

THE MAGAZINE OF MISSOURI WESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

# MWSU



**FALL 2020**

**16** Coping with COVID





**"The years we spent here laid the foundation for the success we've enjoyed in life, and with family and friends. We are forever grateful for Missouri Western and wouldn't change a thing about our college experience."**

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- Mary '75 and Zack '74 Workman



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FALL 2020

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## ON THE COVER

Shelly Lundy (left) and Peggy Payne (right) prepare to greet the class of 2024 coming onto campus for Griffon Edge.

## FEATURES

### **12** New Centers Open to Serve Students

A Center for Service and a Center for Military and Veterans Services are two new centers on campus to serve students. Read about their missions and plans, and their benefits to students.

### **16** Coping with COVID

Alumni entrepreneurs share their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **20** Happy 50th Anniversary to the Alumni Association!

The Alumni Association has been serving graduates from all Missouri Western institutions for 50 years; a recap of the group's activities and achievements begin on p. 20.





The MWSU Magazine is a publication of the Marketing and Communications Office for alumni and friends of Missouri Western State University and its predecessor institutions.

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Missouri Western State University  
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## president's PERSPECTIVE

Dear Friends,

My name is Elizabeth Kennedy, and I am humbled to have been asked to serve as Missouri Western's interim president. I want to start by thanking you for your dedication to, and faith in, Missouri Western State University. Without the support of our alumni and friends, we would not be able to support our students now and in the future. Please know, I appreciate each and every one of you.

As I begin my role as interim president, I am meeting with different groups and individuals from the campus and community to receive their feedback and share my vision for the future of the university. During all of these meetings, two things continue to stand out – an overwhelming love of Missouri Western and the idea that we are all a part of the Griffon family.

For me, coming to Missouri Western has been a real homecoming. I am originally from Missouri and still have family in the area. The welcome that our Griffon family has shown me has made me truly feel that this is where I belong, and I am incredibly grateful for this reception. I know this welcoming feeling does not stop with me, as our students report feeling the same way. Home is where the heart is, and this is so true at our beloved University.

A few weeks ago, we asked our returning students to tell us in one word what Missouri Western means to them. From home, welcoming and love, to opportunity, future and encouragement, one thing rings true – Missouri Western is a place where students feel comfortable to be themselves while growing into young adults who are aspiring to fulfill their hopes and dreams. I encourage you to watch the video on Missouri Western's [Youtube](#) channel. The responses are a great reminder of why we're here and the students we are supporting.

I'd also like to take a moment to remind and reassure you that we are doing all we can to keep our campus and community safe during this unprecedented semester. Our semester began on Monday, August



Dr. Elizabeth Kennedy

17 and will conclude with finals week on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. We are committed to the health and wellbeing of our campus community and have recently set up a dashboard on our [COVID-19 Response webpage](#). Here you can quickly view updated COVID-19 statistics for the university as well as learn about our updated on-campus procedures and guidelines.

With the help and cooperation of our entire campus community, we will be able to reduce issues and minimize potential disruptions on campus. As of this publication, physical distancing and face coverings are required on campus, and signage is posted around campus to remind everyone of our protocols and practices. We want every Griffon to be safe and stay healthy!

Once again, thank you for welcoming me to the community and for your continued support of our university. Now more than ever, our students need to know that we are here for them in every way possible. Whether we are physically on campus or working remotely, the health, wellbeing and education of our students is our top priority. I look forward to working with you in the future to provide our students with the best possible education and experience during their time at Missouri Western.

Dr. Elizabeth Kennedy

Interim President

Missouri Western State University



## New healthcare program facilities address regional needs

Missouri Western has recently established a new Center for Excellence in Applied Healthcare Learning (CEAHL). CEAHL strives to expand capacity for nursing and health professions programs and strengthen hands-on learning opportunities for the region through enhanced access, quality, attracting new students and providing responsible education and training needs.

The expanded partnership with regional healthcare providers will ensure that Missouri Western's education and training programs are responsive to current and future workforce needs.

"There is a critical shortage of healthcare workers in the region and our goal is to address that shortage by developing a pipeline of local talent with the required skills and training to succeed in the workplace," said Dr. Crystal Harris, interim dean of the College of Science and Health. One way that the new facilities will meet this need is by the addition of 10 chairs per cohort in the nursing program. Previously, the program saw 50 students admitted per semester. Beginning with the fall 2020 cohort, that number has been raised to 60.

Final construction on the CEAHL facilities was completed in March 2020. The new facilities,

located on the first and third floor of Murphy Hall, include classrooms, technology equipment, simulation labs and faculty offices. Regional hospital training was the first use of the Community Lab in April 2020. Additionally, St. Joseph Youth Alliance has been able to utilize the space for student training purposes.

The expansion of laboratory spaces will not only benefit Missouri Western students, but the community and region as well. As seen by Mosaic Life Care's use of the community lab for essential

training and Youth Alliance student training, the state-of-the-art simulation lab will also be available to provide opportunities for education and job exploration to visiting high school students and employees of community partners.

The new simulation laboratory will also honor a community partner through its new name: Mosaic Life Care Auxiliary Community Lab. Mosaic Life Care Auxiliary has benefited the community for more than 80 years, including last year's generous donation toward the new CEAHL facilities, and the new name, approved by the Missouri Western Board of Governors, will honor their generosity.

For more information on CEAHL, or to plan a visit, see [missouriwestern.edu/CEAHL](https://missouriwestern.edu/CEAHL).

CEAHL is possible because of the MoExcels Grant Missouri Western received in 2019 from the Missouri Department of Higher Education, and support received from Mosaic Life Care, Heartland Foundation, Mosaic Life Care Auxiliary, and the Missouri Western State University Foundation. ■

Above: The new entrance to the Mosaic Life Care Auxiliary Community Lab

Left: Construction began on the new space in Murphy Hall in 2019





# Spring break brings valuable experiences

Missouri Western's spring break 2020 began on March 9 before the COVID-19 pandemic halted activities and travel, and several student groups and faculty members were able to enjoy educational and/or service opportunities.

## Glade Restoration

Thirteen students and two biology faculty members, Dr. Cary Chevalier and Dr. Mark Mills, traveled 300 miles to help initiate a major Ozarks glade restoration project of Meyers Glade near Protom, Missouri. The students were all members of the student chapter of The Wildlife Society. Dr. David Ashley, professor emeritus of biology and a member of the Tumbling Creek Cave Foundation (TCCF), arranged the trip.

Dr. Ashley said the TCCF is dedicated to preserving Tumbling Creek Cave, a National Natural Landmark known for its pristine cave formations and cave life. The cave is considered to have the highest biodiversity of any North American cave found west of the Mississippi River. Meyers Glade, recently acquired by the TCCF, is located on the land surface directly above the major passages in Tumbling Creek Cave and has had little management in the past 10 years.

Dr. Ashley noted that Missouri glades, which consist of shallow soil layers and exposed bedrock that produce a mostly treeless arid environment very similar to deserts of Arizona and Texas, all face the risk of being overgrown with invasive cedar trees. So the Missouri Western team spent part of their spring break cutting, felling and burning the cedars in an effort to restore the glade. Dr. Ashley said he estimates they spent about 250 person-hours on the job.

"Having the opportunity to do that kind of real-world wildlife management at such a well-established facility like the Ozark Underground Laboratory is priceless," student Jeremy Reynolds said. "You get the feeling that you are part of a legacy while you are there and the work, while hard, was extremely gratifying."

## Art in Arkansas

Two faculty members, Kathy Liao, assistant professor of art, and Dr. Madeline Rislow, assistant professor of art, traveled with 39 art history and painting students to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas over spring break. Along with the main exhibits, they toured the museum's Frank Lloyd Wright house and Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirrored Room. Also, Crystal Bridges' curator, Dr. Mindy Besaw, gave the students a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum.

Students also visited The Momentary, a new contemporary art space, where they viewed State of the Art 2020, an exhibition presenting insight into what's happening in the art world right now. Other stops included the



Art history and painting students tour Crystal Bridges during spring break.

21c Museum Hotel in Bentonville and the Precious Moments Chapel in Carthage, Missouri. The trip was made possible by generous support from a Missouri Western Arts Society grant and the Applied Learning Fund.

## Service in Bangladesh

Dr. Dan Shepherd, associate professor of education, spent his entire spring break in Bangladesh serving his church. He and six others traveled to the country to introduce the residents there to Christianity.

Dr. Shepherd's brother, a minister in the Detroit area, had traveled to Bangladesh several times before and talked to Dr. Shepherd about his experiences. When it happened that his brother's trip coincided with Missouri Western's spring break this year, Dr. Shepherd jumped at the opportunity.

"I wanted to see for myself the amazing outcomes he has been experiencing," Dr. Shepherd said. "And it was unlike anything I had ever experienced."

Dr. Shepherd said the group traveled around visiting with the Bengalis, who are primarily Muslims, telling them Gospel stories. "When we asked if they wanted to hear more, they always said yes."

Dr. Dan Shepherd visits Bangladesh over spring break.



He saw many people convert to Christianity that week, and the significance wasn't lost on him when one day he found himself talking to a group of 12 fishermen. "Of course, I told them about Jesus the fisherman."

Dr. Shepherd said there was nothing "comfortable or convenient" about their accommodations. He said the last thing a nurse in the United States told him before he left was "don't get bitten by a mosquito," but the first night he probably got 30 bites. "But I had had my malaria shot," he noted.

## Media students to Big Apple

Griffon Media students Zoë Jones, Alicia Otto '20, Christian Sarna and Kathleen Woods, along with their advisor, Dr. James Carviou, traveled to New York City over spring break to attend the College Media Association Spring 2020 Conference. The Griffon Media team presented two sessions – Otto and Sarna presented Yearbook Editor Playbook: How to Manage Your Staff Amongst the Chaos of College Life, and all four students presented We're Growing in the Wrong Direction: How to Handle a Small Staff in Your Student Media. Additionally, the students

and Dr. Carviou facilitated an open yearbook forum.

While at the conference, they received the following awards:

- Second Place - Best Homepage - Griffon News;
- Honorable Mention - Best Newspaper - Four-year School Under 5,000 Students; and
- Honorable Mention - Best Yearbook Cover - The Griffon 2019.

Additionally, Otto received a Board Citation for her work designing the conference's marketing brochure and program.

The students also had the opportunity to attend several Broadway shows, including Moulin Rouge, Phantom of the Opera, Mean Girls and Book of Mormon. They also attended a monologue rehearsal and the live show, "Late Night with Seth Myers."

Otto noted that the students worked on videotaping projects while there, and they came home with some unique footage of New York City.

## Bronx biology research

Dr. Tilottama Roy, assistant professor of biology, and student Shawn Boss spent part of their spring break at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) collecting samples from dried preserved plant specimens for their ongoing research in the lab on campus.

Dr. Roy's research focus is on understanding the evolutionary relationships and diversification

*Continued on page 7*

missouri  
arkansas  
new york city  
bronx  
bangladesh





## New chiropractic school agreement signed

In March 2020, Missouri Western signed another chiropractic school admissions agreement, this one with Logan University-College of Chiropractic in Chesterfield, Missouri.

The agreement states that if a student maintains a 3.0 GPA for three years at Missouri Western, they will have automatic matriculation to Logan. The first-year Logan chiropractic curriculum will transfer back to Missouri Western as 30 credit hours of upper-division biology course work, which will earn them a Bachelor of Science/Health Science from Missouri Western.

While here, the student would complete 90 credit hours – all general studies courses, the core of the biology major, and any three advanced biology courses used in the Biology/Health Science program electives. ■

## Commencement ceremony Sept. 20

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the spring Commencement ceremony has been postponed until Sunday, Sept. 20.

For the safety of our community, two ceremonies will be held at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. Graduates will be limited to four tickets for guests, but both ceremonies will be live streamed. All attendees will be required to wear masks. ■

## Nursing students receive fellowship scholarships

Eight Missouri Western students received 2020 Nursing Fellowship scholarships from the Mosaic Life Care Foundation.

In honor of Nurses Week (May 6-12), the Foundation announced their commitment to the annual fellowship that will award \$10,000 each to up to 10 qualifying applicants. This year's recipients were chosen from applicants currently enrolled in nursing programs throughout the Mosaic service region, and eight of the nine selected are in Missouri Western's nursing program.

Following graduation and obtaining a Missouri State Nursing License, each Mosaic Life Care Foundation Nursing Fellowship recipient will be partnered with a professional mentor throughout their first three years of employment with Mosaic, participate in community engagement opportunities and develop clinical and leadership skills in a supportive, hands-on environment.

The scholarships recipients include Jennifer Buch, Kourtney Chaney, Jaileigh Hamlin and Ashley Moeck, all of St. Joseph; Shelby Gaines, Watson, Missouri; Lauren Hill, Troy, Kansas; Alyssa Hough, Gower, Missouri; and Holly Poppa, Bethany, Missouri. ■

## Griffon Edge

Student Ambassadors welcome incoming freshmen to Griffon Edge.



## Student interns for Missouri Speaker of the House

Dillon Schreckler would like to have a political career after he graduates, so he jumped at the chance to meet Speaker of the Missouri House Elijah Haahr '05 when he visited campus in October 2019. After they talked that day, Rep. Haahr asked Schreckler if he would be interested in serving as an intern for him during the legislative session in the spring. Schreckler jumped at that chance, too.

So once a week, Schreckler traveled to Jefferson City to work in Rep. Haahr's office in the state capitol. Most of his time was spent observing the lawmakers in session and at meetings.

Schreckler says in his time in Jefferson City, he has seen a lot of bipartisanship in action, and believes the state legislators truly care about the state as a whole, and they don't care about power. "Legislators see each other as friends and colleagues rather than rivals."

He also realized that he and Rep. Haahr have a few things in common. Schreckler is a member of the Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity, which Rep. Haahr helped bring back to campus when he was a student, and both majored in political science.

Schreckler feels he was lucky to get to work with Rep. Haahr throughout the spring semester. "He is a great mentor. He values his team and wants them to know what is going on."

Growing up with parents who both work for the federal government, Schreckler says he fell in love with the way government works, and hopes to serve at the state or local level to make an impact. ■

## Convocation on Critical Issues rescheduled

Because of concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, the 27th annual R. Dan Boulware Convocation on Critical Issues featuring Mike Morell has been postponed to Sept. 30, 2021. For more information on the event or speaker, visit [missouriwestern.edu/convocation](https://missouriwestern.edu/convocation). ■

## Spring break brings valuable experiences

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Biology student Shawn Boss studies plant samples at the New York Botanical Garden.

of two groups of plants: the mints, belonging to the plant family Lamiaceae, and the false foxgloves, belonging to the plant family Orobanchaceae. She said the herbarium at the NYBG, one of the largest in the world, is a repository for a wide variety of dried plant specimens, including the ones in her research. She and Boss spent two days there collecting approximately 40 samples and brought them back to campus.

"Shawn gained valuable applied learning experience, and he learned about herbaria, sample collection techniques from dried preserved plant specimens and more," Dr. Roy said.

She noted that the majority of the false foxgloves are federally listed as endangered, so studying and understanding their evolutionary patterns will help determine future conservation measures.

Dr. Roy, Boss and two other students, Benjamin Bashaw and Lyndsay Lamey, recently published a paper about their false foxgloves research in a peer-reviewed journal, BIOS. Dr. Roy noted that their study was the first published research to date on the diversification of the false foxgloves in temperate North America and their migration to the Midwest.

"I actively involve undergraduate students in my research, and I am always on the lookout for opportunities for them to have more exposure and first-hand experience even beyond campus," Dr. Roy said. "So I wanted my research student who is involved in the project on false foxgloves to travel to NYBG to get first-hand experience." ■



# Campus Kudos

**Zoë Jones** was named the 2020 Missouri Western Student Employee of the Year and Student Employee of the Year for the State of Missouri. She served as editor-in-chief of the Griffon News student newspaper.

The National Student Employment Association, in conjunction with the Midwest Association of Student Employment Administrators, coordinates a National Student Employee of the year to recognize the outstanding achievements of students who work while attending college.

Four elementary education majors traveled to Interface A, the Missouri State Science, and Math Conference with **Dr. Ollie Bogdon**, assistant professor of education: **Melissa Berger**, **Katherine Yeacker**, **Makayla Hedge**, and **Shelby Pettigrew**. With Dr. Bogdon, they presented a three-hour workshop, The Story Behind 3 Dimensions and Phenomena Based Units.

**Hannah Berry** and **Josiah Schmedding** were nominated to represent Missouri Western at the 33rd annual Missouri Governor’s Student Leadership Forum on Faith and Values held last spring in Jefferson City, Missouri.

The forum challenges students’ character development by encouraging them to reflect on their own decision-making skills, values, and belief systems. The forum’s guiding principle is teaching students to embrace altruism rather than egotism.

Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft welcomed students to the annual forum that was created by his father, former Missouri Governor and 79th U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. Students began the day having breakfast with Governor Mike Parson and First Lady Teresa Parson at the Missouri Governor’s Mansion.

**Dr. Jordan Atkinson**, assistant professor of communication, had an article published with his co-author, Dr. Nicholas Tatum (Abilene Christian University), in the Basic Communication Course Annual, “Best Practices for Recruiting Students from the Basic Course.” The Basic Communication Course Annual publishes the best scholarship available on topics related to the basic communication course and is distributed nationally to scholars and educators interested in the course.

Missouri Western’s **student chapter of the Wildlife Society** participated in the Missouri Department of Conservation’s statewide Share the Harvest Program, which provides healthy animal protein through venison donated by sport hunters each year. Students picked up loads of readied venison from the meat processors and delivered it to Second Harvest Community Food Bank. In 2019, The student chapter distributed 3,366 lbs. of venison, enabling the delivery of a record 26,928 meals to the needy in the St. Joseph and surrounding area.

**Dr. Marianne Kunkel**, assistant professor of English, was one of five poets invited by Kansas City’s Mid-Continent Public Library to write an original poem for National Poetry Month in April 2020. Her poem, “Wonder,” was posted on The Story Center’s Facebook page.

At a virtual ceremony in the spring, Student Affairs awarded its annual Student Organization Awards:

- Outstanding Student Organization Member Award: 3rd - **Caitlin Dillon**, 2nd - **Mackenzie O’Neill**, 1st - **Alyssa Bonnett**
- Outstanding Student Organization Advisor Award: **Dr. Pam Clary**, advisor for the Organization of Student Social Workers and Renewal, and **Dr. James Carviou**, advisor for the MWSU Chapter of Society for Collegiate Journalists
- Dean Hoff Outstanding Achievement Award: Sophomore - **Zoë Jones**, Junior - **Mackenzie O’Neill**, Senior - **Cecilia Tackett**
- Dr. Robert A Vartabedian President’s Outstanding Leader Award: **Jocelyn Sands**
- New Program of the Year: **Residential Life Northside RAs** for “Escape Room”
- Program of the Year: **Geography Club**
- Community Service Program of the Year: **Organization of Student Social Workers**
- Glenn Marion Community Service Award: **Geography Club**
- The Spirit of the Griffon Award: **Phi Delta Theta**

- Fraternity and Sorority of the Year: Fraternity - **Alpha Sigma Phi**, Sorority - **Delta Sigma Theta**
- Outstanding Faith Based Organizations: **Renewal**
- Best New Student Organization: **American Institute of Graphic Artists**
- Student Organization of the Year: **Student Athlete Advisory Committee**

Although the Alpha Chi National Conference did not take place face-to-face in Albuquerque, New Mexico, students in Missouri Western’s Lambda Chapter, **Breanna Hancock**, **Devin Mattoon**, **Rebecca Prest**, **Becca Smith-Grantham** and **Dr. Angela Haas**, assistant professor of history, uploaded their collaborative research project, Culturally Transmitted: Controversies and Conspiracies Plaguing the Modern Vaccine, and won the grand prize of \$5,000. The collaborative research projects include extensive investigation of a topic by a team of students from different majors, culminating in a paper and conference presentation. **Smith-Grantham** submitted the paper, The Reciprocity Equation: Engagement and Expectation in the Social Media Exchange, and won a \$3,000 Benedict Fellowship to pursue graduate studies. The sponsor of Alpha Chi Lambda, **Dr. Teddi Deka**, professor of psychology, received the Distinguished Service Award for service to Region IV.

Griffon Media students received the following Collegiate Media Association awards for the fall 2019 semester:

- Best TV Special Event Coverage – third place, Griffon Update
- Best Newspaper Feature Page/Spread – second place, Griffon News
- Best Yearbook Division Page/Spread – honorable mention, The Griffon Yearbook
- Best Podcast – honorable mention, Griffon News
- Four-Year Yearbook Adviser of the Year – **Dr. James Carviou**

Griffon Media students received the following Missouri Collegiate Media Awards at a virtual ceremony in the spring of 2020:

Advisor of the Year – **Dr. James Carviou**

## Griffon News Awards

Journalist of the Year – **Zoë Jones**

In-Depth News Reporting – third place, **Christian Sarna**, “Who is the ‘campus cult?’”

Investigative Reporting – second place, **Christian Sarna**, “Who is the ‘campus cult?’”

Website – third place, Griffon News

## Griffon Yearbook Awards

Overall Theme Development – first place, Griffon Yearbook staff

Feature Photography – first place, **Wil Abeling**

Feature Writing – first place, **Christian Sarna**

Student Life Design – first place, **Bethany VonSeggern ’18**

Feature Photography – second place, **Alicia Otto ’20**

Feature Writing – second place, **Alicia Otto ’20**

Personality Sketch – second place, **Alicia Otto ’20**

Student Life Design – second place, **Alicia Otto ’20**

Personality Sketch – honorable mention, **Alicia Otto ’20**

Student Life Design – honorable mention, **Bethany VonSeggern ’18**

Student Life Design – honorable mention, **Bethany VonSeggern ’18**

Personality Sketch – honorable mention, **Bethany VonSeggern ’18**

Sports Design – honorable mention, **Bethany VonSeggern ’18**

The 2019 Griffon Yearbook also received two awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association:

Gold Circle Award, second place, Table of Contents – **Bethany VonSeggern ’18**

Certificate of Merit, photography – **Wil Abeling** ■

# Spring sports recap

**Unprecedented times around the globe brought an unprecedented season to the Missouri Western spring sports teams. Many saw their season cut short as they were on their way to playing successful seasons.**

**Softball**

Griffon softball saw the remainder of its season canceled after just 22 games. The Griffons had won 10 of its last 12 games, including two rivalry wins at Northwest Missouri in MIAA play before the season was called off with a 13-9 record. Sophomore Sydni Hawkins became one of the final MIAA Hitters of the Week, racking up 14 hits over the final seven games of the season with nine RBIs, including five in what proved to be the season finale. Hawkins ended the year batting .425 with a team-high 31 hits, three home runs and 20 RBIs.

Coach Buzz Verduzco



**Baseball**

Griffon baseball finished the shortened season 8-15 with a 3-3 record in the MIAA. The team had just swept a three-game series against new MIAA foe Rogers State when the decision was made to cancel the remainder of the season due to COVID-19. It looked like a season that might be destined for great things. Senior pitcher Roy Robles broke a Missouri Western record with 17 strikeouts the first game of the season at Oklahoma Baptist. The Griffons won four of their final five games of the shortened season.

**Men's Golf**

The men's golf team was looking good before its season ended after just one spring tournament. The Griffons had recorded two fifth-place team finishes. Overall, the team had three top-seven finishes with a low-tournament total of 602 in Las Vegas and a low-round of 280 in the first round of the Kentucky Wesleyan Fall Invite.

With 2019 Missouri Western Male Student-Athlete of the Year Patrick McCarthy sitting out with an injury, senior Luke Horseman picked up the lead for the squad. Horseman competed in all six events, averaging a 73.86. He had a low-round of 69 in the first round of the Winona State Invitational where he finished a season-best fourth place. Horseman was par or better three times. Matt Thoms had a 74.33 average through

five events and sophomore Jett Simmons had a 74.65 average through six tournaments. Six different Griffons saw time on the course. None had an average above 77 and five were 75 or better. Thoms, Simmons, Tom Buffington and Preston Ewing were par or better two times each.

**Tennis**

First-year head coach Olaya Garrido-Rivas changed the culture and had her Griffon tennis squad winning before the season abruptly came to an end.

Missouri Western was 6-5 on the year, yet to face an MIAA opponent in conference play when the season ended. The team had just won three of its last four matches when the remainder of the season was cancelled after a 6-0 win at Illinois Springfield and just days away from a home match against Southwest Minnesota State.

Senior Karoline Ström reached as high as No. 12 in the ITA Central Region singles rankings.

Tennis coach Olaya Garrido-Rivas works strategy with Federica Salmaso.



The senior won her first four matches at No. 1 singles and went 6-5 overall. The new head coach brought in new faces as well. With returning senior Federica Salmaso missing much of the spring, the lineup usually featured four newcomers at the singles positions. Isabella MacGibbon went 7-3 in her freshman campaign, playing both at No. 2 and No. 3 singles, and won her final four singles matches.

**Women's Golf**

The young Women's Golf squad was off to a promising start before the season was cut short. The Griffons posted top-eight finishes in each of its last four events of the year after 11th and 12th place finishes in the first two events of the season. A season-best 612 total netted the squad a fourth-place finish at the Midwest Classic in early October, the best finish for the team all year.

Freshman Allycia Gan paced the team, averaging a 76 per round with a team-low 70 in the first round of the MIAA Fall Preview. Gan finished third at that event and the Midwest Classic and was named All-Region by the Women's Golf Coaches Association. Tammy Lim was just two-and-a-half strokes behind Gan's average with a 78.5 in her first season as a Griffon. Anna Bech averaged a 79.21 in her sophomore campaign and turned in a sixth-place finish at the Arkansas Tech Women's Fall Invite and a seventh-place finish at the Midwest Classic.

# Lacrosse begins spring 2021

Griffon fans will be introduced to a new sport in 2021 as women's lacrosse begins its first season of competition. The addition of women's lacrosse as the 17th NCAA DII sport at Missouri Western was announced last November. Rachel Benzing was announced as the program's first-ever head coach in January and has been working tirelessly to assemble a roster through challenging times.

Benzing's Griffons will not compete in the MIAA, but in the Great Lakes Valley Conference. Missouri Western was the first MIAA member and first state institution in Missouri to add the sport, forcing the Griffons to look outside their home conference. In the team's first season, they will host three home conference games with additional non-conference competition in the spring. The Griffons will open the GLVC season on April 3 at Rockhurst before hosting Indianapolis in their GLVC home opener on April 9.

# Updated fall schedule

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all fall sports seasons have been suspended indefinitely. Visit [gogriffons.com](http://gogriffons.com) to stay up to date with any additional information related to future sports seasons.

# Tentative griffon basketball schedule

Men's and women's times TBA  
All Home games played at MWSU Fieldhouse

Nov 19 (Thu)	Away	Rogers State University (Okla.)	Claremore, OK
Nov 21 (Sat)	Away	Northeastern State University	Tahlequah, OK
Dec 2 (Wed)	Home	Lincoln University	
Dec 5 (Sat)	Home	University of Central Missouri	
Dec 12 (Sat)	Home	Northwest Missouri State University	
Dec 17 (Thu)	Away	Pittsburg State University	Pittsburg, KS
Dec 19 (Sat)	Away	Missouri Southern	Joplin, MO
Dec 30 (Wed)	Home	Rockhurst University	MEN only
Jan 7 (Thu)	Home	Emporia State University	
Jan 9 (Sat)	Home	Washburn University	
Jan 14 (Thu)	Away	University of Nebraska Kearney	Kearney, NE
Jan 16 (Sat)	Away	Fort Hays State University	Hays, KS
Jan 21 (Thu)	Home	Newman University	
Jan 23 (Sat)	Home	University of Central Oklahoma	
Jan 27 (Wed)	Away	University of Central Missouri	Warrensburg, MO
Jan 30 (Sat)	Away	Lincoln University	Jefferson City, MO
Feb 6 (Sat)	Away	Northwest Missouri State University	Maryville, MO
Feb 11 (Thu)	Home	Missouri Southern	
Feb 13 (Sat)	Home	Pittsburg State University	
Feb 18 (Thu)	Away	Washburn University	Topeka, KS
Feb 20 (Sat)	Away	Emporia State University	Emporia, KS
Feb 25 (Thu)	Home	Fort Hays State University	
Feb 27 (Sat)	Home	University of Nebraska Kearney	



# New centers open to serve students

## Center offers credit for service

One of Missouri Western's values is service, and Dr. Melody Smith said the University is now "putting action" behind that value. After pilot programs in the spring and summer, this fall marked the full launch of the **Center for Service**, where students can earn credit hours for community service, at no cost.

"Critical skills development is central to our core mission and applied learning is our focus," said Dr. Smith, who developed the Center. "So the Center seeks to provide opportunities to learn and serve by connecting students to volunteer opportunities."

Students can earn one free elective credit hour for every 40 hours of service, up to 120 hours and three credit hours.

The Center created three categories of service. The first, community engagement, is a general category that offers a variety of service opportunities. Dr. Smith noted that students who are not from the immediate St. Joseph area can commit to service in their hometowns.



In fact, this past summer, as part of the pilot program, a student volunteered in Brookfield, Missouri.

The second category of service is career readiness, where students may select an activity that is related to their major. And the third, civic outreach, allows students to select a service that suits their passion or helps with a cause they support. Dr. Smith said she

has had many inquiries from students that fit this category because they want to work in an animal shelter.

Dr. Smith said partnering with organizations and businesses has been an important part of creating the Center, as those entities can reach out to the Center with service opportunities. She is happy that the Center's work will benefit communities. In fact, the City of St. Joseph has contributed funding for the Center.

This past summer, six students, all members of Missouri Western's women's soccer team, volunteered at the American Red Cross of Northwest Missouri as part of the Center's pilot program. They were able to complete service hours remotely, doing casework for disaster relief.

Dr. Smith noted that many student organizations have a community service component, but the Center now gives access to service opportunities to all students.

"Missouri Western has a long history of connecting with our community," she said. "Athletes, Greek organizations, Griffon Edge first-year students, academic departments, student organizations and others have generously served our local community for decades, logging thousands of hours of service each year. Now we will complement this established tradition by offering service opportunities to all degree-seeking students."

Dr. Gary Clapp will serve as the director of the Center following Dr. Smith's retirement this past summer. The Center is located on the second floor of Eder Hall.

**"Missouri Western has a long history of connecting with our community. Athletes, Greek organizations, Griffon Edge first-year students, academic departments, student organizations and others have generously served our local community for decades, logging thousands of hours of service each year."**

- Dr. Melody Smith

## Center for military on campus

When Joe Midgley got out of the Army and went to college, he didn't know where to turn to get help with his military education benefits and his other concerns. Additionally, the veteran quickly realized that he had had quite a different life experience than most of his classmates, so he didn't quite fit in.

That was why, this past spring, he jumped at the opportunity to set up Missouri Western's new **Center for Military and Veterans Services** on the second floor of Eder Hall.

"I'm very excited about building something I know will help people," he said when he was hired last



Joe Midgley

March. "I want the center to be a home away from home."

Midgley, who served in the U.S. Army and most recently served as the Assistant Director – Military and Veterans Recruitment/Coordination at California University of Pennsylvania, said he wants to make sure the center includes opportunities for socializing and relaxing, along with study spaces

and a kitchen area. He offers those who come in, help with not just military-related things, but school schedules, financial aid and more.

"I mainly want to create a warm, welcoming environment."

A few years ago, Missouri Western consolidated its services for military students and began offering degrees that fit their schedules and circumstances (see "Missouri Western offers military-friendly options"). But the Center for Military and Veterans Services creates the missing physical space, and Midgley was hired to develop that and manage all military and veterans services. Before, military students were always welcome in the Nontraditional and Commuter Student gathering space, but now there will be the space just for veterans, current military members and their spouses and dependents.

*Continued on next page*



Continued from pg 13

Midgley said he also wants to increase membership in the current Student Veterans of America organization on campus, and he plans to hold lunch-and-learns for faculty and staff throughout the academic year to educate them on military matters.

“My goal is when someone says ‘military,’ everyone will say, ‘Go see Joe.’”

Midgley said the closing of campus one week after he started his new job at Missouri Western because of COVID-19 changed his plans of meeting employees and military students face-to-face, but he held a lot of virtual meetings and made a lot of phone calls until classes resumed in the fall.

“This will be a comfortable place where they feel accepted,” Midgley said. “We need a shared space for those going through things that nonmilitary people may not understand. I want them to be able to say what they want to say and it will stay here.”

Missouri Western offers military-friendly options

Missouri Western offers many opportunities for military members and veterans to obtain their degrees.

One benefit for active-duty and military veterans and their spouses and dependents is that they can receive in-state tuition for courses they take from the University.

Military members and veterans can also apply credits from their Joint Services Transcript or Community College of the Air Force Transcript as the foundation of the University’s Bachelor of Science in Technology degree.

When Joe Armato ’20, a member of the U.S. Army Reserves, was looking for a university to continue his studies and earn a bachelor’s degree, he said Missouri Western offered him the best path through the Bachelor of Science in Technology, and Armato earned that degree this past May.

“I reached out and found out about the BST,” he said. “It was great because it was designed specifically for me.”

The best part, he said, was because of his associate degree from Metropolitan Community College-Maple Woods and having his military experience count as credit hours through the Joint Services Transcript, he found out he could finish and graduate from Missouri Western in just one year. Since he lived in Kansas City, he was able to complete the degree with a concentration in criminal justice all online.

Another degree, the Bachelor of General Studies, is an undergraduate degree specifically for learners who have delayed or interrupted their studies, or for whom their original major is no longer appropriate. A student is required to have at least 75 earned credit hours with an overall GPA of 2.0 or higher and completed general studies, math and English composition.

The degree allows the student to build a custom concentration out of two minors, rather than a single content focus, while meeting all bachelor’s degree requirements. It is open to all students who fit the criteria, but it especially appeals to many military members or veterans.

“These men and women have done a lot for our country,” said Joe Midgley, director of the Military and Veterans Center on campus. “Now we can help them expand their knowledge, earn a degree and join the workforce.”

New center addresses regional workforce need

Missouri Western’s new Center for Workforce Development will offer a variety of workforce development and continuing education opportunities. The Center was established based on the increased need, magnified by COVID-19, in our region for basic skills training and continuing education courses. A variety of workforce development and continuing education opportunities will be offered,



Center for Workforce Development

including GED prep, career development, Microsoft Office Suite, various certifications and certification prep.

The Center has partnered with an external provider to offer the self-paced, non-credit courses completely online. The Center’s ultimate goal is to help people get back to work and continue to support our region’s workforce.

For more information, you can contact Annette Weeks by emailing [aweeks@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:aweeks@missouriwestern.edu), calling (816) 271-4283, or visiting Popplewell 203. If you’re ready to expand your skill set, earn professional credits, or learn something new, visit the Center’s website at [missouriwestern.edu/workforce](http://missouriwestern.edu/workforce).

From the Alumni Association President

Fellow alumni,

I am truly excited to have been asked to be the president of the Missouri Western State University Alumni Association for the 2020-21 academic school year. I am a proud ’75 graduate of Missouri Western’s elementary education department, and to this day appreciate the faculty who helped me complete my degree. Those professors were certainly committed to their program and their students. My husband, Zack, is also a MWSU graduate, and we are strong believers in the Black and Gold. We are pleased to be able to give back our time and talents to an institution that provided so much to us.

The Alumni Board would like to promote a lasting relationship with Griffon graduates and increase the involvement of our alumni base. I encourage everyone to remain “Griffon Proud!” Support the university by attending events on campus, networking with graduates and students, and wearing your Griffon gear proudly. If you are not able to return to campus, please follow the successes of the university, its students and its faculty on Missouri Western’s social media feeds.



Mary Hausman Workman ’75

Even though we continue to face challenges presented by the coronavirus, we can still feel the excitement of fall and everything it brings with it to the MSWU campus. This time of year brings a fresh start to students and faculty. I’m sure we can all remember the enthusiasm we felt as we returned each fall for new classes, activities, sporting events, clubs and friends.

When the Griffon was chosen in 1917-18 to be the mascot for the St. Joseph Junior College, they must have realized the lasting impact that the mascot would have. Information on the university’s website states, “The Griffon was

chosen because it was considered a guardian of riches, and education is viewed as a precious treasure.” Now, 103 years later, the Junior College has evolved into Missouri Western State University, and I hope that we, as alumni, will consider how we can support the treasure that is Missouri Western State University.

Mary Workman

Mary Hausman Workman ’75  
Alumni Association President

Pandemic Griffis

Alicia Otto ’20 poses with the diploma she earned during an unprecedented semester at Missouri Western.



The Alumni Welcome Center opened this past August in Spratt Hall 105. Stop in and say “hi,” grab a cup of coffee and browse through old yearbooks





## Coping with COVID

# Two alumni business owners share their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic

*In an interview earlier this year with Missouri Western supporter Tom Payn, he was asked about the challenges of being an entrepreneur. Payn, who owns several Subway restaurants in the Denver area, talked about how business owners are constantly facing a barrage of “darts” and trying to dodge them.*

*That was before COVID-19. Today, Payn would most likely agree that with the pandemic, those darts got sharper and more numerous, and kept on coming. We talked to two alumni business owners about their experiences with the pandemic and dodging those darts.*

## Adapting in Vicksburg: TyAnn '10 and Brady '10 Ellis

TyAnn and Brady Ellis own two businesses in Vicksburg, Mississippi – a Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory and Billy's Italian Restaurant, and both were able to remain open and offer delivery and curbside pickup.

TyAnn, who manages the businesses, said shortly after dine-in service was suspended at Billy's, they began offering a pizza kit for families, and those were a big hit.

“This gives families a chance to be creative and spend time together,” she said. “And parents LOVE how their little ones eat their entire meal since ‘they made it.’ I have had many adults message me pictures of their ‘masterpieces.’”

RMCFs are well known for their Fudge for Troops program, so TyAnn began offering Fudge for First Responders. That meant that for every pound of fudge sold, their RMCF sent a pound of fudge to all the first responders in the county.

“Our community is awesome; customers have really stepped up,”

she said. “Also, I have had many donations given to both businesses to help feed first responders,” she said. “I even had a lifelong friend from Iowa call to purchase a few gift cards. He wanted to help not only our business but asked me to give them to first responders.”

The Ellises, who have two young sons, took advantage of the closed dining room of the restaurant to start a “long overdue” renovation of Billy's. When the pandemic hit, they were in the middle of remodeling their home, as well.

“Family life is a little hectic right now,” TyAnn said in April 2020. “Brady has been working his full-time job (as a general sales manager for a car dealership) and then remodeling the restaurant once he is off. We couldn't be more excited, and I can't wait until the economy gets back on its feet and we can have a ribbon cutting for our newly renovated space.”

TyAnn said this has been a challenging time, and each week seems to bring a different adjustment. “But our crews have been rock stars every step of the way. We are very blessed and thankful for everyone that has helped us through this time.”

*Continued on next page*



Left to right: Ross Theesen '15, Mackenzie Theesen '15, Seth Lyons '09



## Facing the Challenges: Ross '15 and Mackenzie '15 Theesen

For Ross and Mackenzie Theesen, COVID-19 brought a lot of darts and challenges. The Theesens own two Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factories in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Additionally, they are in a partnership with Seth Lyons '09, where they own 12 Which Wich sandwich shops in Albuquerque and Colorado.

The two RMCFs were in indoor malls, so they had to close in mid-March.

"It was a very surreal moment for Mackenzie and me," Ross said.

"We had to get rid of

any product that was

perishable, so most of our shelves are completely empty.

We were able to donate a lot of apples and other goodies to local hospitals for the staff there, which was a good feeling. We also gave apples away to customers who came in for a sandwich at our Which Wich locations."

He said they had to furlough employees at the RMCFs, but they kept paying the general manager.

At the sandwich shops, they continued to pay the general managers, assistant general managers and the best shift leads.

"We know we can't do this on our own, and we truly believe that the businesses that take care of their employees through tough times such as COVID will

**"We know we can't do this on our own, and we truly believe that the businesses that take care of their employees through tough times such as COVID will thrive when things get better."**

- Ross Theesen '15

thrive when things get better." He noted that the general manager at one of the RMCFs had recently bought a house, and they didn't want her to struggle.

At the RMCFs, they began making deliveries two days a week, and that has helped the bottom line because the community has been so supportive. The pandemic, he said, seems to have turned them into a logistics company that delivers chocolate.

As all the sandwich shops offered take-out and delivery, Ross said he found himself more involved with the day-to-day operations than before, such as inventory and scheduling. He spent a lot of time trying to procure fresh produce.

"We had to change everything we normally did almost overnight to keep costs

down as much as possible to ride this thing out for as long as we can," Ross said in May 2020.

Unfortunately, there were setbacks. One business was robbed, which had never happened before, and another suffered a broken window (they believe someone was trying to break in after hours).

"This is without a doubt the toughest situation we've been through as business owners. We've made very tough decisions very quickly, and so far we believe they've been the correct ones," Ross said. "We truly believe that we have a chance to come out of COVID stronger than before, for the way we've taken care of our staff and stayed open for our communities."

## Teaching through a Pandemic: Kaleb Johnson '15

Teachers set out to give their students the tools and knowledge they need to succeed. Oftentimes, they provide them with comfort and mental guidance as well. During a pandemic, the latter becomes an even more vital part of the job.

"I could easily sense the anxieties that COVID-19 brought to the world," said Kaleb Johnson, fifth-grade teacher at Hyde Elementary in St. Joseph. "As a teacher, I knew that my main job at that point in time was to help ease those anxieties for my students."

When the pandemic hit, there was an instant transition needed between in-person and online classes.

Johnson was able to provide his students with daily Zoom meetings so they could have some consistency. These served as a way to check in with his students both academically and mentally. He would play interactive games, read and discuss stories, and just make sure that they were doing as well as could be expected.

Johnson is thankful that "the school district did a great job" enacting a solid plan sending students home for spring break while determining what to do after. Little did Johnson and his students know, they wouldn't see each other in person again. "If I could go back in time, I would say so many things differently to my students to help give them some sort of closure for our in-person school year," Johnson said.

With daily changes due to COVID-19, it is hard telling what the future holds for in-person classes. No matter what classroom learning looks like, Johnson knows that there needs to be an even greater focus on the social and emotional health of students and staff. "We need to meet our students where they are. This is something teachers have always done; it will just be even more important this coming school year." ■



Left: Students return to campus for in-person, socially distanced classes. Below: The MWSU Percussion Ensemble practices outside in a socially distanced setting.

## COVID-19 Planning in Griffon Country

In light of the quick changes that needed to be made to the spring semester because of COVID-19, Missouri Western's administration worked diligently to ensure that the 2020-21 academic year would provide students with a quality educational experience while protecting the health, safety and well-being of the campus community. The administration evaluated multiple scenarios and recommended the best

course of action based on the available information from CDC, state and city officials.

While planning for the fall semester, the only thing guaranteed was that COVID-19 would remain unpredictable for many months. After multiple discussions with faculty, staff and student leaders, it was decided to shift the start and end dates of fall semester – beginning the semester August 17 and concluding before Thanksgiving. The University also

instituted protocols for wearing face coverings, social distancing, limiting room capacity and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, as well as contingency plans if cases occur on campus. As always, the health and safety of the campus community remains the top priority. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, please check the COVID-19 webpage, [missouriwestern.edu/covid-19](https://missouriwestern.edu/covid-19), for the most up-to-date information. ■





# Cybersecurity adds online option

The cybersecurity graduate program is now offered online and in person. This addition makes the program even more convenient for working professionals seeking to advance their careers.

“Cybersecurity professionals are in high demand, filling a critical need in today’s dynamic technical landscape,” said Yipkei Kwok, program director of the cybersecurity program. “They develop new ways to protect data, companies and technical infrastructure from cyber threats and are the main line of defense

for protecting organizations in every industry.”

Students in the program learn to apply the principles of data protection, network security and computer forensics as well as the ethical, legal and policy issues associated with information security.

“My professors took what I already knew about the IT field and raised it to a whole new level,” said Todd Miller ’19. “They exposed me to areas and jobs in the IT field that I previously knew nothing about.” Miller credits his professors and

experiences at Missouri Western with providing him the confidence needed to help his students reach their full potential and see the wealth of job opportunities within the IT field. He is currently a high school teacher and adjunct instructor at multiple colleges.

If you’re interested in joining the cybersecurity program, visit [missouriwestern.edu/csmp/cybersecurity](http://missouriwestern.edu/csmp/cybersecurity), call (816) 271-4288 or email [cybersecurity@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:cybersecurity@missouriwestern.edu). ■

## Graduate student takes advantage of 100% online program

Angela Thro was looking at masters programs at several universities when she connected with Dr. Susan Bashinski, dean of Missouri Western’s Graduate School. Missouri Western had just the program she wanted – a masters in K-12 Cross-Categorical Special Education – and she will graduate December 2020.

Unlike most of the graduate students in that program, Thro is not a teacher; she is an occupational therapist for the Orchard Farm School District in St. Charles. Thro earned her bachelor’s degree in therapy from Washington University in St. Louis in 1995, but as soon as she graduated, the profession moved to a master’s degree requirement. The time never seemed right to work on that master’s, so in 2017,



Angela Thro

she looked into other options and discovered the program at Missouri Western.

She said the coursework on autism in the SPED program was important to her, because so much of her caseload is working with special education students.

When she was studying for her bachelor’s degree, she said, she doesn’t remember there being even one paragraph about autism in any of her textbooks.

“What I was doing was getting by, but now I understand so much more. The instructors help me see the whole child, and that’s what matters,” Thro said. “I realized the connection was the most important, and my classes have taught me those skills.”

She said at first, she wasn’t sure how she would do with the degree program being 100% online, but says it has worked out well. She has encouraged many teachers to look at Missouri Western’s masters programs.

“I’ve been thrilled,” she said. “It was absolutely the best decision I could make.” ■

## Dr. Jordan Siewert '08: Chronicling the unexpected journey

Dr. Jordan Siewert never expected to write a book, but when his daughter was born in 2014 with a congenital heart defect, he found that he wanted to share his experiences.

“I felt that maybe my story could speak to someone,” said Dr. Siewert, a native of St. Joseph, Missouri. “I feel like the book has given me great insight into things – into life and taking one day at a time.”

He wrote “Fixing You,” a story about his 5-year-old daughter, Natalie, where he chronicled the struggles of balancing residency, fatherhood and her medical journey. In the end, Dr. Siewert said his daughter’s experience and her struggles made him a better doctor.

“I was able to see behind the curtain of medicine,” he said. “On the training side, you have no idea what people are going through – how a family will sit in the hospital with their sick child and wait all day just to see the doctor’s face and pray for good news. Or how it feels to talk about palliative care and end-of-life discussions. This is something I would not wish on anyone.”

Dr. Siewert’s story began when he enrolled at Missouri Western and wasn’t sure what he wanted for a career. He liked the sciences, so he decided to major in chemistry and see where it took him.

“I loved my time at MWSU. Looking back now, had I gone to a larger state school, I do not know if I would have been able to succeed. Personal attention was something

that was likely very important to my overall ability to focus on the coursework and succeed.”

He graduated from the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2010 and went on to a Family Medicine Residency in Toledo, Ohio. Today, he is the medical director of the Adult Medicine Clinic for the Promedica Physicians Group in Toledo, a clinic dedicated to the underserved.

“I see patients who do not speak English, who do not have insurance and who have been turned away by other offices. I find a great deal of pleasure in helping those who have nowhere else to go,” Dr. Siewert said.

Along with their daughter, he and his wife, Kelly, also have two sons, Joey and Lucas. Dr. Siewert said Lucas has a chapter in the book; his birth was complicated because Kelly went into labor at 20 weeks when Natalie had to have emergency surgery.

Dr. Siewert said he first thought about writing a book about his family’s experiences when he read a book that was written by a high school friend, Johnny Cathcart. The book, “Hotpants: A Memoir,” chronicles

Cathcart’s cancer journey when he was a teenager.

“It really touched me,” Dr. Siewert said. “It spoke to me and really brought me some unique insight.”

“Fixing You” started out relatively easy to write and was therapeutic, he said. He wrote the end first, and then started at the beginning. However, the editing was a different story. On the third time through, his daughter had to have another open heart surgery, and “that brought back some very difficult feelings

and made reviewing the book very hard near the end.”

Dr. Siewert hopes his book shows people that medical issues don’t always turn out the way you want them to, but maybe they turn out okay.

“I just want people to see how, if you take things one day at a time, no matter the struggle, there is always light at the end of the tunnel,” he said. “I also wanted to give some insight into medical training. A portion of the book talks about what it is like to be a new doctor.”

“Fixing You” is available on Amazon, and all proceeds from sales of the book go to charity. ■





# Happy 50th anniversary to the Alumni Association!

In the first edition of the alumni newsletter in March 1970, it was announced that Missouri Western had formed an Alumni Association, and a board and officers were elected. According to the article, the purpose of the group was to advance the educational interests of Missouri Western and provide opportunities for alumni to stay in touch with their alma mater. At the time, Dr. M.O. Looney, college president, noted that “an active alumni association is an integral part of every college program, providing close relationships with the citizens of many communities who are interested in higher education.”

The first officers included John Biehl '57, president; George Fenner '35, vice president; Marilyn Maxwell '45, secretary; and Jean Andrews Evans '37, treasurer. Missouri Western employee Sam Sharp was the executive director and Milton Litvak '38 drew up the bylaws and articles of incorporation.

Over the years, the Alumni Association has hosted numerous events and activities both on and off campus, including Homecoming activities and football tailgates, and regional chapter and alumni network events. The Association also distributes scholarships to current students, and to incoming freshmen who are children of alumni. For several years, Alumni Board members and volunteers also made calls for the annual fund-raising phonathon. Alumni have also supported fellow Griffons, serving as mentors and helping them connect with prospective employers and networking opportunities.

The annual Commencement breakfast was an important Alumni Association tradition that was held for more than three decades, honoring the graduates and featuring a guest speaker. The first Commencement breakfast was in 1970 and the guest speaker was Elliott “Bub” Spratt. For many years, a Commencement rehearsal immediately followed the breakfast, so there was always a good turnout of graduates at the breakfast, allowing future alums to start connecting with current alums almost immediately.

In October 1983, in conjunction with Homecoming, the Alumni Association held its first awards banquet at the St. Joseph Country Club, and the banquet has been held every year since. Alumni Association Board member Col. John Byrne Logan pioneered the idea for the

awards program and served as chair of the first awards committee.

The first Distinguished Alumni Award recipients were Dr. Alvin M. Liberman '36, president of Haskins Laboratories and professor of linguistics at Yale University; Christel E. Marquardt '70, a partner in the law firm of Cosgrove, Webb and Oman, Topeka, Kansas; W. Dale Maudlin '71, president of First Midwest Bancorp, Inc., St. Joseph; David H. Morton '42, senior partner in the law firm of Morton, Reed and Counts, St. Joseph; and Blaine J. Yarrington '37, retired vice president of Standard Oil Company of Indiana. The first Distinguished Faculty Award recipient was Francis Kessler, political science professor.

The Herb '35 and Peggy Iffert Award for Outstanding Service to the University was created in 2007, and the GOLD (Graduate of the Last Decade) Award was added in 2010. The Great Griffon and Student Leadership awards began in 2017.

Since the first awards were given in 1983, 232 have been honored.

What today is known as the Forever Griffons Luncheon began in 1993, when Junior College alumni wanted to hold an event specifically for them. The first event honored 13 Junior College faculty members. The event evolved into an annual Junior College Brunch, and the name was recently changed to the Forever Griffons Luncheon.

In 1995, the Alumni Association helped raise funds to build the Junior College Room on the second floor of the student union. As part of the 25th anniversary celebration of the present-day campus and the four-year institution, the Junior College Room, which featured

The first Distinguished Alumni Award recipients



a mural that was created by Al Kost '32 was dedicated. Also, as part of the 25th anniversary celebration, the Alumni Association donated funds to improve the reflecting pool in front of Eder Hall. The Association funded two fountains, lights and five benches that were placed around the pool.

In recent years, the Alumni Association hosted Arts, Beats and Treats, a family-friendly event held after the Homecoming parade every year. The Future Griff's at the Chocolate Factory began in 2012, when the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory in St. Joseph opened and Future Griff's was formed. The Alumni Association has hosted tailgates at both Royals and Chiefs games as well.

Throughout its history, the group has also hosted trips across the globe. Most recently, in 2019, alumni traveled to Greece. The COVID-19 pandemic canceled the planned 2020 trip to Egypt.

Today, the Alumni Association focuses on student recruitment, retention, advocacy and giving back. Kim Weddle '00 currently serves as the Executive Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations.

But from its earliest beginnings to now, no matter how much has changed, one thing has remained the same for the Alumni Association – it has always been made up of committed alumni who have served as board members and volunteers to ensure a successful organization and to secure the connections between Missouri Western and its graduates. ■

## Alumni Association Board Presidents 1970-2020

John Biehl	Molly Pierce	Jason Horn
George Fenner	Douglas Kean	Greg VerMulm
Richard DeShon	Linda Merkling	Diane Hook
Dale Maudlin	Dan Danford	Randy Klein
Teresa Klein	Bruce Windsor	Robert Sigris
Donald Keck	Richard Sipe	Shelby Coxon
Ross Woodbury	Chad Welch	Dave Slater
Herbert Iffert	Dan Kellogg	Angie Springs
James Cooper	Bill McMurray	Mary Vaughan
George Fenner	Laurel Goforth	Natalie Redmond
Fred Bell	Ralph Schank	Jim Jeffers
Sidney Naidorf	Kristine Smith	Tona Williams



First Alumni Association Officers from left to right: John Biehl '57, Marilyn Maxwell '45, George Fenner '35 and Jean Evans '37.



1992 Phonathon volunteers



2001 Phonathon volunteers

Alumni Day at Arrowhead for the 2014 Kansas City Chiefs vs. Cleveland Browns game.



GRIF FONS  
FOR LIFE



# Alumni Association Awards

The Missouri Western State University Alumni Association has announced the names of its alumni awards honorees. A virtual Alumni Association Awards Banquet will be premiered on YouTube in October.

## Award winners are:



**Pat Modlin '88, retired executive and current business owner: Distinguished Alumni Award.**

After retiring from Cerner Corporation as vice president of engineering strategy and operations, Modlin and his wife Terri bought property in Downtown St. Joseph and started two businesses, Felix Street Gourmet and Room 108. He serves on numerous community boards and committees, including as chair with Terri of the United Way 2020 campaign.



**Dr. Regan Dodd, associate professor of health and chair of the Department of Health Professions: Distinguished Faculty Award.**

Dr. Dodd has been at Missouri Western since 2012. She serves as Missouri Western's Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) and will chair the MIAA FAR Council. She also is in charge of the Chiefs Training Camp internship program, which attracts up to 60 students from across the country each summer.



**Isaac Collins '11, business owner: GOLD (Graduate of the Last Decade) Award.**

Collins competed in the Craig School of Business franchise program in 2012 and won the opportunity to purchase a Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory store in Iowa. Three years later, he sold that business and bought a Yogurtini store in Kansas City. At 31, he now owns three Yogurtini stores and is the co-founder of Superhero Yoga.



**Mary Shuman, retired: Herb '35 and Peggy Iffert Award for Outstanding Service to the University.**

Shuman has been a member of the MWSU Ambassadors since 2006, served as president for three years and remains a vital member of the Ambassadors Executive Board where she has served as chair of the Scholarship Committee since 2007. She is also a charter member of the Missouri Western Arts Society.



**Greg VerMulm '89, partner and chief product officer with MarketSphere Unclaimed Property Specialists: Great Griffon Award, Craig School of Business**

VerMulm served on the Alumni Board for 12 years, with two years as president, and also served on the Missouri Western Foundation Board of Directors. He is currently serving his second term on the Craig School of Business Advisory Committee, where he served two terms as Chair.



**Brett Esely '01, Missouri Western's senior associate athletic director for external affairs: Great Griffon Award, College of Professional Studies**

Esely handles the day-to-day functions related to marketing, advertising, public relations, corporate partnerships, event management, ticketing for Griffon events and outside operations for the Kansas City Chiefs Summer Training Camp hosted by Missouri Western. He also has oversight of the Sports Information Office, men's and women's golf programs and the Griffon Cheer Squad.



**Lee Murdock '10, knowledge manager, KU Health System: Great Griffon Award, School of Nursing & Health Professions**

Murdock helped implement Heartland Health's first telehealth solution while working as a CHL RN. Lee is now part of the KU Health System as a Knowledge Manager – a brand new role at KU and in the Healthcare IT field.



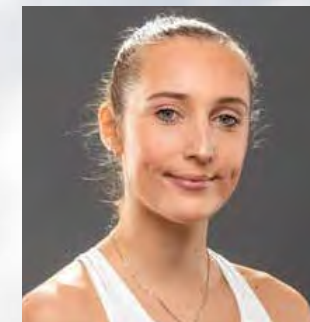
**Jordan (Jay) Alford '20: Clifford Hughes '55 Award**

Alford was a highly engaged student before graduation. She was a Resident Assistant in Scanlon Hall, a Student Ambassador, Program Assistant for the Center for Student Involvement as well as a Co-Producer and Hostess of the Griffon Newscast. She was a captain of the Mystics Dance Team and later founded the Missouri Western Dance Company. She also held a number of leadership positions across campus.



**Merle Phillips '20: Graduating Student of the Year**

Phillips engaged in award-winning research both at Missouri Western as well as Harvard Medical School. He was also recognized multiple times with awards from the American Chemical Society. Merle served in a variety of critical leadership roles and was a frequent volunteer at outreach events.



**Federica Salmaso '20: International Student of the Year**

Salmaso was involved in community service and volunteer opportunities with the tennis team. Federica graduated Magna Cum Laude and served as an officer for the Psychology Honors Program. She also served as Program Coordinator for International Student Services and organized many events.

## Congratulations to all our award recipients!

*Alumni Association award nominations are accepted year round. All recipients and their*

*accomplishments are intended to reflect the values, excellence and integrity of Missouri Western State University. If you would like to nominate someone for an award, visit the Missouri Western Alumni Association webpage, [missouriwestern.edu/alumni](http://missouriwestern.edu/alumni). Past recipients are also listed on the webpage. ■*





# Gary Ellison: griffon architect

As the present-day campus celebrated its 50th anniversary this past fall, the University recognized a long-time architect and architectural firm in St. Joseph that has been involved in the design and construction of almost every building on campus. A plaque recognizing the late Gary Ellison is now on display in the front entrance of Popplewell Hall.

Ellison, who had a background in construction, began working as a draftsman for Herschman-Douglas Architects. When plans for the new college campus were being developed in the late 1960s, Ellison was in on those plans because Herschman-Douglas designed the three original buildings on campus – the Science and Math Building (Agenstein Hall), the Learning Resource Center (Hearnes Center) and the Administration and Classroom Building (Popplewell Hall).

“He loved working at Missouri Western and became close friends with Dr. Looney (president 1967-83) and a lot of the employees,” said Gary Ellison’s son, Jeff.



Campus, 1970



Gary Ellison

Gary Ellison purchased the architectural firm in 1974 and became a licensed architect. He was still working when he passed away in 2003. Jeff Ellison and his sister, Lori Wilson '84, are the current owners.

When they try to figure out how many buildings on campus the firm designed or helped design, Jeff

Ellison said it’s easier to count the ones they were not involved in – just three.

“Contractors had a lot of respect for Dad,” Jeff Ellison said. “They told me they rarely heard him raise his voice or lose his cool.”

As children, Jeff Ellison and Wilson fondly remember Sunday drives with their dad to follow the progress of the new campus. They drove through cornfields where Downs Drive is now. And, Jeff Ellison remembers when he was a teenager going on the Spratt Memorial Stadium construction site with his dad in 1979.

“He really felt a bond with Missouri Western,” Jeff Ellison said of his dad. “And we feel a lot of pride and ownership in Missouri Western.”

“We are Griffons both professionally and personally,” Wilson said. ■

Spratt Stadium, 1979



## 1970s

**Timothy O'Connor '79** has moved to Warrenton, Missouri where he serves as a Concessions Manager for Delaware North.

## 1980s

**Matthew Fry '88** received the 2019-20 Jackson Parkhurst Award for Special Achievement from the North Carolina Symphony.

## 1990s

**Roberta (McDaniel) Dias '91** recently retired from the St. Joseph School District after 29 years in education.

**Trenny (Schroeder) Wilson '91** has been promoted to Assistant Chief of Police at Missouri Western.

**Col. Grace Link '92** stepped down as the executive director of the Missouri Veterans Commission for a new role at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. She had served in the Missouri role since April 2018.

**Brian Shindorf '94** retired as Chief of Learning for the Jefferson City School District in June 2020. Shindorf began his career as a teacher in the St. Joseph School District, where he also served as a principal and assistant superintendent.

**Stephanie Stewart '97**, assistant professor of nursing at Missouri Western, has been awarded with the 2020 Parkinson's Foundation Nurse Faculty Award, which includes grant funding to launch a Navigating the Parkinson's Journey program in St. Joseph, Missouri.

## 2000s

**Jennifer Hill '00** has moved to Leander, Texas where she serves as a Revenue Officer for the IRS.

**Chad Fehr '02** is the Dean of Residential Campus/Assistant Dean of Students at Marymount California University.

**LaShaundra Randolph '03** has been re-elected to the National Association for Campus Activities' Board of Directors. She is currently the Coordinator for Campus Life and Leadership at Metropolitan Community College – Penn Valley (Missouri).

**Traci Howell '08** published “Rudy,” a tale about the children of Santa Claus' first reindeer team. Howell earned a degree in English from Missouri Western and a master's in fine arts from National University.



**Cassandra (Schuster) Cyril '07** and her husband, Romel, announce the birth of a daughter, Veronica “Ronnie” Cyril, born Sept. 25, 2019.



**Jena (Pickerell) Williams '09** and her husband, Tyler, announce the birth of twin sons, Jack and Judah, born Nov. 4, 2019.

## 2010s

**Dan Ritter '12** is the head football coach at East Buchanan High School in Gower, Missouri.

**Kelly W. Puckett '14** was appointed Grundy County Prosecuting Attorney by Gov. Mike Parson on May 1, 2020. Puckett had been serving as the interim prosecuting attorney since January 2019.

**Jacob Wagner '19** is a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame. He is working with the Development and Optimization of Red-shifted Fluorescent pHi Biosensor.



**Bianna '15 and Jacob '17 Blaylock** announce the birth of a son, Jackson, born Feb. 2, 2020.

## 2020s

In 2019, **Merle Phillips '20** was selected to participate in a prestigious Research Experience for Undergraduates program, where he conducted research at Harvard University for 10 weeks. He was subsequently accepted into Harvard's biological and biomedical science PhD program, and began his studies there this fall.



**Ben '20 and Abby '20 (Wolff) Smith** tied the knot on August 20th, 2020. They were surrounded by many

members of their Missouri Western family and are looking forward to championing the fine arts together. Ben and Abby hope to pursue a MFA in performance/pedagogy and PhD in theatre respectively. The two are still avid supporters of the Xi Eta chapter of Alpha Psi Omega, Griffon Film Society and Missouri Western Players. ■



# In Memoriam

We remember those who have passed away. If you want to include someone in this listing, please call (816) 271-5676, mail the information to MWSU Magazine, Missouri Western State University, 4525 Downs Drive, St. Joseph, MO 64507, or email [magazine@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:magazine@missouriwestern.edu).

**Claudia Ackley '56**, Ironton, Missouri, June 21, 2020.

**Mark D. Colgan '04**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Jan. 30, 2020.

**Robert A. Cummings '78**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Feb. 22, 2020.

**Carole Everett '93**, Troy, Kansas, July 19, 2020.

**Brenda G. Farmer '91**, Cowgill, Missouri, March 13, 2020.

**Gena Fisher '91**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Feb. 22, 2020.

**Marvin "Kody" Free '81**, Agency, Missouri Aug. 8, 2020.

**Stephanie Gabbert '97**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Feb. 6, 2020.

**Lucretia Hawley**, Hamilton, Missouri Aug. 17, 2020.  
Lucretia was a former Professor for Business and Economics.

**Robert W. Hurlbut '89**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Feb. 29, 2020.

**Gary Hurst '98**, Savannah, Missouri, May 22, 2020.

**Rudolph Jenkins '76**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Aug. 4, 2020.

**Rebecca A. King '09**, Country Club Village, Missouri, April 27, 2020.

**Robert Kunkel Sr. '74**, Bellevue, Nebraska, July 14, 2020.

**Terry J. Jimenez '86**, St. Joseph, Missouri, March 19, 2020.

**Christel Marquardt '70**, Topeka, Kansas, March 8, 2020.  
Marquardt was named an Alumni Association Distinguished Alumna in 1983, the first year the awards were given.

**Daren Nigus '87**, Topeka, KS, Aug. 28, 2020.

**Matthew Nold '99**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Feb. 16, 2020.

**Darlene O'Banion '78**, St. Joseph, Missouri, July 20, 2020.

**William Oberle '75**, Overland Park, Kansas, Aug. 6, 2020.

**Diane Pace '09**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Aug. 11, 2020.

**Jean Parker '71**, St. Joseph, Missouri, July 23, 2020.

**Janet Peters '45**, Liberty, Missouri, June 25, 2020.

**Joye N. Rhodes '76**, St. Joseph, Missouri, May 19, 2020.

**Natalie Root '13**, St. Joseph, Missouri, May 19, 2020.

**Stacie (Wells) Root '94**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Aug. 31, 2020.

**Louise H. Schaaf '35**, St. Joseph, Missouri, July 27, 2020.

**George R. Smith '76**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Aug. 6, 2020.

**Steven Keith Streeter '76**, Boulder, Colorado, April 28, 2020.

**Lacreaca L. Tolliver '05**, St. Joseph, Missouri, May 9, 2020.

**Sharon Wagner**, St. Joseph, Missouri, Aug. 17, 2020.  
Sharon was a former Associate Professor for Business and Economics.

**Tahler J. (Johnston) Wildman '12**, State Center, Iowa, April 16, 2020. ■

## Two alums inducted into Black Archives Hall of Fame

Hamilton Henderson '66 and Danielle McGaughy '96 were inducted into the Black Archives Museum of St. Joseph's 2020 Hall of Fame. Henderson retired from the St. Joseph School District after

a long career as a history teacher, is active in politics at the city level, and serves on many committees and boards.

McGaughy serves on both the Bartlett Center and Inter-Serv

boards. She started a community garden in the Midtown area and has been instrumental in the Juneteenth celebrations in St. Joseph. ■



## IRONMAN Griffon: Dr. Adrienne Johnson

- ✓ 2.4-mile swim
- ✓ 112-mile bicycle ride
- ✓ 26.2-mile run
- ✓ Become an Ironman

That is the list now owned by Dr. Adrienne Johnson, associate professor of education, who checked the Ironman goal off her bucket list last fall when she competed in and finished IRONMAN Wisconsin in Madison.

Dr. Johnson said she had been competing in triathlons for about 15 years, and about five years ago she put a plan in place to progress to an Ironman. That meant continuing her swimming and running, and ramping up her biking skills. She also competed in three half-Ironmans over the five years and a 50K trail race in the year before the race.

She said she wasn't worried about finishing the race, but finishing it in the time allowed – 17 hours.

"I tend to have a combination of stubbornness and endurance, so I knew I could finish," she said. "I'm like an Energizer bunny."

That will to finish on time, she said, led to a mantra that she repeated in her head throughout

the entire race – "all-day pace, all-day pace" – meaning she kept up a pace that didn't raise her heartbeat and one that she could keep up all day.

She indeed met her goals, finishing in 16:20:36. While many of the competitors ended up walking most of the marathon, she was able to run for all but about the last six miles when her foot started bothering her.

"I finished knowing I pushed myself within reasonable limits. A better time was not worth a permanent injury," Dr. Johnson said. "I'm a pretty even-keel person, but right after the finish, I was super excited; it was five minutes of pure elation. It's a pretty cool feeling to finish. Then I sat down and couldn't get up again."

Dr. Johnson said she not only appreciated the support of her husband and the crowd along the route, but the fellow Ironman participants who encouraged each other all along the way.

The bicycle course included a very long hill that they had to climb twice, and a firefighter in full gear ran with her. "He kept encouraging me, yelling, 'Keep going, don't give up.' I kept thinking I could stop when he did, but he never stopped," she said with a laugh.



Dr. Adrienne Johnson

Her husband, Dr. Britt Johnson, associate professor of physical education, became an Ironman in 2010, and she says a bit of a competitive spirit may have played a small role in her wanting to become an Ironman, as well. Although his time was better, he was impressed that she ran more of the marathon than he did.

"There's always a little bit of competition," she said. "I will almost always lose, but that doesn't stop me from trying."

Being a role model for her young daughters was also one of her incentives to become an Ironman.

"I want to set a positive example to them of what it means to be healthy and happy, and have a healthy body image," she said. "We talk a lot about being strong emotionally and physically, and valuing that over someone else's ideals. But they said no way would they do an Ironman." ■





# Lifetime Sports Academy

Many different programs and events have come and gone over Missouri Western's more than 100-year history, but one particular program may be one of the longest running. The Children's Lifetime Sports Academy began in 1973.

In a 1974 edition of an alumni newsletter, an article about the academy noted that it was held from 1-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday for two weeks, and was coordinated by Dr. Charles Erickson, who was the chair of the Department of Health, Physical Education and

Recreation at the time; and Don Deaton, who was the coordinator of recreation.

With a few additions and subtractions over years, the activities haven't changed a lot – that first year the academy offered swimming, archery, bait casting, canoeing, golf, trampoline, tumbling, hunter safety, trap shooting and marksmanship.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the 2020 edition of the academy to be canceled, most likely for the first time in its almost 50-year history. ■

