

HORIZONS

Together Again

*Remembering
President Emeritus
William T. "Bill" Higdon
1930-2021 ► P18*

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Better Together

Reflecting on the past several months, there are so many highlights that I could share with you. Stories of our amazing students who have come together during the second year of a global pandemic with positivity, creativity, and a zest for learning. Stories of our resilient faculty and staff who gracefully endured that pandemic and the extra work it added – I will not ever take these amazing people for granted. Stories of our incredible alumni and friends who returned to campus this fall to celebrate not one, but two honor classes as a part of Homecoming 2021.

In the fall of 2020, we put together a comprehensive plan for our students to return to Graceland for in-person learning on both of our campuses. There have been numerous bumps and learning opportunities along the way, but the guiding principle of our Toward Together plan was the health and safety of our community.

For our students, their health meant being together, in person, experiencing their formative years as young adults. The Graceland Experience on the Lamoni campus is deepened by the feeling of belonging that our students get when they are in each other's lives – learning, playing, laughing, growing side-by-side.

As we went into the fall of 2021, we watched global health statistics closely, hoping against hope that we would be able to welcome our beloved alumni and friends back to campus for Homecoming. When we ultimately made the call and the attendees began to RSVP, I could sense that same desire in our alumni that our students have – to be together.

Togetherness is the theme of this issue. In many ways, it is the theme of Graceland University. We are better when we are together, intertwining our lives and experiences in a way that helps us to feel that we belong. Late Graceland President Emeritus William T. Higdon was someone that constantly made me feel that I belong at Graceland and I will miss his wisdom and counsel. His impact on the University made us all better. He brought us closer. He helped us feel that we belong.

We dedicate this issue to Bill.

Patricia H. Draves, PhD
President



© Our Lamoni campus was picture perfect for Homecoming weekend October 15-17, 2021! Summit Video, owned by Chad Godfrey '97, was hired to film events on Saturday and captured spectacular aerial views of the campus.

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A message of hope for our recent graduates



TOGETHER AGAIN

At long last, Gracelanders returned to "the Hill" for Homecoming 2021



MORDEN CENTER DEDICATION

The Graceland community gathered to celebrate the iconic gymnasium and recognize the generosity of the Morden, Resch, and Closson families, along with other donors who made the renovation project possible

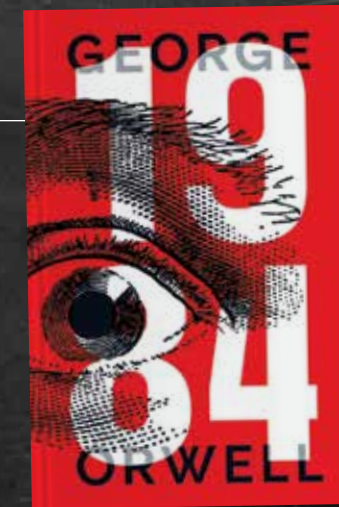
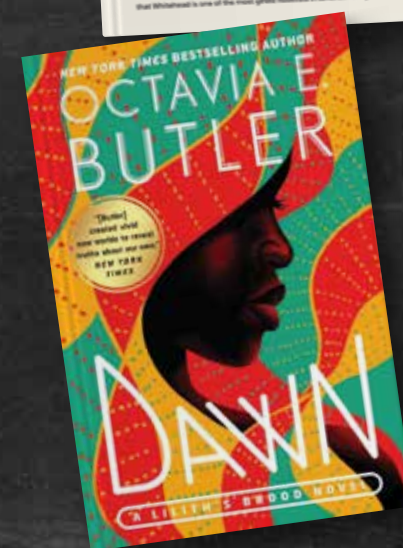
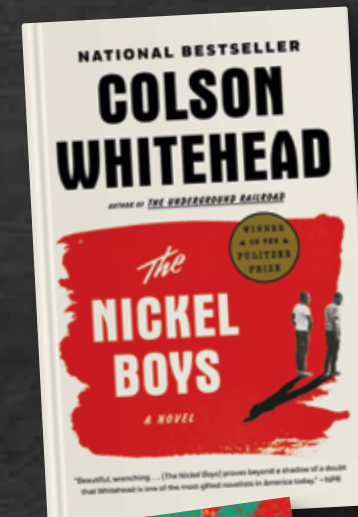


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The Buzz

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES



WHAT ARE YOU READING?

WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED

Here are some of the books alumni shared with us on social media back in the summer, along with a couple selections our Horizons team read recently.



© TERRY BARKER '77



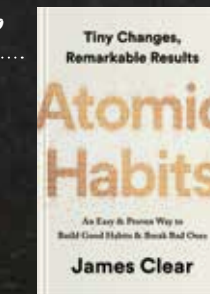
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© MICHELLE KEENAN LINER '07



TIFFANY SMITH '06



SHANE ADAMS '99

1 Book Club

Associate Professor of English Cat Clifford started the **GRACELAND BOOK CLUB** in 2017 because she wanted to read 1984 by George Orwell and she wasn't alone. Soon she had a group of students and faculty who gathered to foster community and celebrate the love of reading.

Book Club discusses books (usually novels) that the group decides to read. Last year's selections ranged from "new classic" fantasy and dystopian novels like Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and *Dawn* to Colson Whitehead's recent award-winning novel *The Nickel Boys*. Students, staff, faculty and community members are welcome to join anytime and there is a strict "no guilt" policy – that is, members are encouraged to read if they can but not to feel guilty if they can't!



Students showed up in their beach gear and filled the stands at the Jenner Sports Complex for football's home opener of the 2021 season.

2 GO JACKETS!

The Buzz

From new programs to all things student life, there are so many cool things happening!

2

The Rise of "Stingdom"

While student attendance has ebbed and flowed at Graceland sporting events, this year's Graceland Student Government (GSG) was determined to make it thrive. "We recognized that while we have so many student-athletes on campus, we were lacking school spirit at those events, and we wanted to find a way to support them," said GSG president Casey Main '22 (pictured front row, the one wearing floaties). From this initiative, coupled with the students' desire to have a **STUDENT SECTION**, the "Stingdom" was born. The new student section can be seen attending sporting events with exciting themes like beach day, gold out, and jersey night.

3

A New Degree for a Changing World

The past few years have shifted and changed many paradigms while also challenging social and religious institutions. With a desire to change the world, the Community of Christ Seminary now offers a **MASTER OF ARTS IN PEACE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION** for those who wish to explore the intersection of faith and action and how it can be applied in everyday life. The goal of this program is to spark important conversations around justice by combining spiritual formation, theological literacy, civic engagement, local ministry context, and innovative methods of social change and transformation.

4

Together Royal

Graceland sponsored the **KANSAS CITY ROYALS NURSE APPRECIATION NIGHT** on June 15, 2021, as a special event to honor the hard work, strong commitment, and dedication of all nurses. Alumni, Graceland nurses, and Royals fans gathered together at Kauffman Stadium to celebrate the incredible sacrifice healthcare workers have made during the COVID-19 pandemic. Graceland gave out "Gutsy Nurses" shirts, hand sanitizer, shopping bags and even had two Gracelanders – Katie Bruels '18 and Patrick Kirk '19 – throw and catch the honorary first pitch.

📅 Mark your calendars and join us at the K for our next Nurses Night on May 20, 2022.

5

Signs That Matter

Associate Professor of Art Karen Gergely and her 2D Design classes finished the Fall 2021 semester with a **PARADE OF ORIGINAL SIGNS** students made and carried across the Lamoni campus. The assignment was for students to create signs that either represented their identity or something they believe would make the world a better place.

6

Lady Ja(gs)ckets

Women's soccer players senior Natalie Nedd and freshman Annalisa Vincent were selected to join the **GUYANA LADY JAGS NATIONAL TEAM**, coached by Ivan Joseph '96, in the CONCACAF World Cup qualifying round of matches held in February and April of 2022. Just before Nedd and Vincent returned to Guyana to start training ahead of the February matches, Graceland hosted a send-off party to celebrate their achievement.



3



📷 Courtesy of the Kansas City Royals

4



5



6

The Next Chapter

BY SHANE ADAMS

A Message of Hope for Our Graduates

Over the course of the pandemic, Graceland has learned to get creative in the ways that it celebrates its graduates.



From hosting its first virtual commencement exercise in the fall of 2020 to celebrating outside with the Spring 2021 graduates, the past few ceremonies have been anything but standard.

One constant, however, is the incredible quality of graduates that Graceland continues to yield. In a study done by Payscale.com, our graduates – more than any other university in Iowa – consider their careers “high-meaning,” which shows that they are extremely interested in and believe they are making the world a better place.

“One of my favorite things about serving as president is the opportunity I have to shake each graduate’s hand as they walk across the stage at commencement,” said Patricia H. Draves, PhD, Graceland University President. “While our virtual ceremony was completely necessary for safety purposes during the pandemic, I welcomed the return to our in-person experience.”

Graceland’s graduates for both the spring and fall ceremonies of 2020 were celebrated virtually, so all were invited to attend an in-person ceremony in 2021. Several took up that offer, both in the Spring 2021 Lamoni ceremony as well as the Fall 2021 ceremony held in the Community of Christ Auditorium

in Independence, Missouri. The challenges that each student has overcome in achieving their goals were acknowledged and applauded by the guest speakers at each commencement.

FALL 2020 (Virtual)

In December 2020, Graceland held a virtual commencement for its graduate-level and School of Nursing students. Broadcast via Facebook and YouTube, the conferring of degrees, while untraditional, was no less meaningful as three members of Graceland’s faculty shared brief thoughts on the University’s core values of learning, wholeness, and community. Gleazer School of Education faculty member Montel Evans, MEd, encouraged students to allow their minds to grow in the silence that occurs before thought. Dr. Kathy Lenz from the Graceland School of Nursing called the students to action in a world that needs their gifts. Dr. Tony Chvala-Smith walked the graduates through Graceland’s foundational roots of community, challenging them to think of community as a verb rather than as merely a noun.

SPRING 2021 (Huntsman Field – Lamoni, Ia.)

The Spring 2021 ceremony was held outside to give people the ability to social distance amidst the pandemic. During the ceremony, Dr. Vince Lewis was awarded an honorary doctorate and shared these words with the graduates: “The world is waiting for you, the world is looking for you, the world needs you.” The ceremony also featured brief remarks from three key members of the Graceland community – Zack Mullins, Men’s Wrestling Head Coach, Tonya Coffelt, Associate Professor of Education, and Daryn Nowlin, Class of 2021 graduate. Coach Mullins led a celebratory group chant, “Can-I-Get-A-Ric-Flair-One-Time “WHOOO!” Coffelt reminded students just how strong they are, especially in facing the challenges that they overcame while students. Nowlin talked about the endurance required for students to endure the COVID experience on campus and closed with a moving and personalized performance of The Beatles’ “Let it Be.”

THE NUMBERS

650 The total number of degrees awarded for the full 2020-21 academic year and part of the 2021-22 academic year (summer 2021 to present).



615 GRADUATES
35 U.S. STATES
14 COUNTRIES

FALL 2021 (Community of Christ Auditorium – Independence, Mo.)
Graceland alum Jill Jensen '88 Chadwick is Director of Media Relations and the Medical News Network at the University of Kansas Health System. She shared her experience of over four decades in broadcasting. Her four points for graduates were: 1-Hold on to your passion for your profession; 2-It’s okay not to know everything; 3-Never stop learning; and 4-Wherever you’re going next, it’s going to make a difference and you’re going to impact people’s lives. ■





Faculty Awards

Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching



In chronological order, from left:

Fall 2020 **Elise Hector, PhD, RN, CPN**
Assistant Dean, School of Nursing
and Assistant Professor of Nursing

Spring 2021 **Steve Glazer, PhD**
Professor of History

Fall 2021 **Jane Garrow, MSN, RN, '13**
Assistant Professor of Nursing

Honorary Doctorate Spring '21



Vincent Lewis, PhD

Exceptional Service Award Spring '21



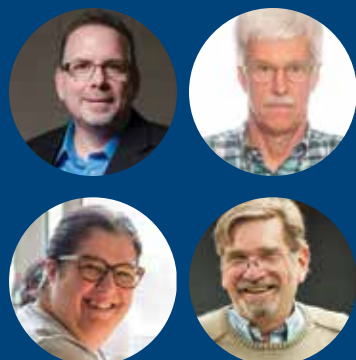
In order, from left:

Catherine "Cat" Clifford, PhD
Associate Professor of English

Shawna Cooper '99 Jackson, MSN, RN, PHNA-BC
Assistant Professor of Nursing

Sharon Little-Stoetzel, RN, PhD, CCRP, CNE
Professor of Nursing

Faculty Emeriti Spring '21



In order, from top left to bottom right:

Dennis McElroy, EdD, '81

Brian Smith, PhD

Teri Nixon '78 Foster, PhD

David Devonis, PhD

Together Again

Homecoming 2021

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES



There was something special in the crisp autumn air October 15, 2021 – the **BUZZ OF EXCITEMENT** as alumni returned to campus for the first time in years could be felt across Lamoni. The familiar scene of friends reuniting had an extra sense of sanctity. So many things kept people apart these past two years. This homecoming was the first time that alumni got to see and experience how the campus has changed. Needless to say, this year's homecoming celebration was one to remember because, for the first time in a long time, we were "Together Again."

[READ MORE ►](#)



flickr • View all Homecoming event photos here:
[flickr.com/gracelanduniversity](https://www.flickr.com/photos/gracelanduniversity/)



There was much excitement as alumni got to explore the latest improvements on campus – the reimagined Newcom Student Union and The Swarm, and the incredible progress made on the Morden Center. Newcom Student Union officially opened in May 2020, but entering the Great Room to check in was the first time that many Graceland alumni got to lay eyes on the new building. Alumni reminisced over their mailboxes that were preserved in the construction and toured the refurbished structure in awe. The joy and celebration did not stop when the sun went down. On Friday, food trucks lined the circle drive and hundreds of students gathered alongside alumni to eat food, listen to music, and be in community.

Graceland celebrated double the honor classes this year because Homecoming 2020 was canceled due to the pandemic and those honor classes were unable to gather. With twice as many people to celebrate, Graceland was overjoyed to have them back.

For the first time in two years, live theatre also returned to Graceland. “The Great American Trailer Park Musical” directed by alumni Todd Davidson ’87 brought laughter, spunk, and music back to the Shaw Center stage. Alumni could also attend a music showcase put on by the music department with performances by Symphonic Band, Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, Harmonium and Orchestra.

On Saturday, Gracelanders gathered to celebrate the Morden Center dedication and tour the building to see the progress already made in phase one of this extensive renovation. At Sunday’s homecoming worship service, Director of Communications at Community of Christ International Headquarters and co-director of Spectacular Jennifer Glandon ’96 Killpack spoke to a crowded room in the Shaw Family Auditorium. A beautiful end to the weekend, Killpack shared about “Infinite Mystery” and concluded another amazing Graceland homecoming.



Alumni Awards

Read about the awards:
[graceland.edu/Horizons](https://www.graceland.edu/Horizons)

Distinguished Service Award



Brent Ruoff, MD, '77 first started thinking about the world of medicine and critical care after a serious bout with appendicitis while a camper at church reunion. He went on to major in chemistry at Graceland and completed his coursework in just three years, graduating summa cum laude. Ruoff spent 42 years as a hospital administrator and emergency room doctor with Washington University School of Medicine, and he knows exactly what he’s most proud of – mentoring young doctors and other career medical professionals with a holistic approach to taking care of sick people.

Graceland Award of Recognition



Ron Gillilan, MD, was a bright student who couldn’t afford college until a local farmer volunteered to pay for his education on one condition: he had to promise to return the favor for someone else down the road. Ron and his wife, Carol, lived up to that commitment by hosting several Graceland students and connecting them with summer internships. Dr. Gillilan worked in the medical field for 50 years and recently finished 12 years of service on Graceland’s Board of Trustees. He says he will always cherish the opportunity to help guide Graceland.

Honorary Alumni Award



Katie Bash, PhD, is attributed to leading Graceland to a successful accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. For 20 years, Katie worked at Graceland (most recently as the VP for Institutional Effectiveness) developing an integrated model to alleviate repetition and align budgeting with strategic planning. Bash cultivated the work of the faculty and a task force into an equitable program-prioritization process that provides a numeric measure of effectiveness with direction of improvements. With deep appreciation for her hard work and dedication to Graceland, Katie Bash is now an official alumna.

Yellowjackets Hall & Wall of Fame



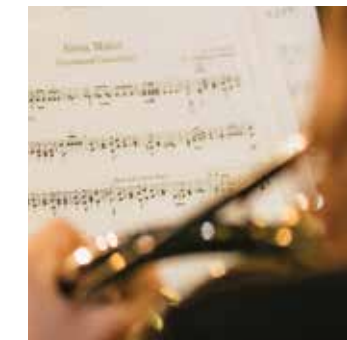
Julia Travis '26 Closson, known best as “Judy,” was inducted into the Hall of Fame posthumously for her commitment to Graceland as a faculty member for 12 years and her help in expanding Graceland programs for women and for the college in general. She sponsored the Graceland Women’s Recreational Association and also developed a program that invited local high school girls to visit campus and participate with her classes in recreational activities, which turned out to be an effective recruiting tool for the college. Closson was always a supporter of Graceland, the college’s ideals, and the college community.



Matt Lynch '05 was inducted into the Hall of Fame to honor his incredible basketball career as a guard at Graceland. He was a 1,000-point scorer and set the school record for steals in a single game, season, and career. He helped with sports camps and traveled with the coaching staff on recruiting trips to help bring in athletes who could help take the program to the next level.



The **1960 Men’s Cross Country Team** was inducted into the Wall of Fame for winning the Missouri College Athletic Union Conference Championship and earning a second-place finish in the NAIA national meet. Led by Coach L.D. Weldon ’29, athletes Earl Detrick ’63, Chuck Madden ’65, Dick Harrington ’64, Bruce Beck ’62 and Elbert Harrington ’64 carried Graceland to national fame in 1960, having previously posted a 9-1 season.



Sting LOST & FOUND

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES

It was a hot summer day when **STING MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED** from the Lamoni campus.



The shiny mascot statue was last seen by the Morden Center construction team, but no one could quite remember where it was moved. Some thought it was stored in Hampton Center or hidden in a supply closet, but in the months leading up to Homecoming 2021, the community concern over the lost Sting statue began to increase. The people of Lamoni took to the internet to raise awareness about Sting's whereabouts in hopes of bringing it back to its home in Morden Center. From students direct messaging Caitlin Jenner '73 on Twitter to missing person signs posted throughout Lamoni, the entire community kept a watchful eye out for Sting.

The academic year started, still no Sting. The first football game brought some jubilation as a sideline celebrator in a Sting costume shook pom poms and cheered on the Yellowjackets, but it just wasn't the same. The weather began to turn and as October rolled around, Sting was still on the lam, and the rumor mill ran wild as everyone created their own theories as to where Sting could be. Graceland Student Government added Sting to the student scavenger hunt as the "golden ticket" item in hopes that it may turn up in this lighthearted competition.

Still, Sting's buzz was absent from campus. Until early in the morning on October 22, 2021, when Sting was found soaking up the sun by Big G Lake.

While what exactly happened is still a mystery, it is believed that Sting's great escape was aided by legendary Gracelanders Rod Dixen '70.* Traveling across the United States, from the Rocky Mountains to the beautiful beaches of Florida, Sting and Dixen had the summer of a lifetime (or so the theory goes).

The iconic Sting can now be seen in its rightful place, holding up the United States flag overlooking the center court of Morden Center. Welcome home, Sting. ■

"I've asked Sting where he went, who he was with, and what he did during his absence. Unfortunately, he's not saying a word. All Sting does is smile, so I'm assuming wherever he was, it must have been fun."

DAVE SCHAAL, EdD, '80
Vice President for Student Life
and Dean of Students

Check the Class Notes section for more about Rod Dixen ► P30

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God, it is in this moment of relative quiet that we dedicate to you a building that we plan on being very loud in. We're grateful that you speak through both the stillness and the quiet, but also the

thunder. And so we ask that you bless the thunder of our noise that we will make in this space. The intensity of competition, the roar of crowds, the blasting of music – we pray that you would speak through the thunder of the sounds that we make to shape the lives that participate in this space.

Check out a special version of this prayer:
graceland.edu/Horizons

THE DEDICATION OF

Morden Center

BY SHANE ADAMS

On Saturday, October 16, 2021, Graceland's Morden Center was officially dedicated in front of hundreds of students, alumni, community members, and friends.

Gracelanders gathered around the north steps and listened to speeches from coaches, administrators, students, and supporters alike. Those who attended were welcomed by the Graceland drumline and the cheer and dance teams, who infused energy and vibrance into the gathering – a celebration of gratitude and excitement that will not soon be forgotten.

The message of those speeches paid homage to the generosity of the lead gifts of the Morden and Resch families, but also acknowledged that the building – the "Covered Wagon" or the "Southern Iowa Ski Slopes" – has a purpose that goes far beyond just sports.

Graceland Student Government President Casey Main kicked off the day with remarks on the Power of Community: "From watching your new friend hit a homerun in a tape ball game for your house to cheering on a great friend as they shoot a three-pointer or spike a ball over the net, I love that as a community, we come together to cheer for one another: on and off the court. Celebrating our successes and being a shoulder to lean on for our losses is valued in this place."

Professor of chemistry Daniel Pratt, PhD, '81 shared about the Power of Education: "Athletics and academics make an amalgam: a beautiful blend of two arenas that make better people."

Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Dave Schaal, EdD, '80, offered a prayer of dedication that was a poignant and fitting conclusion to an incredible event that brought together the Graceland community to celebrate generosity and the Power of Together.

The impact of the upgrades to the building are being felt across the campus, especially throughout the athletic department. The structure itself was always impressive, but leaks in the roof and drainage issues in the floor made for difficult conversations with incoming recruits as they toured the facility.

"It's been a privilege coaching our wrestling team in the newly renovated Morden Center. Our athletes feel pride competing in front of our home crowd. I look forward to many more Yellowjacket victories in the Morden Center thanks to the generosity of the Morden family as well as many others," said Zack Mullins, Head Men's Wrestling Coach and Associate Director of Athletics.

THE POWER OF Philanthropy

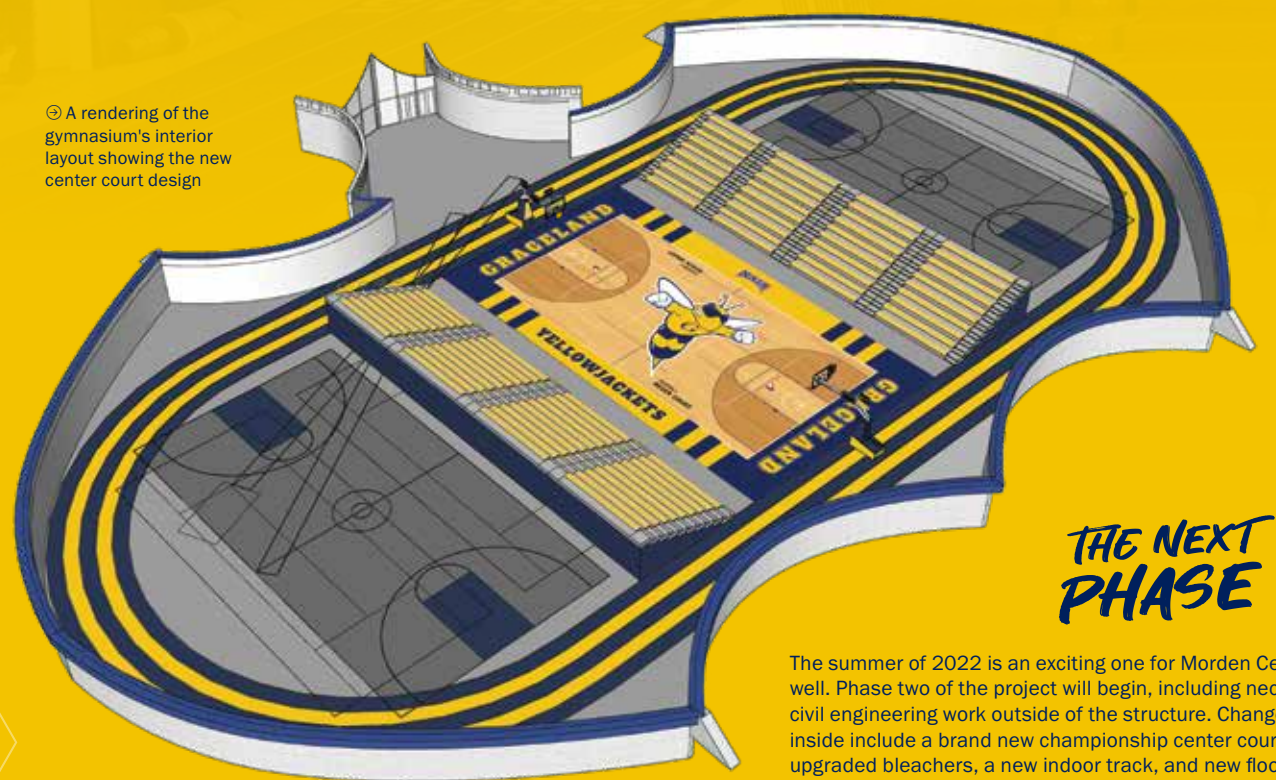
BY SHANE ADAMS

For 50 years, the iconic gymnasium has been the scene of countless moments in Graceland's history, hosting a wide variety of athletic, academic, cocurricular, and community events. We honor the generosity of these Gracelanders and the impact of their legacy.

© From left: Acacia portraits of Louise MacDonald '43 Morden, Paul Morden '36, Richard J. Resch '58, Eugene E. Closson '26, Julia Travis '26 Closson, James T. Closson '56



© A rendering of the gymnasium's interior layout showing the new center court design



The summer of 2022 is an exciting one for Morden Center as well. Phase two of the project will begin, including necessary civil engineering work outside of the structure. Changes on the inside include a brand new championship center court with upgraded bleachers, a new indoor track, and new flooring on the outer courts, which have been named in honor of coaching legends Stew McDole '65, Rod Schall '50, and Betty Welch '48.

Paul & Louise Morden

When Louise MacDonald '43 Morden was a student at Graceland she tried to earn a varsity letter in every sport, and she failed in every attempt. However, Julia "Judy" Travis '26 Closson recognized Louise as a special student. She told her, "Louise, you've worked harder than any other student to earn a letter. I want you to have this honorary letter." That big G letter is displayed among her most treasured possessions to this day. Louise's long connection to Julia Closson makes it fitting that the Morden family made the lead gift to renovate the Eugene E. and Julia Travis Closson Physical Education Center.

In the summer of 2021, thanks to the generosity of Louise and her late husband Paul Morden '36, Graceland made much-needed updates to the iconic structure. The building, now called Morden Center, celebrated 50 years of service to the university this year and is the most heavily used building on Graceland's Lamoni campus.

The Morden family's long history of service and generosity to Graceland's mission reaches back many years. They have provided funding for a multitude of initiatives, including the Community of Christ Seminary, Campus Ministries, and other capital projects like the renovations to Walker Hall and Newcom Student Union, where the Campus Ministries Suite is named in their honor. Louise now gives in honor of her late husband because they both had such fond memories of their life on campus together. "Paul would be delighted that our name is on the Morden Center," she said. "He loved Graceland as I do and would be so happy to help so many students who use this facility."

Louise remembers her time on campus fondly. "Graceland put me on a road to success," she said, acknowledging the special connection that she has to the University. While the Mordens' history with Graceland dates back even before Paul and Louise's time on campus, their name is now a permanent fixture, a fitting honor to a lifetime of service.

"Graceland has been an important fixture in my life and in that of my late husband, Paul. To honor him, I am excited to share our love for Graceland with generations of students to come."

LOUISE MacDONALD '43 MORDEN



Richard J. Resch

In October 2019, alumnus Richard J. Resch '58 cemented his legacy of philanthropy to Graceland with a generous contribution to the Morden Center project. In acknowledgment of his lifetime of service to the Graceland community, center court and the bleachers will be named in his honor. In the summer of 2022, the Richard J. Resch Court will be installed alongside new bleachers, creating a completely new environment for Graceland's athletic teams to compete.

Resch's latest donation is another example of his consistent generosity to Graceland over many years. In 2009, he was the lead donor for the major renovation to the science building, now named Resch Science and Technology Hall. He also funded the Dan B. Kelley lounge in Gunsolley Hall in 2015.

That renovation honored his friendship with Dan B. Kelley '58 and Dan's wife, Sharon McCormick '58 Kelley, his best friends from Graceland. "We spent a lot of time in that lounge and our close friendship continued for the rest of our lives until they passed away a few years ago," Resch recalled. "I wanted to honor that place so students could enjoy it for many years to come."

Although he got advanced degrees from both MIT and Harvard, Resch will always have a personal connection to Graceland. He followed his parents' (Clifton '33 and Lois Hatch '32 Resch) footsteps to Graceland and had several other family members who attended as well.

"Between athletics, intramurals, and academics, it is obvious how important Morden Center is to Graceland students," said Resch. "I am anxious to come back and see it when it is complete." Graceland is proud to have generous donors like Richard J. Resch amongst its beloved alumni and friends.

"Graceland had a profound impact on me, shaping my learning interests and setting me on a course for professional success. It is with great pride and respect for the University that I make this gift."

RICHARD J. RESCH '58





“As a member of the Alumni Board and as a Closson, my blood has always been and always will be Blue and Gold. It has been an honor to have this building named for my grandparents for over 50 years.”

CAL CLOSSON '82



The Clossons & Other Donors

Louise Morden holds few other professors in as high regard as Julia “Judy” Closson. She holds a treasured varsity letter to this day that she received from Closson when she was a student, despite failing in every attempt to earn a letter. As the transition from Closson Center to Morden Center is complete, the impact of the Closson family on Graceland will remain as treasured as Louise’s varsity letter.

Originally named the Eugene E. Closson Physical Education Center when it was built in 1968, Morden Center will continue to keep the Closson name at its heart. The north atrium entrance to the building will be named for the Closson family and their generations of service to Graceland. “Our family worked closely with Graceland and the Development Office on this project and were consulted from the beginning,” said Cal Closson '82. “From our perspective, the iconic and practical aspects of the fieldhouse are what is most important,” Cal said.

The Closson Atrium also honors the service of Cal’s father, James Closson '56, who passed away in the summer of 2021. Cal and his brothers, Brad '86 and Jeff '88, both also attended Graceland, as did many of their children. “And hopefully our grandchildren will be able to see my grandpa and grandma’s picture in this atrium when they attend in a couple decades, give or take,” Closson laughed and said. The generations of Clossons who have generously given their time, talents, and support for Graceland makes them a fixture in its rich history.

Those who attended the dedication of the Morden Center bore witness to the multitude of generous donors who adorn the donor wall at the Closson Atrium entrance. Their gifts ensured that Graceland students were able to enjoy Morden Center this academic year and put the University well on its way to funding phase two, which will complete the renovation by replacing the auxiliary floors, the track, and more. ■

THE POWER OF Philanthropy



© The new scoreboard is massive, clocking in at almost double the size of the previous scoreboard.

The temporary donor wall showcases the many donors who gave to the project. Gifts of \$10,000 or more will be included on the permanent wall feature.

Directly after the dedication ceremony, Kent Bradford '79 (serving as owner’s representative for the project) gave a presentation about the renovation work and displayed materials from the old gym, including pieces of the ceiling, wood court flooring, and light fixtures.



If you are interested in contributing to phase two of the Morden Center renovation project:

graceland.edu/give
development@graceland.edu
800.645.3582

Team Freddie

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES

The Fall 2021 semester was rapidly approaching as the Frederick Madison Smith Library found itself without a full-time librarian. When help was desperately needed, a **TEAM OF GRACELANDERS** answered the call – former Graceland librarian Diane Eberly '67 Shelton, MaryAnn Stanton '73 Manuel, Betsy Folkins, and Hayley Condit '21.



The dream team, from left: MaryAnn Manuel, Hayley Condit, Betsy Folkins (seated), and Diane Shelton

THE POWER OF TOGETHER

Shelton got a call from Graceland’s Executive Director for Planning and Effectiveness Beth Higdon '73 asking to keep the library open for a week. Then they realized they needed someone to keep the library operating and functional for the entire fall semester. Shelton thought to herself, “How can you have a university without a library?” So she agreed to come and help her alma mater.

ANSWERING THE CALL It had always been Shelton’s plan to work as a librarian and in the summer of 1985, Graceland hired Shelton to take over the role. From the fall of 1985 to 2011, Diane Shelton could be seen running around campus as the sponsor of the Hawaiian Club and the Crescents organization, and of course, diligently managing the library. Diane’s husband, Joe Shelton '67, worked as an admissions counselor and announced Graceland football games for years. “We were really involved in Graceland life, and we loved it,” said Diane. “So, when they called and asked if I could help, how could I say no?”

“The connection to Graceland is what drew me back again. I missed doing my job. It did me good to be a part of the Graceland community again; it meant a lot to me to do that. You never lose that connection.”

DIANE EBERLY '67 SHELTON

ASSEMBLING THE LIBRARY TEAM When Shelton arrived on the Lamoni campus in the fall of 2021, she was not alone in the task of keeping the library open. Diane was accompanied by Hayley Condit, who had already been recruited by Graceland as an assistant librarian. Condit intended to only work in the library for a month or two, but ended up falling in love with the role. (She now works as the resource management librarian and plans on pursuing a graduate degree in library science.) Shelton knew she needed more help to keep things running smoothly so she asked two of her former colleagues, Betsy Folkins and MaryAnn Manuel, to help. Both had 21 years of experience with Graceland – Folkins, who retired in 2017, had previously done a lot of

work with cataloging materials and interlibrary loans as an assistant librarian, and Manuel was the tutor coordinator until she retired in 2019. Manuel said, “Volunteering in this new role really fulfilled a need for me to be involved and be around the students. I think it’s important to stay in contact with Graceland – it’s going to evolve over the years, but it has always been a really nice place to work, and the students are always really good kids.”

PASSING THE TORCH

Shelton, Folkins, and Manuel closed the book on their volunteer service when Jacob Starks was hired as Graceland’s Director of University Libraries. Shelton believes, “The new librarian is becoming a part of the Graceland community and I feel like our work has been left in good hands.” ■



© You might remember the plaque dedicated to Frederick Madison Smith (or “Freddie” as he is affectionately called) just inside the doors at the library’s main entrance – the one with an image of Smith’s head that students traditionally rubbed as they left the building, an act believed to help strengthen the knowledge gained while studying inside. The plaque reads, “He delighted in learning, believed in education as essential to freedom and dignity, and in a strong, healthy society for effective service to God and mankind.” Now Jacob Starks carries the torch as Director of University Libraries and is working diligently to maintain those standards by improving library resources.



REMEMBERING PRESIDENT EMERITUS

William T. “Bill” Higdon

BY SHANE ADAMS

In the annals of Graceland history, there are a few names that will forever be remembered for their contributions to the University. Marietta Walker. Roy Cheville. Edmund Gleazer. The Clossons. No list of Graceland legends would be complete without the incomparable pair: William T. '49 and Barbara McFarlane '49 Higdon. William, known to most as “Bill,” passed away peacefully on November 18, 2021, leaving a legacy behind that shaped Graceland for more than 60 years.

For decades, the Higdon family led the University. Higdon's father, Earl '27 served as acting president beginning in 1964 before his son Bill succeeded him in 1966. Bill then served as president from 1966 until 1974 when he was ordained as an apostle in the Community of Christ (then RLDS) World Conference, a position that he also succeeded his father in serving. Barbara was inaugurated as Graceland's first woman to serve as full president in 1984 (Velma Ruch had previously served as Graceland's first president on an interim basis in 1974, coincidentally when Bill Higdon went under appointment). Barbara retired as president emerita in 1991, succeeded by Bill, who then served his second term as president until his retirement in the spring of 1997.

There has never before been (and likely never will be) another Graceland president with the distinction to succeed both his father and his wife as Bill did, but that remarkable feat is only a footnote to the rich legacy of contributions that Higdon made to Graceland during his two terms as president. His accomplishments weren't just numerous, they were also incredibly impactful, and will be measured by generations of students. He oversaw the development of Graceland's Independence campus, introduced the “Bear Pit” sessions of open dialogue with student leaders, oversaw the creation of Graceland's first master's degree program, purchased SkillPath Seminars, and completed a multi-million-dollar fundraising campaign.

A VISIONARY LEADER

Barbara Hiles Mesle '72, who was a student during his first term as president and then a faculty member from 1980 until 2016 after his retirement, described him as an innovative thinker and a man of big ideas. More a scientist or inventor than a college president, Mesle said, “He didn't just float trial balloons; Bill launched airships.”

“Sometimes I'd think to myself, ‘What if I just *make believe* that an idea were plausible?’ but Bill *believed* in his big ideas and he often made them become true,” Mesle recalled. “I was the beneficiary of a Graceland he helped forge.”

“Bill was incredibly generous with his time. I am grateful for the opportunities I had to visit with Bill and receive his counsel. His wisdom, vision, and passion for Graceland set a high bar for university presidents.”

PRESIDENT PATRICIA H. DRAVES



Our father was a visionary. To paraphrase Bobby Kennedy's famous quote, Dad dreamed of things for Graceland and asked “why not?” This stemmed from the very core of his character; he was able to see not only what should be but have a means to make it reality. Which he did, over and over again. He had the right temperament and the right skill set to respond to critical times in Graceland's history.

Because Graceland was always our parents' fourth child, wherever Dad's vision led, Mom (Barbara McFarlane '49) and we children came along. Each of us has memories of what we did because Dad was asking why not. When the telescope was installed as part of Platz-Mortimore Science Hall and someone needed to learn to operate it, for example, Dad said why not me (he was Graceland's astronomy professor at the time) and off we went to Evanston, Illinois, for a summer because Northwestern had a similar telescope.

Or as people in the national spotlight came to Lamon, we got to meet and hang out with them. A random Sunday morning, for example, might find one or more of us shooting hoops on the driveway with a U.S. Senator (Birch Bayh of Indiana) or some Thursday night jamming in the living room with a singer-songwriter soon to be famous (John Denver). Because Dad asked why not bring the outside in to help provide Gracelanders with the exposure that would serve them in an expanding world.

This same impetus to expand led down some less-traveled paths. Some were less successful (trying to establish an American-style university in Bulgaria); some were wildly successful (establishing a partnership with a nationwide seminar company aka SkillPath). But he was always asking why not and he had the chops to make it happen most of the time.

The same applied to him as a parent. He encouraged us to ask why not about our dreams and helped us to fulfill them. He was always looking for ways to help us to figure out how to answer “why not?” for ourselves, although both he and Mom were there to provide support, advice, and a possible safety net. Together they were a force of nature, and we were honored to share them with Graceland. - REFLECTION FROM BETH '73, RUTH '77 AND RICH '79 HIGDON

A TIMELINE

The Impact of President Emeritus William T. "Bill" Higdon

"He didn't just float trial balloons; Bill launched airships... I was the beneficiary of a Graceland he helped forge."

BARBARA HILES MESLE '72

1966



1965

May: Asked by Board of Trustees to serve as Graceland's president, and subsequently prepared for the role by enrolling for one year at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at University of Michigan

1966

July 1: Became 10th president
October 15: Inaugurated

1967

February 5: Introduced "Bear Pit" sessions of open public dialogue with students

1968

April 2: Announced the creation of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program

Homecoming: Announced naming of Eugene E. Closson Physical Education Center (selected by committee of faculty)

1969

Fall: Oversaw the development of Graceland's nursing campus in Independence, Missouri

1974

June 30: Left Graceland presidency

1992

January 1: Returned to Graceland as 15th president (likely the only person who will ever succeed both his wife and father as Graceland's president)

May, September: Graceland partnered with area junior and community colleges, Indian Hills Community College and North Central Missouri College, to offer bachelor's degree completion programs in elementary education

1995

January: Graceland finalized the \$43 million purchase of SkillPath Seminars, which had annual revenues of \$60 million and averaged 650 seminars each month in 460 cities

March: Graceland announced a partnership program with American Institute of Business to offer a bachelor's degree completion program in business administration

Summer: Introduction of Graceland's first master's degree program (nursing)

1996

May 31: Completion of \$22.6 million Blueprint For Tomorrow fundraising campaign (1992-1996)

1997

Spring: Announced plans to retire as president the following spring semester

May 18: During Graceland's 100th commencement ceremony, Board of Trustees president Jay Newcom made the surprise announcement that Graceland's first structure would be known from that day as the Higdon Administration Building, honoring the three Higdon's who led the college

1997



1966-74

During Bill Higdon's first tenure, Graceland expanded considerably, both in terms of size and diversity of student body, academic offerings, and physical presence on "the Hill."

1992-97

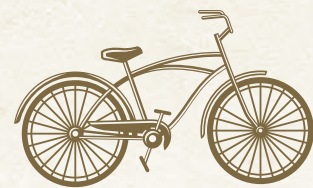
During his second span at the president's desk, Graceland continued to expand academic programs and finalized the purchase of SkillPath.

Anita Mortimer '72 first met Higdon as a student during his first term as president and considered him a lifelong friend. She went on to serve on the Alumni Board of Directors and then as a member of the Board of Trustees during Higdon's second stint leading the University. "Graceland is better because of Bill Higdon," Mortimer said. She recalled that board meetings never went as well as they did when Higdon was president. "Everyone wanted to do their absolute best, both for Bill Higdon and for Graceland. He was a true leader with presence and the confidence necessary for a president."

Mortimer's fondest memories of Higdon were personal ones, calling him a cherished mentor and quasi grandfather to her son, Ross. When she first joined the Board of Trustees, she would bring her son to campus and would often stay with Bill and Barbara. Once, they were eating in the Commons together and Ross wanted a chocolate chip cookie despite the fact that there were no longer any out. Higdon took Ross by the hand, marched him back into the kitchen, and Ross came back with a huge grin on his face and a cookie in his hand. When he returned to the table, he exclaimed, "Grandpa Bill knows everybody."

Higdon brought that personal touch to his leadership at Graceland from the very beginning. Harry Ashenhurst '70, Graceland's current Board of Trustees Chair recalls being on campus during Higdon's early years. "I first met him as a freshman on day one," Ashenhurst recalls. "He stopped me on the sidewalk in front of the Admin building and introduced himself as the new president. That was the start of a friendship that spanned many decades."

Over the years, Ashenhurst traveled with Higdon through Africa, Asia, and Europe,



GUIDING PRINCIPLE

When Bill was seven or eight, he wanted a bicycle. But it was the height of the Depression and his parents made him a deal: if he earned half the money, they would kick in the other half. So Bill went down to the local grocery (which happened to be the precursor of Hy-Vee) and asked the proprietor for a job. The man asked, "Well, William, what can you do?" Bill looked around and saw a worker putting cans on the shelf or sweeping up and replied, "I can do that." That became the guiding principle of his life – he could do almost anything he set his mind to.

recalling a time they were driving through Kenya and they were driven off the road by a large semi. Even though the car flipped twice and came to rest in a deep pile of dirt, both walked away laughing that they survived and then rarely mentioned the experience to each other again. "That was Bill," Ashenhurst said, "always on to the next adventure."

AN ENTREPRENEUR BY NATURE

Former Board of Trustees Chair Jennings "Jay" Newcom '64 described Higdon as an entrepreneur by nature; always looking for a way to benefit Graceland economically. "I remember when the SkillPath opportunity came along," remembers Newcom. "He immediately saw its benefit to Graceland and worked tirelessly to bring the Board, faculty, and staff to the point of acceptance. That acquisition proved to be Graceland's salvation during a very rough time."

Newcom, who worked closely with Higdon during his second term as president, witnessed the immense benefit that Graceland reaped through his natural people skills, his ability to analyze every situation, and his willingness to make the tough calls during hard times. "[Bill] constantly sought out the best and most talented people to join the Graceland team and was able to bring them on board," said Newcom. "Many times, during that period together at Graceland, someone would ask me how Graceland was able to attract such good, competent people. I was able to give a simple answer: 'Bill!'"

Any remembrance of Bill Higdon is incomplete without mentioning the work that he did with his partner of 61 years, Barbara McFarlane Higdon. Mesle, who began as a faculty member under Barbara, then served under Bill during his second term, put it plainly: "Not all men of Bill's generation would have been willing to marry

a woman of such formidable intellect and stunning talent as Barbara McFarlane. Their alliance seemed to me more like the King of France marrying the Queen of Spain. It's impossible to overstate the positive effects of their lifelong collaboration."

"It's hard to think of them separately," said Mortimer. "Bill never held Barbara back. And vice versa."

Bill and Barbara treated Graceland as an extended part of their family, even referred to as "the fourth child" by the Higdon children (see sidebar, page 19). That parental influence of the University has molded and shaped the direction of the institution for generations yet to be. Graceland is not just different because of the presidencies of the Higdon's; it is unequivocally better.

A PRESIDENT THAT CARED DEEPLY

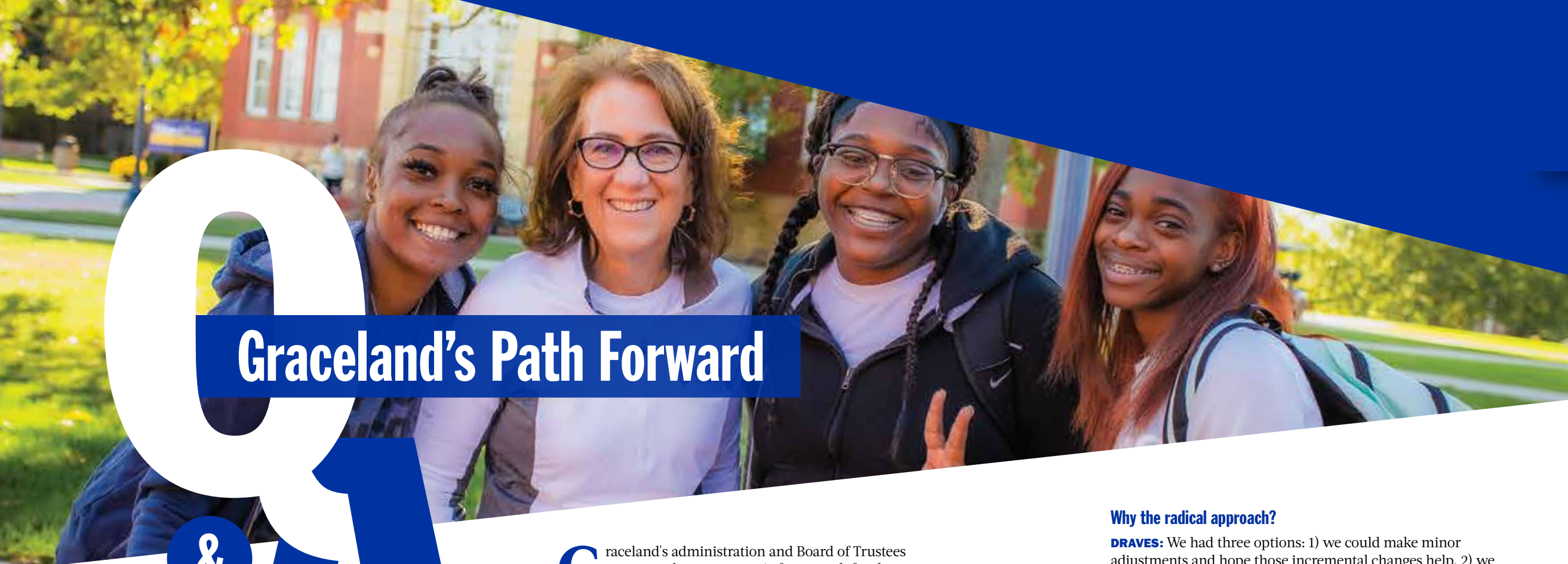
William T. Higdon was a bold and visionary leader. But he was also the kind of president who cared deeply about the individual students at Graceland. Director of Undergraduate Admissions Twong Wells '97 remembers meeting the Higdon's as a high schooler. "I was in the process of deciding where I wanted to go to school and my coach was a Graceland alum," remembers Wells. "Bill & Barbara just happened to be in Florida on their vacation and they took us out to dinner to speak more about Graceland."

"It was at that moment that I made my decision to further my education [at Graceland]," said Wells. "I was beyond impressed with the fact that a president of a university would take the time out of their vacation to come and speak with potential students." Wells committed that day to play football at Graceland. "That experience made me feel like Graceland was going to be different and boy, I wasn't disappointed." Wells, who now leads undergraduate recruiting for the Lamoni campus, was so impacted that when he is out recruiting, he tells this story to potential students. "I want them to see the level of commitment this University is willing to give to its students. My hope is that I can be as wonderful and impactful as Bill & Barbara were on students that they came across. Their passion and kindness still resonate with me to this day."

Mesle shared that Higdon gave her several meaningful gifts. "After Barbara died, he showed up in my office in the basement of Briggs with Barbara's GU nameplate. Bill handed it to me. The even greater gift is his daughter, Miriam Elizabeth. Beth has been the friend of my heart for more than 50 years. Thank you, Bill. You were never boring."

"He was the consummate people person, genuinely liked and respected by everyone," said Newcom. "I never spent any time with Bill when it was not clear that Graceland students, faculty, and staff, as well as alumni and other supporters, all were front of mind with him. I, along with many others, will miss Bill's influence as Graceland continues to grow and prosper. I can only add, 'Rest in Peace, my Friend.'" ■





Q & A

Graceland's Path Forward

with President Draves

INTERVIEW BY SHANE ADAMS

Graceland faces many threats from both internal and external forces. Higher education is changing rapidly as are student expectations. Shifting demographics, internal culture, and an unsustainable financial model led Graceland leadership to **CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO** and explore a new strategic path forward.

Graceland's administration and Board of Trustees announced a new strategic framework for the University at the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester, aimed at ensuring the school's financial sustainability for future generations. This announcement was accompanied by internal documentation outlining how Graceland could address the challenges that it faces alongside many other institutions across the country.

The *Horizons* team sat down with President Patricia H. Draves, PhD, to discuss the strategic framework and shed some light on the details.

The first question I think many people have asked is, why now? What is the rush of rolling out a new strategic framework?

PRESIDENT DRAVES: The rollout of this new approach cannot happen fast enough. Every university in the United States is hyper-aware of the demographic enrollment cliff that has been well documented. 2026 is 18 years after the 2008 recession, which resulted in a significantly lower number of births and thus, fewer high school seniors ready to go to college in 2026.

But this isn't the only issue. The perceived value of a college degree has fallen over the last several years. Add to that changing student demands and we're facing a pretty big uphill climb. Thankfully, Graceland has started this process early. I talk pretty regularly to other college and university presidents and they are all facing similar challenges, but they're further behind in the planning process than we are.

When did this process start?

DRAVES: We formed a strategic planning committee all the way back in 2019. We surveyed alumni, faculty, staff, and students and started identifying themes we saw emerging. That early work informed this strategic framework and led to the Board of Trustees forming the Next Version of Graceland Task Force.

Ultimately, Graceland's financial model has not been working. Expenses have repeatedly exceeded revenues and we can no longer cost-cut our way to sustainability. For Graceland to live well into the future, it was critical that we take some pretty radical steps.

Why the radical approach?

DRAVES: We had three options: 1) we could make minor adjustments and hope those incremental changes help, 2) we could make some more substantial changes to get Graceland on par with the "new normal" for higher education, or 3) we could redefine and transform how we fulfill our mission by proactively creating an innovative future for ourselves. Graceland is an institution that takes bold steps. We felt that transformational change was the best path forward, especially if our path forward is mission-focused, market-driven, sustainable, strategic, and innovative.

What are the things that you are most excited about in this new framework?

DRAVES: I think the new academic model is probably the most exciting shift. One of the things I heard about a lot when talking to alumni and students is the importance of the Graceland Experience. As I enter into my fifth year as Graceland's president, I have seen first-hand how that experience directly impacts the lives of our students and how they carry those intangible lessons from residence life, athletics, and leadership roles into the workforce and their daily lives outside of our campuses. The Graceland Experience effectively develops our graduates. Part of the framework involves codifying those outside-the-classroom experiences into integrated and holistic learning.

Additionally – and this is super exciting – we plan to offer every student that attends Graceland's Lamoni campus a second major. This is a completely unique experience that will combine three major elements – a streamlined general education that continues to be rooted in the liberal arts, a set of life and leadership courses, and strategic courses in social responsibility, health and wholeness, and digital citizenship. We believe this second major will not only give our students a leg up in the competitive job market but also will develop the kind of bold, empathetic, responsible graduates that the world is seeking.

Students will still get a major in some area of expertise – chemistry, elementary education, business – but this secondary major contains courses in transformational leadership combined with the co-curricular experiences at Graceland.

The World Needs Graceland

As I approach my retirement from the Graceland Board of Trustees after 10 years on the Board, I am reminded again, as I have been repeatedly over the years, of what a gift the University is.

We live in a world that calls all its citizens to engage with each other with love and compassion, and to uphold the ultimate value in human worth and dignity.



Graceland answers that call. Throughout its history Graceland has built a community that offers hope, wholeness, and a sense of personal fulfillment. It inspires people to live passionately the values and mission of the institution. It teaches people to be lifelong learners who embrace the world with wonder and appreciation, with skills in specific disciplines that are productive and meaningful.

Graceland has created a place where relationships are nurtured and sustained over a lifetime. It instills a sense of purpose and meaning that sustains life in times of need and crisis.

Graceland does all these things. As we continue to grapple with the major challenges around us, may Graceland be forever in our lives. May we remain committed to its values and mission. May we devote ourselves to its cause. As we continue to live with and adapt to the world pandemic, we joyfully begin to find ourselves together again. And, with this power of being together, we move forward, offering healing to a world in need.

HARRY J. ASHENHURST, PhD, '70
Chair, Graceland University Board of Trustees

Graceland is an institution that takes bold steps. We felt that transformational change was the best path forward, especially if our path forward is mission-focused, market-driven, sustainable, strategic, and innovative.



What would you say to those concerned about the majors being phased out?

DRAVES: I understand how hard it is to see programs phased out. Institutions across the country are experiencing similar pains. But we must make sure the resources we have available to invest are in programs with a clear and sustainable path to growth. We are placing a heavy priority on programs to bring students to Graceland. It is critical we have the types of programs that students are seeking in order to grow our enrollment. We also asked all our programs and academic leadership to streamline our existing majors to be clearer and more distinctive in the marketplace.

What are the outcomes that you are hoping to see?

DRAVES: We have some pretty aggressive growth goals – 10% growth on the Lamoni campus and 7.5% growth on the Independence campus, which also includes all of our online programs. But we believe these goals are very much within reach. The pandemic tested all of us at Graceland, but I think we are looking forward to brighter days ahead.

But this framework isn't just about academics, correct? What are some other key elements that you think alumni should know about?

DRAVES: One of the key efforts that will help make us successful is modernizing our technology and systems. Graceland has already taken several important steps in digital transformation. This means we are using technology to be more efficient and more importantly, to serve our students better. I'm thrilled to have our Chief Information Officer, Talia Brown, leading that effort, which is no small undertaking. We are also fortunate to have some of our alumni play key advisory roles in this process. Some of Graceland's technology systems are nearly two decades old, which places an immense burden on our information technology services team. Modernizing our systems will help us recruit better, understand our students better, and grow our enrollment. It's an important investment in our future.

We'll also be rolling out an integrated enrollment plan under Deb Skinner's leadership that will encompass both of our undergraduate and graduate offerings. Deb and her team have a big challenge ahead of them, so it's critical for us to approach our enrollment strategically.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with our alumni and friends?

DRAVES: I have worked closely with the Board of Trustees and I chaired the Next Version of Graceland Task Force as well as the Operational Task Force that followed it. I know, and the Board knows, that there are certainly risks associated with transformational change. But the risk of doing nothing is far greater. The threats and challenges we face are real. How we respond will allow us to not only survive but thrive into the future.

On numerous occasions in the past year, I've said *the world needs more Graceland graduates*. I believe that with all my heart. The students that I interact with, that I have witnessed walk across the commencement stage – they are the people the world needs. Our task is not to fundamentally change the Graceland Experience. It's in changing how we deliver it. ■

BRAND STORY

USER FOCUSED

NAVIGATION

2K+ PAGES MIGRATED

PAGES PER VISIT

FRESH DESIGN

TIME ON SITE

METRIC SNAPSHOT

These numbers show increased engagement ☺

APPROX. **70%** of visitors to the site are on mobile

17.8% pages per visit

38.5% time on site

12.2% total page views

January 2021 vs 2022

UNIVERSITY NEWS

Graceland.edu Gets a New Look

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES

Graceland's website receives an average of about 20,000 visitors per month – that is 20,000 **OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT** and share the mission of Graceland.

Our alumni and friends know that our Lamoni campus is a beautiful and tranquil place – full of lush green grass and beautiful trees, winding walkways and gorgeous sunsets. There is nothing quite like visiting campus, but more and more prospective students – especially during the pandemic – have been foregoing the traditional campus visit in favor of experiencing campuses virtually. So, the marketing department was challenged to ensure that Graceland's digital experience matched the magic of the in-person experience and, thanks to the gift of an extremely generous donor, that project was made possible.

PROJECT SCOPE
Partnering with Agency Off Record (AOR), an agency headquartered in Denver, Colorado, Graceland's marketing team set off to completely overhaul its web presence. Helmed by Derek Newcom '96, AOR specializes in marketing, branding, and digital projects. The project prioritized prospective student discovery by improving the user experience and design of the site, paying close attention to the navigation, and ensuring that there were plenty of alumni success stories on as many pages as possible.

Over 2,000 pages were migrated, redesigned, and rewritten, and new pages were created to improve the online experience. The approach was user-focused, aiming to boost key metrics like time on site and pages per visit. Achieving this goal translates to telling a more visual and interesting story for prospective Gracelanders, helping them imagine themselves as a student on one of our campuses or in one of our online classes.

TELLING Y(OUR) STORY
This extensive project is part of Graceland's effort to tell our brand story more effectively to a larger audience and increase enrollment. Visuals are an important part of storytelling in this era, especially for members of Generation Z, so the team focused on using photography and video more intentionally, even creating a video viewbook complete with interviews from current students, administration, alumni, and faculty. ■

SHARE YOUR STORY!
Alumni success stories are an extremely effective way for prospective students to visualize their own transformation into Graceland graduates. While the current website contains hundreds of alumni stories, the marketing team is always looking for more. To share your testimonial with future Graceland students, visit:
graceland.edu/mygracelandstory



UNIVERSITY NEWS

Only the Tough

Graceland's NEW HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

PATRICK ROSS has brought with him a wave of excitement about the future of the Yellowjacket football team.

His philosophy: Only the Tough. Creating a winning team isn't for the faint of heart and Coach Ross is recruiting young men from across the country who are ready for the challenge. Ross orchestrated one of the best turnarounds in recent college football history during his time at Lindenwood University in St. Louis, Missouri, where he led the school from only seven wins in the previous three years to 11 wins in his first season as head coach and a national championship appearance a few years later.

COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE Coach Ross knows that to turn around the Graceland football program, it will take only the tough to win. He has set high expectations for his student-athletes both on the field and in the classroom. Upon his hiring, Ross said, "I am extremely honored to be chosen as the next head football coach at Graceland. The commitment from Athletic Director Brady McKillip '00 and President Draves was apparent in the interviewing process. One of the experiences I gained from 20 years of coaching is that it is hard to build and sustain a strong program without administrative support. I am certain the administration at Graceland is committed to helping the football program elevate to the top of the Heart of America Athletic Conference. I've always had a lot of respect for the HAAC and I know how competitive the league is, so I'm excited to get back in and begin to build one of the best programs in the country."

"Patrick has proven to be the best candidate moving forward to rebuild our football program and develop a winning culture for years to come. We are all excited to see that Graceland has committed to the development of a winning program."

JEFF CRISWELL '86
Former NFL player

THE SEARCH SQUAD The search committee, led by Graceland Men's Soccer Head Coach Bryan Courtney '98, worked quickly and diligently to identify Ross as their leading candidate. Courtney was joined by VP for Student Life and Dean of Students Dave Schaal '80, Director of Athletic Operations Mari Chandler '09, Assistant Professor of Allied Health James Geiselman, Director of Writing and Tutoring Center Roger Powell '12, and Director of Undergraduate Admissions Twong Wells '97. Several Graceland football alumni also assisted the search, including Jeff Criswell '86, Greg Criswell '86, Chris Coffin '99, Doug Bailey '83, Bruce Crozier '84, Russell Bruch '82, and Nick Uhlenhopp '02.

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT With the excitement generated from the program rebuild, Graceland is working with a group of football alumni to form the Graceland Football Alumni Association and hopes to increase alumni engagement by holding events in the future. Graceland's first home game of the 2022 season kicks off on September 3 versus Evangel University. Come check out what football has in store! - BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES



GET INVOLVED

We are looking forward to launching the Graceland Football Alumni Association! If you are interested in joining — as a member or serving as a decade representative — get in touch and make sure we have your correct contact information.



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Senior Director of Development
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314.603.0263 mobile

UNIVERSITY NEWS

A New Generation of Graceland Leaders

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES

Over the past year, President Draves promoted key leaders to serve in pivotal advisory roles as members of her Executive Council.

Each of them brings a unique skill set to their leadership role, but they are united in their commitment to furthering the mission of Graceland: to create learning environments where students develop their potential for meaningful and productive lives. They know the mission well because they all experienced it as students and are excited to ensure that a new generation of students finds their place at Graceland as they did.

Kristi Hettrick '96, the new Vice President for Institutional Advancement (VPIA), remembers vividly the moment that she decided she wanted to return to Graceland. The career fundraising professional was so blown away by the Newcom Student Union project and wanted to be a part of whatever Kelly Everett '77 – Graceland's former VPIA – was planning to do next for Graceland students. "I told Kelly that I wanted to help. I wanted to go to work fundraising for exciting projects like that."

Talia Kinder '05 Brown and **Deb Knotts '93 Skinner** were elevated to Chief Information Officer and Vice President for Enrollment and Strategic Growth, respectively, acknowledging their decades of service to the University with leadership positions that are critical for Graceland's growth in the coming years. Brown is currently in the midst of leading Graceland's digital transformation (Dx) project, a massive overhaul of Graceland's technology systems and processes.

Skinner has served Graceland in a wide variety of roles over her 25 years at Graceland and now is charged with growing enrollment across the University. When asked about serving in this new role, Skinner said, "I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve a community I treasure. It is the Graceland friendships, experiences, and challenges which have made my life rich and full. It is an investment I work hard to repay every day."

Assisting in all these efforts is **Shane Adams '99**, Graceland's Chief Marketing Officer, who oversees all marketing and communications for the University. First on his list was improving Graceland's website. Next up: taking a closer look at the University's brand story and finding a way to elevate awareness across key demographics and markets.

And for **Beth Higdon '73**, who is now Graceland's Executive Director for Planning and Effectiveness, service to Graceland runs in her blood, quite literally, as she follows in the footsteps of her parents and grandfather. Higdon believes, "Every generation has its own Graceland Experience. Even though the Graceland I attended years ago was significantly different, the value and uniqueness of that Graceland Experience has evolved to be meaningful in today's so-very-different world."

For these five alumni, Graceland isn't just another job – it's a calling to an institution that prepared them to give back. ■



From left:
Talia Brown,
Beth Higdon,
Kristi Hettrick,
Shane Adams,
Deb Skinner

Opening Pandora's Box

Not all Graceland experiences look the same – that was especially true for former Graceland student **BILLY J. “BJ” STRAWTER '97**. Now owner and publisher of renowned Detroit-based magazine Black Life, Arts, and Culture (BLAC), Strawter came to Graceland as a young football player from Midland, Michigan.

As a new student 700 miles from home, some of his biggest challenges were navigating life in rural Iowa and transitioning to the college experience. Even though Strawter did not graduate from Graceland, he still remembers the connections he made during his time in Lamoni.

Going to college isn't always easy. Strawter notes, “The hardest part for me was being so far from home. There is a lot to navigate, but the people on my house made me feel really welcomed.” Specifically, Strawter recalls his house president Mike Seagraves '94 for his willingness to welcome him on the hall; Frank Brown '96, who taught him how to play guitar (and one of the reasons why he plays guitar to this day), and the Darby twins (Dana Darby '95 Tapp and Darlene Darby '95 Davis) were also an important part of his Graceland community.

WRITER'S NOTE While interviewing BJ, I asked him if there were any Graceland students that stood out to him and – without knowing who I was, he described his house president who was really kind to him. BJ couldn't remember his first name but knew that his last name was something like “Seagraves.” I gasped in shock as I realized that the man BJ was referring to was my dad, Mike Seagraves. More than 25 years later, Graceland connections continue to appear in the most surprising places – a true testament to the Power of Together.



As a student, Strawter got a taste of entrepreneurship when he opened a dance club in town called Pandora's Box. While opening the club did not release a host of evils unto the world as the Greek myth suggests, it did provide an excellent opportunity for him to develop his entrepreneurial experience. “It was a great lesson in how to manage money, advertising, marketing and partnerships,” said Strawter. From the importance of accounting to working his first serving job at Pizza Hut to gaining an appreciation for diversity of background and thought, BJ learned a lot from being at Graceland. So when the time came to launch into the working world, he was more than ready.

Strawter was first introduced to BLAC magazine as a client of his advertising agency, MILO. Both groups worked together to help BLAC transition into digital media. Through this process a relationship was built, and the magazine asked Strawter if he would be interested in investing. He believed in the mission and vision of the brand and when BLAC was looking to sell, he bought their publication, hoping to take it to the next level. He has since expanded the multimedia company that publishes BLAC to include local city websites in Atlanta, Chicago, Memphis and Detroit.

As a Graceland alum, BJ Strawter still carries lessons that he learned during his time on “the Hill.” His advice to current students: “Don't give up.”



In BLAC's November/December 2021 issue, Strawter penned a powerful publisher's note, in which he states, “If anything, the last year has reinforced my belief that life is a roller coaster. That ups and downs are part of the journey but that stomach-in-your-throat feeling on the drop doesn't last. The trepidation felt at the beginning of a dip is valid, but in the end it's all going to be okay.”

As a Graceland alum, Strawter still carries lessons that he learned during his time on “the Hill” and hopes to connect with Graceland's Black Student Union (BSU) and other clubs in the future. His advice to current students echoes his own Graceland Experience: “Don't give up. Just know that in any given moment you're going to find yourself in a difficult situation and feel overwhelmed, and there are people there at Graceland who you don't even know who are looking out for you.” – BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES

© BLAC's November/December 2021 issue features stories dedicated to the legacy and impact of the arts. Strawter's “Leap of Faith” publisher's note kicked off the issue. Visit the digital magazine here: blacmagazine.com



SCAN THE CODE FOR DETAILS

Learn more about the Accelerated Leadership Certificate Program.

Graceland Collaborates with SkillPath on New Certificate Training Programs

Over 200 new managers have been awarded certificates and eBadges as part of a new accelerated training program launched collaboratively by Graceland University and SkillPath. In five half-day online sessions, learners in the **Accelerated Leadership Certificate Program** explore management fundamentals from communication to emotional intelligence to coaching. The October and December programs were met with rave reviews from learners across the country who especially enjoyed the varying perspectives of the five different trainers and the real-world applicability of the course content.

This program, which will be offered monthly going forward, is the first of several accelerated certificate programs planned for business professionals. Two others — **Accelerated Microsoft® Excel® Certificate Program** and **Accelerated HR Management Certificate Programs** launch this spring. Content for the courses is researched and drafted by SkillPath and goes through a review process with a final approval from Graceland's Executive Council.

SkillPath, owned by Graceland for over 25 years, is a leader in learning and development and shares Graceland's commitment to making the world better through education and understanding. “Lifelong learning is so important,” said Michele Markey, SkillPath CEO. “When you're in school, you don't always know what's ahead in today's ever-changing workplaces. Suddenly you're promoted to management or your role requires high-level Excel skills and you've got to come up to speed in a rapid fashion.”

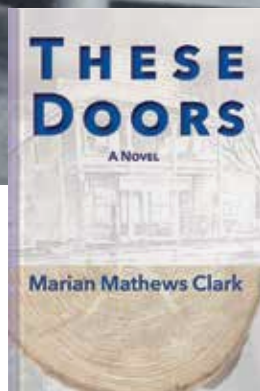
Jeff McElroy, Dean of Graceland's C.H. Sandage School of Business agrees, “These programs offer an abbreviated version of what we're teaching in the classroom and are a refresher for someone who hasn't used those skills in a few years or never learned them. They're also part of the Graceland/SkillPath synergy team's efforts to strengthen continuing education and ongoing skills training for working professionals.”



CLASS NOTES



1



3

2

SEND US YOUR NEWS

Completed a degree program? Published a written work? Received that awesome promotion? Earned a prestigious honor? If so, we want to hear about it. Share your memories and milestones with us here: graceland.edu/classnotes

Class notes submitted between Aug. 1, 2020, and Nov. 15, 2021, are included in this issue.

66 Sally Hutchcroft Mearns,

Sunnyvale, California, received the Lorraine Dambruso Award for Meritorious Service to the Profession at the Californian Language Teachers Association annual meeting in February 2021. She is currently the Site Manager for the Stanford World Language Project in the Graduate School of Education.

67 Marian Mathews Clark,

Iowa City, Iowa, recently published *These Doors: a Novel* which is set in the woods of Oregon. She received her MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1987 and has been working on this book ever since. Though she's lived in Iowa for 50 years, she considers herself a dual citizen of Iowa and Oregon (which still holds a place in her heart). 📍 1

69 Jim Barker,

Keaau, Hawaii, published his book *Flapjacks and Fish Sauce: Asymmetrical Vietnam Humor*, a compilation of stories from veterans who served in Vietnam during the war. After graduating from Graceland, he served in Vietnam from 1971-72 as an adviser and linguist with the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in II Corps.

Barker also authored an article published August 2021 in *Vietnam* magazine and online (historynet.com), which documents his involvement in the 1984 triathlon from Long Beach, California, to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., to honor the fallen of the Vietnam War. The article brings to light the vision and goal of Jim and three other veterans (including Jim's twin brother Ron Barker '69) who swam, ran, and biked from coast to coast as a way to remind Americans of the gallantry and sacrifice of service members who were in

Vietnam, to raise awareness of the efforts of locating the 2,500 MIA Americans, and strengthen the bonds with South Vietnamese refugees who fought with the U.S. in the war. 📍 2

70 Rod Dixen,

Lamoni, Iowa, is a legendary Graceland student, having been enrolled in classes dating back to 1966 and appearing to take tests throughout the years, despite only being seen in the *Acacia* on a few occasions.

75 Mary Ellen Foss Kimball,

Osceola, Iowa, was presented the Governor's Arts Legacy Award on Aug. 14, 2020, by the Iowa Arts Council for her lifetime support of the arts.

92 Mark Hanton, EdS,

has become a businessman in his spare time after he patented his mustard and honey sauce, Hantoon's Munny. This recipe has origins from his days at Graceland. After sharing it with people he knew and receiving encouragement, he decided to try and make a business out of it. He

has been fine-tuning the recipe over the years, and now has quite a local following in Michigan with his product available in over 12 stores and online. 📍 3

97 Josh Ganson,

Nixa, Missouri, is Director of Operations for HappyFeet and Legends Soccer, a company that focuses on teaching and coaching youth soccer skills in Springfield, Missouri.

01 Matt Koehn-Fairbanks,

St. Paul, Nebraska, picked up his 500th win as head coach of the St. Paul High School Men's Volleyball team on Sept. 5, 2020. Matt has been coaching at St. Paul since 2007.

02 Tarasa Oldridge Gardner,

Kirkville, Missouri, was named Distinguished Educator at Moberly Area Community College for professional excellence and outstanding ability as a language and literature faculty member and Developmental English Department Coordinator.

03 Cara Calloway Young,

PhD, FNP-BC, FAANP, Austin, Texas, was selected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and a Rising Star Faculty by the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. She is an associate professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Texas Austin.

17 Steven Roschitz,

San Antonio, Texas, is fresh off his third season as a pro beach volleyball player. He made 4 of the 7 AVP Main Draws in 2019 and was one of eight athletes up for Rookie of the Year on the tour. He has established himself as one of the top Open players in Texas and currently ranks No. 1 in the state, having garnered multiple Open victories and Top 3 finishes. Coach Roschitz is in his third season as a coach at 210 Beach Volleyball, LLC and member of their Pro Staff.

WEDDINGS

93 David Negaard and **Heather Knowles**, Wailuku, Hawaii, Dec. 19, 2020.

15 Alex and Julia Austin '20 Carr, North Liberty, Iowa, July 3, 2021. **Thomas and Rebekah Lloyd Vogelsang**, Denver, Colorado, Oct. 10, 2020.

16 Jordan and Avery Roane Buell, Carlisle, Iowa, May 4, 2019. **Braden Austin and Jessica Pycior '17**, Lamoni, Iowa, Nov. 4, 2018.

ANNIVERSARIES

49 Leonard and Eileen O'Dell '53 Speer, Glendale Arizona, 60 years, Dec. 24, 2020.

50 James and Martha Midgorden Shaw, Maplewood, Minnesota, 70 years, Oct. 27, 2021.

52 Bob and Beverly Taylor Dimmitt, St. Louis, Missouri, 66 years, Dec. 31, 2020.

54 David and Joyce Elliot '58 Blair, Louisville, Kentucky, 60 years, April 2, 2021.

59 Bill and Pamela Caviness '57 Landrum, Blue Springs, Missouri, 60 years, July 3, 2020.

72 Bob and Kathie Gaffield Seedroff, Grand Junction, Colorado, 50 years, Aug. 28, 2021.

BIRTHS

10 Greg and Emily Phillips Irr, Blue Springs, Missouri, Perry Joseph, born Nov. 26, 2014, Sawyer Anne, born June 2, 2017, and Everett Barker-David, born Aug. 7, 2021. **Joseph and Nichelle "Nikky" Closson Oxley**, Independence, Missouri, daughter June, born July 1, 2019.

15 Hannah Shields Krischel, Des Moines, Iowa, Landon, born July 6, 2018, and Willow Jean, born April 21, 2021.

16 Braden Austin and Jessica Pycior '17, Lamoni, Iowa, son Kaius Anthony, born March 5, 2020.

IN MEMORIAM

29 Elbert Hannah, Conley, Ohio, Dec. 17, 2004.

30 Ruth Barton Howard, Rockport, Maine, Sept. 19, 2004.

31 John Barber, Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 24, 2007. **Louise Bernhardt Carroll**, Sandwich, Illinois, May 8, 2007.

32 Winifred Welch Clarke, Geneseo, Illinois, Jan. 8, 2013.

33 Henry Hills, Reynoldsburg, Ohio, Jan. 20, 2006.

35 Evelyn Elliot Bice, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, May 5, 2016. **Louis Butterworth**, Aliso Viejo, California, Nov. 28, 2009. **Mabel Hamilton Sullivan**, San Diego, California, Nov. 24, 2018.

36 Jeanne Metz Kuhn, Eudora, Kansas, May 27, 2006. **Lillian Foley Whisler**, Independence, Missouri, April 4, 2011.

37 Pearl Travis Davies, Independence, Missouri, Nov. 4, 2011. **Fred Lambkin**, Ringwood, Illinois, Sept. 2, 2006. **Orra Rew**, Iowa City, Iowa, Nov. 11, 2013.

38 Ethel Wilkinson Smith, Belton, Missouri, April 7, 2012.

39 William Russell, Saint Johns, Michigan, March 31, 2009. **Edna Ford Wilder**, Lee's Summit, Missouri, Jan. 30, 2021.

40 Robert Ballantyne, Overland Park, Kansas, Nov. 1, 2003. **James Beatty**, Devils Lake, North Dakota, Feb. 19, 2017. **Dale Dickson**, Winter Park, Florida, March 27, 2010. **Henry "Mike" Gerber**, Aledo,

Illinois, Oct. 23, 2005. **Eleanor Vanderflute Hoffman**, Shannon City, Iowa, Feb. 3, 2020. **Marion Kelley**, Sun City, Arizona, July 18, 2018. **Cora Henson Oldroyd**, Plant City, Florida, Feb. 21, 2016. **William Quinlivan**, Boca Raton, Florida, Feb. 24, 2016. **Ruth Perrin Timms**, Billings, Montana, April 28, 2013. **Alfred Wilcox**, Portola Valley, California, Feb. 24, 2013. **Erle Wildermuth**, Willowick, Ohio, Oct. 27, 2008.

41 Jack Ball, Pismo Beach, California, Sept. 3, 2016. **Elva Ensley Graham**, Marshalltown, Iowa, May 5, 2010. **Judith Sellers Wright**, Oak Grove, Missouri, April 13, 2003. **Berdella Larsen Wehrmacher**, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Nov. 19, 2020. **Judith Sellers Wright**, Oak Grove, Missouri, April 13, 2003.

42 Fern Bailey Ball, Roscommon, Michigan, Feb. 21, 2010. **Ervin Cook**, Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 26, 2021. **Marjorie Hermanson Davis**, Republic, Missouri, Feb. 24, 2014. **Elizabeth Day Fabian**, Grand Blanc, Michigan, Aug. 19, 2002. **Verna French Gerber**, Aledo, Illinois, April 16, 2018. **Russell Graf**, Bowling Green, Kentucky, July 1, 2019. **Lois Hampton**

Kelly Everett '77 Retires

Everett's 23 years of service to Graceland are ultimately about personal relationships.

He joined the Institutional Advancement office as Don Keairnes '53 was about to retire. "He asked me to consider applying for a job that I would love, not just like. The rest is history. Graceland has been the most rewarding job I could have ever imagined," Everett said.

Everett joined Graceland in 1998 and since 2007, served as Graceland's Vice President for Institutional Advancement. His most recent work was critical in ensuring that important capital projects like the renovations of Newcom Student Union and Morden Center were funded and completed. He also helped steward the university's fundraising and alumni programs strategy.

For Everett, who graduated from Graceland in 1977, the connection to Graceland and Community of Christ has always been at the forefront. When he was a student, he was inspired to change his major to business administration by faculty emeritus Jerry Runkle '34, whom he considered a great teacher and a wonderful minister. "I would find out where he was preaching and go find and listen to him if I could," Everett said.

"My favorite memories are of my coworkers, the families that I've called upon, and the many students I've interacted with," he said. "Some of my best friends are those that I worked with at Graceland." Everett talked about how rewarding it was for him to work for Graceland, and even in retirement, he continues to come to campus regularly. "I'm working in a couple of part-time roles," he said. "Anything I can do to help Graceland in any way, I am happy to stay involved."



IN REMEMBRANCE

We honor members of the Graceland community who have recently passed.* Their service to the institution had a lasting impact at Graceland and beyond. Tributes can be found online: graceland.edu/Horizons

Betty Thomas Welch '48, pioneer of women's athletic programs, professor emerita of physical education, Yellowjacket Athletic Hall of Fame inductee (1985).

Arthur "Les" Leslie Gardner '52, professor emeritus of history, director of Asian studies and intercultural affairs.

President Emeritus Joe Hanna '54, president (1980-84).

James "Jim" T. Closson '56, professor emeritus of education, first full-time registrar, director of admissions.

Mary Jean Jeanae '65, professor emerita of education.

**Administration, faculty, and staff who are Graceland alumni are also listed in the Class Notes In Memoriam section.*

Harris, Blue Springs, Missouri, Jan. 16, 2020. **Marion "Bud" Hermanson**, Rockford, Illinois, July 8, 2007. **Elaine Buffehr Mullin**, Torrance, California, July 27, 2018. **La Nelle Ralph Radcliff**, Overland Park, Kansas, Nov. 17, 2018. **Everett Sherman**, Independence, Missouri, March 6, 2008. **Stella Criswell Sterling**, Denver, Colorado, May 31, 2019. **Frances Raw Vaughan**, Naples, Florida, June 26, 2021.

43 Clifford Buck, Ukiah, California, May 24, 2011. **Dorothy Menzies Gibbs**, Independence, Missouri, May 26, 2008. **Lorraine Wheatley Hammer**, Colorado Springs, Colorado, May 30, 2012. **Helen "Tina" Hughes Wildermuth**, Willowick, Ohio, Nov. 16, 2014. **Helen Peters Williams**, Cameron, Missouri, Sept. 1, 2007.

44 Lillian Maxwell Morse, Blue Springs, Missouri, Oct. 22, 2000.

45 Georgianna Dickerson Condit, Mansfield, Ohio, June 29, 2019. **Chrystal Draper Crownover**, San Jose, California, Sept. 13, 2018. **Evelyn Allen Guenther**, San Diego, California, Dec. 19, 2020. **Nora Moser Taylor**, Bethesda, Maryland, Aug. 6, 2020. **Sally Burch Wheeler**, Austin, Texas, Nov. 30, 2020.

46 Ruth Kempf Bender, Orangeville, California, March 24, 2019. **Mary Sears Choate**, Independence, Missouri, Oct. 25, 2020. **Irene Winegar**

Lemmon, Hagerman, Idaho, Sept. 22, 2020. **Shirlee Tarrant Poore**, Columbia, Missouri, May 1, 2021. **June Andrew Russell**, Independence, Missouri, Feb. 3, 2019. **Lois Coffman Seeley**, Perry, Iowa, Oct. 23, 2020. **Biloine Whiting Young**, Saint Paul, Minnesota, Aug. 22, 2020.

47 J. Dewey Chandler, Yakima, Washington, Aug. 2, 2020. **John Clark**, Monroe, Ohio, Feb. 16, 2006. **David France**, Walden, Colorado, Feb. 13, 2015. **Alma Nelson Jr.**, Guilford, Missouri, July 28, 2014. **Virginia Haas Thompson**, Woodland, California, Sept. 8, 2014. **Joyce White Tracey**, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Nov. 2, 2018.

48 Ray Cain, Independence, Missouri, Dec. 9, 2020. **Lawrence Fordyce**, Boynton Beach, Florida, July 28, 2008. **Alice Folkes Gunn**, Independence, Missouri, Aug. 29, 2020. **Mary Jo Wilder Jackel**, Lamoni, Iowa, Dec. 8, 2020. **Betty Kam Lum**, Pearl City, Hawaii, Dec. 5, 2019. **Vern Montgomery**, Fairland, Oklahoma, June 15, 2020. **Dorothy Smith Piedimonte**, Mesa, Arizona, Sept. 21, 2020. **Doris McHann Ralston**, Independence, Missouri, Aug. 1, 2012. **James Renfroe**, Escalon, California, July 20, 2020. **Wanda Canaday Talcott Ingram**, Sun City, Arizona, Jan. 31, 2021. **Arthur Thompson**, Woodland, California, Feb. 13, 2017. **Betty Thomas**

Welch, Sun City, Arizona, Nov. 23, 2021. **Byron Werges**, Canandaigua, New York, Aug. 7, 2021.

49 Wanda Bingaman Andersen, Kansas City, Missouri, Oct. 3, 2020. **Collene Allen Ellis**, Olathe, Kansas, Sept. 15, 2020. **Florence Clifford Hawley**, Independence, Missouri, Oct. 17, 2021. **William "Bill" Higdon, President Emeritus**, Grand Forks, North Dakota, Nov. 18, 2021. **Gerald Knutson, President Emeritus**, Independence, Missouri, April 2, 2021. **Lewis Lowe**, Willow Street, Pennsylvania, Sept. 16, 2020. **Edward Manley**, Sedalia, Missouri, July 20, 2019. **George Norwood**, Blue Springs, Missouri, Sept. 5, 2021. **Glenn Price**, Lawrence, Kansas, Jan. 17, 2021. **Robert Taylor**, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Dec. 26, 2020. **Clarice Anderson Young**, Saint Paul, Minnesota, Dec. 21, 2020.

50 Larry Bosshardt, Bremerton, Washington, Dec. 8, 2020. **Joyce Wainwright Brady**, Meridian, Idaho, June 12, 2021. **James Lancaster Jr.**, West Bloomfield, Michigan, May 16, 2021. **Darlyne LaGrece**, Independence, Missouri, Feb. 4, 2021. **Dorothy Dickens Short**, Independence, Missouri, Nov. 27, 2020. **Sarah Williamson Walsh**, Overland Park, Kansas, Sept. 9, 2020.

51 Clarke Ballinger, Englewood, California, May 31, 2021. **Gladys Sampson Cox**, Austin, Texas, Feb. 24, 2021. **Madonna Hunt Hunter**, Humble, Texas, Sept. 21, 2021. **Madelyn Powell Griffith Irish**, La Plata, Maryland, Jan. 23, 2018. **Wayne Lewis**, Portland, Oregon, Feb. 23, 2021. **Ernest Miles**, Cypress, Texas, Aug. 10, 2020. **Neva Lutz Norling**, Encinitas, California, March 13, 2021. **Dennis Sturgill**, Woodbine, Iowa, Oct. 10, 2016. **Floyd Wheat**, Saint Joseph, Missouri, Aug. 1, 2021. **Celia Stageman Zinser**, Estes Park, Colorado, Nov. 4, 2020.

52 Carol Crum Baker, Independence, Missouri, Aug. 9, 2020. **Beverly Baeth Ferguson**, Glendale, Arizona, Nov. 21, 2020. **Arthur "Les" Gardner**, Lamoni, Iowa, April 16, 2021. **Ray Hogue**, North Richland Hills, Texas, Dec. 18, 2020. **Lucille Moore Johnson**,

Auburn, Washington, Aug. 5, 2020. **Mavis Smith McDonald**, Petrolia, Ontario, Canada, March 21, 2020. **Bonnie Carmichael Ross**, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 24, 2021. **Carlin Talcott**, Independence, Missouri, Dec. 4, 2020.

53 Norma Kendrick Boman, Blue Springs, Missouri, Nov. 9, 2020. **James Carpenter**, Greenwood, Missouri, Aug. 6, 2021. **Richard Edwards**, Crofton, Maryland, Oct. 5, 2017. **Kenneth Graham**, Lebanon, Ohio, July 13, 2021. **David Johnson**, Auburn, Washington, July 13, 2020. **Dorothy "Dottie" Minton Klaus**, San Antonio, Texas, Jan. 10, 2021. **Irvin "Jake" Maymon**, Pittsboro, Indiana, March 14, 2021. **Lynn Ourth**, Chattanooga, Tennessee, Aug. 2, 2021. **James Sloan**, Franklin, Ohio, Dec. 29, 2020. **Doris Brockway Stollsteimer**, New Freedom, Pennsylvania, Dec. 31, 2020. **Gwen Olney Twachtman**, Jackson, Michigan, Nov. 10, 2020. **Dennis Weldon**, Radiant, Virginia, March 3, 2021. **Richard Wilmot**, Moreno Valley, California, Jan. 19, 2021.

54 Betty Cole Ballantyne, Sykesville, Maryland, Oct. 9, 2020. **Sherrill Bell Cochran**, Independence, Missouri, Oct. 8, 2021. **Doris Dillon Eike**, Radcliffe, Iowa, Feb. 23, 2021. **Joe Hanna**, President Emeritus, Omaha, Nebraska, Feb. 10, 2021.

55 Marjorie Chock Clark, Kaneohe, Hawaii, Aug. 26, 2020. **Wayland DeWitt**, Palm Desert, California, Sept. 8, 2020. **Huberta "Bert" Ellithorpe Eisele**, Gladstone, Missouri, Nov. 5, 2020. **Richard Guthrie**, Mount Hope, Kansas, June 1, 2020. **Betty Jo Fisher Knapp**, Silverthorne, Colorado, Nov. 1, 2020. **Robert Phillips**, Kansas City, Missouri, Sept. 6, 2020. **Mary Jane Closson White**, Lamoni, Iowa, June 25, 2017.

56 Julia Wilkenson Ashby, Grant City, Missouri, Nov. 21, 2020. **James Closson**, Blue Springs, Missouri, June 8, 2021. **Samuel Cummings**, McDermott, Ohio, June 14, 2021. **Charles Hakes**, Blue Springs, Missouri, July 30, 2020. **Clifford Hummer**, Fort Worth, Texas, July 3, 2021. **Claude Lee**, Topeka, Kansas, Aug. 23, 2021. **Chun III "Neal" Park**, Overland Park, Kansas, May 5, 2021.



ALUMNI PROFILE

Thurston Smith '95 Recognized for a Lifetime of Service

Since completing the Addiction Studies program at Graceland in the late 1990s, **THURSTON S. SMITH, MPA, LAC-S, CCS**, has had an eventful life and career, which was recently recognized through a series of awards and public service citations.

"For me, it all began in South Carolina," Smith said, before going on to detail his extensive work for the federal government, military service, academic studies, and career in the counseling field. Smith spent over 20 years working for Veterans Health Administration (VA) in many different mental health, administrative, and leadership roles before retiring in 2018. His career in federal service also included employment for Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) in Washington, D.C.

Smith has over 25 years of experience in the behavioral health counseling profession, with specialties in substance abuse, mental health, training, and public policy. Near the beginning of his career, he joined NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, which led him to join Graceland's Addiction Studies program. "Graceland was one of the few academic institutions at that time providing education in addiction counseling," he remembers. "NAADAC was the predecessor to my admission to Graceland. I really enjoyed the professional networking that the program provided, and was thoroughly impressed by Graceland's seasoned academic instructors, who were all current practitioners in the field."

In 2021, that same organization that helped him discover Graceland honored him with the **Mel Shulstad Professional of the Year Award**, which recognizes an individual who has made outstanding and sustained contributions to the advancement of the addiction counseling profession. "It was phenomenal for this organization to place such value on the work I've done over my career," Smith said.

The NAADAC honor was Smith's third major honor in as many years. In 2019, he was awarded the **Tennessee Governor's Volunteer of the Year Award**. Then in 2020, immediately following the completion of a three-year federal advisory committee service obligation for the U.S. Treasury Department's Taxpayer Advocacy Panel, he received the **Presidential Volunteer Service Award**, with a special Gold designation, given his over 500 hours of service in this capacity.

Smith continues to serve the community from his current home in Memphis, Tennessee, where he is the Community Outreach Coordinator and Associate Minister at the New Salem Missionary Baptist Church, and is now pursuing his Doctorate in Ministry in Community Wellness and Social Justice through Memphis Theological Seminary. "I have always had a strong desire to serve others, yet I was historically ambivalent about organized religion," said Smith. "It is through growth and maturity that I've come to this place and am now deeply committed to doing the Lord's work on so many levels." - BY SHANE ADAMS



© The Presidential Service Award is a civil award that recognizes U.S. citizens who have dedicated their time and resources to their communities and inspire others to do the same.



If you're interested in seeing a production of "State Song," visit: darrelljohnston.com

ALUMNI PROFILE



Since graduating from Graceland in 2010, **DARRELL JOHNSTON** has starred in stage shows across the country, directed plays at Graceland, and even founded a film festival in Denali, Alaska.

Johnston grew up in Leon, Iowa, and originally wanted to study radio broadcasting, but when he came to Graceland, he found his new home in the theatre department. Johnston earned his MFA in acting at the University of South Carolina and has appeared on screen and on stage across the nation.

Johnston started law school in 2020 to learn more about the other side of performing – contracts, copyright, property, and production rights, and how to better bring the arts to southern Iowa. As the pandemic shutdown began, Darrell was curious to see if Iowa had a state song and was pleasantly surprised to find not only that one existed, but it was in desperate need of an update. Darrell was inspired to write a fictional musical titled "State Song" about how the Iowa state song came to be.

Darrell likes to premiere his shows and films in Southern Iowa to honor his roots and help in the process of bringing new theatre and art to the area. During the first week of January 2022, Darrell workshopped his new musical at Carol Hall on Graceland's Lamoni campus. Michael Morain '01 got to witness the production and said, "It was cool that [Darrell] had so many music styles all in one show – there is a lot of variety in his music writing ability, and it is really impressive."

But Carol Hall wasn't the only stop on the "State Song" workshop tour. Immediately following the workshop in Lamoni, Darrell packed up his gear and performed his new musical in New York at the Manhattan Theatre Club the following week.

In his interview Darrell said, "Southern Iowa holds a permanent place in my heart. It is my childhood home. 'State Song' is sort of a love letter to Iowa. In the song, 'Iowa,' the lyrics that ring most true are, 'The people of Iowa are famous for their charms. If you find yourself in their presence, there's a reason.' Premiering my work in Southern Iowa is my small way of participating in cultural vitality in the place that I love. Southern Iowa deserves great theatre! I am incredibly lucky to have Graceland as a welcoming venue to make this ethic possible." - BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES

57 Donald Brown, Lake Forest, Illinois, Nov. 27, 2020. **Delores Jones Gunderson**, Kansas City, Missouri, May 9, 2019. **Samuel Marmoy**, Tempe, Arizona, Aug. 18, 2020. **Virginia Binkley Nelson**, Angola, Indiana, Nov. 26, 2020. **Bob Ramsey**, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Oct. 29, 2021. **Jerie Gail Davis Ramsey**, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Jan. 9, 2021. **Norma Kidd Wilkin**, Lake Wylie, South Carolina, April 22, 2021. **Donald Winslow**, Red Bluff, California, Aug. 27, 2020.

58 Larry Brown, Mount Ayr, Iowa, Aug. 22, 2020. **Patricia Green Heady**, Crystal Lake, Illinois, Dec. 30, 2020. **Patricia "Mickey" MacLeod Simmons**, Santa Rosa, California, Sept. 18, 2021. **Veneta Snethen**, Glen Allen, Virginia, July 12, 2020. **Patricia Binns Warren**, Overland Park, Kansas, March 4, 2021.

59 Norman Amsberry, Urbandale, Iowa, Dec. 19, 2020. **Alfred Brady**, Columbia, Missouri, Dec. 18, 2020. **Marilyn Eliason Chappelow**, Independence, Missouri, Jan. 17, 2017. **Samuel Chappelow**, Independence, Missouri, Aug. 3, 2020. **Barbara Miller Joseph**, Mobile, Alabama, Feb. 1, 2021. **Wesley Loyd**, Cincinnati, Ohio, July 1, 2020. **Kay Plumlee Mehlich**, Austin, Texas, Sept. 26, 2020. **Laurelle Burton Redford**, Independence, Missouri, Nov. 25, 2020. **Ronald Roberts**, Waterloo, Iowa, Oct. 29, 2020. **James Williams**, Lafayette, Colorado, Jan. 10, 2021.

60 Jeane Cadwell Geer, Tacoma, Washington, April 6, 2013. **Ann Huizenga**, Grand Haven, Michigan, April 16, 2019.

61 Donna Castings Marasco, Des Moines, Iowa, July 28, 2020. **Larry Purcell**, Fort Dodge, Iowa, Nov. 19, 2020.

62 Anita Johnson Butler, Oak Grove, Missouri, Aug. 8, 2020. **Ririfatu Mariteragi**, Lee's Summit, Missouri, Aug. 19, 2021. **Ronald Resch**, South Fallsburg, New York, Nov. 19, 2009. **Larry Sturgis**, Lamoni, Iowa, Oct. 16, 2021. **Troyce Wheeler**, Council Bluffs, Iowa, March 7, 2021.

63 Clarence Awaya, Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 18, 2013. **Gail Hice Brown**, Mason City, Iowa, Feb. 11, 2021. **Madison Parker**, Aurora, Illinois, March 9, 2021. **Glynnette Anderson Patton**, Gering, Nebraska, April 30, 2021.

64 Jane Perry Barnes, Lee's Summit, Missouri, June 24, 2021. **Paul Elvin**, Saint Paul, Minnesota, Aug. 26, 2020. **Suzanne Fisher Hanton**, Fort Gratiot, Michigan,

Dec. 24, 2020. **Charles Volz**, Independence, Missouri, Oct. 17, 2020.

65 Mary Jean Jeanae, Santa Barbara, California, Nov. 12, 2021.

66 Jim Cooper, Vero Beach, Florida, July 29, 2018. **Thadd Koonce**, Midland, Texas, Jan. 23, 2021. **Donald Richardson**, Nauvoo, Illinois, Feb. 21, 2019.

67 Alan Dowhower, Sibley, Missouri, March 23, 2021. **Lee Wemlinger**, Columbus, Ohio, Feb. 8, 2021.

68 Jim Hammer, Urbandale, Iowa, Aug. 24, 2020. **Donald Lohr**, Burlington, Iowa, Aug. 13, 2020. **Hulda Nelson Steele**, Bayou La Batre, Alabama, Nov. 18, 2014.

70 Mike Ashbaugh, Logan, Ohio, Aug. 24, 2021. **Wilton Boyle**, Auckland, New Zealand, Aug. 31, 2020. **Janelle Payne Hetherington**, Cottage Grove, Oregon, July 14, 2019. **Jacqueline Cripps Isberg**, Rochester, New Hampshire, Sept. 15, 2020. **Robert Love**, San Jose, California, Sept. 13, 2021. **Maxine Barnett Norris**, Mount Ayr, Iowa, Aug. 22, 2015. **Philip Patrick**, San Jacinto, California, Aug. 29, 2019. **Steven Pulley**, Independence, Missouri, Feb. 7, 2011. **Mabel Shields**, Mount Ayr, Iowa, June 3, 2013. **Alan Smith**, El Cajon, California, Jan. 15, 2021. **Jane Neice Stephens**, San Antonio, Texas, Dec. 19, 2008. **Ralph Wouters**, Pleasant Hill, Missouri, June 16, 2021.

71 Andrew Dunn, North Platte, Nebraska, Jan. 17, 2021. **Kenneth Hastings**, Blue Springs, Missouri, Dec. 11, 2020. **Wilma Edward Jarvis**, Washington, Iowa, Oct. 13, 2013. **Jacqueline Reilly Powell**, Fort Dodge, Iowa, Jan. 17, 2016.

72 Patricia Barr Andersen, Fort Collins, Colorado, Oct. 5, 2021. **James Hetherington**, Cottage Grove, Oregon, Sept. 13, 2019. **Haraldine Harbert**, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, April 27, 2010. **James Pataky**, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Oct. 19, 2020. **Ed Shields**, Mount Ayr, Iowa, Dec. 21, 2020. **Barbara Daily Yarrington**, Lamoni, Iowa, May 30, 2020.

73 Charles Manual, Ellston, Iowa, Oct. 18, 2021.

74 Larry Martin, Independence, Missouri, Jan. 20, 2021. **Clarice Minnick**, Creston, Iowa, March 20, 2018.

75 Brent Gierhart, Lafayette, Louisiana, Dec. 26, 2014.

76 John Caruso, Mahopac, New York, April 2, 2021. **Kevin Rhode**, Raymore, Missouri, Sept. 3, 2020. **Katharine Ray Rustan**, Odessa, Missouri, Aug. 5, 2020. **Paula Heston Stearman**, Shawnee, Oklahoma, Sept. 25, 2021.

77 Rhonda Mann Boyd, Bozeman, Montana, Sept. 15, 2021. **Thomas "Bear" Robinson**, Des Moines, Iowa, Aug. 11, 2021.

78 Neva McKee Beeman, Centerville, Iowa, May 29, 2017. **David Drummond**, Farmington, Iowa, Aug. 11, 2020. **Stephen Nelson**, Colorado Springs, Colorado, June 7, 2021. **Maxine Werner**, Shannon City, Iowa, July 27, 2014.

79 Mark Friend, Grain Valley, Missouri, Dec. 23, 2020. **Sherry Lord Gray**, Orland, Maine, May 24, 2021.

80 Fahtemeh Abediyeh-Zabiheian, Bethesda, Maryland, July 23, 2016. **Sherri Klejch Nelson**, Otley, Iowa, Nov. 18, 2020. **Mark Woodson**, Edwardsville, Illinois, Sept. 10, 2020.

81 Mark Crawford, Osceola, Iowa, June 4, 2021. **Richard Eliason**, Bigfork, Montana, June 9, 2017.

82 Curtis Martin, Lee's Summit, Missouri, Dec. 4, 2020. **Vicki Osgood**, Ida Grove, Iowa, June 29, 2020.

84 Nancy Quier Rupell, Kansas City, Missouri, March 3, 2021.

85 Rick Braby, Sibley, Iowa, Aug. 5, 2020. **Lisa Wright Burns**, Clarksburg, Ohio, Feb. 22, 2021.

86 Ronda Raley Arnswald, Westmont, Illinois, Dec. 21, 2015. **Jacqueline Hampton Gordon**, Beaufort, North Carolina, Feb. 22, 2018. **Terrelene Prager France**, Cosby, Tennessee, Aug. 5, 2021.

87 Belinda Goodman Markworth, Higginsville, Missouri, May 26, 2021.

90 John Donnelly, Costa Mesa, California, Sept. 3, 2020. **Tony Sturdevant**, Ridgeway, Missouri, Jan. 25, 2021.

91 Shannon Clark, Canby, Oregon, Oct. 23, 2020.

92 Chanda Swanson, Littleton, Colorado, Aug. 1, 2021.

93 Michal Dishon-Alon, Overland Park, Kansas, Sept. 4, 2009.

94 Dora Oakman Walsh, Independence, Missouri, Nov. 13, 2020.

95 Glenda Colton, Yuma, Arizona, Oct. 6, 2019. **Sadie Cain Jeter**, Sumter, South Carolina, Jan. 8, 2020. **John Malek**, North Las Vegas, Nevada, Sept. 12, 2021. **Jeffrey Talcott**, Independence, Missouri, Sept. 22, 2020. **Kimberly Wiesen**, Kansas City, Missouri, Nov. 13, 2019.

96 Rebecca Hunt, Mount Ayr, Iowa, Jan. 22, 2015. **Lourdes Santoni**, Yardley, Pennsylvania, April 1, 2021. **Kathleen Bennett Wilson**, Longview, Washington, Jan. 5, 2016.

99 Dennis Sorenson, Burbank, California, Feb. 1, 2020.

00 Marilyn Wismer Kettlewell, Independence, Missouri, Nov. 17, 2019. **Dustin Wallace**, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 14, 2021.

01 Lynn Wilkinson Hansen, Tallahassee, Florida, Nov. 15, 2019. **Barbara Maddaleno**, Centerville, Iowa, Jan. 25, 2018.

02 Aaron Grisby, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, Dec. 5, 2020.

05 Mary Kelly Stevens McCullough, Nashville, Tennessee, Dec. 8, 2020.

06 Gregory Peistrup, Las Vegas, Nevada, Sept. 18, 2020. **Lily Sittner**, Bethany, Missouri, July 25, 2015.

13 Jeremiah Hicks, Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 8, 2021.

14 Ardian Ferati, Fushe Kosove, Kosovo, Dec. 13, 2020.

16 Julina Iosua Poli, Independence, Missouri, Sept. 10, 2021.

HONORARY ALUMNI

Harold Lambert, Blue Springs, Missouri, April 9, 2020.

POLICIES

Submissions are included as space permits and may be edited for length or clarity.

Send high resolution digital photos – 300 dpi and/or minimum of 1,200 pixels on the shortest side of the image.

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