

HORIZONS

GRACELAND UNIVERSITY



*This is our moment.
This is our future. This is...*

Our Time to Lead

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A Moment Made for Graceland Leaders

Dear Graceland Alumni and Friends: As we step into a pivotal year for Graceland University, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude – and possibility. This issue of the alumni magazine reaches you at a defining moment for our institution, one shaped by both the challenges facing higher education nationally and the real momentum emerging here on “the Hill” and in our classrooms in Independence, Missouri, in Overland Park, Kansas, and online around the world.

This year, our Graceland community will be working on a new initiative: **Our Time to Lead**, a focused two-year, \$20 million campaign to strengthen the university, extend our financial runway, and accelerate the return on key strategic investments already showing promise.

Graceland needs your support. There will be many opportunities to engage with our campus communities and with me personally, and I hope you will feel the same sense of purpose we feel each day on campus: Graceland is worth fighting for, investing in, and leading forward.

Why This Moment Matters

Across conversations with alumni over the past year of my presidency, one theme has emerged consistently: *Graceland changed my life, and I want to ensure it can do the same for others.* That sentiment – rooted in identity, belonging, and mission – is the foundation of this campaign.

Our students continue to choose Graceland for the same reasons many of you did:

- a community that sees them and lifts them,
- faculty who know their names and invest personally in their success,
- and a culture built on service, faith in human potential, and lifelong connection.

In a time when many colleges are struggling, **Graceland is acting boldly.** Not only are we controlling costs, but we are also raising revenue by investing in programs that meet workforce needs and deepen our mission. Our **Doctor of Physical Therapy program**, now fully accredited with its first graduating class, is proof that strategic innovation works and can strengthen both academic excellence and long-term financial health. Our nursing and graduate health programs continue to grow and are expanding opportunities for students called to serve.

This is our moment. Our Time

“When you help us, you’re helping the people we’ll go on to serve.”

When **BREA HEADLY '29** from Chicago first visited Graceland, she felt something click: “I could actually see myself here. Everyone was so inviting. Students showed me around, people I’d never met said hi, and the professors talked to me like they genuinely cared. I realized I wanted a small school where I could really connect.”



That **sense of connection** only deepened when she officially arrived on campus this fall. Brea, now a nursing major, a member of the Honors Program, a softball player, and an ambassador for BSU, remembers her first day clearly. “My HP came in and immediately started helping me move in,” she laughed. “And I got to eat with people I’d met on earlier visits – it made everything feel familiar.”

And even though she had *sworn off* muddy games, that didn’t last long. “I ended up in the mud anyway,” she admitted. “It pushed me out of my comfort zone, but in the best way. That day helped me connect with people who are now part of my community.”

Brea has always known she wanted to work in the medical field, eventually choosing nursing because “I’ve never wanted to do anything else. I love helping people.” Graceland, she says, is the perfect environment for her to grow into that calling. “It’s a place where I can slow down, focus, and get my work done. My professors actually care about what they do. John Godfrey gets me out of my comfort zone all the time – and somehow that makes me want to learn even more.” Now she studies for hours in the Swarm with friends who have become her support system.

But getting here wasn’t simple. Scholarships were essential.

“I spent hours searching for scholarships,” she said. “My mom kept telling me, ‘Apply for five every day.’ I don’t want to say college wouldn’t have been possible without scholarships, but it would have been very hard. That support made a huge difference.”

She also knows that **continued support shapes Graceland’s future**. “[Alumni] helping Graceland directly impacts students like us,” Brea said. “It helps us build something new. Nurses are in high demand – and when you help us, you’re helping the people we’ll go on to serve.”

Students like Brea are exactly who Graceland hopes to empower – students who are eager to learn, ready to serve, and driven to lead. But enrolling and supporting mission-driven students in today’s competitive higher education landscape takes resources, vision, and collective effort.

That’s why the *Our Time to Lead* campaign matters. Without new investments, programs like nursing, physical therapy, and emerging graduate offerings cannot expand to meet growing demand. Without financial runway, strategic progress stalls. And without alumni leadership, students like Brea may never discover the place where they truly thrive.

This is her time to learn. This is **Our Time to Lead**.

“Now is not the time to be a bystander. Even small actions make a real impact.”

ALEX '15 AND JULIA AUSTIN '20 CARR embody the many ways Graceland brings people together.



Alex grew up in Lamoni, with Graceland woven into everyday life. His father, the late Brad Carr '91, was a beloved Director of Student Activities who mentored generations of students.

“Graceland was home,” Alex said. “When I started looking at colleges, nothing else felt right. I knew the people, I trusted the place, and I knew it would help me become who God wanted me to be.” Julia didn’t come from a Graceland family, but her campus tour changed everything. “It instantly felt like where I was supposed to be. Graceland let me play a sport, join fine arts and campus ministries, and pursue a rigorous academic path.” Both credit the fantastic staff and faculty who saw their potential early and helped launch their careers. Graceland also gave them their closest friends – and ultimately, each other. Today, the Carrs remain deeply committed to ensuring Graceland continues shaping lives with that same care and purpose.

Julia returns regularly to speak with science students, advise pre-dental majors, and help current undergrads find their path into professional programs. “Not everyone can give financially,” she said. “But everyone can give something – mentorship, connection, time.” Alex serves as Vice President of the Alumni Board, sits on the C.H. Sandage School of Business Advisory Board, brings guest speakers to campus, and is hiring a Graceland intern for his company. Together, the couple even helped establish a scholarship to support students in financially vulnerable situations.

“We’ve been blessed,” Alex said. “The least we can do is help others access the same opportunities we were given.” But they recognize the landscape of higher education has shifted since they were students. “When I was applying to college, the advice was simply ‘go where it feels right. Today, it’s more transactional, but students risk missing the growth opportunities that form the foundation of who they become. If we had chosen the cheapest option, we would’ve missed the opportunities that shaped us.”

“Universities don’t run on magic – they run on resources. Students today have different needs and if we believe **others deserve the Graceland Experience we had**, then we must step forward and support them.” Julia added, “Now is not the time to be a bystander. Even small actions – connecting with faculty, mentoring a student – make a real impact.”

Alex and Julia both speak with urgency, but also deep hope. Alex noted, “We live in a country that encourages philanthropy – the time for gifts is now. If we all assume someone else will step up, Graceland will suffer.” Julia nodded. “Graceland belongs to all of us. And it needs all of us right now.” When asked what they hope to see next, Alex did not hesitate. “I hope that people are energized by this call to action and that it sparks the growth Graceland needs to fully live out its mission.”

This is their legacy of leadership. This is our collective moment of decision. This is **Our Time to Lead**.

to Lead This is our future.

“I didn’t graduate from Graceland – but I believe in this place completely.”

When **JENNIFER MATNEY** joined Graceland University as Chief Financial Officer, she brought with her two decades of experience in the banking industry, a sharp analytical mind, and something else – something quieter but deeply powerful: the perspective of a **first-generation college graduate**.



“I know what education can do for a family,” Jennifer said. “It changed the direction of my life. It opened doors that wouldn’t have existed otherwise. And I feel a responsibility to help make that possible for others.”

She will be the first to say she did not grow up steeped in Graceland traditions and even though she hails from Kansas City, she was unfamiliar with the Community of Christ faith. She didn’t attend Graceland, didn’t cheer in the Morden Center (she preferred her beloved Kansas City Chiefs), did not know what a “house” was, and had never heard of “painting the bell.” Yet, from her first months on campus, Jennifer began to see something she had not encountered anywhere else in higher education – or corporate finance.

“I’ve worked in places where numbers mattered more than people,” she said. “Graceland is the opposite. Here, numbers matter because people matter. Every decision, every investment, every hard conversation is ultimately about students and their futures.”

Jennifer now mentors two graduating seniors, walking with them through career discernment, financial planning, and the transition into life after college. “They’ve taught me as much as I hope I’ve taught them,” she reflected.

But Jennifer is also clear about the financial reality higher education is facing. “This is the toughest environment small universities have seen in generations,” she said. “Demographics are changing. Costs are rising. Competition is fierce. The margin for error is razor thin.” She paused, then added, “Graceland can thrive – but not without a community willing to step forward.”

Jennifer is not only leading the university’s financial strategy – she is also a donor herself.

“If I’m asking others to invest, I have to lead the way,” she said. “I believe in the mission of this institution and I have seen first-hand how the sponsoring church has stepped forward to partner with us and be our ally in this moment. I believe in our students. Without new support, all the cost containment and fiscal responsibility we have exercised the past few years will mean nothing to our momentum. It is all at risk without the runway we need for our investments to provide us a solid and sustainable return.”

For Jennifer, this time at Graceland is personal. “I didn’t graduate from Graceland,” she said. “But I believe in what Graceland makes possible. I believe in its future. And I want every student – first-generation or not – to have access to the kind of life-changing education that shaped mine.”

This is her commitment. This is our shared responsibility. This is **Our Time to Lead**.

“I used to be the student in the dean’s office. Now I’m the one helping shape the future.”

When **JOHN GODFREY ’06** walked back into the Dean of Students office this year, he had to laugh. “I spent a fair amount of time here as a student,” he joked. “I wasn’t a bad kid – I was just always in the middle of something. The House system brought out my enthusiasm...maybe too enthusiastically sometimes.”



But this fall, John returned under very different circumstances: as the Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students, responsible for **shaping the campus experience** for today’s students and the generations who will follow. John and his wife (Tammy) and kids (Sarah and Jackson), left their life in San Diego, California to move back to Lamoni – a decision he describes as both joyful and weighty.

“When you love a place the way I love Graceland, you feel a responsibility to it,” John said. “This university changed the trajectory of my life. When I got the call inviting me to help lead Student Life, I knew it was my turn to step up.”

John sees Graceland’s strengths through the eyes of someone forever shaped by them: community, mentorship, acceptance, leadership development, and the deep sense of belonging that defines the Graceland Experience.

But he also sees the risks. “The pressures facing higher education are real,” he said. “If we don’t respond boldly as a community – if alumni and friends don’t step forward – we risk losing the very things that make Graceland transformative. Students today need the same support and opportunities we all had. Without new and significant investment, that becomes harder every year.”

As he settles into his first year in the role, John spends his days meeting with students, attending House events, advising campus leaders, and ensuring that every corner of campus reflects the values that shaped him.

“I look at these students and see myself,” he said. “They’re full of potential, full of dreams, full of that same energy I had. And I want them to have every opportunity I did – and more.”

That’s why John is all-in on *Our Time to Lead*.

“This campaign isn’t about patching holes,” he said. “It’s about safeguarding the future. It’s about making sure Graceland is here – not just for the students sitting in classrooms and in the Swarm today eating burgers, but for the kids who are five years old right now and will someday come here to discover who they are.”

John believes deeply that alumni leadership will make the difference. “Graceland can thrive. I know that. I’ve lived it. But it will take all of us choosing to lead in this moment. This is our chance to ensure that the community that shaped us is here – strong, vibrant, and ready to transform lives – for the next hundred years.”

This is his calling. This is our moment. This is **Our Time to Lead**.



100 YEARS

OF HOMECOMING

You belong here.

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES, MS, '21

Each fall, Graceland's Homecoming week fills the Lamoni campus with energy, laughter, and a little friendly competition. While alumni return to relive their college days, current students are busy creating new memories of their own.



Homecoming on “the Hill” captures everything that makes student life so vibrant, spirited, and uniquely Graceland.

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



From Student Life’s “noonish games” that spark spontaneous joy on the campus lawn, to late-night Air Band rehearsals that turn into bonding sessions, and the chaotic – but legendary – scavenger hunt that sends students sprinting across town (no cars allowed!), Homecoming is as much about community as it is about celebration. To get a glimpse of what makes the week so special for today’s Yellowjackets, we caught up with Kendall Davis ‘26, president of the Council of Student Activities, to hear about the student side of Homecoming.

Homecoming week features a daily “noon-ish game” that tests teamwork and creativity – an opportunity for House pairings to win points even if that House has smaller participation numbers. A campus favorite is the IKEA build off, where each House pairing is given a piece of furniture to build in under 35 minutes. Monday night is a heated game of dodgeball that primes students for the next day’s activity: the unforgettable scavenger hunt that has students shaving Graceland symbols into hair, posing in the Maid Rite Amish buggy, and performing interpretive dances of the fight song at President Shrock’s residence at the Carmichael House. “It helps create that bonding experience for freshmen and transfer students,” said senior Kendall Davis. “Like, *oh my gosh*, this is what Graceland is about.” For many students, Homecoming arrives just early enough in the semester to cement friendships and capture the spirit that makes Graceland feel like home.

By the time Air Band night arrives on Friday, the energy across campus is electric. House pairings rally together for their final performances – the culmination of late-night rehearsals, paint-splattered creativity, and countless cardboard props. As the competition heats up, so does the camaraderie.

“On Thursday and Friday, students start to get this crazy look in their eyes because they have to win,” Davis said with a laugh. “Then by Sunday, there’s this silence across campus as everyone takes a collective breather.” From fierce but friendly rivalries to campus-wide support – even professors asking who’s in the lead – Homecoming on “the Hill” captures everything that makes student life so vibrant, spirited, and uniquely Graceland. *cont.* ☺

SAVE THE DATE ☺
Mark your calendars and join us next time!

October 2-4 2026





Strength, Legacy, and Community Honored at Graceland Dedications

Graceland University celebrated a milestone weekend for Yellowjacket Athletics with the dedications of the **HENSON STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING CENTER** on Friday and the **MORDEN CENTER COURTS** on Saturday. Both events highlighted the spirit of community, generosity, and excellence that define Graceland.

On Friday, students, alumni, and supporters gathered in the new Henson Strength and Conditioning Center to recognize the lasting impact of the Henson family’s generosity. President Joel Shrock, PhD, and Athletic Director Brady McKillip ’00 recognized the impact of the facility on student-athletes’ growth, both on and off the field. Shrock shared that the facility represents Graceland’s commitment to helping student-athletes reach their full potential – physically, mentally, and personally. He expressed immense gratitude to **Greg ’75 and Holly Lennon ’78 Henson** for their generosity in supporting students for decades to come.

The following day, the celebration continued inside Morden Center. Four newly renovated courts were dedicated to **Stew McDole ’65, Rod Schall ’50, Betty Welch ’48, and Tee ’75 and Debbie Hawthorne ’75 Ness** – alumni whose leadership and generosity have shaped Graceland athletics for decades. Closing out the ceremony, Alumni Board representative and former volleyball player Allie Krabbenhoft ’14 Kaminski reflected on how these dedications honor not just individuals, but the ongoing stories of belonging and transformation that unfold every day. ■

“As we dedicate these four courts, we aren’t just installing letters on the floor. We are telling stories. We are weaving the courage of Betty Welch, the excellence of Rod Schall, the generosity of Tee and Debbie Ness, and the mentorship of Stew McDole into the very fabric of student life at Graceland.”

ALLIE KRABBENHOFT ’14 KAMINSKI

Alumni Awards

Read about the awards:
graceland.edu/Homecoming

Distinguished Service Award



Patricia "Pat" Gabrielson '64 Trachsel, PhD was honored in memoriam with Graceland's Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her extraordinary dedication to both the University and her broader community. A trailblazer in nursing education, Pat was instrumental in launching and growing Graceland's pioneering distance RN-to-BSN program – offering flexible, accredited online pathways for working nurses. In addition to her work at Graceland, Trachsel worked with Sherri Minton '65 Kirkpatrick as a long-time member of the HealthEd Connect Professional Nurses Association committee that awarded nursing scholarships to students in numerous developing countries.

Graceland Award of Recognition



Diana Jones '87, known for her unwavering dedication to supporting international students on campus, was honored with the Graceland Award of Recognition. Since joining Graceland, Jones has served as a mentor, guide, and advocate – helping students from diverse backgrounds navigate academic, cultural, and personal challenges. She has organized welcome events, facilitated peer connections, and provided essential orientation and advising services that significantly ease the transition and foster a sense of belonging. Jones' empathetic leadership and tireless commitment have enriched campus life and championed Graceland's mission of global inclusivity. Through her heartfelt support, she ensures that every international student thrives both at school and in life.

Yellowjackets Hall of Fame



Paul "Bud" Reedy '68 was a rare dual-sport standout in football and wrestling from 1963 to 1967, earning four varsity letters in each. On the gridiron, he was a four-year starter, twice named First Team All-Conference, and served as senior co-captain and team MVP in 1966. Even more remarkable was his wrestling career, where despite no high school experience, he won four conference championships, twice placed at nationals as an NAIA All-American, and posted a 60-12-2 record. Reedy also captured the prestigious Wheaton Tournament twice and was honored with Graceland's Silver Seal Award in 1967.

Yellowjackets Wall of Fame



1976 Men's Volleyball National Championship Team was this year's Wall of Fame selection. The Graceland College Yellowjackets captured the 1976 NAIA National Volleyball Championship, in a five-game final match defeating Rutgers University-Newark, an NCAA Division 1

team having dual membership with the NAIA at the time, 15-3, 12-15, 15-11, 13-15 and 15-9. This was Coach Rod Schall's second national championship, following his first in 1973. Noted in this Yellowjacket victory was Coach Schall's use of statistical analysis, now called analytics, that he used successfully as an assistant to the U.S. Olympic team during the 1980s, aspects of which are still in use today. The Yellowjackets upset victory over Rutgers, were led by All-Tournament team member and MVP, Junior Daniel Timm '78 of Lake Elsinore, California, and All-Tournament team member, Junior Russ Simmons '77 of Independence, Missouri, along with Team Captain – Senior Elwin Ahu '76 of Honolulu, Hawaii. Of the 16 Yellowjacket team members, eight came from Independence, Missouri.



© Pictured, top to bottom: Tara Shupe '11 visits with guests at her photography exhibition. Gracelanders celebrate Alumni Awards recipients and Honor Classes at receptions held throughout the weekend. Diana Jones captures the moment with selfies. Thirteen men's volleyball team members reunite for their induction at the awards banquet, along with Rod Schall's widow, Deanna. Janné Grover '15 gives a moving message at the Sunday worship service.

DPT CLASS
OF 2025



LEAD

Graceland's First **Doctor of Physical Therapy** Graduates

BY SHANE ADAMS '99

When Graceland launched its hybrid Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program just in the winter of 2023, the goal was ambitious: to create an accessible, inclusive, and high-quality pathway to **A DOCTORATE IN ONE OF HEALTHCARE'S MOST IN-DEMAND FIELDS.**



THE WAY

The goal is realized for the students of Graceland's first DPT cohort, who graduated in December of 2025. With them comes a milestone that signals both accomplishment and momentum: the program's achievement of full accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE). This moment at Graceland reflects years of work, rooted in the belief that education should be accessible, meet students where they are, and that feeling like you belong is crucial for successful learning.

Building a Program for Access & Excellence

For Program Director Leigh Murray, PhD, the accreditation announcement marks a validation of the program's unique approach. "Achieving full CAPTE accreditation formally validates that our DPT program meets all rigorous national standards for curriculum, faculty, clinical education, and student outcomes," Murray said. "But more importantly, it reinforces that our model – one designed around access, flexibility, and belonging – can compete with the best programs in the nation."

From the very beginning, Graceland's DPT program was designed to challenge convention. Where many programs rely on rigid, campus-based schedules, Graceland built a hybrid structure that pairs online learning with immersive, hands-on laboratory experiences at its Mission, Kansas, site located next door to SkillPath, Inc. Students from across the country balance families, jobs, and community commitments, with the ability to complete their doctorate without uprooting their lives.

According to Murray, that flexibility is intentional, reflecting Graceland's mission in action. "Belonging and access aren't just marketing terms here," she said. "They're built into the bones of the program – from the hybrid delivery to early-assurance pathways and the way we support nontraditional students. We designed this program to welcome people into a profession that changes lives."

© The DPT faculty and inaugural cohort – the Class of 2025 – gathered to smile and celebrate following the dual professionalism and pinning ceremony held on commencement weekend, the day before they crossed the stage and made it official.



Pathway to Practice – From HMS to DPT

For students dreaming of careers in physical therapy, Graceland now offers a seamless path from undergraduate study to a professional doctorate – right here on “the Hill.”

“The **PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY TRACK** within Allied Health was created in response to a growing number of students eager to pursue careers in PT,” said Melanie Mason, DAT, chair of the Health and Movement Science (HMS) Department. “When the DPT program launched, it was a natural partnership. We wanted to build a clear, intentional bridge for students to move from undergrad to doctorate.”

That bridge is more than just a curriculum map. HMS students gain early exposure to clinical reasoning and assessment skills, working with state-of-the-art tools like the Anatomage Table, InBody analyzer, and Kinetisense 3D motion capture system. “This pathway helps students see themselves as future clinicians,” Mason said. “They start building that professional identity from day one.” Graceland’s small classes and close-knit community also play a role. “Our department mirrors what students will experience in DPT: personal attention, mentorship, and a strong sense of belonging,” Mason added. “Those relationships carry through to graduate school and beyond.”

As Graceland continues to expand its health sciences portfolio, the HMS-to-DPT track stands as a model for what the university does best — connecting learning, leadership, and belonging into a single, transformative journey.

Hybrid Learning, Human Connection

The program’s faculty members have found creative ways to turn a hybrid model into a vibrant community.

Michael Powers, PhD, Clinical Assistant Professor and Director of Admissions, notes that the sense of connection begins the moment a student is accepted. “Every accepted student receives a personal phone call from me,” Powers said. “That first conversation sets the tone so students know from day one that they’re seen and valued.”

That ethos continues through orientation, when all faculty and students gather for two days of in-person learning and team-building activities before classes begin. “Not every hybrid program does this,” Powers said, “but it’s one of the ways we build connection and belonging from the very start.”

Joy Craig, Admissions Advisor with Evidence In Motion (EIM) – Graceland’s partner in delivering the hybrid DPT program – says that spirit of connection starts even earlier.

“A true passion for people and a heart of service,” Craig said. “One of my favorite parts of this work is hearing students share their ‘why.’ I’ve heard countless personal stories, some rooted in their own experiences, others inspired by the journeys of family members, where physical therapy sparked a desire to be that change for someone else. Students drawn to the Graceland DPT program aren’t just hoping to be strong practitioners; they’re genuinely motivated to change lives.”

She added that the partnership between EIM and Graceland ensures students feel supported long before classes begin. “The synergy between the two teams has been incredible,” she said. “We all have the same goal of supporting our students, and in turn, the program’s success. From the first interest call to the first day of class, every student interaction is delivered with a white-glove level of service and a personal touch. Students realize they’re not just a number; they’re coming into a community that’s invested in seeing them through to graduation and beyond.”

Mareli Klopper, DPT, DSc, Assistant Clinical Professor, agrees that belonging takes intention. “Fostering connection in a hybrid environment requires a thoughtful and personal approach,” she said. “I make time to log into online sessions early just to talk

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with the students – about life, about sports, about what’s happening that week. Those small moments remind students that their faculty are people, too.”

Klopper added that today’s students are digital natives who already build deep friendships online, and Graceland’s structure amplifies that. “When you combine that with our immersive labs,” she said, “you create a really strong sense of community.”

The program’s academic design also helps. Students digest material asynchronously in their online courses before applying it in live discussions or lab immersions, giving them the ability to practice and learn the skills in their own way first. “Our students show up ready to engage,” Klopper said. “And when they finally step into the clinic, they’re confident and prepared.”

Grace, Grit & Growth: The First Cohort

For the inaugural class, that preparation has translated into success, and some powerful personal stories.

Marthanesie “MJay” Jones ’25, a student from Memphis and one of the cohort’s leaders, said she was first drawn to Graceland for its flexibility but stayed for its mission. “Being from Memphis, the name ‘Graceland’ itself carried a personal connection,” she said. “It reminded me of home – and of grace, which has always been one of my favorite words. Choosing Graceland turned out to be one of the best decisions I’ve made. I’ve been challenged, supported, and reminded of the meaning of grace in every sense.”

Jones, who helped launch a mentorship program for future students, said her proudest moment came when she realized how far she’d come. “During my final clinical rotation, everything clicked. All the lessons, the challenges, the late nights – it came together in those patient interactions.”

For Elijah Hay '25, the program's structure itself was life-changing. "Graceland's hybrid model gave me freedom," he said. "I could work, study, and still be home with my dog instead of relocating across the country. During our lab immersions, I felt a true sense of belonging – learning side by side with classmates and instructors who cared deeply about us."

Cassidy Payne '25, another member of the first cohort, echoed that sentiment. "Orientation was the start," she said. "All the students, professors, and families gathered at Chicken and Pickle, and it immediately felt like a community. Even though we're spread across the country, the group chat before exams proves it – we're in it together."

Payne's clinical experiences reminded her why she chose this field. "I worked with a patient recovering from a traumatic brain injury," she said. "I was their therapist, coach, cheerleader, and friend. That experience reminded me why physical therapy matters and how much trust patients place in us. It's something I'll carry forever."

The Science of Belonging

As the DPT program continues to evolve, faculty are committed to continuous improvement – not just in outcomes, but in belonging itself.

Klopper and Powers recently presented research at a national conference about belonging in hybrid education. "We're gathering feedback from our students to measure what belonging feels like and how we can foster it intentionally," Klopper said. "That's rare in professional education, and it shows our commitment to doing this right."

For Murray, belonging is both philosophy and science. "It's about designing systems that remove barriers and cultivate confidence," she said. "Our students aren't just learning techniques – they're learning how to lead, how to serve, and how to heal."

That leadership starts at the top. "This program has succeeded because of shared vision," said Vice President for Academic Affairs Jill Fort, PhD. "From the very beginning, Dr. Murray and her team built something that reflects who we are as a university: innovative, caring, and student-centered. Their work ensures that every student, no matter where they live, feels like they're part of the Graceland community."

What Comes Next

With full CAPTE accreditation secured and the first graduates stepping into clinics across the country, the future of Graceland's DPT program looks bright.

Murray sees the next few years as a period of growth. "We'll expand our cohorts, strengthen our clinical partnerships, and continue to focus on community impact," she said. "We're also exploring more interprofessional opportunities with other members of the Graceland faculty so we can bring together students from nursing, occupational therapy, and nutrition to learn from one another."

For students like MJay, Elijah, and Cassidy, that growth represents something bigger than degrees or data – it's a legacy. "We're the first [cohort], but not the last," MJay said. "We've shown that a hybrid program can build real belonging. That's something special."

As Graceland's DPT program continues to expand, it's clear that its foundation isn't just built on academic rigor or innovation – it's built on people. On students who bring grace to their learning, on faculty who model compassion, and on a university that believes education should always begin with belonging. ■

Coming Soon: Doctor of Occupational Therapy

Graceland University's next step in health professions education is already underway: the **DOCTOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (OTD) PROGRAM**, launching in Fall 2027.

Under the leadership of Dr. Stephanie Adams, an accomplished educator and clinician with a background in hybrid professional learning, the OTD program will build on Graceland's growing legacy of innovation in graduate healthcare education.

Like Graceland's hybrid DPT program, the OTD will combine online coursework with immersive, hands-on learning experiences, allowing students from a wide range of backgrounds and locations to pursue their degree without uprooting their lives.

"Our OTD curriculum will emphasize leadership development, evidence-informed learning, and interprofessional collaboration," Adams said. "Students will graduate ready to address complex health challenges and provide transformational care that positively impacts society."

The program's design mirrors Graceland's mission of access and belonging. "Belonging is at the heart of our OTD program," Adams said. "We foster strong faculty-student relationships, peer support networks, and community partnerships to ensure every student feels valued and connected throughout their journey."

By offering another pathway for compassionate, highly skilled healthcare professionals, Graceland is expanding its impact in the region and beyond – preparing leaders who bring justice, service, and excellence into every patient interaction.

DPT students Brielle Estwin and Freda Redding participate in lab immersions held at SkillPath.



Performing Arts Steps Into a New Era

Center Stage



© From left: Cara Phipps, Leah Wyman, Kim Manuel, and Parker Worden

A **PERFORMING ARTS ROUNDTABLE** with Department Chair Kimberly “Kim” Manuel, MFA, '01, Assistant Professor of Theatre & Theatre Program Coordinator Cara Phipps, MFA, Director of Bands & Music Program Coordinator Parker Worden, and Visiting Assistant Professor & Director of Choral & Vocal Studies Leah Wyman, DMA

The performing arts at Graceland have always been about more than what happens under the spotlight. Early Graceland theatre faculty like Roscoe Faunce '26 (1934-60), Winston Imslee '42 (1955-85), and Celia Schall '47 (1957-90) laid foundational roots in the performing arts, ensuring they are about discovery, belonging, and transformation, qualities that echo through every rehearsal, recital, and performance in today's Shaw Center.

Now, with a reimagined **PERFORMING ARTS MAJOR**, Graceland is redefining what it means to study the performing arts in a changing world. We gathered the creative forces leading that vision – Manuel, Phipps, Worden, and Wyman – for a conversation about collaboration, creativity, and the heartbeat of the performing arts at Graceland.

HORIZONS: *Kim, you helped shape this new Performing Arts major. How would you describe its spirit?*

KIM MANUEL: At its core, this program is about creativity, connection, and courage. The performing arts have always reflected culture, and today that culture moves faster and feels more interconnected than ever. We wanted to create a program that prepares students to meet that world, one that honors tradition but also embraces innovation.

Our new Performing Arts major gives students the freedom to shape their own artistic path. Through concentrations in Dramatic Media, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Performance Studies, students can explore everything from stage and screen performance to



creative production and arts management. It's about helping them develop not just their skills, but their voice, learning who they are as artists and how their work can make an impact.

The Shaw Center is a huge part of that experience. Having a beautiful recital hall (Carol Hall), the black box (JR Theatre), and the auditorium (Shaw Family Auditorium) all under one roof allows students to collaborate with one another and with a variety of professionals working in our evolving performing arts industry. That spirit of connection defines who we are.

LEAH WYMAN: As someone who's new to Graceland, that sense of collaboration was the first thing I noticed. This community genuinely supports each other, it's not just a tagline, it's lived out every day. Students care deeply about inclusion and about whose stories get told, and the faculty are intentional about nurturing that. It's rare, and it's exactly what makes this program feel so alive.

HORIZONS: *Cara, theatre has always been a cornerstone of Graceland's arts culture. How has it evolved under this new structure?*

CARA PHIPPS: Theatre at Graceland has always been about storytelling and connection; and that hasn't changed, it's grown. Through the Dramatic Media concentration, our students are exploring how stagecraft meets screen and digital design. In addition to learning fundamentals of acting, directing, and design for the stage, they also learn to tell stories which integrate film, social platforms, and new creative mediums.

What I love most is that we're expanding possibilities without losing our sense of connection within our Performing Arts community. Whether it's in the JR Theatre or working across music, theatre, and media projects, students learn to trust each other, take risks, and find truth in the work.

HORIZONS: *Parker, you've led the instrumental program for several years. What's your focus for students in music today?*

PARKER WORDEN: We're focused on developing complete musicians, artists who understand both performance and the systems that make performance possible. Students perform in bands, ensembles, and pit orchestras, but they're also learning sound design, event production, and music technology.

One of my favorite things is how naturally collaboration happens. A Dramatic Media student might compose music for a short film, or a Performance Studies student might help produce a concert. Those intersections are where real creativity happens, and it mirrors the collaborative world they'll work in after graduation.

HORIZONS: *Kim, how does the Business and Entrepreneurship track fit into that creative mix?*

MANUEL: It gives students the tools to make their career goals possible. They learn about arts management, marketing, and leadership – how to run a production, fund a project, or even start their own company. It's a creative degree with a practical edge, and it connects naturally with the performance area.

HORIZONS: *Collaboration clearly connects every part of the program. Leah, as the new Director of Choral and Vocal Studies, what stands out to you about Graceland's arts community?*

WYMAN: The first thing that struck me is how genuinely welcoming it is. Graceland walks the talk when it comes to community and belonging. Our choral tradition has always been about blending individual voices into something greater, and my goal is to nurture that sense of connection while

The Performing Arts program is bold, inclusive and forward-thinking – a blend of tradition and innovation that reflects Graceland's mission at its best.

expanding what we do through new repertoire, collaborations, and community engagement. I love how open our students are to trying new things. Many of them care deeply about inclusion and about whose voices and stories we bring forward. When they find harmony together, they're also finding community.

HORIZONS: *The program has been described as a home for students who feel like they don't belong anywhere else. What does that mean in practice?*

MANUEL: That's really the heart of it. The Performing Arts have always provided a space where people can be seen and celebrated for their individuality. We want every student to feel safe to take creative risks and confident in expressing themselves.

PHIPPS: You can feel a sense of belonging in every rehearsal. When students realize they're supported enough to fail, that's when the discovery and growth so essence to craft happens.

WYMAN: Exactly. Whether you're in a choir or on stage, when you bring your authentic self, you not only make better art, you build connection. That's the transformative part.

WORDEN: That sense of connection stays with students long after they graduate. We hear it from alumni all the time, how those shared experiences in music, theatre, and performance shaped their confidence and creativity in life.

HORIZONS: *How can alumni and friends stay connected or support what's happening in the performing arts today?*

MANUEL: Come back. Attend concerts, plays, and musicals because *your presence matters*. Alumni can mentor students, sponsor guest artists, or help fund additional scholarships, projects, and trips we have planned for our Performing Arts students.

PHIPPS: Share your stories. Our students love hearing how former Gracelanders built careers in the arts or used creativity in unexpected fields. It reminds them that their training here has reach beyond the Shaw Center.

WORDEN: Every instrument, every opportunity, and every scholarship makes a difference. The more support we have, the more we can open doors for the next generation of artists.

WYMAN: One of the most meaningful things alumni can do is share their stories with potential students. When they talk about what the arts meant to them at Graceland, it helps the next generation imagine themselves here too.

Graceland's Performing Arts program is bold, inclusive, and forward-thinking – a blend of tradition and innovation that reflects the university's mission at its best. With these talented faculty members guiding the next generation of performers and creators, one thing is certain: the curtain is only rising on what's to come. – INTERVIEW BY ANGELA SLOSARSKI

We invite you to stay connected and support the Performing Arts!

Q Visit graceland.edu/VPA to view upcoming events and learn how you can get involved.





“Most of our Resch Scholars speakers have been Graceland alumni. They share their knowledge and experiences not only with our scholars, but with other students across the sciences as well.”

JAMES GEISELMAN, DC, DACBN
Associate Professor of Allied Health

Blending Research & Real-World Experience

Geiselman brings that same blend of inspiration and expertise into his own work. In addition to directing the Resch Scholars Program, he teaches in the Allied Health department and speaks at international conferences on topics such as evidence-based nutritional therapy, Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S), and Exertional Rhabdomyolysis.

“Whether I’m teaching in the classroom or speaking to an auditorium of healthcare professionals, I thrive on blending clinical expertise with academic research,” he said. “It’s about inspiring intellectual curiosity and empowering learners with practical, evidence-based strategies.”

By weaving real patient cases and clinical perspectives into his classes, Geiselman helps Resch Scholars connect theory with application – building the kind of analytical and critical-thinking skills that prepare them for competitive graduate and professional programs.

Looking Ahead

Since its founding in 2022, the Resch Scholars Program has quickly become one of Graceland’s most prestigious opportunities for high-achieving students in the sciences. Geiselman hopes to see it continue to grow. “Building on the current program is based on donor generosity,” he said. “I’d love to see it offer even more resources and experiences for students in the years ahead. Our students are eager to learn from those who have walked this path,” he said. “When alumni share their stories, it brings the full Graceland Experience to life.”

– BY SHANE ADAMS ’99

Get Involved!

As the program continues to thrive, Geiselman welcomes Graceland alumni working in STEM fields to contribute as guest speakers or mentors.

✉ Contact Dr. James Geiselman:
jfg1@graceland.edu

Building Leaders, Making Connections

The **RESCH SCHOLARS PROGRAM**, made possible by a \$2 million gift from the Richard J. Resch Foundation, offers competitive scholarships to students majoring in Allied Health, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Information Technology, or Data Science.

The program not only alleviates the financial burden for top students but also fosters a close-knit community of emerging leaders shaping Graceland’s future in science and technology. When Associate Professor of Allied Health **JAMES GEISELMAN, DC, DACBN**, describes the program, his pride is clear. “This is a prestigious scholarship. Being selected is a clear recognition of a student’s dedication to academic excellence,” he said. “Resch Scholars continue to be leaders within their respective majors. They’re detail-oriented, highly motivated, and deeply engaged across campus – often as athletes, student leaders, and mentors to others.”

That balance of drive and curiosity has become the program’s signature feature. Resch Scholars take part in key events, such as the Resch Scholar Speaker Series and Scholar’s Showcase, engaging directly with alumni and professionals who demonstrate how a Graceland education leads to meaningful careers.

Alumni Giving Back

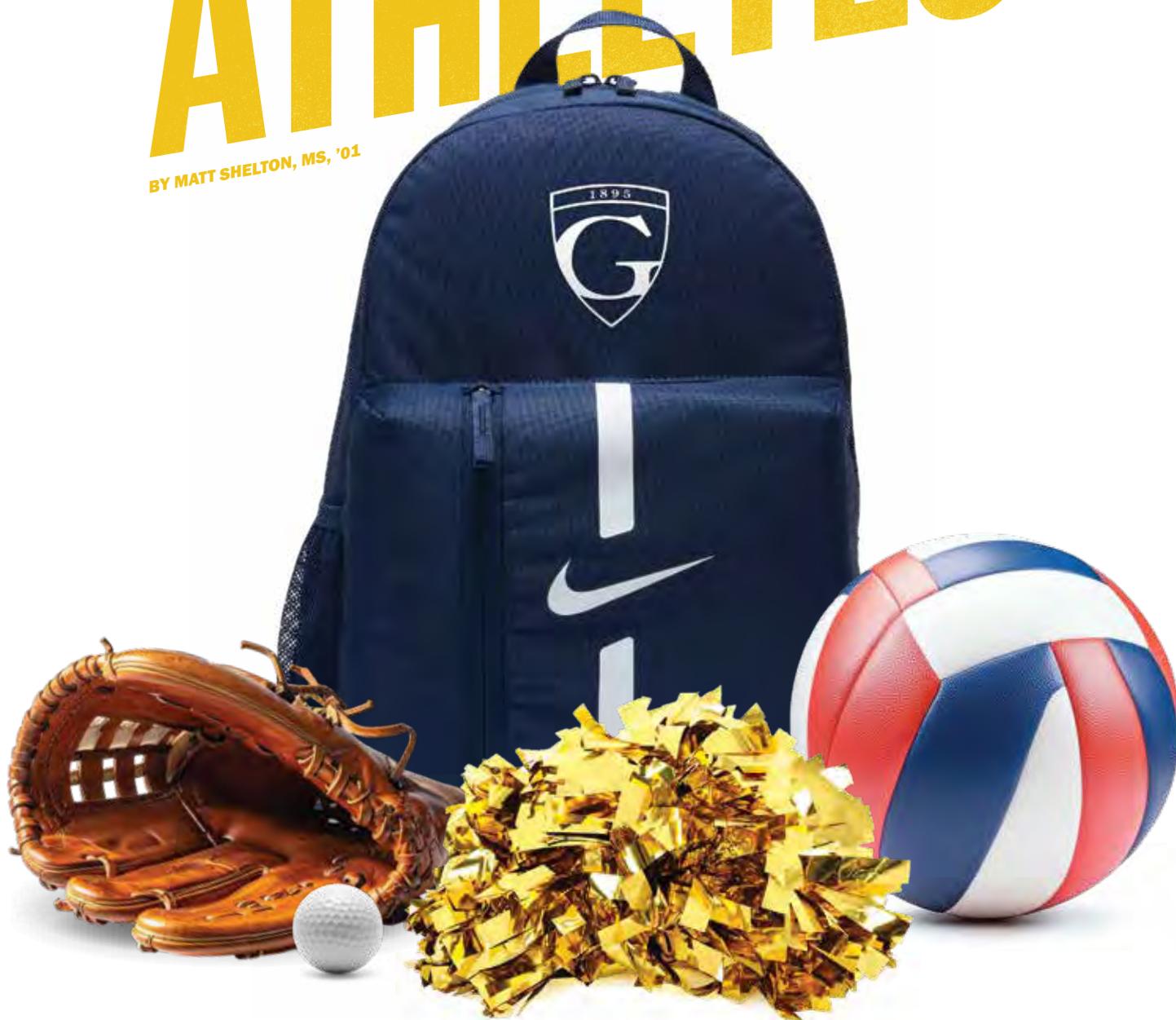
One of the most rewarding developments, Geiselman said, has been seeing alumni return to Lamoni to invest in the next generation. Among the most recent speakers was Katie Hettrick ’99 Dennis, MD, now Program Director for the Pathology Residency Program and Associate Professor of Pathology for the University of Kansas Health System. “She shared how her time at Graceland – as a volleyball player, a house president, and an engaged student leader – helped shape her into a competitive applicant for medical school,” Geiselman said. “Her story really resonated with our students because it showed how far a Graceland education can take you.”



For students, these alumni encounters are both inspiring and grounding. They witness real-life examples of what is achievable – proof that the curiosity and compassion they develop on “the Hill” can grow into remarkable careers in healthcare, science, and technology.

SCHOLAR ATHLETES

BY MATT SHELTON, MS, '01



Success isn't confined to the scoreboard at Graceland. It shows up in classrooms, GPAs, and national academic honors. In the 2024–25 academic year, Graceland student-athletes proved once again that **EXCELLENCE IN ATHLETICS AND ACADEMICS** isn't an either-or. It's both.

14

varsity programs earned
NAIA Scholar Team honors

BASEBALL - BASKETBALL (M)
CROSS COUNTRY (M) - DANCE - GOLF (M+W)
INDOOR TRACK (W) - OUTDOOR TRACK (W)
SOCCER (M+W) - SOFTBALL
VOLLEYBALL (M+W) - WRESTLING (M)

TOP 10

NAIA national rankings for Yellowjacket teams
that soared well above the 3.0+ GPA threshold

DANCE - GOLF (M) - SOCCER (M)
SOFTBALL - WRESTLING (M)

71

Yellowjackets student-athletes named
Heart of America Athletic Conference
Scholar-Athletes

BRING THE STING
Morgan McCullough '26 and Lawson Mulder '28 find balance between studies and sports.

At its core, Graceland's approach focuses on seeing the athlete as a whole person. It's not just about eligibility; it's about growth. Athletes receive structured tutoring, flexible academic resources, and a **campus culture that values scholarship as much as sportsmanship.**

At a university where approximately three-quarters of students compete in varsity athletics, the message is clear: what happens on the field and in the classroom are fundamentally connected. The same discipline, leadership, and teamwork that win games also drive academic achievement. And Graceland is building a model where one reinforces the other, day in and day out.

In 2024-25, the university earned academic honors across nearly every sport, from wrestling and golf to dance and baseball, with five teams ranking among the top 10 nationally. For Athletic Director Brady McKillip, MS, '00, the recognition reflects something deeper. "These accomplishments reflect the dedication of our student-athletes in balancing their academic and athletic commitments," said McKillip. "We are proud to see their hard work recognized on a national level."

The **NAIA SCHOLAR TEAM AWARD** highlights Graceland's program-wide success. Fourteen varsity programs earned NAIA Scholar Team honors, awarded to teams maintaining a 3.0 GPA or higher across all eligible athletes. Several Yellowjacket programs soared well above that threshold, earning top 10 national rankings: Softball (3.76 GPA, 5th nationally), Men's Soccer (3.66 GPA, 3rd nationally), Men's Wrestling (3.33 GPA, 4th nationally), Competitive Dance (3.40 GPA, 7th nationally), and Men's Golf (3.58 GPA, 10th nationally).

Individual student-athletes also received recognition. Seventy-one Yellowjackets were named **HEART OF AMERICA ATHLETIC CONFERENCE SCHOLAR-ATHLETES**, celebrating exceptional achievement across all varsity sports and reflecting Graceland's focus on developing well-rounded leaders.

McKillip notes, “This recognition goes far beyond a number – it reflects the daily habits, late nights, early mornings, and resilience of our student-athletes. Competing at a high level is tough enough. Doing it while excelling in the classroom says everything about the caliber of people we have at Graceland.”

That caliber is further illustrated by KJ Fry, recently selected as one of two Heart of America Conference student-athletes eligible for the **NAIA A.O. DUER SCHOLARSHIP AWARD**, a prestigious national honor recognizing juniors for outstanding academics, leadership, integrity, and athletic achievement. Fry’s nomination underscores the outstanding level of student-athletes Graceland consistently develops.

Where Culture Meets Commitment

Graceland’s academic success in athletics isn’t accidental, it’s intentional. Coaches, administrators, student-athletes and even alumni supporters are working together to build a culture where excellence is expected and supported in both realms.

Faculty are a critical part as well. Professor of History Steve Glazer, PhD, has served as the faculty mentor for Women’s Volleyball for many years. He said, “These student-athletes have been some of my highest academic achievers, and, as I like to tell the team, ‘you work hard in my classes, so I want to support you on the court.’ This program every year produces numerous winners of academic honors and prestigious awards, a tribute to the leadership and culture of academic excellence Coach Stew McDole ’65 fosters.”

Student-athletic excellence has long been central to Graceland’s mission and is celebrated through the **FREEMAN AWARDS**, established in 2012 by Faculty Emeritus Tom ’55 and Terry Moore ’56 Freeman. The award honors junior student-athletes who combine academic discipline with athletic achievement. Coaches select top performers in each sport, with honorees receiving an engraved medal and the highest-ranking student awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. With the Freemans’ estate commitment to endow the award, this tradition will continue to recognize and inspire future Yellowjackets – reflecting a sustained commitment to the culture of excellence that defines Graceland athletics.

Student-First Athletic Identity

At its core, Graceland’s approach focuses on seeing the athlete as a whole person. It’s not just about eligibility; it’s about growth. Athletes receive structured tutoring, flexible academic resources, and a campus culture that values scholarship as much as sportsmanship.

For men’s soccer captain David Hopfer ’26, leadership means building an inclusive, supportive team culture while also excelling academically. He embodies what it truly means to be a liberal arts student – committed to his craft, academically high-achieving, and deeply involved in campus life.

The results? Graceland’s scholar-athletes aren’t just winning games. They are earning national academic recognition, thriving in the classroom, and developing into servant leaders across campus.

The Road Ahead

With momentum building, Graceland’s athletic department is setting its sights even higher. Continued investment in academic support systems, expanded leadership development opportunities, and strong alignment between coaching and faculty are all part of the plan. And perhaps most importantly, the student-athletes themselves are leading the charge by raising expectations, modeling discipline, and reminding the entire campus community that the pursuit of excellence doesn’t stop at the edge of the field. ■

Yellowjacket Pride

Shining a spotlight on three student-athletes who have demonstrated academic excellence & achievement:

MEN’S WRESTLING

KJ FRY

HOMETOWN: Osceola, Iowa

CLASS YEAR: 2026

MAJOR: Business Management

HOUSE: Powell



A team captain, tutor, and leader on and off the mat, KJ Fry is the definition of a complete student-athlete. He maintains a 4.0 GPA, leads Bible study on campus, and embodies Graceland Wrestling’s “Be Water” mindset: *full effort, total adaptability*. Whether mentoring classmates or grinding through training, Fry leads by example – reflecting the academic and athletic excellence Graceland champions.

SOFTBALL

MALORIE MCKINNEY

HOMETOWN: Knoxville, Iowa

CLASS YEAR: 2026

MAJOR: Criminal Justice, Forensic Psychology, Psychology

HOUSE: Hanthorne



A two-time NAIA Scholar-Athlete and NFCA Academic All-American, Malorie McKinney leads in every arena. A 2025 Graceland Freeman Award winner and Defensive Player of the Year, she’s also served three years on the GUS Leadership Council and twice as team captain. Known for her mentorship and selfless example, McKinney is the definition of a team-first leader – on the field and in the classroom.

MEN’S SOCCER

DAVID HOPFER

HOMETOWN: Augsburg, Germany

CLASS YEAR: 2026

MAJOR: Business Management, Marketing, Finance

HOUSE: Stewart Manor



As team captain, David Hopfer leads with inclusion and integrity – welcoming newcomers and setting the tone for Graceland soccer’s values. A true Renaissance man, he balances academic excellence with athletic focus, all while modeling servant leadership. Hopfer’s commitment to both scholarship and sport reflects the program’s highest ideals: competitive, connected, and constantly striving for growth.



Huntsman Field looks different this season. Several updates made possible by community investment give Graceland's home field **A FRESH LOOK AND RENEWED PURPOSE.**

Huntsman Field Remix

BY ANGELA SLOSARSKI

The new scoreboard lights up the field, the sound system carries across the stands, and the stadium feels renewed. These upgrades aren't about flash; they're about care – about creating a space that matches the energy and dedication of the student-athletes who play here.

Thanks to the partnership of BTC Bank and National Management Resources Corporation, Huntsman Field received a major upgrade with a new digital scoreboard. It adds color and motion to every game, turning routine plays into moments that stay with you. Not only that, but it provides an opportunity to display special recognitions, such as the Yellowjackets Hall and Wall of Fame honorees and Freeman Student-Athlete Awards on Homecoming weekend. It's a visible sign of investment, not just in facilities, but in the people who bring them to life.

The improvements don't stop there. The upgraded sound system fills the air with energy, and the fresh paint in the stands reflects Yellowjacket pride. These changes matter as much on practice days as on game days. The atmosphere drives focus, and the environment supports performance. It's a field that showcases the pride, spirit, and excellence of the Yellowjackets every day.

For current student-athletes, these updates are a reminder that their work is valued. For recruits visiting campus, they're the kind of details that make an impression – the ones that turn a good visit into a clear decision.

Each update on Huntsman Field tells a story of progress, not the kind that comes from one major change, but the kind that builds over time – through community support, thoughtful planning, and the shared belief that Graceland's best days are always ahead. Every improvement reflects Graceland's commitment to today's student-athletes and creates a space that will inspire those who come next. ■

These upgrades aren't just about flash; they're about care – about creating a space that matches the energy and dedication of the student-athletes who play here.

Ring of Honor

On September 6, the Graceland community gathered to recognize the **2025 RING OF HONOR INDUCTEES** – two outstanding Yellowjackets and Hall of Famers William “Billy” Gray ’93 and Cris Welch ’92.

Gray left a lasting legacy as a varsity athlete in football and basketball, earning many awards that honored his outstanding collegiate career in both spots (securing NAIA All-American honors twice). In football, Gray was a four-year starter and was considered one of the fiercest and most competitive defensive players on the field. In 1992, Gray coached for his alma mater, mentoring the Graceland defensive line.

Welch made an unforgettable mark on Graceland’s football program, both as an offensive line player (1988-91) and head coach (2003-09). He led the Yellowjackets to a record-setting 2005 season – beginning with a preseason appearance at the 11th Annual Wheat Bowl (defeating the Crimson Storm 24-20) and closing with their first-ever appearance in the 2005 NAIA Football Championship series postseason playoff game.

This recognition, presented by the Graceland Football Alumni Association (GFAA), highlights their incredible accomplishments as Yellowjackets. Established in the spring of 2022, the GFAA’s mission is to reconnect with former Graceland players, foster a sense of community among football alumni, and organize events to gather and strengthen those connections. – **GEORGIA SEAGRAVES, MS, ’21**



📍 From left: 2025 Inductees William “Billy” Gray and Cris Welch

Make a Gift!

The GFAA is working directly with the football staff to prioritize needs, and we could use your help. Donations to the Alumni Association will go directly toward advancing the football program and improving the experience for the players and coaching staff. Funds will help connect alumni to the program as well.

🔍 To join the GFAA or learn more, visit: graceland.edu/GFAA



A New Era for Yellowjacket Football

BY **GEORGIA SEAGRAVES, MS, ’21**

Graceland Football has entered an exciting new chapter with a **LEADERSHIP TRANSITION** that builds on stability, shared vision, and long-term momentum.

After years of guiding the program with purpose, Patrick Ross moved into a newly created role as General Manager of Football Operations, where he will focus on player placement, recruiting, and mentoring the next generation of coaches. His continued involvement ensures a steady foundation for the program he helped elevate.

Stepping into the Head Coach role is a familiar face: Phil Staback, longtime Assistant Coach and Offensive Coordinator. Staback brings over a decade of collegiate coaching experience, including an impressive run at Southwest Baptist University, where his offensive leadership helped secure a 10-2 season, a national ranking, and dozens of All-Conference and All-American accolades. A former two-time All-American quarterback, Staback once played under Ross at Lindenwood University, forging a relationship rooted in trust, leadership, and shared success.

Both coaches express deep enthusiasm for the future. Ross calls this Graceland’s “best staff in years,” while Staback describes the promotion as an honor and a continuation of the work they have built together. The program is poised for continued growth and renewed energy. ■

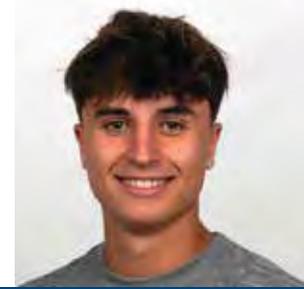


📍 Coach Staback addresses the huddle during the matchup against Clarke University

An opportunity began with a Graceland graduate and Alumni Board member whose professional journey in the tech world positioned him uniquely to connect his alma mater to this **HIGH-ENERGY EVENT.**



© Left to right:
Peter Wilkinson,
Josh Obersteadt,
Arup Ghosh (top),
Álvaro Martín Peña
(bottom).



FROM GRACELAND TO HACK MIDWEST

How One Alumnus Opened Doors for Future Innovators

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES, MS, '21

When Graceland computer science students **ÁLVARO MARTÍN PEÑA '27** and **JOSH OBERSTEADT '27** packed their laptops and headed to Kansas City for Hack Midwest, they weren't just joining a hackathon – they were stepping into one of the Midwest's largest gatherings of developers, designers, and engineers. That opportunity began with Graceland graduate and Alumni Board member **PETER WILKINSON '93**, whose professional journey in the tech world positioned him uniquely to connect his alma mater to this high-energy event.

Wilkinson's introduction to Hack Midwest came years ago while working at the startup Pharmacy RX Saving Solutions, where he served as Vice President of Product alongside a team of engineers. The company's head of engineering was a passionate advocate for the hackathon, encouraging teams to participate. Curious, Peter attended one of the early events himself.

"It was filled with energy and innovation," Wilkinson recalled. "You had teams from all kinds of organizations – big corporations and small startups – coming together to build creative solutions in just one weekend."

Five years later, Wilkinson transitioned to Select Quote, a company with a large IT organization and a strong culture of collaboration. Through a mutual connection, Mike Gelpman, the founder of Hack Midwest, reached out to see if Select Quote might get involved. That's when Wilkinson had a new idea – one that connected his professional world back to Graceland. "I realized big universities were sending teams," he said, "and I thought, why not Graceland? How could I help make that happen?"

Wilkinson connected Gelpman with **ARUP GHOSH, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Graceland, who helped coordinate the University's participation. What followed was a meaningful partnership – one that gave Graceland students access to a vibrant, real-world learning environment.

A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE: LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

For Martín Peña, a junior from Moralzarzal, Spain, majoring in Computer Science and Information Technology and a member of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Club student chapter, Hack Midwest was an experience unlike any other. "You have the opportunity to talk with many companies and even CEOs looking for talent. We got to meet a lot of people who share the same passion – people who are always trying to improve."

Wilkinson's story underscores the power of alumni networks to expand opportunities, bridge generations, and help Graceland students step confidently into the wider world.

Martín Peña and his teammates joined forces with two students from Missouri Western University, gaining firsthand experience in collaboration and problem-solving across institutions. "It was really nice to meet people from other colleges," he said. "Working with people you don't know is important for what we want to do in the future."

Together, they coded for 24 hours straight, developing an AI-powered marketplace app for college students. The platform allowed users to buy and sell materials securely within their university community, using a .edu email and student ID verification system.

Visiting Professor of Computer Science Aquila Galusha '16 was on hand to witness the atmosphere firsthand. "The students were let loose on their own, and only participants were allowed inside," he said. "It was row upon row of teams – hundreds of people gathered together. You could tell everyone was exhausted, but worked hard."

Through the vision of an engaged alumnus and the dedication of its faculty and students, Graceland made its mark at Hack Midwest – proving that innovation, creativity, and collaboration thrive not only in large institutions but also in the small, connected community of Lamoni, Iowa.

Looking ahead, Wilkinson hopes Graceland will continue to strengthen this connection, helping students link to professional communities in Kansas City and beyond. "I think of myself as a connector," he said. "Whether it's helping people know which companies to look at in Kansas City or supporting connections across the country." His story underscores the power of alumni networks to expand opportunities, bridge generations, and help Graceland students step confidently into the wider world. ■

A Letter from the Alumni Board President



"As you spread across the world, remember that it is this special shared experience, across different generations and time frames, that unites us all together."

It is an honor to serve as your Alumni Board President and to connect with you on our shared love of Graceland. From the student leadership opportunities, life-long friendships, to the excellent academic experience, my time at Graceland is truly the most cherished of my life. It has been an honor to give back to Graceland as a member of the Alumni Board over the last three years, and I am excited to expand my impact in my new role as the Alumni Board President.

My friends from Graceland continue to be some of the most important people in my life. The key components of those friendships are our shared values of community, learning, and wholeness offered at Graceland, which transcend my years on campus. Each generation of Graceland students insists that their era was the best; that's part of what makes our time on "the Hill" so special. It has been a pleasure to connect with alumni across generations and to experience how easily those bonds form to create genuine friendships. As you spread across the world, remember that it is this special shared experience, across different generations and time frames, that unites us all together.

The current pressures on higher education make our role as alumni more critical than ever. Now is the moment to give our time, money, and talents to Graceland to support a strong foundation for students to come. The Alumni Board is always looking for people who are eager to make a difference. If you are passionate about recruiting students, helping graduates succeed, engaging with alumni, or championing Graceland, we would love to have you get involved with us. Please reach out to us at alumni@graceland.edu to connect. May Graceland's unique and transformative influence continue to be with you today and everyday onward.

Melissa Sherer

MELISSA SHERER '18
President, Graceland Alumni Board of Directors

Support Your Alma Mater

Alumni Board applications typically open in the fall, but we welcome your participation any time with our committees, which all alumni are eligible to join. I encourage you to learn more and apply here:

graceland.edu/AlumniBoard



Each July, Graceland's Lamoni campus bursts to life with color, laughter, and community as hundreds of high school students arrive for **SPECTACULAR** – the largest annual gathering of Community of Christ youth in the world.

GRACELAND + Spectacular

PARTNERS IN BELONGING FOR OVER 50 YEARS

BY SHANE ADAMS '99

Since 1973, Graceland has been home to this week-long event, which blends faith, friendly competition, and personal growth in the kind of setting that only Graceland can provide. For more than 50 years, SPEC has offered high schoolers a chance to live on a college campus, worship together, and discover who they are – all in a place designed to help them feel that they belong. In a world where so many young people struggle to find connection, SPEC's message resonates deeply: *You are loved. You are valued. You belong.*

Learn more!

Q Visit graceland.edu/SPEC and join us **July 11-18** for an incredible SPEC 2026!

“SPEC is one of the most unique and meaningful events we host each year. It not only gives hundreds of high schoolers a glimpse of what life at Graceland is like, but it also reflects what this institution stands for – community, faith, learning, and belonging. SPEC embodies the best of who we are.”

JOEL SHROCK, PhD
President

☺ **Top:** The campus comes alive with vibrant energy as camp participants rep their delegations with themed shirts throughout the week. **Bottom:** Camper and future Yellowjacket Gia DeRose '30 was one of six Wallace B. Smith Scholarship recipients this past July.



A Shared Legacy of Faith & Education

Community of Christ and Graceland University have always shared more than a name on the marquee – they share a mission. SPEC began in 1970 at the church's headquarters in Independence, Missouri, before finding its permanent home in Lamoni three years later. While the camp was paused during the COVID-era, the partnership is back better and bigger than ever.

Throughout the week, students live in the residence halls, eat in the Floyd McDowell Commons, and fill classrooms, fields, and auditoriums across campus. Every corner of Graceland becomes a hub of activity: morning worship in the Shaw Amphitheatre, volleyball and basketball tournaments in Morden Center, and evening activities varying from a silent dance party to a talent show. The camp makes full use of Graceland's facilities, and recent campus improvements – like the addition of air conditioning in Morden Center – have helped create a more comfortable and welcoming experience for participants and staff alike.

"It's amazing to see how the Graceland community rallies around SPEC each summer," Shrock added. "Faculty, staff, and students all contribute to making this week special while not infringing on the special experience the students have on our campus. It's a living example of radical belonging and the way the church's enduring principles are lived out by community."

Building Leaders Through Belonging

While SPEC is known for its energy and fun, its purpose runs deeper. Campers are encouraged to explore leadership, creativity, and faith through workshops, arts, and recreation. It's a place where future Graceland students – and future community leaders – discover their strengths.

Over the years, the connection between SPEC and Graceland has only grown stronger. Many SPEC campers go on to attend Graceland, drawn by the same sense of purpose and belonging they experienced during the week. The university and the church work hand in hand to help make that possible.

Investing in the Future

That shared commitment is exemplified through the **KATHY & JOEL ROSS INSPIRED LEADERSHIP FUND**, established in 2023 to nurture leadership and service among Graceland students. The fund supports key scholarships like the **WALLACE B. SMITH AWARD**, which offers two full-tuition scholarships, as well as additional half-tuition awards for students who have participated in SPEC.

"These scholarships ensure that the sense of belonging young people find at SPEC can continue long after camp ends," Shrock said. "They help us invest in the next generation of leaders – people who will carry Graceland's and Community of Christ's values into the world."

A Place That Feels Like Home

As SPEC has returned to full strength in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, its importance feels greater than ever. The camp has evolved to include new opportunities for creative expression, service, and personal reflection while maintaining the traditions that generations of participants remember fondly.

For one week each summer, Graceland becomes more than a campus – it becomes a living, breathing community of belonging. Campers arrive as strangers and leave as family, united by a shared experience that stays with them for life. And when the buses pull away, Graceland remains changed, too – refreshed and inspired by the energy of hundreds of young people who, like generations before them, found something spectacular on "the Hill." ■

Graceland Alumni at the Heart of SPEC

Behind every great camp experience is a team that makes the magic happen. For SPECTACULAR, that team includes a group of Graceland alumni who lead, mentor, and serve with dedication. Co-directors **Jamie Varvaro '81**, **Doug Roberts, MA, '02**, and **Jenn Glandon '96 Killpack, MA**, describe SPEC as a place where transformation happens through community.



"All are welcome and belong at SPEC. We take that seriously." – Doug Roberts



"It's about recognizing each person's worth and remembering that we are all one community – no matter what team we're on." – Jenn Killpack



Jamie Varvaro, who has served in leadership roles for decades, said it best: "SPEC is a safe space made of love, where we can all be ourselves – a place where dreamers can believe."

New Faces on the Board of Trustees

BY GEORGIA SEAGRAVES, MS, '21

Graceland is proud to welcome **TWO NEW MEMBERS** to its Board of Trustees.

Though their paths and professional backgrounds differ, both share a deep connection to Graceland and a commitment to strengthening the university's future, living out its values of radical belonging and supporting students in transformative ways.



TOM HILES, MEd, '82

This appointment marks Hiles' second tour of service on the Graceland Board. With a 35-year career in higher education, including 20 years as a vice president at multiple

universities, Hiles brings extensive leadership and fundraising experience. While serving as Vice Chancellor at the University of Missouri, his team completed a record-setting \$1.4 billion campaign.

A 1982 Graceland graduate, Hiles also carries a meaningful family legacy at the university – his father dedicated 25 years to Graceland, and his siblings have served as faculty, staff, or alumni. Hiles looks forward to assisting with Graceland's fundraising campaign and strategic planning efforts to strengthen the University's financial picture, growing enrollment, and increasing the endowment. He also encourages alumni to support these goals personally.



NOEL SHERER, MS, '91

For Noel, joining the Board feels like coming home. A 1991 graduate, he credits Graceland with shaping his life and leadership, citing roles like house president as formative

experiences. He met his wife, Alison, on campus, and all three of their children have attended Graceland – with their daughter currently in student leadership. Professionally, Noel has been a business owner, healthcare leader, entrepreneur, and nonprofit board member. His recent role as Mission Center President for Community of Christ deepened his belief in the power of shared vision and values to transform communities. Noel hopes to foster inclusivity and belonging so every student feels welcome, and he encourages students to use challenges and setbacks as fuel for growth.

Both Hiles and Sherer bring distinct strengths and experiences to the Board of Trustees, and together they embody the passion and commitment that will help guide Graceland into a bold future. ■

CLASS NOTES

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.

Submissions are included as space permits and may be edited for length or clarity. Send high quality digital photos – 300 dpi and/or minimum of 1,200 pixels on the image's shortest side.

Share your memories and milestones with us here: graceland.edu/classnotes

Class notes submitted between June 11, 2025, and Oct. 9, 2025, are included in this issue.

75 Holly Nelson-Becker, Derby, United Kingdom, professor emeritus at Brunel University London, has recently co-authored and authored, respectively, the research publications *Being that hopeful person: The contribution of social workers to older people's well-being and Healing from Loss and Grief in a Classroom Space: Engagement with Arts*. 📍 **1**

76 Barbara Brock, Cheney, Washington, professor emerita at Eastern Washington University, has authored *Creative Dates: The Why, the How, and the Reason for Now*, a book inspired by a Graceland class assignment from the late Professor **Raymond Zinzer '42** that she and **Sallie Babcock '77 Waite** participated in back in 1976. Brock later adapted and refined that assignment for the recreation and leisure course she taught for 30 years at EWU, ultimately culminating in this inspiring new book that promotes meaningful relationships and helps people reconnect in an increasingly disconnected world. 📍 **2**

80 Terry Green, Mineral Point, Wisconsin, founder and president of Strata Productions, Inc, is currently directing his fourth feature film, *The Camera*, on location in France. 📍 **3**



2



Watch how everything came together to get this magical shot ► graceland.edu/Horizons



99 Gregory Howard Jr., El Paso, Texas, has served 37 years in the United States Army and was recently promoted to the rank of Colonel – Deputy Chief of Staff. On June 6, 2025, he completed his second master’s degree, Military Strategic Studies, from the United States Army War College.  **4**

03 Nichole Moore, Centerville, Iowa, has been honored by Marquis Who’s Who for her exceptional leadership in local government and transportation planning as the Executive Director of the Chariton Valley Planning and Development Council. Nichole has led initiatives for improved housing, recreation and recently transit services for veterans in her various roles, serving southern Iowa for nearly 20 years.

18 Samuel Hinkhouse, Houston, Texas, has been officially recognized as a U.S. patent inventor. The patent, *System and Method for Performing and Verifying Data Erasure* (U.S. Patent No. 12,423,017 B2), acknowledges the work Hinkhouse completed with his former colleagues at Smith & Associates, the company of former Graceland University Board of Trustee member and **Honorary Alumni Robert Ackerley ’06**, to create a reliable and verifiable process for securely wiping data from computer storage devices.

MARRIAGES

22 Addison and Sierra Marshall ’21 Wilson, Blue Springs, Missouri, married April 12, 2025.  **5**

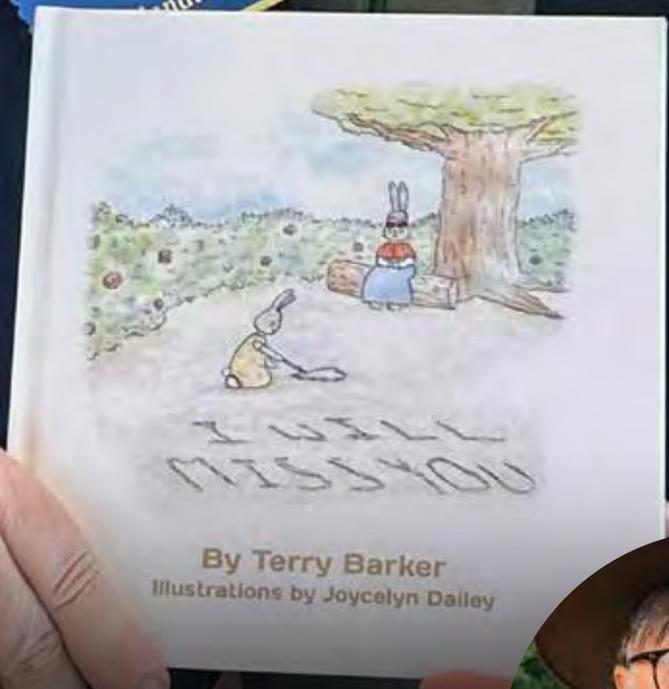
ANNIVERSARIES

54 Wendell and Lillian Bowser Wallace ’57, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, 66 years, Jan. 25, 2025.

65 Jerry and Sandra Froyd Mogg ’66, Saint Joseph, Missouri, 60 years, June 21, 2025.  **6**

78 Mark and Cynthia Carson Christenson, Independence, Missouri, 50 years, Dec. 20, 2025.

99 Reverend Deacon Daniel and Linda Johnson, Yorktown, Virginia, 54 years, March 20, 2025.  **7**



Ensuring that this project – born from love, loss, and learning – continues to inspire future Graceland artists, Barker has gifted the proceeds from *I Will Miss You* to support art scholarships at Graceland.



ALUMNI PROFILE

I Will Miss You

Two Gracelanders, over 50 years apart, join forces – weaving creativity, mentorship, and heart into **A COLLABORATIVE ARTISTIC JOURNEY.**

When then-art student **JOYCELYN DAILEY '24** opened an email from Karen Gergely, MFA, Graceland's Art Program Coordinator, two years ago, she didn't know it would lead to illustrating a children's book – or to a two-year collaboration with another Graceland and author, **TERRY BARKER '77**. Gergely reached out on Barker's behalf after he contacted her seeking an illustrator for his latest story, *I Will Miss You*, sparking an invaluable learning experience for Dailey to pursue her artistic dreams.

"At the time, illustrating children's books was a career goal," Dailey said. "I immediately responded with enthusiastic interest. From there, Terry, Karen, and I scheduled calls and exchanged countless emails as the book came to life."

Barker's story, written in 2017, was born from a deeply personal promise. "My sister Sharon passed away from an aggressive form of cancer," he explained. "Her great-granddaughter got mad at God for taking her. That broke my dad's heart, and I promised him I'd write a story to

help children understand that God isn't a meany."

Though he finished the manuscript that year, Barker couldn't find the right illustrator until reconnecting with Graceland. With Gergely's mentorship and Dailey's artistic vision, *I Will Miss You* began to take form – a children's story that weaves together themes of faith, death, and God to help young readers cope with loss.

For Dailey, the opportunity was both thrilling and intimidating. "I had almost no experience with character design or watercolor," she said. "Drawing wasn't my specialty, but I wanted the illustrations to feel soft and comforting for this story." Through trial, error, and encouragement from Gergely, Dailey found her rhythm and style.

Originally, Barker envisioned giraffes as the main characters – his sister's favorite animal – but Dailey suggested bunnies might feel more relatable. "Still, I added a giraffe as Nicky's beloved toy – a personal tribute to Terry's family," she said.

Each illustration went through multiple rounds of sketches and color tests before earning approval. "Terry gave me full creative freedom," Dailey said. "He trusted me before I trusted myself." Barker agreed: "Joycelyn's art told the story better than my words."

When the finished book arrived, Dailey described the feeling as "surreal." For Barker, it marked both a promise fulfilled and a new beginning.

Barker and Dailey met face-to-face for the first time at Graceland's 2025 Homecoming, where they shared their collaborative story with fellow Gracelanders on campus.
- BY LISA GILBERT

Are you looking to stay connected and help drive student success? We invite you to join GU4U and participate in networking and professional development support!

Q Find out more: graceland.edu/GU4U

DEATHS

Correction: *The following alumni were added in error to the Deaths section in the Spring/Summer 2025 issue – Paul and Roberta Krinzi are not deceased. We extend our sincere apologies.*

44 Betty Lou Zinser Hinderks, Olathe, Kansas, May 5, 2025.

45 Claire Cudworth Campbell, Bryan, Texas, April 9, 2025. **Wanda Harris Hughes,** Guntersville, Alabama, July 27, 2024. **Jean Snowden Johnson,** Evergreen, Alabama, Sept. 17, 2025.

46 Eula “Joyce” Pearson Emmons, Marion, Iowa, Aug. 14, 2025. **Betty Snowden Taylor,** Huntsville, Alabama, Nov. 30, 2023. **Shirley Lanphere Vickery,** Boulder, Colorado, Dec. 16, 2022.

47 Jeanne Hinkle Fitzpatrick, Greencastle, Indiana, Aug. 6, 2025. **Conrad Rasmussen,** Council Bluffs, Iowa, May 13, 2025. **Joan Jennings Raveill,** Bellevue, Nebraska, May 30, 2020. **Dorothy Lewis Seaver,** Independence, Missouri, March 13, 2025. **Donna Atwood Ward,** Manhattan, Montana, Oct. 2, 2018.

48 Faye “Madaleen” Montgomery Miller, Fairland, Oklahoma, Sept. 23, 2023. **Ruth Thomas Smith,** Mesa, Arizona, Oct. 3, 2021.

49 Kathryn Snowden Baldwin, Stockton, Alabama, Nov. 14, 2024. **Alma “Al” Baughman,** Independence, Missouri, June 4, 2020. **Howard Hall,** Quarryville, Pennsylvania, March 12, 2025. **Howard Harrington,** Leawood, Kansas, Oct. 10, 2022. **Betty Jo Bagley Hawkins,** Ottumwa, Iowa, Jan. 5, 2024. **Barbara Peavy Howard,** Lee’s Summit, Missouri, April 2, 2025. **Daniel “Ivan” Skinner,** Melbourne, Florida, Aug. 27, 2008. **Maben “Leonard” Speer,** Glendale, Arizona, March 7, 2025. **Marjorie Hill Stowell,** Lee’s Summit, Missouri, July 25, 2025. **Vallie Lavinghouze Wolfe,** Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 29, 2024.

50 Warren “Greg” Beitz, Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 27, 2015. **Bertha Chock Fong,**

Kaneohe, Hawaii, Sept. 26, 2024. **Donald King,** Jackson, Ohio, Feb. 21, 2024. **Luella Hawley-Sedlak,** Santa Barbara, California, Jan. 26, 2025. **Ann Hilburn Spencer,** Mobile, Alabama, May 6, 2010.

51 Wallace Aki, Hilo, Hawaii, July 10, 2025. **Lillias Rotzien Leialoha,** Hilo, Hawaii, Oct. 2, 2025. **Joyce McElwain Midgorden,** Melbourne, Florida, Aug. 20, 2023. **Dorothy Katzman Wheat,** St. Joseph, Missouri, Oct. 14, 2025.

52 Jack Braby, Huntington Beach, California, Feb. 6, 2022. **Richard Cheville,** Rochester, Minnesota, March 17, 2025. **Calvin Chun,** Dublin, Ohio, Jan. 13, 2024. **Joy Vincent Fears,** Hendersonville, North Carolina, Feb. 16, 2025. **Gilbert “Paul” Hedrick,** Merriam, Kansas, Feb. 6, 2023. **Trefor Munch,** Ankeny, Iowa, Dec. 2, 2024. **Wardell Schoff,** Hamilton, Missouri, Feb. 7, 2025. **Arnold Van Den Bosch,** North Hollywood, California, Jan. 20, 2024. **Barbara Smith Wilkinson,** Massillon, Ohio, March 22, 2025.

53 Charlie Browne, Independence, Missouri, Oct. 22, 2024. **Ramon Chase,** Gainesville, Virginia, July 25, 2024. **Bonita Gates Christensen,** Phoenix, Arizona, March 4, 2025. **Yvetta Reilly Kolar,** Germantown, Ohio, Sept. 11, 2025. **Phyllis Hansen Parker,** Garden City, Idaho, Dec. 2, 2024.

54 Carol Ellis Beitz, Prescott, Arizona, Jan. 3, 2024. **Vivian Collins Campbell,** El Cerrito, California, Nov. 29, 2024. **Alice Johnson Conrad,** Hedrick, Iowa, Sept. 21, 2024. **Edith McKinney Cook,** Kansas City, Missouri, July 16, 2024. **Donald Eisele,** Kansas City, Missouri, Sept. 27, 2025. **Archie Hill,** Foldens, Ontario, April 25, 2024. **Sharon Thompson Kinney,** Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, July 29, 2018. **Beverly Moore Lancaster,** West Bloomfield, Michigan, Jan. 11, 2025. **John Mader,** Lee’s Summit, Missouri, Aug. 2, 2021. **Elizabeth Tokuda Nakama,** Irvine, California, Jan. 30, 2025. **Willard Pendarvis,** Lansing, Michigan, June 30, 2024. **Norman Waldron,** Pinole, California, Oct. 11, 2025.

55 Shirley Parks Abel, Hamilton, Montana, March 2, 2012. **Charleen King Ayres,**

IN REMEMBRANCE

The Life & Legacy of Jolene Lynn, PhD, RN

Lynn’s dedication to nursing and nursing education strengthened the experiences of Graceland students during her years of service. Her leadership helped elevate the School of Nursing in lasting and meaningful ways.

Lynn joined Graceland in 2018 as Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and quickly became a trusted leader, collaborator, and mentor. In 2021, she was appointed Dean of the School of Nursing, where her warmth, expertise, and steady guidance left a deep impact on faculty and students. With 39 years as a registered nurse and more than two decades as a nurse educator, Lynn brought deep clinical and academic experience that strengthened the program. Her background in emergency care, day surgery, and wound management – along with research interests in education, health disparities, and student retention – grounded her leadership in compassion and evidence-based practice.

Lynn’s greatest joy was found in her students – watching them gain confidence, master new skills, and shape their own path toward meaningful, impactful nursing careers. Even as dean, she continued teaching introductory courses and her beloved Theory of Nursing class – modeling the curiosity, humility, and passion for service she hoped to instill. “Dr. Lynn was an inspiration to the novice nursing student,” one student shared, reflecting the gratitude expressed by many whose academic and professional journeys were shaped by her encouragement.

Colleagues remember Lynn’s collaborative spirit and her belief that the best solutions emerged when people worked together. She often said that Graceland’s faculty “prioritize our students,” and she lived that value daily. Her efforts helped ensure that nearly 700 learners – from BSN candidates to future nurse practitioners and doctoral students – had the support and confidence they needed to pursue their goals.

Lynn retired from Graceland in 2024, and after a courageous battle with cancer, she passed away October 5, 2025. During the Graceland University Nursing Recognition Ceremony on December 12, 2025 at the Community of Christ Temple, her service to nursing was honored with the Nightingale Tribute led by her colleagues and students.

A passionate educator, steadfast leader, and tireless advocate, Lynn leaves a legacy that continues to advance Graceland University Nursing.



Albuquerque, New Mexico, Jan. 29, 2025. **Velma “Jeannie” Knutson Bondurant,** Colorado Springs, Colorado, Oct. 18, 2024. **Betty Vuillemot Fahselt,** East Tawas, Michigan, Sept. 3, 2024. **Pearl Ward Freeze,** Bates City, Missouri, July 17, 2025. **Velma Davies Gleason,** Conroe, Texas,

Aug. 17, 2024. **Daniel Greene,** Santa Rosa Valley, California, Feb. 22, 2020. **Archie Hill,** Foldens, Ontario, Canada, April 25, 2024. **Thomas Kemple,** Mukilteo, Washington, Dec. 16, 2023. **Sue Ann Payne,** Montgomery, Texas, April 14, 2025. **Faye Saylor Salter,** Melbourne, Florida, March



IN REMEMBRANCE

Honoring the Life of Carol Shaw: 1979 Honorary Alumna, Former Board of Trustees Member & Faithful Benefactor

Shaw, a woman of quiet grace, steady wisdom, and unwavering commitment to service who helped shape the Graceland community for more than four decades, passed away this past June. Known for her gentle strength and thoughtful presence, Carol partnered alongside her late husband, JR Shaw '56, in a lifetime of philanthropy that profoundly enriched the University and advanced its mission.

Shaw played an integral role in their family's philanthropic vision, particularly through her involvement with the Shaw Family Foundation. While JR's leadership and entrepreneurial innovation were widely recognized, Carol's influence was equally profound – often expressed through careful guidance, a discerning eye for meaningful impact, and a steadfast belief in supporting institutions that lift and transform lives. Her thoughtful participation helped steer the Foundation's work, ensuring its support reflected the family's values of education, creativity, and opportunity.

Together, they changed the landscape of Graceland University. Their generosity made possible the creation and later the transformational expansion of the Shaw Center, a cornerstone of the performing and visual arts on the Lamoni campus. Their historic \$16 million gift – the largest in Graceland's history – redefined what a liberal arts education could offer, providing state-of-the-art spaces for music, theatre, and artistic exploration. Shaw was deeply proud of the students whose lives were enriched by these opportunities, and she delighted in seeing the arts flourish in a place that meant so much to her family.

In addition to their commitment to facilities, Carol supported JR's vision for building a vibrant university art collection. Through their leadership, Graceland became home to the Canadian Heritage Collection and a significant collection of contemporary Canadian works now displayed throughout campus. She valued the role of art in expanding perspectives and sparking inspiration, and she embraced its ability to shape student experiences in meaningful ways.

Shaw's life was a testament to the power of unseen ties: the lasting love of family, the grace of faith, and the beauty of living fully and giving freely. She will be remembered at Graceland not only for her generosity, but for the thoughtful, steady spirit behind it – a legacy of quiet philanthropy that continues to uplift the University she supported with such heart.

11, 2023. **Carol Melton Sharp**, Yakima, Washington, Dec. 29, 2023. **Anne Slosson Tierney**, Temple City, California, July 5, 2024. **John Walden**, Urbandale, Iowa, June 18, 2020. **Robert Watts**, Billings, Montana, Dec. 18, 2022. **Harold Weeks**, Trenton, South Carolina, June 4, 2025. **Joseph Wolfe**, Bainbridge Island, Washington, Dec. 30, 2022. **Armis "Lenall" Worlund**, Huntsville, Alabama, June 10, 2024.

56 Marilyn Whittaker Chastain, Springfield, Missouri, July 22, 2019. **Charles Cottingham**, Walla Walla, Washington, Feb. 24, 2025. **Richard Fortman**, Independence, Missouri, Aug. 27, 2019. **Dale Guthrie**, Fairbanks, Alaska, 2024. **Warren Hall**, Lee's Summit, Missouri, June 15, 2025. **Philip Hampton**, Aurora, Colorado, Dec. 15, 2024. **Marianna Jones Johnson**, Lone Jack, Missouri, Oct. 14, 2017. **Lawrence Swager**, Guymon, Oklahoma, Jan. 28, 2022.

57 Vearl "VC" Counts, Salem, Missouri, Sept. 23, 2025. **Larry Gall**, Cameron, Missouri, June 12, 2025. **Janice Hodges Jimenez**, Redlands, California, March 27, 2025. **David Rathbun**, Clarksburg, West Virginia, Aug. 16, 2025. **Lillian Bowser Wallace**, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Feb. 6, 2025.

58 Lois Barnhardt Carlile, Jensen Beach, Florida, March 3, 2025. **Richard Curtis**, Chicago, Illinois, Jan. 1, 2015. **Edward Gould**, Bonners Ferry, Idaho, July 15, 2025. **Allen Kent**, Elgin, Illinois, Aug. 15, 2025. **Hugh Methner**, Midland, Michigan, June 29, 2025. **Elsie Sheffer Saylor**, Lakewood, California, July 19, 2018. **Janet Miller Wright**, Lubbock, Texas, March 18, 2025.

59 Arthur "Fred" Burt, Vero Beach, Florida, Dec. 14, 2024. **Rebecca Stephens Chapman**, Independence, Missouri, April 4, 2025. **George Conner**, Casper, Wyoming, May 27, 2025. **Martha "Jane" Harder Watkins**, Binghamton, New York, Jan. 30, 2020.

60 Ruth Brown Anderson, Lee's Summit, Missouri, Aug. 15, 2025. **Theodore "Ted" Biller**, Orange, California, Aug. 12, 2025. **George Hewitt**, Chesterfield,

Virginia, April 28, 2024. **Marcelyn Page**, New Port Richey, Florida, March 2, 2024. **Beverly Dexter Phillips**, Las Vegas, Nevada, June 25, 2025. **Dana Arnold Walsh**, San Antonio, Texas, July 1, 2025.

61 Charlotte Kelley Mayberry, Bernie, Missouri, Nov. 30, 2020. **Dorla Johnson Reid**, Dafter, Michigan, Oct. 22, 2024.

62 Ronald Becker, Netarts, Oregon, July 6, 2025. **Rick Carter**, Saint Marys, Georgia, Jan. 19, 2020. **Barbara Shrout Day**, Independence, Missouri, Feb. 4, 2024. **Janyce Simons DeBarthe**, Lamoni, Iowa, March 22, 2025. **Susan Flowers Hanson**, Ormand Beach, Florida, Feb. 9, 2021. **Mary Herod Phelps**, Independence, Missouri, March 12, 2023. **Linda Crosswhite Reynolds**, Cameron, Missouri, Dec. 23, 2023. **Edith Barrett Siler**, Aurora, Colorado, Nov. 16, 2010.

63 Nancy Peterson Barr, Williamsburg, Virginia, July 15, 2008. **Judith McManigal Boyer**, Excelsior Springs, Missouri, Sept. 12, 2025. **Judy Betts Kuntz**, Independence, Missouri, May 3, 2025. **Sherri Hearn Lott**, Morgantown, North Carolina, Aug. 1, 2024. **David Lundquist**, Odessa, Missouri, April 17, 2013. **Marvin Sword**, Independence, Missouri, Aug. 13, 2025.

64 Earl Bennett, Bridgeport, Michigan, June 12, 2023. **Arthur Butler**, Blue Springs, Missouri, Aug. 30, 2025. **Donald Deskin**, Casper, Wyoming, Feb. 23, 2017. **Charles Lord**, Plattsburg, Missouri, July 31, 2025.

65 Wayne Crawford, Independence, Missouri, Jan. 16, 2022. **Harvey Pearl**, Flushing, Michigan, Feb. 5, 2023. **Robert "Bob" Shute**, Independence, Missouri, April 1, 2024. **Leonard Siler**, Aurora, Colorado, Nov. 25, 2010. **Lynn Witte**, Independence, Missouri, Jan. 14, 2024.

66 Landa Cook Erwine, Osceola, Missouri, Aug. 13, 2023. **Richard Ford**, Lee's Summit, Nov. 1, 2023.

67 Gordon Johnson, Flint, Michigan, April 17, 2024. **Lonnie Mair**, Sun City, Arizona, April 19, 2025. **Janet Bertram Mortimore**, Clio, Iowa, Feb. 16, 2018. **Edward Mosler**, Chula

Vista, California, May 24, 2020. **David Mueller**, Tallahassee, Florida, Aug. 26, 2025. **Karen Self Quraishi**, Walnut Creek, California, Aug. 27, 2023.

68 Blair Curtis, Madison, Georgia, Oct. 16, 2021.

Alice “Joanne” Fitts Patterson, Vermillion, South Dakota, April 5, 2024. **Gary Williams**, Brooks, Georgia, Dec. 23, 2020.

69 Pamela Henderson, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 11, 2025. **Richard Martin**, Lenexa, Kansas, April 15, 2025. **Charles Millner**, Windsor, Colorado, Aug. 27, 2020. **Howard Sakima**, Blue Springs, Missouri, Aug. 27, 2025. **Barbara Thompson**, Freeport, Maine, Aug. 10, 2021. **Judith Barwise Varalli**, Independence, Missouri, July 13, 2025. **Suzanne Sherwood Wiley**, Murrieta, California, Aug. 27, 2024.

70 Arlan Sindt, Grain Valley, Missouri, June 27, 2022.

71 Mike Gonzales, Montgomery, Texas, Jan. 17, 2019.

72 Wanda Smith Center, Cherokee, Texas, March 3, 2021. **Elaine Calder Davis**, Kingston, Missouri, Aug. 11, 2025.

73 David “Ed” Davis, Kingston, Missouri, Oct. 21, 2023. **Robert Kettlewell**, Denver, Colorado, Dec. 30, 2023. **Shirley Melenzyer Schertz**, San Antonio, Texas, July 10, 2025.

74 Barbara Landrum Cooper, Pittsburg, Kansas, June 12, 2022. **Bonner Davis II**, Blue Springs, Missouri, Jan. 15, 2022. **James DeVito**, Westport, Connecticut, April 23, 2025. **Janice Carpenter Sartwell**, Independence, Missouri, Jan. 3, 2025.

75 Susan Stalzer Perrin, St. Louis, Missouri, Sept. 18, 2025. **Tony Shriver**, Centerville, Iowa, Sept. 29, 2025.

77 Carol Plumlee Herbst, Tooele, Utah, March 18, 2025.

78 Rick Forth, Xenia, Illinois, July 9, 2025.

79 Carla Rossman Barber, Owosso, Michigan, Sept. 9, 2025. **David Davies**, Brush, Colorado, March 19, 2023.

Honorary Alumna Carol Shaw, Calgary, Alberta, June 27, 2025.

A Steady Hand Celebrating 40+ Years of Dedicated Service

After 42 years of quiet consistency and trusted leadership, **JANICE TIFFANY '83**, Executive Director of Business Services, will retire from Graceland this winter – leaving behind a legacy of excellence that stretches across nearly every corner of the University's finances.

Tiffany began her career at Graceland in 1983 as a cashier, eventually serving in roles that included accountant, controller, director, vice president, and executive director. Through it all, she became known for her calm leadership, her encyclopedic knowledge of the University's financial systems, and her ability to find solutions with grace and good humor.

Over the decades, Tiffany guided the University through countless budgets, audits, and financial transitions. “Technology has certainly changed what we do and how we do it,” she reflected, “but Graceland's commitment to students has remained constant.”

When asked what she's most proud of, her answer came without hesitation: “Receiving clean audit opinions in each of the 38 years I've been responsible for them.” Just as meaningful to her, though, has been the opportunity to help others succeed. “As I got older and wiser, I realized

people have different skills,” she said. “What my office needed from them may not always be what they were comfortable with, but I could help them with my part of the world. It's been gratifying. It's been an honor.”

President Joel D. Shrock, PhD, echoed that sentiment. “Janice has been part of the very fabric of Graceland for more than four decades,” he said. “Her steady leadership, attention to detail, and unwavering integrity have shaped the financial foundation of this university. Her influence will be felt long after she steps away from her desk.”

As she looks ahead to retirement, Tiffany said she's most looking forward to “free time and a lack of schedule.” But what she'll miss most is the same thing that's defined her career: “Helping people and providing solutions and answers.” For generations of colleagues, those quiet acts of service are what made her not only a leader – but a cornerstone of the Graceland community.



83 Scott Roberts, Lamoni, Iowa, Jan. 26, 2025.

84 Sandra Blair Cronbaugh, Battle Ground, Washington, Jan. 7, 2010.

86 Carmen Wisemen, Kansas City, Missouri, Feb. 7, 2021.

88 Michele Griffin, Poughkeepsie, New York, 2022.

92 Alta Vanderflucht, Grand River, Iowa, Aug. 29, 2025.

93 Patricia Smith Litz, Georgetown, South Carolina, July 26, 2021. **Unacarlo Abels Ward**, Sylva, North Carolina, April 4, 2022.

94 Judith King, Trimble, Missouri, Sept. 14, 2024.

95 Phyllis Monroe Haulsee, Johnson City, Tennessee, April 28, 2025.

96 Barbara Sutton, Pella, Iowa, Aug. 31, 2023.

97 Franklin Rosado, Yonkers, New York, March 19, 2018.

99 Gurcharan Punea, Eatontown, New Jersey, June 19, 2025.

01 Everly Allen King, Saginaw, Michigan, Nov. 3, 2023.

03 Trudy Kelley, Independence, Missouri, Oct. 1, 2025.

05 James Tippett, Las Vegas, Nevada, July 21, 2025.

09 Howard Clark, Greene, Iowa, July 7, 2009.

11 Brooke Welsh, Bethany, Missouri, July 3, 2025.

12 Lalita Venkatsammy-Rucker, Olathe, Kansas, July 21, 2025.

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.

Brenda Armstrong Parkes, Overland Park, Kansas, July 22, 2025.

Dolores Windham, Mountain Home, Arkansas, July 21, 2025.

***Jolene Lynn**, Kansas City, Missouri, Oct. 5, 2025.

**Tributes can be found online for administration, faculty, or staff whose service was 20 years or more: graceland.edu/Horizons*



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📌 Anyone who completes 12 semester hours of coursework at Graceland is considered alumni.



2025-26 ALUMNI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
CADENCE SIRES '27

Hometown: Johnston, Iowa / Major: Marketing,
Digital Content Creation, Transformational Leadership
Involvements: Shalom House President, Gadets Dance Team