



# MARSHALL

WINTER/SPRING 2025

*magazine*

**Dr. Rebecca Meyer**

**MARSHALL  
HEALTH NETWORK**  
'BUILDING A BRIGHTER,  
HEALTHIER FUTURE'



**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY  
& ALUMNI**



**THE MARSHALL ADVANCED  
MANUFACTURING CENTER:**  
How this hub of innovation and  
resources is helping Marshall  
preserve a historic landmark.



PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL





# CONTENTS

2

**Letter from the Editor:** Editor Jean Hardiman talks about why she loves seeking out and sharing stories of members of the Herd who step up to fill the needs they see around them.

4

**Update on Marshall For All, Marshall Forever:** Now in its second year, Marshall For All, Marshall Forever continues to increase students' opportunities while also raising the bar for hard work and success. Read more about how this could change the future of education.

8

**Catching up with Coach Gibson:** We caught up with Head Football Coach Tony Gibson, who shared his thoughts on coming back to West Virginia to lead the Herd.

12

**Student spotlights:** We have a mother-daughter pair who are attending Marshall at the same time, both honing their skills to help fulfill their unique purposes. Get to know Cassandra and Kymora Woods of Huntington. We're also proud to introduce you to Jack Feuer, a business student who is already working on seven business ideas with the help of Marshall's iCenter.

18

**Cover story:** Marshall Health Network brings together some of the region's powerhouses in health care. Learn how this strengthens the education of the future physicians studying in the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine.

24

**Meet the new Marshall Health Network CEO:** Get to know Scott Raynes, an Oak Hill, West Virginia, native who has come back to West Virginia to serve as president and CEO of Marshall Health Network.

28

**The Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center:** Right down Fourth Avenue from campus is a hub of innovation and resources for local manufacturers. Get a fresh look at the ways that the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center strengthens businesses and how it's helping Marshall preserve a precious, historic landmark.

32

**Getting to know our faculty:** Meet Dr. Jana Tigchelaar, a devoted professor of literature and soon to be chair of the Department of English.

34

**Board of Governors:** Let us introduce you to Ginny Lee, who brings her Silicon Valley business acumen and her enthusiasm for increasing access to education to our Marshall University Board of Governors.

40

**Moment in Marshall History:** In this issue, we're looking back at women on Marshall's campus who were "firsts" to represent women in their roles. Get to know these capable leaders and how they broke new ground in this university's history.

46

**A special Marshall scholarship experience:** Marshall education student Kylie Roberts is the first recipient of the Michalle Arthur Oldaker Memorial Scholarship, given in honor of one of her favorite teachers. See how a scholarship can touch a student's heart while inspiring her to change lives herself.

49

**Alumni spotlights:** Enjoy these question-and-answer sessions with two Marshall alumni who are standing out in their fields — U.S. Circuit Judge Stephanie Thacker of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, and Steve Robinson, district athletic director for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina.

54

**Alumni Weekend Preview:** The Marshall University Alumni Association will host its annual Alumni Awards Banquet April 12 at the Marshall Health Network Arena. Get the details on this special event hosted annually to celebrate our Marshall family.

56

**Marshall Family Scrapbook:** Enjoy all the green and all the smiles, and please submit photos for us to share. You can email photos to Editor Jean Hardiman at [jean.hardiman@marshall.edu](mailto:jean.hardiman@marshall.edu).

## President

Brad D. Smith

## Chief Marketing Officer

Dave Traube

## Editor

Jean Hardiman

## Art Director

Steven Schmidt

## Photographers

Austin O'Connor, Brock Burwell,  
Morgan Napier, Sholten Singer  
Cayden Gu

## Writers

Katherine Pyles,  
Angela Henderson-Bentley,  
Jean Hardiman, Taylor Stuck-Vance,  
Rebecca Stephens,  
Lindsey M. Harper, Kasey Stevens

## Magazine Planning Committee

Dave Traube, Jean Hardiman,  
Leah Payne, Steven Schmidt, Austin  
O'Connor, Brock Burwell, Krystle Davis,  
Melanie Chapman Whitt, Clark Davis,  
Kasey Stevens, Rebecca Stephens,  
Matt James, Walker Tatum

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For subscription information, contact  
Rebecca Stephens at  
[stephens107@marshall.edu](mailto:stephens107@marshall.edu)

Comments or suggestions  
should be addressed to  
[jean.hardiman@marshall.edu](mailto:jean.hardiman@marshall.edu)



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# LETTER *from* the EDITOR

When I was a teenager, I cut out a piece of newsprint and posted it by my desk. It was part of a newspaper column that inspired me. It was about choosing your career path, a process that some Marshall students are going through right now. Obviously, it's one of our biggest life decisions, but not always clear and simple.

I can't remember the exact words I had cut out, but I remember they talked about a wonderful intersection in life — a moment when you realize that something you love to do is something that the world needs done. That moment when you realize you have what it takes to fill that void — that's when you know you're on the right path. We all know the path might veer, but at least you're headed in the right direction.

For me, the path has always been about sharing stories. It's something I absolutely love to do, especially when the stories are inspiring. Fortunately for me, Marshall is bursting with those kinds of stories. I'm in awe, constantly, of the people I meet and the work that they're doing. And the beauty of it is the vast array of skills they have and the vast array of needs that they are meeting.

This issue is full of stories about innovators, leaders and doers who are all part of the Marshall family. They are doing important work in fields ranging from health care to manufacturing to criminal justice to education to business and more. They've all seen something that needs done, and they're working every day toward that end.

Our cover story sets the tone by providing a closer look at the new Marshall Health Network and how the partnership among Marshall's Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, Marshall Health and local hospitals will improve health care in this region. It's a collaboration that will not only leverage and pool resources but also strengthen educational opportunities for the future physicians who will take care of us. We've identified the areas of health care in which we want to excel, and we are making impressive headway.

This issue also gives you a glimpse into the incredible work being done at the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center, an amazing resource to our region's businesses. Learn more about the tools, technologies and supports it provides to help strengthen companies with great products and ideas, and how it's helping Marshall preserve one of its most iconic symbols.



And those aren't the only ways in which our Marshall experts are helping identify and find solutions to tackle challenges. We'll give you an update on how the Marshall For All, Marshall Forever program is continuing to change lives. This issue's "Moment in Marshall History" takes a look back at women at this university who were the first woman in a variety of roles on campus. They shined in academics, athletics and administrative roles and I, for one, am thankful for their talents and for lighting the way for future generations of powerful women.

Also, please enjoy getting to know some other members of the Herd — including Board of Governors member Ginny Lee, football coach Tony Gibson and some of our students, faculty and alumni. Each one of them is working diligently toward improving the world around us — all in different and impressive ways. I am so honored to share each their stories.

At Marshall University, we are surrounded by talented, driven makers of change. Let's look for that and appreciate that in each other, and let's be that to each other when we can see that it's our turn to step up. Our paths are all different, surely. But when we're looking out for each other, helping each other over roadblocks and clearing the way for a better future, we're all headed in the right direction.

*Jean Hardiman*

**Jean Hardiman, Editor**





PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL





# ‘DEMONSTRATING WHAT IS POSSIBLE’

Marshall For All, Marshall Forever is proving how  
investing in students can change the future

By Angela Henderson-Bentley



PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL



### Marshall For All, Marshall Forever

is about transforming every life the university touches. One of those lives is Marshall's senior vice president for development and the president and CEO of the Marshall University Foundation, **Nico Karagosian**. It was the vision of Marshall For All that brought Karagosian to Huntington.

"One of the things that really attracted me to this position was President Smith's vision for Marshall For All and, as he says, 'leveling the playing field in Appalachia,'" Karagosian said. "To have a president with such a commitment to really setting Marshall and our students up for success long term. That's what it's all about."

The Marshall For All program, which was first announced by Marshall President Brad D. Smith in September 2022, allows Marshall students to combine scholarships, grants, work opportunities and family contributions to earn their bachelor's degree without needing student loans, which will allow students to graduate with little to no debt. In addition to removing financial barriers, the program also gives its participants four levels of support: a peer mentor, a professional adviser, an academic adviser and an alumni mentor.

The university has also recently announced the addition of Marshall For All: Tuition-Free WV — an expansion of Marshall For All that allows eligible first-time freshmen from West Virginia to attend college without paying tuition. Under this expansion, West Virginia students with a family income of \$65,000 or less will have their tuition and fees fully covered — with no loans required. The new program is already underway and will be applied to all accepted incoming freshmen students who qualify.

Currently, participants in the Marshall For All debt-free program are randomly selected from a pool of students who meet the criteria of being fully accepted to Marshall, completing their FAFSA for the upcoming year and being registered for orientation by April 1. The goal of the program is that in 10 years, all Marshall students will graduate from the university debt-free.

"I believe that this is becoming a demonstration project for the rest of the nation on what is possible and the role that higher education can play," Smith said.

The program's first cohort of 100 students was accepted in fall 2023 and the second 100 in fall 2024, with nearly all 200 being eligible for a financial need-based Federal Pell Grant. According to Smith, national statistics show that Pell-eligible students graduate roughly 20% less than non-Pell eligible students. Marshall For All students are outperforming their Pell-eligible peers in GPA, year-over-year retention, and engagement on campus. They're also outperforming



non-Pell eligible students in the same categories.

"We currently have two years of data that introducing a program like this can not only level the playing field, but they can potentially outperform a student who may not come from similar circumstances," Smith said. "It's gotten me super excited."

The Marshall University Foundation is working to help secure financial support for the program, and Karagosian has seen incredible support since coming to Marshall in August.

"Donors can see that they can make a difference and that Marshall is making a difference," he said. "People are excited about the potential of contributing to that and watching Marshall and our students continue to be successful."

In October, Marshall announced a gift of \$5 million from the Sandberg Goldberg Bernthal Charitable Foundation to support Marshall For All. The foundation was founded by Sheryl Sandberg, former chief operating officer of Meta and founder of Lean In.

"Those transformational gifts that come in, they take your breath away with the impact that they're going to have," Karagosian said. "The wonderful part of that gift is that it's not only going to help an incoming cohort of these students, but also a portion of it is going into the endowment to fund the program in perpetuity."

Karagosian and Smith agree that the Sandberg gift shows the impact Marshall For All is having across the country.

"It's a vote of confidence that what we're doing is bold and it's transformational," Smith said. "It signifies our message is resonating with innovators, thought leaders and philanthropists who see the possibilities of what we're doing and what it could mean to the nation. It demonstrated that we can seek support for Marshall For All even from those that may not have a direct affiliation to Marshall."

While Smith and Karagosian continue to seek those transformational gifts, both emphasize the importance of alumni support for the program.

"Here's an opportunity for alumni to give back and to help students have the same Marshall experience they did and set those students up for success in the future," Karagosian said. "And this isn't just about multimillion dollar gifts. Every single gift that comes in is important to the Foundation and Marshall University."

"Alumni already serve as what's possible," Smith said. "So just by being Marshall alumni, they set the standard. Now they can transform lives for generations to come by supporting Marshall For All, Marshall Forever."

"As we begin to tell some of these students' stories and we hear their excitement about having this opportunity and their backgrounds and what they've gone through to get

to this point, that's inspiring," Karagosian said. "I think if anyone hears those stories, they'll want to be a part of it in any way they can."

While Karagosian is not a Marshall alum himself, he still has a great deal of passion for the university and its students. "There is no place like Marshall," Karagosian said. "I would put the passion from this alumni base up against any other institution in the country. There is just something about this place that is so incredibly powerful. It's truly a special place, and I'm honored and humbled to be a part of it."



To learn more about how to support **Marshall For All, Marshall Forever**, visit [formarshallu.org](https://formarshallu.org) or email [foundation@marshall.edu](mailto:foundation@marshall.edu).





**"To have this opportunity is just amazing, and I am very thankful and grateful."**

**- Zoey Coakwell  
Marshall For All student,  
first-generation college student**

**Learn more about  
Zoey's story.**



Make your mark during the

## **MARSHALL DAY OF GIVING**

**APRIL 23 & 24**

Marshall University alumni and supporters will have an opportunity to make their mark on the university during the annual Day of Giving, which spans two days — April 23 and 24.

Hosted by the Marshall University Foundation, the event gives the Marshall family an opportunity to join together and make a lasting impact on Marshall's students. Several match opportunities will be available during the "1837 Minutes for Marshall" allowing supporters to see the impact of their gift doubled or tripled during the event.

### **Supporting Marshall For All**

Alumni and supporters can participate by visiting [givingday.marshall.edu](https://givingday.marshall.edu) from noon Wednesday, April 23, to 6:37 p.m. Thursday, April 24.



athletics

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT HEAD FOOTBALL COACH **TONY GIBSON**

Tony Gibson, with  
Former Head Football  
Coach Bobby Pruett





## **What's this experience like, getting a head coaching job in the state where you grew up?**

It's surreal to see everything you worked up to in 30 years finally lead to this moment at a place that's so special for my wife, myself and my kids. To get this job this close to home is special; both of my kids were born in Charleston, my wife is from Glenville, and I'm from Van, West Virginia.

## **What has it been like to realize you're the head coach at Marshall University?**

You look for this when you become a head coach: to do it at a school that means so much to so many people. You want to be surrounded by people who care and have the same vision and goals. And here, everywhere I go, whether it's downtown or at the mall or Sheetz for my coffee in the morning, people are gung-ho about Marshall football. I never thought I'd be taking pictures with someone at Sheetz at 5 a.m., but it's unique to be back and be around this kind of atmosphere and in a town that cares so much about Marshall football.

And Marshall has so much tradition, being the team of the '90s, all the tradition of winning, and coming off a conference championship now. The expectations that are present are exciting.

## **When you talk about Marshall football to others, what do you say?**

My thing, and what I've told recruits, is that Marshall's always won. They won double national championships in FCS, jumped to FBS, and won the MAC. They won Conference USA, and now they've won the Sun Belt. Every level that Marshall has been in, they've won, and that's our goal.

Someone asked what the year one expectation was, and I've only got one goal, to be Sun Belt champions, that's the goal we're going to stick with. And I want to be the first team from the Sun Belt to be in the college football playoff. Can we do it in year one? I don't know, but we're going to give it hell.



## Has there been anything that's surprised you so far about this position or the surroundings?

It's infectious around here. Anywhere you go around this town, they know who the coach of Marshall football is. The support is overwhelming, and all the people have reached out. They ask what we need and how they can help.

There is one thing that has surprised me, and that's a hidden gem when I think about Huntington: all the places to eat. I think I've gained 20 pounds in about a month and a half here. I wasn't expecting that.

## What is it about being a coach that made you decide to make a career out of it?

It's being able to help guys get to where they want to go, and that same situation helped me get to where I wanted to be as a coach. Coaches were a big part of my life — the support and the respect I had for my coaches. I had guys that cared about me and my family and still stay in touch with me to this day, and that's the kind of relationship I want to have with my players. That's how I've set it up in my 30 years of coaching. We're going to coach them hard and love them harder, and we're going to hold guys accountable.

And I think we can change lives and help kids that want our help, and that's our No. 1 goal.

## What do you want people to know about Tony Gibson, the man and not the coach?

I strive to be a great husband, a great father and a great grandfather. I have two grandkids and I want to set them up as much as possible. Some coaches take themselves way too seriously, and they think they're higher and have more power and all those things. I want to be a part of the Huntington community. I want to be a part of Marshall University and Marshall Athletics and be who I am.

## How do you want your Marshall football program to look on the field?

The biggest thing when I think of our team on the field to open the season in Athens, Georgia, is that we're going to play with a little bit of an edge. We're going to be physical as a football team. We're going to play extremely hard. I know

this state is proud. It's built on toughness and grit with the coal mining industry, the steel, and all those things that we pride ourselves on in West Virginia, and we'll pride ourselves on representing that.

I want our fanbase, administration and players to be proud of what we're building, and I hope that shows.

## How important is the state of West Virginia to the Marshall football program?

It's important for the kids and coaches in Huntington to know we care about them, but also the kids that are part of our footprint, our home state and the surrounding area. We have to go through every holler and every mountain community off a dirt road, wherever we have to go to get to these high schools because there may be a hidden gem somewhere, and we never want to miss one from our home state. It's very important to me, to our staff, that we cover this state.

We get a bad rap in this state, that there isn't talent. There are kids that are good enough to help us win, and we have to find them. We're going to make sure we hit every avenue we can to make that happen.

## Has it sunk in that you're the head coach?

Sometimes, you get busy working and recruiting, and it feels like it used to be as an assistant. I forget that I'm the head coach. And then all of a sudden, you're like, whoa, I have to make that decision, or I have to do whatever. Every once in a while, it hits me, and I'm sure once we start spring practice, it's going to be surreal, so I'm looking forward to that. But I love it so far.









PHOTO BY AUSTIN O'CONNOR

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT





# JACK FEUER

**Major:** Finance and Entrepreneurship

**Hometown:** Columbus, Ohio

**Graduating in** 2026

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## **Can you talk about your involvement Marshall University's iCenter (Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship)?**

Right now, I am currently working on about seven different businesses: Two artificial intelligence (AI) software companies, three mobile apps and two web-based applications. The iCenter has become my new home and has provided a space for me as well as other students who are looking to launch their own businesses. Mentors such as Dr. Ben Eng (interim dean of the Lewis College of Business), Tricia Ball (executive director of the iCenter) and David Wiley (director of the Brad D. Smith Student Incubator), have been the greatest support system. The iCenter has allowed me to go from idea to product in less than a week.

## **Are you involved in any other extracurricular activities?**

I am currently a cadet in the Marshall ROTC program.

## **Why are you glad you chose Marshall?**

Coming from West Point, I am glad to have returned to Marshall to be able to pursue my dream of being an entrepreneur. Marshall has allowed me to balance my own course schedule, travel while working and have an unbelievable support system that pushes me every day to improve.

## **What or who has helped you get here? Any mentors or other supporters you'd like to mention?**

My family has been my biggest support system. Mentors such as Dr. Eng, Tricia Ball and David Wiley have been such a great help.

## **Favorite experiences as a Marshall student?**

One of my favorite experiences as a Marshall student this year was representing Marshall University at the West Virginia Roundtable and being able to meet and learn from the drivers and business leaders of West Virginia.

## **Tell us what you're passionate about.**

Outside of building companies and learning AI, I absolutely love learning languages. Right now, I am learning Spanish and Russian. My ultimate goal is to become fluent in over 10 languages and be able to connect with as many different people and cultures as possible.

## **Plans for the future?**

Continue growing my businesses, traveling the world and documenting the whole journey through social media.





KYMORA  
WOODS

Mother & Daughter

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT





# CASSANDRA WOODS

**Major:** BA, General Business

**Hometown:** Huntington, West Virginia

**Graduating in** 2028

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## Why did you choose your major, and what inspired you to go back to school?

My faith played a significant role in my decision to return to school. I felt called to continue my education and refused to let fear or doubt hold me back any longer. Surviving a life-threatening health crisis last year gave me a renewed perspective, inspiring me to pursue my dreams and embrace new opportunities.

My background as an executive assistant, administrative assistant and designer of shirts and logos inspired me to pursue degrees in business and art. I wanted to move beyond support roles and into leadership, gaining expertise in finance, marketing and management, while nurturing my passion for creativity. This unique combination prepares me for entrepreneurship, branding and community outreach while enhancing my ability to serve in both professional and ministry settings.

## What are your plans for the future?

As I continue my work with the city of Huntington, I plan to use my business degree to advance into leadership roles that enhance city operations and support community development. I also intend to reopen my business, leveraging my expertise in finance, marketing and strategic planning to build a successful and impactful enterprise. I'm determined not to let age limit what God has promised me.

As a pastor's wife, I see how my business knowledge can strengthen both my church and community outreach. A strong business mindset enables me to develop effective programs, partnerships and initiatives that serve the church and the broader community. By blending business, faith and service, I aim to lead, mentor and create opportunities that leave a lasting impact in ministry and entrepreneurship.

## So far, what do you like most about Marshall?

What I love most about Marshall is the incredible support system — it truly feels like a family. From my professors to my fellow students, I've experienced nothing but encouragement along the way. Making the dean's list was a proud "Marshall Moment" for me, as it reaffirmed that I'm capable of excelling academically, even after so many years away from school.

## Have any scholarships, supporters or mentors helped you get here?

I've been blessed with scholarships that made this journey possible. I'm deeply thankful for the support of my husband, my family, my big sister Nita and my church family. My best friend, Rhoda Withrow, my director, Marshall Moss, and the city of Huntington have also been incredible sources of encouragement.

CASSANDRA  
WOODS

PHOTO BY AUSTIN O'CONNOR



### What keeps you busy besides schoolwork?

I'm a wife to Pastor Shawn Woods, the first lady of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, and caregiver to my husband, who undergoes home dialysis four days a week. I'm also a mother to Kymora and Rocmond, as well as a proud fur mom to our giant schnauzer, Murphy, and standard poodle, Bella. In addition, I work for the city of Huntington in the Human Relations Commission department.

My faith and community are central to my life. I founded God Within HER Ministries and had the honor of hosting our first women's conference in 2023. Staying actively involved in my church and community brings me immense joy and a profound sense of purpose.

### What's it like starting college at the same time as your daughter?

It's such a unique and amazing experience! Not many people get the opportunity to share this journey with their child, and I feel incredibly blessed that we can encourage each other along the way. We check in on each other, share study tips and occasionally even tackle similar assignments. Although I'm taking online classes and she's attending in person, we still make time to support each other and celebrate our wins as we navigate this journey together.

### What motivates you?

My faith, my family and my purpose are my greatest motivators. I'm passionate about helping others — especially young people who have faced challenges — because I know firsthand how life-changing it is to have someone believe in you. I strive to be that person for others.

For me, this journey is about more than earning a degree. It's about proving that it's never too late to pursue your dreams. At 50, I'm living proof that your story doesn't end until you decide it does.

“ ”

**What I love most about Marshall is the incredible support system — it truly feels like a family. From my professors to my fellow students, I've experienced nothing but encouragement along the way.**

**- CASSANDRA WOODS**

# KYMORA WOODS

**Major: Health Science**  
**Hometown: Huntington**  
**Graduating in 2028**

### Why did you choose your major?

I chose Health Science because I want to help people and make a difference in their lives. Becoming a nurse is my dream. I want to care for patients, help them feel better and teach them how to live healthier lives.

### What are your plans for the future?

I plan to work as a NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) nurse or in the Labor and Delivery Unit, helping to care for newborns and their families.

### So far, what do you like most about Marshall?

What I like most about Marshall is how welcoming and supportive everyone is. My professors make learning fun and are always willing to help, which keeps me motivated. I've also met some great people and made new friends. It's nice to feel like I'm part of a community where everyone is working toward their goals. Being at Marshall has been a really positive experience so far. It's a great place to learn.

### Have any favorite "Marshall Moments" so far?

Being able to share this journey with my mom as she pursues her own education is also a special highlight. It's moments like these that make me feel like I'm in the right place and that all the hard work is worth it.

### Have any scholarships or other supporters or mentors helped you get here?

Yes, scholarships and support from others have been essential in helping me get to where I am today. My dad, the Rev. Shawn Woods, has been my biggest supporter, always encouraging and believing in me. My brother, Rocmond, and my church family at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church have also played a huge role, offering guidance, prayers and motivation. Financial aid and scholarships have eased the financial burden, allowing me to focus on my studies. I'm grateful for everyone who has supported me on this journey.



**KYMORA  
WOODS**

**CASSANDRA  
WOODS**

**Are you involved in any hobbies/activities besides schoolwork that you want to mention?**

Outside of school, I help out with my church and work, which keeps me focused and organized. I also make time for my family and friends because they are important to me. I enjoy going to cheer on the Thundering Herd.

**What's it like starting college at the same time that your mother is going back to school?**

Starting college at the same time as my mom has been a unique experience. It's great because we can support and encourage each other through this journey. Seeing her work so hard inspires me to do my best, too. It's also fun to share this chapter of our lives together, and I'm proud of us for taking this step toward our goals. It's been a challenge, but it's also been really special. My mom is an online student, so we don't see each other on campus. But she brings me things I need sometimes, and I see her when she picks me up for church. Even though we're not on campus together, she's still a big support for me.

**What motivates you? What are you passionate about, and why is it important?**

Helping others motivates me. I'm passionate about caring for people and making a difference in their lives, which is why I want to become a nurse. Knowing that I can be there for someone during a difficult time or help them improve their health is really important to me. It gives me a sense of purpose and reminds me why I'm working so hard toward my goals.

“ ”

**Starting college at the same time as my mom has been a unique experience.**

It's great because we can support and encourage each other through this journey. **Seeing her work so hard inspires me to do my best, too.**

**- KYMORA WOODS**









PHOTO BY SHOLTEN SINGER

# A HOLISTIC APPROACH to a HEALTHIER FUTURE

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Marshall's Centers of Wellness reflect a collective commitment to holistic health in West Virginia and central Appalachia

**By Katherine Pyles**




A photograph of Ashley Payne, a Black woman with curly hair, wearing a green and white patterned sleeveless top. She is smiling and looking towards another person whose back is to the camera. She is holding a blue pen and writing in a notebook. The background shows a brick building and a wooden deck.

PHOTO BY SHOLTEN SINGER

## **ASHLEY PAYNE**

Director of CORE  
(Creating Opportunities for  
Recovery Employment)  
Division of Addiction Sciences



"We" — a small word with immense power, according to Marshall University President Brad D. Smith — is at the core of the university's rally cry "We Are... Marshall." In health care, "we" represents the essential partnership between providers and patients, as well as the innovation-driven collaboration among health professionals working together to deliver quality care. This spirit of unity and shared purpose drives the collective efforts of Marshall University, its Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine and its academic health system, Marshall Health Network, to improve health outcomes across the region.

"Together with Marshall Health Network, we are advancing health care, education and research for the betterment of our community and beyond," Smith said. "We are building a brighter, healthier future, where innovation and compassion converge to redefine health care excellence."

With the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine leading the charge, the university and health system are driving advancements in four key areas known as Centers of Wellness. Those Centers include: Addiction & Behavioral Health; Gerontology & Healthy Aging; Obesity & Diabetes; and Rural Health & Primary Care.

"These centers are a holistic shift in how we deliver health care, how we train future health care professionals and how we engage with our communities," said Beth L. Hammers, chief integration and external affairs officer for Marshall Health Network and vice dean for administration at the School of Medicine.

At the helm of the Centers of Wellness are world-class clinicians and scientists. Adam M. Franks, MD, a pioneer in rural-focused health education, serves as vice dean for rural health and chair of the Department of Family and Community Health. Shahrar Taheri, PhD, an internationally renowned expert in obesity, diabetes and metabolic disease, will join the school in spring 2025 as the inaugural vice dean for adiposity-based chronic disease, and a subsequent search is underway for the vice dean for addiction and behavioral health.

"We're recruiting individuals who are leaders in their fields to bring their depth of knowledge and expertise to our programs, with the goal of establishing flagship initiatives that will be recognized locally, regionally, nationally and internationally," said David Gozal, MD, MBA, PhD (Hon), dean of the School of Medicine and vice president for health affairs at Marshall. "From an external perspective, our goal is for Huntington and for the Marshall 'We' to be recognized as national experts in these core areas. Internally, this approach ensures that our students learn from the best of the best and gain exposure to the most advanced knowledge and conceptual novelty throughout their medical training."





Marshall's innovative education model integrates a broad spectrum of disciplines, from basic and laboratory science to engineering and even journalism. Soon, dual degree programs will be offered in such fields as health informatics, health care cybersecurity, social media medical journalism and biomedical engineering, equipping students not only to address today's challenges but also to shape the future of health care, Gozal said.

"Whether these students choose to stay in West Virginia — which is, of course, our intent — or work elsewhere, they will have a unique skillset and an innovative way of thinking that will make them extremely desirable and successful," he said. "Wherever they go, they'll carry the Marshall name with them, taking the best practices they learned here to improve communities around the world."

## LEADING IN RURAL HEALTH CARE

Marshall has long been at the forefront of rural medicine, with mobile outreach programs, telemedicine initiatives and community clinics that improve access to both primary and specialty care for rural populations. The newly defined Center of Wellness for Rural Health & Primary Care elevates this commitment, Gozal said. In 2021, the School of Medicine made history when, under the leadership of Vice Dean for Education Paulette S. Wehner, MD, it established the nation's first separately accredited rural surgery residency program and set a new standard for rural health care worldwide. The innovative surgery training model ensures residents are well versed in general surgery as well as procedures commonly encountered in rural surgical practice, including those in subspecialties like urology, orthopaedics and obstetrics and gynecology.

In just four years, collaborations with critical access rural hospitals have led to two additional rural residencies in psychiatry and internal medicine.

"To truly be a health care leader, we must identify scalable solutions with a lasting impact," Gozal said. "Rural residency programs are one such solution where we're already seeing immediate results."

Rural Surgery Resident Rebecca Meyer, DO, was already considering a residency at Marshall when she learned about the rural surgery program. A Missouri native who grew up in a suburban area, Meyer fell in love with rural Appalachia while attending medical school.

"As soon as I heard about the new program, I knew it would be the perfect fit for me," Meyer said. "Practicing in a rural community offers the chance to treat a wide range of conditions. I thought it was a beautiful opportunity to be the well-rounded surgeon I want to be."

To further improve care throughout the region, Marshall has strengthened its partnerships with community health

centers and integrated primary care services into its addiction recovery center PROACT (Provider Response Organization for Addiction Care & Treatment), a single accessible hub for individuals looking for recovery-related services. Later this year, a new mobile unit will also expand access to primary care, immunizations, sports medicine and occupational health services throughout southern West Virginia.

## ADVANCING EDUCATION, CARE IN OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

The other Centers of Wellness are driving innovation in their respective fields as well. The Center of Wellness for Gerontology & Healthy Aging, which houses fellowship programs in geriatric medicine and geriatric psychiatry, prioritizes preventive medicine. The Center of Wellness for Obesity & Diabetes is building on Marshall's foundation of excellence in bariatric surgery while also expanding into nonsurgical weight management and further developing the Chertow Diabetes Center.

Looking ahead, a new state-of-the-art Marshall Community Health Institute in Huntington will redefine multidisciplinary training for medical students, faculty and health professionals throughout the region. Central to the institute will be a futuristic simulation center, where VR (Virtual Reality) technology will take team-based problem-solving to a new level.

The Institute will also become the new home for the Center of Wellness for Addiction & Behavioral Health. Marshall's innovative models for substance use disorder are comprehensive, addressing factors beyond the individual while also assisting families and communities at large.

"This Institute represents a bold step forward in how we train future health care providers and address critical health challenges at Marshall University," Hammers said. "By combining leading technology with real-world community health initiatives, we are not only enhancing medical education but also expanding access to innovative care solutions that will have a lasting impact on our region."

The School of Medicine's Division of Addiction Sciences works with dozens of organizations to provide care and treatment in hospitals, homeless shelters and other locations in the Huntington area. Two of its leading initiatives include PROACT and Project Hope for Women & Children, a residential treatment facility for women with substance use disorder and their children.

Multisector collaboration is a crucial aspect of creating solutions, and the Division of Addiction Sciences hosts weekly sessions to keep clinicians and local partners, along with recovery advocates, informed about progress, challenges and trends.



PHOTO BY SHOLTEN SINGER



Marshall is also committed to clinical research covering many areas related to addiction, including vaping and opioid use during pregnancy, a critical issue in West Virginia. Its research model is uniquely comprehensive and sets a new standard for substance use research. The university also offers a one-year addiction medicine fellowship, giving physicians an opportunity to experience the breadth of services and areas of expertise required in treating substance use disorder.

Gozal said the advancements taking place within each of the Centers of Wellness demonstrate a powerful synergy between Marshall, its medical school, the academic health system and surrounding communities.

"Our role as a state-supported school of medicine is to generate opportunities, create training programs and ultimately serve the citizens of West Virginia," Gozal said. "This dual commitment to education and community engagement defines who we are and why we exist."

“ ”

**We're recruiting individuals who are leaders in their fields** to bring their depth of knowledge and expertise to our programs, with the goal of establishing **flagship initiatives that will be recognized locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.**

**- DAVID GOZAL, MD, MBA, PhD (Hon)**

Dean of the School of Medicine &  
Vice President for Health Affairs at Marshall





marshall health

# A PERSONAL HOMECOMING

Marshall Health Network welcomes Scott Raynes as president and CEO.

By Katherine Pyles

PHOTO BY SHOLTEN SINGER



**A**s Scott Raynes steps into his new role as president and CEO of Marshall Health Network, it marks the continuation of a remarkable career — and a personal homecoming. Raynes, who has earned the distinction of FACHE (Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives), was born and raised in West Virginia and brings with him decades of experience as well as a heartfelt commitment to the Mountain State.

"Returning to West Virginia to help lead and contribute to Marshall Health Network is both humbling and exciting," Raynes said. "Growing up in Oak Hill, West Virginia — and I believe this holds true for anyone raised in the state — instills a strong sense of community and purpose. We are taught to be caring, compassionate, hardworking and loyal. These values are part of who we are, and I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to return home."

It was in West Virginia that Raynes began his health care career, setting him on a path that would see him rise to leadership positions across the southeastern United States. Most recently, Raynes served as president and CEO of Southeast Georgia Health System, where he led a comprehensive network that included a teaching hospital, a children's hospital, a community hospital and two skilled nursing facilities, along with a multispecialty physician group of more than 200 providers.

"Scott has the vision, expertise and compassion to lead Marshall Health Network as an academic health system for the future," said David Fox, chair of the Marshall Health Network board of directors. "His deep commitment to the people of our state and his passion for improving health care make him the ideal leader for Marshall Health Network's important next chapter."

In his new role, Raynes will work closely with Marshall University, an institution he has long admired for its transformative impact on the region, he said.

"Marshall University means so much to so many," Raynes said. "Working with President Smith is absolutely energizing to me. When you spend time with him, you know, immediately, he is committed to improving the quality of life in our region. As the region's growing academic health system, Marshall Health Network is proud to join President Smith and Marshall University in reaching new heights of success, and I'm excited to contribute to that bright future."

Raynes succeeds Kevin W. Yingling, RPh, MD, who served as Marshall Health Network's founding president and CEO. Under Dr. Yingling's leadership, the academic health system and the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine realized impressive growth, including expanded pediatric and cardiovascular facilities and the development of rural and surgical residency programs.

"Dr. Yingling has been the ideal leader to guide Marshall Health Network to the outstanding system it is today," Raynes said. "A visionary, he is also incredibly intelligent, thoughtful and articulate. Above all, he embodies integrity and humility — a true servant-leader. It is the greatest honor of my career to continue the important work he has started."

Raynes earned his bachelor's degree in business administration from the West Virginia Institute of Technology, an MBA with a specialization in health care from West Virginia University and a master's degree in higher education and counseling from Morehead State University. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and past president of the Tennessee Hospital Association.

Beyond the accolades and professional milestones, it's Raynes' personal ties to the region that stand out. His wife, Shawwna, is a Huntington native. They have two daughters: Delaney, who is attending Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Ella, who is a senior at the University of Alabama.

"Our family has been fortunate to live and work in some wonderful places, making lasting friendships along the way," Raynes said. "Now, we look forward to welcoming those friends to visit and experience the beauty of our home state."

With an impressive career that spans decades and regions, Scott Raynes is no stranger to making an impact. Now, he's ready to do so in the state he calls home, where his leadership at Marshall Health Network is poised to usher in a new era of health care in the region.





**“Life is a team sport,** and nowhere do you find that to be more authentic than as part of **HERD NATION.** Winter, spring, summer and fall, we are moving forward with a bold plan. **Marshall For All, Marshall Forever!”**

**- BRAD D. SMITH**

President, Marshall University





# CAPTURING THE MARSHALL *Spirit*

New precision scanner creates first accurate rendering of the Memorial Fountain, showcases the ever advancing capabilities of the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center

By Mike Friel





One of the most recognizable Marshall University icons, the Memorial Fountain, pays homage to victims of the 1970 plane crash that killed 75 Marshall football players, coaches, athletic boosters and flight crew members.

Created by sculptor Harry Bertoia and dedicated in 1972, the 13-foot high, 6,500-pound work of art recently was named to the National Register of Historic Places. Bertoia said his hope was that the fountain would “commemorate the living — rather than death — on the waters of life, rising, receding, surging so as to express upward growth, immortality and eternity.”

Now, one of the university’s most photographed and indelible landmarks has been preserved in full three-dimensional glory.

On a mild November day, engineers from the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center (MAMC) scanned the mammoth monument constructed of bronze and copper tubes using the latest advanced scanning technology. MAMC’s mobile technology enabled the MAMC team to capture each curve and crevice of the fountain in a few hours, creating a highly accurate three-dimensional rendering that preserves Bertoia’s memorial in fine detail.

Marshall officials will be able to use the computer-aided-design file to generate accurate 3D replicas of the fountain or — should the need arise — create replacement parts.

“We are committed to excellence,” said Dave Traube, Marshall’s chief marketing and communications officer. “The fountain is such a visual representation of the Marshall spirit that it only makes sense that we want to portray it as accurately as possible with each use. The 3D rendering will allow us to do this.”



MAMC Director Derek Scarbro said the center’s scanning technology is some of the most advanced in central Appalachia. “Not only are our scanning systems highly accurate and capable of capturing the finest details and even colors, they are portable, which really is a game-changer when you need to scan immovable objects like the Memorial Fountain.”

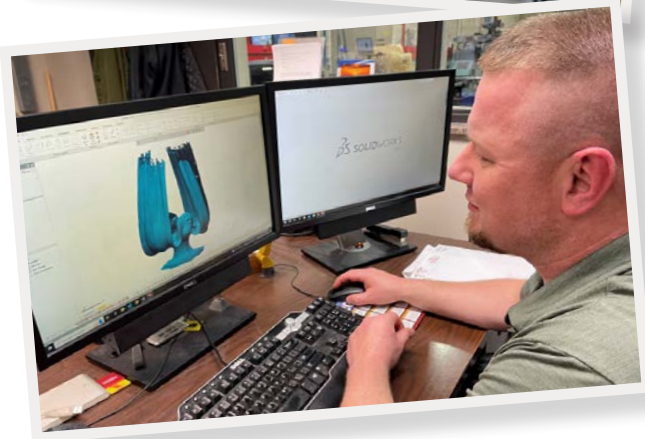
While MAMC’s scanners typically are used to reverse engineer components or capture precise measurements for clients in industries such as automotive and aerospace, Scarbro said the fountain project highlights another practical application for the technology — and one that adds emotional heft to technological hardware.

“It’s a great showcase of the innovative technologies at MAMC,” Traube said.

Precision scanners are just a fraction of the more than \$25 million in sophisticated technologies that MAMC provides, which are accessible to entrepreneurs and manufacturers of all sizes. There are also computer-controlled mills and lathes, laser and waterjet cutters, and a stable of 3D printers, including large-format, full-color-capable and even metal — all of which run on advanced software with a bevy of tools that utilize artificial intelligence (AI).

PHOTO BY AUSTIN O’CONNOR





"We work to bring this technology to our region to expose businesses and help them realize new contracting avenues or ways to develop new products," Scarbro said. "With more than 700 years of combined industry expertise, our staff of engineers, machinists and technicians ensure that clients take full advantage of this technology trove."

MAMC's advanced technology and industrial expertise are but one part of a comprehensive array of services the center offers, services that extend far beyond the confines of its technology centers in Huntington and South Charleston. Workforce development is central to the mission of the center. In addition to customized and specialized manufacturing training delivered on-site and at companies around the region, MAMC's industry-aligned career skills programs in CNC machining, welding and industrial maintenance for automated systems (SMART) prepare individuals for high-demand jobs in the manufacturing sector. In fact, more than 90% of students find employment in their chosen occupations. Graduates of the programs earn nationally recognized industry credentials as well as associate of applied science degrees through MAMC's partnerships with Mountwest and Bridge Valley community colleges.

Apprenticeship Works, MAMC's nationwide Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Partnership, assists companies nationwide in developing and maintaining custom apprenticeships in more than a dozen high-demand occupations in order to bridge critical skills gaps in their



operations. The initiative is funded entirely through grants from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), which took notice of a unique apprenticeship model MAMC developed for a West Virginia manufacturer and encouraged its replication nationwide. That success led the DOL last year to designate MAMC as a national manufacturing apprenticeship hub.

MAMC also is a hub of innovation. When inventors and innovators walk through the doors, they connect with a team of MAMC experts in the Design Works lab and makerspace who assist with design, prototyping, testing and manufacturing to help bring new ideas and products to market. MAMC offers Early-Stage Funding Opportunities assistance to offset the cost of many of these services.

For existing companies, MAMC, with its Advantage Valley partners, organizes supply chain opportunities to connect small businesses to contracting opportunities with government agencies and larger manufacturers. At the same time, the Quality Services team assists companies large and small with implementing and maintaining systems to reduce waste, improve efficiency and boost productivity. This includes helping manufacturers achieve critical quality certifications often required to become suppliers to large manufacturers and government agencies.

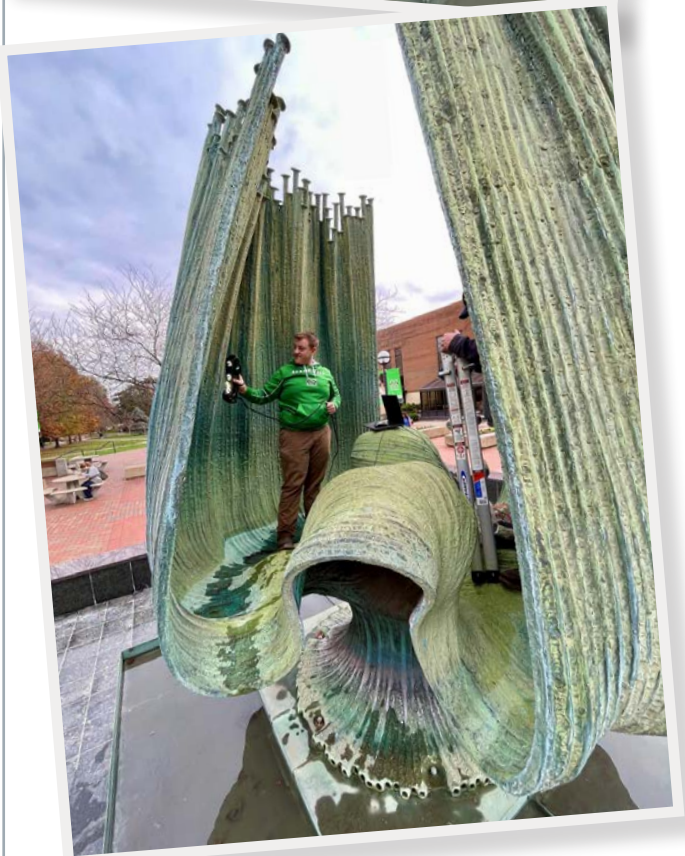
Last year alone, MAMC served 324 companies and delivered manufacturing training to 987 individuals through its diverse portfolio of assistance programs.

MAMC's mission also extends to K-12 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) education. More than 6,200 students each year benefit from MAMC's outreach efforts, which include student tours and workshops, in-school demonstrations and a series of popular summer camps. The goal is to encourage young people to consider careers in manufacturing and other technical fields and inspire them to develop entrepreneurial mindsets.

"MAMC does a great many things to support manufacturers, entrepreneurs and students," Scarbro said. "We continue to expand and adapt to meet the growing and changing needs of those we serve. That agility has been a hallmark of our organization for 35 years. No other U.S. university offers a manufacturing center that delivers the diverse services you find at MAMC."



To learn more about MAMC, visit [www.mfg.marshall.edu](http://www.mfg.marshall.edu).





PHOTOS BY AUSTIN O'CONNOR

# FACULTY FEATURE

## JANA TIGCHELAAR

*("Dr. TIG" to her students)*

Associate professor of English, associate chair of the Department of English and director of graduate studies. Set to become department chair on July 1.

## **Tell us about your education and career background.**

I joined Marshall as an assistant professor of English in 2015. Prior to that, I taught at the University of Kansas (KU), after getting my Ph.D. in English from KU in 2014. I got my master's degree in English from Ohio University in 2008. My academic career came after a few years working in different fields: editing and publishing, customer service, and administrative work.

I graduated from Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, in 2000, with a bachelor's degree in English and art.

## **Can you tell us the basics of what your job entails?**

Currently my job is mostly administrative and advising work, with a little teaching and research. A typical week will include meetings with graduate students for advising, colleagues to discuss departmental matters, and folks from around the university and beyond. As the director of graduate studies, I am the advisor for all the students enrolled in our English M.A. program. I also work with the graduate programs committee to set the graduate curriculum, evaluate program needs, and plan for professionalization opportunities. As associate chair, I support the department chair in areas like student awards, planning department meetings, and supporting faculty and staff. This all sounds very boring when I'm writing it out like this, but one through-line here is that I work with my colleagues and our students in some way in every element of my job — and that is what motivates and inspires me!

## **Tell us about your choice to teach literature.**

I am a clichéd English professor in that I have always loved reading. I grew up in a small town in rural Iowa, and books were my entry point into other worlds and perspectives. I almost always had (and honestly still have) a “to read” pile that I find comforting — just knowing there is another world to dive into when the current book is finished! Although the stories are different, the experience of reading is the same: for a while, the world around me falls away and I am immersed in another world. Gifted and supportive English teachers and professors in high school and college encouraged me to dig deeper into these worlds and ask questions about the way they're constructed — and that is critical theory, at its most basic level. Processing in writing the ideas and thoughts and reactions I have to the things I've read builds on the world-expanding power of literature: I'm adding my voice to the conversation around these books — conversations that have sometimes been going on for centuries.

I teach and research early and 19th-century American literature, women's literature, Gothic literature, and regional literature, including Appalachian literature. My classes are almost always writing intensive. I think writing

is an important partner to reading in not only making sense of what we read, but also adding our own ideas to this larger conversation. With the rise of generative AI, I believe writing is even more important, because it is about the process of making meaning and understanding, not about the product. We write to learn, to understand, but also to build and to create — and a robot can't do that for us.

In the past few years, my research has focused on depictions of neighborliness in 19th-century American literature. I'm working on a book project that explores the neighborly relationship as an alternative to later modes of belonging and relationship that are more individualistic, isolationist, and nativist. Neighborliness encourages us to think beyond ourselves, our families and our isolated and exclusionary communities.

## **What do you hope is the impact of your work?**

I hope my work as an advisor helps students at all levels feel welcome and like they belong. I think too often students are intimidated by the unfamiliar aspects of college and graduate school. I was the first member of my family to get a graduate degree, and I had no idea how grad school worked. We have lots of first-gen undergrad and grad students at Marshall, so I want to help them feel at home here. I hope my work as a teacher opens up new worlds for my students and shows them that their voices matter, and that they do have something to say that is of value — even about dusty old literature that doesn't seem relevant to them.

## **What is fulfilling about your job?**

I believe teaching literature and writing to students at all levels is incredibly important work that not only builds students' critical thinking, reading, and writing skills, but also helps with information literacy, research ability, and forming empathetic connections with others. I also think that it is so important to continue to champion the liberal arts in a culture that seems to be losing sight of their importance. Literature, art, music, theater, film, history, languages — these are fields that should be open to all, not just an educated “elite.” This is why I do what I do.

## **Based on your work, what have you learned that you wish everyone knew?**

I wish everyone knew that the biggest barrier to student success is a lack of adequate support. This is especially true with Marshall's students, who are often first-generation students without family financial support. Many of our students are taking care of children or other family members, working jobs off-campus, and juggling so many responsibilities that focusing solely on their coursework is a luxury they can't afford. Making Marshall affordable for all students is step one. But support here also means encouragement, mentorship, and compassion. Kindness and consideration can go so far in building up our students' sense that they can be successful in college.



PHOTO BY CAYDEN GU



# LEADERSHIP LESSONS

WITH GINNY LEE

By Kasey Stevens

### Marshall University Board of Governors member Ginny Lee

was born in the inner city of Boston to parents who emigrated from China in the late 1950s with less than \$100 in their pockets. She grew up in a modest-income household, getting by on food stamps and on free and reduced lunch programs in the Boston public school system.

When Lee was earning her undergraduate degree at Brown University, she put herself through school by taking out the maximum amount of student loans allowed and worked 30-35 hours a week across three jobs to make ends meet.

If that wasn't enough, she also played on the varsity volleyball team at Brown. She earned first team All-Ivy all four years and became the second volleyball player ever inducted into the Brown Athletic Hall of Fame.

Lee went on to earn her master's degree in business administration and management (MBA) from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

Lee started her career in investment banking, moved on to a major consumer products company and then went on to management consulting after completing her MBA.

She also had a nearly 18-year career at Intuit, where she was a senior executive and held a variety of general manager positions, as well as a variety of business and technology leadership roles, including serving as senior vice president and chief information officer.

After her career at Intuit, she served as president and chief operating officer at the online education giant Khan Academy.

Lee helped lead Khan Academy through the COVID-19 pandemic, when online learning really took off out of necessity. This was one of her biggest challenges and opportunities that she encountered while there.

"Brad (Smith) would often tell us at

Intuit, 'You never fix the roof when it's raining because by that time, it's too late,'" Lee said. She took that lesson to Khan Academy and made sure that Khan Academy went through a major re-architecture of the platform so it could scale effectively.

And thank goodness it did because when COVID-19 hit in the spring of 2020, Lee said they went from 17 million website users per month to 27 million website users per month.

Marshall's tie with Khan Academy doesn't stop at Lee. This semester, Marshall Online is piloting a partnership with Khan Academy to embed Khanmigo, an artificial intelligence (AI) learning assistant, into select online courses.

Through her career of leading small teams to leading teams of over 1,200, Lee said she had to learn to scale herself and her leadership team to execute well and meet different business challenges.

### Lee's leadership philosophy includes the following six tenants:

- 1 Create a vision and inspire others to make it happen. Know where you are driving and lead with a balance of the mind, hand and heart.
- 2 Always start with the people. Strategy and strong execution will follow.
- 3 Solve for the total company first, the team second, and the individual third. Focus on putting "points on the board," and good things for the individual will naturally come.
- 4 Power of the team. No "hero mentality," as you can't accomplish anything on your own.
- 5 Spend time on what's important. Focus on the critical few priorities and not the trivial many.
- 6 Cookie cutters won't work. Situational leadership is key.

Lee's now on her "third chapter" in life — focusing on paying it forward as other people did for her throughout her life.

She currently serves on the boards of directors for Oportun, OnTrac and Guideline. She also facilitates an MBA course on interpersonal dynamics and she does executive leadership development at Stanford Business School, as well as serving on the Marshall University Board of Governors.

Lee's term on Marshall's board began in October 2022 and runs until the end of June 2027.

"My background is similar to the student profile of Marshall — good, honest, hard-working people coming from modest means and with big dreams — so I resonate with the Marshall students a lot," said Lee, who is also a basketball fan, one who went from cheering the Boston Celtics to being a Golden State Warriors and Steph Curry fan.

Some of the initiatives Marshall is working on that Lee is excited about include increasing the applicant pool, the acceptance and graduation rates, the Institute for Cyber Security and the Marshall for All, Marshall Forever program.

"I love the fact that Marshall isn't just thinking about Marshall, but it's also trying to be a prosperity platform to help students get meaningful jobs post-graduation," Lee said. "It's trying to help increase the regional societal success."

Lee lights up as she talks about Marshall and the path it is forging in a time when there is a lot of uncertainty in higher education.

**"It is a group of people focused beyond what the university needs itself," she said. "It cares so deeply about the well-being of the community."**





PHOTO BY MORGAN NAPIER



PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL







# LIVING YOUR MARSHALL *MoMent*











history

# *A moment in Marshall history*

A black and white photograph of three young women in the foreground, smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman on the left is holding a large, light-colored inflatable object. The woman in the middle has long hair and is also smiling. The woman on the right has curly hair and is wearing a dark top. In the background, a large crowd of people is visible, suggesting a large gathering or event. The text "CELEBRATING HISTORIC WOMEN WHO HAVE SHAPED MARSHALL'S PROGRESS" is overlaid on the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below the text is a green rectangular box containing the author's name "By Lindsey M. Harper" in white. At the bottom of the page, the text "MARSHALL.EDU | WINTER/SPRING 2025" is followed by the page number "41" in a bold, white font.

# **CELEBRATING** HISTORIC WOMEN WHO HAVE SHAPED MARSHALL'S PROGRESS

**By Lindsey M. Harper**



**B**ehind every “first” milestone is a story. In this issue’s look at history, we’re celebrating women and highlighting 12 moments when women paved the way right here at Marshall. Whether they intended to be a “first” to create lasting change or they just wanted to live their lives — the women featured here were leaders in student organizations, athletics and in administrative roles both on campus and in Huntington. Their achievements remind us that progress happens when someone takes the first step, inspiring us all to lead and maybe even be first, wherever we are.

**ORA B. STAATS** was the first woman to serve as the registrar at Marshall and she did so from 1913 to 1923. She was also listed as the treasurer and an associate dean at this time. After this role, she continued teaching English. She later became the financial secretary until she retired from Marshall sometime around 1945.

**MAXINE PROCTOR** was the first woman to serve as the student body president to the Student Government Association in 1942. Most of the initiatives that year were geared toward war efforts. In a 1987 interview with *The Parthenon*, Proctor-Waugh stated, “I had the leadership qualities [to do it], and it just so happened I was a woman.”

**ELIZABETH “BETTY” ARRINGTON** (who later added Nichols) was the first woman to serve as the editor-in-chief of *The Parthenon* student newspaper in 1944. At the time, the staff on the newspaper was almost entirely women. Due to the war, funding for the paper was cut. These women sought funding from local businesses so they could continue writing and so they could send out 400 copies of the paper each week to the men in the service.

**MARY STEVENS** was the first woman to join the Veterans Club on campus in 1959. She joined the group as a sophomore after serving a year in the Women’s Air Force at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. The second woman joined this organization in 1960.

**MARY DAVIS** was the first woman to earn the title “Miss Black Pearl” and she did so in 1969. Miss Black Pearl was a pageant started by the Black United Students organization and was considered part of the Homecoming activities at Marshall. This specific pageant ran from approximately 1969-1982.

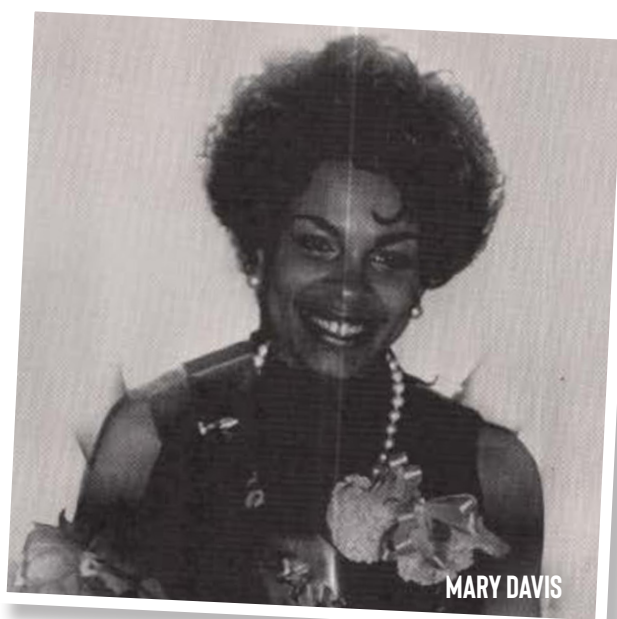
**DEBBIE BAILEY** was Marshall’s first African American cheerleader, joining the team in 1970. In an issue of *The Parthenon* published on Oct. 29, 1970, she said, “My parents were quite proud, and Black students have been very enthusiastic, especially the guys who are playing.”

She said all the hard work was most worthwhile when the Black members of the football team said, “It’s so good to have a sister out there cheering for your cause.”

**DR. PHYLLIS CYRUS**, an associate professor of management at Marshall, was the first woman sworn in as the mayor of Huntington in 1973. She was originally elected to the City Council in that year’s election. She succeeded Mayor Owen Duncan, who died on Aug. 19, 1973.

**JETAUN C. WASHINGTON** was the first African American woman hired on with the University Security Department in 1973. When asked whether her race or gender influenced her being hired, she replied: “It may have, but I’m pretty sure it was because of my background.” She received her bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from West Virginia State University earlier that year.

**DOROTHY “DOT” HICKS** was a pioneer for the women’s sports program at Marshall University. In 1974, she awarded Marshall’s first two sports scholarships to women (golfer Nancy Bunton and basketball player Kathy Haas). In the early 1980s, as the director of athletics for women’s sports and the liaison to the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), she oversaw the universities’ transition from the AIAW to the NCAA. In 1990, she was inducted to the Marshall Athletics Hall of Fame. In 1999, she retired from the university. In 2008, the Herd Softball field that bears her name was opened. In 2024, she was named the Homecoming grand marshal.





**SANDRA TAYE WILKERSON** was the first woman to serve on Marshall University's Advisory Board in 1979. As an alumna of Marshall, she earned her degree in physical education and speech in 1957. Marshall President Robert Hayes said in a press release, "I believe she will make a great contribution to the work of the board."

**KAREN PELPHREY** was the first woman at Marshall to have her jersey number retired in 1986. She was the fifth athlete overall to have her number retired — No. 12. For her contributions to basketball, she received the Most Outstanding Player award and all four performance awards that year (best field goal percentage, best free throw percentage, leading rebounder and leading scorer).

**NANCY L. FRANCIS** was the first woman elected president of the Marshall University Foundation in 1993. She was the 21st person to serve in this role. She had been a member of the Foundation since 1984 and an officer since 1987. She was instrumental in founding Hospice of Huntington, the Huntington Museum of Art, United Way of River Cities and Marshall's Society of Yeager Scholars.

**SARAH DENMAN** was the first woman to hold the title of provost at Marshall University and did so from 1999 until her retirement from the university in 2008. Her work as a leader across campus was instrumental. Working 39 years in education, 33 of which were at Marshall, she played a major role in the growth of the university and its available programs offered today.

*Many other women helped pave the way at Marshall as well, all of them helping make the university what it is today and inspiring future leaders.*

BETTY ARRINGTON (CENTER)



To view digitized content from the **UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES** and learn more about Marshall's history, please scan the QR code:



PHYLLIS CYRUS



SARAH DENMAN



DOT HICKS









PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL





Kylie Roberts is the recipient of the Michalle Arthur Oldaker Memorial Scholarship, gifted by Charles Oldaker in memory of his late wife.

# A LEGACY OF INFLUENCE: **MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP** CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH **INSPIRATION**

By Taylor Stuck-Vance



**M**ost people can look back on their time in school and remember at least one teacher who impacted their lives. Perhaps it was a lesson that stuck with them or the style of teaching, but often it's the way a teacher went the extra mile outside of the classroom that stays with students.

Kylie Roberts knew her eighth-grade biology teacher, Mrs. Oldaker, had impacted her when she was in middle school, but she never expected to be directly impacted by her legacy in college.

Ara Michalle Arthur Oldaker was a native of Huntington and graduated from Marshall University in 1991. She went on to serve as an educator for the Chesapeake School District as well as Collins Career Technical Center, both in Chesapeake, Ohio.

In middle school, Roberts was considering a medical career, so she was in Oldaker's Bio-Med class, but it was their shared love of reading that bonded them.

"We both loved to read," Roberts said. "She would always tell us that we needed to read outside of school, and she was very big on literacy and the importance of literacy. But I specifically had a book that I had read, and I really loved it and I shared it with her. She was like, 'Well, if you love it, let me borrow it. I'll read it and come talk to you about it.' And she did. I loved her for that. I thought it was so nice of her to truly show interest in something I was interested in, especially considering it was a book meant for eighth-graders."

Sadly, Oldaker died in 2022 at the age of 54 after battling breast cancer. An active volunteer in her community, she and her husband, Charles, had already discussed ways they could further give back, so when she passed, Charles Oldaker knew the best way to honor his wife was by endowing a scholarship in her name.

"As an educator, there's not only the responsibility that comes with the profession, but the opportunity to have an impact on kids," Charles Oldaker said, speaking from Michalle's perspective. "Kids really need somebody who's got a big, compassionate heart as much as somebody who's able to give them reading, writing and arithmetic. They need somebody who cares about them."

When Roberts enrolled at Marshall, she filled out the scholarship application and put it out of her mind, not expecting much. But to her surprise, she was selected as the first recipient of the Michalle Arthur Oldaker Memorial Scholarship.

"When I first got the email, I was shocked," she said. "I didn't even remember signing up for it. So I just cried and was excited — and it made me think of her." Roberts is now a junior in the College of Education and Professional Development, preparing to be a reading and special education teacher.

"I think she would be excited," Roberts said of Michalle Oldaker. "And I think she would be proud of herself, honestly, because she's also the reason I decided to go into special education."

Michalle Oldaker had a hearing impairment that impacted her speech. Roberts remembers how knowledgeable she was about sign language and how she stressed inclusion.

"The things she went through, she would share how it affected her but how it also allowed her to see the world at a different angle," Roberts said. "She was still able to do everything, plus more. She never stopped learning. I loved that about her."

Roberts is completing clinical rotations this semester and next year will enter the classroom to begin student teaching. She also works at the campus Rec Center as marketing supervisor, and this summer will help plan summer camps for children.

"It's a lot, but I love it," she said. "It gives me so much and prepares me for a lot."

When she graduates, she said she hopes that she will be able to grow with her students.

"A lot of times, people forget that as time goes on, education continues to evolve," she said. "It's never going to be the same. Especially with special education — you're never going to have the same year, because you're never going to have the same kids. I just hope to remember that, and I hope to build relationships with my students, like Mrs. Oldaker built with us."

Roberts met Chuck Oldaker last year at the Marshall University Foundation's Scholarship Honor Brunch, which brings together scholarship donors and recipients for a day of celebration of the recipients' achievements. She told him that his way of honoring his wife has further inspired her to want to give back in the same way when she is able.

"I just want to say thank you to Mr. Oldaker for continuing to honor Mrs. Oldaker in a way that she would want to be honored," she said. "She loved education. She never stopped learning, even when it was hard."



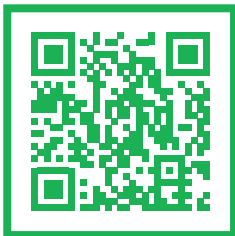


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**"I honestly think that she was such an influence on so many people, but especially my career, and for the rest of my life, I will think of her."**

**- KYLIE ROBERTS**

To learn more about leaving a legacy through scholarship, visit [www.formarshallu.org](http://www.formarshallu.org).



**Charles and the late Michalle Oldaker**



# ALUM *Spotlight*

**STEPHANIE D. THACKER**

1987 — Bachelor Business Administration, Marketing

PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL





# ALUM Spotlight

**STEPHANIE D. THACKER**

1987 — Bachelor Business Administration, Marketing

## What is your current job title?

U.S. Circuit Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

## Can you tell us the basics of what your job entails?

I am one of 15 active judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Our court decides all federal appeals in each of the five states within our circuit. Those five states are Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, South Carolina and North Carolina.

## Can you tell us a little about your career background?

I graduated magna cum laude in 1987 from Marshall University with a degree in business administration. In 1990, I graduated Order of the Coif from the West Virginia University College of Law, where I served as a member of the West Virginia Law Review and the editor of the coal issue of the West Virginia Law Review.

For the 22 years I practiced law, I worked both in the civil and criminal litigation arenas. I began my legal career as an associate with a Pittsburgh law firm.

I served as a federal prosecutor for 12 years, both at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia and at the Department of Justice in the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. During my tenure with the U.S. Attorney's Office, I served as part of the trial team in the first federal domestic violence prosecution in the country pursuant to the Violence Against Women Act. I also coordinated a number of prosecution initiatives aimed at combating crimes of particular import in West Virginia, including domestic violence, child support and federal coal mine safety violations. In addition to the obvious charges, these types of crimes included prosecutions for firearms violations, tax evasion, fraud and money laundering.

While with the Department of Justice, I rose through the ranks from trial attorney to principal deputy chief of the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. During my time with the department, I prosecuted and went to trial on cases in multiple jurisdictions, spearheaded several nationwide initiatives and provided training both nationally and internationally on the prosecution of child sexual exploitation crimes.

I also was co-author of the Department of Justice Federal Child Support Prosecution Handbook. For my work on the Innocence Lost Initiative, a national initiative aimed at combating child sex trafficking, I was awarded the Assistant Attorney General's Special Initiative Award. Ultimately, I was awarded the Attorney General's Distinguished Service Award for my work as part of the trial team in United States v. Malachi York. York was the leader of a cult-like organization based in Georgia. Following trial, he was convicted on federal charges of transporting minors across state lines for the purposes of child sexual molestation, as well as racketeering and financial reporting violations. York's case was reported at that time as the largest prosecution for child molestation ever directed at a single person in the history of the United States, both in terms of number of victims and number of incidents.

Following my tenure with the Department of Justice, I was in private practice in Charleston, West Virginia, where I engaged in litigation practice concentrating on complex litigation, environmental and toxic tort and criminal defense.

In September 2011, I was nominated by the president to fill a vacancy on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. I was confirmed by the United States Senate on April 16, 2012.

I like to maintain a busy schedule. So, in addition to my service on the Fourth Circuit, I have also served by designation on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, as well as on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Additionally, I have been designated as a federal district court judge in the Middle District of North Carolina, the District of Maryland and the Western District of Virginia.

## How did your time at Marshall help prepare you? Are you glad you chose Marshall, and why?

I am absolutely glad I chose Marshall University. I would not be where I am today without the education, opportunity, growth and experience I gained at Marshall. Marshall University prepares graduates for real life. Graduates of Marshall are well-rounded and prepared to exist equally in a big city as down a country road. Most importantly, Marshall University is the university in West Virginia that educates West Virginians.



### Were there any scholarships, mentors or opportunities that were instrumental in your choosing Marshall?

I am not sure I would have been able to attend college at all without benefit of the Pell grant and the work study program. I am forever grateful. I particularly enjoyed the work study program because it afforded me the opportunity to gain employment experience while contributing to my tuition. As part of this program, I worked at the library — which really lived up to the name “work study!” — and in the marketing department which was also quite helpful since marketing was my major.

### Favorite experiences as a Marshall student?

One of the things that most moved me during my time at Marshall and solidified my connection to the Marshall community was the yearly memorial service for the victims of the 1970 plane crash when the Memorial Fountain is turned off, and then each spring when the fountain springs to life again signifying that though we will never forget those that were lost, we carry on. I continue to take time to pause each Nov. 14 to remember the souls lost that day.

### Are you involved with Marshall now? Can you talk about your latest involvement?

I am committed to remaining involved in supporting Marshall University by accepting opportunities to engage with the students, particularly through the pre-law and criminal justice programs. I was most honored to be a part of bringing the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit to hear oral arguments at Marshall in 2022, which was the first time in the history of the court.

### Can you tell us what you’re passionate about? Why do you love it, why is it important, and what should people know about it that they might not realize?

Connecting with nature is important to me and to my mental health. John Muir described it best, saying, “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

### What have you learned through your career and life experiences that is worth passing on?

I have learned that life cannot always be planned out, that you should not shy away from opportunity when it presents itself, and that you should always leave room for serendipity.



# ALUM Spotlight

**STEVE L. ROBINSON**

2005 M.S. Adult & Technical Education

## **Current job and location:**

District Athletic Director — Charlotte, North Carolina

## **Can you tell us the basics of what your job entails?**

I am district athletic director for the 16th-largest school district in the nation. I oversee and work with athletic directors for 21 high school athletic programs and 47 middle school athletic programs. I also coordinate graduation for 33 high schools across Charlotte-Mecklenburg, while overseeing the district's drivers education program.

As of March 28, 2025, I am president of the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association. The North Carolina Athletic Directors Association (NCADA) is made up of secondary athletic directors from across the state of North Carolina. Through the NCADA, I was nominated to represent the state of North Carolina and Section 3 of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrator Association (NIAA).

## **Tell us about your recent national award nomination.**

The Bruce D. Whitehead Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to individuals from within the NIAAA membership in recognition of their length of service, special accomplishments and contributions to interscholastic athletics at the local, state and national levels. Nominations are submitted by state athletic director associations, screened by the NIAAA Awards Committee, and selected by the NIAAA Board of Directors.

I am humbled by the nomination to represent the state of North Carolina and Section 3, which comprises seven other southern states. This nomination comes from peers whom you know and do not know, and they are able to speak to the body of work and leadership.

## **Can you tell us a little about your career background?**

It's been diverse and has brought me to the profession I truly love now. I'm an entrepreneur at heart, and obtaining my master's degree from Marshall and God's favor continues to open doors. I worked in the mental health field and became a foster parent for a short time. Over the years, I transitioned into opening my own commercial cleaning company, which strengthened my business acumen and leadership skills.

In addition to my entrepreneurial ventures, I am also an empowerment speaker and author of the book "Prayer, Patience, Progress." This work reflects my commitment to personal growth and motivation.

## **How did your time at Marshall help prepare you?**

Building lifelong relationships with everyone from the student life, professors, custodial staff and resident advisors — everything about campus life helped build who I am now. People cared about each other. I love that Marshall chose me. I still have the acceptance letter somewhere. I had friends from my hometown, Oak Hill, who were already here and just helped pave the way, the Huntington community, the Nu Beta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated, lifelong friends who have become family, and the alumni. The list goes on.

## **Favorite experiences as a Marshall student?**

Hanging out on the tables in front of Holderby Hall, all sporting events, step shows and working for Professor Phil Carter (gaining knowledge and wisdom). One of my favorite professors was my communications teacher, Camila Brammer.

## **Can you talk about your involvement with Marshall Alumni?**

I just became the president of the Charlotte Area chapter, and we are excited and looking forward to doing impactful things to promote our beloved university. Matt James and Walker Tatum came down to Charlotte and met with us, and the energy and commitment they bring is something that we can all apply to whatever we do. I am grateful for those guys.

## **Can you tell us what you're passionate about? Why do you love it, why is it important, and what should people know about it that they might not realize?**

My "why" is formed from my mother, Jean, who is also a Marshall alum. When I was young, I used to ask Mom why she always helps people, and she said, "Son, I help others so that one day, someone can help you, teach you or guide you if I am not there."

I am passionate about helping others be their best, counseling others, even just being a good person to someone else. I love to see others grow and overcome different obstacles in life. I strive to be a laborer across someone else's path, to help them so that one day someone can help my daughter or my two granddaughters and my son, should I not be there.

## **What have you learned through your career and life experiences that is worth passing on?**

Time and peace are my two greatest gifts. You cannot get them back, so set boundaries on them and do not negotiate them. What you do with your time and peace will tell you who you are.



marshall alum



# MARSHALL UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION TO HOST **86TH** ALUMNI AWARDS BANQUET

The **MARSHALL UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION** will host its annual Alumni Awards Banquet Saturday, April 12, at the Marshall Health Network Arena.

The Alumni Awards Banquet honors exceptional alumni, university supporters and students, celebrating the remarkable achievements within the Marshall University alumni community during an evening of gratitude and appreciation.

"The Marshall University Alumni Awards Banquet is a special evening where we come together to celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of our alumni," said Walker Tatum, director of alumni engagement. "These individuals exemplify the values of 'Marshall For All, Marshall Forever' — showing the world the strength, passion and impact of the Thundering Herd. It's our honor to recognize their extraordinary contributions to our community and beyond."

The evening will begin with a VIP reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner and awards at 7:30 p.m. Highlighting more than two dozen awards, the banquet recognizes student scholarship awards from Marshall University Black Alumni, Awards of Distinction given to alumni representing each of the university's schools and colleges, several alumni chapter awards, including Chapter of the Year and Alumni Chapter President of the Year, the Dr. Ronald G. Area "3 C's" Award, and lastly the national awards for Distinguished Young Alumnus, Outstanding Community Achievement and Distinguished Alumnus.



For sponsorship opportunities or more information, contact **Walker Tatum at 304-696-2524 or [tatum8@marshall.edu](mailto:tatum8@marshall.edu)**. Visit [www.formarshallu.org](http://www.formarshallu.org) to learn more.









# MARSHALL



Mike and Teri Sexton,  
Makayla and  
Lovevona Chastain, and  
Haileigh Runyon



Lorene Bukhart Whitehouse,  
Dee Williamson Herbert and  
Kimberly Turley



The Bobersky Family



Jill, Reid, Kristy, Jay,  
Kennison, Annabelle and  
Jodi Jackson



The Ely Family



Payton and Alys Smith



Walker Tatum, Dot Hicks and  
Matt James

## FAMILY SCRAPBOOK



# UNIVERSITY



Mark Jewell in Argentina



Michelle Perdue, Susan Black and Andrea Anderson



Nancy Campbell  
in Egypt



Nate Fanelli and  
MARCO



Steve Henshaw and  
Bill Ratcliff



Anthony, Kelli and  
MaKenna Herr



*We love our Marshall family.  
To submit your photos, email  
[jean.hardiman@marshall.edu](mailto:jean.hardiman@marshall.edu)*



# LETTER *from* the PRESIDENT

Dear Marshall Family,

As winter fades and campus begins to bloom with the arrival of spring, we are reminded of the energy and renewal that comes with each new season at Marshall University. This is a time of growth, fresh opportunities and celebrating the achievements of our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

This spring, we continue to see momentum across campus. With another year of increased enrollment, we are proud of the work being done to ensure that Marshall remains an accessible and transformative institution for students from all walks of life. A key part of that commitment is the expansion of our Marshall For All initiative with Marshall For All: Tuition-Free WV, which provides free tuition to first-time college students from West Virginia whose families earn less than \$65,000 per year. This program is opening doors, reducing financial barriers and making higher education more accessible for students who might have once thought college was out of reach.

Spring also brings a sense of celebration — whether it's cheering on the Herd, preparing for final projects, or gathering for annual traditions that remind us of the strength of our community. On that note, I hope you will plan to join us for our annual Community Cares Week May 20-23, 2025. This annual event invites all who are connected to our university to help us "take care of the house" by volunteering to assist with painting, landscaping, housekeeping and other impactful tasks.

And of course, Spring Commencement is just around the corner — one of the most rewarding days of the year. It's the moment when our students take the next step, moving forward into careers, expanding their education or embarking on new adventures. Watching our graduates walk across the stage, ready to make their mark on the world, is a powerful reminder of why we do what we do.

At the heart of all we do is you — our students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters. You make this university special, and your contributions, whether big or small, help us continue to grow and thrive. I invite you to stay connected, return to campus and be part of the moments that define Marshall University.

Thank you for being part of our story. I hope to see you at a game, an event, or simply visiting the place we all call home.

Go Herd!

*Brad D. Smith*

**Brad D. Smith, President**








PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL



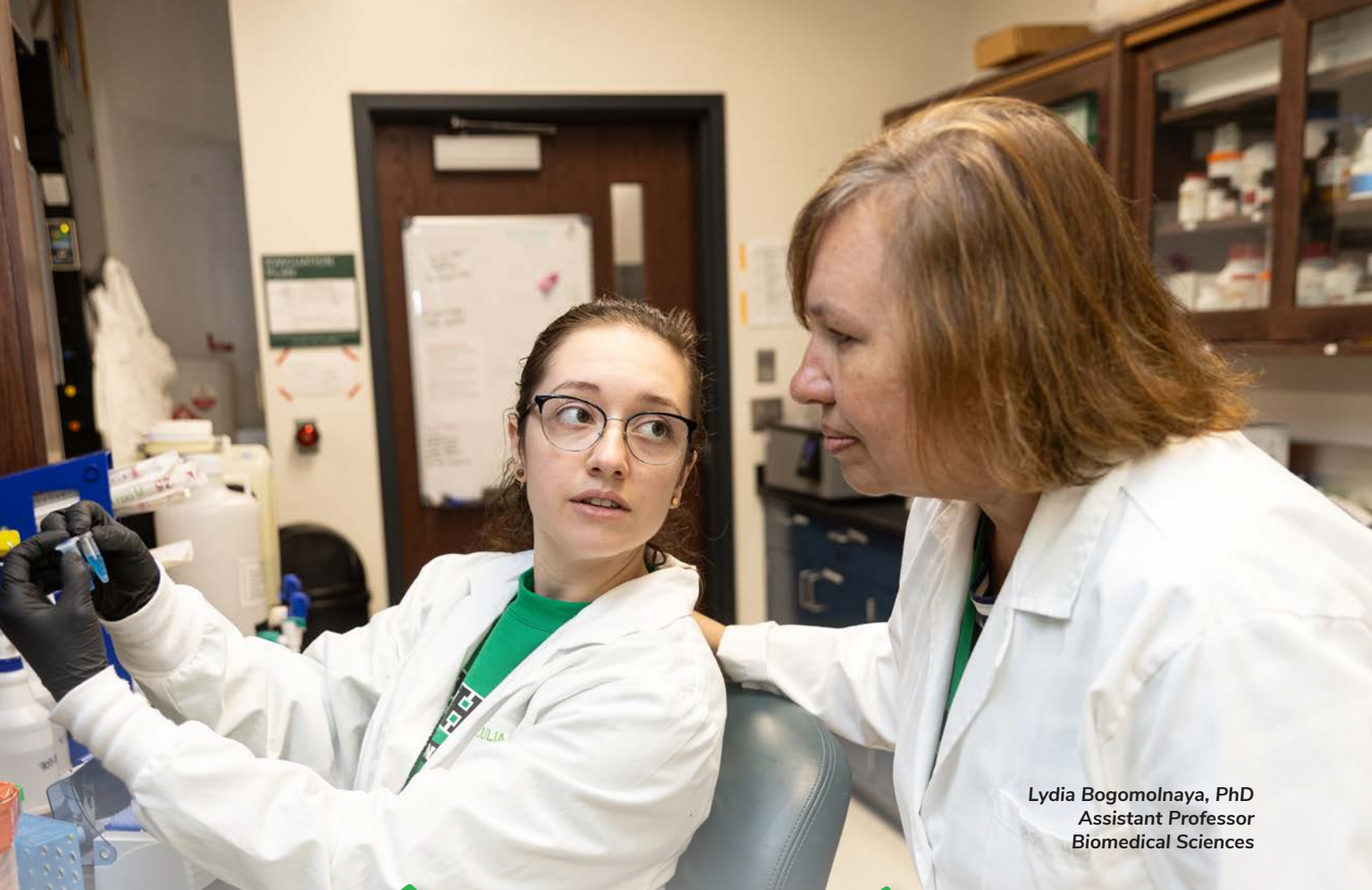






PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL





Lydia Bogomolnaya, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Biomedical Sciences

# THIS *MoMent* MATTERS

## REWARDING RESEARCH

At Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, our students and faculty are more than scholars—they're innovators dedicated to solving West Virginia's most pressing health challenges. From advancing rural health care solutions to tackling chronic diseases and substance use disorders, their groundbreaking research is shaping healthier futures for our communities.

Learn more at: [jcesom.marshall.edu](https://jcesom.marshall.edu)



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