

Researchers studying the science of addiction

Marshall



magazine

EPIDEMIC



The university is drawing a line in the sand in the fight against opioid addiction.



See page 41 for ALUMNI NEWS and more

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features

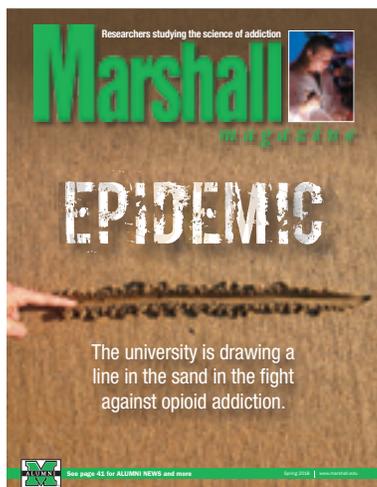
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on the cover

Led by President Gilbert, the Marshall University family is collaborating to combat the opioid crisis in our community and setting the standard of treatment for the rest of the nation.

Marshall

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Autumn and Early Spring with President Gilbert



1.

1. President Gilbert gave the Robert C. Byrd Lecture on Civic Responsibility in September.

2. President Gilbert presents Emily Kinner with her sash after she was named Miss Marshall at the Homecoming game in October.

3. President Gilbert and Dr. Eunice Bellinger, president of BridgeValley Community and Technical College, signed agreements initiating cooperation to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Regents Bachelor of Arts degree.

4. Athletic Director Mike Hamrick, Head Football Coach Doc Holliday, President Gilbert and Student Body President Matt Jarvis participated in the annual memorial service for the victims of the 1970 plane crash.



4.

5. President Gilbert was joined by School of Medicine Dean Dr. Joseph Shapiro, Huntington Mayor Steve Williams, former Dean Dr. Charles McKown Jr. and Vice President for Research Dr. John Maher as Williams declared Monday, Jan. 29, as "Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine Day" to kick off the school's 40th anniversary year.



2.



3.



6.

6. President Gilbert reacts to the Herd's defeat of Wichita State in the first round of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. This was the team's first appearance in the tournament in over 30 years.



5.



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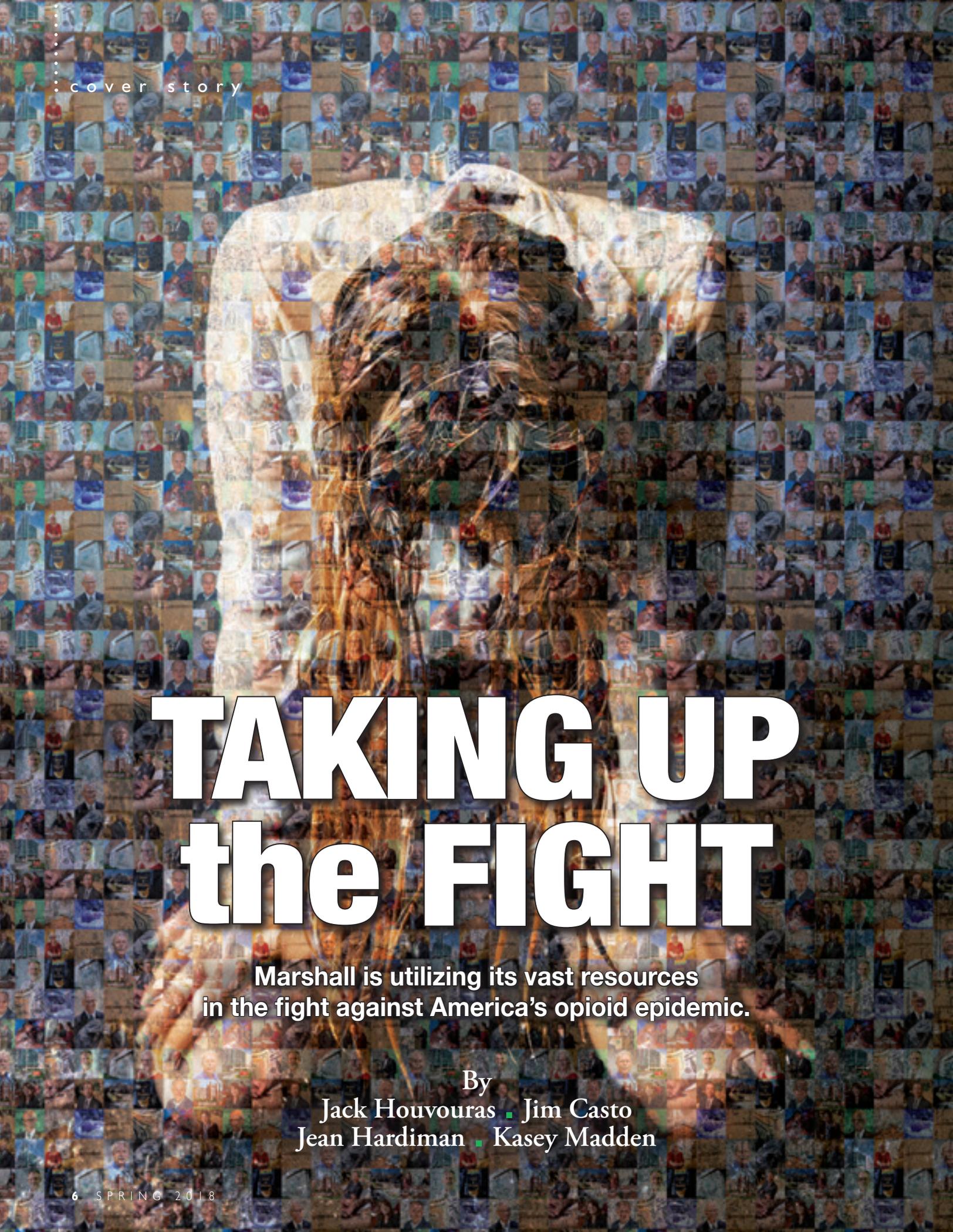
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TAKING UP the FIGHT

Marshall is utilizing its vast resources
in the fight against America's opioid epidemic.

By
Jack Houvouras ■ Jim Casto
Jean Hardiman ■ Kasey Madden

It has been described as a scourge on our society, a national emergency and the deadliest drug crisis in American history. The facts are frightening. Every day, 116 people die from opioid-related drug overdoses in the United States. That equates to more than 42,000 lives lost every year to commonly prescribed pain killers or heroin. Appalachia has been particularly hard hit, and today it is nearly impossible to find someone whose life hasn't been directly impacted by the crisis. Solutions to this public health emergency have not come easy, but that has not deterred Marshall University from taking up the fight to end this national nightmare.

In October 2016, the university announced the formation of a substance use recovery coalition. Marshall



Marshall President Jerome Gilbert has pledged the university's vast resources to end the opioid crisis: "We have dedicated people who sincerely believe that this is a disease and a social condition that we need to fight."

President Jerome Gilbert said the effort is university-wide, with at least 10 academic departments and programs working together in various ways. What's more, the school is working with partners in the region to join the fight.

While speaking at a meeting on the Huntington campus in January, President Gilbert drew a line in the sand and pledged to continue using the university's vast resources to end the opioid crisis: "I think we are going to make a huge difference," Gilbert said. "We are better positioned than any other university in the country to make a huge impact on solving the addiction problem. It won't be done overnight. But we have dedicated people who sincerely believe that



Photo by Rick Lee.

Amy Saunders is the director of the Marshall Wellness Center and co-chair of the university's Substance Use Recovery Coalition.

**Appalachia has been particularly hard hit,
and today it is nearly impossible
to find someone whose life hasn't been
directly impacted by the opioid crisis.**



this is a disease and a social condition that we need to fight. We have the determination and the ability to conduct that fight, and I'm very proud that Marshall is a major contributor in the fight against addiction.”

From doctors at the School of Medicine to students in behavioral science, from researchers at the School of Pharmacy to faculty in wellness and prevention, from counselors and social workers to alumni working on the cutting edge of addiction sciences, Marshall is waging war on the opioid crisis.



Wellness and Prevention

The first wave in the university's war on the drug crisis is education. Knowledge is power and officials at Marshall understand the importance of preventing their students, and area residents, from falling into the trap of opioid addiction.

Amy Saunders is the director of the Marshall Wellness Center and a co-chair of the university's Substance Use

Recovery Coalition. She is also the principal investigator for a nearly \$1 million grant Marshall received from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to provide evidence based prevention and early intervention training to health care students and faculty, along with community members to identify substance misuse. The three-year grant was awarded in 2015 and has enabled Marshall to provide Screening, Brief Intervention and



Photo by Rick Lee.

Marshall's School of Medicine and School of Pharmacy have been proactive in educating students on the role health care providers can have in addiction prevention.



Photo by Rick Lee.

Cedric S. Gathings, vice president for student affairs, wants students and their parents to be aware of and be comfortable using support services offered by the university including the counseling center, the women's center and disability services.

Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) training to more than 3,500 health care students and providers.

“Our first step was to train faculty so they could train our emerging, future health care students and members of the community,” Saunders said. “Not all, but about half of individuals who have a substance use disorder also have a mental health diagnosis, and many have a history of trauma. It is important for health care providers to understand this connection and the connection to underlying trauma that many of these individuals have experienced in order to treat individuals.”

Those taking the training learn how to provide screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment for individuals who are at risk of developing, or who have already developed, a substance use disorder or mental health issue.

The effort is a collective one with Marshall University's Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, School of Pharmacy and School of Physical Therapy, nursing, public health,

psychology, social work and counseling programs; and the Wellness Center.

“The program has been a huge success,” Saunders said. “SBIRT at Marshall has not only trained students and community members on this important model, but it has also encouraged more collaboration between departments and interdisciplinary research.”

Saunders believes Marshall faculty members, and especially the program's clinical coordinator, Lyn O'Connell, have been working diligently to ensure their training efforts will continue beyond the life cycle of the grant.

“Lyn has gone above and beyond, traveling all around the state to train case managers, nurses, school counselors and other health care providers,” Saunders said. “Faculty members have infused the training into their curriculum, ensuring that SBIRT will be sustained beyond 2018. Also, we could not have trained so many individuals without the help of our graduate students.”



Cabell Huntington Hospital has a care network for babies who are born to addicted mothers. Inpatient care units for children before and right after they are born help combat neonatal abstinence syndrome.

In 2012, a **drug-exposed baby** was born every 25 minutes in America. Since then the numbers have **skyrocketed**. On a **positive note**, **Huntington** is nationally recognized as a **leader** in care for infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome.



SBIRT is one of several projects in which the university is working with the City of Huntington's Office of Drug Control Policy and other community organizations to address the substance use issue at each stage.

"While socioeconomic factors are a risk factor, we have seen the drug epidemic does not discriminate," Saunders said. "Marshall is committed to sharing our innovative and evidence-based solutions to the opioid crisis with

our community, state and federal partners. Marshall will work to address the health disparities associated with the issue. SBIRT is only one of the education and workforce initiatives we hope to provide to the community and state."

Cedric Gathings, the vice president for student affairs at Marshall, said the university is making a concerted effort to support students with education and prevention programs.

"We're maintaining an open and transparent dialogue with both students and parents," Gathings said. "That dialogue begins early. At freshman orientation, we have a panel discussion about the support services available to



Photo by Rick Lee.

Lily's Place, the first Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Center in the country, provides medical care to infants suffering from NAS and offers non-judgmental support, education and counseling services to families and caregivers.



Neonatal abstinence syndrome is a result of the sudden discontinuation of fetal exposure to substances that were used or abused by the mother during pregnancy. In effect, the baby is going through drug withdrawal. Huntington, West Virginia, is nationally recognized as a leader in the care of infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome.

students including the counseling center, the women’s center and disability services.”

Gathings said a counseling center staff member is on call 24/7.

“The biggest thing we try to do is make sure the students know we’re here to support them. Regardless of who you are, where you’re from or what you’re dealing with, we want to help.”

A Seeds of Hope grant will provide funding, technical assistance and mentorship as Marshall works to increase its collegiate recovery efforts. University officials are determined to help all students, and this grant will aid those who need help with both their recovery and academics.

Also on the prevention front, faculty and students in Marshall’s schools of pharmacy and nursing have visited middle schools and high schools throughout the region

as part of ongoing efforts to educate the next generation about the dangers of opioids.

Mothers and Newborns

Sadly, adults are not the only victims of the opioid crisis. In 2012, a drug-exposed baby was born every 25 minutes in America. Since then the numbers have skyrocketed. On a positive note, Huntington is nationally recognized as a leader in care for infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome.

Babies who are born to mothers with a substance use disorder at Cabell Huntington Hospital have an incredibly detailed care network, including prenatal care services for the mothers and inpatient care units for babies before and just after they are born to combat negative symptoms and consequences of the exposure. The network represents a significant investment by



Dr. David Chaffin, an obstetrician-gynecologist specializing in maternal-fetal medicine at Marshall Health and professor at the School of Medicine, founded the Maternal Addiction Recovery Center (MARC) program, where he provides medication-assisted treatment to pregnant women who have an opioid addiction.

About **half of individuals** who have a **substance use disorder** also have a mental health diagnosis, and many have a **history of trauma**.
It is **important for health care providers** to **understand this connection** and the connection to underlying trauma that **many of these individuals have experienced.**

Cabell Huntington Hospital and Marshall University to care for these children.

A portion of the babies discharged meet the criteria to move on to Lily's Place, the first Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Center in the United States. Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Sean Loudin, M.D., serves as medical director for Lily's Place, which provides medical care to infants suffering from NAS and offers non-judgmental support, education and counseling services to families and caregivers.

One of the leaders in the care for mothers is Dr. David Chaffin, an obstetrician-gynecologist specializing in maternal-fetal medicine at Marshall Health and professor at the School of Medicine. Chaffin founded the Maternal Addiction Recovery Center (MARC) program, where he provides medication-assisted treatment to pregnant women who have an opioid addiction.

"There is a significant coalition of individuals from the School of Medicine, School of Pharmacy, campus departments and the community at large who help women find their way out of the streets and provide medical care to them throughout their pregnancy,"

explains Dr. Kevin Yingling, inaugural dean of the Marshall University School of Pharmacy and co-chair of the Substance Use Recovery Coalition.

Collaboration is a key component. Robert Hansen, the director of addiction services at Marshall Health, came out of retirement to join the fight and has vast experience working with nonprofits by building networks and finding resources. He's been busy putting all those skills to use after assuming his position in January 2017.

"Even though everyone talks about the opioid crisis, finding dollars to do something unique and creative is a challenge," Hansen explained.

It's happening, though, and Hansen has his hands in a host of initiatives. One of the first is named Healthy Connections, and its goal is to fill the void that exists after newborn care for babies and their mothers is completed.

"The big question for us has been what happens when a baby leaves Lily's Place or the hospital. What does the mom do? What happens to the babies?" said Hansen, who retired from Presteria Center in 2012 and headed up Harmony House and Recovery Point before



Courtesy of MU School of Medicine and School of Pharmacy.

Robert Hansen is the director of addiction services at Marshall Health.

grant for Healthy Connections that will help mothers develop soft skills.

“We need to help these mothers build up self-esteem and self-confidence. Sometimes you have to develop self-worth before you can go out and get your GED or enroll at Marshall,” Hansen said.

Quality Insights, a multi-agency nonprofit based out of Charleston, recently committed \$1 million to the Healthy Connections initiative.

“I’m very optimistic because the amount of work we can accomplish going forward is going to be amplified,” Hansen said.

The next initiative is called Project Hope. With the help of a \$2.8 million Ryan Brown grant from the West Virginia Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities, Marshall Health will open a women and children’s treatment center.

“This project is very unique, one of the few in the entire state, where mothers and children will have a protected environment to live, recover and rehabilitate for six months,” Yingling said. “It’s designed to keep families united, help children develop and give them the tools so that they can grow up to be healthy adults.”

Success Breeds Success

Leaders in the fight against the opioid crisis say there is much to be learned from the success Huntington and

joining Marshall Health. “We started meeting with a few agencies and it just morphed into 15 to 20 agencies wanting to help. We designed a program that includes wrap-around services for moms who are in recovery and their young children.”

Several departments at Marshall, along with River Valley Child Development Services, which offers an available daycare facility, are among those involved.

In addition, Hansen said he is working on a



Photo by Rick Lee.

Kevin Yingling accepted the position of co-chair of the Substance Use Recovery Coalition after his recent retirement as dean of the Marshall University School of Pharmacy.

There will be a treatment center where mothers and children will have a **protected environment** in which to live, recover and rehabilitate for six months. It's designed to **keep families united**, help children develop and give them the tools so **they can grow up to be healthy adults.**



Marshall have had treating mothers and their newborns. They're hoping that success breeds success.

"The next step is for the city and the university to be nationally recognized for its solutions to addiction. For that to happen, we need broad-based, wrap-around care and integration of services in the community," said Yingling. "We will be addressing addiction across all ages, all demographics and all genders."

Marshall Health, along with the experienced faculty, professionals and dedicated students at the schools of medicine and pharmacy, will play vital roles in many of the efforts to make sure Huntington's citizens have no shortage of pathways and support on their way to recovery.

One such project currently in the works is named PROACT, an outpatient wrap-around service for men and women.

"PROACT is going to be a separate facility in Huntington for the purpose of integrating all care aspects for individuals in substance use disorders," Yingling said. "That would include social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health, group therapy, career and job rehabilitation, long-term recovery and medication-assisted therapy."

Yingling explained that medication-assisted therapy, commonly referred to as MAT, is the supervised use of medication to stop dangerous behaviors, stabilize lives

and reduce drug cravings and relapses. The ultimate goal is to be drug free.

"Anyone can call or walk into this facility and be immediately triaged and be integrated into recovery," Yingling said. "It is awesome."

PROACT will be operated with financial support from Cabell Huntington Hospital, St. Mary's Medical Center and Marshall Health.

"We will have physicians and pharmacists, social science faculty, behavioral science faculty and students all working at the facility," Yingling said. "The goal is to move those seeking treatment toward long-term recovery, and all the services they will ever need would be provided there."

An effort led by Hansen that was launched last December is Huntington's Quick Response Team (QRT). QRT workers spend 40 hours per week following up with people who have overdosed. Coordinator Connie Priddy of Cabell County EMS reviews who overdosed the previous day, and then the team heads out to talk with them.

"We follow up with people multiple times because it may be the fifth time we see them that they decide to ask for help," Hansen said. "We have a policeman, a full-time EMS worker and a clinician or recovery coach. They rotate. We're trying to bring multiple people together to access as many resources as possible."

Hansen read about a similar program that had been successful in the Cincinnati area and invited the key players to Huntington to share their expertise. The city collaboratively applied for and was awarded two grants to fund a Huntington version of the program.

In yet another initiative, Hansen has been working with Cabell Huntington Hospital and St. Mary's Medical Center on Project Engage. Established with the help of a consultant – Dr. Terry Horton from Christiana Healthcare System in Wilmington, Delaware – the program aims to identify and help people admitted to the hospital, usually for other health reasons, who have a substance use disorder. It could be someone who tried to use drugs illegally in the hospital or someone going through withdrawal in the hospital. Once they are identified at the hospital, they can enter recovery programs.

“Part of this model is that eventually, there will be peer recovery coaches in both hospitals who will meet with patients, build a relationship and then help them into an outpatient program,” Hansen said.

An effort that has seen great success is the Cabell-Huntington Health Department's Harm Reduction Program, which involves a clean needle exchange program. It is utilized by hundreds of patients each week. The program not only prevents outbreaks of infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis, but it also puts drug users in contact with a peer recovery coach who encourages them to begin the recovery process.

Hansen chairs the West Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition, which now covers 53 of the state's 55 counties with harm reduction efforts.

Marshall's schools of medicine and pharmacy are involved in another part of the Harm Reduction program, which is educating the public about Naloxone for treatment of an overdose and distributing it to those interested in

having some on hand. That program goes by the acronym SAFE, for Stop Addiction Fatality Epidemic.

Yingling expects Huntington will be at the leading edge of recovery efforts regionally when the PROACT center is open and Healthy Connections is in full swing. Marshall University, with its many areas of expertise, is a crucial component to finding the solution to substance use disorders.

“I commend President Gilbert for taking on the initiative to establish the coalition and to focus the energies of the university in a significant way,” Yingling said. “We would not be where we are today in providing a sound, broad-based solution if it were not for President Gilbert's leadership at the university.”

Planning for the Future

As part of the university's comprehensive plan to address the opioid crisis, officials are not only offering a plethora of services and programs today, but preparing their graduates to continue the fight in the future.

Dr. Lori Ellison is the director for Marshall's Counseling Program which offers a Master of Arts in Counseling. Whether they become professional counselors or school counselors, it's inevitable the program's graduates will find themselves faced with



St. Mary's Medical Center, along with Cabell Huntington Hospital and Marshall Health, is offering financial support to PROACT, a facility that will integrate all aspects of care for those who suffer from substance abuse. Social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health, group therapy, career and job rehabilitation, long-term recovery and medication-assisted therapy are all part of the comprehensive list of services PROACT will provide.

DOING HIS PART

A 1984 alumnus of the School of Medicine is doing his part in the fight against the opioid crisis from his offices in Tennessee. Daniel Sumrok, M.D., is the director for addiction sciences at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's College of Medicine. Sumrok said he first became involved in addiction sciences because it was a growing public health issue. His studies focus on addictions caused by traumatic events in people's lives.

"We study ritualized, compulsive, comfort-seeking, substance abuse disorders," Sumrok explained.

Patients in Sumrok's practice take an adverse childhood experience assessment (ACE), which considers traumatic events a patient experienced as a child. The more adverse childhood experiences a person has the more likely their health will be affected, including links to illicit drug use.

Sumrok has found great success in his practice, which has seen no opioid-related deaths in the last 10 years. His research shows that with each visit to his practice, a patient can reduce the chance of relapsing by 5 percent. After just 20 visits, the patient's chance of relapse is close to 0 percent.

"The biggest thing I have learned is that treatment works — it saves lives and families and communities," Sumrok said. "Not all treatments are equal, and evidence should guide the choices of providers and policymakers."

Sumrok said to best solve and treat substance use disorder, a comprehensive approach is needed.

"Today it is clear that the people of



Photo courtesy/ University of Tennessee Health Science Center.

Marshall alumnus Daniel Sumrok, M.D., is the director for addiction sciences at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's College of Medicine.

Huntington and West Virginia are suffering disproportionately in this epidemic," Sumrok said. "Their heartache and sorrow must be recognized and the nation mourns with you. But after speaking with local leaders and my colleagues at Marshall Health, and hearing about the community approach that has been initiated in Huntington, I cannot help but be convinced that we will get through this scourge if we continue to work together," Sumrok said.

Sources

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2017/09/science-of-addiction-babies-opioids/>

<https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/>



Photo by Rick Lee.

Dr. Lori Ellison is the program director for Marshall's Counseling Program, which offers a Master of Arts in Counseling.

helping people who have been caught up in the opioid epidemic. Accordingly, she said it's imperative students in the program be involved in the SBIRT training to identify individuals who need treatment.

"The effects of opioids are widespread and insidious," Ellison said. "The addictive properties of opioids are so strong that it seems many are blindsided by their effects."

Another key role of substance abuse counselors is to work with the families of patients as the user moves through treatment.

Jo Dee Gottlieb serves as director for the Bachelor of Social Work program within the College of Health Professions at Marshall. She said most of the region's social workers see the effects of substance abuse daily in their practice, with it reaching up to almost 90 percent of their caseload. As such, Marshall has reached out to other campuses, including West Virginia State and Concord universities, enlisting them in the effort.

Gottlieb noted beginning this academic year, Marshall has established a multidisciplinary minor in addiction

studies that "brings together disciplines dedicated to understanding addiction."

"Unlike other Addiction Studies programs at other schools, this minor encompasses much more than just the aspect of treatment," Gottlieb said. "It includes history, psychology, social work, public health, sociology, anthropology, criminal justice and kinesiology. The idea of the program is to create innovative thinkers who can take their interdisciplinary knowledge of addiction into the world in order to contribute toward tackling the problem."

The university is even recruiting new generals in the fight against opioid addiction. In December, Daniel Langleben, M.D., a highly regarded addiction psychiatry specialist and a federally funded researcher with the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, was named the inaugural Maier Professor and Director of Addiction Sciences at the School of Medicine. He will begin work at Marshall in August.



Photo by Rick Lee.

Jo Dee Gottlieb, MSW, LCSW, serves as the director for the Bachelor of Social Work program within the College of Health Professions' department of social work. A licensed social worker for over 30 years, she is also the social work chair for Healthy Connections.

Cabell-Huntington Health Department's **clean needle** exchange program is utilized by **hundreds** of patients each week. The program not only **prevents** outbreaks of infectious diseases such as **HIV** and **hepatitis**, but also puts drug users in contact with a peer recovery coach who **encourages** them to begin the **recovery** process.

The professorship, the result of a \$1.25 million gift from the Maier Foundation, will support the university's efforts to address the opioid addiction crisis across the region and country. In addition, the position helps build a foundation for future expansion of the medical school's offerings in graduate medical education. Gilbert said the addition of Langleben to Marshall's faculty is pivotal in the university's efforts.

"Dr. Langleben brings a breadth and depth of experience that will propel our university forward in the fight against all addictions," Gilbert said.

Dr. Joseph Shapiro, dean of the School of Medicine, said Langleben will help the school expand its existing clinical experience with cutting-edge molecular research.

"We will press forward in the quest to find answers to some of the most devastating illnesses, like addiction, plaguing our generation."

Garnering National Attention

On Feb. 20, Dr. Walter J. Koroshetz, director of the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and three other officials from the NIH, visited the School of Medicine

to learn more about the university's research and clinical outreach in regard to the nation's addiction crisis. Koroshetz and his team met with researchers, clinicians and students during the visit, which included a round-table discussion.

"I'm very proud of the work we are doing here at our medical school related to pain and to opioid addiction," said President Gilbert. "I am hopeful that the NIH will look favorably upon the institutions like Marshall – of our size – that are in the trenches, doing innovative work in these areas. I feel like we forged some wonderful relationships during the visit and look forward to working with NIH in the future."

In April, a team of experts from Marshall traveled to Atlanta to present at the The National Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit – the nation's largest annual conference focused on the opioid crisis. In their session "Using What We Know: Helping Teachers, Families and Communities Respond Systematically to Children Affected by Familial Substance Use Disorder," team members discussed the effects on children when substance use disorders are present in families, as well as effective school, community and family-based interventions. They explained how failing

to intervene to support the family structure contributes to cognitive, emotional and behavior problems in children before and after they start school.

The panel of Marshall presenters included Amy Saunders, director of the Marshall University Wellness Center; Marianna Footo-Linz, chairman of the Psychology Department; Conrae Lucas-Adkins, assistant professor of school psychology; Lyn O'Connell, clinical coordinator of Marshall's Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program; and Todd Davies, Ph.D., associate director of research in the Division of Addiction Sciences at Marshall's Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine.



In December of 2017 Daniel Langleben, M.D., was named the inaugural Maier Professor and Director of Addiction Sciences at the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine. He will join Marshall full-time in August.

The Marshall speakers joined a number of national figures on the agenda, including U.S. Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams, and the heads of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

President Gilbert said he is pleased to see Marshall's leadership in recovery efforts recognized.

"In Huntington, we are at the center of the solution to this epidemic impacting communities across the country," he noted. "Because our community was affected early, we are now ahead of the curve and the rest of the country in creating recovery initiatives. Recent data show that Huntington may have turned a corner in this fight in the last few months and the lessons Marshall's health care and social services providers have learned will be helpful to the rest of the country."



President John F. Kennedy once said, "When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity."

Today, Marshall University is rising to meet the challenge of America's opioid crisis. It has turned to its faculty, staff and students, as well as partners throughout the community, to educate the public about the dangers of opiates. What's more, the university is leading the way to seize every opportunity available in its vast network of



Photo by Rick Lee.

Marshall University's School of Medicine will be able to expand its existing clinical experience with cutting edge molecular research under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Langleben.

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304-523-2764

Healthy Connections

www.healthyconnections.info
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www.huntingtoncitymission.org
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resources to help solve the riddle of addiction. The crisis may not be over, but because so many talented, dedicated and caring people have chosen to join the fight, there is finally a light at the end of the tunnel. □

Jack Houvouras is the publisher of *Marshall Magazine*.
James E. Casto is the retired associate editor of *The Herald-Dispatch* and the author of a number of books on local and regional history.
Jean Hardiman is university relations specialist at Marshall.
Kasey Madden is the managing editor of *Marshall Magazine*.

Editor's Note: A Step in the Right Direction

As this issue of *Marshall Magazine* was going to press, some encouraging statistics were being announced by Marshall and city leaders in Huntington.

"We're a long way from winning this war, but we are beginning to win some battles," said Huntington Mayor Steve Williams, as quoted in an article by Bishop Nash in *The Herald-Dispatch* in Huntington.

The officials reported that total overdose calls were down in the last three months of 2017 as compared to the previous year. The downward trend continued through the first three months of 2018.

Although a single cause for the decrease in calls has not been established, officials believe that the Quick Response Teams and a combination of other community efforts, such as the Harm Reduction Program and Marshall's growing addiction-related initiatives, have led to the decrease.

"We all know that communities throughout our state and the country are waging the same battles," said President Gilbert. "What is special about Huntington is that Marshall University and the community have come together to develop innovative solutions, and it looks like we are beginning to see results. I'm encouraged that together we will solve this problem."

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SUPER STORY

From the tough streets of
New Jersey to Marshall University
to Super Bowl glory,
Vinny Curry has never forgotten his roots.

By Keith Morehouse

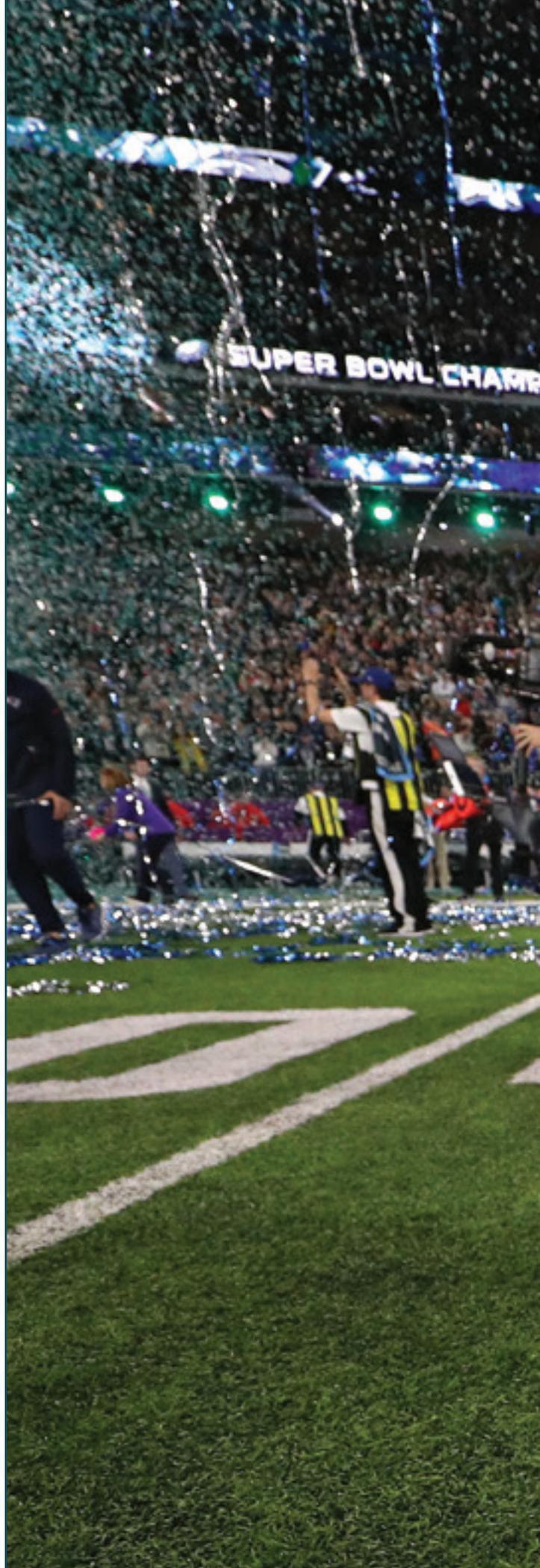




Photo courtesy of Getty Images.

It's a photograph that gave the social media universe a look inside Vinny Curry's soul. Right after his Philadelphia Eagles had beaten the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LII, there he sat, still wearing his 75 jersey, in the middle of US Bank Stadium. Amid a flurry of midnight green confetti, Curry was at peace. Jubilation, exhilaration, satisfaction and pride were etched on his face, his tired body parked at the 48-yard line.

"I don't think I was even thinking," Curry said in an exclusive interview for *Marshall Magazine* just three days after the Super Bowl win.

In retrospect, he was.

"There's so much passion, emotion, hard work and sacrifice that you go through in life and the sports world," Curry said. "Then, to reap

the benefits and rewards, the feeling was ... just unreal."

For him, the home of the Vikings became "Vinny-apolis" for a day. That's apropos when you're living out a dream — a dream born in his hometown of Neptune, New Jersey.

Growing up in a town where New York Giants fans reign supreme, Curry was always an Eagles fan. He idolized Rickey Watters, Brian Westbrook and Brian Dawkins. He knew that football could be a way out. But he also knew he had to avoid the dangers indigenous to his neighborhood — those dangers that constantly whisper your name and hope you're listening. His dad Vincent and mom Linda always hoped Vinny would sidestep the land mines. During Super Bowl week, he opened up to

Bleacher Report's Tyler Dunner and said those mean streets even claimed his mom for a time:

For two years, she was homeless and hooked on heroin. Curry's friends never quite understood why he was talking to this random woman in the streets when they prowled about town. That is, until one frigid day when Curry spotted mom and asked a friend to pull over. He handed her money and a jacket and said to find shelter.

"It was my first time ever talking about my story," Curry said of the *Bleacher Report* article. "It was definitely not easy, but it was the first



Curry played defensive end for the Thundering Herd 2008-2011. He was named the 2011 Conference USA Preseason Defensive Player of the Year as well as being named a semifinalist for the Rotary Lombardi Award, given annually to the nation's top lineman or linebacker.



The Philadelphia Eagles drafted Curry in the second round of the 2012 NFL Draft, right before he graduated from Marshall.

“When I first got to **Marshall**, I was big on learning the **legacy** and **history** of the school. I was **touched** by how the fans **accepted** me, and how the whole community **embraced** me.”



Photo courtesy of Vinny Curry.

In his NFL career, Curry has completed 22 sacks during the regular season and boasts 130 combined tackles.



Photo courtesy of Vinny Curry.

Curry starred in all 16 of the Eagles' regular season games in 2017, along with playing in all three postseason games.



Photo by Rick Hays

Marshall Athletic Director Mike Hamrick (left) and Marshall President Jerry Gilbert (right) present former Thundering Herd football star Vinny Curry with the key to the Vinny Curry Football Locker Room. Curry donated \$200,000 toward the renovation of lockers and facilities upgrades in the Shewey Building.

time talking about it and it was cool to get it off my chest.”

Cissy Jackson would escape the demons and re-take her life. She would watch with pride as her son went on to prep school in Cincinnati and then landed at Marshall in 2007. He didn’t know much about Huntington, but the city recognizes a football legend when it sees one. Vinny Curry had found his home away from home.

“When I first got to Marshall, I was big on learning the legacy and history of the school,” Curry said. “And knowing the history of the football program, I was touched by how the fans accepted me, and how the whole community embraced me. For me to give back and do the things I’m doing, it’s just awesome.”

One of the ways Curry has given back to Marshall was a \$200,000 gift last summer to fund the Vinny Curry locker room project. He also gives back symbolically. When it came time to pick a jersey number for the Eagles, he chose No. 75 in memory of the 75 football players, coaches, staff and fans lost in the 1970 Marshall plane crash. What’s more, he often dons Thundering Herd attire when being interviewed by the media after big Philadelphia wins. After the NFC Championship win over the Minnesota Vikings, Curry sported his Herd letterman jacket and Marshall ski cap.

“I didn’t think it was going to go mainstream or anything,” Curry said of his postgame gear. “I just knew it was a big game and I thought, ‘What should I wear?’ I picked my Marshall jacket and hat.”

He has become an NFL ambassador for his alma mater, spreading the word of the Herd with a smile as wide as his wing span.

Cissy Jackson passed away in 2011 in the middle of football season. One day after he returned from his mom’s funeral, he was faced with a decision. Without practicing all week, he had

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Photo by HunterMartinPhotography.

Vinny Curry addresses the media after being selected by the Philadelphia Eagles as the 59th overall pick in the 2012 NFL draft.

“There’s so much passion, emotion, hard work and sacrifice that you go through in life and the sports world. Then, to reap the benefits and rewards, the feeling was ... just unreal.”

to decide if he should play against Rice, or sit the game out.

“We got him home from the funeral,” Marshall Coach Doc Holliday recalled, “and I asked him if he wanted to play. That was his decision. Initially he said ‘no’ but then he thought about it and said he wanted to play.”

And play he did. Curry had nine tackles, 3-1/2 sacks and a strip fumble that led to Marshall’s 24-20 win over Rice. As much as a defensive player can take over a game, Curry put the Herd on his considerable shoulders and dominated the football game.

“He played as good a game from a defensive lineman that I’ve ever seen.” Holliday said.

Curry was drafted in the second round of the 2012 NFL Draft by the Philadelphia Eagles. Prior to the

2016 season, Eagles’ Head Coach Doug Pederson and new defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz changed the defensive scheme from a 3-4 defense to a 4-3. That would play more to Curry’s talents, and Philadelphia’s ownership rewarded him with a \$46 million contract, with \$23 million guaranteed. But he said his life was enhanced beyond riches when in May of 2016, his son Noah Vincent Curry was born. What a time to be Vinny Curry.

As he basked in the aftermath of the Eagles’ Super Bowl triumph, Curry was met by another Marshall legend. A certain newly-elected NFL Hall of Famer wanted to see him for a moment.

“Randy Moss greeted me with a great big hug,” Curry said, “and I think he’s the greatest receiver to

ever play the game. He told me, ‘I’ve been following you your whole career, and you deserve this.’”

Curry acknowledges that the Super Bowl was the culmination of years of perseverance, but his career isn’t over yet. He has recently signed to play with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and he is quick to point out that through it all he has never forgotten his roots.

“I play for my mom, my dad and my family. I play for my son Noah, for Neptune and Huntington. I play for green and white fans everywhere, whether they are supporters of the Eagles, Buccaneers or the Thundering Herd.” □

Keith Morehouse is the sports director for WSAZ NewsChannel 3 in Huntington.

space odyssey

Two NASA engineers establish the Professor Thomas Olson Scholarship to honor the Marshall professor who helped shape their lives.

In 1967, two Marshall University engineering graduates left Huntington to embark on careers that would ultimately find both of them working at NASA. It was a time of wonder, a race for space where astronauts reached for the stars and landed on the moon. In the midst of this historic and exciting period, two Sons of Marshall were there to witness it all. And even while their careers were being launched to lofty professional heights, the

two men never forgot where it all started.

NASA aerospace engineers Gary Ray and Bob Lang recently returned to their alma mater to establish the Professor Thomas Olson Scholarship Endowment for Engineering. Ray said he and Lang remember many amazing professors from their time at Marshall, but wanted to honor Olson for not only what he taught them about engineering, but also his lessons on life.

“Tom was that guy who cared,

I mean really cared,” Ray said. “He’s still that way, even today. He always kept a log with everyone’s name and where they work. He took a bunch of kids coming out of high school and sent us out into the workforce as young men ready to succeed.”

Obviously, the education Ray and Lang received at Marshall was top-notch, because they both landed jobs at NASA soon after graduation. But the pair said it was the little things between classes that mattered the most.

By Shane Arrington



Thomas Olson (left), former professor of engineering at Marshall University, receives a framed copy of the agreement for the scholarship endowment bearing his name from Lance West, vice president for development at the Marshall University Foundation Inc.

Ray said he remembers feeling confident both in his knowledge and in himself when interviewing and competing with engineering grads from Auburn, Purdue and other larger schools – all thanks to being nurtured by a professor who truly cared about his students.

Today, Ray and Lang are helping to preserve Olson’s legacy through the establishment of the namesake scholarship. Considering Olson is a man who spent his entire career passing up opportunities of his own to stay in teaching and foster the growth of future generations of

engineers, it may not be surprising that his response to all the attention was short and sweet.

“I thought it was very nice that they did this,” Olson said. “Those two were very successful in their careers and I suppose I may have been a factor.”

Olson dedicated nearly 35 years to Marshall. Initially, he only intended to teach a year because he thought it would look good on his resume. Then that year turned into another, and another, until more than three decades had passed. Thirty-plus years he wouldn’t trade for anything.

“I had a couple other jobs through the years, but I got the bug early on and couldn’t leave,” Olson said. “I really appreciated the opportunity to teach. I still miss it. When Labor Day rolls around, I still get that feeling I should be back at Marshall. But I can’t, of course – I’m 91-years-old. I would not have traded it for any career in the world.”

Both Ray and Lang came from humble beginnings. They had to work long hours outside of the classroom just to afford their tuition. It was professors like Olson who made their dreams of becoming engineers a reality.



Gary Ray, around 1977, stands next to a scale model that represents Launch Complex (Pads) 39 A and B used to launch the Space Shuttles. He was the lead project engineer for both Pads, and responsible for the design, construction and activation functions.

It was Ray who came up with the idea of a scholarship to honor their favorite professor. It came to him when he and Lang returned to Marshall for the dedication of the state-of-the-art Arthur Weisberg Family Applied Engineering Complex in 2015. Ray said he remembers talking with Olson, and remembers how enthused he was with the advances in the engineering program. It was then Ray knew he had to do something to honor the man who gave so much of himself to his school and students. When approached by Ray with the idea, Lang said he didn't even have to think about it.

"It took me seven years to get a

four-year degree, because I had to work all the time to pay for it," Lang said. "So, to be able to be a part of this scholarship that's going to help future generations of engineers pay for their education so they can focus on their studies, it's just an amazing feeling."

Olson has stayed in touch with both of his former students over the years, and knowing a couple of NASA engineers has come with some perks. Olson remembers fondly the time they invited him to see a space shuttle launch live and in person at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.



Gary Ray receives the National Space Club Florida Committee 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award on Sept. 13, 2016.

"I tell you, that was great," Olson said. "I was sitting in the area where the VIPs were, not that I'm a VIP, but



Bob Lang (center) sits at a NASA control board during the countdown for the Apollo 11 flight on July 16, 1969. Apollo 11 was the first manned mission to land on the Moon. Four days later on July 20, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to step onto any planetary body besides Earth.

Bob Lang inspects a piece of hardware on Space Shuttle *Discovery*. *Discovery* flew 39 times from 1984 through 2011, more missions than any of its sister ships, spending a total of 365 days in space.

that’s what Gary did for me. When the shuttle took off you could feel the vibrations in your chest.”

While Ray and Lang both look forward to this scholarship providing opportunities to future engineers, they also take pride in the creation of something that keeps Professor

Thomas Olson’s name associated with Marshall engineering for years to come.

“I really can’t say anything more about this amazing man,” Ray said. “We went off and became aerospace engineers for NASA—and Tom could have done that as well. He could have

said ‘I’m going to quit teaching. I’m going to be a part of the space program and put a man on the moon,’ but he didn’t. He chose to dedicate his life to Marshall University and its students, and I feel so thankful that we are able to continue helping students in his name.”

Anyone interested in contributing to the Professor Thomas Olson Scholarship Endowment for Engineering can contact the Marshall University Foundation at 304-696-3512. □

Shane Arrington is a freelance writer living in South Point, Ohio.

WONDER YEARS

Marshall alumna Erika Klose uses the wonder of science to reach her students and earns the highly prestigious Milken Educator Award.

A visitor to teacher Erika Klose's classroom at Winfield Middle School might see groups of students figuring out how to move a can without touching it, or using oregano flakes to prove that water moves when heated. These unusual activities display Klose's teaching philosophy, which emphasizes hands-on engagement in scientific inquiry.

"In order for science to be attainable and interesting to middle-schoolers, there has to be something they experience, something they notice," said Klose, a product of the Marshall University College of Education and Professional Development. "Kids walk through life and stuff happens around them, but most of the time they don't notice. For example, we are studying non-contact forces, like magnets and static electricity. A lot of my

students have rubbed a balloon on their head and seen static electricity, but did not think about it. But if they are having some kind of experience that they can hang the scientific content on, they will make that connection."

Klose's commitment to ensuring her students not only understand scientific concepts, but also experience the fun and wonder of science, was the reason she was one of 45 teachers in the United States (and the only teacher in West Virginia) to win the highly prestigious \$25,000 Milken Educator Award from the Milken Family Foundation in 2017. The award is given to midcareer teachers who have demonstrated their commitment to educational innovation and excellence.

Having one of its graduates receive such a prestigious award is an honor to Marshall University.

By Molly McClennen
Photos courtesy of Milken Family Foundation



Dr. Jane Foley, senior vice president of the Milken Educator Awards (left), gives a congratulatory hug to STEM teacher Erika Klose as Foley recognizes Klose's achievements.

"I was thrilled to learn that a Marshall alumna had won a prestigious Milken Award," noted Marshall President Jerome A. Gilbert. "Erika is truly an inspirational teacher who serves as an outstanding role model for young women and young men alike. Like so many of our graduates, she exemplifies excellence in everything she does. We are indeed proud to say she is a Daughter of Marshall."

Klose says she was shocked when she realized the school assembly to recognize a Milken honoree was for her.

"I felt so special, and more than that, I felt loved," she recalled. "Our whole school was there, our whole faculty and my students, and a lot of special guests. When I realized they were there for me, I was amazed."

Klose grew up in upstate New York and, despite being drawn to the field of education from a young age,

began her career as a geologist, a background that has provided the foundation for teaching science to her students today.

"My dad was a teacher. I grew up in an environment where education was valued," Klose said. "I loved school. I had wonderful relationships with my teachers. I had a tremendous opportunity to explore things I was interested in, which led me to study geology." Klose earned a Bachelor of Science in Geology from Smith College in 1997 and a master's in geological sciences in 1999 from Lehigh University. She then fulfilled a lifelong dream of working with the U.S. Geological Survey, first as an intern, then full time for six years. Part of her job responsibilities included presenting science lessons in local schools, work Klose found she loved to do.

"I would come home at the end of those days and I would be absolutely exhausted, but it was an exhaustion



Dr. Jane Foley (left) explains during an assembly at Winfield Middle School that one teacher is about to receive West Virginia's 2017-18 Milken Educator Award. One digit at a time, students hold up cards representing the cash amount of the award. West Virginia Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steven Paine reveals the final zero indicating the total amount of \$25,000.

that was unlike working all day as a geologist. It was that exhaustion of 'I have done a good work today.'

Klose decided to return to school to get her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT). She had visited friends in the Huntington area and loved its small-city sense of community, so she chose Marshall for her graduate studies. She earned the degree in 2007, and it was an education she says left her well prepared for the classroom.

"The MAT program was very eye-opening to me. While I always thought I wanted to be a teacher, I realized I did not know how it all worked. The methods courses were wonderful because we were taught using inquiry and they modeled how we were supposed to be approaching our own students in the classroom. It was a very effective program. I am thankful for it," said Klose.

Klose combines what she learned from working as a scientist with what she learned in the MAT program to design lessons that help her students see that science is



Visiting dignitaries, several of whom are also veteran Milken Educators, give Erika Klose a hand with her oversized \$25,000 check. From left, Peggy Hawse (WV '94), regional coordinator for U.S. Senator Joe Manchin; Erika; West Virginia First Lady Cathy Leigh Comer Justice; West Virginia Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steven Paine (WV '95); U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito; Dr. Jane Foley (IN '94), senior vice president of the Milken Educator Awards; and Fred Joseph, district director for U.S. Representative Alex Mooney.

fun and interesting, something she hopes will have a positive impact on them for their entire lives.

“I chose to teach middle school because that is a time when students make tremendous decisions about their future. They may not realize they are making those decisions, but I believe that a lot of what happens in middle school determines whether students attach a positive or negative association to a subject or possible career. My goal is that they will attach very positive memories to science and to middle school. I want them to feel engaged, to have a good time, to feel free to ask questions and explore,” Klose explained.

Klose said watching the 2017 solar eclipse with her students was one of the highlights of her teaching career. It was a moment when she saw her students experience the love of science she works to impart to them.

“It reminded me how important wonder is. Our students knew the scientific process of what was going on, but they were still taken with the wonder of seeing it. It reminded me what teaching is about. My job is to allow them to be amazed and to instill in them a curiosity about the world and how it works.” □

Molly McClennen is a freelance writer who lives in Huntington, West Virginia.



After the assembly, science teacher Erika Klose calls her mom to share the good news about receiving the Milken Award.

MILKEN AWARD WINNERS

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Victoria Smith (WV '96)

Deb Brown (WV '91)

Ede Ashworth (WV '90)

Steele Resol

New Thundering Herd softball coach Jen Steele has big shoes to fill, but she is determined to carry on the program's culture of winning.

By Keith Morehouse
Photos by Adam Gue and Rick Haye



Winter in Huntington, West Virginia, can sometimes paint a pretty gloomy picture. You don't get too many 65-degree days, but that was the kind of climate change a softball team could appreciate for a day. Jen Steele must have felt like she was back coaching in Jacksonville, Florida, and the new head coach of the Thundering Herd wasn't about to waste the day. On Jan. 22, the Herd softball team hit the turf at Dot Hicks Field.

"We're going to get as many reps as we can off of the bat," Steele said, "[and] try to work on some big picture defensive things before the weather kicks us back indoors."

It was perfectly understandable that Coach Steele wanted to get a jump on the softball season. Hired in June of 2017, Steele knows she has considerable cleats to fill.

Her predecessor, Shonda Stanton, left the Herd after a 42-win season and an NCAA tournament appearance in 2017. The Herd put together a school record 17-game win streak. Marshall produced the Conference USA Coach of the Year (Stanton), the C-USA Pitcher of the Year (Jordan Dixon), and the C-USA

Player of the Year (Morgan Zerkle). The Herd won an NCAA tournament game over DePaul and set a single season school record for wins. Steele is replacing the winningest coach in Marshall softball history. Other coaches may have balked at the challenge — not Steele.

"Marshall's a place that has a culture unlike any other place," Steele said. "It's always been a school that I've admired from afar."

So, she jumped right in and made herself at home at the Marshall softball complex. She had to get to know players that had only known Coach Stanton.

"It was definitely different," senior catcher Taylor McCord said.



Softball coach Jen Steele offers an encouraging word to freshman Rachel Rousseau.



Elicia D'Orazio is a preseason All-Conference USA selection. She led the nation in stolen bases last season with a Marshall and Conference USA record of 59.



Taylor McCord, preseason All-Conference USA selection, threw out 16 potential base stealers as well as leading the team with 12 home runs.



Katie Adams is a local player from Hurricane. She is a freshman catcher/infielder who helped her high school win three state titles.



Junior power hitter Briana Daiss has 15 home runs in two seasons including a grand slam against No. 15 Arizona during her freshman season in 2016.



Kailee Williamson, sophomore pitcher, pitched 37 2/3 innings last season. She struck out the very first batter she faced.



Junior Abigail Estrada is an everyday left field starter. She belted a grand slam at Charlotte.

“Honestly, in my opinion it was a really easy transition. These coaches made it easy to come in and do what we’ve always done to focus on ball and school, and they’ve made it a really fun atmosphere. We’re excited to have the coaching staff that we have. I feel really lucky that we got them.”

Of course, with change there’s always a level of curiosity.

“She’s (Steele) awesome,” senior infielder Elicia D’Orazio said. “A new coaching staff is always fun, always different. Every year, whether it’s a new staff or not, you have to come in and sell yourself and earn your spot all over again.”

Steele doesn’t really dwell on the exits of All American players like Zerkle and Dixon and third baseman Shaelynn Braxton. She can’t afford to. Instead she’ll utilize the talents of pre-season all-conference players like D’Orazio and McCord. D’Orazio led the nation with 59 stolen bases last year, batted .397 and led the team with 49 runs scored. McCord is the Herd’s rifle-armed catcher who batted .349 and led the Thundering Herd with 12 home runs.

“It’s always great when you have players pave the way,” Steele said. “And what’s really exciting is to see people this year kind of step into that role – whether it’s a veteran player or someone early in their career that gets to make their own mark. We’re lucky that people before us paved the way and we’re excited to see what we can do this season.”

Steele and the Herd were tested early in the season with an ambitious schedule that included three games with schools from the Southeastern Conference. Marshall began the season



Blakely Burch, sophomore transfer from USC Upstate, is an infielder and strong hitter who can run. Out of nine hits last season, six went for doubles.



Freshman infielder Grayson Radcliffe from Rockville, Virginia, is looking to be the starting shortstop for Marshall's softball team.



Jordan Colliflower steals third base. She is a starter in right field and had a career-high three triples last season.



Eloise Tribolet batted around .300 in her first year in Division I after transferring from Gulf Coast State College. She is a member of the French National Team.

with a 4-0 loss at Auburn and then headed down to Clearwater, Florida, where they beat Missouri 8-2 and lost a 5-4 thriller to 10th ranked Tennessee. Marshall will have to re-earn the respect and plaudits from their Conference USA colleagues. They were picked fifth in the league's preseason poll.

"If preseason polls mattered we would never play," Steele said. "There's really not a lot of pressure when you're not picked to be the top dog right away, so for us it only helps to fuel that motivation."

The coach hopes to lean on the veterans like D'Orazio and McCord while watching the younger players step up and deliver.

"We have a pretty good mix of youth and veterans," Steele said. "I think the big key for us is figuring out what the circle's going to be like, because we have four different arms to go to and they're all pretty different from each other. Being able to kind of mix and match will be really important."

There's definitely a change in the air for Marshall Softball, but the players and coaches have no intention of changing the culture of winning. This program has been to the NCAA Tournament twice in the last five years, and Steele wants to lean on those big expectations again during her maiden season. That springlike day in January might be a harbinger of good things ahead. □



Junior pitcher and hitter Ali Burdette hit a pinch-hit, two-out, two-run home run in the top of the seventh last year at Georgia Southern to give Marshall the eventual win.

Keith Morehouse is the sports director for WSAZ News-Channel 3 in Huntington.

Madi Marshall makes a catch in right field. She scored in 10 straight games last season while coming in as a pinch runner.



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M **ALUMNI** *everGreen*
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A MESSAGE FROM MAX LEDERER

MUAA National President



Marshall Alumni:

Alumni Weekend is always a fantastic opportunity to reunite with your Marshall University family while sharing the great experiences you had at Marshall with your own family.

Saturday night, March 31, was the 81st Alumni Awards Banquet. The Awards Banquet is the Alumni Association's opportunity to recognize the amazing contributions and achievements of our fellow alumni. The awardees have achieved amazing things and have given back to the school and other communities in ways that humble me.

Each year, the awards include recognition of an alumnus who has contributed outstanding national achievements in his or her particular field of endeavor. An alumnus is recognized for personal contribution to his or her community. Further, there is recognition for loyal and unselfish service to Marshall. There is also recognition for young alumni, outstanding faculty, Marshall Student Athletes, the top alumni club, as well as others.

Past recognition has been given to a former Young Thundering Herd player, an Olympic silver medalist in bobsled and a firefighter recognized by the State of Ohio among many others. All their stories are inspiring and moving. The Alumni Banquet is an uplifting and a first-class event, arranged and presented by our alumni staff. It's enjoyable whether you know an awardee or not.

I urge all alumni to not only attend Alumni Weekend, but to be a recruiter and an ambassador throughout the year. Pay forward the help you received. This is a responsibility and an opportunity. Become an active alumni member and stay connected. We need you to let everyone know what a special place this is. Let people know what WE ARE MARSHALL means to you. We need you to represent Marshall, both professionally and in your community.

Thank you for your continued support of Marshall University through the Alumni Association. The members of the Alumni Association Board of Directors hope that each time you visit www.herdalum.com, the Facebook page or a campus or center, you learn something new about the university, your classmates, the faculty and the staff. I encourage each of you to contact the board and provide your suggestions. We are here to serve you. Thank you for your continued support of the university.

Max Lederer
President, Marshall University Alumni Association

ALUMNI RELATIONS STAFF

MATT HAYES, Executive Director
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Superheroes, Mutants and Cowboys, Oh My

The Thrilling Life of Comic Book Creator Beau Smith



Marshall alumnus Beau Smith began his love affair with comic books when he was a child growing up in Huntington, West Virginia.

Have you ever dreamed of fighting bad guys alongside the Dark Knight? How about intergalactic battles with Superman? Or maybe hunting down monsters in the wild, wild West alongside a beautiful, pistol-toting law woman?

Beau Smith has had that dream. And he lives it every day of his life.

Growing up not far from the Marshall University campus in Huntington, Smith got his first taste of the comic book life at the tender age of 4. The way the paper felt on his fingers. The bright colors. The heroes doing battle with evil. Every page, a new adventure waiting to be discovered. Every night, he dreamed of one day living in that world.

“I was 4-years-old,” Smith said. “I was at the Tradewell store with my mom in Westmoreland. They had a spinner rack of comic books – bright, four-colored, mesmerizing comic books. Each one had fantastic beings with bright costumes, big muscles, ray guns, all fighting monsters and other big people with bright costumes and big muscles. Army men, cowboys, creatures from outer space – what’s not to love? My mom was kind enough to buy me some. I was in love for life. I couldn’t read yet, but I loved looking at the pictures. I tried to draw or trace what I saw on the pages. In my head, I started making up stories of me and my brothers, my family, my friends – we were all fighting the bad guys.

“I specifically recall how disappointed I was when I started first grade. I thought, finally, I am going to learn to read these wonderful books, but much to my

dismay, they don’t teach you to read all in one day. I have to say, learning to read comics was my massive motivation for going to school. It also spurred

a lifetime of reading for me. My love of books has only grown. Even today, I read on average two books a week. Oh, and that first comic book that I read was *Batman* #143. I still have it.”

After graduating from high school, Smith put those dreams on hold. He held various retail jobs in the Huntington area, graduated with a degree in journalism from Marshall University, and settled into the routine of changing diapers and getting up early to attend his ho-hum job. Then, in his early 30s, while sitting on the tailgate of his truck in the parking lot of a local department store, Smith decided he would listen to that little voice in his head from the third grade telling him he needed to pursue his passion.

He attended a few comic book conventions, met writers, designers and artists, and was eventually able to make the connections that led to his first job in the industry, writing a one-page gag strip in the back of a small comic.

Three decades later, Smith has worked with some of the most iconic characters of all time including the Green Lantern, Batman and Superman as a writer, and has even seen one of his own original creations, the gunslinger Wynonna Earp, brought to the small screen as a television series on SyFy.

“I have to say that it all sneaked up on me,” Smith said. “Writing comic books was always my dream, so actually making up and writing stories was a high. Then one evening I was writing an issue of *Guy Gardner Warrior* for DC Comics and Superman was the main guest star. There was this huge fist fight that I had the two characters engaging in and, right smack dab in the middle of it, I stopped and said out loud, ‘I’m putting words into Superman’s mouth!’ It almost became overwhelming. I thought about the pure history of Superman, the character, and was just knocked out. In my career, I’ve been lucky enough to write for quite a few icons such as Wolverine, Batman, Wonder Woman, Captain Action and characters from Star Wars. It’s more than I deserve.

“I love the unique craft of story-telling. The merger of pictures and words. Comic books are like no other form of entertainment. I enjoy the unlimited budget for special effects, the ability to use or make up any location for your story. But most of all, the freedom to totally create from whole cloth, the paint-a-scene with an infinite canvas. For a creative itch, it’s the ultimate scratch.”

And then, of course, there is his very own creation, Wynonna Earp, brought to life by Melanie Scrofano on the television series by the same name which was just renewed for a third season on SyFy.

“Wynonna Earp was basically created when I was in grade school. During the ’60s, westerns littered the television



Smith shows off his most famous creation, Wynonna Earp.

and film landscape. Being a young boy during that time, the western was a huge part of how you saw your fantasy hero self. As we all know, every hero must have a villain to defeat. Also during that time, monsters were all the rage,” Smith said. “So I would write and draw stories in my school notebook of cowboys fighting dinosaurs and the universal monsters such as the Mummy, Frankenstein, Dracula, Wolfman and the Creature from the Black Lagoon. I merged them together. So, in 1996, I brought that idea out of the desk, dusted it off and made it relevant for the market and tastes of the present.”

When Smith is not creating new comics or occasionally on the set watching his creation come to life, he has remained close to home with a place in Ceredo and still considers Marshall the place where it all began.

“Even as a writer, it’s really hard for me to describe what it’s like to see something you created breathe, move and speak — not only to you, but to the world. Let me tell you, it’s a really big deal to me,” Smith said. “I loved the expanse of culture that Marshall injected into my life. From a creative point of view, Marshall offered me so many opportunities and venues to, not only express myself, but to be exposed to things that would truly help me grow in a creative occupation. It may have taken me a few years to put those pieces into my life’s puzzle, but when it finally did

happen, it has allowed me to do what I love, and what I have wanted to do my entire life, for going on 30 years.” □



Wynonna Earp was first conceived and executed by Smith as a comic book character (below), but was later developed into a television figure played by Melanie Scrofano (above) on a show produced by the SyFy network.

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For more information, contact the Marshall University Alumni Association at (304) 696-3134 or alumni@marshall.edu



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2017 HOMECOMING



Marshall

University was excited to step back in time and return to an age of knights, castles and cutthroat battles for large, over-the-top thrones as the Thundering Herd chose to “Overthrow the Monarchs” during Homecoming 2017!

A full week of activities with a medieval twist began Monday, Oct. 9, and culminated with Marshall winning the Homecoming football game against the Old Dominion Monarchs on Saturday, Oct. 14.



homecoming





AROUND HERD NATION

HERDZONE STADIUM STORE | SEPTEMBER 15, 2017

Thundering Herd fans received a welcome addition to Joan C. Edwards Stadium in the fall with the grand opening of the HerdZone Stadium Bookstore in September. Located on the southwest side of the stadium between Gate B and Gate C, the new retail space specializes in Marshall Athletics gear and exclusive apparel, and will sell official merchandise for Herd athletics. The store is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, with special hours on game days.



47TH ANNUAL MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN CEREMONY | NOVEMBER 14, 2017

The 47th annual Memorial Fountain Ceremony took place on the Memorial Student Center Plaza in November, remembering the 75 people who died in the 1970 plane crash. Members of the Marshall community gathered as the Memorial Fountain was shut off for the winter. The keynote speaker was Marshall senior student Fisher Cross, grandson of Herbert and Josephine Proctor, who were killed in the crash.



HERD HOLIDAY | NOVEMBER 28, 2017

Becoming a welcome tradition on the Huntington campus, the annual Herd Holiday event took place in the Memorial Student Center in November. The yearly event featured the official holiday lighting on the student center plaza, along with numerous activities, snacks, giveaways, music and even an appearance by Santa Marco.



MARSHALL DAY AT THE CAPITOL | JANUARY 24, 2018

The West Virginia State Capitol was lit up with green and white as Marshall University took center stage in January for Marshall Day at the Capitol. Nearly 100 departments and organizations took part in the annual trip to Charleston, which featured official proclamations read on the senate and house floors, special



music by the John Marshall Fife and Drum Corps and other activities inside the Capitol. □



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The Marshall University Foundation.



Please share your news with us by sending it to the Marshall University Alumni Association; One John Marshall Drive, Huntington, WV 25755. *Preference will be given to active alumni;* other news will be printed as space allows and should be received within six months of the event. For more Class Notes, go to www.herdalum.com.

1970s

Dr. Roger Weis (B.A. '71, M.A. '74) recently retired from teaching at Murray State University and celebrated by writing his 14th book, *Leading and Managing Nonprofit Organizations*. He taught for 28 years at MSU while writing 11 textbooks and three books of poetry. He has begun writing his first novel, *Marissa's Secret*. While at Marshall, he was on the MU tennis team, and prior to enrolling at Marshall, he was a reporter, editor and community service coordinator for the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He received two bronze stars for bravery in a war zone.

1990s

Russ Dempsey (B.A. '97) was recently named assistant general counsel for American International Group (AIG) in Houston.

Paul Mullins (B.F.A. '92) exhibited *These Same Waters*, a solo exhibition of his work, at Marshall University's Visual Arts Center from Sept. 25-Oct. 27, 2017.

Sharon Rotenberry (B.A. '91, M.S. '11) was named executive director of the West Virginia Alzheimer's Association.

Kara Dixon Vuic (B.A. '99) was named the Benjamin Schmidt Professor of War, Conflict and Society

in 20th Century America at Texas Christian University.

Eileen Woods (M.A. '95) exhibited her work at the Main Gallery, Cultural Arts Center in Columbus, Ohio, from Nov. 17 to Dec. 30, 2017. The exhibition was with Paula Nees and was titled, "RUST to DUST: Frayed Opulence — Luxuriant Ruin."

2000s

Rebecca Lutz (B.A. '00) established her own public relations firm, Rebecca Lutz Content Strategy, LLC in the fall of 2017.

Tori Marra (B.A. '07, M.A. '11) serves as chief operating officer for the Outspoken Agency in New York

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Connect with the Marshall University Alumni Association on social media and share in the alumni experience!

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City. She has developed an affiliate bureau, Speakers Boutique, for speaker programming ideas.

Derek Scarbro (B.A. '03), former director of intergovernmental Affairs for West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, has been named director of the Appalachian Hatchery, a Robert C. Byrd Institute initiative to diversify the economy of southern West Virginia and promote job creation.

Sara Payne Scarbro (B.A. '03), former senior advisor to West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, was named associate vice president for external engagement at the Marshall University Research Corporation (MURC).

Sheryl Webb, (B.A. '04, M.A. '06) former deputy Secretary of State for West Virginia, has been named by Gov. Jim Justice as director of personnel for the state.

Sassa Wilkes (B.F.A. '09, M.A.T. '12) exhibited Personal Space, a solo

exhibition of her work, at Marshall University's Visual Arts Center from May 26-July 5, 2017. She opened Make: Art Gallery and Community Studio in Barboursville, West Virginia, this fall.

2010s

Ashleigh Adkins (B.F.A. '17) was hired as marketing assistant at Better Foods Inc. in Nitro, West Virginia.

Andrew Dennison (B.A. '16) has been hired as a developer for Kinsale Insurance Company in Richmond, Virginia.

Jack Folwell (B.F.A. '17) was hired as an environmental designer for Starr Design in Charlotte, North Carolina, in July.

Leah Gore (B.F.A. '17) completed an internship at the Juliet Museum/Clay Center this past summer.

She was selected to participate in an internship at Danish chef Rene Redzepi's new restaurant, Noma 2.0, in Copenhagen, Denmark, from Feb. 7-May 7, 2018. She says that Noma has been an incubator of some of the world's best chefs and creatives focusing on an entire movement of exquisite artful locality, and adds, "I'm pretty positive that I'm the first West Virginian to venture into this innovative, multi-Michelin-rated creative playground!"

Ezgi Karakus (M.A. '12) is currently an adjunct faculty member in cello performance at Ottawa University and Emporia State University in Kansas since 2016. She is also a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance.

Liang Wu (B.F.A. '17) was accepted to begin the M.F.A. in design at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in August.

Mark Your Calendar!

HOMECOMING 2018 Saturday, October 20

Mark your calendars for a weekend full of fun and excitement during Homecoming 2018, culminating Saturday, October 20, as the Marshall University Thundering Herd takes on

the defending Conference USA champion Florida Atlantic Owls. Make plans to join us and be sure to visit www.herdalum.com for a complete weekend schedule, homecoming theme announcement and much more!





A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

GREEN FLOWS THROUGH OUR VEINS

Greetings, Fellow Alumni and Friends of Marshall University:

How well do you know your heritage?

It is a question that has come up more and more often here at the Office of Alumni Relations as a few of our staff members have recently undertaken ancestry projects for their families. Digging through mountains of data, our staff have traced their roots through soldiers in every major war, pioneers, Native Americans and other men and women – the good, the bad and the ugly – all the way back to their arrival here in the United States and before.

It is a fascinating and exhaustive undertaking, mining decades' worth of census data, marriage and childbirth records, and trusting in a little intuition, leading to the discovery of what makes us unique and how we came to be.

The project also uncovered unknown connections: distant cousins, aunts and uncles, and great, great, great grandparents who we had no idea were in the family.

But genealogical mapping only uncovers part of the truth. While it is true that the names that appear on census papers and long-forgotten records show us our heritage, it doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't show us who these people were as human beings.

They may have been born in 1850, but what were their passions? What did they like to do? What did they hope to become? In truth, the people on a family tree may never be anything more than a collection of names pointing us to where we have been.

The entire exercise got us thinking about other families we are a part of. Work families. Social families. And, of course, our Marshall family.

That's right, you and me. You, sitting at your home, or at the office, or – hopefully in the passenger seat of your car – reading this magazine right now. We are family. And we have the same green blood running through our veins.

It may sound corny and overplayed, but the Herd family is as real as anything any ancestry website or DNA test will ever prove. We all share the same unequivocal bond – our experiences as students at Marshall University. We all know it to be true. Hugs and a shared meal with complete strangers at tailgates. A friendly honk or a "Go Herd" at the store with your Marshall shirt on. That feeling of belonging when back on the Huntington campus, at an alumni event, or even just seeing a Marshall license plate or flag flying proudly at someone's home.

As the old saying goes, you can't pick your family. But that isn't always true. You and we all picked this family – the Marshall family – and around here, you are always welcome home.

Until next time, Godspeed and GO HERD!

Best Regards,
Rob, Matt and Larry





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