Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Stewart Bell Tower

Connections
MAKE US STRONGER

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Stewart Bell Tower
Bachelor’s or Masters: Learn Quality Care from the Best

Laurie Coburn trains bachelor’s degree students for careers in the vascular interventional radiology field, and master’s degree students to become radiology assistants.

Her undergrad students go on to conduct important procedures like angiograms, and her graduate students become essential members of radiology teams, working closely with physicians.

Coburn spent 29 years working as an interventional radiology technologist and an advanced practitioner in radiology, doing most of her work at Primary Children’s Hospital.

Like her students, she started at Weber State. She earned her associate’s, bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Weber, and even took classes from her current faculty colleague, Dr. Bob Walker.

The most important thing she teaches at WSU: providing quality care for patients.

Quality of care is a top priority at Weber State
An Ogden Campus Landmark Turns 50 Years Old
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Amplified
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Painting the Streets in Shades of Purple
Ash Ryan BA ’16 is chasing her dream on the streets and walls of Philadelphia.

Ryan is a street artist and muralist, creating large scale murals in her signature blue, purple and pink palate. One of her most recent murals, a 1,300-square-foot portrait of hip-hop artist Lil Nas X in Philadelphia’s Gayborhood, was featured in Variety and Philadelphia Magazine.

"Once I lost my job due to the pandemic, I wanted to chase my original dream of becoming a muralist," said Ryan, who previously worked as a floral designer.

During her time at Weber State, Ryan experienced health issues from chronic Lyme disease and found her painting, printmaking and figure drawing classes particularly cathartic. Kathleen "K" Stevenson, visual art and design department chair, was her favorite professor.

"K Stevenson supported me and inspired me to continue creating my lowbrow, dark surrealism art and helped me discover some of my favorite and influential artists," Ryan said.

Now with the disease in remission, Ryan continues her work as a muralist. One of her latest projects is a 1,100-square-foot mural that consists of nine diverse portraits.

Ryan spray painted this issue’s cover on a public art wall in Philadelphia. See her create her artwork in a time-lapse video at weber.edu/wsumagazine. Follow her on Instagram, Twitter and TikTok at @asheyeart. She can also be reached at her website, asheyeart.com.
Welcoming a New Dean to Social & Behavioral Sciences

Newly appointed dean of the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences (CSBS) Julie Rich holds a Ph.D. from the University of Oxford in geography with an emphasis on paleoclimatology, the study of ancient climates. What she’s found at Weber is a climate that’s perfectly suited for her focus on teaching and community connections.

From the moment she stepped foot on Weber State’s campus as a first-year student “decades ago,” Rich said she’s been committed to the university. Her mother worked in Weber State housing; her father helped install the first seats at Stewart Stadium. “There is a lot of Rich blood, sweat and tears at Weber State,” said Rich, who worked as interim dean before beginning her work as dean during the summer of 2021.

As a member of the Weber State faculty since 1991, Rich has emphasized teaching and field work. Her research and writing focus on arid environments and environmental change.

CSBS is home to the departments of sociology and anthropology; criminal justice; geography, environment and sustainability; history; political science and philosophy; psychological science; and social work and gerontology. The college is expanding with new certificate programs in tele-mental health, crisis intervention and geospatial analysis; an associate’s degree in social and behavioral sciences; and a Master of Social Work.

In addition to her role as dean, Rich will continue to advance Weber State’s Global Community Engaged Learning (GCEL) program, which undertakes projects to help alleviate poverty in developing nations.

“All of the challenges we face in the world deal with societal issues,” Rich said. “How did we become so polarized? Why is the suicide rate so high in Utah? How can we live more sustainably? These big problems we deal with day in and day out are going to be resolved in part by social scientists, people who understand the way individuals think and respond and know how policy is created. The importance of what we teach and learn in this college is critical.”

Artwork from the Heart

WSU grad-turned-recruiter named Talent of the Year in the final Crystal Crest Awards

Yuqi Liu’s 2020 Crystal Crest Talent of the Year Award came as a surprise to her, especially since she painted as a hobby, not as a major. On the day the awards were announced, she received a congratulatory email from a colleague at work. “What happened?” she replied.

Liu was one of the final winners of the Crystal Crest Awards, which celebrated individuals and organizations in the areas of scholarship, talent, leadership, achievement and instruction. The awards were held annually for 38 years.

While she didn’t expect an award, her stunning art and charitable work make her the clear winner.

A fall 2020 graduate in business administration, Liu now recruits students for WSU’s International Student & Scholar Center. On the side, she has practiced oil painting and traditional Chinese watercolors since childhood. She has donated artwork to a Chinese charity established to help fund children’s education. “It means a lot to me to notice my talent in this area,” said Liu, whose art subjects range from cultural Chinese scenes to still lifes to go-kart racers.

While she expresses herself through art, she said WSU public speaking instructor Greg Larson helped her find her voice in his class, where she had to step out of her comfort zone to deliver five speeches or presentations to Larson and her peers in English, a language she was actively learning. “Yuqi was part of that class when she had recently come from China and perhaps the biggest obstacle she faced was her transition from classroom English learned in China to conversational American English,” Larson said. “Besides her intelligence, two of her strongest qualities were courage and the willingness to work very hard to achieve her goals.”

Liu chose WSU because she thought Utah would be a peaceful state for studying. At WSU, she discovered an institution that supported international students. She made friends from many countries, including the U.S., and with them explored local culture.

“She is the kind of student that we hope to have at WSU, and she deserves to be recognized for her amazing talents and also commitment to making Weber State University great, Great, GREAT,” said Tiana Witkamp, administrative specialist for the International Student & Scholar Center who nominated Liu for the award. “She makes every effort to happily serve her fellow students and consciously wants to make a difference for others, especially those in need.”

“IT’S A very fantastic opportunity to study at Weber State.” —Yuqi Liu
Shooting for Success

The Utah Jazz have made earning a college diploma a slam dunk for four first-year Wildcats.

Each student received a scholarship from the team aimed at helping first-generation, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) students earn their bachelor’s degrees. The scholarships cover the full cost of attendance, including tuition, books, fees, room and board.

Gabriela Rosas Calderon, whose parents are from Mexico, knew she wanted to be a teacher since third or fourth grade. She would play teacher with other children while they waited for their moms, who were taking ESL classes.

“In elementary school, I looked up to my teachers as role models,” Rosas recalled. “I want to be like that when I grow up.”

Jai’Auna Jefferson, the youngest of 14 siblings, is a self-described “over thinker,” who knew early on she would need a college degree, whether she became a veterinarian or worked in psychology.

“My dad’s friends would say, ‘I wish I had done good in school. I wish I had gone to college’—Today, Jefferson’s plan is to study sociology and eventually become a professor.

Angel Solis, who plans to study mechanical engineering, said that at age 15, watching his mom “work her butt off to provide for me and my brother” inspired him to go to college.

Jordyn Beddow said her decision to pursue a radiologic sciences degree is inspired by her father, who suffers from diabetes and has had four open-heart surgeries. She fell in love with Weber State after touring the campus.

“I loved the mix of downtown and nature,” she said. “I also know that I am going to get the best education.”

For Rosas, sharing the news with her parents was the highlight.

“Mom and dad were so happy,” she said. “They came to this country with nothing and gave me everything,” Beddow was in a state of shock and disbelief when she got the news. She had been thinking about college, but each doubted it would amount to anything until they heard directly from Jazz players and staff.

“I was always looking for ways to improve myself, to become a better soldier, to get outside my comfort zone,” she said.

Dalto served her first 20 years as an enlisted soldier, achieving the second-highest rank, serving as a master sergeant, and then took a direct commission into the U.S. Army Nurse Corps as a first lieutenant, serving 18 years as an officer before going on to command the Utah Army National Guard’s Medical Detachment. Then, in 2021, she was promoted to brigadier general.

Dalto said it can be hard to be in the limelight, but young women need role models. “It’s important to show them when starting their military career there’s no door that’s closed to them, and it’s okay to celebrate women’s accomplishments,” she said.

Dalto’s awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal and Army Achievement Medal. She also deployed to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in support of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm in 1990.

Life-Saving Doses Administered Here

When the community needed help, Wildcats rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

Weber-Morgan Health Department partnered with the university and the Dee Events Center to hold a mass COVID vaccination clinic from January to June 2021.

Weber State’s long history of engaging with the community prepared the university for a public-health emergency. COVID Task Force Chair and Public Safety Director, Dane LeBlanc, helped coordinate the university’s first pandemic response back in 2009 with an H1N1 vaccination clinic at the Dee. He said that training and collaboration made the connection easy this time.

More than 200 faculty, staff and students from the Dr. Ezekiel R. Dumsic College of Health Professions were trained, screened, credential-certified and enrolled with the Weber-Morgan Medical Reserve Corps. The volunteers provided 50% or more of the staffing for the vaccination area, including during the days specifically reserved for Weber State faculty, staff and students.

Another 30 non-medical employee volunteers from various departments including Campus Police, the Fire Marshall, Facilities Management, Dee Events Center, Human Resources, Marketing & Communications and Environmental Health & Safety also helped with the process.

Thanks to the volunteer effort nearly 100,000 life-saving doses were administered. “We have many Weber State alumni on our staff,” said Brian Cowan, health department executive director. “The university has been a critical partner for us for many years, particularly during the pandemic. We would not have been able to sustain our COVID-19 mass-vaccination clinic without their help, and our entire community owes them a debt of gratitude.”

Caring for each other and for the community is a Wildcat hallmark that was on full display during the worst moments of the pandemic.

No Doors are Closed

WSU graduate makes history in the Utah Army National Guard

The first female to be promoted to brigadier general in the Utah Army National Guard is a Weber State University alum.

Charlene C. Dalto is the land component commander for the Utah Army National Guard headquartered at Draper, Utah. She provides strategic leadership for six major subordinate commands, made up of about 4,400 soldiers.

Dalto, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in nursing in 1992, said she was inspired to go into the military by her older sister, who also served.

Dalto served her first 20 years as an enlisted soldier, achieving the second-highest rank, serving as a master sergeant, and then took a direct commission into the U.S. Army Nurse Corps as a first lieutenant, serving 18 years as an officer before going on to command the Utah Army National Guard’s Medical Detachment. Then, in 2021, she was promoted to brigadier general.

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Weber State Ranks Second in the Nation for Veterans

A new Military Times survey ranks Weber State as No. 2 in the nation for veteran students.

More than 300 schools across the United States participated in the “Best For Vets: College” survey, which included 70 questions about each college’s costs, programs, policies and services that impact military-connected students. WSU is the only Utah college in the top 10.

“It’s the support we get from the university and its Military Outreach for Veterans Education (MOVE) committee, and it is the teamwork we have in the Veterans Services office,” explained Charles Chandler, WSU Veterans Services director. “You put those two together, and it’s a catalyst for making sure that veterans are taken care of here at the university because the transition from being in the military into higher education is daunting.”

WSU Veterans Services helps veteran students excel by offering services like certifying educational benefits and connecting veterans to scholarship opportunities. In 2020, 1,275 students received some type of benefit through Veterans Services. The WSU Davis campus offers a dedicated full-time school certifying official, tutoring services and a veterans study lounge through Veterans Upward Bound.

EXPLORING free speech

23rd Annual WSU DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

Throughout the past year and a half, the United States has witnessed a continual state of unrest, both at local and national levels. Racial tensions and extreme political polarization have brought attention to the need for civil discourse within our communities.

As the country continues to face challenges, Weber State University recently fostered open dialogue about these issues at the 23rd Annual Diversity Conference, held Sept. 30-Oct. 1 in a virtual format. Events were held virtually on both days, with an in-person option on Sept. 30 in the Shepherd Union.

“Through social media, a 24/7 news cycle and other platforms, we have seen firsthand the discourse in our country, and a frequent component being expressed through that is the right to free speech,” said Tia Nero, diversity, equity and inclusion program coordinator.

The conference explored the meaning and idea of free speech, giving participants an opportunity to better understand an essential component of the First Amendment. Presenters and participants also examined how free speech impacts the world around us.

The conference strives to educate people on the importance of engaging in discourse and advocacy in their communities. It offers a unique platform for attendees to engage in workshops and presentations that encourage them to challenge their own biases by examining the issues from all sides and perspectives. Past conferences have explored such topics as diversity in music, the challenges of immigration and the importance of diversity in education.

2021 Diversity Conference Sparks Dialogue

November 10-11
Bonneville Chamber Music Festival

October 01
Weber State Symphony Orchestra Concert

October 08-16
Something’s Afoot a play by WSU Theatre students

October 20
Choirfest presented by WSU Music

October 26
Hurst Artist in Residence: Amitav Ghosh

October 28
Browning Presents! Guillermo Galindo

November 05
Dumke Arts Plaza Grand Opening featuring the sculptures of inaugural artist Chakaia Booker

November 06
Weber State Symphony Orchestra Movie Scores

November 12-20
The Impracticality of Modern-Day Mastodons written by Rachel Teagle

November 18-20
Orchesis Dance Theatre: Rhythm, Here & Now

December 03
Symphonic Band Holiday Concert

December 05
Combined Choirs & Orchestra Holiday Concert

FOR A FULL LIST OF EVENTS: WEBER.EDU/ARTSCALENDAR

Weber State University
Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities
ARTS AT WEBER
WINTER/FALL 2021
On Christmas Eve 1945, a weary World War II paratrooper from the Army 82nd Airborne Division battled tangled ticket lines at crowded train terminals and circuitous detours on an ill-conceived mission to reunite with his family in Ogden, Utah. Four days into his nine-day leave, the young soldier had only made it from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Cincinnati, Ohio.

Homesick and defeated, he stepped outside the depot to stretch his cramped legs. While moon-kissed snowflakes fluttered to earth, his eyes locked on an illuminated nativity scene a short distance away. As he trudged closer, a magnificent chorus of carillon bells pierced the evening solitude. The otherworldly toll of an ancient carol soothed Pfc. Dean W. Hurst’s soul and steeled his resolve to find joy and meaning in each new experience.

Continued →
The carillon is an extraordinary musical instrument comprised of at least 23 cast bronze bells, tuned to produce consonant harmony when multiple bells are sounded together. For more than five centuries, the carillon has been a voice for humankind: tolling warnings, mourning defeats, celebrating victories and announcing news. Carillons are typically installed in a belfry, a tower that is attached to a main building, or a free-standing structure called a carillonneur.

Dean Hurst’s memory of yuletide bells in Cincinnati resurfaced in 1968 as he studied a Weber State campus master plan. One year earlier, he had been hired as the school’s first, full-time executive director of Alumni Relations and the newly established college development fund. Through his energetic fundraising efforts and extensive involvement in the community, Hurst became well-acquainted with an Ogden couple and their affinity for Weber.

Donnell B. Stewart served as student body president during the 1925–26 academic year. After a lengthy military career, he returned to Weber State in 1966 for a business administration degree. His wife, Elizabeth Dee Shaw Stewart, attended high school at Weber Normal College and stayed when the school became a junior college in 1922. She worked at Weber as the assistant registrar and, later, as secretary to President Aaron W. Tracy. While temporarily placed in charge of the college library in 1931, she was asked to teach two English courses.

At 35, Elizabeth underwent life-saving surgery that left her unable to bear children. “It was a dreadful shock to me, for it meant that the family I had always hoped to have would never become a reality,” she recorded in her memoirs.

After establishing a music scholarship in honor of Elizabeth’s mother in 1964, the Stewarts donated a series of what they considered to be “small gifts” to Weber — a jeep for archeological trips, equipment to measure atomic power for the physics lab.

“The then one day I said to Dean, ‘Isn’t there something the college needs that is a little more acknowledgeable than what we have done?’” Elizabeth noted in her journal.

Hurst consulted a two-year-old campus plan sketch and spotted an inconspicuous shape he was told could represent a clock or bell tower. “I immediately thought of the carillon in Cincinnati and envisioned something similar at Weber, a kind of central landmark that would rise above campus and be seen from many vantage points in the community,” he said.

Hurst ran the idea past then-President William P. Miller, who recalled listening to the cheerful clang of the carillon in Hoover Tower at Stanford University, where he pursued his doctorate. He encouraged Hurst to seek funding from the Stewarts.

“I made a rough sketch of what I thought a bell tower might look like and arbitrarily attached a $50,000 price tag,” said Hurst.

While the idea immediately appealed to Elizabeth, who loved music and had studied pipe organ with a renowned professor while the idea immediately appealed to Elizabeth, who loved music and had studied pipe organ with a renowned professor at Columbia University, Hurst’s subsequent research into carillons revealed an alarming disparity in the amount of money he had asked for and the actual amount it would cost to build one at Weber. Elizabeth suggested that Hurst solicit additional funding from her late mother’s charitable organization, the Mary Elizabeth Dee Shaw Foundation, which was chaired by her “Uncle Lawry” (Lawrence T. Dee), the only surviving son of Thomas and Annie Dee.

“Africa extolled the virtues of the carillon, Chairman Dee scrutinized my primitive bell tower sketch and proclaimed, somewhat sarcastically, “This looks like something off the Golden Gate Bridge!” Hurst recalled. “My heart sunk. But after a thoughtful pause, Mr. Dee continued: ‘You know, when I was a student at Cornell, I’d lie in bed on Sunday mornings and listen to the campus carillon. It always made me think of home. A carillon tower at Weber is a great idea. I say we do it!’ The rest of the board agreed, and we were on our way!”

Well-known Ogden architect John L. Piers, a Weber College alumnus, designed the 100-foot-tall tower. With limited space on campus, planners chose to install a Schulmerich “electro-mechanical” carillon with 148 miniature, precision-tuned, bell-metal tone generators, which, when struck by metal hammers and amplified through Stentor speakers positioned atop the tower, produced bell tones indistinguishable from a carillon of full-sized bells, but at a fraction of the cost and weight. The instrument was played manually from a dual keyboard console located in a performance room at the base of the tower. The carillon could also be pre-programmed to play melodies automatically at certain times.

In addition to the electronic carillon, the Stewarts commissioned four, full-sized carillon bells, cast in Asten, Netherlands, by the Royal Eijsbouts bell foundry, along with stone clock faces and a quartet of “golden buff” brick-face pylons to match the color of other buildings on campus. To promote the area as a peaceful gathering place for campus and community, Piers added a landscaped terrace and reflecting pool, bumping the total cost of the project to $220,000.

Like Music to a Development Officers Ears

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Opening Doors for Donors

The next step was to give the tower a name. No other structure on campus had been memorialized and, according to Hurst, the Stewarts were reluctant to add their name to the bell tower. “Elizabeth may have had an illustrious Dee family pedigree, but she and Don never sought the limelight,” he said. “They were lovely, humble, low-key individuals.”

Hurst, however, had his own agenda. He pulled the Stewarts aside and said, “I’m making you a sacrificial lamb for memorialization. I know you don’t want to, but it’ll open up doors for me as a development officer.” Turns out, Hurst was right. Don and Elizabeth Stewart’s public generosity inspired dozens of other local donors to come forward. “In fact,” Hurst chuckled, “right after the bell tower was built, Willard Eccles said to me, ‘Why didn’t you ask me to fund that bell tower? I would have done it!’”

While the project was announced to the public in March of 1970, preliminary construction didn’t begin until the spring of the following year. An onslaught of unseasonable winter storms and construction setbacks delayed Stewart Bell Tower’s grand opening until Tuesday, December 14, 1971. About 200 people assembled to hear world-renowned carillonneur John Klein demonstrate the versatility of the instrument and perform a recital. Klein pronounced the Stewart Bell Tower carillon “perfectly installed and beautifully voiced.”

A Faceift for the Ages

Once tuned at the foundry, a carillon bell never needs further tuning in its tower. Bells over 300 years old sound as they did when they left their maker’s hands. Unfortunately, many structures that house carillon bells lack comparable stamina. By 2002, Weber State’s iconic bell tower was in trouble. “Water started leaking into the subbasement,” said WSU Facility Management’s Patrick Malone, an electronic systems technician and bell tower caretaker for more than 32 years. “But the primary problem was that bricks began falling off.”

When then-President Ann Millner informed Hurst, his first thought was, “Oh, dear! They’re going to tear it down.” Instead, renovation crews stripped the pylons and installed new bricks; they built a large drainage system to remove excess groundwater in the plaza, replaced the four gigantic clock faces, and backlit the hands and tick marks with LED lighting so the time could be viewed at night. To emulate the beauty of the hillside above campus, landscapers also created a water feature with exposed rock and natural vegetation. But, what about the bells? “The four large bronze bells are still up in the tower, they still play the Westminster melody and chime the hours,” said Malone. “The carillon and keyboard are over at Shepherd Union in the Stewart Bell Tower Lounge. They can still be activated to play different melodies that are amplified through the speakers,” he added.

Hurst said the new system was hard for him to fathom. “I remember Ann telling me that we no longer needed all those bells, wires and conduits,” he recounted. “I said, ‘But how will the bell sound come from the tower?’ And she said, ‘Dean, it’s a new, digital world!’”

Wildcat readers shared their memories of the Stewart Bell Tower with us. Turn to page 44.

A Gathering Place, Now and Always

For 50 years, Stewart Bell Tower has been an eyewitness to Weber State University history. It has been the backdrop for holiday concerts, dances, firework displays, midnight Homecoming traditions, purple-pancake breakfasts, fashion shows and Weber’s Juneteenth celebration.

In times of tragedy, such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Wildcats have gathered at Stewart Bell Tower to comfort each other and grieve as a community. Hurst, who lives near campus, admits he misses daily carillon concerts. But, as he has watched Stewart Bell Tower retain its prominence amidst campus growth and development, he has grown increasingly proud of the role he played in securing a historic gift whose mere presence symbolizes the dignity and distinction associated with higher education.

“Over the years, there came a sense of pride in having done something that would outlive me,” said Hurst, who is 94. “I think what they’ve done to the plaza is absolutely marvelous. I’m sure the Stewarts would agree.”

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WSU’s Spirit Squad Wins National Titles & Shows What Dedication Means

We have Spirit!

By: Allison Barlow Hess
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

We have Spirit!
What does perfection look like? For two minutes and 15 seconds, Weber State’s cheer team came as close as possible at the 2021 NCA National Cheer and Dance Competition in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The overall score — 98.507 — earned the team its fourth-straight national title in the Advanced Large Coed division. That’s not all, that score was best in the country — of all 100 teams, in any division — giving the Wildcats their first Grand National Championship.

And WSU’s dance team, which along with the cheer team makes up the Spirit Squad, reclaimed the national Hip Hop title. To cap off a weekend of wins in Daytona Beach, Elsa Hassett and Kollin Cockrell earned the national Partner Stunt title, while Anu Keene and CJ Weinberg placed second and Katherine Abela and Michael Androsov placed fifth.

But for program advisor and cheer coach Summer Willis, there’s no such thing as perfection.

“From the outside you might not see all the little things that happen on the mat, but overcoming adversity is what we work so hard on,” Willis said. “We do rep upon rep upon rep to be prepared for that one little thing that goes wrong. I think we’re teaching and we’re working on adjusting. True champions make a routine appear perfect and never give up.”

Adjusting as a team required 416 beats of choreographed and synchronized tumbling stunts, basket tosses and pyramids, culminating with a two-part-elite stunt sequence, never before performed at nationals.

“No one knew what we were coming to do,” said Hassett, a senior studying communication. “No one knew the sequence we had, and we went out there and literally did the best routine of our lives. Our stunts were perfect; our tumbling was amazing; our pyramid was just to die for. We ended the routine and people were crying. It was so cool.”

What they accomplished on the national stage was a goal they set from the beginning of the year. Willis said it was inspiring to watch the team pull together and do the work to make the dream a reality, and it turned out to be easy compared to the mental and emotional intensity of the previous year.

The Spirit Squad had to miss a whole season of cheering and performing at university events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their 2020 nationals competition was canceled practically as they packed to attend. They had to wear masks to practice, and to stop practice whenever members came in contact with someone who had COVID.

Nationals gave them something to focus on. “Above the Line,” with a commitment to teambuilding and leadership, became their mantra and their motivation. Team captain Cockrell said practice was intense: three days a week of team workouts and then three or more days of individual lifting and conditioning. He and Hassett dedicated 160 hours on their own to the partner stunt routine.

The reward was cohesion and control, and it helped overcome a world of turmoil outside the gym. And for Cockrell, it’s not the first time the Spirit Squad saved him. In 2015, he was a three-time National Champion in Olympic weightlifting. After eight years of work, a back injury abruptly ended his dream of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. “I was at my lowest of lows,” Cockrell said.

He decided to visit his sister in Utah and work out at a local gym. A Wildcat team member immediately recognized Cockrell’s potential and recruited him to turn his physicality from an individual sport to one where the team literally stands on his back — or bounces on an upturned palm. While he learned a new sport, he also refocused on academics, earning a degree in health promotion.

“My whole plan is to introduce cheerleading to guys, and show it’s not a girly thing,” Cockrell said. “To show guys this is what partner stunting is. This is the strength it takes: the power, the speed, the muscles, the concentration. It’s very, very difficult. My plan is to introduce it to the world.”

We ended the routine and people were crying. It was so cool.” —Elsa Hassett
He’s made a significant start on that effort. After the team victory, and winning the national partners title with Haskett, Cockrell spent the summer hosting 30 cheer camps in 18 states around the country with Gabi Butler, one of Weber State’s new recruits and a health promotion major. Butler, who was featured on the Netflix docuseries Cheer, has more than 1.7 million Instagram followers. After graduating from Navarro Junior College in Texas, she found her new home at Weber State.

“Elsa’s athleticism, and Gabi’s work ethic are phenomenal,” Cockrell said. “It’s amazing to have been on this journey with both of them.”

The experience and depth of the 2021–22 team will add excitement and energy at every game. The level of perfection is actually a little intimidating for Cameron Canada, a first-generation, first-year student. He’s moving to Ogden to leave behind a turbulent childhood in California. For him, the cheer squad is his best path to earn a degree in English and pursue his lifelong dream of teaching and mentoring.

“I have a huge drive to affect and impact others’ lives, not necessarily change the world, but make the world around me a better place,” Canada said.

The Wildcats’ Grand National title brought national attention and attracted recruits from around the country, but Willis said the cheer and dance team members who will represent the school for the 2021–22 season are the ones who visited or attended camps before the championship and truly understand the Weber way. They fell in love with the culture and community and want to make a meaningful difference.

“For me cheerleading is just another dose of life lessons,” Willis reflected. “It’s about knowing your why, giving your best each and every day and working together to lift each other up.”

And that’s as close to perfection as you can get.

Taking home titles isn’t the only way Wildcats represent WSU nationally.

For the 2021–22 year, nine Wildcats made the USA National Coed Premier Team, composed of the most talented female and male cheerleaders in America. They compete at the International Cheer Union World Cheerleading Championships.

Weber State’s Ed Moroney was the first Wildcat to make the team in 2017, but each year the number has grown. Wildcats now comprise 25 percent of the national team.

Just like everything else, COVID-19 disrupted events and competitions in 2020, but finally, in July 2021, the team got together to plan and practice a new routine for world competition.

“It is so cool to look next to you on the mat and you see four of your Weber teammates and then you look on the other side and you see another four,” said Elsa Hassett. “It is so awesome. It’s such a huge accomplishment for Weber State to have produced so many elite athletes.”

Eventually the USA National team may get a shot at the Olympics. After many years of consideration, in August 2021, the International Olympic Committee announced that cheerleading has received full Olympic recognition. Kollin Cockrell is excited about the possibility of the Olympic experience he missed as a weightlifter.

“If I can accomplish being an Olympian, I will have completed the goal I set for myself when I started working out back in middle school,” Cockrell said. “That would be tremendous.”

Performing on a world stage is just another way Spirit Squad members jump at the chance to elevate Weber State.
At the height of COVID-19, WSU and Ogden community leaders banded together for residents lacking healthcare.
Two things drive Shardae Jones’ commitment to helping people access healthcare: her experiences at work and growing up.

As a community health worker, Jones sees the struggles those with limited access to care face daily due to lack of income, lack of insurance, homelessness, language barriers and more. Working for the Association for Utah Community Health (AUCH), she connects patients in Weber County facing these barriers to sustainable, long-term care. The Alliance for the Determinants of Health, an organization dedicated to combating non-medical issues that impact health, looks to Jones and her colleagues to help address those issues as well. Patrons are referred by Select Health and local health organizations like Midtown Community Health Center.

Jones works with clients for up to six months.

“If I’m not better than them, I work here. I’ve gone to school here. I’m involved in the community here, I’ve walked the streets here, I live here… I am them,” Jones, a lifelong Ogdenite, said about her clients.

Growing up, she said her parents struggled with drugs, alcohol and rehab stints. She and two of her three siblings lived with her grandparents for a time, and she moved often, since the family struggled to afford housing. To this day, Jones worries for her grandparents and her parents. Jones wonders if she’d be here if they couldn’t have afforded to buy a place to live.

“I worry about her mother’s ability to afford healthcare. ‘My mom is a felon, a three-time felon,’” Jones said, a lifelong Ogdenite, said about her clients. “I want to get involved in what was going on in the city and the county.”

“I wanted to get more involved in what was going on in the city and the county,” Jones said. “So, she just gave me the information and then I just started joining the meetings.”

Jones recalls screening people receiving COVID-19 tests at Ogden Intermodal Transit Center. Some didn’t like having to wear a mask in line, and a few others at an administrative level. Some didn’t dress for the cold day. While lessons were learned for the next clinic, she knows she made a difference.

After working with community leaders in the task force, she’s considering one day running for city council. Recently, she accepted a position on the Ogden City Diversity Commission.

“The task force was a huge issue,” Knuth said. “People of color were underrepresented in all of the numbers. So, not only were they having higher infection rates but they weren’t getting tested, so it’s possible those infection rates were way higher than what was reported.”

Partnering with Intermountain Healthcare for a testing clinic in November 2020, the task force helped set an Intermountain Healthcare record for the most tests administered in a single event: 564 in four hours. The task force, which operated from April to December 2020, held six other testing clinics, along with a free flu vaccination clinic thanks to a $25,000 state grant.

“One of the efforts was making sure we were communicating in the languages of the communities that were being impacted heavily, so we ensured there was Spanish translation of this information that was coming out,” said Angela Choberka MA ’11, task force member and Member Equity Program Consultant at SelectHealth.

Realizing CDC health guidance was being disseminated rapidly by local organizations with little to nothing provided in Spanish, the task force lobbied local health organizations to dedicate Spanish-language resources. Ogden City Council allocated $30,000 for translation services. Weber County and Weber-Morgan Health Department also made it a priority.

The task force also partnered with A Mask for Every Utahn to distribute over 60,000 masks, handing them out at a wide range of locations, from Walmart to Rancho Markets to the Ogden Intermodal Transit Center.

For children in the Ogden School District learning at home, the task force prepped over 1,500 art kits, with crayons and scissors.

Jones found out about the task force from Choberka, a coordinator for the Alliance for the Determinants of Health.

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“People are hard for her to find jobs, it’s really hard for her to keep jobs.”

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As a 32-year-old, non-trad WSU student, she is earning her Bachelor of Integrated Studies in criminal justice, communication and health administration to one day help others at an administrative level.

Jones isn’t alone in wanting to address health inequities.

She recently joined other Ogden community members in the COVID-19 Multicultural Task Force for Ogden City.

Community leaders created the task force following a presentation Nubia Pina, director of the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs, gave to the Ogden City Council and Ogden Diversity Commission, outlining urgent healthcare needs for local communities.

“We kind of just started thinking about various groups and leaders in our community who could band together,” said Taylor Knuth BA ’14, founding task force member and former WSU development director.

The task force included 28 community leaders and many volunteers, including WSU staff, faculty, alumni and students like Jones.

The task force set out to increase healthcare access for underserved, underrepresented and historically marginalized communities, a need also pointed out by Weber State’s Center for Community Engaged Learning Research Extension (CCEL-RE).

At the height of the pandemic, CCEL-RE, an office created to meet community data needs for local communities.

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After working with community leaders in the task force, she’s considering one day running for city council. Recently, she accepted a position on the Ogden City Diversity Commission.

“It’s just pushed me to see my greater responsibility — doing what I can to make where I live a better place and somewhere other people want to live,” Jones said. “I’ve been really blessed, but not everybody’s in the same position, so I just want to be able to give back in some way.”
Bill Cook

Bill Cook proudly served on the Multicultural Task Force. After all, the group’s goals dovetail with his ongoing mission as Ogden Civic Action Network (OgdenCAN) director. Part of WSU’s Office of Community Development, OgdenCAN brings together seven local institutions to address health, education, housing and financial stability for nearly 14,000 residents in Ogden’s East Central neighborhood. Participating organizations include Ogden City, local health organizations and more.

“It’s probably over 14,000 reasons why people have health issues,” Cook said. “However, poverty does contribute to that. Lack of healthcare access contributes to that, intergenerational poverty contributes to that as well.”

About 30% of the residents are in poverty, and about 70% don’t earn a living wage, he said.

OgdenCAN’s projects in the community have included working with Ogden School District and Ogden-Weber Technical College to provide paths to adult high school diplomas and GEDs, implementing a program for physicians to prescribe free produce at grocery stores for those facing food insecurity, and piloting a rideshare program for doctor visits.

“This particular neighborhood has so many incredible assets,” Cook said. “The people are so resilient; it’s been quite amazing getting to know people.”

OgdenCAN recently published a wellness guide, featuring inexpensive or free health resources, and started a community leaders program where five interns are hired from the neighborhood each year to complete community projects.

Cook invites anyone interested in volunteering to reach out.

“OGDEN CAN MEETS AN ONGOING NEED”

OGDEN CAN

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WSU Alumni Association President

CURTIS FUNK BS ‘11

If you could travel to Paris, France, with a famous person who would it be? Benjamin Franklin spent many years there and would surely have some incredible stories to tell.

If you could do only one activity near Paris, what would it be? I’d tour the Palace of Versailles in search of some sweet landscaping ideas.

What is your dream travel destination? I’m not cool enough to dream of climbing to the summit of Mount Everest, but the trek to the base camp from Kathmandu, Nepal, sounds like an incredible backpacking trip, with awesome views.

Have you ever felt like a “tacky” tourist? Definitely more than once! In Paris, we signed up for lots of “touristy” sightseeing trips, and whenever I tried to communicate with locals, the language barrier was always too thick.

Share a memory of Stewart Bell Tower: Trying to convince my wife, Megan, to sneak up there for a kiss to fulfill our duty as official Weber State “traditions keepers.”

The No. 1 reason to get involved with the WSU Alumni Association is: To stay informed about exciting things happening in our Weber State community.
Weber State, great, GREAT!

To give back to a school that affords so much...to my children...a school that has experienced tremendous growth and change.

Have you ever felt like a “tacky” tourist? Probably on a trip to Europe after high school. When you’re in a large group of teenagers speaking American English, you’re just going to stand out.

Have you ever felt like a “tacky” tourist? Yes, when we took a family trip to Disneyland, we put on a leach on one child who wanted to wander and gave the other end to his “Grandpa Shep.” We always knew where they were, but we sure got a lot of strange looks from other guests.

I’d visit the Louvre (I’ve already climbed the Eiffel Tower.) Have you ever felt like a “tacky” tourist? I’ve never been there!

What is your dream travel destination? Hawaii. I’ve never been there!

If you could do only one activity near Paris, what would it be? Twelve’s “Judge Judy” Sheindlin because we’re going to premier access to fine restaurants and good service. Plus, Judy is “very to the point,” so you know people are going to behave around her, especially on airplanes.

What is your dream travel destination? I’d love to visit the shooting sites of iconic films. For example, Oregon’s Timberline Lodge (The Shining); Hawaii, standing in for the fictional Isla Nublar in Jurassic Park; and Forrest Gump’s bench in Sleepless in Seattle. I’d visit the shooting sites of iconic films. For example, Oregon’s Timberline Lodge (The Shining); Hawaii, standing in for the fictional Isla Nublar in Jurassic Park; and Forrest Gump’s bench in Sleepless in Seattle.

The No. 1 reason to get involved with the WSU Alumni Association is: The opportunity to meet new people.

If you could do only one activity near Paris, what would it be? The stairway from the 2nd floor to the top is not open to the public. (I looked this up.) It takes about 30 to 45 minutes to climb the stairs, depending on how fit you are. I love challenging myself to do things that a lot of people wouldn’t do.

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‘80s

Steven "Steve" Mayfeld BS ’81 retired in 2019 after 38 years in law enforcement, where he worked on high-profile cases that made US national news, such as the Elizabeth Smart kidnapping case. He worked for 25 years as a crime scene photographer and crime lab tech for the Salt Lake City Police Department. He previously worked as a file clerk for the FBI in San Francisco from 1973–1977. He also worked as a deputy sheriff in Jefferson County, Colorado, from 1981–1990. He lives in Layton, Utah. Brent Jacobsen BS ’83 is the president and CEO of Big Prairie Ventures Inc., a distribution and logistics enterprise. Previously, he served as VP and general manager of Life Science for IMI Precision Engineering. Brent received his MBA in general management from Brigham Young University. Brent has worked in various commercial, strategy and new product development roles with global, publicly traded medical device companies, such as C.R. Bard, Johnson & Johnson and Medtronic, as well as venture-funded startups. Brent and his wife, Tammy, and their family live in the Denver metro area. Former US Congressmanwoman Lynn Jenkins Katzfey BS ’85 lives in Layton, Utah. She served in Congress, representing Kansas. She served as vice chair of the Republican House Conference, and on the Ways and Means Committee as chair of the Oversight Subcommittee. Prior to her time in Congress, she served six years as the Kansas state treasurer, and one term in both the Kansas House of Representatives and Senate. She received an associate’s degree from Kansas State University in 1985. She is currently working as a senior policy advisor for Capitol Hill Policy Group, focusing on federal policy issues relating to tax, trade and healthcare. She and her husband, Jerry Katzfey, live in Eudora, Kansas. Stephanie Kawamura AS ’89, BS ’91, MS ’94 received her PhD in educational psychology in 2004 from Capella University. She is the coordinator for WSU Student Support Services - STEM (SSS-STEM), a grant-funded program that provides academic support primarily to first-generation and low-income students with majors in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

‘90s

Michael Wilcox BS ’93 is an ophthalmologist for Utah Eye Centers, specializing in cataract, LASIK and glaucoma surgery. He received his MD from the Medical University of South Carolina, with honors and national recognition for his research in ocular lens implants. He completed his ophthalmology residency at the University of Utah. Dr. Wilcox is one of the few select surgeons who instructs other surgeons worldwide with the latest technologies and refinements in cataract advancements at the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery conference every year. Over the past 20 years, he’s performed over 20,000 cataract and LASIK procedures, and has been recognized as one of the top 100 LASIK surgeons in the nation. He is also an accomplished instrument rated pilot. Michael serves as a mentor in the WSU Leadership to Legacy Program. He and his wife, Stephanie Wilcox BS ’94 live in Farmington, Utah.

Miller Atagi ’94 is a social worker with Ogden School District. For 27 years, he has helped show incarcerated youth a better path in life through education. He is a hospice social worker. Miller is currently serving on the WSUAA Board of Directors. He and his wife, Jennifer Atagi AA ’92, live in South Weber, Utah.

Aimee Martinez Thomas BA ’91 is a member of the investigative council for the Utah Judicial Conduct Commission. In addition to her education from Weber State University, she earned a Juris Doctorate from Brigham Young University in 1998. She has worked in public service for seven years. She works with Weber State students to edit the Utah Chinese Immersion program. She is currently serving on the WSUAA Board of Directors. Her husband, Ash Thomas MBA ’11, is a civil engineer with Weber County. They support WSU athletics and on-campus forums available to the community: They have two daughters, and live in North Ogden, Utah.

Christina “Chris” Haddock Millard BS ’95 retired after 20 years in Advancement at WSU. She served as the WSU director of government relations, and previously worked as the director of the Office of Sponsored Projects. Chris has also taught English for WSU, Utah State University and Brigham Young University-Hawaii. She and her husband, Rick Millard, served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Saito, Japan. Together, they have three children, 12 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. They live in St. George, Utah.

Stacie Simmons BS ’96 is a teacher with the Davis County School District. She has served in many callings within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including Young Women’s president, Primary Presidency first counselor and primary teacher. She has also served in the Relief Society as a second counselor, teacher and music leader and she is currently on the activities committee. Stacie is currently serving on the WSUAA Board of Directors.

Jason Smith BS ’96 is the director of family services for Lindquist Mortuaries and Funeral Services. Upon receiving his degree from WSU, Steven worked for General Electric for 14 years in a variety of roles, completing his time as a general manager. He received his MBA in 2003 from Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. He has volunteered with community projects with the Holy Family Church, St. George, Utah. He is a retired General Motors management trainee and is the former owner of the Davis County Auto Show. He is a past president of the Weber County Business Community and Chamber of Commerce, Davis Education Foundation and in his family and church. He served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Sacramento, California. He lives in Layton, Utah, with his wife, Melanie. They have five children, two of whom are attending Weber State. Jason is currently serving on the WSUAA Board of Directors.

Steven Peterson BS ’97 is the president and CEO of Zeus Industrial Products, Inc. Steven previously worked as vice president and general manager for TE Connectivity in Shanghai, China. He also worked as vice president head of sales for Samsung. Upon receiving his degree from WSU, Steven worked for General Electric for 14 years in a variety of roles, completing his time as a general manager. He received his MBA in 2003 from Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. He has volunteered with numerous community projects with the Holy Family Church, St. George, Utah. He is a retired General Motors management trainee and is the former owner of the Davis County Auto Show. He is a past president of the Weber County Business Community and Chamber of Commerce, Davis Education Foundation and in his family and church. He served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Sacramento, California. He lives in Layton, Utah, with his wife, Melanie. They have five children, two of whom are attending Weber State. Jason is currently serving on the WSUAA Board of Directors.
Helping Hands, providing disaster relief to individuals and families in the US since 2010. He is married to Lisa Peterson, who also studied at WSU. They have been married for 29 years and live in Charleston, South Carolina. They have four sons, and two grandsons.

Emily Vause Oyler BS '98 is the executive director of the Weber School Foundation for Weber School District, where she has worked for five years. She currently volunteers for a variety of organizations, such as the Breakfast Exchange Club of Ogden, the Rotary Club of Ogden and the Weber-Davis Boys and Girls Club. Emily is the chair of the Women in Business Committee and a speaker through the Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce. She has three children, two of whom are current WSU students.

‘00s

Holly Anding AS '01, BM '02 works at Weber State University as the technical services manager in the Stewart Library. She received her Master of Library Science degree from the University of North Texas. She is a full-time performer with the New American Philharmonic Orchestra and board president of the non-profit music group NEXT Ensemble, based out of Ogden. She lives in South Ogden. Her partner of 19 years, Justin Torreis AS '98, BS '00, BA '05, is a professional oboe player in northern Utah. He is a member of the Ballet West Orchestra, Cathedral of the Madeleine Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra Ogden. He is also a board member and performer with the New American Philharmonic. In addition, he is a recording artist for feature films, TV, radio, musicals and records and plays in bands and orchestras for traveling Broadway shows and traveling headliners.

Luke Rasmussen BS '01 is the newly appointed superintendent of Ogden School District. In 2019, he received the Principal of the Year Award from the State of Utah Association of Secondary School Principals for his work toward increasing student achievement and school growth at Ogden High School. Luke also teaches courses for Weber State University in the Educational Administration program for aspiring school leaders. His wife, Amber, is an educator in the Ogden School District. They have three children and live in North Ogden, Utah.

Mel Witharna AS '02 is a proud first-generation American, originally from Sri Lanka, who came to the US to attend WSU. He is the founder and owner of Janadhi & Company, which provides IT services for small-to-medium-sized businesses. The company has designed over 2,500 websites, and provides technological needs from hardware to software. Janadhi & Company has provided services for Tesla, the US Senate and Proctor & Gamble, but they are most proud of services they provide to local small-to-medium-sized businesses. Their IT services also include residential technological support. Mel’s daughter is carrying on the tradition as a Wildcat, attending WSU as of fall 2021. He lives in South Ogden, Utah.

Nancy Jarvis BS '05, MA '14 is a cloud and provider WSU alum, adjunct professor and WSU employee of 20 years. She continued her education by earning the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) certification from Axos Global Best Practices and the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification from the Project Management Institute. She served as the president of the WSU Chapter of Utah Women of Higher Education in 2010. The positions she has held at WSU have added value to the university and made a difference toward student success.

Nicholas Carr AS '05, BS '19 is a sixth grade teacher in the Davis County School District. Prior to becoming a teacher, he served the community for 10 years as a police officer with the Commerce City Police Department in Colorado. He was awarded a Silver Star for valor. His wife, Carrie Carr BS '05, is a registered nurse and a personalized primary care coordinator with Castell Healthcare, part of Intermountain Healthcare. They have one daughter, three dogs and live in South Ogden, Utah.

Afton Barkdale Hinckley BS '05 is an active volunteer in her church and community. She has served with the Junior League of Ogden for seven years, including two years on the board of directors. Her husband, Eric Hinckley M.Acc '06, is the assistant controller at Ogden Regional Medical Center, and volunteers his time with a local church youth group. They have one daughter and live in Ogden, Utah.

Payne Haynes AS '06 received his doctorate from Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine in 2012. He is a double board certified foot and ankle surgeon. Dr. Haynes founded Elite Foot & Ankle Associates, which has four locations around the Portland, Oregon, area. He and his wife, Karie Haynes AS '05, have four children.

Aloha Flores Reynolds BS '06 is a software engineering manager for O.C. Tanner. He holds two graduate degrees from Grand Canyon University: a PhD (2019), and a master's degree (2014), both in industrial and organizational psychology. He will receive a second master's degree in data analytics and information technology from Southern Governors University in fall 2021. Nathan serves as adjunct faculty at Neumont College of Computer Science, teaching both psychology and Quality Software Engineering. He is a volunteer educator for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Nathan is engaged to Sara Lamoreaux, and together they have three children.

Ashlee Sheehan BS '14 is a teacher in Davis School District. She has been teaching Utah studies, world geography and AP human geography at Layton Jr High for seven years. She also served as a Latinos in Action (LIA) advisor for four years. Ashlee married Andy Sheehan BS '20 in 2018.
Andy is a marketing and communications specialist for Savage Services. They have one daughter and live in Fruit Heights, Utah.

Laurence Maril Nelson III BA ‘14 is the General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. Memorial Research Fellow. As such, he is writing a US Marine Corps history of the occupation of Haiti. Laurence is finishing his PhD in history at Texas A&M University. His dissertation covers the US occupation of Nicaragua, 1927-1933. Laurence and his wife, Emma C. Nelson, have three children.

Nathan Meyers AS ‘14 is an information technology and cybersecurity instructor for Davis Technical College. Previously, he was the IT Security and Network specialist for the City of South Salt Lake. Nathan is currently attending Western Governors University, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Cloud Computing. He is an active member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. He and his wife, Amanda, live in Kaysville, Utah. They have one daughter.

Ryan Mulcahy AS ‘15, BS ‘15 is a materials and process engineer at BLUE ORIGIN. He received his master’s degree in welding engineering from The Ohio State University in 2019. He received an Additive Manufacturing Certificate from CAM-T in 2019. He also completed a Central Certification Program Level II from The American Society for Nondestructive Testing, and received his certificate in 2019. Prior to attending WSU, he received an associate’s degree in welding technology from Ferris State University in 2010. He is a certified welding inspector (CWI) and is a member of the American Welding Society. He lives in Bend, Oregon.

Todd Oberndorfer BFA ‘15 is the outreach manager and advisor for the Department of Visual Art & Design at Weber State University. Todd is the co-director of Arts in the Parks, a free summer outreach program that travels to different Ogden city parks. He is an adjunct professor at WSU. He is a founding member of The Banyan Collective media company and co-hosts the Nine Rails Arts Podcast, Ogden Outdoor Adventure Show and the Van Sessions.

Lorie Buckley BFA ‘15 is the arts coordinator for Ogden City. She directs public art initiatives, the art grant program, First Friday Art Stroll, Mayor’s Awards and more. Lorie works to change the face of Ogden using the arts. The Don Rimx murals on Grant Avenue and the Dunke Arts Plaza are among her projects. Lorie and her husband, Eddie Buckley, have two children and reside in Layton, Utah.

Valleen Day BIS ‘15 is the owner of a healing and wellness company, Emerald Hive, where she is a master foot-zonologist and teacher. She is working towards being a functional wellness coach. She owns a small logo and T-shirt design shop. Valleen volunteers for the Rocky Mountain Great Dane Rescue Association. Valleen is married to Frank Day. Together they have three children and live in Ogden, Utah.

Matthew Ross Barker BS ‘15 currently manages the Swenson/Strembel Complex at Weber State University. Matthew is a volunteer coach for Weber State Weightlifting. His wife, McKay Barker BS ‘16, BS ‘18, currently teaches PE and health, along with coaching volleyball at Davis High School. They have two dogs and live in South Ogden, Utah.

Andrea Salcedo BS ‘17 received an MEd in educational leadership and policy from the University of Utah in 2019. She works as a mentor advisor for WSU, and oversees WSU’s peer mentor program. Previously, Andrea worked at WSU in Career Services as a student employment coordinator. She has also worked at the University of Utah as a graduate assistant for leadership development and training. Andrea lives in Ogden, Utah.

José De Avila BA ‘18 works at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) as a college recruiter and admissions advisor. While his day-to-day duties vary, helping students in his role is his passion. He received his associate’s from SLCC in 2016, and after graduating from WSU, began working for the University of Utah as an academic advisor for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. He is currently pursuing his master’s degree in educational leadership and policy from the University of Utah.

Sara Ellefson MSAT ‘19 is a certified athletic trainer. She is currently pursuing a PhD in athletic training from Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions. In 2017, Sara received her bachelor’s degree in kinesiology and sports science from the University of South Dakota. She is also CPR and BAT certified. Sara previously worked at The Orthopedic Partners in Park City, Utah. Her team specialized in acute knee injuries, as well as total knee arthroplasties. She conducted her own post-operative clinic. She lives in Indian Harbour Beach, Florida.

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How does someone inspire students to remember and differentiate the morphology of blood-forming cells eternally in order to diagnose a disease? Does it resemble a pepperoni or mortadella? Is it a whole potato or a potato chip? Using food analogies is what Yas Simonian has successfully been doing to teach hematology (blood disorders) for years.

Simonian graduated from three colleges at the University of Utah: health, pharmacy and medicine. She joined the WSU faculty in 1981. After chairing the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences for 12 years, she was appointed dean of the Dumke College of Health Professions in 2008.

Her many professional achievements include serving as president of the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science, commissioner on the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs and representative for the Association of Schools of Advancing Health Professions. She has authored numerous articles in professional journals and regularly presents at state, regional, national and international conferences with students.

During her tenure as dean, the college went from offering one master’s degree program to five. Recently, the college graduated its first Doctor of Nursing Practice cohort. Simonian has educated thousands of students who are now healthcare providers. Their contributions to healthcare locally, nationally and globally validate the value of their Weber State education and demonstrate the differences they continue to make in communities they serve.

Yasmen Simonian
Dean, Dumke College of Health Professions

Kelly Stackaruk
Senior Development Director

Kelly Stackaruk arrived at Weber State as a student on a vocal scholarship. She loved performing with the jazz group Choralition and studying abroad in England.

Stackaruk returned to WSU after the birth of her first child to work with the Wildcat Club, hosting out-of-state booster trips, handling annual giving campaigns, producing the newsletter, “Cat Paws” and promoting the annual Cat Bash dinner and auction.

Her success and enthusiasm eventually led to the position as development director for COAST, now the College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology (EAST). During her tenure with EAST, she has established a successful Pacific Northwest Alumni event and increased privately funded scholarships by 70%. During Weber State’s Dream 125 Comprehensive Campaign, she oversaw fundraising efforts that exceeded the college goal by over 200%.

Her fundraising has resulted in two new buildings for the university: the Computer & Automotive Engineering Building at WSU Davis and the Noorda Engineering, Applied Science & Technology Building under construction in Ogden. Stackaruk’s efforts also produced the Ardell Brown Automotive Wing and three centers: Alan E. Hall Center for Sales Excellence, Wadman Center for Excellence in Construction & Building Sciences and the Center for Technology Outreach. When President Mortensen announced his “Louder and Prouder” initiative, Stackaruk developed the EAST Explorer Initiative, a program that employs current WSU students to conduct strategic outreach to alumni. She also collaborated with the interior design program to create the annual Charitable Chair fundraising event.

Stackaruk loves meeting with alumni, corporate partners and friends of the university. A favorite aspect of her job is hearing stories from alumni about their time at WSU and their life after graduation.

She has served on the board of trustees for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Weber-Davis and is a current member of the Box Elder School District Foundation Board, overseeing fundraising efforts. Stackaruk remains a loyal Wildcat and is proud to represent Weber State.
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50 YEARS OF BELL TOWER MEMORIES

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Stewart Bell Tower, readers sent us their memories of the iconic structure.

On March 31, 2020, my husband and I took a nice stroll on the Weber State University campus as the COVID-19 restrictions were just beginning. We passed the silent Stewart Bell Tower where we had seen many students meet and mingle only a few days before. Now nothing was happening. The campus was almost completely empty with few cars and even fewer people. It was very strange and a little frightening to see such a formerly vibrant place so devoid of students.

We received the WSU Alumni Magazine in the Spring of 2021. I was surprised by the amount of learning that was actually going on when the campus was empty. I learned from the magazine that WSU certificate programs helped 1,200 Utahns build high-demand skills during the pandemic, with support from state grants funded by the CARES Act. In the early stages of the pandemic, the Weber State Counseling & Psychological Services Center transitioned to tele-therapy. And Weber State’s Storytelling Festival is celebrating its 25th year and will run during February and March 2021 online. Weber State University had 5,727 graduates in 2020.

I guess the real answer is that many programs were active and progressing even though the physical campus seemed so unproductive. Thank goodness for the technology and the resourcefulness of the Weber State University leaders, faculty, and students. Soon the Stewart Bell Tower will ring out the end of COVID-19 and student life will once again be normal.

Eleanor Newman
During the fall 2021 semester, 63.9% of classes included face-to-face instruction. Once again, students are gathering under the Stewart Bell Tower.

Read our feature story about the founding of the Stewart Bell Tower on page 12.

I remember when the Stewart Bell Tower was new. It was built in the parking lot south of buildings 1, 2, 3, 4, and most of the parking lot was still there when the bell tower was dedicated. The campus was expanding, and the Stewart Bell Tower was a big part. In 1981, the night before we were married, Doris and I walked around the campus, and we spent time sitting under the Bell Tower. There was a nice plaza area, directly under the tower, with a great view of the surrounding buildings. It has been 40 years since, but we still have the fond memories of that night.

Scott Mumford BS ’81

Mostly I just remember being on campus in 2011/2012 when that really bad wind storm hit, scurrying through campus to get to Elizabeth Hall before it locked down, and seeing the minute hand on one of the faces hanging down at a concerning level and wondering if we were going to lose it.

— Sami Postma, Facebook

As children we used to find such joy in seeing all of the wishes/coins that had been tossed into the pool. We visited so frequently that we came to know the schedule (or perceived schedule) of when the coins were cleared out. We also were blessed to hear the bells tolling every day, it always made me smile as I knew another day was starting.

Great memories!

— Julie Jonson, LinkedIn

Weber State asked for your Stewart Bell Tower stories on social media. Here is what you said:

Getting Social

Homecoming 2017
we were waiting at Stewart Bell Tower to do True Wildcat at midnight, but the time came and went. The bells never rang. Everyone was so confused, so a bunch of us played bells ringing on our phones and kissed our SO's. Then, after five minutes, the cops kicked everyone out. We’re still counting ourselves as True Wildcats, though.

— @wildcatrack, Instagram

Weber State students and alumni often take on jobs that require a shower at the end of the day, from remodeling homes to collecting microbiology samples in the Great Salt Lake.

Write to us about your dirty job and how Weber helped prepare you for it at magazine@weber.edu.

I’m not sure about you, but I used to wish coins in the swimming pool under the bell tower. I still remember the minute hand on the tower’s clock going down at a concerning level and wondering if we were going to lose it.

— @weberstate

Want to share your thoughts on something you read?

Email us at: magazine@weber.edu
Exactly 100 years ago, before the start of classes in fall 1921, a Weber College faculty member helped a young, first-generation college student enroll in school and pursue his educational and business dreams, even though he lacked the funds or high school credits to qualify. That student is someone I dare say you all know. J. Willard Marriott, Sr. went on to found a multi-billion dollar, international hospitality company, all because a faculty member named Aaron Tracy cared enough to help him overcome his immediate challenges and reach his long-term potential.

Before classes started this fall, Dick Marriott, J. Willard’s son, addressed an assembly of our faculty and staff, encouraging them to help today’s generation of students the same way Aaron Tracy helped Dick’s father have a transformative educational experience at Weber.

Whether seeking an education to pursue graduate studies at elite institutions like Oxford or Carnegie Mellon University, or seeking an education that allows a single parent to provide immediately for family, Weber State offers boundless opportunities for learning with individualized attention.

To strengthen our ability to provide these opportunities to more students in an ever-changing world, this fall we launched a new five-year strategic plan — “Weber State Amplified” — with this vision. Weber State University will be a leader in transforming lives by meeting all students where they are, challenging and guiding them to achieve their goals academically and in life.

We invite you to learn more about our strategic plan goals and desired outcomes at weber.edu/strategic-plan. As we implement the plan, we seek your continued feedback and support to “amplify” the experience of our students and impact on our community.

Join us in positioning Weber State to be an even greater university in the years ahead. Go Wildcats!

Best,

Brad L. Mortensen, PhD
President

Wildcat Alumni

Weber College, 1920

J. Willard Marriott, Sr.
& Alice S. Marriott

J. Willard Marriott, Sr.