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The Big Ticket

Andy Toole takes
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Ken Gargaro takes
Colonial Theatre
On the Road
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DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

I love university traditions — the rituals, the events, the stories that carry on from year to year and bind together each generation of students. Those traditions, which engender such devotion to our alma mater, make us feel a part of something bigger than ourselves. But as much as we love our traditions, they carry a risk. Held too tightly, they render us slow to adapt to changing circumstances. Sometimes colleges and universities allow tradition to shackles them to outdated practices that no longer match the institution’s mission. We need courage and wisdom to discern when it is time to hold on and when it is time to let go.

That’s the choice RMU confronted when we decided to put the Pittsburgh Center, the building we have owned at 600 Fifth Ave. in downtown Pittsburgh since 1959, up for sale. While the university went on to purchase the Oliver Kaufmann estate — which became the Moon campus — three years later, Pittsburgh remained a focal point of the school for many more years. Downtown Pittsburgh had been the institutions home since its founding in 1921, and I know many of you completed your degree at the downtown campus.

Now RMU’s center of gravity has shifted to the Moon campus. That process accelerated during the most recent decade, but the change has been ongoing for three decades; enrollment at the downtown campus has declined steadily since the early 1980s. As a result, in 2001 RMU stopped offering most undergraduate programs at the Pittsburgh Center. Today we use only about 30 percent of that building.

Meanwhile, we are experiencing tremendous growth in Moon. As I write this, we make plans for approximately 480 new freshmen this fall — breaking last year’s record of 720. An astounding 1,500 students are asking to live on campus — about 200 more than we can fit in our residence halls. We have reserved space for students in local hotels, and for the fall of 2011 we plan to build a new apartment-style residence hall to accommodate 190 students.

The resources necessary to maintain the Pittsburgh Center are much better spent enhancing the Moon campus. Of course, we will keep our connection to the city. We plan to lease space at satellite locations in downtown Pittsburgh and the southern and eastern suburbs. Those decisions will be market-driven, based on the needs of the graduate and nontraditional students who will be served at those locations.

At Moon, we plan to use the proceeds that will be generated by the Pittsburgh Center to build a facility for our media arts programs, which currently utilize the downtown building. Already we have a new media arts house on campus, which you can read about on page 20.

We also plan to strengthen our commitment to nontraditional students with eight new wholly online degree programs, both graduate and undergraduate, which will allow working adults greater flexibility to earn their degree while balancing the demands of job and family. We have a long tradition of serving students like these, and it is one we intend to continue. No matter how they earn their degree, Robert Morris will be their alma mater nonetheless. Just like it will always be yours.

Sincerely,

GREGORY G. DELL’OMO, PH.D.
PRESIDENT
A Promise Made, A Promise Kept

Thanks to a $600,000 state grant, RMU has opened the Veterans Education and Training Service Center, which provides enrollment and academic advising as well as other transition services to students who are military veterans. The VETS Center is located in the newly renovated Jefferson Center.

Last year, RMU became one of the first private universities in the nation to announce that service members who qualify for educational benefits under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill would be able to earn their degree free of charge at the university. Approximately 175 veterans have enrolled at RMU under the G.I. Bill.

“The not only did we promise to enroll veterans, but we pledged to provide them with the support and services they need to transition to campus life and, in many cases, to their post-military careers. With the dedication of the Veterans Education and Training Service Center, we make good on that pledge,” said RMU President Greg Dell’Omo, Ph.D.


“There are over 400,000 veterans in Western Pennsylvania, most of them returning from active duty,” Pippy said. “Thousands of young men and women are coming home to benefits as a result of the G.I. Bill. This will provide the opportunity for them to further their degrees.”

A Promise Made, A Promise Kept

Yeah, We Do Art Too

Fifteen students in the media arts program were honored for their submissions to the Graphic Arts Association’s annual “Neographics – The Power of Print Communications” contest. The winners, who competed against others in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey, were all students in RMU’s Introduction to Graphic Design and Graphic Design Studio II classes taught by Ferris Crane, M.F.A., associate professor.


Extra! Extra!

A team of three RMU students won the Pittsburgh region’s first foundation-sponsored journalism competition. The contest was funded and coordinated by The Heinz Endowments as part of its sponsorship of the annual Women’s Health & the Environment Conference. The conference had more than 2,000 attendees in March at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

In the contest, three-person teams from six local universities each had to produce a range of media reports, including a written news story, a two-minute video report, and digital photography. Communication majors Aimée Morgan, Maria Sativa, and Kevin Williams were each awarded an Apple iPad, the first-place prize.

“The judges noted in particular the students’ news sense as the lone group that found a great human interest story from a cancer survivor, and the fact that they located—and took a picture of—a cancer support center she referenced in her interview,” said Andrea Franz, Ph.D., associate professor of communication.

And the Winner Is

Three RMU-TV television shows were recently honored by the 31st Annual Telly Awards. “Colonial SportsCenter,” a sports highlight show produced by students Josh Esas, Ed Albert, and Chris Baginski, “RMU Live,” a campus newscast produced by Baginski and Albert, and “Campus Stories,” an in-depth interview talk show produced by Clark Cairns ’10, each received a Bronze People’s Telly Award. The Telly Awards honor outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials and programs; the finest video and film productions; and Web commercials, videos, and films.

RMU Students Nab Engineering Scholarships... Again

Manufacturing engineering students Brendan Mathers, a junior, and Nikki Rodgers, a senior, have received scholarships from the Society of Manufacturing Engineers Education Foundation. Mathers received a $2,500 scholarship and Rodgers received $2,000.

Since 2007, six RMU students have received scholarships from this nationally competitive program, and some, including Mathers, have received more than one.

In addition, Chris Chavez, a junior majoring in mechanical engineering, has received a 2-year, $10,000 scholarship from the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering.
It Doesn’t Get Any Better than “Best”

RMU’s chapter of the American Marketing Association was recognized as one of the Most Outstanding Collegiate Chapters for the 2009-10 academic year at the AMA’s 32nd Annual International Collegiate Conference this spring in New Orleans.

The AMA, which supports the practice, teaching, and study of marketing worldwide, presented RMU’s chapter with awards for Outstanding Small School, Outstanding Chapter Planning, Outstanding Professional Development, and Outstanding Community Service. Together, those honors enabled RMU to be recognized as one of the Most Outstanding Small School Chapters and put it on the AMA’s list of Top 20 Collegiate Chapters.

“The recognitions achieved at the conference demonstrate the outstanding leadership qualities of our students,” said Jill Maher, Ph.D., professor of marketing and advisor to RMU’s AMA chapter. “They are a perfect representation of the caliber of students here in the School of Business at RMU.”

Sing It Proud

Robert Morris University has a new melody for its alma mater, and we bet you know the tune.

Penned in 1857 as “Annie Lisle,” the melody of RMU’s new song was first adopted by Cornell University students as “Far Above Cayuga’s Waters.” It’s now sung at many universities, including Syracuse, Vanderbilt, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Kansas, Missouri, and Indiana.

“Our goal was to create an alma mater that everyone could sing,” said RMU band director Elizabeth Heath Charles, who also updated the lyrics by Joellen Sharp. “School spirit is at an all-time high, and I look forward to future university ceremonies where everyone will be singing ‘Hail to Thee, Dear Robert Morris.’”

VIDEO CONTEST Go to Foundations Online to hear the new RMU alma mater. Then create your own and send a link to foundations@rmu.edu. It can be a mashup remix, or you performing it, solo or with your friends. Prizes and fame await the best entries!

Engineering Solutions

Engineering students in a manufacturing operations course collaborated with Microsonic Inc., one of the country’s leading manufacturers of custom ear molds for hearing aids, on a project to reduce the company’s production time and save money. The students developed a prototype design for a 50-tine tubing carousel to simplify and accelerate the production of the ear mold tubes.

Students also advised Microsonic on other modifications to its production and packaging processes, greatly reducing the company’s production time.

A Thank You Note

After watching their daughter, Brianne McLaughlin, compete in the Winter Olympics, the nursing major’s parents got another big surprise. A fundraiser organized by Clearview Federal Credit Union sent them a check for $3,330 to help defray their travel costs.

Many RMU faculty, staff, students, and friends donated to Clearview’s McLaughlin travel fund. In a note to the university, Brianne’s mom, Susan, wrote: “Thank you for always supporting Brianne and being her biggest fans. She has been in good hands since she made the decision five years ago to become a Colonial.”

There He Goes Again

Lee Folk, who graduated in May with a bachelor’s degree in nursing, won this year’s Presidential Transformational Award, the university’s highest undergraduate honor.

The award is given annually to a graduating student who has been transformed by his or her experience at RMU and has also contributed to the transformation of the university in a meaningful way. Folk traveled twice to Nicaragua with the nursing program, and his stunning photography and stirring dispatches from that nation brought to life RMU’s work to improve the lives of poor families there.

Global Perspective

Over the summer His Excellency Le Cong Phung, ambassador to the United States from Vietnam, paid a visit to RMU to discuss educational opportunities and partnerships for Pittsburgh-area universities and Vietnamese colleges and universities.

Phung met with several RMU leaders including Provost David Jamison, J.D., Ida Mansourian, executive director of international programs, and Jay Cason, vice president for institutional advancement. Also in attendance at the July meeting were other Vietnamese officials as well as representatives from the University of Pittsburgh, Washington & Jefferson College, and the Community College of Allegheny County. The visit was coordinated by the organization Global Pittsburgh.

By the Book

The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education has extended the accreditation for RMU’s nursing degree programs.

Accreditation for the bachelor’s and master’s nursing programs was extended until 2020, and the accreditation for the doctor of nursing practice program was extended until 2015. Each program met all the commission’s accreditation standards.

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Are You a Friend of Robert?

Name: Robert Morris
Email: foundations@rmu.edu

Follow us on Twitter @RMUNews for the most up-to-date news.

Go to Foundations Online to hear the new RMU alma mater. Then create your own and send a link to foundations@rmu.edu. It can be a mashup remix, or you performing it, solo or with your friends. Prizes and fame await the best entries!

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**Milwaukee’s Best (Book)**


**Leading the Way**

RMU Provost David Jamison, J.D., was one of only 25 chief academic officers nationwide selected to participate in a seminar on “Leadership for the 21st Century for Chief Academic Officers” in July in Annapolis, Md. This highly competitive leadership development program is offered by the Council of Independent Colleges, a national association of more than 600 independent liberal arts colleges and universities, and the American Academic Leadership Institute, which provides leadership identification and development programs for higher education.

**Under New Management**

RMU has named Maria V. Kalevitch, Ph.D., the dean of its School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science. Kalevitch has been the interim dean of the school since last year, when she replaced Winston Erevelles. Kalevitch, a professor of science, has been on the RMU faculty since 2002.

Andrea Frantz, Ph.D., associate professor of communication, has been named head of the department of communication.

Robert Skovira, Ph.D., university professor of computer and information systems, has been named head of the department of computer and information systems.

**Portrait of the Artist**

Heather Pinson, Ph.D., a assistant professor of communication, has written her first book, The Jazz Image: Seeing Music through Herman Leonard’s Photography. Leonard, 86, took some of the most iconic photos of jazz’s golden age during the 1940s and 1950s, and has been a photographer of celebrities ranging from Frank Sinatra and Marlon Brando to Bono and Bill Clinton.

Pinson writes that Leonard’s photographs of jazz legends such as Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis are so ingrained in our consciousness that those pictures are what we think about when we think about jazz. She describes Leonard as a groundbreaking photographer who humanized his subjects at a time when they were struggling offstage for equality and civil liberty. “Leonard’s photographs have become as necessary in the definition of jazz as the music itself,” writes Pinson. The Jazz Image was published by the University Press of Mississippi.

Pinson knows a thing or two about music. After training as a classical violinist at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., she studied jazz and music history at Louisiana State University. She earned a doctorate in interdisciplinary arts at Ohio University.

**Simply Outstanding**

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Society for Materials honored Priya Manohar, Ph.D., a assistant professor of engineering, as an Outstanding Member for 2009-10. The award recognizes exceptional service over and above the normal expected participation and assistance to the chapter.

**Leonard’s Photographs Have Become as Necessary in the Definition of Jazz as the Music Itself”**

> For Service Above & Beyond

At this year's graduate commencement ceremony, RMU recognized the service of two long-time professors who retired and joined the ranks of the university’s emeritus faculty.

Jon A. Shank, Ed.D., professor of education, retired after 44 years of service to RMU. He served as chair of the secretarial and office administration departments from 1971 to 1977, acting dean of business programs in 1977, dean of the former School of Communication Arts and Sciences from 1977 to 1991, then dean of the former School of Applied Sciences and Education from 1991 to 1998. Shank earned his Ed.D. and M.Ed. from the University of Pittsburgh and his B.S. from the University of Cincinnati, all in business education.

Seith Finn, Ph.D., professor of communication, retired after 15 years at RMU. Known for constantly refining and extending his course syllabi, he converted one into a textbook, Broadcast Writing as a Liberal Art. As Faculty Federation executive vice president from 2001 to 2005 and president from 2006 to 2009, Finn was instrumental in negotiating two bargaining agreements on behalf of his colleagues while maintaining a constructive and open dialogue with the president and provost. Finn earned his Ph.D. in communication theory and research and M.A. in broadcasting and film from Stanford University, and his B.A. magna cum laude from Brown University.

**Like a Good Neighbor**

Ann Jabro, Ph.D., university professor of communication, received a Communitas Award from the Association of Marketing and Communications Professionals for excellence in community service. Jabro was nominated for the award by the Rev. Sam Jamperro, director of the Coraopolis Community Development Corporation. Jabro has taught undergraduate and graduate courses centering on community renewal, civic marketing and emergency communications in Coraopolis.
ASK ET ALL

New coach Andy Toole’s two-time NEC champs, with dazzling guard Karon Abraham, will be facing some hungry opponents this year, especially Mount St. Mary’s and Quinnipiac. The Colonials have their sights set high, after almost knocking off Villanova in overtime in the first round of March Madness.

FOOTBALL

Robert Morris closed out the 2009 season with a five-game winning streak. Can they keep improving under legendary coach Joe Walton? In the balance for the first time: a chance for an automatic NCAA FCS playoff bid.

THE BIG GAME: NOV. 19 VS. DUVESNE

This looks to be a showdown between two explosive running backs. Myles Russ eclipsed 1,000 yards rushing for the second straight season in 2009, while the Dukes’ Larry McCoy rushed for eight touchdowns.

DEE-FENSE

276.3 YPG

The Colonials had the NEC’s stingiest defense in average yards allowed per game.

1. Roberts 247.8
2. Bryant 287.4
3. C. Conn. State 298.1

LEAGUE AVERAGE 330.3

THE BIG GAME: OCT. 30 VS. DUVESNE

An early crosstown rivalry matchup that could set the tone for the Colonials’ season. RMU will look to snap a three-game losing streak against the Dukes after Abraham almost catapulted Robert Morris to a come-from-behind win last season.

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LICKING HER CHOPS

For a petite woman, business major Sereen Askari packs a frightening punch—and her reverse roundhouse kick is pretty special too.

The sophomore from Moon Township is one of the most talented karate athletes in the country. The first-degree black belt took first place in July at the national junior championships in Greenville, S.C., in the lightweight class (under 60 kg./132 lbs.) for females ages 18-20. That earned Askari a place on the U.S. junior team for the Junior Pan-American Championships in Montreal in August.

It wasn’t the first international tournament for Askari, who hopes one day to compete in the Olympics. If she does, she will have to wait until 2020; karate is recognized and sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee, but lost to golf and rugby in a close vote last year to decide what new sports to add in 2016.

Askari has been competing since she was seven. She trains at the Pennsylvania Shotokan Karate Club, the Sewickley dojo of U.S. team coach Dustin Baldis, who studied sport management at RMU. Her mom is a Colonial too—Kelly Askari is majoring in organizational studies.

WRITTEN BY MARK HOGGER
PHOTO BY SHELLY LIPTON

VISIT FOUNDATIONS ONLINE TO SEE HOW SEREEN DID AT THE PAN-AMERICAN JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS.
The House that Robert Built

This fall, President Barack Obama is expected to dedicate the new President's House memorial in Philadelphia, which was briefly the nation's capital and home to President George Washington. The nation's first president lived there in a house given to him by his friend, Robert Morris – a house where both men kept slaves.

That America's first black president will dedicate a museum to this particular piece of U.S. history is an irony not lost on the project's champions, who have been dogged by controversy in their 10-year effort to open a memorial to the old executive mansion. It's the story of a nation that continues to come to terms with slavery: For RMU, it's a reminder of our own part in helping America keep its promise of equal opportunity for all.

Enraged New Yorkers savaged Morris. In one political cartoon, the devil uses prostitutes to lure him away to Philadelphia: "Come along Bobby, here's the girls." In another, Morris blindly steers the ship of state towards doom in the shoals as another devil calls, "This way, Bobby." A third cartoon shows a thinly disguised moneypurger calling himself "Robert Coffer," clutching a bag of coins and tugging reluctant congressmen out of New York by their noses.

Morris lamented the vitriol in a letter to his wife that summer. "They lay all the blame of this measure on me, and abuse me most unmercifully, both in the Public Prints, private conversations, and even in the streets; and yesterday I was nearly engaged in a serious quarrel with one of them," he wrote. "However, I don't mind all they can do, and if I carry the point, I will, like a good Christian, forgive them all."

He did carry the point. And in a gesture of magnanimity, Morris offered his own Market Street mansion to his old friend and frequent houseguest, George Washington. The president was delighted. "It is, I believe, the best single house in the city," wrote Washington.

In 2000, crews excavating at Independence National Historical Park for an expansion of the Liberty Bell pavilion discovered the foundations of the old house, which had long ago been razed. Along with the old architectural remains, a new and uncomfortable truth was unearthed, one that has launched a ferocious debate about the purposes of history and memorial. Scholars soon confirmed that also living in the mansion with Washington and the First Lady were nine slaves. What's more, personal letters show the man who "could not tell a lie" actively conspired with a key aide to deceive his slaves, making sure they stayed unaware of Pennsylvania's gradual abolition law, which freed any non-Pennsylvanian's slave who...
lived within the commonwealth for more than six consecutive months. Washington went so far as to rotate his slaves periodically back to his Virginia estate at Mount Vernon to dodge the rule.

America’s first president was hardly the only Founding Father who benefited from human bondage. Chattel slavery was the law at the time; those who lived in the Philadelphia house before Washington also kept slaves, Morris included. But now, the ghosts of Washington’s slaves were at the threshold of the Liberty Bell, one of the nation’s most powerful symbols of freedom. Many found it hard to bear “that in the City of Brotherly Love, the center of the abolition movement of this period, in the home of the first president that freedom and slavery should be joined at the hip,” says UCLA history professor Gary Nash, an expert on the colonial era.

A group of mostly black Philadelphians called the Avenging Coalition demanded that a new museum at the site be devoted not to the familiar story of Washington, but to that of his slaves, as well as the other Africans and their descendants who inhabited early Philadelphia, both slave and free. The National Park Service agreed, promising to give the coalition and other concerned citizens a say in how the site would be presented.

Slowly, the project has proceeded. Workers are almost finished with the new museum next to Independence Hall. The symbolic partial reconstruction follows the footprint of the old house, and will document with text and video reenactments the lives of Washington’s slaves.

Doris Devine Fanelli, chief of cultural resources management for the National Park Service, has worked at the Independence Hall complex for 31 years. To her, the often tempestuous President’s House project is an excellent example of civic engagement. “I have said that any museum, if they ever wake up and find hundreds of people on their doorstep demanding to come in, they’d be delighted,” she says.

Not everyone agrees. Rob Morris, a software designer from suburban Philadelphia and a distant descendant of the house’s former owner, is furious that his ancestor has been swept aside in the retelling. “Everybody knows George Washington’s story, and there isn’t a kid in America who hasn’t heard about slavery,” he says. “But this is the only place to tell Morris’s story, and what is Morris’s story? It is how free market capitalism saved the American Revolution.”

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At the center of the public maelstrom is Rosalyn McPherson. The city’s appointed manager for the President’s House project, McPherson brings what is probably the perfect résumé to the job: She started out as a junior high school history teacher, then became a textbook editor, went on to Time Warner to develop a popular history series and later adapted the material for classrooms, then became senior vice president of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia’s venerable science museum.

And as a black woman who remembers seeing segregated drinking fountains when her family visited relatives in Louisiana, McPherson admits the project has had “a deep personal effect on me.” She says she is eager to see busloads of visiting schoolchildren discover the stories of Hercules and Oney Judge, two presidential slaves who escaped to freedom during Washington’s term in office.

“Our history usually has portrayed African Americans in a passive role, with others doing the emancipating. This exhibit tells the story of the role we played in securing our own freedom,” McPherson says.

Nash, who is one of the project’s chief historians, said Americans should not fear the new museum will wrongly sully Washington’s reputation or rob him of his rightful place in history.

“My take is that it’s only in a mature democracy that you can look history squarely in the face like this,” he says. “I don’t think we’re kicking Washington out of the pantheon or knocking him off his pedestal. We are saying he was human, he was a man of the age, that he had warts, figuratively speaking. But there’s still plenty of glory to be passed out to Washington, Jefferson, and the other slaveholding Founding Fathers. They accomplished a great deal.”

Fanelli says she is sure the President’s House will lead Americans to a better understanding of the history. “For years, the exhibit has been set up to publicize the names of the most important people,” she says. “Now it can focus on the people who were the backbone of the city.”

Despite all the attention garnered by the rebuilding of the President’s House, the man who did the most to get it in Philadelphia in the first place seems destined to linger in relative obscurity. Many people no doubt know Robert Morris’s name best through RMU, which has no real connection to Morris, Richard Kluger, president of the university when it was known as the Pittsburgh School of Accountancy, selected Morris’s name in 1935 because of the founder’s role in financing the American Revolution.

Partly it is Morris’s own bad luck. He eventually sold the house to pay for an enormous marble mansion in Philadelphia. It was a boondoggle almost from the start; Morris quarreled with the architect, Pierre L’Enfant, who was splitting his time between his client’s massive project and the new federal city, which he famously designed. The huge mansion, mocked as “Morris’s Folly,” was never finished. He later lost it, along with nearly everything else he owned, after several of his land speculation deals went bust. Washington eventually had to visit his former host in debtor’s prison.

But even if he is generally unknown to the public, Morris is still recognized by historians as a quintessential figure in the republic’s formation. Morris occupies a prominent place in the most celebrated paintings of America’s founding, including the dome of the Capitol rotunda. His statue stands in Philadelphia at the Second Bank of America, a few blocks from his old house.

That is far more than anyone remembers about Hero. Mostly there is just a notice in a Philadelphia newspaper from 1777. It is written by a concerned owner who, in the chaos as he and his neighbors prepare to flee the city in the face of the advancing British, has discovered that a valuable piece of his property has gone missing. In that ad, Morris describes his runaway slave: “Plays well on the violin, whistles remarkably well, and has an excellent ear for music.”

Rex Crawley, Ph.D., chairman of the Robert Morris University Council on Institutional Equity and assistant dean of the School of Communications and Information Systems, says it pains him to think his ancestors were treated as less than fully human by the university’s namesake. Crawley is the force behind the Black Male Leadership Development Institute, which each summer brings dozens of black high school students to campus, where they learn leadership skills and the value of higher education.

“Robert Morris is not my hero. Hero is my hero,” Crawley says of the escaped slave. “When I close my eyes and envision Robert Morris’s house as a place of bondage, and then think of the RMU campus and the BMI together as a place of empowerment, there’s that juxtaposition of history, and an ultimate good. Robert Morris probably never could have imagined that his legacy would include the education and empowerment of African Americans.”
When you tell someone you’re an actuary, there’s a good chance you’ll be met with a blank stare. Just ask Katie Dobbs ’02, an actuary at Cheron Inc. in Chicago. “I always get a confused look from people outside of the profession,” she says.

But with an average starting salary of around $50,000 and glowing ratings by both Jobs Rated Almanac and The Wall Street Journal, both of which call it the number one job, many actuarial science students and employers see the profession as a steady career path.

Robert Morris University has one of the fastest growing and most respected actuarial science programs in the country. The program began in 2001 with just two students; last fall, 38 freshmen enrolled. Recently, it received national recognition by the Society of Actuaries, an honor shared by only 11 other universities in the United States, among them Temple, St. John’s, and Michigan.

“We are extremely pleased and honored,” says Leonard A. Asimow, Ph.D., professor of actuarial science and mathematics and the founding director of RMU’s actuarial science program. “With our support, the program will continue to grow and provide our students with the best possible education.”

Actuaries are experts on risk. Most work in the insurance industry, where they help design health and retirement benefit plans by determining premiums and profit margins, and making recommendations based upon their calculations. For example, they may create an actuarial table to determine life expectancies for a group of people over a period of time, based on current mortality rates. Many also work for human resource consulting firms; however, since most companies deal with some kind of risk, the job opportunities for actuaries in all industries—particularly health care—are steadily growing.

“Health care is getting more and more complex and risky,” says Bill Sarniak, a senior markets actuary and vice president at Highmark in Pittsburgh. “That’s where actuaries thrive.”

Together, Maxwell and Asimow designed RMU’s actuarial program to have a strong mathematical foundation, with an emphasis on business and communications skills, and a focus on preparing students for their professional exams. Dobbs works primarily as a consultant, assessing the risks that her clients’ pension plans are sensitive to, monitoring the future outlook of the plans, and making sure they meet all of the legislative requirements. She credits RMU’s well-rounded curriculum with helping her find success so soon after graduation. “Some schools focus on just the mathematics behind actuarial science,” she says. “But, the actuarial profession is also built on business and communications skills, which RMU supports as well.”

“Actuarial students not only need a strong mathematical aptitude but in general, they need to have very good problem solving skills,” says David G. Hudak, Ph.D., associate professor and the program’s current director. “Our program, tied together with the general curriculum, provides RMU’s actuarial students with a great opportunity to develop these critical skills.”

The program also offers students many opportunities for paid internships, which usually result in job offers at graduation. “Without a doubt, my experience and what I learned there allowed me to hit the ground running right out of school,” says Allison Freeman ’08 who is an actuary at Erie Insurance, where she did an internship in the summer of 2006. She says RMU’s annual Actuarial Career Day was a major selling point for her. “It helps students get internships and interview experience early in their college careers,” she says. This year’s event is October 1, in Sewall Center, and as many as 20 local and national employers are expected to attend.

“RMU’s candidates are more prepared for the business world,” says Sarniak. “Our job is really half math, half business. RMU’s students have a strong foundation in business, and because of the internships that are available to them, they get that valuable practical experience, too.” Each year, over the past five years, Highmark has hired at least one RMU graduate for a full-time position, and they always try to get one or two interns as well.

Asimow came to RMU from Maryville University in St. Louis, where, as director of the actuarial science program he first met Mark M. Maxwell, Ph.D., a mathematics professor. Maxwell migrated to RMU in 2000 and immediately began to revitalize the university’s dormant actuarial science concentration. In the spring of 2001, he recruited Dobbs and Hill Gifford ’02 from Maryville as his first students in RMU’s program, and Asimow followed shortly thereafter.

Together, Maxwell and Asimow designed RMU’s actuarial program to have a strong mathematical foundation, with an emphasis on business and communications skills, and a focus on preparing students for their professional exams. Dobbs works primarily as a consultant, assessing the risks that her clients’ pension plans are sensitive to, monitoring the future outlook of the plans, and making sure they meet all of the legislative requirements. She credits RMU’s well-rounded curriculum with helping her find success so soon after graduation. “Some schools focus on just the mathematics behind actuarial science,” she says. “But, the actuarial profession is also built on business and communications skills, which RMU supports as well.”

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Jessica Kachur ’07, is a perfect example of how RMU’s program is built to help its students succeed. The university recruited her in high school because of her strong math skills. “It really intrigued me,” she says. “I always wanted to be in the math field, but I didn’t necessarily want to be a teacher. This just seemed like the right fit.”

While studying at RMU, Kachur had a paid internship with Mercer Inc., a human resources consulting firm in Pittsburgh. Mercer hired her following graduation, and today she’s an associate, calculating liabilities for pension plans and determining employer contributions. It’s challenging work, but she says she’s well prepared to meet that challenge. “You have to have a lot of personal determination and commitment, especially when it comes to the exams. But RMU makes sure you know what to expect and how to succeed.”

Written by Valentine J. Bruch
Photography by Michael Williams ’06, Art Dickenson & Paul Lorei
The first Kenneth Mishler Scholarship went to Matt Varga, a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, the Association of Future Accountants, the honors and cooperative programs, and the rugby club team. The Tokiko Mishler Scholarship went to Marie George, also a member of the National Honor Society of Collegiate Scholars, Student Nurses of Pennsylvania, and the cross-country and track and field teams. “I was more impressed with these two individuals than I am with some of the individuals who have walked through the hallways of my own offices,” says Mishler.

Written by Valentine J. Brinch
Photography by Edward Fox Photography & Glenn Brooks

Growing up, Mark Mishler ’82 was convinced he’d have the opportunity to go to college. He just wasn’t sure how.

Coming from what he refers to as a “humble background,” Mishler’s parents had to work hard to support their five children in their home in Johnstown. His father, who dropped out of high school at 16 and later joined the army, eventually earned his G.E.D. and worked for the postal service. His mother, whom Mishler considers the bedrock of the family, emigrated from Japan in 1951 and worked in a factory stitching shoes. But Mishler never let obstacles stand in the way of his dreams. “I knew I could do whatever I wanted in life,” he says, “and I wanted to go to college.”

Today, he serves as president and chief operating officer of The Warranty Group, the world’s largest provider of extended warranty programs. And he says he owes much of his success to Robert Morris University. “This institution,” he says, “if I wouldn’t have come here… I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

Mishler joined the army after high school, graduating in the top 5 percent of his basic training class and first in his advanced individual training course. With help from the military and financial aid, he enrolled at Cambria-Rowe Business College in Johnstown in 1978, where he earned an associate’s degree in insurance accounting and finance. He soon realized that a two-year degree just wasn’t going to be enough. He chose RMU because of its business program’s strong reputation.

After graduating with an accounting degree, Mishler took a job with an insurance company in Rockwood, Pa., working his way up from the accounts receivable department. His goal was to one day become the chief financial officer of a public company. “I felt that the only way to do that was to take on every opportunity that came down the road, and even ask for opportunity, because sometimes you’re just not going to have it handed to you; you have to reach out and grab it. And that’s just what I did.”

In the summer of 1996, Mishler was serving as a civil engineer in the National Guard for a combat engineer battalion when he went to Guatemala to help build roads and schools. It was a life-changing situation for him. “We were building schools with running water and electricity and giving those people hope so their children could get an education,” he says. “We went in and we carved roads out of mountains.”

Soon Mishler was recruited to be controller of a small insurance company in upstate New York that was traded on the New York Stock Exchange. He took on every position he could, trying to learn as much as possible, and in 1997, at the age of 38, Mishler achieved his goal of becoming a CFO. Not one to stay satisfied for long, Mishler then reset his goals and began his quest to be the president of a company. He joined The Warranty Group in Chicago in 2002, confident he’d achieve this new goal. “When I walked into that organization, I just looked around and said, ‘I can be the president of this company some day.’” Two years later, he realized that dream.

Through all of his success, Mishler has always held RMU dear to his heart. “What drove me for the rest of my career were the basic building blocks I received here at Robert Morris University,” he says. Now Mishler and his wife, Gina, are giving other RMU students the chance to go to college through two $5,000 scholarships named for his parents. The Kenneth Mishler and Tokiko Mishler scholarships, both established in 2009, are eligible to qualifying students from Mishler’s hometown of Johnstown.

>> Visit Foundations online to see Mishler’s speech at the RMU Scholarship Luncheon.
At a university once devoted solely to business studies, in a leafy little ravine named for a bygone era, stands an ultra-modern space for the newest of the arts.

Completed in June, the Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Foundation House for Media Arts gives Robert Morris University a singular space for design — the visual arts that inform our everyday lives. Part of Colonial Village, which includes the Melvin D. Teetz Alumni House and Rooney Visiting Scholar House, the new building features a gallery and workspace for students, faculty, and visiting artists, as well as a sophisticated video screening room.

Jon Radermacher, M.F.A., head of the media arts department in the School of Communications and Information Systems, says he hopes the house will help to build an arts culture on campus that will touch more than just the 175 undergraduates in his department. “Media arts is split in half, with TV/video and photography in Moon, and graphic design and Web design downtown,” Radermacher says. “The media arts house will not only be a space for artists to give master classes, but a place for design students to display their work. Right now design is ‘that program downtown.’ This will help to make media arts more visible and accessible to other students on the main campus.”

The new building is a strong vote of confidence for the design program, which has been housed in the downtown building that is now for sale. The 1,800-square-foot three-story house will begin hosting visiting artists this month. Its workspace includes seating for 16 artists who will work in the space for six to eight weeks, enough for most classes, which typically have fewer than 20 students. French doors let in plenty of natural light, an important feature for student artists typically confined to fluorescent-lit classrooms or studios. The main floor has a conference room, and wall space and video screens to display student work. The top floor is an apartment where a visiting artist can stay for a night or a semester.

The 20-seat ground floor screening room offers a high-definition 65-inch screen and is available for any media arts class that needs it. Radermacher says he plans to schedule video game nights on the big screen to attract students from the nearby dorms to the house. “Lots of people are into gaming, but this will give us a chance to talk about the concepts behind the games,” Radermacher says. “Seeing beyond the surface and trying to understand what’s going on behind the scenes — that is what art is all about.”

Construction was made possible by a $200,000 grant from the Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Foundation. Foundation board member Christina Heasley-Treadwell ’91 is an independent communications professional who works in video production, Web design, marketing, and advertising. About eight years ago she began to reconnect with her alma mater. “RMU was applying for a grant at the foundation when I was asked to come out to the campus and take a look at how things have changed,” Heasley-Treadwell says. “In listening to the professors speak about their work and the students’ needs, and knowing about the Colonial Village, I thought it would be nice if the communications school could have its own building.”

Heasley-Treadwell stresses that she abstained from voting when her board weighed RMU’s proposal against others. “We as a foundation would like to see the entire student body have more opportunities to experience the arts,” she adds. “This enhances the campus’s ability to provide a place for focused advance studies in the media arts. It heightens the visibility and the accessibility of the arts on campus.”

And not just the physical accessibility, notes Radermacher. “I think for some people the arts are seen as something extra, not essential,” he says. “But the truth is, almost everything around us is touched by art: our clothes, our appliances. Because of this house, we now have opportunities to present that reality in ways that we didn’t before.”

WITTEN BY BONNIE PFISTER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VALENTINE J. BRINCH, AUBREY DIVOTO ‘18, & MITCH KRAMER ’08
The Colonial Theatre, which brings its show on the road to major venues in Pittsburgh this year, has come a long way from its start as a shoestring operation set in an old barn on campus. But even then the productions were lively and drew decent crowds. The show-space enjoyed 30 years of dramas, comedies, and musicals. “People saw the theater as a destination,” says Ken Locke, director of student activities and a stage veteran himself.

It was a good run, but then the barn burned down, the company’s director retired to Florida without a replacement, and while Locke and the drama club struggled to keep the spotlighted doors ajar, the Colonial Theatre has about 50 active members working in every capacity of live performance — as actors, technicians, stage managers, and house volunteers. They represent a wide range of majors, from nursing to education. “It’s an all-campus activity,” Gargaro says. “We’re building a real theater department.”

Within two years, Gargaro and his colleague, Barbara Burgess-Lefebvre, M.F.A., were full-time faculty producing a four-show season. In the theater industry, musicals are by far the biggest challenge to produce because of the sheer number of people involved. Elaborate costumes and set design tend to rack up expenses and required manpower. And yet, since 2005, Gargaro has spearheaded four shows per academic year, most of which are musicals.

“It’s amazing,” says Locke, who has collaborated with Gargaro in the past as a production manager. “It’s exponential. This season really has been our biggest accomplishment.”

In January, RMU’s performance of “Rent” wowed audiences at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival’s Mid-Atlantic regionals, held at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The Colonial Theatre production was one of eight finalists picked to perform at the competition, out of 55 universities that entered. “We were definitely the largest player,” Gargaro says. “And we’ve performed that way consistently.”

What began as an experiment has turned into a campus phenomenon. In due time, Gargaro hopes the university will support a full-fledged B.A. in theater arts. Meanwhile, Colonial Theatre has about 50 active members working in every capacity of live performance — as actors, technicians, stage managers, and house volunteers. They represent a wide range of majors, from nursing to education. “It’s an all-campus activity,” Gargaro says. “We’re building a real theater department.”

The university curriculum has expanded rapidly, and boasts a full roster of 15 classes, from Intro to Theater to Fundamentals of Acting, Stage Combat, Jazz Dance, and Acting for the Camera. At the moment, theater is offered as a concentration in a communication major. But the concentration has become a magnet. Fall 2010 classes are already booked solid, and about a dozen students are currently declared, triple the numbers from three years ago, Gargaro says.

Gargaro’s presence at RMU has also forged a collaborative relationship between the university and Pittsburgh Musical Theater. This past summer eight RMU students interned for PMT. Unlike many internships, which consist of filing and opening mail, the RMU interns train in singing and tap dance. Other students have been cast in big-budget PMT shows, performing at the illustrious Byham Theater in downtown Pittsburgh.

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W RITTEN  B Y ROBERT ISENBEG
PHOTOGRAPHY  B Y ISTOCKPHOTO
A video crew on location in Washington, D.C., shoots footage for RMU’s new “Change a Life” promotional campaign, launching this Fall.
JOHN “JACK” KNEE ’58 has retired from the Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, where he has volunteered for 19 years. He is a retired CPA and lives in Ponte Vedra, Fla.

1960s

MICHAEL FARRELL ’63, CEO of Somerset Hospital, received the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Penn’s Wood Council Boy Scouts of America in April. Mike has been with Somerset Hospital since 1966. He lives in Berlin, Pa.

GERALD TIDT ’68 has been appointed to senior vice president of sales for MidCap Business Credit. Gerald and his wife, Joan, reside in Strongsville, Ohio, and have two sons, Kevin and Jeff.

1970s

PATRICIA CROUSE ’76 is a member of the sales and marketing team for Broven’s Graphic Solutions and Garden Spot Ribbons & Awards. She lives in Mount Joy, Pa.

1980s

L. THOMAS MARCHIMON ’80 wrote an article on U.S. corporate income tax policy published in the March issue of Interzest, an international journal. Tom is a senior tax attorney with Acloa. He and his wife, JUDY BREDLOVE MARCHIMON ’87, are proud to announce their daughter, Amy, graduated from John Carroll University this spring. The Marchimons live in Pittsburgh.

JOHN J. POLILUCI ’81 and his wife, Pescilla, celebrated their 25th anniversary on June 15. John works in radiology informatics for West Penn Allegheny Health Systems. John and Pescilla have a daughter, Gwendolyn, and reside in Pittsburgh.

DANA E. AUDO ’82 is the Pennsylvania private banking regional manager for Huntington National Bank. He was formerly with National City Bank. Dana lives in Hampton Township with his family.

LISA MASSIRONI FAULKNER ’82 is client services manager with DiNuzzo Investment Advisers. She and her husband, Ron, live in New Brighton and have two children, Ashley and Grant.

GREG CONDON ’83 is a senior solutions consultant for J.B. Knighter Company, Inc. He previously was the vice president and part owner of Duquesne Litho. Greg and his wife, DIANA NAYLOR CONDON ’83, live in Collin Township with their two children.

JOSEPH T. SENKO M’83 was named treasurer of the Brother’s Brother Foundation, a Pittsburgh charity that delivers medicine and textbooks to poor countries. He is with the accounting firm of McKeeve, Yorga & Senko and resides in Pittsburgh.

EMANUEL ROMANIAS ’83 is the founder and owner of Kangaroo Alley Cigars, which is the only premium cigar brand based in Pittsburgh.

LARRY E. BITTNER ’84 is a commercial lender with S& T Bank in Westford. He formerly was vice president of business banking and commercial lending for Huntington National Bank. Larry resides in Beaver.

KATHI DUBRA ’84 M’85 gave a speech about the “Secrets of Great Leaders” to more than 100 RMU alumnae and friends at the Woman of RMU luncheon in April in downtown Pittsburgh. Kathi is the manager of strategic sourcing for Allegheny Technologies Inc. She resides in Scott Township.

SEAN MCCRUDY ’86 was promoted to vice president for strategic accounts and global sales at Interstate Hotels & Resorts. He previously served as the global director of worldwide sales. Sean resides in Moon Township.

SCOTT BYERS ’87, CEO and president of Diversified Information Technologies in Scranton, serves on the Corporate Leadership Advisory Council of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Scott lives in Roaring Brook Township, Pa.

SHIRLEY LAZORCHAK M’87, associate professor of marketing at California University of Pennsylvania, received the Hugh G. Wales Award for outstanding faculty advisor from the American Marketing Association. She resides in Canonsburg.

MURRAY COHN ’88 was promoted to vice president of team ticket sales for the National Basketball Association. He previously was the NBA’s senior director of team ticket sales. Murray serves on the advisory board for the RMU sports management program. He and his wife, Betsy, live in Winter Garden, Fla., with their sons, Matthew and Michael.

JIM BALLweg ’89 is the senior director of corporate sponsorships for the Carolina Hurricanes of the National Hockey League. He formerly was vice president of sales with the San Diego Padres and also has held positions with the Houston Astros and the triple-A Nashville Sounds.

THOMAS K. SKELETON ’89 is CEO of Foundation Radiology Group, a

> MEETING THE AMBASSADOR

The 2010 ALUMNI TOUR in Ireland featured many memorable moments, from the cliffs of Moher to the night life of Dublin. Topping the list had to be a private visit to Phoenix Park, the residence of U.S. Ambassador Dan Rooney and his wife, PATRICIA ROONEY, a university trustee and loyal friend.

Go to Foundations Online to see more photos from the group’s Emerald Isle tour. And keep watching this space to find out about the 2011 Alumni Tour.
diagnostic imaging provider in Pittsburgh. He has more than 25 years of experience in health care, most recently as president of technology services for MEDX, Inc. Tom also serves on the board of visitors for the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at RMU.

1990s

JACQUELINE A. TRAVISANO ’90 was appointed vice president for business affairs and CFO for St. John’s University in New York City. She joined the institution last year as associate vice president for business affairs. Before that she was vice president for finance and operations at Carlow University in Pittsburgh. Jackie resides in North Babylon, N.Y.

MELINDA KLUTSTromBOld ’91 was appointed vice president of human resources for Ansaldot Sts USA, the Pittsburgh-based unit of a rail systems control manufacturer headquartered in Genoa, Italy. She is a former vice president of human resources for Redzone Robotics.

PATRICIA McDOUGHAN’95 is director of business solutions with Feld Entertainment, the parent company of Disney On Ice and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Patty lives in Burke, Va.

NICHOLAS P. MATT M’97 is senior vice president and CFO Group, leading the debt and equity financing practice in Pittsburgh. Nicholas resides in North Huntingdon.

DIANE McCLUNE M’97 is operating director for the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health, a nonprofit coalition of employers advocating for value and quality in health care. She formerly was the regional director of marketing for the American Heart Association, and also has worked on the clinical side of health care as a registered nurse. Diane and her husband, Robert, reside in Beaver.

2000s

DANIEL ESMOND ’10 and his wife, Tonya, are the proud parents of Ryan Thomas, born last September 14. Dan is the director of operations and staff coach for the AFC Lightning soccer club in Atlanta. The Esmonds reside in Sensio, Ga.

HOPE MIEUX VACCARO ’01 is vice president and recruiting manager for FVC Financial Services. She was formerly diversity recruitment manager for the Bank of New York Mellon. Hope and her husband, David, reside in South Park.

MATT HOFFMAN ’00 and his father, Stan Hoffman, were profiled in a March article in Keystone Edge, a weekly online magazine about high-tech companies and professionals in Pennsylvania. The father-son duo are both software designers – Matt at Concurrent Technologies Corp. and Stan at Babcock Lumber – and both are presidents of their local chapters of the Association of Technology Professionals.

SHELLY SCALERCIO SHOENTHAL’00, director of community relations and fundraising for the Mars Home for Youth, was named vice president and sponsorship chair of the Public Relations Society of America’s Pittsburgh chapter Shelllyn and her husband, DAN SHOENTHAL ’02, reside in Gibsonia.

Scott Umberger ’00 M’09

opened Umberger Performance in Robinson Township with his cousin R.J. Umberger, a center for the Columbus Blue Jackets of the NHL. Scott played football and was on the track and field team for the Colonials, and spent two years as an assistant to RMU strength and conditioning coach Todd Hamer.

HEIDI FREEMAN LEWIS ’10 has been named the Riley Scholar-in-Residence in Feminist and Gender Studies at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. She plans to complete her Ph.D. in American studies.

> ALUMNI ASSOCIATION EVENTS

A busy tailgate party with 125 alumni guests, followed by a thrilling 12-6 Pirates win over the Astros, highlighted an exciting summer for the Alumni Association.

The group also held a speed-networking event at Café Euro in downtown Pittsburgh in August, and luncheons at Wright’s Seafood Inn in Heidelberg and Mad Mex in Cranberry. Much more is to come in the fall.

The Robert Morris University Alumni Association’s mission is to engage alumni in the university community, to herald its legacy, promote its progress, and lay a foundation for the future, while advancing the well-being of its alumni. As a partner, we will provide leadership and support to Robert Morris University as we become one of America’s most distinguished universities.

JOIN THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION COUNCIL AND HELP PLAN FUTURE EVENTS. CALL (412) 397-2586 TO FIND OUT HOW.

ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENTS

COLONIAL GOLF CLASSIC

ALLEGHENY COUNTRY CLUB

SEWICKLEY PA

THURSDAY, SEPT. 30, 2010

REGISTRATION/SPONSORSHIP DEADLINE

MONDAY, SEPT. 13

For more information about registration and sponsorship opportunities, contact the RMU Alumni Relations Office at (412) 397-2586 or rmualum@rmu.edu.

ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY

PRESENTS

COLONIAL GOLF CLASSIC

Allegheny Country Club

Sewickley, PA

Thursday, Sept. 30, 2010

Registration/Sponsorship Deadline

Monday, Sept. 13

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ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

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HONOR THEM WITH A BOOK

The university library provides the information and knowledge that will help form the intellect of future generations. For your contribution to the Library Fund of $20 or more, RMU will place a customized bookplate in a new book in the collection to honor or memorialize a special person or event of your choosing.

To order your bookplate, download a form at www.rmu.edu/library.


**CLASS NOTES**

The Class of 2000's Patrick Person '04 studies from Purdue University in June. He was formerly the sports Barbershop in Lafayette, Ind.

**OCTOBER 15-17**

**HOMECOMING WEEKEND ‘10**

**FRIDAY**

Homecoming Happy Hour
7 p.m., Iron City Grille at the Holiday Inn.

**SATURDAY**

Reunion Years Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Sewall Center Classes of ’64, ’70, ’75, ’80, ’85, ’90, ’95, ’00, & ’05
Branch is free; please call to reserve.

RMU vs. University of Albany
Noon. A last-second RMU field goal broke Albany’s 12-game win streak last year. The Great Danes are sure to have revenge on their minds.

Alumni Tailgate & Picnic
For only $85, get hot dogs, hamburgers, pop, and a raffle ticket for the postgame prize drawing. Register by Oct. 1. Kids 12 and under eat free.

5th Quarter
Wined down after the game under the alumni tent with live music provided by Frank Vienna & Metro Mix.

To make your reservations, call 412-397-2586 or rmu.edu/alumni.

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 17**

**CONSL Energy Center**

WOMEN VS. NORTHEASTERN, NOON

CLUB VS. PITT, 3 P.M.

MEN VS. AIR FORCE, 6 P.M.

Three games for one ticket—plus see the new home of the Penguins!

For Hockey Tickets, call (800) 745-3000.

RMU HOCKEY SHOWCASE

< RaymonD “smokE” thomaS '00 M '03

Bonaventure University, where he worked for six years.

Kimberly Kozovvich Ruz M ’05 is a state and local tax consultant with the KCAH Group in McLean, Va. Kimberly and her husband, Alonso, live in Alexandria, Va.

Kristy Trautmann M’05 was promoted to executive director of the EISA Foundation, where she had been a program officer. The foundation supports nonprofit organizations in southwestern Pennsylvania that focus on women, girls, and people with disabilities. She resides in Murrysville.

Angela Kokanos Lagonis M’06 received a master’s of arts degree in journalism and mass communication from Point Park University, where she works in the admissions office. She lives in Pittsburgh with her husband, George.

Melissa Nemierz M’06 is an account manager with Brunner. She lives in Pittsburgh.

Benjamin T. Pegg ’06 is an actuary with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington. Ben was previously an actuarial analyst for the Hartford Life Insurance Company. He resides in Arlington, Va.

Deanna Gilkey Schmuck M’06 is an instructor with the Bidwell Training Center. She and Eric Schmuck were married last year. They reside in Monroeville.

Eric White ’96, staff sergeant with the Army Reserve 45th Engineer Battalion, won the annual Best Warrior competition at Camp Smith, N.Y., in April, advancing to the U.S. Army Reserve national competition. The contest included physical fitness, marksmanship, navigation, and a written exam. Eric is a track and field coach at Duquesne University and resides in Dormont.

Lea Guarino ’06 and Megan Venezie ’07 were listed among “Pittsburgh’s 50 Finest” by the western Pennsylvania chapter of the Cyctic Fibrosis Foundation. The charity event selects the “most eligible” single men and women in the region, based on their community service and career success. Lea is business development manager for Big Day Entertainment and owner/DJ of Guarino Group Productions. Megan is a client service analyst with Direct Energy Business. The list also included UPMC Passavant nurse practitioner and part-time nursing professor Jennifer Keeley.

James G. Howard ’02 is an active duty 2nd lieutenant with the U.S. Army. He lives in Sierra Vista, Ariz.

Kristina Iorio ’06 is unit marketing director for the Chick-fil-A in Robinson. She lives in Siera Vista, Ariz.

In Memoriam

Linda E. Gentle ’42 of Bridgeville died March 17 at the age of 86. She was a member of the Italian Sons and Daughters for more than 40 years, serving as financial secretary. Linda was a retired bookkeeper for the former Bridgeville Auto Sales.

Glen Schaefer ’01 of McMurray died March 30 at the age of 85. He was a World War II veteran and a retired CPA and CFO of Hankinson Corp. in Canonsburg. He is survived by his wife, Marian Lambert Schaefer ’49, and three children.

Robert Mood ’57 of Gibsonia died April 30. Bob was a Korean War veteran.

James R. Drenning ’68 of Apollo died February 11 at the age of 62.

Charles “Chuck” Van Ryn, retired member of the marketing faculty, died March 29 at the age of 67. Chuck taught marketing for many years at the university and was well known for his sense of humor and his rapport with his students and his colleagues.

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Robert Mood ’57 of Gibsonia died April 30. Bob was a Korean War veteran.

James R. Drenning ’68 of Apollo died February 11 at the age of 62.

Charles “Chuck” Van Ryn, retired member of the marketing faculty, died March 29 at the age of 67. Chuck taught marketing for many years at the university and was well known for his sense of humor and his rapport with his students and his colleagues.

Class Notes updates with photo. Send your update to rmualum@rmu.edu for a chance to win an RMU soccer scarf.

Ashley Hennemuth ’10 has accepted a full-time nursing position with UPMC Presbyterian in the neon ICU department where she did her transitions for her nursing studies.

Bill Mckeeown ’94 and Rachel Pacsi Mckeeown ’05 are the proud parents of Liam Mckeeown, born January 20. Rachel is a business development specialist at Clearview Federal Credit Union in Moon Township, and Bill is a sales representative for Philips Respiroins in Murrysville. The family resides in Harmony Township.

For only $5, get hot dogs, hamburgers, pop, and a raffle ticket for the postgame prize drawing. Register by Oct. 1. Kids 12 and under eat free.

To make your reservations, call 412-397-2586 or rmu.edu/alumni.

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Andy Toole, who turns 30 this month, is the youngest head coach in NCAA Division I men’s basketball. Yet when it comes to basketball, this guy’s been around the block. Toole spent three seasons as Mike Rice’s top assistant, helping guide the Colonials to three straight postseason appearances before taking the top job in May when Rice left for Rutgers.

The Red Bank, N.J., native was a four-year starter in Division I for Elon University and then the University of Pennsylvania. The Quakers made the NCAA tournament both years he played. Toole was a three-point specialist, sinking 212 in his career, and he was picked for the All-Ivy League and All-Big Five teams while at Penn.

HOW IS YOUR COACHING STYLE DIFFERENT THAN THAT OF MIKE RICE? I am not sure I’ll be able to yell as much as Coach Rice; he was gifted in that regard. But I think we share a lot of commonalities in the way we believe the game should be played.

WHAT DID YOUR FAMILY SAY WHEN THEY FIRST HEARD THE BIG NEWS? They were all very excited for me, and they all attended the press conference. My father, who is a huge supporter, has called me maybe 400 times a day since I have been hired. My family is pretty good at keeping me humble and grounded, so when I go home I am sure my mom will still tell me to take out the garbage.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR FREE TIME? When I do find a moment or two, I enjoy spending time with my girlfriend, as well as my friends and family. And I’m a huge fan of reality television.

IF YOU COULD PICK FIVE ALL-TIME PLAYERS FOR YOUR OWN DREAM TEAM, WHO WOULD THEY BE? Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Tim Duncan, and Bill Russell. I would be a player/coach and would accept the sixth man role.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOW? Growing up my favorite show was “Saved By the Bell.” Today I think my favorite show is “The Biggest Loser,” again with that reality television.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP IN RED BANK, N.J.? Growing up in Red Bank was really no different than growing up anywhere else. I could ride my bike to the beach in the summer, which was great. But I spent most of the time playing basketball or any other sport I could.

BEING A FORMER POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR, DO YOU HAVE ANY POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE? I do not. There is enough politicking in being a basketball coach that I can get my fill right where I am. I majored in political science because I found it interesting, but I knew coaching would be my career.

Written by Valentine J. Belich
Photography by Michael Williams ’08

andytoole.com