Brianne McLaughlin
Goalie | Robert Morris University

Hometown: Sheffield Village, Ohio
Birthday: June 20, 1987

<table>
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Thanks to an illustrious career with the Colonials in which she stopped an NCAA Division I record 3,809 shots, Brianne was selected for the U.S. Olympic Team. The team meets its first opponent, China, at 3 p.m. on Sunday, February 14.
As you’ll learn in this issue of Foundations, I’ve become an evangelist for international education and experiences, encouraging students to study abroad and pushing RMU to offer multiple international opportunities. The reason: Students who graduate without international experiences will find themselves at a disadvantage in the workplace, especially as their careers advance. The G-20 Summit held in September in Pittsburgh reminded us that we compete in a global marketplace, and we will not succeed unless our workers have the tools to thrive in this increasingly complex and diverse environment.

Last year IBM conducted the third edition of its biennial “Global CEO Study” series, which looks at the enterprise of the future. The research was based on surveys of more than 1,100 CEOs and public sector and business leaders from around the world. The question the study sought to answer was: “What will the enterprise of the future look like?” It examined the differences between the responses of financial outperformers and those of underperformers. The results indicated that the successful enterprise of the future will have five major characteristics:

**HUNGRY FOR CHANGE.** The enterprise of the future is capable of changing quickly and successfully. Instead of merely responding to changes, it shapes and leads them.

**INNOVATIVE BEYOND CUSTOMER IMAGINATION.** The enterprise of the future surpasses the expectations of increasingly demanding customers. Deep collaborative relationships allow it to surprise customers with innovations that make both them and it more successful.

**GLOBALLY INTEGRATED.** The enterprise of the future is integrating to take advantage of today’s global economy. Its business is strategically designed to access the best capabilities, knowledge, and assets from wherever they reside in the world and apply them wherever required in the world.

**DISRUPTIVE BY NATURE.** The enterprise of the future radically challenges its business model, disrupting the basis of competition. It shifts the value proposition, overturns traditional delivery approaches, and as soon as opportunities arise, reinvents itself and its entire industry.

**GENUINE, NOT JUST GENEROUS.** The enterprise of the future goes beyond philanthropy and compliance and reflects genuine concern for society in all actions and decisions.

So what does all of this mean for Robert Morris University? It serves as a roadmap for the type of education and experiences we need to provide our students, who are the workers and leaders in the enterprises of the future. They need to be able to understand different cultures and interact with people of diverse backgrounds. They must have a strong sense of ethics and social responsibility. They must be innovative and comfortable with technology and its applications. They must be great communicators, risk takers, and entrepreneurs. And most of all, they must not be afraid to fail.

This is how we approach our educational mission at RMU, regardless of what a student studies, because we feel this applies to everyone and in every career—especially in our increasingly complex and competitive world.

Sincerely,

GREGORY G. DEL’OMO, PH.D.
PRESIDENT
The Thinker
It’s been a busy year for Monica Marie VanDieren, Ph.D., but the math professor and codirector of the University Honors Program isn’t bothered by work. She even has rearranged the letters of her name into a slogan: “I am one driven American.”

Just before fall semester started, VanDieren flew to Poland to speak on theoretical concepts of infinity at a European Science Foundation research conference. In November, VanDieren gave a talk on encouraging children’s mathematical creativity at Leadership Pittsburgh’s TEDx conference. That was after getting back from Washington, D.C., where she represented RMU at the National Collegiate Honors Council’s annual conference. Presumably she got some work done on the plane for the council’s small college standing committee, to which she was just appointed.

Then last month, VanDieren was keynote speaker at the “Girls’ Night Out” event at Canonsburg Middle School. The event promotes healthy lifestyles, positive self-image, and empowerment of female students.

With a track record like that, it’s no surprise the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette published a glowing profile of VanDieren this summer in its “The Thinkers” series. But we do hope she got a moment’s rest over the holidays.

Equal Access to All
RMU has formed a new organization, the Council on Institutional Equity, chaired by Rex L. Crawley, Ph.D., and including both student and faculty members. The council’s role is ensuring that all members of the campus community have equal access to the university’s programs and services. Crawley, assistant dean of the School of Communications and Information Systems, was recently named a “Man of Excellence” in the education field by New Pittsburgh Courier.

Hail to the Chief
When Barack Obama came to Pittsburgh to speak at the AFL-CIO convention in September, senior Tyler Puntenet not only met the president backstage, he even got to drive in the motorcade.

Thanks to an uncle who is active in Democratic politics, the finance major from Wampum drove a limo ferrying White House press corps from the airport. Puntenet shook the president’s hand, though he admits he was too nervous to strike up much of a conversation with the commander-in-chief.

“I didn’t know what to say to him. I was just so excited,” Puntenet said. It didn’t get any easier; at the same function, he also got to meet Mario Lemieux.

Global Greening
Sustainability, a key issue at last month’s climate summit in Copenhagen, is also the main concern for students of management professor Marcel Minutolo, MBA, in a classroom exercise that involves real-world business experience.

Minutolo’s students have been paired with Steward Earth LLC, a sustainability consulting firm based in McKean, Pa., through a student-business matchmaker program run by the Global Reporting Initiative. The UN-backed agency in Amsterdam sets standards for measuring and reporting environmental sustainability for companies and organizations.

Through the matchmaker program, Minutolo’s students get to participate in the writing of a business sustainability report, while Steward Earth gets some extra eyes and minds checking on its work.

> Honor Roll
Science students working with faculty members Maria Kalevitch, Ph.D., Paul Badger, Ph.D., and William Dress, Ph.D., recently presented the results of their summer soil research projects at the Annual Meeting of the Soil Science Society of America held in Pittsburgh.

Students in a directed study course on leadership in public relations designed by communications professor Ann Jabro, Ph.D., attended the Public Relations Student Society of America conference in San Diego in November. Jabro’s paper, “Front Planning: A Transformative Learning Experience Linking Theory to Practice,” was presented at the society’s Educators Academy Division.

Rebecca Tokarsky, an environmental science major, was named the president of the RMU chapter of the National Science Teachers Association. The newest student group in the School of Engineering, Math and Science plans to be presenting at the association’s annual conference in Philadelphia in March.
> See This Magazine and Extra Features at RMU.edu/Foundations

> Love, Actuarially

After spending so much time thinking about fires, floods, and mortality, students of actuarial science must make something less disturbing to read between classes. That’s where Michael Pacolay comes in.

A senior in the university’s highly acclaimed actuarial science program and an intern for Highmark, Pacolay was one of two students selected nationally last year to the editorial board of The Future Actuary. The newsletter is published jointly by Society of Actuaries and the Casualty Actuarial Society and is read by those preparing for careers in the field. Pacolay’s first article, which revisited job interview tips from actuarial managers, was published in the fall.

Pacolay, a West Mifflin native, practices kung fu. So when he’s “fattening the table,” we are not sure if that means the actuarial kind, or more solid ones.

> Focus on the Arts

Jon Rademaker, MFA, interim head of the media arts department in the School of Communications and Information Systems, is among 31 international artists whose work — salt and pepper shakers (above) from his “Consumption” series — is being shown in Paper or Plastic? The exhibition at the Luke & Eley Gallery in Lawrenceville runs through Jan. 16.

Media arts professor Hyla Willis, MFA, traveled to Spain’s Basque country in the fall to participate in Soft Power, a program about art and the politics of biotechnology. Willis wrote with subRosa, a feminist art collective she is part of.

Media arts professor Carolina Loyola-Garcia, MFA, participated in “Transfer Lounge,” an exhibition featuring Spanish and American artists in the Space Gallery in downtown Pittsburgh in the fall.

For his body of work as a writer, English professor John Lawson, Ph.D., was honored by St. Andrews Presbyterian College with its Ethel N. Fortner Award in the fall. Lawson once taught creative writing at the Laubengarten, N.C., college, and St. Andrews College Press published Lawson’s first collection of poetry, Generatives, in 2007.

> On the Big Screen

The latest film by the university’s Center for Documentary Production, “What Does Trouble Mean? Nate Smith’s Revolution,” premiered in October to a packed theater at the new August Wilson Center for African American Culture in downtown Pittsburgh.

With archival footage, interviews, and dramatic reenactments, the 56-minute film tells how an African American crane operator evolved into the charismatic leader who forced integration of Pittsburgh’s construction trade unions in the 1970s. The film was written and produced by Erica Peiffer ’03 and Alexander Wilson ’03 M’07 and edited by Brad Grison ’07.

Academic Media Center Director Michael DiLauro screened his award-winning documentary, “Prisoners Among Us,” at the University of Miami in September for the school’s motion picture program. DiLauro’s film, about the emergence of the Italian-American identity during World War II, won the Best Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the New York Independent Film Festival in 2004.

> Preparing for the Worst

More than 100 students from the School of Nursing and Health Sciences participated in a disaster drill at Pittsburgh International Airport in August. Airport rescue units needed volunteers to play the roles of airline crash victims so teams could practice their emergency response procedures. RMU provided more volunteers than any other organization.

> In Print

Valentine J. Brikich, senior writer for public relations and marketing, recently published Bridgegate: A Narrative History of a Pennsylvania River Town. In the book, Brikich shares tales of his family’s history in the town, as he touches on the meaning of place in one’s life. More about the book is at Foundations Online.

> Official Business

Morgan O’Brien ’82 M’05 joined the university board of trustees this fall. O’Brien is president and CEO of Duquesne Light Holdings. His wife is Kathleen Flavin O’Brien ’91.

President Gregory G. Dell’Omio, Ph.D., has been named to the Division I board of directors of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, as the representative for the Northeast Conference. Dell’Omio is also a member of the NCAA President’s Advisory Group.

> Movers & Shakers

Maria V. Kalevitch, interim dean of the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, served as evaluator on a National Science Foundation panel in Washington D.C. in November, where she reviewed proposals submitted to the NSF Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) program.

“‘The Doctor Is In,’” a Moon Community Access TV program co-hosted by computer and information systems professor Robert Skirvin, Ph.D., and Coraopolis physician Marc Schniederman, has received its second consecutive national Communicator Award.

Connie Seragiella ’99 M’01 D’08, director of information technology customer services, presented her paper, ‘Factors Affecting Women’s Decisions to Pursue an IS Degree: A Case Study,’ at the Information Systems Educators Conferences in Washington, D.C., in November.

Science education professor Matthew Maurer, Ph.D., and Lauralane Zelosnuk, a biology teacher at Moshannock High School, teamed up to discuss the university’s “college in high school” program at a regional conference of the National Science Teachers Association in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in November.

Donna Feiterman, director of the Office of Student Civic Engagement, gave the invocation at the 140th Anniversary Symposium of YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh in October.

Paul Spradley ’03 M’06, assistant director of student life for multicultural affairs, has been named to the board of directors of the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council.
> World Wise

The university’s new executive director of international programs, Ida Mansourian, has an impressive global track record. The Iranian native has been to almost 40 countries, on every continent except Antarctica, and speaks four languages. Mansourian has been working on international programs at Mesa Community College since 1996, including the last five years as director of international education. One of the country’s biggest community colleges, the Arizona institution sends about 150 students abroad each year, and enrolls some 2,000 international students from more than 100 countries.

“When I saw how much emphasis the president places on global learning, I told myself that this is a place where international education programs can get a lot of support and many things can happen,” Mansourian says of RMU.

Titi Adewale MA0, RMU’s former director of international student services and study abroad, has moved to Charlotte, N.C. Associate Provost Lawrence Tomel, Ed.D., praised her service to RMU. “Titi’s leadership and personal commitment to international exchange and study abroad has personified the RMU core value of global perspective.”

> Welcoming the World, Part 2

When throngs of foreign diplomats and media from around the world poured into town in September for the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit, RMU stepped forward to make them feel at home.

Students from nine countries translated the script for a one-hour guided walking tour of the downtown area into their native tongues. With the help of Doug Derda, web/social media designer, and the tour’s writer, recorded the audio as downloadable podcasts. The podcast tours were advertised in the G-20 media center and in major hotels, and were downloaded more than 2,000 times that week.

VisitPittsburgh, the region’s tourism bureau, is working with RMU to link to the downtown walking tour podcasts on its main Web page.

If you’d like to download the free MP3 walking tour of downtown Pittsburgh in English, French, Turkish, Chinese, or six other languages, visit rmu.edu/foundations.

> Their Final is in Hardcover

Students in the documentary photography course taught by media arts professor Christine Holtz, MFA, made something lasting out of their class project. The book, Community, features the best photos by students Samantha Cuddy, Stephen Innan, Ryan Matteo, Jalisser Sandora, Nicole Storry, and Cassandra Weinzierl. The book is for sale online, and a link — with a preview of some of the best shots — is available at Foundations Online.

> RMU Welcomes the World

Denmark’s top evening news anchorman and three other European professionals visited campus in October to discuss the G-20 summit and American and European politics with distinguished faculty and an influential alum.

The meeting was the second visit to RMU by a delegation from the German Marshall Fund of the United States. The Washington-based organization arranges month-long transatlantic study fellowships for Europeans and Americans selected as potential future leaders. This year’s group also included directors of nonprofit organizations in Turkey and Romania, and the director of a cultural center and museum in Slovakia.

Professors Darja Crawley, Ph.D., and Patrick Litzinger, Ph.D., gave presentations to the group, as did Dewitt Pratt ’81, executive vice president for economic development at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. The fellows also met with President Gregory G. DiFelice, Ph.D., who explained the U.S. system of higher education and his guiding philosophy and strategy for RMU.

> Scholarships

The university’s chapter of Alpha Chi National Honor Society inducted 69 new members in the fall. Student members are juniors and seniors who have completed 60 credits, at least half at RMU, and who carry an A-average with a QPA of 3.7 or higher.

Brendan Mothers, a sophomore studying mechanical engineering, won a $2,000 Myrtle and Earl Walker Scholarship from the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, one of 143 scholarships awarded nationwide this year by SME.
HOC KEY

Golden goals and four assists to lead RMU finishing 4-5-1 in league play and 8-9-1 the year, a school record.

Senior midfielder Sean Riley had four goals and four assists to lead RMU offensively, and freshman goalkeeper Toba Balaji posted a 0.91 goals-against average and five shutouts in 12 starts. Sophomore forward Avery Davis made All-NEC Second Team, she finished fifth in the conference with nine goals and sixth in points with 18, both team bests. Freshman goalkeeper Jessica Olin compiled a .795 save percentage and posted a 3-4-3 record in NEC games.

It was a bright spot in a trying year in which the team went 1-7 in the NEC and 2-13 overall. Sophomore forward Chantele Crow led the Colonials in scoring with four goals and a pair of assists.

> IMPRESSIVE FINISH SPURS NCAA PLAYOFF DREAMS

When junior kicker Garrett Clawson split the uprights to give the Colonials a 15-10 last-second win at Albany, the victory meant more than just breaking the Great Danes’ long dominance on their home field. It also meant more than just helping Clawson tally a team record 14 field goals. With that kick, the Colonials got back to their winning ways.

The team finished 2009 with five straight victories, reversing a six-game losing streak. Their 5-3 Northeast Conference record (5-6 overall) raises hopes the team can contend for the NEC title next season, and the automatic Football Championship Subdivision playoff berth that will come with it.

“It could have been easy for this team to hang their heads after we started 0-6,” said coach Joe Walton. “To their credit, they decided that’s not what Robert Morris football was about. One game at a time, they took it upon themselves to improve, and it’s extremely gratifying to see us finish the way we did.”

The Colonials defense led the conference again by holding opponents to only 276.3 yards per game; they allowed just 36 points in the final five games while forcing 13 turnovers over that stretch. The team’s emotional leader, junior linebacker Alex DiMichele, was a finalist for NEC Defensive Player of the Year with 109 tackles, three sacks, two interceptions, and four fumble recoveries. Junior halfback Myles Ross had his second 1,000-yard season, and senior wide receiver Sherrod Evans set a new record for receptions with 47. Freshman Jeff Sinclair finished 5-2 as a starting quarterback, completing 78 of 145 passes for 828 yards and nine touchdowns against six interceptions.

“We certainly were up and down this season, but we finished the way we were supposed to,” DiMichele said. “I can’t wait for training camp. I realize that’s down the road a little bit, and you’re going to work hard in the offseason and in spring ball, but I can’t wait to put the pads on again when it means something.”

> DIMICHELE

> HALL OF FAME

The 19th class of inductees, named at halftime of the Oct. 17 home football game against Saint Francis, each left indelible marks in Colonials sports history. Sam Dennis (’94-’95) still holds a school-record 3,847 yards rushing. In basketball, Jarrett Durham (’94-’96) coached the men to 3 NEC titles and NCAA berths.Shari Hiavuth (’94-’97) is second all-time in field goals with 570, and Perry Johnson (’87-’96) was a Junior College All-American with 28.4 points per game his sophomore year. Soccer star Chris Haltquist (’92-’95) still holds team records for 84 games played and 21 assists.

> ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS

Three athletes, all juniors, were selected by College Sports Information Directors of America for the ESPN The Magazine District II Academic All-America. Nuclear medicine technology Amanda Graham (volleyball) has a 3.99 GPA, actuarial science major Mike Lovely (football) has a 3.80, and elementary education major Chrissy Baldasberger (soccer) has a 3.80.

> CROSS COUNTRY

The women placed seventh at the NEC championships in 2009, led by freshman Krista Domis, who posted a time of 19:28.9 in the 5,000-meter race to finish 20th individually. Sophomore Brian Mitchell paced the men, crossing the finish line in the 8k race with a time of 27:31.4 to finish 23rd overall as the squad recorded a sixth-place finish.

> VOLLEYBALL

The Colonials finished 11-5 in the NEC (14-20 overall) and earned their 11th consecutive berth in the conference tournament, losing to eventual champion Long Island in the quarterfinals. Junior middle blocker Amanda Graham made All-NEC First Team with an attack percentage of .332, third in the conference. Sophomore Alyssa Bennett made All-NEC Second Team with an average of 8.5 assists per set, third best in the circuit.
When the U.S. women’s hockey team takes the ice in Vancouver for next month’s Winter Olympics, Brianne McLaughlin will be primed to get between the pipes. One of three goalies on the roster, the former Colonials star has a reputation for stopping shots—3,809 of them during her college career, an NCAA record.

A senior nursing major whose studies are on hold for the Olympics, McLaughlin credits her older brother, Michael, for getting her started in hockey. “He was a forward, so I guess that’s how I became a goalie,” she says. “He’d rather shoot against his little sister than against a wall.” Their father still teases them about the time one summer when, hearing shouting from the yard, he stepped outside to investigate and found Michael running drills with Brianne, who was dressed in full goalie pads in the sweltering heat and dropping again and again into the “butterfly” stance.

Growing up in suburban Cleveland, McLaughlin played against boys until high school. As a freshman starter in the RMU women’s inaugural year, she got accustomed to facing a lot of pucks. McLaughlin responded by standing on her head in game after game, most notably in the 2008-09 season opener against No. 3-ranked Minnesota in her senior year, in which the Golden Gophers outshot the Colonials 65-10 and still lost 3-2.

McLaughlin is proud of her RMU career and says the team, under coach Nate Handrahan, “is getting better every year.” Now as she travels and trains with the best players in the country, McLaughlin enjoys reminding her powerhouse-school teammates of her upstart alma mater. Eight players and U.S. coach Mark Johnson hail from the University of Wisconsin, so when RMU upset the defending national champion Badgers 3-1 in November, the former Colonials netminder had a lot of fun at morning skate.

The Olympics have long been a dream of hers, and McLaughlin says she can’t wait to march in the opening ceremonies: “It always looks so cool on TV, so it will be interesting to see it from the middle of everything.” And she already has checked out the new medal designs. She especially likes the look of the gold one.

Robert Morris University’s study abroad programs offer students an expansive range of opportunities to travel, live, and learn overseas. Experiencing other countries firsthand allows students to see their own culture with fresh eyes. It also helps them to become people who can work and live with confidence born of successful day-to-day interactions in the wider world.

A global perspective is an integral part of a complete RMU education, and the university strives to ensure all students have the chance to learn through travel. Exchange agreements with a growing number of overseas universities lock in RMU tuition costs for students spending a semester or year abroad. Faculty-guided “short tours” — in which students spend spring semester studying a country in class, then go there with their professor for a few weeks in the summer — make travel and study abroad possible for those unable to take more time away from core classes and jobs. Short tours include faculty-led trips by nursing students to China and Nicaragua, film students to Gambia, and hospitality students to Germany, France, and Switzerland.

Those initiatives are paying off. A record 138 RMU students participated in study abroad programs in the 2008-09 academic year, almost double the number who went overseas the prior year.

Juniormedia arts major Channing Frampton was concerned a semester abroad would make it hard for him to complete his degree on time. Instead, he opted for a faculty-guided three-week short tour of Finland last June. Students visited the University of Tampere, attended an international film festival, and climbed to the top of the country’s northernmost weather station. Frampton, an aspiring TV weatherman who gives the forecasts for RMU-TV, even had an opportunity to deliver a trial forecast at the nation’s largest commercial TV station, in Helsinki.

“We got to talk to broadcast professionals, and learn about technology in Finland, which in many ways is a few years ahead of us here in the States,” says Frampton. “It was an amazing opportunity that I think will help in my future.”

International experience as a career plus is an idea that’s gaining credence. The Committee for Economic Development, a non-partisan advocacy group comprised of corporate executives and university leaders, estimates that U.S. corporations lose $2 billion a year because of inadequate understanding of global markets. “Employers are increasingly looking for workers with international expertise and language skills because they know it makes their organizations far more competitive in the workplace,” says President Gregory Dell’Omo, Ph.D.

Senior accounting major Kevin Senko was all business during his semester last spring at the American University of Dubai. He roomed with a classmate from Nigeria and juggled a rigorous schedule of classes, including international finance, portfolio management, and history of the Middle East.

“The textbooks were American, but the issues we studied came from the culture around us: currency exchange issues in a port city, discussions about pegging the value of oil to the U.S. dollar,” says Senko.

“I want our students to feel comfortable living on the earth as global citizens,” says Jim Vincent, Ph.D., a longtime English literature professor who pioneered RMU’s exchange program with the University of Limerick and has led student trips to Ireland for the past three years. “We’re part of Pittsburgh’s attempt to become a stronger player in international business and commerce. You cannot do that with students who only know Allegheny and Beaver counties.”

Adventuresome Audrey Petrus couldn’t decide between Japan, Spain, or London. So the actuarial science major opted for the Semester At Sea program last year, visiting 12 countries including Spain, South Africa, Mauritius, India, Vietnam, China, and Japan, with the home stretch sailing through the Panama Canal. Her
classes in global studies and physics were conducted when the ship was at sea. In port, Petrus explored the bazaars of Morocco, learned to meditate in Thailand, and made friends with someone in Namibia,” she says, “and see how it’s different from sitting down and having dinner with someone in India, and how that’s different from sitting down and having dinner with someone in Japan. And how it’s kind of the same.”

Michael Church, a senior accounting and marketing major, spent four weeks in Greece studying public relations at the American College of Thessalonkibefore setting out on his own for Estonia. The loneliness of solo travel gripped him for much of the first day, but it wore off as he navigated his way around Tallinn, tracking down the location of a cobbled medieval passageway he’d seen photos of in books. “It was the coolest thing,” Church says. “I’m here. I’m in another country. I’m on my own, and I’m finding my way.”

Social sciences senior Krystal McCoy spent three weeks in Israel, where students camped with Bedouins near the ancient ruins of Masada, explored the ancient streets and alleys of Jerusalem, and swam in a natural spring alongside some local women wearing bikinis and others wearing burkas. “The most surprising thing for me was how warm and welcoming people were everywhere we went,” says McCoy.

RMU’s newly named executive director of international programs, Ida Mansourian, says she is eager to expand both the university’s study abroad programs and international offerings on campus. “We don’t want student travel experiences to just be a memory for their photo album,” she says. “I would like it to be a teaser for them to start enhancing their global understanding more and more, for when they enter the workforce.” The Iranian native spent three years studying in Germany before coming to the United States. In her last job as director of international education at Mesa Community College in Arizona, Mansourian launched a foreign film festival that is now in its sixth year.

Besides the advantage a global perspective can give graduates entering the workforce, Vincent believes it also makes a significant difference in their inner life. “College is a time of personal growth, as much as learning accounting principles or comparative literature,” he says. “Seeing the world is the best way to encourage cultural diversity, and the best way to get people on the path of self-discovery.”

Written by Bonnie Pfister
Photography Provided by Office of International Studies

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**AFTER A DISASTER, A HELPING HAND**

Despite an exam looming the next day, Luca Lugini was fast asleep early on April 6 in a house he shared with two other students at the University of L’Aquila in Italy. Suddenly, a massive earthquake shook them into terrified wakefulness. “We ran outside,” Lugini recalls. “It was really cold. There were many people in the street in just their pajamas.”

Lugini spent the rest of the morning in his roommate’s car. The dawn broke on a sickening sight: Dozens of buildings were reduced to rubble in the capital of Italy’s Abruzzo region. Nearly 300 people would be found dead, and some 65,000 left homeless. Of those killed, 55 were students of the university; several buildings on the campus of 27,000 students also were destroyed.

Five thousand miles away, western Pennsylvanians began thinking about what they could do to help. "By the second day, it was clear this was a bigger catastrophe than it initially seemed,” says Joseph D’Andrea, a retired language teacher at Moon Area School District and president of the American Italian Cultural Institute (AMICI) of Pittsburgh. "I began to think, ‘The community must respond in some way.’"

D’Andrea is a good friend of RMU. The university awarded him an honorary doctorate of letters last spring, after he accompanied President Gregory Dell’Omoh Ph.D., and Provost David Jamison, J.D., on a trip to Italy’s Molise region to explore study abroad agreements with Italian universities.

Together they came up with a plan: AMICI would raise money to help reconstruct buildings, D’Andrea says. The RMU scholarships were among 35 offered to L’Aquila students for study at U.S. and Canadian universities after the deadly earthquake. Another 161 students received offers to attend European universities.

On August 20—one day before classes began—Lugini, 21, a Campobasso native, and Berardo Artieri, 25, of Torano, arrived in Pittsburgh. Lugini is completing a bachelor’s degree in software engineering, while Artieri is pursuing a master’s degree in engineering management. “My first impression: Everything is bigger here,” Lugini says. “Cars, streets, buildings. It was very strange... But everyone is also so much friendlier than in Italy, especially in those first days.”

“The friendliness of everybody is impressive,” Artieri concurs. “You can speak to professors informally here, almost as if they’re friends.” And he adds, “the studies seem more practical. In Italy you study many, many proofs that you will never need.”

Both have made friends living on campus, taking in American football games and experiencing a South Side packed with costumed college students on Halloween. One of their first projects at RMU was translating and recording Italian audio for a series of foreign language walking tours of downtown Pittsburgh the university produced for the G-20 summit.

Lugini and Artieri say they are grateful to the community members, professors, and fellow students who are helping them to complete their studies. “This is not just a beautiful campus, but it’s full of beautiful people,” Lugini says. “I would definitely tell students back in my country to come here if they can.”

AMICI is continuing to seek contributions to support Lugini and Artieri through the spring semester. Those wishing to help may contact D’Andrea at (412) 264-2485 or gdandrea1@verizon.net.

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Soon Katselas and contractor Pasquale Navarro were driving a convertible across the 230-acre property’s rolling fields, past the former mansion of Oliver Kaufmann (whose brother owned Fallingwater), down a hillside and into a hollow. “I threw stones where dorms would go, put pins where the road would go, and laid out stakes for classrooms,” Katselas recalls. “On butcher paper we drew up the dorms—very rough sketches. Within three weeks, the contractor began digging.”

It was, as Katselas says, “an instant campus.” The builders put a temporary half-tent, half-plywood addition on the mansion so students could eat and live on campus. The next year, they started building the student union, the Jefferson Center.

An intrepid artist, Katselas was philosophically influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright’s honest expression of materials and space. It’s hard to look at Jefferson and not think of Wright’s Fallingwater. Cantilevered entryway roofs, poured concrete, and the way the building nestles into the hillside all evoke images of the famous Edgar Kaufmann home. Katselas humbly refuses to compare his work to Wright’s masterpiece. “I hope all of my work reflects an authentic expression of use, with a healthy dose of spirit. I think Frank Lloyd Wright would like that.”

For many years, campus social life revolved around Jefferson. Education professor and retired dean Jon Shank, Ed.D., recalls meeting colleagues in Jefferson for 65-cent lunches. “Athletic banquets, convocations, President Sewall’s inauguration, and most other important events were held in its dining area,” Shank says.

Katselas intended the union as the focal point for visitors driving up the old main road, but the campus entrance was changed. Eventually Jefferson’s dining hall, bookstores, and post office, which once had drawn heavy student traffic, found other homes. The upper level became a fitness center, while the lower level was storage space.

But after substantial renovations in the fall, Jefferson’s once-underutilized lower level now boasts a glass-walled 24/7 computer lab, the only one on campus open overnight. There is also a Veterans Education and Training Services Center to accommodate the growing number of military personnel at RMU, an expanded phonathon room, and a student lounge with comfortable seating. Each space has security cameras and two clearly marked exits for safety.

Bill Joyce, RMU architect and director of planning and design, worked with interior designer Shannon Eisenreich and contractor Graziano Construction. They incorporated some “green” elements, such as paint low in volatile compounds and lights that dim when a room is empty. But they tried to respect Katselas’s design; for instance, they removed a drop ceiling that had masked the original coffered concrete. “We’re letting the architecture be part of the character of the space,” Joyce says.

Like Katselas’ other campus buildings, Hale, Franklin, and the newly renovated residence halls, Jefferson displays his trademarks: exposed concrete, roof monitors to let in natural light, mullionless glass to draw the eye into the building, and poured-in-place ceilings and flooring. “We’re surrounded by Tasso’s buildings,” Joyce says, gesturing to the scattered structures that flow down the hillsides, connected by walkways.

RMU has changed substantially since those early days. A stroll around the rest of campus today reveals an eclectic collection of buildings. “After Tasso we had a variety of designers, and there’s not much consistency of materials,” Joyce says. That’s something he and others have been trying to change with new buildings like the Nicholson Center, Rogal Chapel, the residence hall renovations and planned new buildings for the business and nursing schools. “One of our challenges is not to create a distinct look, but a palate of materials that we might ask architects to use. We wouldn’t tell them how to design new buildings, but would give them materials—such as brick, standing seam metal roofs, the selected use of stone—to create a consistency of look.”

Although each generation of buildings presents new styles with unique aesthetic and practical values, Joyce believes it’s worth the effort to maintain original designs. “I think people respond to quality spaces and are inspired by them, especially when they understand an architect and what inspired the design originally.”
Mrs. Gonzales lies in a hospital bed as she recovers from leg surgery. All around, high-tech equipment monitors her condition, while her concerned daughter sits at the foot of the bed, waiting.

Two nurses enter the room to see how she is doing. “My leg,” she says, “it really hurts.” One of the nurses checks the surgical wound on Mrs. Gonzales’ leg and finds that it’s bleeding and needs immediate attention. The other nurse calls the doctor for guidance on the proper medication and dosage.

Suddenly, Mrs. Gonzales is having trouble breathing. The nurses jump into action. They check the woman’s blood pressure, temperature, pulse. They determine the cause to be acute pain and do their best to bring her comfort. Once the situation is under control, they explain everything clearly to Mrs. Gonzales’ anxious daughter, in order to ease her mind.

And just like that, the simulation is over.

RMU simulation specialist Janice Sarasnick, RN, MSN, leaves the observation room, where she has been watching this unfold, and goes out to congratulate nursing students Lauren Markan and Dustin Huerta on a job well done and to debrief them on the hospital emergency exercise. Mrs. Gonzales, by the way, is fine. After all, she’s just a dummy—a really smart dummy.

This is just another day in RMU’s new state-of-the-art simulation laboratory in the university’s School of Nursing and Health Sciences. It’s the university’s latest effort to provide a hands-on, engaged education to its students.

“Robert Morris University has always believed that learning doesn’t just take place in the classroom,” says school Dean Lynda Davidson, Ph.D., RN. “This new simulation laboratory is another example of our commitment to provide our students with real-life experiences that will enhance their education and better prepare them for their future career.”

The new lab was made possible by a $250,000 grant from Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, a $500,000 state grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, which was presented by state Rep. Mark Musto and state Sen. John Pippy, as well as a $95,000 federal grant made possible through the efforts of U.S. Sens. Robert Casey Jr. and Arlen Specter. Located inside RMU’s John Jay Center, it features two high-fidelity treatment rooms, one critical-care room, two classrooms, one low-fidelity nursing practice lab, and multiple office areas, as well as advanced audio-visual and IT equipment that allows for scheduling and administrative support, debriefing recordings, and live audio-visual feeds.

“The additional funding allowed us not only to purchase the new mannequins and state-of-the-art recording equipment but also to hire and train dedicated staff to assist in the simulation
The current facility was a much-needed upgrade to RMU’s previous nursing simulation capabilities, which lacked the technology and space to provide a realistic learning experience for the students. As the demand for this type of simulation-based training grows among regional health care organizations, the university plans to further expand its capabilities with a new 23,000-square-foot simulation center, which will be known as the RMU Regional Research and Innovation in Simulation Education (RISE) Center. This new facility is tentatively scheduled to be completed in 2011.

“Simulation is great for providing students a variety of experiences,” says professor Katherine J. Perozzi, MSN, RN, low-fidelity simulation lab coordinator. “It allows them to feel that they have indeed managed such a situation before, and it makes them feel more confident in the actual clinical setting.”

Perozzi has a bachelor’s degree in math and nursing and a master’s in nursing education. Before coming to RMU, she taught fundamentals and obstetric nursing for 10 years at the University of Pittsburgh. She says that this first phase of the RISE Center will provide valuable simulation opportunities to hospital personnel, nursing schools, and other medical professionals in the region.

Both the military and the aviation industry have been using simulation for decades to safely train their people in real-life situations. Over the years, schools of nursing have used computer simulation to promote critical thinking skills.

Now, thanks to recent technological innovations, simulations-based training is becoming more common in the health care industry. RMU’s School of Nursing and Health Sciences began utilizing high-fidelity simulation with its nurse training in 2005. Since that time, the nursing educational curriculum has evolved to employ simulation across the board, in clinical undergraduate, master’s level, and doctoral courses.

“This type of hands-on learning is so important because it allows them to make mistakes now rather than later,” says Howard, whose research, which focuses on evaluating learning outcomes related to the use of simulation, shows that students find simulation superior to the case study approach.

Many universities and health care organizations across the country are already taking advantage of simulation as a learning tool. What’s unique about RMU’s simulation lab is that it’s meant to be an open educational resource not just for the university but for the region’s health care providers also. Already, local organizations like Heritage Valley Health System, St. Clair Hospital, Ohio Valley General Hospital, Valley Ambulance Authority, Pittsburgh Technical Institute, and other patient safety organizations and initiatives have shown an interest in collaborating with RMU for training and educational purposes. Once these partnerships are finalized, RMU will serve the region as a major source for simulation-based training and competency testing.

The new lab utilizes three separate software packages to conduct the simulations. One microphone in the control room enables the instructor to be the voice of patient, and another, which they call the “Voice of God,” is an intercom used for other communications. The simulation rooms themselves closely resemble typical hospital rooms, from the IV drips to the bedside monitors, all the way down to the in-room phone. Audio-visual equipment, such as digital video recorders, editing software, monitors, and microphones, provide live remote viewing, immediate feedback, and after-action review during the debriefing period. The lab also features an information management system that assists with scheduling, monitoring of usage, and measuring outcomes.

“I used to work in a hospital, and I found the simulation to be very realistic,” said Huerta, a second-degree student, who earned a BS in political science/biology at RMU before coming back for nursing. “For example, being able to call the doctor on the phone in the room was very realistic.”

Jill Barney, who played Mrs. Gonzales’ concerned daughter in the scenario, is also impressed by the power of simulation. “It’s fun, stress-free, and with all of the new technology, you really feel as if you’re in a hospital. I think simulation is a great way to learn how to care for a patient in a learning environment.”

WRITTEN BY
TERRY CLARK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VALERIE HASTINGS
Some say ethics is merely a high-minded abstraction to be put aside when reality strikes. At Robert Morris University, we believe ethics is not the opposite of pragmatism, but is instead the keystone of a successful career. That’s what we teach our students. Of course, we have a good role model.

“I am not ignorant that many people employ themselves in defaming men whom they do not know and measures which they do not understand. To such illiberal characters the best answer is to act well.” – Robert Morris

For Robert Morris, ethics was fundamental. The wealthy Philadelphia merchant, congressman, and superintendent of finance for the American government during the Revolutionary War often used his own credit to ensure that troops were armed, fed, and paid. His enemies accused him of profiteering, so Morris opened the government’s books to the public and appeared before Congress to account for every penny. Fully exonerated, Morris became one of Pennsylvania’s first senators. He even handed the keys to his own mansion in Philadelphia, then the nation’s capital, over to his good friend, George Washington, so his first chief executive could have the best house in town.

At the height of the Gilded Age a century ago, Judge Elbert Gary, chairman of U.S. Steel, declared that his company would be held to a higher ethical standard. His “Gary Principles” were the first code of business ethics adopted by an American corporation.

“If we succeed in business, we must do so on principles that are honest, fair, lawful, and just.” – Judge Elbert Gary

In her address at the 2009 graduate commencement exercise, Dr. Susan M. Kapusta ’81, U.S. Steel general manager for community affairs and president of the corporation’s foundation, said the legacy of the “Gary Principles” continues. For Kapusta and the other 161 RMU alumni who work at U.S. Steel, their education also has helped them to the full “Gary Principles.” Kapusta said, “There is a discussion of ethics in every course. The faculty sets an example for professional focus that points the way to creating ethical professional leaders.

“Ethics is not someone else’s responsibility—it’s your personal responsibility,” concluded Kapusta. “Let your own personal moral compass chart your course and point you in the direction of what is right.”

After two decades climbing the corporate ladder, Rande Somma ’73 was named president of North American operations for a Fortune 100 Detroit auto parts supplier, a $17 billion operation. He called a meeting, and told the staff their first action would be to write down a list of things they would not do to succeed. “When you formulate illogical means of reaching an end, you now place 100 percent of the burden on your own competence and skill and your talent, and the kind of organizational culture you create, the kind of people you surround yourself with, how you approach the business,” he says. “It changes everything.”

Pressure from Wall Street—especially from investors who seek short-term results—makes it challenging to stay committed to ethical behavior, says Somma, who is now a private industry consultant and vice chairman of Tower Automotive. But it’s imperative, he believes. So he established the Rande and Georgia Somma Integrity First Scholarships, $2,500 awards given annually to four RMU undergraduates who write the best essays analyzing moral or ethical issues in a business case study.

“When I talk about being ethical and integrity being critical when it comes to being a legitimately competent leader, people start to think ‘I’m some sort of prophet of righteousness. And they want to know, ‘Don’t ethics matter?’ Yes, but that’s why I’m doing it this way. Profitability matters, but over the long term also,’ he says. “Performance matters, but the authenticity of performance matters more.”

Being president of a wealth management firm with $700 million in assets and a regular on Barron’s annual list of the country’s top 100 financial advisors, Carrie Coghll-Kuntz ’08 has a lot to be proud of. But despite her successes in 20 years in the business, the Brentwood native long dreamed of something more.

“I kind of laugh when people ask, ‘What year did you graduate?’ For me it’s kind of an honor just to have a year,” says Coghll-Kuntz. The president and co-founder of D.B. Root & Co. in downtown Pittsburgh earned her bachelor’s in organizational studies last year from RMU.

“In business you hear people say it’s all about our employees, that they make it happen. But to be able to gain an understanding of what an employee is looking for in a good leader completely opened up a new perspective for me,” she says.

Besides her recognition from Barron’s, Coghll-Kuntz was chosen among the “Top 50 Women in Wealth Management” this year by Wealth Manager magazine; the Pittsburgh Business Times also named her one of the year’s “Top 25 Women in Business.” For her distinguished record of service and accomplishment, RMU honored her recent alumna with the 2009 Heritage Award.

Coghll-Kuntz says she always loved numbers, and jumped right into the world of finance after getting an associate’s degree in accounting from community college. Known as a consumer advocate and widely quoted in both local and national media, she has written two books on investing and is involved with economics education programs for schoolchildren, professionals, and the general public.

One person she particularly remembers educating was her daughter, Kelli. When Kelli was 8, she spent a day at the office with her mom, and later made a memorable observation. “On the way home, she looked at me and she said, ‘You lied to me,’” recalls Coghll-Kuntz. “I said, ‘What are you talking about?’ And she said, ‘You said you talk to people about money, but you don’t do that. You talk to people about their lives.’”

“It’s a very satisfying career when you can watch people save enough money to achieve their retirement, or get their dream house, or educate their children or grandchildren,” Coghll-Kuntz says. “I feel very fortunate that I have the ability to touch so many people.”

W R IT T E N BY M ARK H OUSE R

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Acting Well

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Along with the textbooks she carries to class, Laura Rentler carries with her a wide, welcoming smile and an inner ambition to reach out to all those in need.

At the age of 10, Rentler lost her father to liver cancer. The Caring Place, an organization that helps grieving families cope with loss, provided comfort to the Rentlers. Wanting to give back to the organization, she started attending special events on its behalf, giving speeches to audiences in the hundreds. At RMU, Rentler has volunteered as a student counselor for students who have lost a parent or loved one. “People may forget what you said or what you did,” she explains, “but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

The marketing major and Mt. Lebanon native comes from a long line of relatives who attended RMU. Rentler is an RA, vice president of student government, and president of the campus chapter of American Humancics, an organization that prepares undergraduates for the nonprofit sector. She also works in the Office of Student Civic Engagement, coordinating events and matching up student organizations with volunteer opportunities. For instance, she planned a winter carnival the men’s lacrosse team held for students at the Bradley Center, a residential program for at-risk children. She also organized a campus leadership summit last year for 250 high school students.

“Laura has really developed into a leader in the last couple of years, and it’s really been rewarding for me to watch her grow into that,” says Randon Willard, community and volunteer services coordinator for the university.

Wellness is both a passion and a way of life for Carl Ross, Ph.D., CRNP-BC, CNE.

The nursing professor has been taking faculty and students to Nicaragua since 1995. There, through a collaborative agreement with the Universidad Politecnica de Nicaragua, they provide much-needed health care and preventative education to poor residents in urban barrios and rural villages. Ross, who came to RMU from Duquesne University in 2005, just completed his 69th trip in November with 10 undergraduate nursing majors.

“These trips are transformational for the students,” says Ross. “They not only get solid clinical experience, they get to change the lives of others and, at the same time, are changed themselves. It’s really a powerful experience all around.”

As a member of RMU’s Wellness Committee, Ross also works to improve the health of faculty and staff. He helped initiate the university’s Weight Watchers program in 2007, and has become one of its success stories, losing a whopping 150 pounds through better eating habits and regular exercise. “I was always obese,” says Ross, who was once nearly 400 pounds. “I had to change my whole lifestyle. Now I wouldn’t think of going to bed without working out. Exercise has truly become a part of my life.”

Ross’s transformation has also had an effect on his students. “I’ve become a role model for many of them,” he says, “especially for the seniors, who knew me when I was heavy.” During his trips to Nicaragua, Ross’s students see how he lives firsthand. “They see my eating habits and how I get up every morning and walk, and they say, I’m going to get up and walk with you.”

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1940s  
RAYMOND T. BOOK ’47 is a former state representative for the 41st district, and reports that his proudest accomplishment was proposing two bills that were signed into law: House Bill 1155, which lets people declare organ donor status on their driver’s license, and House Bill 90, which arranged for doctors to discuss organ donation with next of kin after a patient’s death. Ray lives in Brentwood.

1960s  
ELBIE “ELBIE” YAWORSKY ’75 was named executive director for 3 Rivers Connect, a Pittsburgh nonprofit organization that provides data on the local economy, regional social services, and recreational programs and activities. Elbie has been on the organization’s board since 2005. Elbie and his wife, DENISE SCARELLA YAWORSKY ’76, live in Ambridge.

1970s  
ROBERT D. BEER ’71 joined First National Bank in August as senior vice president with FN B Business Credit Department. Bob was previously senior vice president, senior portfolio manager with RBS/Citizens Bank, and managing partner of the Trebuchet Consulting LLC, specializing in sports, entertainment, and marketing.

> Our Favorite Fashion Expert  
TOM JULIAN ’93, the star of our Spring 2008 issue, has written the Nordstrom Guide to Men’s Style, a hardcover guidebook published by the major department store. His Tom Julian Group in Pittsburgh provides marketing and consumer research. See his interview on Foundations Online.
Doug is employed by the Lower Paxton Township Police Department. He and his wife, Liane Schiappetti ’95, live in Harrisburg with their sons, Jacob and Evan.

James A. Pollard Jr. ’94 is the accounting manager for Frank Curn in Clearwater, Fla., and has earned an MBA from the University of Tampa. James lives in Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.

Vicky Vento ’94 is employed with the Jacob and Evanan.

VickY VENTO ’94 JAMES R. POLLIARD JR. ’94 LEANNE SCHILPP PETRAS ’95 in Harrisburg with their sons, its Fox Chapel, Hampton and Butler offices. She has been in the mortgage industry 18 years, and is a recipient of the Mortgage Bankers Association of Pennsylvania Platinum Superstar award. VickY lives in Pittsburgh.

David W. Durkin II ’96, M’95 is partner and chief information officer of BlackBull Online. His start-up company provides Internet marketing services to Pittsburgh’s small businesses owners.

Jason Halperin ’96 and Kimberly Montes Halperin ’96 are the proud parents of Jacob Meyer, born on May 7. Kimberly is a medical claims analyst for United Health Care. The Halperins live in Las Vegas.

Robert Mersnik ’96, vice president and manager of business development for Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, was appointed to the Pennsylvania Bankers Association’s professional development policy committee in July. He lives in Westford.

Kristina Fausti ’92, director of legal and regulatory affairs for Fiduciary360 in Sewickley, will join the board of the Financial Planning Association of Pittsburgh this year as director of government affairs. Kristina lives in Prospero.

Donald J. Johnston ’97 will serve as president of the Allegheny Tax Society. Donald is a partner with Grosman Yanik & Ford LLP in Pittsburgh. He lives in Westford.

John J. Fisher ’98 was promoted to vice president, ticket sales and service for the Arizona Diamondbacks, overseeing sales for all groups, suites, and season tickets. He joined the Diamondbacks in 2007 as director of season ticket sales.

Matt Monroe ’99 is assistant athletic director for ticket services at the University of Maryland. He lives in Crofton, Md.

2010 ALUMNI TOUR

Join Greg and Polly Dell’Omo and a band of merry travelers on an unforgettable tour of Ireland.

Your guide will be Professor James Vincent, noted raconteur and expert on Irish literature, history, culture, and legend. All arrangements by Gulliver’s Travels of Shadyside.

For details, call Jay Carson at 412-397-5870 or email carsonj@rmu.edu.

Class Notes would love to hear from you.

2000s

Nikki Soto Franciscus ’00 and her husband, John, became the proud parents of Owen, born on May 29. He joins big brother Matthew, born Sept. 2. Nikki is a medical claims analyst for United Health Care. The Franciscuses live in Hermitage.

Kevin lives in Mount Lebanon.

Brother Connor, 7. Nikki is a financial consultant with Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. The Franciscuses live in Hagensburg, Md.

Kristan Bosak Weir ’00 and Daniel Weir ’99 and big sister Grace welcomed Lily Christine, born Sept. 2. He is vice president for Aon Benfield. The Weirs live in Mt. Lebanon.

Todd Ahern ’91, M’95 and his wife, Terry, are the proud parents of Lucas Michael, born September 12. He joins big brother Matthew, 3. Todd is a system analyst with PPG Industries. The Aherns live in Allison Park.

Daniel G. Horgan ’02 is a director of community affairs with Capital One in the Washington, D.C. area. Dan previously served as executive director of Pittsburgh Caros.

Anna Reed ’02 married Alex Kaleda on August 15. Anna is an executive administrative assistant with H.J. Heinz Co. Alex is a Penn State graduate and also is employed at H.J. Heinz. They live in Ross Township.

Kevin McDermott ’02 and his brother opened a Minuteman Press franchise in 2005 in Hermitage, Pa. In May, the

Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce gave them the Phoenix Award for Entrepreneur of the Year. Kevin lives in Hermitage.

E-mail us at rmualumni@rmu.edu.


Bobbie Jo Belsis ’13 is assistant director of development for the Duquesne University department of athletics. Bobbie Jo lives in Connegy.

Amy Lute ’13 and Ryan Sutton ’13 have set May 29, 2010, as their wedding date. Amy is a reservation manager at the Hyatt Regency Hotel at the Pittsburgh Airport and lives in Aliquippa. Ryan lives in Moon Township.

Stacy Sustar Ritchart ’03 was awarded the President’s Club award from FedEx as one of the top sales professionals in the country. She has worked at FedEx since 2007. Stacy and her husband, Doug Ritchart ’01, live in Hopewell with their 2-year-old daughter, Ellis Agnessa.

Paul D. Spiegley ’93, M’06 will serve on the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council board. Paul is the assistant director of student life for multicultural affairs at RMU. He lives in Aliquippa.

Sarah E. Vujicic ’93 put Lucas E. Brown ’93 announced their engagement. They are planning a wedding for this fall.

Jeff Fondellier ’04 was named vice president of operations of Community Action Southwest, a social services agency for Washington and Greene counties. He has been with the agency since 2004. Jeff lives in Bethel Park.

> Alumni Awards

In a Homecoming ceremony at the St. John’s Pier, CATHERINNE D. TREXLER ’91 (pictured above with Spiegler, Dell’Omo, and Kaiser) was presented with the RMU Alumni Association’s 2009 Alumni Achievement Award in recognition of her professional distinction. As management analyst for the Allegheny County Department of Public Works, Catherine orchestrates a program that led her employer to become the first agency in Pennsylvania accredited by the American Public Works Association.

Christopher J. Kaiser ’00, senior account executive with Johnson Controls, won the Young Alumni Achievement Award. Chris was a live lunch donor for his mother in 2003, and serves on the board of the American Liver Foundation’s Western Pennsylvania Chapter, as well as his local library board.

The university library’s cataloging and government documents assistant, Karen Spiegel ’91, received the Alumni Service Award. Besides her service on the university’s Women’s History Month Committee and work coordinating the 2007 Women’s History Month Health Fair, Karen is active in the Boy Scouts of America as a merit badge counselor.
Robert Morris hopes you will friend him on Facebook.

Pittsburgh College Hockey Showcase 2010 watching the Colonials battle the UConn Huskies!
Fri at 2:30 pm

Why you should be Robert’s “friend”...
>> Get updates on RMU events and happenings.
>> Reconnect with old friends.
>> Network, network, network!
>> Win cool RMU prizes weekly.
>> View photo galleries of campus.
>> Watch engaging videos.
>> Remain an active member of the RMU family!

Carla Swank can’t wait to meet up with you at the alumni bash next month
Thu at 11:43 am

Robert Morris wonders when he will get paid back for loaning the Continental Army all that dough....
Wed at 8:47 am

Kelly Burke where is trivia at?!?
Tue at 11:30 am

Greg Dell’Omo is loving the winter scenery on campus!
Mon at 3:29 pm via Facebook Mobile

Matthew J. Husak ’94 is vice president and audit/compliance/risk director with Parkvale Bank in Pittsburgh.

Paul Maurinac M’04 will serve as recording secretary of the Allegheny Tax Society. Paul is a senior manager at McGonigle & McDowell in Pittsburgh.

Larry E. Tanner M’04 is a senior accountant for tax services with Beard Miller Co. He is also treasurer for the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project.

Ray Butler ’96 and his wife, Beth, are the proud parents of Max Joseph, born August 6, and his big brother, Logan. Ray is head equipment manager for the RMU athletic department. The Butters live in Alquippa.

KELLY DOMENICK M’06 was promoted to senior management at Carbis Wagner LLP.

Dana Hackley M’06 and her husband, Bill Repak, recently achieved the level of black belt in tang soo do, a Korean martial art. The couple spent four years, and more than 2,000 hours of practice, to earn the honor. They live in Moon Township.

Sherin Foust M’05 was promoted to business development director with ThoughtDrivers, a business consulting firm in the tracking industry. She now oversees the company’s driver leasing service. Sherin lives in Beaver Falls.

Lloyd Gibson D’07 and Regina Gibson D’08 were presenters at the International Council for Small Business World Conference in Seoul, Korea, in June. They presented two papers, “Chinese American Internet Banking Acceptance: Implications for Multicultural Marketing” and “Online Monitoring Acceptance by Women Entrepreneurs.” Lloyd is the director of the MBA program at Seton Hill University and assistant professor of business. The Gibsons live in Pittsburgh.

In Memoriam

Walter James ’James’ Lee III ’78, of Northern Cambria, passed away on July 26 at the age of 58. Jamie was the former executive vice president of W.S. Lee and Sons Inc. and was actively involved in Boy Scouts programs.

Robert C. Cogdell Sr. ’76 of Penn Hills passed away on August 4, 2009 at the age of 69.

Road Trip to State College

The Office of Alumni Relations and other friendly faces were road-tripping in November for a big game against the Penn State Nittany Lions. While the team may not have prevailed, we had a Mast catching up with our central Pennsylvania alumni at a pregame reception at Dameron’s before going together to the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park.

Would your alumni group like to host the next road trip? Call (412) 397-2586 and let’s set something up!
SHARI PAYNE M’00 can help you get engaged. And we’re not talking about diamond rings.

This past fall, Payne was named as RMU’s first dean of engaged learning. In this position, she oversees the university’s Student Engagement Transcript, which formally documents students’ participation in experiential learning: leadership activities, community service, study abroad, athletics, and work experience. She also coordinates service-learning opportunities for students in conjunction with RMU’s Office of Student and Civic Engagement.

Payne, who grew up in Vandergrift, earned a doctor of education degree from the University of Pittsburgh, where she also earned a bachelor’s degree in English writing. In 2000, she earned a master’s degree in communications and information systems from RMU.

1 | Why do you think experiential learning is so important? It helps students bridge the gap between theory and practice. Theories and concepts become much clearer when students can roll up their sleeves and put their knowledge to work.

2 | What did you like best about RMU’s Communications and Information Systems program? I really enjoyed the Case Analysis class taught by Barbara Levine, Ph.D., dean of the School of Communications and Information Sciences. The course focused on problem-solving in real-life situations. I enjoyed it so much that it made me realize I wanted to move on to a doctoral program.

3 | I hear you play the flute. Did you ever consider becoming a professional flautist? There was a brief period of time when I was in high school that I toyed with the idea of becoming a professional musician. It wasn’t unusual for me to practice several hours a night. But I realized that it wouldn’t be as much fun if I had to make a living doing it.

4 | If you could be on any reality television show, which one would it be and why? Let’s see. I would probably want to be on a show where the central theme was some kind of competition. I guess it would be “Dancing With The Stars.” It just looks like so much fun!

5 | What do students tell you when they first become involved in service learning? That their service learning courses are a lot more work than their other courses. They also say that they’re a lot more rewarding, too.

6 | How have you seen students changed by the type of engaged learning offered at RMU? Students come out with more self-confidence and drive. It’s really heartening to see students who’ve just finished an engaged learning experience come back for more.

7 | How have students changed the lives of others through these same activities? Our students are out there in the community serving as mentors and tutors to local elementary, middle, and high school students. They are really serving as leaders, not just in the RMU community but in the surrounding communities as well.

8 | When you spent a few months as a newspaper reporter after graduating from college, what was your strangest assignment? Covering a local school board meeting was really an eye-opening experience. Prior to that, I had no exposure to the inner workings of our public school system. For those readers who have never attended a school board meeting, I highly recommend doing so at some point in time.

9 | Your favorite book is The Time Traveler’s Wife. If you could travel to any time in history, when would you go? I guess if I had that power, it might be nice to go back to a time when my maternal grandparents were still alive and young. We used to all gather around the piano, which my mom played, and sing show tunes and Christmas songs. My Pop-Pap would lead the songs, while my Grandma would just sit back and watch because she couldn’t carry a tune.

10 | You say that when you retire, you want to open up a mom-and-pop ice cream stand. If RMU was a flavor of ice cream, what would it be? RMU would be like chocolate chip cookie dough. It’s a never flavor that hasn’t been around as long as vanilla and chocolate, but it’s a fan favorite nonetheless.

Written by Valentine J. Brugh

Upcoming Events

- **January**
  - 13 Pittsburgh Speakers Series: Robert Reich Heinz Hall, 8 p.m.
  - 26 Diversity Speakers Series: Dr. Nampali Srinivasa Rajal Chapel, Noon

- **February**
  - 5/6 Winter Blast
  - 10 Pittsburgh Speakers Series: Mia Farrow Heinz Hall, 8 p.m.

- **March**
  - 24 Colonial Theatre presents Urinetown through Feb. 28 Massey Hall, 8 p.m.

- **April**
  - 7 Pittsburgh Speakers Series: David Brooks Heinz Hall, 8 p.m.
  - 25 Pittsburgh Speakers Series: Greg Mortenson Heinz Hall, 8 p.m.

- **May**
  - 7/8 Commencement and Golden Graduates Recognition