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## Answering the Call p. 5

When COVID-19  
Changed the World,  
the Avila Family  
Met the Challenge

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CONTACT  
Avila University • 11901 Wornall Road • Kansas City, MO 64145  
816.501.3602 • [Advancement@avila.edu](mailto:Advancement@avila.edu) • [Avila.edu](http://Avila.edu)

Avila University President,  
Ronald A. Slepitzka, Ph.D., CSJA

Interim Vice President for Advancement  
Maggie Mohrfeld

EDITOR

Sr. Director of Marketing & Communications,  
Darren Roubinek

CONTRIBUTORS

Athletics Department  
Bailey Carr '09, '12, CSJA  
Paul McQuiston  
David Riffel Photography  
Maureen Reardon

## DEAR ALUMNI & FRIENDS,

**Our lives** have been upended since this past March. The terrible effects of the pandemic continue to affect us, and uncertainty is ever present. As an Avila community, we have leaned on the mission and values established by our founders, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, to guide us as we faced difficult hurdles and decisions over the last six months.

In these pages, you'll read about how the Avila Family continues to meet the challenges as we look forward to welcoming back our students for the 2020-21 school year—on campus!

I have repeatedly shared a motto of the Sisters of St. Joseph, “together we are more” and I am proud to say I have witnessed remarkable work by everyone coming together to do their part. From faculty and staff shifting their plans and teaching methods to a different learning, staff making personal phone calls to check on students, to alumni and friends responding to our student emergency fund. We came together and we accomplished MORE than we knew we could. That will be even more important as we welcome students back to campus. They, too, are critical to our success in adapting learning to the challenges of this pandemic.



I have repeatedly shared a motto of the Sisters of St. Joseph, “together we are more” and I am proud to say I have witnessed remarkable work by everyone coming together to do their part.

Our students remain our number one priority and I want to take a moment to recognize the Class of 2020. Despite not holding a traditional graduation ceremony, these graduates' hard work in and out of the classroom deserves recognition, especially in light of the additional hardships they faced in their final semester. Many of our students also juggle part- and full-time jobs and work hard to earn scholarships, inspired by the promise of an Avila degree and the opportunities it affords.

Inspired by our CSJ founders, Avila is at its best when its community provides welcoming, safe, and intellectually rigorous spaces for our students to flourish. The challenges we face might be unprecedented and our strength will be tested. But when we stand as one, investing our efforts into providing a more just future for coming generations, we can overcome any obstacle.

I hope you'll join me in taking up the challenge.

Gratefully,

Ronald A. Slepitzka, Ph.D., CSJA  
President





*Dr. Jett's ... understanding of teaching, developing curriculum, program reviews, accreditation visits and faculty support mean the entire University will gain from his knowledge.*

— President Ron Slepitzka, Ph.D., CSJA

## Jett Picked as Dean for the College of Professional Schools



Andy Jett, Ed.D., joined the Avila family when the University named him its first Dean for the College of Professional Schools this April. As Dean, he will oversee the Schools of Business, Education and Visual and Communications Arts, as well as the Advantage Institute for Professional Studies.

“Dr. Andy Jett’s extensive experience in higher education in Kansas City, paired with a strategic approach to problem solving, makes him a valuable addition to Avila,” University President Ron Slepitzka, Ph.D., CSJA said. “Andy’s entrepreneurial leadership style will especially benefit the College of Professional Schools, but his understanding of teaching, developing curriculum, program reviews, accreditation visits and faculty support mean the entire University will gain from his knowledge.”

Jett previously served in a variety of roles over 15 years at Baker University, the nearby private, four-year university located in Baldwin City, Kansas. In his most recent role as Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Jett led efforts to optimize institutional online resources for admissions and academics. He said he looks forward to bringing his experience to Avila.

“Having worked in the Kansas City higher education market for many years, I know that Avila has a great reputation for quality instruction and I am excited to build on that foundation to create new programs,” Jett said. “Avila’s commitment to its values, students and strategic evolution help differentiate it from the many small private liberal arts-based universities prospective students have to choose from while applying for college.”



## Katherine Kashka '19: 2019-20 Jeanne Collins Thompson '54 Ariston Award

This summer, Avila recognized Katherine Kashka '19 as the 2019-20 Jeanne Collins Thompson '54 Ariston Award winner. Created to celebrate the mission, values and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, the award has long been one of the most notable accolades presented to one senior. Kashka began her career with Olathe (Kan.) School District's Center Based Resource Department after graduating in December 2019, where she teaches students with severe disabilities. 🗣️



**The 2019 Common Reading** was *A Deadly Wandering: A Tale of Tragedy and Redemption in the Age of Attention* by Matt Richtel, the story of Reggie Shaw and the fatal car accident caused in part by distracted driving while texting. This year's Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture Series speaker, Shaw spoke about how he drifted across the center line and struck and killed two scientists while checking his cell phone and the supporting research that highlights our brain's inability to truly multitask and regain situational awareness, as well as our inability to resist our phones.

Below are a handful of lessons that Avila first-year students learned from Shaw's story:

*Every single time you sit in the driver's seat of a car, you make (a) choice. If you are intoxicated, you decide whether or not you should drive. When you are headed to school in the morning and you hear the ding of your phone, you make the decision of not only answering a text, but you make the decision if you are going to put the other people around you and your own life in danger.*

— Camille, Kansas City, Missouri, Nursing

*It is hard to be empathetic towards him knowing what he had done, but it is also important to put yourself in his shoes and try to imagine the guilt that he will have to live with for the rest of his life. Even after 13 years, he was still emotional on stage while he was talking.*

— Jada, Belton, Missouri, Psychology

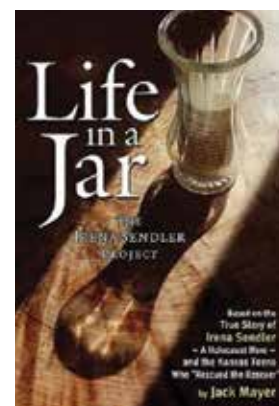
*I can combat texting and driving by leading by example and do not have my phone out while I drive. There are many ways everyone can help counter texting and driving, and it can just start by telling a friend or family member to not text while driving.*

— Seth, Lee's Summit, Missouri, Accounting



*The choices that you make affect your loved ones, friends, and others. Make the decision to be a safe and defensive driver. Driving is a privilege, not a right.*

— Jacob, Capron, Illinois, Communication



**October 22, 2020**

The 2020 Harry S. Truman Distinguished Lecture features *Life in a Jar* by Jack Meyer, this year's First-Year Experience Common Reading. *Life in a Jar* is a dramatization of the life of Irena Sandler, a Polish Catholic social worker who organized a rescue network of fellow social workers to save 2,500 Jewish children during the Second World War. Her story disappeared until it was rediscovered by three Kansas high school girls and refashioned into a drama, now performed across the globe. 🎭



## The New Goppert Performing Arts Center

Call for tickets:  
816.501.3699 or  
Avila.edu/Tickets

October 8, 9, 10  
7:30 pm  
October 11  
2 pm

A graphic for the play 'Harvey' by Mary Chase. It features a large, stylized green rabbit ear on a dark blue background. The word 'HARVEY' is written in large, white, block letters across the middle, with 'by Mary Chase' in smaller white text below it.

November 19, 20, 21  
7:30 pm  
November 22  
2 pm

A graphic for the play 'Twenty 20s'. It features a large, red, hand-drawn speech bubble with the text 'TWENTY 20s' inside. Below the speech bubble is a stylized red and yellow face with a wide, open-mouthed smile. The background is yellow with red brushstrokes.

An original work, devised  
and performed by students  
in Avila University's School  
of Performing Arts

# Goppert Performing Arts Center

With the grand re-opening of the Goppert Performing Arts Center (GPAC) quickly approaching, Avila Theatre is looking forward to returning home.

“We are eagerly awaiting the opening of Goppert this fall, but we’re also looking forward to a time when we can safely gather together again,” said Charlene Gould, Ph.D., dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences and professor of theatre. “As the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet say, ‘Better Together,’ and this spirit is also at the heart of the performing arts. We cannot wait to welcome you into our new home.”

Construction made the 2019–20 Avila Theatre season feel different. Productions took place across Kansas City, and COVID-19 measures cut the season short. While the troupe faced these challenges, the opportunity to perform for different communities left an enormous impression.

“Theatre happens in many environments with different kinds of audiences and challenges, so it was an exciting and educational year,” said Matt Schwader Harbor, assistant professor of theatre and Director of Performance Studies. “Design and rehearsal processes had to anticipate different spaces and actors learned quickly that what might work in one room may not work in another.”

Designed to enhance the audience experience while providing improved rehearsal space, the addition of the new Roderick J. & Jo Anne Cyr Grand Lobby, Dave and Geri Frantze Family Black Box Stage, Sue Willcox, Ph.D. Music Room performance space and Virginia C. and William D. Tompkins Rehearsal Room mean Avila will continue to produce high-quality shows. 🎭



From left: Garland Moore, Tyler Lindquist, Alyssa Grinnell, Ju-Young Morimoto and Isabella Brauner on the set of *Miss Nelson is Missing* in February, performed in partnership with Theatre for Young America at the Union Center City Stage.



## When COVID-19 Changed the World, the Avila Family Met the Challenge

# Answering the Call

### When Mollie Brown '14

left for Arkansas on an assignment with Travel Nurses Across America this January, she believed her main duties would revolve around helping the patients of Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock during flu season, a busy time at any children's hospital.

However, as the calendar turned over to March, it became clear 2020 would not be a typical flu season. With each day more information about the spread of the Coronavirus COVID-19 emerged, and Mollie knew she and her colleagues faced the most potentially dangerous medical crisis since the Spanish Flu in 1917.

"Community and teamwork were instilled in me from Avila. The healthcare world is my community and my team members needed help. Avila prepared me to answer the call." It's a call that would take Mollie from Arkansas right into the heart of the pandemic in the United States, New York.

While Mollie's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic is exceptional, it's not uncommon among Avila University alumni. Avila University's long-standing excellence in Nursing and other service-centric professions and its value-driven mission mean that Avila alumni naturally stood on the front lines of their communities' responses.

“

Across the country, the response of Avila's alumni has been remarkable. The following are some of their stories:

**CHRISTINE EVANS HANDS '80** knew early on the pandemic presented Merriam, Kansas with the biggest emergency it had faced in her time as city council member. Christine's time at Avila helped prepare her for confronting unforeseen challenges. In this time of pandemic she knew decisive and well-communicated decision making would be necessary to settle the nerves of Merriam residents while ensuring basic services would continue, if somewhat modified.

Utilizing social media to explain the council's decisions, Christine said sharing information and open communication are essential to her role during this time.

"Our outreach centers on sharing information with our constituency and explaining why we made our decision," she said. "It's important for elected officials to set a good example. I try to keep myself up to date on what the guidelines are and abide by them, both for my own safety but also so that people know that no one is above following them."

As a non-traditional student raising children at home in the late 1970s, Christine said she approached some of her Avila courses with "fear and trepidation." However, with the support of her teachers and fellow students, she said she was able to overcome her

“

It's important for elected officials to set a good example, but it's especially key right now.”

**Christine Evans Hands '80**



initial concerns and lack of familiarity, eventually leading to an 18-year career at Hallmark Cards as a computer technology manager.

"What struck me when I began at Avila was how accepting the people were," she said. "Because I was pursuing a degree in business with an emphasis in information technology, I was learning materials I'd never had much to do with, like business communications or marketing. My teachers at Avila were just really good. They were challenging, but supportive and I gained so much from them and my time there." 🗨️

“

We jumped into action to support the medical needs of the Kansas City community from a very early stage.”

**Olivia Johnson '13**



**THE PANDEMIC'S REPERCUSSIONS** for Kansas City's medical infrastructure meant those infected by the virus were not alone in feeling the effects of COVID-19. Increased demand on resources prevented some members of the community from receiving the support they needed to manage their ailments. Organizations such as the KC CARE Health Center and case workers like Olivia Johnson '15 stepped up to continue to meet the need.

"We jumped into action to support the medical needs of the Kansas City community from a very early stage," Johnson said. A lot of the patients we serve are working class and have been financially affected by COVID-19. Many of my clients have either

lost their jobs or have been unable to seek shelter as they normally would."

As a case worker with the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program at KC CARE, Johnson works with clients who recently discovered they had been diagnosed with HIV to provide support, education and advocacy. However, her role changed significantly as the pandemic grew in scale.

"Beginning with the work from home order in mid-March, my work process halted because all case managers were moved to working remotely and prohibited from meeting with clients," Johnson said. "It's been a huge shift in my day-to-day work. As we have settled into the new procedures, it has been challenging to meet my clients' needs during these times of turmoil."

As conditions changed quickly and unexpectedly, Johnson said she leaned on her Avila experience and training "to handle unprecedented times as these."

"During my time at Avila, I not only learned how to advocate and provide direct services to clients, but also how to assess the needs of my organization and community," she said. "The perspective I gained with the social work program has helped me excel during these times." 🗨️



**WITH NEARLY A DOZEN RETIREMENT** communities in six states, Stuart Lindeman '86 faced a maze of conflicting governmental regulations, social distancing requirements, and wildly different infection rates. As President and CEO of Mission Health, he acted aggressively to ensure his patients, residents and staff had access to the personal protection equipment and other resources they needed to safeguard against the virus.

"We knew that COVID-19 was going to affect our country's most at-risk populations, which certainly included the 4,000 seniors we take care of in six states," Stuart said.

"Our main concern was to put a bubble around our communities to make sure our residents, patients, and caregivers were safe, because they're our first priority," Stuart said. "We also wanted to make sure that we were serving the local communities in which we operate. In the larger cities, we affiliated with hospitals that anticipated a surge of patients with COVID-19 and offered to admit these positive patients, once stable, directly from the hospital, alleviating some of the hospital's burden should they become overwhelmed.

"In most of our communities, we had zero COVID cases, even though we're one of the largest providers of senior care in Kansas and have many more communities spread across the country. We felt prepared, but we were not spared. Positive cases were found in seven of our 50 communities, such as in Minnesota where we had 75 patients test positive for COVID in one building."

“

One of the things Avila taught me was the importance of solid values and the importance of giving back."

**Stuart Lindeman '86**



From maintaining open dialogue across facilities to educating staff on how to handle the different challenges they may encounter, Stuart said Mission Health's CARES (Character, Attitude, Respect, Excellence, Service) values have served the organization and its people well during the pandemic. Those values came directly from his experience at Avila, he said.

"We not only want to take care of our patients and residents—that's our number one priority—but in order to do that, we also want to be sure we're taking care of each other," Stuart said. "One of the things Avila taught me was the importance of solid values and the importance of giving back. As a nursing home administrator, I lived by that and continue to do so. You take care of your residents and patients, and you do right by your staff, good things will happen. I've been passionate about this business for 35 years and the values supporting my longevity were learned from Avila." 🗨️

“

Avila helped me see the world differently."

**Laura Hoffman '93**



**AS A LONG-TIME EMPLOYEE OF CERNER**, one of the largest healthcare-related companies in the United States, Laura Hoffman '93 did not doubt the potential severity of the disease and felt her work would support the work done in medical facilities across the country and world. However, as a type-1 diabetic, she said the pandemic presented her with an unexpected worry.

"As an autoimmune disease, my diabetes gave me a lot of concerns," Laura said. "I've had it as long as I can remember, so I hadn't considered it a risk before. This has made me reconsider and think about it a lot differently.

"Avila helped me see the world differently. I had gone to a large high school, where it was easy to get lost in the crowd, and at Avila, that was impossible as everyone knows everyone else. I loved that professors were easy to talk to and most had an open-door policy, something I've kept in my professional life as well."

Her work as an integration executive at Cerner meant she was well-acquainted with being productive in non-traditional workplaces like airports, hotel rooms and planes. The transition to sheltering in place meant those skills came in handy as she adjusted to working from home, even if that transition meant sacrificing one of her favorite parts of the Cerner workplace.

"Many of the projects I was working on have been put on a lower priority so we can concentrate on the updates to the EMR (electronic medical record) that are COVID-focused to help our clients better handle the increased patient volume," she said. "But the biggest challenge is not being around people. Many times, the best ideas come from those elevator or "water cooler" conversations. While there is still the ability to call, email, or message, those side conversations many times lead to some of the best ideas." 🗨️

“

We can't just concentrate on the solutions for today, but we need to find the solutions for tomorrow.”

Michele L. Watley '09, '14



**WHEN MICHELE L. WATLEY '09, '14** founded Shirley's Kitchen Cabinet in 2018, she hoped to bring policies disproportionately affecting Black women and their families to light, allowing local communities to address issues directly. Limited access to health care, housing and employment has long affected Black women particularly, she said, but it took the pandemic for a wider audience to become aware of this disparity.

“Even if researchers found a cure for COVID-19 tomorrow, we still need to understand and address the impact of unemployment, disrupted and remote schooling and evictions,” Michele said. “Especially with education, if you don't have a parent at home with the time to help educate their child, there will be disproportionate effect on Black women and their families that will need to be reckoned with.

“We can't just concentrate on the solutions for today, but we need to find the solutions for tomorrow.”

Named for Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress, the non-partisan, non-profit

organization's website added a COVID-19 specific microsite. The site provides information on how to get testing, resources for housing and how to deal with issues related to eviction or job losses.

“It is important to look at the effect on Black women and their families right now because it might be a predictor on what to expect moving forward,” Michele said. “How do we create and enact long-term policies that can be implemented to help alleviate these gross disparities in access to resources? As a non-partisan, non-profit organization, we are dedicated to better equip black women to understand the issues facing them in their communities and supply them with the tools they need to see through their efforts.”

In addition to Shirley's Kitchen Cabinet, Michele founded The Griot Group in 2018 to provide media consulting, campaign management and constituency outreach to advocacy nonprofit and education organizations locally, regionally and nationally.

She admitted that running two advocacy-oriented organizations during an emergency eats up much of her time, but she appreciated how her breadth of political advocacy experience has aided in spreading awareness about issues facing Black communities.

“Pivoting from working with candidates to helping advocacy organizations and running an NPO (non-profit organization) has been one of the silver linings of COVID, if there are any,” Michele said. “It allows me to use my experience working on campaigns across the political spectrum and niche skill set to help these groups. NPOs and people who have not been heavily involved in politics don't normally get the opportunity to move issues that affect them.”

“

Community and teamwork were instilled in me from Avila.”

Mollie Brown '14 (pictured right)



**AS THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRESS**, Mollie Brown left and returned from another travel assignment, electing to travel to New York, the most heavily hit city in the United States. Assigned to the particularly hard-hit Coney Island Hospital in Brooklyn, she aided

with the dramatic influx of patients flooding the hospital during her three-week spell beginning in mid-April. While there, she saw the effects of the virus on communities that lacked resources to combat it and ultimately contracted COVID-19 herself.

“COVID-19 is very real—not only have I cared for patients with it, I contracted and recovered from it myself,” she said. “The Northeast (United States) has been hit so hard because there is simply a lack of resources. You have patients who have healed from the virus but have nowhere to go because shelters and nursing homes aren't accepting people who have had it for fear of it possibly spreading in their facilities.

“In the Midwest, we have had time to watch and prepare. It is only a matter of time before it hits harder here. If wearing a mask and being more socially aware helps keep the curve flattened, we owe it to each other to be flexible and embrace this new reality.”

# Events that Inspire

Due to social distancing requirements, Avila University's 103rd graduating class faced unprecedented obstacles in the final months of their college career. Despite these challenges, nearly 4,000 new alumni earned and received their degrees in May.

"I am proud of the Class of 2020—not only for their academic achievements, athletic feats and community service—but also for their dedication in these past few months while weathering unprecedented worries and concerns," Avila President Ronald A. Slepitzka Ph.D., CSJA said. 🎓



Avila University  
Kansas City, Missouri

## Commencement

The Class of 2020 will be invited to walk across the stage with their classmates during next May's commencement exercises.



*“Everything from teaching to all of our student and campus services pivoted to do what was needed to help students complete the spring semester. Everyone kept their focus on the students to provide them with the most support possible.”*

— Alexandra Adams, Ed.D., vice president for enrollment management

## Preparing for the Unknown

Facing a campus shutdown, faculty and staff ensured learning continued remotely

### Confronted with the global pandemic

in March, Avila University staff and faculty worked tirelessly to prepare the University and campus for remote learning and distancing. In just nine days, the employees of Avila sanitized buildings, adapted lesson plans to remote learning and acquired the accommodations necessary to safely return.

“Faculty had just over a week to transition to online learning—staff had even less time—and everyone just came together and did it,” said Alexandra Adams, Ed.D., vice president for enrollment management. “Everything from teaching to all of our student and campus services pivoted to do what was needed to help students complete the spring semester. Everyone kept their focus on the students to provide them with the most support possible.”

“The biggest challenge moving forward is keeping up with all the changes, as they seem to literally change daily in some

cases,” Adams said. “The purchasing of additional equipment to create multi-use classrooms where faculty can teach both online and in-person, NAIA requirements for athletes, cleaning equipment—all these things are necessary, but are costly.”

At publication, the University had begun welcoming back staff and faculty to campus and had developed plans to open for the Fall 2020 semester.

“We’ve adjusted everything to accommodate for a successful return to campus for our students,” Adams said. “We’ve made plans for appropriate social distancing and mask wearing on campus, modified classes, labs and housing to accommodate our students and purchased technology and sanitizing stations to monitor the health of everyone that steps foot on Avila’s campus.” 🦺



## Feed Your Friends

Avila University Food Pantry

# Food Pantry Opens to Avila Community

Opened to the Avila community this February, the University's newly created food pantry provides essential goods to students, staff, faculty and friends who need assistance, for whatever reason. The pantry was an immediate hit, according to Jordan Wagge, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology and pantry organizer.

"I thought people would be trickling in at first and we would have time to adjust, but we had 30 people come through in the span of an hour," Wagge said. "After a week, we had gone through almost half of our supplies. Everyone that has come in so far has left with a big bag of groceries."

The organizers worked closely with partner Harvesters—the Community Food Network to make sure the pantry met federal and state guidelines while also providing food safety training to staff members. Harvesters also is donating food and supplies to make sure all goods are stocked.

While the partnership with Harvesters helps supply some of the food and supplies for the pantry, Wagge said they are looking for assistance from the Avila community to guarantee the project remains sustainable.

"Our biggest needs right now are either cash donations or targeted food categories," she said.

To make a donation to the Avila Food Pantry, please visit [www.avila.edu/donate](http://www.avila.edu/donate). 🗣️



## Student Affairs Creates Transfer Student Orientation Program

In order to meet the unique challenges transfer students face when they enter Avila University, the Office of Student Affairs introduced the Transfer Student Orientation program (TSO) this past spring to help them discover the resources the University offers.

"Avila has welcomed transfer and other non-traditional students throughout its history, and recognizing the importance of those students, we decided to create an organization tailored to the unique considerations those students face," said Jason Baldwin, director of student life and TSO founder. "Thanks to insights from several current and former transfer students, we've begun reimagining how we welcome non-traditional students with events and resources specific to their experience."

Aided by seniors Ersh Muhammad and Hayley Thagard, Baldwin said the TSO Program is designed to "recognize, support and connect" Avila transfer students. As former transfers, Muhammad and Thagard both know what the complications the transfer process entails.

"Both Ersh and Hayley are assets to the Avila community, but especially the

transfer students who are entering Avila from other institutions," Baldwin said. "We are fortunate to have two strong leaders as part of Avila and the TSO program. Their willingness to support new students and their honesty in sharing their experiences mean that new transfers have a better sense of what Avila has to offer."

Both Muhammad and Thagard volunteered to help with the TSO because of the uncertainty they faced when considering where to transfer. Each decided to attend Avila thanks to strong initial impressions of the people and campus, something they wanted to pass on to the next generations of transfers.

"When I first came to Avila, I wasn't always sure who I needed to talk to about different services on campus," Muhammad said. "And then one day we were talking about freshman orientation and we started talking about offering a transfer student organization. I'm very passionate about it because when I came here, it's something I would have wanted." 🗣️



# Women's Basketball Wins KCAC Postseason Tournament

**A string** of strong defensive performances and timely scoring helped earn the Avila University women's basketball team its first Kansas Collegiate Athletics Conference (KCAC) tournament championship early this spring, booking its first trip to the NAIA Division II Women's Basketball Championship since 2012.

Culminating in a tight 67-65 victory over second seed Sterling College on March 2 in Wichita, Kansas, the Eagles emerged as a dark horse contender after it defeated no. 5 seed Tabor College 55-50 on the road in the quarterfinals before defeating Oklahoma Wesleyan University 72-62 in Mabee Fieldhouse.

Helmed by head coach Torie Murillo '14, seniors Paige Bunn (15.5 points per game) and Taylor Faulkner (14.7) and junior Matti Morgan (14.8) led the squad in scoring for the season, with Faulkner coming up with a clutch 19 points in the conference championship.

With the conference tournament championship, the team earned an automatic bid to play against the national no. 2-seeded St. Xavier University on March 12 in Sioux City, Iowa in the first round of the national tournament. Unfortunately, the team's season came to an unexpected end after the NAIA canceled all winter and spring championships to prevent the spread of COVID-19. 🏠



# Top Performers Recognized

While COVID-19 prematurely ended the sporting calendar for Avila Athletics, the department recognized those student-athletes who led their teams in competition while exemplifying the University's values.

Torie Murillo and her KCAC Conference Tournament-winning squad highlight the selections, with Murillo named Avila Coach of the Year and Matti Morgan named Female Athlete of the Year. Senior Shandon Boone's dedication and accomplishments on and off the basketball court resulted in the recent graduate being named Male Athlete and Male Scholar Athlete of the Year. 🏆



**Pictured above, L to R:** Male Athlete of the Year: Shandon Boone, Men's Basketball; Female Athlete of the Year: Matti Morgan, Women's Basketball; Coach of the Year: Torie Murillo, Women's Basketball; Female Scholar Athlete of the Year: Danielle Rehor, Women's Basketball; Male Athlete Leader of the Year: Devin

Senerius, Football; Female Athlete Leader of the Year: Brooke Riley, Cheerleading; Male Transfer: Eric Smith, Jr., Men's Basketball; Female Transfer: Cassidy Snowden, Women's Basketball; Male Freshman: Jadon Pyle, Men's Basketball; Female Freshman: Kirryn Killingsworth, Women's Soccer 🏆

## Men's Basketball Celebrate Waris Legacy

The magic of former men's basketball coach Bill Waris could be felt in Mabee Fieldhouse on December 7, as the University recognized his family and former players during a halftime ceremony in Mabee Fieldhouse on the court named in his honor.

One of the first athletics programs at Avila College, as it was then called, the men's basketball team led by Waris ushered in a new competitive spirit among student-athletes. Members of that first team recognized during the ceremony included Dennis Joyce '77—who later served as assistant coach to Waris and became Avila's head coach for six seasons following Waris' retirement—and Wayne Simien, Sr. '78. 🏆



**Pictured above, L to R:** Wayne Simien Sr. '78, Jeff Gilmore '80, Tim Waris, Darrek Porter '82, Charles Allen '84, Frederick Haney '83, Dennis Joyce '77, Mike Moran '83, Cortney Turner '07, Tim Waris Jr., Will Waris, Kathleen Waris Cuddy, and Patty Waris 🏆

# Chiefs

## WE ARE FAMILY

### AVILA UNIVERSITY Steer Dinner & Auction



For the sixth consecutive year, Avila University raised more than \$1 million toward student scholarships during a truly "super" 44th annual Steer Dinner & Auction. Celebrating the Avila family, guests showed up in their finest red and gold attire to celebrate the Kansas City Chiefs the evening before their win in Super Bowl LIV.

This year's Steer Dinner turned into the city's largest pre-Super Bowl party led by Honorary Chairs Patricia '00 and Kevin Lyon, and Event Chairs Greg Kratofil, Jr., and Kristin Kratofil. Nearly 600 guests and volunteers attended the event on February 1, 2020, at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown. View more photos from Steer at [Avila.edu/Steer](http://Avila.edu/Steer). 📷



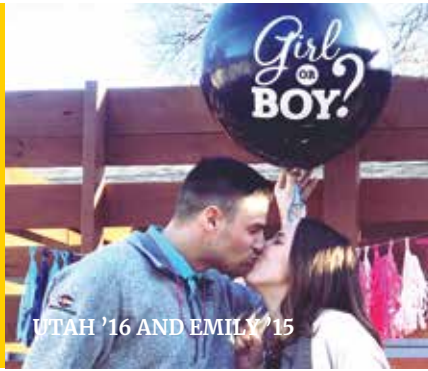




From top, left to right: Honorary Chairs Kevin and Patricia '00 Lyon with Suzanne Slepitza and President Ron Slepitza, Ph.D.; student speaker Chijoke Eguzo '20; Suzanne Slepitza, Joe '16 (Hon.) and Sue Fahey; Anne and Stuart '86 Lindeman; Ken and Marilyn Hager; J. Anthony Snorggrass, Ph.D., Cheryl Snorggrass, Marcie and Ronald Jones; President Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., Bishop James V. Johnston, Jr., and Mark Thompson, of presenting sponsor Country Club Bank; Shelley and Tim '95 O'Brien



LOGAN '18 & VICTORIA '17, '19



UTAH '16 AND EMILY '15



BRIAN '10 AND ALEX '10, '13

## Alumni Sweethearts

**LOGAN '18 & VICTORIA '17, '19** ARCANO met at Avila in 2015. They both studied social work and were members of various organizations on campus, including the Student Social Work Association and the Justice Ministry with OMSA. Victoria is a program assistant for the Kansas City Kansas Police Department Victims Services Unit working in the Wyandotte County Courthouse order of protection office. Logan is working at Splitlog Coffee Co. in Pendleton Heights. He hopes to somehow combine his love of coffee with his education in mental health to create a culture of mindfulness and self-care within the Kansas City coffee community. 📍

**UTAH '16 AND EMILY '15** FINDLEY met at Avila during their sophomore and freshman years in the residence halls. They first became friends cheering each other in their sport teams and then began dating. They were married in 2016. Today they live in Prairie Village. Emily works as a nurse at the University of Kansas Health System in the NICU and Utah is a tax specialist for Lockton. They are expecting their first child in the summer. 📍

**BRIAN '10 AND ALEX '10, '13** met in the Avila residence halls in 2006. Brian was on the football team and Alex cheered. They were married in 2013 and now have two children. Together, they work at Brookside Charter School. Brian is the Athletic/Activities Director and Alex the elementary counselor. 📍

## Flashback Friday

**THE MARTHA SMITH, CSJ, PH.D. ARCHIVES & RESEARCH CENTER** at Avila University is looking to collect photos, similar to this one, publications, course materials and papers documenting the education experience of Avila alumni. The archives preserve and make these materials available to aid in the research, instruction and historical documentation projects. *Contact Avila's Archives & Research Center for more information: 816.501.3602, msarchives@avila.edu. Make sure to follow the Alumni Association's Facebook page to participate in future Flashback Friday contests.* 📍

**Front Row (L-R):** Alycia Bell (Lassen), Annie Beard, Tara (Gustafson) Smith '00, Mary Von Bohland-Rau '99, Sarah (Hall) McKee '02, Erin (Hall) Meade '02 **Back Row (L-R):** Hannah Wolfe (Iliff), Stacy Clark, Debra Lopa, Kaleen (Marsh) Frisbie '99, Jessica Dawn Pankey '99, Alicia Christiansen 📍



## Day of Giving



Thank you to the **OVER 100 DONORS** who made a gift on Avila University's annual Day of Giving on November 19, 2019. **NEARLY \$90,000 WAS RAISED** for student scholarships, athletics, campus ministry and academic departments. Thank you to everyone who participated and mark your calendar for 2020 Day of Giving – November 17, 2020! 📍

# CLASS NOTES

'64 **KATHLEEN HEGARTY THORNE** completed the final volume of her trilogy, **pictured top below**, about the history of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the first half of the twentieth century. All three volumes of "Echoes of Their Footsteps" can be found in every Irish county library and every Irish university, as well as several universities in England, Concordia University in Montreal, and the New South Wales University in Sydney, Australia and about 15 American universities. Kathleen wishes to publicly thank those tireless teachers at Avila,

many of whom have passed over to the "other side," who patiently mentored and encouraged her. She stood on the shoulders of many a fine instructor at Loretto Academy and at Avila College to be able to accomplish what she did. They planted the mustard seed and it blossomed.

'76 **DIANE (NOVAK) WEST**, **pictured bottom below**, married Richard West on April 17 in a very private and socially distanced wedding at St. Mary of the Springs Catholic Church in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

'76 **FABIAN YANEZ** recently retired from the Office of Worship of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Fabian and wife, **DELAINE '76** live in Denver.

'81 **LISA PYCIOR** and husband own Cartridge World-Lee's Summit. They have remained open during the COVID crisis and deemed essential business. They provide remanufactured printer cartridges to essential businesses.

'81 **LISA SACKUVICH** recently received the 2020 Gene Graves Lifetime Achievement Award from National Home Infusion Association (NHIA).

'81 **STEPHANIE SEDIQZAD** recently became employed with USDA.

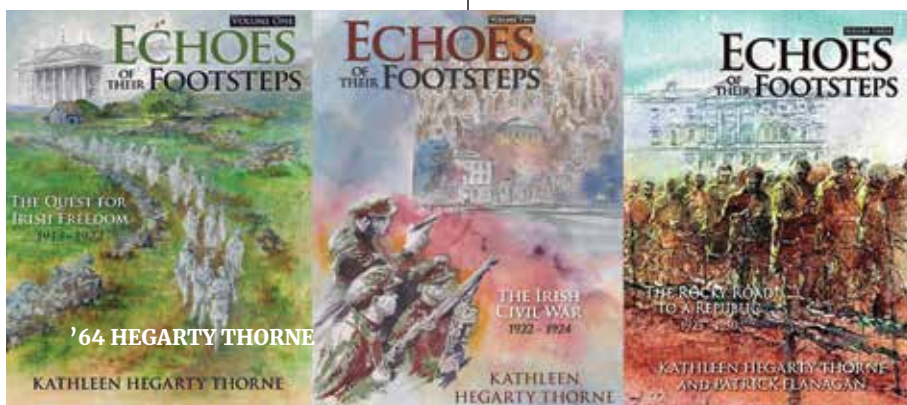
'89, '19 **SHEILA (SHIFLETT) LUEHRS** was recently voted in as a new member of the Alumni Board.

'93 **STEPHEN REDMON** retired in December after serving as Mexico, Missouri's building inspector for 12 years. In December, he also directed "Elf: The Musical."

'95 **LUANA (CUMPTON) PAULSEN** recently became a Pre-Planning Advisor with McGilley Funeral Homes & Cemeteries.

'02 **SARAH (HALL) MCKEE** was recently voted in as a new member of the Alumni Board.

'07 **LEONARD CASEY** was recently promoted to Director, Pipeline Management at Spire. He and his family are moving to Alabama.



'64 HEGARTY THORNE



'76 NOVAK/WEST

## CLASS NOTES

'07, '12 **COURTNEY TURNER** has written three books, "Quit Playin," "You're Not Alone" (about suicide prevention) and "Fit in With Y.O.U." (self-esteem building and self-efficacy focused). Each of the books are geared towards young people.

'09 **DOUG WENDEL** completed his Doctor of Education in Leadership in Education Administration from University of Florida.

'12 **CHUCK DAVIS** recently became the head football coach at Bishop LeBlond High School in St. Joseph, Missouri. Davis is a 2008 alumnus and serves as the assistant basketball coach.

'12 **ERIC POTTER** recently became a recruitment specialist with Olsson.

'12 **JOSH HEWITT** recently became the football head equipment manager at University of Nevada, Las Vegas Athletics.

'12 **MJ BLAND** was recently promoted to Offensive Coordinator and serves as Director of Football Operations with Avila football.

'12, '15 **SARA BOATWRIGHT** accepted the position of Special Events Manager with The Children's Place in December.

'13 **ADAM MAY** is the Clinical Director and Managing Partner of Kansas City Psychiatric & Psychological Services, LLC. His mental health practice remained opened during the pandemic and still maintains active working status as an essential health care provider practice servicing mental health needs for the majority of the KC metro population.

'14 **BRETT BENEKE** was recently voted in as a new member of the Alumni Board.

'14 **CATHERINE (TURNER) WARD-BOPP AND '09 NICK WARD-BOPP** welcomed their first child, Forrest, on December 13, 2019. Pictured top left.

'14 **MOLLIE BROWN** held a travel nurse position in New York City in the ICU to help with COVID-19 patients.



'14, '09 WARD-BOPP



'10 HASTFIELD

'14 CRISS/PETTY



'14 MCMILIAN/BROYLES



'19 BASKIN/McCANTS

'14 **SHAWNALEE CRISS PETTY**, pictured bottom of page 18, married Taylor Petty on November 23, 2019 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Kansas City. Petty was also recently voted in as a new member of the Alumni Board.

'15 **SARAH (MCMILIAN) BROYLES**, pictured top right, married Thomas C. Broyles on September 9, 2019.

'18 **ABBEY OSBORN** traveled to Louisiana to serve in the ICU that needed additional RN assistance.

'19 **ARITT VELAZQUEZ** recently joined the Avila Undergraduate Admissions team as an Admissions Representative.

'19 **DAYSHA BASKIN** welcomed son, Daylan Christian McCants on September 18, 2019. He weighed seven pounds and three ounces. He was 21 inches long. Pictured bottom right.

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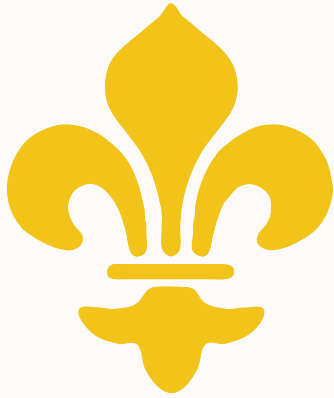
### Stay Connected

We want to hear from you! Job promotion, new baby, recent travels or new home? Let us know so we can share your good news! Email your news to [alumni@avila.edu](mailto:alumni@avila.edu) or complete the *What's New With You* form at [Avila.edu/Alumni](http://Avila.edu/Alumni).




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Alumni Association



# In Memoriam

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To make a gift in memory of a friend or loved one, please visit [Avila.edu/Donate](http://Avila.edu/Donate) or call 816.501.3602.

'49 **DOLORES MURPHY CASEY** of Leawood, Kansas passed away on December 27, 2019. Casey received her bachelor's degree in sociology from the College of St. Teresa.

'49 **MAXINE (KEIM) SCHLICHTER** of Leawood, Kansas passed away on February 25, 2020. Schlichter attended the College of the St. Teresa.

'49 **ROSEMARY (KELLY) STOLLE** of Lynnwood, Washington passed away on April 7, 2020. Stolle received her bachelor's degree in English from the College of St. Teresa.

'52 **THERESA (POVALA) KOLICH** of Sugar Creek, Missouri passed away on December 15, 2019. Kolich received her bachelor's degree in nursing from College of St. Teresa.

'53 **TERESA (SULLIVAN) QUINN** of Olathe, Kansas passed away on November 20, 2019. Quinn received her bachelor's degree in education from College of St. Teresa.

'59 **MARY PAT CONWAY** of Raytown, Missouri passed away on January 21, 2020. Conway received her bachelor's degree in general studies from College of St. Teresa.

'59 **SALLY (WEBSTER) MASCHLER** of Kansas City, Missouri passed away on November 10, 2019. Maschler received her bachelor's degree in history from College of St. Teresa.

'61 **LINDA (HARE) ARENS** of Columbus, Ohio passed away on April 2, 2020. Arens received her bachelor's degree in nursing from College of St. Teresa.

'65 **MARITA (O'ROURKE) BARTHOLOME** of Chelsea, Massachusetts passed away on March 16, 2020. Bartholome received her bachelor's degree in education from Avila College.

'93 **MARY DURKIN** of Kansas City, Missouri passed away on February 10, 2020. Durkin received her master's in Counseling Psychology from Avila College.

'95 **ELIZABETH "BETH" HEIDE** of Belton, Missouri passed away on February 25, 2020. Heide received her bachelor's degree in history from Avila College.

'09 **SUZANNE (GOODE) REEDY** of Louisburg, Kansas passed away on February 23, 2020. Reedy received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Avila University.

'13 **STEPHANIE ROBBINS** of Raymore, Missouri passed away on November 15, 2019. Robbins received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Avila University.

**GARLAND CANTRELL** of Olathe, Kansas passed away on December 27, 2019. Cantrell served on both the Board of Counselors and then Board of Trustees for Avila College from 1989 to 1998.



**PAT MARTIN** of Lee's Summit, Missouri passed away March 30, 2020. Martin worked at Avila University for 21 years. She started as Sister Olive Louise Dallavis's administrative assistant and worked her way up to the leadership position in Advancement. Martin was in charge of the Steer Dinner for many years. During her time as an employee, she received the Avila Medal, Employee of the Year in 1990.

# Paying it Forward

## Laurie Peckham '85 on Making a Difference in the Lives of Future Avila Eagles

As a first-generation college student and the only member of her immediate family to graduate college, Avila Heritage Society member Laurie Peckham '85 deeply appreciates the impact student scholarships at Avila played in her life.

"Having a college degree made a huge difference in my confidence facing issues that I might encounter in the world," Peckham said. "Because of the benevolence of someone that I don't even know, I was able to earn my degree. Now I'm able to do the same thing and if I can make that kind of difference in someone else's life, then I think I've fulfilled what Avila put me on the path to fulfill."

A Kansas City, Missouri native, Peckham originally attended Central Missouri State University but realized she wanted a smaller school environment pretty quickly. She began researching Avila on the advice of her best friend from high school and found what she was looking for.

"The key thing for Avila and why I was able to be successful there was due to the class size and the professor knowledge pool," she said. "For instance, I knew that when I got to higher-level accounting classes, there might be six people in my class. When you're dealing with those sorts of in-depth concepts in a large

class format, it's easy to get behind if a professor has to deal with many questions. At Avila, the professors could better ensure the success of every student—that was a huge difference for me."

That difference paid off. Peckham has provided financial administration and oversight for many companies—from Fortune 500 firms to small companies—in her three-decade career. She now consults on financial reporting for telecommunication firms in Indiana, where she has lived with her husband, Greg, since 2003. She also co-owns a boring company which provides drilling services throughout the state.

Named a member of the Heritage Society in 2017 for a life insurance bequest to the University, Peckham said she was struck at the simplicity of the institutional bequest process.

"The whole process was not difficult at all," she said. "I was able to go online and update my designated beneficiary within my estate plan on their website, which is the case with most estate plans. I learned that if you name a beneficiary on your insurance policy, that beneficiary—with a few exceptions—will be the recipient of those funds from your insurance policy regardless of what you say about it in an estate plan."

While she no longer lives in Kansas City, she returns to the area frequently and makes a point to return to campus as frequently as possible.

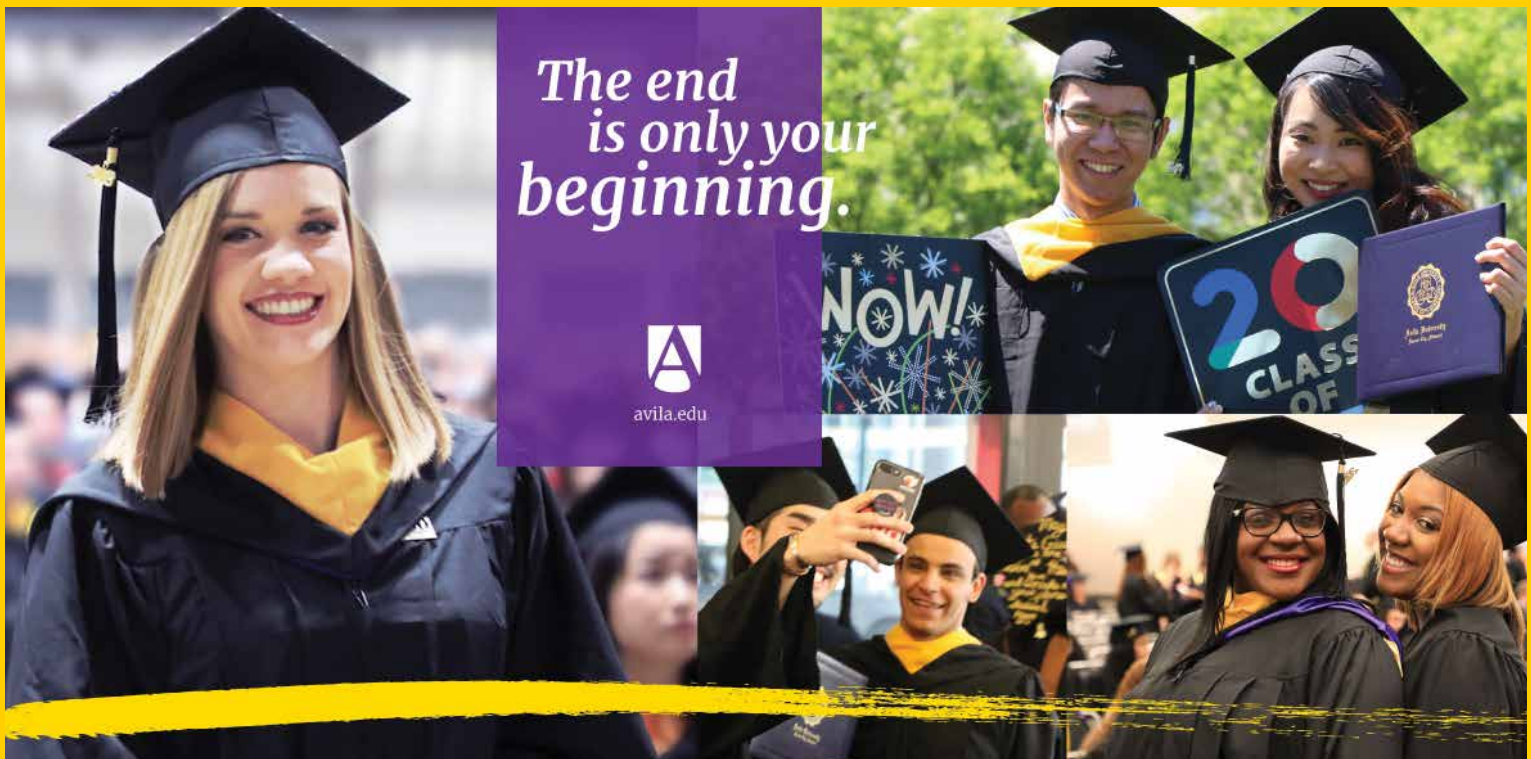
"The last time I visited Avila during the summer, I had a great experience during my tour even though classes weren't in session," she said. "When I was in school, I had friends in productions at the Goppert Theatre and attended many shows there, so I hope to see a show at the new performing arts center. But even with the changes, it's wonderful to see that in many ways, it hasn't changed and is still the same campus I love." 📍



*We invite you to join the hundreds of alumni and friends, like Laurie, who have already planned their legacy at Avila. Making a planned gift to Avila can be done in several simple and savvy ways without reducing your income or diminishing your savings.*

*Call us today to learn more and to make a lasting impact. Contact Maggie Mohrfeld, interim vice president of advancement, at 816.501.2430 or [Maggie.Mohrfeld@avila.edu](mailto:Maggie.Mohrfeld@avila.edu).*





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