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When I encounter students on campus following a semester break, I usually ask them two questions:

1. How was your break?
2. What did you do with your time off?

As you might expect, the responses I receive are often some variation of “I slept” or “I worked” or “I visited family and friends.” However, in this issue of The Eagle, you will read about the remarkable journey of 37 Niagara University students who served the poor during their time away from class.

They are remarkable young people — enjoy their story. They, like many Niagara students and alumni, embrace St. Vincent’s call to become remarkable people of service, while exercising Pope Francis’s compassionate call for mercy.

As Vincentian priests and brothers, we were formed in the belief that St. Vincent de Paul teaches us to see Christ in the poor and suffering insomuch that the poor become our masters and we their servants. Vincentian spirituality, which frames our culture of learning, leadership and service at Niagara, is built upon this concept.

We, as followers of St. Vincent, are awakened to the worth of everyone around us — especially those who so often get pushed into the margins. We see their value as our brothers and sisters, and respond to it with deep respect. Action is, indeed, our entire task.

That message resonated deeply with the students who participated in our Brothers and Sisters In Christ program this past January. Ministering in the most forlorn sections of Camden, N.J., Philadelphia, Pa., and the Republic of Panama, these students eschewed the rest and relaxation typically associated with the semester break to toil in anonymity alongside the marginalized.

Jacey Diez, ’16, spent 11 days working with at-risk students in Camden. It was the second time Jacey volunteered to educate children in New Jersey and her sixth B.A.S.I.C. mission overall, having previously participated in service experiences in Buffalo, Philadelphia, Panama and Greensboro, N.C. She said that the opportunity to teach in poverty-stricken communities provides her with a content feeling of purpose and fulfillment, along with a renewed sense of faith.

While Jacey was immersed in service learning in the Garden State, Rachel Bailey, ’17, was stationed approximately 2,100 miles south, extending our Vincentian outreach to the Republic of Panama. As remarkable as it is that Rachel (and nine other students) lent a hand in nursing homes and orphanages in some of Panama’s poorest indigenous communities, what’s truly inspiring is that Rachel took on these tasks only 15 days after returning home from Nicaragua. It was there that she and five other members of our Bienvenidos Spanish and Hispanic culture club helped build a home for an impoverished family in the mountain town of El Sauce.

At Niagara, we seek to form modern-day embodiments of St. Vincent and it’s quite clear that we have done so with these two young women — as well as the 35 other students who were part of January’s B.A.S.I.C. experience. I stated during my inauguration that Niagara University will fortify a two-way bridge to the world of the poor. This is work that began long before my presidency and will continue long after.

The selflessness of people like Jacey, Rachel and many of you reading this is what will ultimately allow us to make strides toward that goal. We must continue to be inventive with the times, realizing that true charity does not consist of distributing alms, but in helping the poor regain their dignity and independence.

We do this at Niagara University by preparing our graduates, through research, academia and service, to combat human suffering in various ways. As I write this, our accounting students are helping low-income residents prepare their tax returns for free, management majors are developing business plans for the Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity and our Institute of Applied Learning is being held up as a national model for the innovative manner in which it partners with local P-12 schools.

These types of initiatives make a measurable and lasting impact on the lives of people living in poverty, and they also help our students accrue the types of hands-on experiences that make them attractive to employers after they graduate. It’s the epitome of a win-win situation.

Our plan is to further leverage NU’s wonderful treasures of teaching, research and service to assist those in need, inviting them to be part of our community and thereby enhancing all of our lives. Regionally, we will do this driven by our strategy to support growth in the areas of health and the life sciences, aided by our state-of-the-art integrated science center and cutting-edge nursing simulation lab. Through the Niagara Global Tourism Institute, we will help Western New York fulfill its enormous promise as a global tourism destination. And through programs like Brothers and Sisters In Christ and those offered by the Levesque Institute, we will have boots on the ground, individuals working as a singular Vincentian body to make a lasting positive impact on those living on the margins.

I am interested in hearing your ideas on how Niagara University can do more to fulfill the mission of St. Vincent de Paul. Should you have any thoughts on this topic, or anything else, please feel free to contact me at president@niagara.edu.

Sincerely,
Rev. James J. Maher, C.M.
President

More than 540 Niagara University alumni, students and friends came together in the name of educational access and affordability during NU’s 2015 President’s Dinner, held in November. Four individuals known for extraordinary professional success and service to the community were honored during the evening, including Dr. Bonnie Rose, former NU executive vice president, who received the Medal of Honor; Magistrate Judge Hugh B. Scott, ’71, who received the St. Vincent de Paul Award; Dr. Lawrence D. Jacobs, ’61, who was honored with the St. Vincent de Paul Award (posthumously); and Robert J. Dwyer, ’65, who received the Caritas Medal. The event netted a record $200,000 in support of Niagara University student scholarships.

Four alumni were honored by Niagara University’s College of Education during its annual professional recognition ceremony in October. Elizabeth Corieri, M.S.Ed. ’92, and Michelle Longlade, M.S.Ed. ’95, were named Educational Leaders of the Year. Dr. William Helmeczy, M.S.Ed. ’92, M.S.Ed. ’99, was recognized as a Counselor of the Year, and Timothy Rudan, M.S.Ed.’00, received a Teacher of the Year award. Other honorees included Jeffrey Rogers (Counselor of the Year), Dr. Linda Silvestri (Teacher of the Year), and Marie A. Cannon and Anne Readhead (Community Advocates of the Year). Chancellor Emeritus Robert M. Bennett and National Grid were honored with Special Recognition Awards.

Elizabeth Papadopoulos, M.S.Ed.’91, an elementary school teacher in Toronto who recently completed a six-year term as chair of the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers, delivered the commencement address and received the university’s Founder’s Award during the College of Education’s ninth commencement in Ontario in January. The Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., presided at the ceremonies and conferred the degree of Bachelor of Professional Studies in education on the 169 graduates.

Niagara University has been awarded $197,000 in state funding for the second phase of work on its state-of-the-art Nursing Simulation Center. Announced by Sen. Rob Ortt, NU’s capital project is one of 29 at higher educational institutions across the state being financed through the New York State Higher Education Capital Matching Grants Program.

For the next two years, Niagara University chemistry and biochemistry students will study how wood polymer composites age, thanks to a $55,000 grant from the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund for undergraduate research. WPC materials are increasingly common in home and commercial decking, outdoor furniture and the automotive industry, so understanding how their chemistry changes due to weathering is important in improving their design, notes Dr. Robyn Goacher, assistant professor of analytical chemistry and primary investigator for the grant.

As part of a new collaborative initiative between Niagara University and Hand in Hand for Haiti, a nonprofit organization founded by Edward J. Brennan, ’78, six NU students completed a seven-week internship at Lycée Jean-Baptiste Pointe du Sable, a school established by the organization. Tyler Van Leeuwen, Tara Topolski, Amber Mis, Bailey Rudow, Bethany Bouthilier, and Erin Burns served as instructors for the school’s summer camp during what was the first edition of an annual internship that will continue to bring NU student volunteers to serve children in the most impoverished nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Niagara University recently signed two new memorandums of understanding with international institutions. One, with Niagara College, Ontario, Canada, will extend opportunities for higher education on a binational scale. A primary objective of this MOU is to enable the two institutions to take on a greater leadership role in knowledge sharing as a means to enhance the economic growth of the Niagara region on both sides of the international border.

The second was with the Imperial International Hotel School, a new hospitality and tourism training center that is aligned with the five-star Imperial Hotel Vung Tau, Vietnam, and has been custom-designed to provide world-class tourism training for Vietnamese students. Within this partnership, Vietnamese students will work with faculty and administration from NU to receive internationally recognized certificates upon graduation. The programs will be constructed by NU faculty to meet the needs of Vietnam’s hospitality industry and combined with those approved by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the ASEAN Economic Community.

While in Vietnam this summer with his family, ROTC cadet Jesse Pakula, a sophomore criminal justice major from Upper Saddle, N.J., visited several souvenir shops hoping to find an authentic United States military dog tag. Although the majority of the tags he saw were imitation, he found a genuine tag in one small shop in Da Nang, and purchased it with the intention of returning it to its rightful owner, Carlyle J. Gainey. Upon returning to the United States, Pakula, with the assistance of Sgt. Michael Million, an instructor in the Military Science program, began searching for Gainey, first looking through the names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, and then conducting a number of Internet searches.

It was several weeks before the two discovered a 2005 photo of the retirement of Wyandanch High School basketball coach Carlyle Gainey. Sgt. Million contacted the Basketball Coaches Association of New York, and the organization put him in touch with Gainey, who now lives in South Carolina.

In addition to the dog tag, Sgt. Million and Pakula sent Gainey a package containing a t-shirt, hat, and two challenge coins, courtesy of Niagara’s ROTC and Veterans Services offices.

“He probably lost the tag 50 years ago in Vietnam,” Pakula says. “It’s pretty cool (to return it). I’m sure he’ll be happy to see it again.”

In related news, NU’s ROTC program continues to prove why it is considered one of the best in the nation. Results released in October from the United States Army Cadet Command’s Cadet Accessions and Branching Board show that the Purple Eagle Battalion placed in the top 20 percent on the National Accessions Order of Merit List.
NU student-athletes also rank highly among their peers, according to a report released in November by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. NU posted a cumulative Graduation Success Rate of 89 percent, which is 6 percent higher than the Division I national average (for the 2005–08 cohort), and a Federal Graduation Rate of 68 percent, which is two percentage points higher than the national average.

Dr. Timothy Lauger, an assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice, has been named the recipient of the James L. Maddex Jr. Paper of the Year Award for 2014. Dr. Lauger’s research, “Violent Stories: Personal Narratives, Street Socialization, and the Negotiation of Street Culture Among Street-Oriented Youth,” was selected from among all of the articles published last year in the Criminal Justice Review, an academic, peer-reviewed journal.

Several NU faculty and administrators took on new responsibilities with national and international organizations. Dr. Luis Sanchez, an assistant professor of chemistry, has been appointed president-elect of Gamma Sigma Epsilon, a national chemistry honor society founded in 1919. Dr. Sanchez will commence his term as president of the society in 2017, the same year Gamma Sigma Epsilon holds its 47th Biennial Conference at Niagara University.

Dr. Tenpao Lee, a professor of economics and finance, has been appointed a Distinguished Overseas Professor of the Shanghai Lixin University of Commerce in China. This appointment further enhances collaboration between Niagara and Lixin, which entered into an academic cooperation agreement in January 2015 to facilitate faculty and student exchange opportunities between the institutions.

Cathleen Anderson, assistant vice president for enrollment management, has been appointed to serve on the board of directors for the National Catholic College Admission Association. She will represent the association’s mid-Atlantic region (New York and New Jersey) during the three-year appointment.
Three alumni and the 1999-2000 men’s ice hockey team, the first to achieve a national ranking and win a conference tournament, as well as the only team in school history to advance to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament, were inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame during a luncheon and ceremony on Feb. 20, 2016. Mariam Al-Shikarchy, ’05 (women’s tennis), Frank Fiannaca, ’85 (baseball), and Chris Watson, ’97 (men’s basketball), were recognized as among the best and brightest personalities of the Niagara University athletics family, an honor that has been bestowed upon more than 150 individuals and teams since its inception in 1964.

A new Niagara University lecture series intended to facilitate conversations on tourism in the Buffalo-Niagara region launched in November. The series, sponsored by the Maid of the Mist, featured Dr. Anthony Townsend, an expert on urbanism and technology, who presented the keynote address, entitled *A Visit to the Smart City: How Technology WILL Enable Tourism & Economic Development in Western New York.*

“This is another concrete illustration that Niagara University fully intends to be involved in the planned development and growth of the tourism and hospitality industry in Western New York and New York state,” noted the Rev. James J. Maher, NU’s president.

A Halloween-themed children’s literacy program organized by NU students and the New York Power Authority was honored with one of five national *Literacy Alive!* gold awards from Kappa Delta Pi, the international honor society in education.

Andrea C. Nicolia, president of NU’s Alpha Alpha Beta chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, accepted the award during the society’s annual convolution, which was held in October in Orlando. Nicolia also participated in a panel discussion that apprised attendees on how to host a successful *Literacy Alive!* program.

Niagara University’s longstanding partnership with the Niagara Falls City School District has been chosen for the Model of Excellence Award from the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education. NU’s College of Education was presented with a plaque commemorating the achievement and will be featured in an upcoming edition of the AILACTE newsletter.

Christopher R. Coyer, ’93, Christopher J. Feeney, John A. Rieger, ’86, and John P. Rumschik, ’77, have been named to Niagara University’s Board of Trustees. Coyer is a financial services professional, while Feeney serves as executive vice president and chief financial officer for Delaware North. Meanwhile, Rieger is national managing partner of the financial services tax practice at Deloitte, and Rumschik is president and chief operating officer of M&T Insurance Agency.

Patrick J. Whalen, former chief operating officer of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Inc., was named interim director of the Niagara Global Tourism Institute. A comprehensive search to fill the position on a permanent basis will begin this spring. The NGTI is a Niagara University-led initiative that seeks to leverage research and development to transform the regional travel and tourism industry.

Niagara University was well-represented at the inaugural 12-Under-40 recognition ceremony in November. Michael Freedman, MBA’14, NU’s associate director of public relations and manager of online content; Laura DeBacco-Malysza, ’06, OB GYN physician assistant and coordinator of the OB GYN Center at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center; Michael Norris, ’98, town attorney for the Town of Lockport, N.Y., attorney for the Town of Somerset and Village of Cassadaga, and partner in the law firm of Seaman Norris LLP; and Tom Lowe, director of ReNU Niagara, were inducted into the 2015 class. The program was established by Leadership Niagara, the Niagara Gazette, and the Lockport-Union Sun & Journal to recognize leadership talent throughout Niagara County.

Four students from the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management captured first place at Smith Travel Research’s inaugural Market Study Competition in November at the HX: The Hotel Experience conference (formerly the International Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Show) in New York City.

Niagara seniors Jenna Roberts, Carl Bailey, Adam Zarzynski, and International University of Applied Sciences exchange student Fabian Lehmann spent two months preparing a comprehensive analysis of market research data of the Greater Buffalo hotel market. The students were unanimously selected over six other finalists, which were chosen among 27 teams that represented the leading hospitality schools from throughout the United States.
Christopher R. Coyer, ’93

Christopher J. Feeney

John A. Rieger, ’86

John P. Rumschik, ’77

Dr. Jon Marshall, ’00, a member of the 1999-2000 men’s hockey team; head men’s hockey coach Dave Burkholder; Mariam Al-Shikarchy, ’05; and Frank Fiannaca, ’85, were honored during the 42nd Athletics Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Feb. 20, 2016. (Not pictured, Chris Watson, ’97.)

M.S.Ed. students Jessica Bialkowski and Andrea Nicolia accepted the Literacy Alive! gold award on behalf of a collaborative Halloween program that was presented by Niagara University and the New York Power Authority.

College of Hospitality and Tourism Management students (l-r) Fabian Lehmann, Carl Bailey, Jenna Roberts, and Adam Zarczynski were awarded a first-place finish in Smith Travel Research’s inaugural Market Study Competition.
Six Honored During Vincentian Heritage Convocation

By Michael Freedman, MBA’14

David N. Campbell, ’63, Derek Puff, the Rev. Stephen M. Grozio, C.M., ’75, the Rev. W. Barry Moriarty, C.M., Kathleen A. Granchelli, and Christopher Lee, Ph.D., were honored during Niagara University’s annual Vincentian Heritage Convocation, held Sept. 24, 2015. The event, which takes place during the university’s celebration of Vincentian Heritage Week, recognizes the extraordinary contributions of university employees, alumni and community leaders.

David N. Campbell, ’63, a trustee emeritus at Niagara University, received the St. Vincent de Paul Medal as an outstanding Catholic lay person whose life embodies the ideals and values of St. Vincent. The former president of BBN Technologies and CEO of Computer Task Group and Xpedior is the founder of All Hands Volunteers, a disaster response organization that has helped rehabilitate devastated areas in Thailand and along the U.S. Gulf Coast, among others. All Hands Volunteers has executed over 40 projects — utilizing more than 30,000 volunteers — in the United States and abroad.

Presented with the St. Louise de Marillac Award for Outstanding Service was Kathleen A. Granchelli, chief executive officer of the YWCA of the Niagara Frontier. During Granchelli’s 21-year tenure with the YWCA, the organization has secured more than $10 million in grants to develop programs and services in Niagara County. She was the driving force behind the YWCA’s $6 million adaptive re-use of Carolyn’s House, a historic Niagara Falls facility that provides supportive transitional and permanent housing for homeless women and children. The YWCA, under Granchelli’s leadership, has also implemented three full-service catering “businesses” that offer hands-on training to culinary training program students.

The Rev. Stephen M. Grozio, C.M., ’75, was granted the Perboyre Medal for extraordinary service and contribution to the global society. Father Grozio has dedicated much of his priestly work to serving those who immigrated to America in search of a better life. After learning Spanish, “Padre Esteban,” as he was called, served the Spanish-speaking farmworkers and residents of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Mich. He also formerly was director of the Hispanic Evangelization Team, which served the Spanish-speaking communities of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and, since 2007, has been the director of the Hispanic Apostolate of the South Fork of Long Island, which offers Catholic Mass, sacraments and other services in Spanish in seven parishes.

Christopher Lee, Ph.D., an associate professor of comparative politics at NU, was presented with Niagara’s Ozanam Medal, which is awarded to individuals who have improved the situation of the poor and advanced the cause of social justice. Dr. Lee is admired by his students and colleagues for possessing a strong sense of social justice and commitment to diversity. He has led several trips with Niagara’s Model UN student participants, and for many years was the co-moderator of Diversity Advocates at Niagara. More recently, he has worked to establish a field-based intensive course in Cuba, which is set to begin in May.

The Rev. W. Barry Moriarty, C.M., received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters for living an extraordinary life, consumed with St. Vincent de Paul’s excitement and surety about the importance of community service. Father Moriarty is a member of the Congregation of the Mission’s Western Province, with prominent priestly assignments that include tenures as director of Vincentian novices in New Orleans, Germantown and Nairobi. In the mid-1990s, Father Moriarty was summoned to Marsabit, Kenya, originally to teach in the diocesan seminary. Father Moriarty was instrumental in the January 2000 opening of the DePaul Center in Nairobi, which now serves as the center for Vincentian formation in eastern Africa. Father Moriarty later became superior of the facility and helped establish a presence there for the Daughters of Charity.

Derek Puff was presented with the Vincentian Mission Award, which is given to members of the university community who seek to emulate the altruistic spirit of St. Vincent. Puff serves as assistant director of recreation and intramurals and director of the Kiernan Center’s summer youth programs. In January 2013 and then again two years later, Puff chaperoned groups of NU students to perform community service in the most destitute areas of Camden, N.J., as part of Niagara’s Brothers and Sisters in Christ program. He also regularly volunteers at the St. George’s Church soup kitchen in downtown Niagara Falls and serves on the athletics board for Springville High School. As the Kiernan Center’s summer camp director, Puff has partnered with local youth organizations to offer scholarships to financially disadvantaged children.
A new initiative to meet the needs of international families and students and serve English language learners within the global community was launched at NU in January.

The Edward A. Brennan Center for Language, Culture and Leadership, another spoke of the university’s umbrella of outreach, will embrace the richness of culture and language of Niagara’s students, faculty and communities, and extend NU’s Vincentian mission to agencies that serve refugee, migrant and immigrant populations.

It is also expected that the center will cultivate leadership opportunities among both students and professionals in addressing global needs and providing innovative experiences for those preparing to be teachers of English as a second language.

“In keeping with our Vincentian identity, the Center for Language, Culture and Leadership will focus on leading, learning and serving,” said the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., president of Niagara University. “The portfolio of services and programs facilitated through the center will provide a continuum of English language learning. As part of the process, we will build interdisciplinary connections between teaching and learning that will augment services to international students and their families.”

Father Maher noted that the center will be a tribute to St. Justin de Jacobis, C.M., who served as a Vincentian missionary to Ethiopia from 1839 until his death in 1860. Despite significant opposition to his evangelization efforts in Ethiopia, Father de Jacobis founded a college and seminary, was ordained a bishop and is considered an apostle to Africa, and the founder of the Abyssinian mission. He was canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1975.

The new center is named in honor of the father of Edward J. Brennan, a 1978 Niagara alumnus and current trustee who has been very active in serving the global community, largely through his work as co-founder and chairman of the Hand in Hand for Haiti charity. The retired CEO and chairman of DFS Group spearheaded the development of a world-class school in Saint Marc, an area that was ravaged by an earthquake in January 2010. Niagara University students completed a seven-week internship at the school last September as part of a new collaborative initiative between the institutions. Edward A. Brennan served for many years as chairman and chief executive of Sears, Roebuck & Company. He also served as chairman of the board at Marquette and DePaul universities.

Dr. Deborah T. Curtis, ’84, will oversee the Center for Language, Culture and Leadership as its director, while an advisory council will be established to reflect an interdisciplinary approach to the development of English language learners. The advisory council will comprise university officials, faculty members and external stakeholders who work with international families in local communities and schools.

The primary goal of the center is to build upon academic and linguistic achievement to enhance proficiency among learners of English as a new language. In doing so, it will offer programs and services in six core areas, including: language proficiency assessment; intensive academic English programming for international students who wish to study at U.S. universities; academic English language support for international students who are accepted into degree programs at NU; language enrichment for intensive summer experiences: TEFL certificate of study for students interested in teaching English abroad; and leadership and advocacy programming and outreach to serve the international community and those learning English as a new language.

Edward J. Brennan, a 1978 Niagara alumnus and current trustee, will be actively involved with the center that bears the name of his late father, Edward A. Brennan.
Dr. William Cliff
Named Endowed Program Director of Pre-Professional Health

By Lisa McMahon, M.A. ’09

Five years ago, John Hughes, ’67, donated a $750,000 estate gift to establish the first endowed faculty position at Niagara University. This month, his vision became reality when biology professor Dr. William Cliff was named the John J. Hughes, ’67, M.D., Endowed Program Director of Pre-Professional Health.

Although Dr. Cliff will take on some new responsibilities, he’s been serving as an advisor to students interested in the healthcare professions for more than a decade, so the position isn’t necessarily a new role for him. But now, with additional resources, he’ll be able to enhance his efforts.

“Jack Hughes was a very generous benefactor and also a visionary supporter of our pre-health students,” Dr. Cliff says. “(His gift) supports what we’ve been doing and, in a sense, gives me a lot more flexibility and time to accomplish it.”

For the next three years, Dr. Cliff will focus on student recruitment, academic advisement, chairing the committee on recommendations for medical/dental studies, maintaining articulation agreements, and organizing and implementing specific programming activities related to pre-professional studies in the health and life sciences. These activities are intended to serve as a catalyst for Niagara to build upon and expand its programs in the interdisciplinary sciences, generally, and the health and life sciences, specifically. They will also assist in Niagara’s continuous effort to align its strategic priorities with those of New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council.

“The generous gift from Dr. Hughes to fund this position demonstrated his belief in the excellence of our faculty and the strength of our academic programs,” wrote the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., Niagara’s president, in an email to the campus community. “A prominent radiologist who practiced in several states during his career, including New York and Florida, Dr. Hughes stated on many occasions that his professors at Niagara helped him develop the intellectual proficiency he carried throughout his life. He was committed to continuing this legacy by recruiting and retaining world-class faculty to work with our students on interdisciplinary research. The establishment of this endowed position — and Dr. Cliff’s appointment — is a testament to the lasting impact that Niagara University faculty members have on their students, many of whom go on to achieve significant personal and professional success.”

With this appointment, Dr. Cliff formally joins an exclusive group of faculty advisors to the health professions, including Dr. Thomas Morton, M.S.’36, Ph.D.’38, Dr. John Reedy, ’48, and Dr. Robert Greene, ’75, M.S.’77, a group that has helped generations of students pursue their health career aspirations. And he has identified several objectives that he’d like to accomplish during his tenure.

One of the best ways for students to discern whether or not they have a calling to the healthcare profession is to interact with healthcare professionals, Dr. Cliff notes, so one of his priorities will be to expand students’ exposure to the profession through additional internship, shadowing, and volunteer opportunities. Several local alumni and many friends of the pre-professional health program are currently offering these kinds of opportunities and Dr. Cliff is looking forward to adding more.

Dr. Cliff would also like to launch a speaker series with nationally recognized healthcare leaders and distinguished alumni to engage students in discussions about the health professions, ethics and national issues that impact the healthcare system in the United States.

Niagara has a number of notable alumni in the healthcare professions across the country, and Dr. Cliff would like to formalize a mentoring program to connect them with current students.

He’d also like to increase the program’s involvement with community health initiatives, both in the Western New York area and abroad.

“Right now, our university has a number of overseas opportunities that would allow students to gain international exposure to health professions,” Dr. Cliff says. “So I’m looking to expand the opportunities there for students to learn more about health and healthcare professions overseas.”

Many of these ventures will rely on partnerships, so Dr. Cliff will also be strengthening and developing connections with on-campus departments and programs such as nursing, public health, gerontology, career services, admissions, academic exploration, EAGLE Leadership, and the Levesque Institute.

All these endeavors will assist students to prepare, qualify and apply for careers in the health professions. But Dr. Cliff also hopes that they will inspire students to become compassionate, as well as competent, professionals. Dr. Cliff references the late Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States, for a guiding principle and vision for the program. Dr. Koop urged healthcare professionals to “put the needs of patients and students above their own,” “to comfort and assure patients by holding a hand or putting an arm around a shoulder,” and to “provide a patient with spiritual as well as physical help.”

“To me, that expands the dimension of our pre-health program,” Dr. Cliff says. “My desire is for students to go out of here not just trained well in terms of academic competencies, but to go out of here with a greater compassion for others. I think that’s consistent with both our Vincentian mission and our emphasis on service learning. I really want to be able to enhance the program in that direction.”

For more information about how you can become involved in these pre-health initiatives, visit http://www.niagara.edu/pre-health-alumni-and-friends/.
Niagara University formally unveiled its new Nursing Simulation Center during a blessing and dedication ceremony that was held in October.

The state-of-the-art, $1.5 million facility, located in Dunleavy Hall, will provide “hands-on” opportunities for students to manage patient encounters and skills in a risk-free, virtual reality environment, while supporting traditional classroom learning and clinical practice experiences.

The center will also offer opportunities for interprofessional experiential learning. Students will gain a greater understanding of patient assessment and care and become adept at responding to complex situations in a timely manner with competency and confidence.
Alumna Returns to NU to Lead Nursing Sim Center

By Lisa McMahon, M.A.’09

Niagara’s Nursing Simulation Center coordinator, Mary Way, ’97, M.S.’98, has returned to her alma mater thrilled to share the experience of simulation with her students. She brings an extensive background in hospital settings, community healthcare, long-term care, education, and simulation to her role.

The new Nursing Simulation Center will allow students to go through the steps that nurses go through to perform their job, such as assessing patients and establishing a plan for their healthcare, she explains.

“The real value in simulation is having students exposed to situations that are fairly high risk and that they may not encounter in their day-to-day field placements,” Way says, adding that teamwork and interdisciplinary partnerships come into play as well.

While the patient scenarios are scripted, there is opportunity for spontaneity, Way notes. “Students may make a decision, be it right or wrong, which was not what we had planned.” These opportunities will require the students to “think on their feet” to determine the best course of action for their patients, she adds.

In time, Way would like to see the center grow with the nursing program, and perhaps establish community partnerships and interdisciplinary opportunities. For now, however, she is happy to be back on Monteagle Ridge, working with the nursing department to establish this new program.

“It’s wonderful to be working in a brand new environment,” she says. “I’m thrilled to be back in this role.”

By focusing on innovation in education, funded research and community partnerships, the Simulation Center is another way that Niagara is positioning its School of Nursing for future growth, noted the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., Niagara president.

Included among the center’s numerous technological upgrades is a “Sim ManEssential Bleeding,” the type of computerized manikin that is used for scenario-based simulations at the leading medical schools across the country. A computer software system allows professors to adjust the manikin’s heart rate and rhythm as its chest rises and falls. The manikin even blinks, talks and bleeds.

The center also features the same electronic medical dispensing system that is used in hospitals, called a Pyxis MedStation. Niagara students are now able to learn how to operate the system while using fake medications during their training.

A connected conference room within the Simulation Center allows students and faculty members to watch procedures in real time, adding another element of learning that wasn’t previously available. It will help students develop their critical thinking and practice making decisions through a simulated scenario a nurse could face on the job.

“Our vision for the Sim Center is that students will begin utilizing it by the second semester of their freshman year. Our model for operating it is still evolving, but we want all of our students to be exposed to the practical situations it presents as early as possible,” said Frances S. Crosby, ’67, Ed.D., director of the School of Nursing. “Eventually, students will have a Sim Lab requirement attached to their courses. This will not replace clinic time; rather, it will support what’s being learned in the classroom.”
A B.A.S.I.C. Winter Recess at NU: Serving Those in Need

By Michael Freedman, MBA’14

When college students travel during the winter semester break, it's rare that they do so to harvest potatoes, pick carrots and feed the homeless — unless said college students attend Niagara University.

Thirty-seven students volunteered during January to assist the less fortunate in underserved sections of Camden, N.J., Philadelphia, Pa., and the Republic of Panama. The pilgrimages are part of the university's B.A.S.I.C. (Brothers and Sisters in Christ) program.

Among the 19 students and two chaperones who ministered for 11 days in Camden was Jacey Diez, a senior from Lewiston majoring in TESOL and elementary education. This service trip marked Diez's sixth with Campus Ministry — and her second to New Jersey. She also previously participated in B.A.S.I.C. missions in Buffalo, Philadelphia, Panama, and Greensboro, N.C.

“I decided to return to Camden this year because I was truly touched and inspired by the caring individuals we met last year who made a difference in the poverty-stricken community,” Diez said. “As a future ESL teacher, it is my goal to contribute to the development of school classrooms that strongly value diversity and multiculturalism, and provide equal opportunities to learn for all students. The diverse population of Camden’s city schools and high population of English language learners (43.9 percent of students, as of 2015) also contributed to my interest in returning, since teaching English to speakers of other languages is my future career path.”

Along with assisting in schools, the NU students in Camden worked at a soup kitchen, met with local youth groups, attended bilingual Mass, volunteered at a homeless shelter, spent time with impoverished children and elderly in the community, and participated in community clean-up projects in parks and alleys.

Meanwhile, in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, senior biology major Jeffrey Gansworth was one of eight students (and two chaperones) who performed work at centers that offered free food to diseased residents, shelters for the homeless, and after-school programs in the city. Gansworth, a Vincentian Scholar at Niagara University, said the experience further changed his perceptions of poverty and gave him a deeper understanding of what he can now do to help out in his own community.

“What stood out to me was not only how welcoming the people of Philadelphia were, but how thankful the people were that we had traveled from so far to serve. Even the children in the after-school programs were ecstatic to see us every day,” noted the Niagara Falls resident. “The experience showed me that what Niagara is doing makes a difference. Every action, no matter how seemingly big or small, has a powerful effect.”

Much further south, 10 Niagara students were joined by two university employees as they traveled to several locations in Panama. In what each participant called an “eye-opening experience,” the group spent time in the Nueva Vida nursing home and Hogar Malambo orphanage in Balboa — and that was just the first day. They were then introduced to Soloy’s indigenous community and culture, before moving on to Volcan, Cerro Punta and, finally, Panama City to tour the canal and other sites.

Sophomore Jakob Rickettson, of Holland, N.Y., said the trip taught him that it’s better to be humble and serve than to try to accrue material possessions in hopes of “becoming somebody.” The finance major spent much of his time helping a family pick crops in Guadalupe.

“God is their hope, salvation and life. It was a privilege and eye-opening experience to witness these people. I went there to serve them, but, in a way, they inspired and served me,” Rickettson said.

“There are good people in this world who work hard but don’t make much money. I think it’s far too often perceived that people in poverty don’t work at all. They work their tails off and it just doesn’t work out for them. You can serve in more ways than donating money. Even just a smile or a conversation in broken Spanish can become a light and the greatest memory for these people.”

Rachel Bailey, a Spanish and liberal arts major from Grand Island, N.Y., traveled to Panama just 15 days after returning home from Nicaragua, where she helped build a home for an impoverished family in El Sauce.

“Meeting the people and hearing their stories is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life,” she said. “Both trips reminded me not to take the little things for granted, such as readily available hot water. The people in both countries have inspired me to be thankful for everything I have and to love people whole-heartedly. I truly believe that everyone I meet has something to teach me. I just need to be open to receiving and learning.”

At each of the B.A.S.I.C. service locations, an emphasis was placed on prayer, community-building, fellowship, and spiritual reflection, which was held every night.

“B.A.S.I.C. helped me to realize what my prayer life could be,” said psychology major Kelly Zaky, who was stationed in Camden. “Being surrounded by a community so involved in their faith showed me where my spirituality was lacking and how I can learn from the people of Camden to improve it.”

“Going on the B.A.S.I.C. trip was the best decision I made since coming to NU,” reflected Anna Cappello, an Academic Exploration Program student, after her time in Philadelphia. “Not only did I meet my closest friends, but I feel more spiritually devoted to God as an individual and as part of a community.”
The time the students spent together developing spiritually and encountering Jesus in the faces of the poor brought them closer to one another. While the experience unequivocally affected their spiritual identities, the opportunities to engage in fellowship also forged very strong bonds within the group.

“Throughout my time as an undergraduate student, I have discovered that the Brothers and Sisters in Christ program is a service experience that is unlike any other,” Diez said. “Through service immersion and living in community, I have learned that you become friends with people you might never have met. Working with people in a new place quickly turns a group of strangers into close friends. These friendships last, even after the trip is over.”

Gansworth agreed, saying, “The group of people that came with me to Philly became a second family to me. We played games every night together, dined together, lived together, worked together, and laughed together. It is one of my biggest regrets that I had not gone on a B.A.S.I.C. trip sooner. As a senior about to graduate, I will miss — and do miss — the family we formed in Philadelphia.”

In March, 12 students headed to Macon, Ga., relinquishing the traditional rest and relaxation of spring break to lend a helping hand with Kristina Daloia, Niagara’s director of campus ministry, and her husband, Mike Daloia, ’09, M.A.’15, who serves as assistant director of the Heart, Love and Soul food pantry in Niagara Falls.

“The group that served there last year loved the experience, so we are excited to return,” noted Kristina Daloia.

When individuals volunteer to participate in a B.A.S.I.C. immersion trip, they are choosing to fulfill the mission of St. Vincent de Paul, the Vincentian mission promulgated at Niagara University.

The Rev. Kevin G. Creagh, C.M., vice president for university mission and ministry, said that the students’ understanding of his conferees’ “ministry of presence” is a critical component of these weeklong trips of service and spirituality.

“In many of these areas that we send students to, they are working with people who are impoverished, but also living predominantly in isolation,” explained Father Creagh. “These are people in desperate need of human and financial resources, but they are also yearning for personal attention and the love of others.

“We have a moral and spiritual responsibility to meet these needs, for that is what St. Vincent asked us to do.”
Remembering Doc Ock

By Gerald Janan, ’58

It is a distinct honor to be able to share my story and the story of a man whose legacy runs deep here at Niagara University. I truly believe that God has a purpose for each and every life. When He is helping us to accomplish our purpose and reach our full potential, I believe He sends us instrumental people to help us reach that end. For me, one of those people was Dr. Ockerman, also known as Doc Ock or, in some circles, just Ockey.

I grew up in Father Baker’s orphanage. At the age of 15, I was taken in by a great South Buffalo family, Vince and Anne Masterson. This afforded me the opportunity to attend Bishop Timon High School, where I ran track and cross country.

This is where my story with Dr. Ockerman begins. Dr. Ockerman was a recruiter for Niagara, not only for cross country and track, but also for basketball and baseball. Doc would attend many games and track meets. After one of my meets, he approached me and said he wanted to offer me a scholarship to run for Niagara. In this race, I did not finish first, so you can imagine my confusion. I asked him why he was offering me the scholarship. He said, “I watched you and you never gave up.”

Winning was not the most important part to him — it was more about perseverance. I was in total shock — I had no intention of going to college, I just thought I would work in the steel mill — but Doc changed all that. He had other plans for me and he was determined to see them through.

The cross country teams became the Ockermans’ family, as they didn’t have any children. Mrs. Ock would come along on the bus to our meets with lots of goodies for us all. Dr. Ockerman and Mrs. Ock attended just about every event that went on at Niagara: the arts, the plays, baseball and basketball games. Niagara was their second home, their family.

In my junior year, I became very ill and ended up in the hospital. It was Easter vacation and my foster parents were away, so Ockey and Mrs. Ock took me from the hospital to their home and nursed me back to health. Unfortunately, when I returned to Niagara, I no longer was able to run, doctor’s orders.

This was worrisome for me because my scholarship was based on my ability to run. Ockey took charge. He informed me that I still had two years left on my scholarship and made me his assistant coach. I continued to receive my scholarship and was able to continue my college education. His commitment to the success of his students was like no other. He truly thought of his Niagara students as his own children and would do anything to help them succeed. He was committed to helping them complete their education, to fulfill their God-given potential.

While department chairman, Dr. Ockerman saw a real need for more courses to be offered to provide students a variety of vocations. So each year, Ockey would introduce different
courses and hire excellent instructors to implement these subjects. His wisdom brought about many new business departments.

Ockey did the same thing for sports at Niagara. He had a unique way of recruiting for his track team — he would offer free hot dogs and pop to get students to sign up for track and field events. He would also recruit students from the classes he taught. As a result, we had great track and cross country teams, with excellent student participation.

Ockey also saw a void in activities for many of the students attending Niagara. The students who had once played high school sports now had very few athletic opportunities, if they were not on an athletic scholarship. So Doc decided to fill that void by advocating for more intramural sports in basketball, football, track, cross country, tennis, and baseball. He would hold open enrollment for anyone interested in participating and provide the time and place so that they could apply some of their talents.

This idea took off. The benefits were endless — not only for the students who participated, but for the entire student body. The scholarship students also participated in intramurals, and anyone who signed up had to bring three or four friends. This brought everyone on campus closer, enhancing the school culture and comradery for all. And the competition was not too shabby, either! We all became true Niagarans, just like Doc and Mrs. Ock. We were a family, a family that could learn and play together. This legacy is still present here at Niagara.

After graduation, I continued my relationship with the Ockermans. Ockey and Mrs. Ock became like grandparents to my four daughters. Every Christmas, they would come over and help decorate our Christmas tree. Mrs. Ock made gloves, hats, and dresses for the girls. We have so many special memories of good family times with them.

When Mrs. Ockerman died, Ockey became a weekly dinner guest, and if my wife, Judy, made brownies for him, he would give her an A+ rating. He remained a constant figure in our family. He always took the time to mentor my girls, give them advice, ask questions, and just be there for them, once again showing his true commitment to people.

His legacy was truly apparent at his funeral. Hundreds of people shared their stories, many of them very similar to mine. Ockey was a humble man, a man of his word, full of wisdom with a great sense of humor. He was a man who helped me and so many others.

Who would have thought that this little orphan from Father Baker's would have gone to college, received a bachelor's degree in business, gone on to receive a master's degree plus 60 hours in education, become a teacher and a track and field coach who, in turn, was able to make a difference and touch many other lives? This would not have been possible if not for Ockey.
NU graduates of classes ending in 5’s and 0’s returned to Monteagle Ridge Oct. 9-11, 2015, for Alumni Weekend.

On Friday, alumni enjoyed activities such as the annual golf outing, the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management’s Alumni Advantage program, Purple and White Night, and the Class of 1965 Golden Eagle Mass and reception.

The second annual 50+ Eagles Mass and brunch kicked off a day full of events Saturday, including ReunionFest, athletics matches, the blessing of the Nursing Simulation Center, the Class of 1965 memorial ceremony and luncheon, the Class of 1990 Silver Eagle reception, and the alumni awards and dinner celebration. In addition, a special Class of 1985 Mass was held to announce the establishment of the James E. Comerford ’85 Memorial Scholarship.

A Mass and marriage vow renewal ceremony and a farewell brunch wrapped up the weekend.

The reunion provided a perfect opportunity to recognize a number of alums, as well. The Nursing Alumni Council honored Col. (Ret.) Roy A. Harris, ’75, with its Leadership Award, and Helen McMenamin, ’65, with its Clinical Excellence Award. Col. (Ret.) David “Duke” Schneider, ’65, and Capt. James Hay, ’65, were inducted into the ROTC Hall of Fame. Brian Zwergel, ’65, was named Alumnus of the Year, and Paul McManus, ’65, ’02 (Hon.), received the Dunleavy Award. And a new honor in memory of 1965 alumnus John C. DeDeyn Jr. was established.

Also, the Spirit of Niagara Cup was presented to the Class of 1965 for the most dollars contributed to the Niagara Fund from Jan. 1, 2015, to Oct. 8, 2015, and the Class of 1856 Cup was presented to the Class of 1965 for having the greatest percentage of donors during that same time period.

For additional photos, please visit www.niagara.edu/alumni-photos/album/131.
Members of the Class of 1965 gathered to remember and honor those lost along the journey of life and in service.


Class of 1985 members Bob Virgilio, Tom Radice, and Gary Shank enjoy a round of golf at the annual golf outing.

Alumni from the College of Nursing attended the blessing ceremony for the new Nursing Simulation Center.
Mike Ackerman, ’80, Fran Stevralia Crosby, ’67, Karen Ballard, ’66, and Susan Ackerman posed for a photo on NU’s purple carpet during Friday’s Purple and White Night event.

Wendi (Gibbs) Strangis, ’90, and Jackie Harvey, ’90, accessorized for their purple carpet photo.

Gary Salvatore, ’70, Joe Kirlin, ’70, M.S.’72, Gary Pasierb, ’70, and Kevin Carey, ’70, reconnected during Purple and White Night.


Purple and White Night brought Peg (Buttner) Eckstein, ’72, Dave Finerson, ’70, M.S.Ed.’72, Jane (Wennerstrom) Finerson, ’70, M.S.Ed.’80, and Allyson (Cottier) McGinn, ’70, together again.

Keith Sanger, ’85, with his daughter, NU senior Rachel Sanger.
More than 50 merchants are currently part of our Purple Perks program, offering discounts on everything from apparel to travel arrangements exclusively to NU alumni! All you need to take advantage of these great offers is a Purple Perks card! Download yours at www.niagara.edu/purple-perks/.

If you would like your business to be part of the Purple Perks program, contact the Office of Alumni Engagement at 716.286.8787.
Who Was There


Roger Van Dyke, ‘89: A 180-Degree Turnaround

Roger Van Dyke was not a traditional Niagara University student when he enrolled in the College of Nursing. He had been out of high school nearly a decade and had spent that time working various jobs and hanging out with his friends. When he took a position at a center for the developmentally disabled in his hometown of Syracuse, N.Y., he discovered a passion for helping others and decided to pursue a career in nursing.

That decision changed his life, he says, as did the choice to pursue his studies at Niagara. He loved the people and the campus atmosphere, and soon came to realize that regardless of where he started in life, he could become someone who could make a difference in the lives of others.

He also discovered that his chosen profession could make a difference in his own life, as well. His early career took him to the Hopi reservation in Arizona, where he worked in the emergency room at the Hopi Health Care Center and was introduced to the community and its traditions; and to the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage as a commissioned officer with the US Public Health Service, where his future wife, Jane, was the medical director of the Community Health Aide Program and where their son, Tiernan, was born. These assignments afforded him unique opportunities that he would never have had elsewhere, including treating patients in the back of an ambulance and delivering babies, opportunities that he found both transformative and gratifying.

After eight years in Alaska, Roger and his family moved to Atlanta, Ga., when Jane received a post-graduate fellowship with the Center for Disease Control’s Epidemic Intelligence Service Program. This began a new chapter in Roger’s life. He stayed home to care for his son for the first two years, and the two often traveled to Africa, where Jane was assigned.

When Tiernan started school, Roger decided to go back to work. Because he did not want to lose the time he had earned while in the Public Health Service, Roger took a commission in the Army Reserves. Shortly thereafter, he was called to active duty and moved to San Antonio, Texas, where, despite his lack of experience, he was assigned to the Army Burn Center at the Brooke Army Military Medical Center, part of the Army’s Institute of Surgical Research. He notes that nurses often don’t consider working in this specialty because it can be an emotional experience, but he loved his work and requested to stay on when his 18-month assignment ended. Instead, he was named evening night supervisor, another position for which he had no previous experience.

“That’s one of the beauties of wearing a uniform,” he says. “All people in uniform have huge amounts of responsibility and learn things that they never thought they would. It’s an experience that changes you.”

He remained there for another six months before returning to Atlanta and his family where, again, he needed to make a career decision. This time, he opted to take a position as a hospice nurse, another difficult specialty, that he calls his most memorable and fulfilling. He remained in that job until his retirement in 2014.

Today, he lives in Folly Beach, S.C., and is embarking on a new professional journey, that of public servant. A member of the city’s Board of Zoning Appeals, his next step is to run for city council. In preparation, he took a job with Beach Patrol to meet the citizens and get to know their concerns.

“You can start out with no direction,” Roger admits, “but all of a sudden you go to one place or meet one person, and everything changes. When I started at Niagara, it was a 180-degree turnaround for me, and my life was completely different. I am thankful for my life and I understand what a privilege it is to live the way I have.”

Additional alumni stories are available at www.niagara.edu/alumni-news/.
Krista Pike, ’65: Bringing Christ through Nursing

By Lisa McMahon, M.A.’09

Over the course of her career, Krista Pike, ’65, has done just about everything you can do in nursing, and then some. For the past 14 years, she has brought her considerable expertise to countries around the world as a volunteer with Missionary Ventures International.

These mission trips have enabled her to fulfill her passion for serving others and her dedication to spreading the Word of God.

And it seems as if God has had a hand in her ventures.

Shortly after 9/11, a friend contacted her about a mission trip that she was going on to Guatemala. One of two doctors who had planned to accompany the group was suddenly unable to go, and she was looking for someone to take his place. Because Krista had the experience they were looking for, she asked her to consider going on the trip.

Krista had always wanted to volunteer with a missionary group, but she had just purchased a house and did not have the $1,007 the trip would cost. However, her friend suggested that she wait until she received her tax refund before making a final decision.

Her refund was $1,012. “God arranges things,” Krista says.

Since then, she has gone on nearly 20 trips, many times serving as a doctor for the indigenous people of the countries she visits, as well as providing them with vital healthcare information. But what’s most important to her, she says, is being able to share the Word of God with them through her nursing.

“We take God as He is to them, to villages where they fear God, we hug and pray with them, and when we hear from them again two or three years later, their lives have changed because of learning the truth about God,” she says. “Our national Catholic nursing honor sorority is Beta Chi Nu, which stands for ‘Bring Christ through Nursing.’ Appropriate, eh?” she adds.

Krista’s nursing background comes from her studies in Niagara’s College of Nursing, where she “learned the heart of nursing,” as well as her post-graduation work, first at a Navy hospital in San Diego, Calif., then at a hospital in Las Vegas, where she worked as a medical-surgical nurse before being named head nurse in the psychiatric unit. She later returned to New York state and settled in rural Columbia County, where a local doctor she had known while she was in high school taught her to become what was essentially a nurse practitioner.

“There’s so many kinds of nursing and I’ve been so privileged to do them all,” she says.

Today, she is semi-retired and lives in Vermont, where she educates her community on health-related topics when she is not traveling to places like El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Peru. She is also working with Missionary Ventures Canada to organize its first medical mission. She notes that she never consciously chooses her destination, instead letting God pick for her.

“God puts you in interesting places,” she says. “I’ve been on amazing trips and I’ve seen a lot. I love what I do, and I want nurses to know that if you let God lead you, you can bring God (to people) through nursing.”
Dr. Michael Ackerman, ’80, is back at Niagara. And he couldn't be happier about it.

“It’s always had a place in my heart,” he says. “It’s a special place, and there’s something very special about being a Niagara nurse. You can't describe it, but you know it. And that's what I want to bring back.”

As associate director of the School of Nursing, Dr. Ackerman, a doctorally prepared nurse practitioner, will be able to do just that. He plans to draw on his own Niagara experience, his 30-plus year career in nursing, and his research and consulting background to lay a foundation for structure and process that will graduate students who are well-rounded, clinically relevant practitioners.

Growing up in a working class family in the City of Tonawanda, N.Y., Dr. Ackerman knew he wanted to pursue a career in the helping professions. While volunteering as a candy striper at DeGraff Memorial Hospital, he saw the day-to-day responsibilities of both nurses and physicians, and says he made a “deliberate choice” to become a nurse because he preferred the work they did.

At the recommendation of Mary Lorich, a family friend and former professor in NU’s College of Nursing, Dr. Ackerman enrolled at Niagara, where he found a nurturing faculty that “made it comfortable to be a male” in the nursing program. Classes in the liberal arts taught him to think, he says, and role models like Virginia Manning, his junior clinical instructor, prepared him to be excellent in his chosen field.

After graduation, Dr. Ackerman returned to DeGraff to begin his career in critical care nursing. He then joined the VA in Buffalo, where he spent 10 years in positions including nurse manager and clinical nurse specialist.

At the same time, he continued his education, earning his MSN in critical care nursing and his doctorate in nursing science from the University of Buffalo.

“I always had in mind that my terminal degree was going to be a doctorate,” he says. “I enjoyed science, and I enjoyed research.”

He also enjoyed teaching. He taught at NU while pursuing his MSN, and at UB once he had earned his DNS. All while continuing to work as a practicing nurse. “I had the best of both worlds,” he says.

In 1993, he was recruited to the University of Rochester to begin a joint faculty/clinical role. Two years later, he took a position as a senior nurse practitioner in critical care and cardiac surgery at Strong Memorial Hospital, University of Rochester Medical Center. He completed post-master’s training as an acute care nurse practitioner at the University of Rochester that same year. In 2006, he launched the Margaret D. Sovie Center for Advanced Practice, which became a national organizational model for nurse practitioners and physicians’ assistants. For the next seven years, he served as the center’s director and continued his nursing practice.

Dr. Ackerman then returned to Buffalo, where he held several senior leadership roles with local hospitals.

In December 2014, after having spent several years presenting at conferences both nationally and internationally, Dr. Ackerman decided to take a “pause” from his nursing career to form his own consulting company. He also founded the “Stop the Silence in Healthcare” campaign, prompted by his experience as a Crucial Conversations trainer and his firsthand observations of situations where patients have been put at risk or nurses have been mistreated by their colleagues, and no one has spoken out. “It’s a topic I'm very passionate about,” he says.

Although he wasn't looking for a new job opportunity, when the position of associate director of Niagara’s School of Nursing became available, he decided to pursue it because of his love for the program and his respect for Dr. Fran Crosby, ’67, the school’s director. He was offered the job in September.

“I’m at the point now where I want to give back and help others,” he says. “There’s no greater feeling than knowing that you can make a difference. As I progressed in my career, each job I’ve taken has expanded my ability to influence. (In this position,) I can influence the profession by graduating excellent students.”

Additional alumni stories are available at www.niagara.edu/alumni-news/.
1958
Peter Kennedy has written a book entitled *Kiphuth of Yale - A Swimming Dynasty*. Pete swam on seven national championship teams with the Yale New Haven Swim Club.

1966 REUNION
Joan Kissik McMahon recently retired from the University of Kansas Hospital after 16 years as the coordinator of the spinal cord program and a 40-year nursing career.

Charles Walsh reports that his daughters were inspired to become educators because of the fine education he received at NU. Lindsey teaches high school Spanish in Beachwood, Ohio, and Rachel is an associate professor of Italian at the University of Denver.

1969
Col. (Ret.) James Colligan was elected to the town council of Shelter Island Heights, N.Y. He is a former educator and assistant Shelter Island High School basketball coach.

Shaun McMahon recently retired as owner of the Plaza Group after a counseling career of 28 years, preceded by 16 years of teaching English. He also served four years in the US Coast Guard.

1970
Robert Grimm Jr. was named partner at Nesper, Ferber, DiGiacomo, Johnson & Grimm.

1971 REUNION
Robert Mills has been appointed to the board of directors of Global Power Equipment Group Inc.

1973
John P. Gleason received the Robert F. Clinger Outstanding Professional Fundraiser Award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals in recognition of “practicing his profession in an exemplary manner.”

1975
Charlie Diamond has been named executive counsel at Gramercy Communications in Troy, N.Y. Previously, Charlie served as district chief of staff for Congressman Mike McNulty, and later as director of the New York State Cable Telecommunications Association. He also has 15 years of public service in elected office on the City Council of Watervliet, his hometown, and recently concluded his public service with New York state as director of racing and promotion.

Bill Jones has been promoted to vice president of digital experience and payments at Truliant Federal Credit Union. He joined Truliant in 2012 as electronic funds transfer card services manager and has been instrumental in bringing new services, including advanced deposit automation, to Truliant ATMs.

1976 REUNION
Brian Hassett was named to the United Way Worldwide advisory committee to the president and CEO. He is president and CEO of the United Way of the Greater Capital Region.

1977
Rocco Surace has been elected chairman of the Theory of Constraints International Certification Organization’s board of directors for a second consecutive term. He is a partner at The Bonadio Group CPA firm.

Richard Wojciechowski was promoted from senior manager to tax team leader at The Bonadio Group. The team provides tax compliance services, tax planning, and transaction structuring for larger commercial organizations.

1978
Joseph Ruffolo was honored with the 2016 Community Leader Award for Healthcare by the National Federation for Just Communities of WNY Inc. He is president and CEO of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center.

1979
Roberta (Kantz) Gross retired from a 37-year nursing career that included many varied and challenging jobs. She is now pursuing the artistic portion of her life via the cello and the potter’s wheel, while volunteering at a local free clinic. She also referees for USRowing.

Lynne Scalia, MBA’85, received the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching from Buffalo State College in October 2015. She is an associate professor of business for the college.

1980
Michael Carney, M.S.Ed.’03, has been named principal at St. Joseph School in Auburn, N.Y.

Maureen Duggan has been named executive director of Community Design Center Rochester, a nonprofit that advocates for pedestrian-oriented design and planning.

Dr. Denise (McLerran) Seigart completed the American Association of Colleges of Nursing-Wharton Executive Leadership Program in August 2015. Launched in 2012, the program was designed exclusively for top academic leaders in schools of nursing.

Joan Thornton, a three-sport star athlete in high school and a standout basketball player at Niagara University, where she was the first woman ever awarded an athletic scholarship, was inducted into the Greater Syracuse Sports Hall of Fame Oct. 19, 2015.

1981 REUNION
Dr. Gregory French was recognized as one of the top dentists in Central New York by CNY Magazine. The honorees are selected based on evaluations by their peers.

Irene Forgensi Hammons welcomed her first grandchild, Liliana Schneckenburger, on Sept. 14, 2015.
**1982**

Michael Chanatry was appointed vice president of supply chain for Power Generation Products – General Electric Power. He joined GE in 1983 and has held leadership roles in GE Aerospace, GE Aviation, and GE Appliances.

**1983**

Cynthia (Ogg) Kline, M.S.Ed.’05, is an education program manager with PLS 3rd Learning. She will work closely with both the educators and developers on staff to continuously enhance the professional learning and custom technology projects that support educators in K-12 classrooms.

Michael Polite was appointed to the governing board of the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, a nonprofit arts organization based in Pittsburgh, Pa., that presents performing and visual arts programs celebrating the contributions of African Americans in Western Pennsylvania.

**1984**

Chris Viscardi was named to the newly created role of senior vice president, content development, at Nickelodeon Franchise Properties. He will oversee the creative strategies for the network’s key franchises, including Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, SpongeBob SquarePants, and Dora the Explorer.

**1985**

Christopher Aquino, MBA’94, associate professor of accounting at Niagara University, received the school’s 2015 Excellence in Teaching Award. Candidates for the honor are nominated by their peers and then chosen from a committee comprising the award’s last three recipients.

Frank Fiannaca celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of his business, USA Payroll, in February 2016. The company provides nationwide payroll and tax services, a wide range of human resource services, and time and attendance options for small to large companies in the Philadelphia/Southern N.J./Lehigh Valley marketplace and nationwide.

Paul Lawless and his wife, Marianne, were awarded the Caritas Medal from St. John’s University during its Vincentian Convocation in October. They were honored for their work with the special needs community.

Chris Nye was re-elected to the University Place, Wash., city council. He notes that the city hosted the 2015 US Open Golf Championship.

**1986**

**REUNION**

Judy Caterino Lynch is working for the Sussex County, N.J., Board of Elections and notes that she is proud to be part of registering and maintaining voters, especially in these political times.

**1987**

Col. Michael and Jo-Ann (Strobel) Gawkins, completed 28-year Army careers and have transitioned to Wilmington, N.C. They also recently welcomed their first granddaughter.

**1988**

Sam Farina, M.S.’04, was appointed police chief for the Village of Fairport, N.Y., Police Department. He was sworn in by Monroe Family Court Judge James Walsh, ‘88.

Jennifer Regan Haight was named to the board of directors of the Association of Fundraising Professionals Long Island Chapter. She is director of development and communications for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Rockville Centre.

Michael J. Nicholson has been named president, chief operating officer and chief financial officer of J.Crew Group, Inc., effective Jan. 11, 2016. He was most recently executive vice president, chief operating officer, chief financial officer, and treasurer of ANN INC. Michael will lead J.Crew’s finance, global supply chain, sourcing, IT, real estate, asset management, and investment management functions.

**1990**

Suzanne Simon Dietz received the 2015 Bronze Medal from the Military Writers Society of America for Surrender September 2, 1945, the memoir of the officer of the deck and navigator of the USS Missouri. Suzanne is the historian for the Town of Porter and the Aero Club of Buffalo, the oldest aero club in the United States, and the second-oldest in the world. She has written more than a dozen books and numerous historical articles. The authorized biography of Enola Gay navigator Dutch Van Kirk, My True Course, received the Silver Medal in 2013 from the Military Writers organization. Suzanne also served as a consultant for The Day the Bomb Dropped, which aired on the Smithsonian Channel in October, and her volunteer publication on the history of Consolidated Aircraft in Buffalo was published by the Niagara Aerospace Museum.
Catherine Ming has opened her own massage therapy, bodywork and energywork practice in Cary, N.C.

1991 REUNION
Lisa (Schreiner) Berta is the waste operations manager for the remediation of the Cold War Era Separation Process Research Unit in Niskayuna, N.Y., and is employed by AECOM.

1992
Col. Larry Colby was promoted to colonel in June 2015 and serves as assistant professor of strategic leadership at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. He just published his first military thriller novel, *The Devil Dragon*, available on Amazon.com this summer.

1994
Michael Grego has been promoted to program director for the graduate program in nurse anesthesia at Columbia University in New York.

1996 REUNION
Trish Hudson was promoted from change control manager — US/Canada operations, to manager, engineering governance and planning — US/Canada manufacturing operations, at Rich Products Corp. She will provide oversight to the engineering department; project management on key projects; and own the DCQY process.

Michelle Perry has been promoted to manager at Firley, Moran, Freer & Eassa, CPA, P.C. She is a member of the Association of Credit Union Internal Auditors, New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

1998
Donald Dalton, a financial advisor and associate vice president with Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc., Hingham, Mass., was named a 2015 Five Star Wealth Manager and featured in Boston Magazine. He was also an honoree in 2014. The award is presented in recognition of quality service provided to clients.

Dave Messbauer is a counselor at Brockport High School.

Michael Norris was inducted into Niagara County’s inaugural 12 Under 40 class, a program that was established by Leadership Niagara, the Niagara Gazette, and the Lockport-Union Sun & Journal to recognize leadership talent. He is town attorney for the Town of Lockport, N.Y., attorney for the Town of Somerset and Village of Cassadaga, and partner in the law firm of Seaman Norris LLP.

1999
Michele Pilla was named principal of Harry M. Fisher Elementary School in Mohawk, N.Y.

2000
Craig Campbell was hired as lead web developer at The Martin Group, an advertising, branding and public relations firm headquartered in Buffalo, N.Y. Craig joins TMG from Leisure Living, where he developed, designed, and maintained multisite e-commerce platforms.

Michael Colao was promoted to manager of data privacy at Arizona Public Service. He leads the team responsible for safeguarding sensitive customer and employee information at Arizona’s largest electric utility.

Bernadette Franjoine was named to the Opportunities Unlimited of Niagara Foundation board of directors.


Kelly (O’Connell) Kinderman was promoted from director of quality management to vice president of program support and development at Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled. She will oversee the planning and implementation of the agency’s quality assurance and quality improvement program, strategic planning, and program and staff development. She will also serve as a corporate compliance officer and HIPPA compliance officer. Kelly is also active in her community: She serves as board member and chair for Miles for Smiles, a foundation affiliated with the Craniofacial Center of WNY, Kaleida Health; and an advisory board member for Hope for Two…The Pregnant with Cancer Network. She has been married for nearly 16 years and has three children: Jake, Gabrielle, and Addison.

Kathleen (Sweeney) Sullivan was promoted to chief social services attorney for the Cortland County Department of Social Services.

Nicolas Vitanza was promoted from senior manager to director at Deloitte Tax LLP. He serves clients in the financial services, energy and resources, and life sciences and healthcare industries. His areas of specialization are accounting for income tax, tax transformation consulting, and tax technology.

2001 REUNION
Nicholas Morrone is senior vice president for Paramax Corp. He will be involved with all phases of divestiture, acquisition, valuation, financing, and recapitalization.

2002
Michael Folts was promoted from social studies teacher to vice principal of student affairs at St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute in Buffalo, N.Y.

Josh Quant, MBA’09, was appointed northeast territory sales manager at Moley Magnetics, Inc. He is charged with developing the organization’s growing portfolio of local and regional accounts.
Courtland VanDeusen was named treasurer of the Buffalo Niagara Brewers Association.

2003
Randy Harris is vice president at Lighthouse Technology Services. His role is to support the sales, recruiting and technology experts with current, relevant marketing efforts, build mutually beneficial business relationships in the industry, and enhance operations processes to help them better serve their community.

2004
Jaime Pero, M.S.Ed.’06, M.S.Ed.’08, M.S.Ed.’11, was selected as one of Buffalo Business First’s 40 Under 40 honorees. She is a special education teacher at Maple Avenue Elementary School in Niagara Falls, N.Y.

2005
Kevin Hinkley joined Niagara University as an instructor in the political science department in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Amanda Kelly, an attorney at HoganWillig, was named to the 2015 Upstate New York Super Lawyers Rising Stars list in the practice of estate and probate law.

Jodie Papa was elected secretary and member of the executive board of the National Association of Public Insurance Adjusters. She is manager of the National Fire Adjustment Company’s Buffalo, N.Y., office.

Daniel J. Pautz, an associate in Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC’s Syracuse office, has been recognized in the 2015 Upstate New York Super Lawyers Rising Stars list in the field of business litigation.

Nicholas Pusateri was recently admitted to the New York State Bar and subsequently named an associate at Hodgson Russ LLP. He assists the firm’s real estate and finance attorneys with providing clients business-focused legal advice for commercial real estate development, commercial leasing, and real estate investment and financing.

Jim Toner is a senior accountant at AmatoFox and Company, P.C., CPAs in Tonawanda, N.Y.

60 SECONDS WITH:

Ryan, ’07, and Katie (Konfron) Virtue, ’07
Chapter Co-Leaders, Cleveland, Ohio

Hometown: Stittsville, Ontario, Canada
Degree: B.S. in sports management
Current job: Manager — affiliate associations, National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics
My best memory at Niagara is: meeting my beautiful and amazing wife! Also wearing the purple and white as a member of the baseball program.
My favorite hangout was: in the athletics offices at the Gallagher Center.
My favorite part of my job is: the people. I have the opportunity to work with some of the best and brightest people in the sports industry on a day-to-day basis.
When I’m not working, you’ll find me: spending time with my wife and two dogs, or on a baseball field somewhere.
I still want to learn how to: play one song on the guitar. It is an item on my bucket list!
I decided to become a chapter leader because: Niagara has given me so much and I want to give that back as well as connect with other alumni.
Alumni should stay connected to Niagara by becoming involved in their local chapters because: they can help make an impact on current and future students, bond with others who love Niagara and benefited from attending, and meet new people in their local area.

Hometown: Cleveland, Ohio
Degree: B.S. in marketing
Current job: Director of category management, Corporate United.
My best memory at Niagara is: receiving the Everett Okerman Award for marketing.
My favorite hangout was: Gallagher.
My favorite part of my job is: combining my critical thinking skills with my passion for business to make an impact at my organization and with those we work with.
When I’m not working you’ll find me: still at the rink.
I still want to learn how to: speak fluent Italian.
I decided to become a chapter leader because: Niagara has given me so much and I want to give that back as well as connect with other alumni.
Alumni should stay connected to Niagara by becoming involved in their local chapters because: they can help make an impact on current and future students, bond with others who love Niagara and benefited from attending, and meet new people in their local area.

More information on our chapters can be found at www.niagara.edu/alumni-chapters/.
2006 REUNION
Laura DeBacco-Malysza was inducted into Niagara County’s inaugural 12 Under 40 class, a program that was established by Leadership Niagara, the Niagara Gazette, and the Lockport-Union Sun & Journal to recognize leadership talent. She is an OB GYN physician assistant and coordinator of the OB GYN Center at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center.
Daniel DeSimone will be completing his infectious diseases fellowship in July 2016 and has accepted a position as a staff consultant in hospital internal medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.
Ashleigh MacMartin, M.S.Ed.’08, was recognized in October as a 2015 Rising Stars honoree by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of WNY.
Amanda (Ellman) Taylor is a pension administrator at Actuarial Consulting Services Inc., in Amherst, N.Y.
Gregory Woytila, M.S.Ed.’06, M.S.Ed.’07, is superintendent of the North Tonawanda City School District. He previously served as director of curriculum.

2007
Angela (Barbeau) DiRosa has been named director of the Orleans Community Health Foundation.

Cali Gilbert launched her seventh book, Pearl, in November 2015. The follow-up to her #1 international bestseller, It’s Simply Serendipity, continues her personal story of transition. For more information, visit www.caligilbertauthor.com/pearl.html.
Nicolle (Buchheit) Whitt is one of two state finalists for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Secondary Mathematics Teaching, the highest honor bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 mathematics teaching. She teaches at Empire High School in Tucson, Ariz.
Kathryn Witherell was named administrator of the Seneca Health Care Center.

2008
Brittany (Bisnott) DeWire is the court attorney for the Honorable Judge Adetokunbo O. Fasanya in New York Family Court.
Courtney Donahue was hired as an associate at Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman LLP. She focuses her practice on trusts, estates and elder law.
Robert Ingrasci was named vice president of the board of associates of Mt. St. Mary’s Hospital, a group of volunteer men who organize events throughout the year to support the hospital. He previously served as secretary.

Adam Lynch has joined the healthcare industry team at Harris Beach PLLC’s Buffalo office. Prior to joining Harris Beach, Adam was an associate at Lipsitz, Green, Scime, Cambria LLP. He has been involved in depositions, discovery and trial preparations in state and federal courts, as well as handled jury selection. His experience includes collaborating with experts to investigate causes of action preparing motions, as well as arguing multiple motions in New York State Supreme Court.
Christopher Patti, MBA’09, joined Brock, Schechter & Polakoff, LLP, as in-charge senior accountant. He has experience in a variety of tax, audit and accounting services across a variety of industries.
Brandon Wright, M.S.Ed.’10, was named the 2016 Teacher of the Year in the Hernando County School District. He teaches economics, government and history classes at Springstead High School in Spring Hill, Fla., where he is also director of the school’s positive behavior support program.

2009
Raymond DeWire is the manager of elite sports and athletic events at the New York Athletic Club.
Carolyn Lansom was named operations and
support assistant at Global Justice Ecology Project and the ¡Buen Vivir! Gallery for Contemporary Art. She will be responsible for scheduling and managing events and gallery hours, volunteer coordination and processing donor gifts and acknowledgements.

2010

Joshua Coyne was recognized as one of two Ambassadors of the Year by Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants for his volunteer work with The Trevor Project, the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people ages 13-24. Josh has been a crisis counselor for the organization for two years.

Jennifer Gregory, MBA’11, has been appointed sales manager with the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corp. In her new role with NTCC, Jennifer will be seeking convention visits to Niagara USA, among her many duties. She brings seven years of tourism experience to her new role, including positions with Empire State Development, Disney, Six Flags, Delaware North, and the Mansion on Delaware.

Jaimie (Rogemoser) Griffiths is a clinical staff pharmacist at the University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y.

Craig Haffa, MBA’11, was promoted to senior accountant at Brock, Schechter & Polakoff, LLP. Craig has four years of tax experience, primarily concentrating on corporate tax.

Tyrone Lewis has returned to Montaeagle Ridge to serve as the director of men’s basketball operations. After his collegiate career concluded, Tyrone played professionally in Europe for several years, and coached at Bensalem High School in Bensalem, Pa.; at Widener University, an NCAA Division III program in Chester, Pa.; and at Bristol Barrow High School in Bristol, Pa.

Matt Wietlispach has been named strength and conditioning coach in Niagara University’s athletics department. The former Purple Eagle outfielder has served as strength and conditioning coach at Oakton Community College, Parkland College, and Erie Community College, and as strength and conditioning intern for the University at Buffalo and the Buffalo Sabres.

2011 REUNION

Crystal Bojanowski, MBA’12, was named to the Family Promise of WNY board of directors. She is a CPA with Lumsden & McCormick, LLP.

Zachery Hebert was recently admitted to the New York State Bar and subsequently named an associate at Hodgson Russ LLP. He assists the firm’s labor and employment attorneys, and has a particular focus on supporting attorneys in traditional labor practices, such as employee discipline and discharge, union avoidance, collective bargaining, and union organizing campaigns.

Johnathan Miles, MBA’13, was promoted from staff analyst to senior analyst at Brisbane Consulting Group, LLC. He is responsible for valuation, forensic accounting, and litigation support services.

Scott Rosenheck, MBA’12, is a senior accountant at Blue Bridge Financial. He is responsible for daily accounting records, internal and external reports, reconciliations and general expense monitoring.

Gregory Sassone was sworn in as a full-time police officer with the Salamanca, N.Y., Police Department.

Jonathan Smaldon has been promoted to director of new business development by the Syracuse Crunch of the American Hockey League. Jonathan first joined the Crunch staff in June 2012 as an account executive. In his new role, he will be responsible for developing new corporate relationships in addition to selling group and season ticket packages.

Gabrielle Wilson, MBA’12, was promoted to senior auditor at Dopkins & Company LLP. She is part of the general services team and helps provide management with financial information by researching and analyzing accounts and preparing financial statements.

2012

Kent Stancliff was promoted from senior accountant to supervisor in the attest department at EFPR Group.

2013

Amy Baker has been appointed stroke program coordinator at Kenmore Mercy Hospital, Kenmore, N.Y. In this role, she collaborates with the hospital staff and professional associations to facilitate the growth of Kenmore Mercy’s award-winning stroke program. In addition, she is responsible for patient and family education, as well as coordinating community stroke prevention and education activities, including oversight of the stroke support group. Amy has been with the hospital for eight years, most recently holding the role of cardiac clinical advisor.

Chelsea Campbell has been named marketing and communications coordinator for SEEDWAY, LLC., responsible for advertising, promotions and event coordination for the full-line seed company.
Amina Diallo was promoted from staff accountant to senior accountant at Lumsden & McCormick LLP.

Timothy Hilker was named assistant superintendent for business at the Saratoga Springs City School District, effective April 1. He previously was school business administrator at Galway Central School District.

Kelsey Kupping, staff accountant at Lumsden & McCormick LLP, completed the requirements to practice as a certified public accountant.

Ashley LaSota joined MJ Peterson Real Estate as an accounts receivable/payable clerk. She previously worked at First Niagara Bank.

Jesse Lewandowski, MBA’14, was appointed senior accountant at the UBMD Physicians’ Group. She previously was a staff accountant at Chiamgou, Travis, Besaw & Kershner.

2014

Gino Corasaniti joined Grossman St. Amour CPAs PLLC, in Syracuse, N.Y., as a staff accountant in the tax and audit departments.

Jason Cutler, MBA’15, joined Freed Maxick CPAs as a staff accountant.

Ashley DeMar is an actor and instructor with the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse Youth Theatre in Auburn, N.Y.

Eric Demske joined Freed Maxick CPAs as a staff accountant.

Michael Freedman was inducted into Niagara County’s inaugural 12 Under 40 class, a program that was established by Leadership Niagara, the Niagara Gazette, and the Lockport-Union Sun & Journal to recognize leadership talent. He is the associate director of public relations and manager of online content at Niagara University.

Erinn Hill is a development assistant with the McLaren Northern Michigan Foundation in Petoskey, Mich.

Jessica Martinez, MBA’15, was named experienced assistant, tax division, at the Bonadio Group.

2015

Garett Hoyler is a tax associate at Dopkins & Company, LLP. He provides tax compliance services for both businesses and individuals.

Brian Krespan accepted a position as an associate product manager for sales and advertising at Synacor in Buffalo, N.Y.

Taylor Sommerfeldt is a staff accountant at Lougen, Valenti, Bookbinder & Weintraub, LLP.

Marriages

Justin McCarthy, ’94, married Rebecca Warmack, ’04, on Oct. 24, 2015. (To read more about their love story, see page 37.)


Eric Reeners, ’09, MBA’10, married Amanda Summers, ’10, on June 20, 2015.


Births and Adoptions

Brian Andrews, ’91, MBA’94, and his wife, Anna, welcomed a daughter, Lillianna, on Dec. 17, 2015.

Kelly (Crumb) Moran, ’00, and her husband, James, welcomed a daughter, Ella Kathryn, on May 20, 2015.

Angela Harding, ’01, and her husband, Jason Grasman, welcomed a son, Gage Patrick, on July 22, 2015.

James, ’01, and Anne Marie (Rotella) Mathers, ’02, welcomed a son, Garrett James, on Nov. 5, 2015.

Neil, ’03, M.S.Ed.’04, and Valerie (Camann) Haseley, ’01, MBA’06, welcomed a daughter, Hannah Lauren, on Jan. 6, 2015.


Jenna-Marie (Mango) Masi, ’07, M.S.Ed.’08, and her husband, Richard, welcomed a son, Lucca Dean, on June 11, 2015.


Nicole (Buchheit) Whitt, ’07, and her husband, Michael, welcomed a daughter, Mikayla Anne, on Nov. 3, 2015.


IN MEMORIAM

To have a Mass celebrated at Alumni Chapel, call NU’s Campus Ministry Office at 716.286.8400.

John J. Flannery, ’43, passed away on Sept. 21, 2015. He was a salesman for the Allied Chemical Company until his retirement in 1985. Our condolences to his sons, Thomas Flannery, ’81, and Stephen Flannery, ’72; and to his daughter-in-law, Kathleen (Dalton) Flannery, ’73.

Niagara University has a way of connecting Purple Eagles, even across time and distance. That’s exactly what happened to Justin McCarthy, ’94, originally from Staten Island, N.Y., and Rebecca Warmack, ’04, whose hometown is Idaho Springs, Colo. The two were introduced through eHarmony nearly a decade after Becca graduated from NU. It was a chance encounter, initiated when Justin, who had since relocated to Denver, saw Becca’s eHarmony profile picture and “reached out immediately.” As they got to know each other better, Becca asked Justin if he skied or snowboarded, and he told her he had learned while attending a small school near Buffalo, N.Y. When she found out it was Niagara, she thought he was joking.

The two began dating and were married on Oct. 24, 2015. Interestingly, several of the couples in attendance were fellow NU alumni who began dating after they left Monteagle Ridge.

James F. Roehm, '55, passed away on Jan. 14, 2016. He retired from IBM Corp. and was a private tax consultant. Our condolences to his daughter, Kathleen Roehm Shivy, '81.

Robert F. Witt, '55, passed away on Sept. 19, 2015. He was the president of Getabout, Inc., which provides rides to the elderly and people with transportation challenges.

Don Kirkland, '56, passed away on Feb. 8, 2016. He was a retired sales manager for Great Western Wines and Champagnes.

Maj. (Ret.) Thomas K. Lynch, '56, passed away on Oct. 8, 2015. He was retired from the United States Marine Corps. and worked as a valley realtor in Arizona. Our condolences to his wife, Patricia (Riley) Lynch, '59.

Michael J. Zmoynski, '53, passed away on March 6, 2016. He was an assistant pastor and professor at a number of churches in the Diocese of Buffalo and throughout Western New York. He also was a musician who worked as band and choir director for a number of groups, and with the Little Symphony Orchestra and University at Buffalo Band.

Our condolences to Rita (Caldwell) Lenhart, '54, on the death of her daughter, Marie Lenhart-Butkus, who passed away on Feb. 7, 2016.

Paul F. Power, '54, passed away on Aug. 20, 2015. He is a retired Niagara County Community College professor.

Patricia (Pastore) Sullivan, '62, passed away on July 22, 2015. Our condolences to her husband, John Sullivan, '61, and to her sons, Michael Sullivan, '89, and John Sullivan Jr., '93.

Raymond J. Kellmurray, '63, passed away on Jan. 16, 2016. He was a vice president at Dorinco Re-Insurance Co. before retiring in 2007. Our condolences to his son, Paul Kellmurray, '09, and to his daughter-in-law, Holly (Gregg) Kellmurray, '10.

Our condolences to Lynn (Napierski) Meteer, '65, on the death of her husband; and to David Meteer, '04, on the death of his father, Gary Meteer, who passed away on Jan. 23, 2016.

Rose Mary Filicetti Layo, '66, M.S.Ed.'73, passed away on Sept 25, 2015. She was a business teacher at Niagara Falls Senior High School. Our condolences to her daughter, Janice Layo Bartlett, '80.

Msgr. Thomas J. Hartman, '67, SOLA70, passed away on Feb. 16, 2016. For 25 years, he and Rabbi Marc Gellman were featured on Cablevision and Telecare as “The God Squad,” espousing interfaith harmony.

Our condolences to Judy (Skurski) Willard, '70, M.S.Ed.'72, on the death of her mother, Genevieve Skurski, who passed away on Oct. 4, 2015.

Our condolences to Jack Burke, '72, on the death of his mother, Margaret Burke, who passed away on Sept. 10, 2015.
Joseph Azbell, M.S.Ed.’74, passed away on Sept. 21, 2015. He is a former director of the Niagara Children’s Education and Treatment Center for Niagara Cerebral Palsy.

Our condolences to Roxanne Burke Smith, ’75, and to Patrick Burke, M.S.Ed.’88, on the death of their mother; and to Jill Grottanelli Taylor, ’87, on the death of her godmother, Christine M. Burke, who passed away on Dec. 18, 2014.

Lynn A. Zerbey, M.S.Ed.’75, passed away on Oct. 15, 2015. She had a 33-year career in education, including 26 years with the Buffalo Public School District.

Our condolences to Leslie (King) Albanese, ’76, on the death of her father; and to Dr. Jay Albanese, ’74, on the death of his father-in-law, Thomas H. King, who passed away on Oct. 1, 2015.

Our condolences to Gail (Shea) Harris, ’77, on the death of her husband, Bruce A. Harris, who passed away on March 5, 2015.

Jacqueline (Mullane) Walsh, M.A.’77, passed away on Jan. 23, 2016. She was a retired parochial school teacher. Our condolences to her husband, Michael Walsh, ’72, M.S.’74; to her brothers-in-law, Charles Walsh, ’66, and John Walsh, ’72, M.S.’74; to her sister-in-law, Eileen Walsh, M.S.Ed.’94; to her niece, Brenna Walsh, ’09, MBA’13; and to her nephew, Eric Walsh, ’10.

Sister Nancy Grassia, M.S.Ed.’78, passed away on Oct. 14, 2015. She was a Catholic school teacher and administrator.

Husnara T. Sundram, M.A.’78, passed away on Sept. 17, 2015. She was the founder of Fellowship House, a halfway facility for recovering alcoholics, and Madonna House, a halfway house targeted to women recovering from substance abuse or domestic violence. Our condolences to her son, Francis Sundram, ’79.

Gregory J. Olson, ’82, passed away on Jan. 19, 2016. He was a vice president and treasury portfolio manager at M&T Bank.

Our condolences to Sandra (Pottynski) Gibson, ’84, on the death of her mother; and to Emily Gibson, ’16, on the death of her grandmother, Virginia Pottynski, who passed away on Aug. 30, 2015.

Our condolences to Dr. Thomas Summers, ’84, on the death of his mother, Louise Summers, who passed away on Jan. 18, 2016.

Gordon Downing, M.S.Ed.’86, passed away on Aug. 22, 2015. He was a former elementary school teacher.

Our condolences to Paul McMahon, ’86, on the death of his sister, Carol (McMahon) Scott, who passed away on Sept. 10, 2015.


Our condolences to Kathleen (Kelly) Agnello, ’90, on the death of her daughter; and to Donnell Kelly, ’69, on the death of his granddaughter, Rebecca Agnello, who passed away on Dec. 30, 2015.

Our condolences to Judith Kennedy, ’90, on the death of her father, William J. Kennedy, who passed away on Aug. 31, 2014. He was the brother of Brother Stephen Kennedy, C.M.

Our condolences to Bernadette Brennen, M.S.Ed.’91, on the death of her mother; and to Eamon Weber, ’14, on the death of his grandmother, Rosemary Brennen, who passed away on Sept. 27, 2015.

Jeffrey Sgroi, ’92, passed away on Feb. 3, 2016. He was chief financial officer and partner of Sgroi Financial LLC.

Cheryl Ann Jaenecke, M.S.Ed.’93, passed away on Feb. 3, 2016. She was a music teacher at St. Christopher School in Tonawanda, N.Y.

George Piatt, ’94, passed away on May 15, 2015. He was a medical caregiver in private homes.

Our condolences to Dana (Puskas) Walker, ’03, M.S.Ed.’07, on the death of her daughter; and to Michael Puskas, ’00, M.S.Ed.’03, on the death of his niece, Elizabeth Rose, who was stillborn on June 11, 2015.

Our condolences to Jesse Mangal, ’09, MBA’10, on the death of his mother, Pauline Mangal, who passed away on Oct. 5, 2015.

Tyler Matthews, ’13, passed away on Aug. 31, 2015.

Kevin Macaulay, ’15, passed away on March 17, 2015. He was a stationary engineer for the New York City Board of Education and a volunteer fireman. Our condolences to his son, Brian Macaulay, ’99, and daughter, Meghan Macaulay, ’06. (See the spring 2015 issue of the Eagle for a story on Kevin.)
NU students, from left, Rachel Bailey, Amy Wnuk, Jake Eberth, Kelly Fitzpatrick, Briana Neale, and Selena Cerra spent a week of their winter break building a home for a family in Nicaragua. They were accompanied by the Rev. Vincent O’Malley, C.M., and Dr. Abigail Levin.
A t the end of the 2015 fall semester, I, along with five other members of the Bienvenidos club and two faculty advisors, took on the task of building a house for a family in the impoverished village of El Sauce, Nicaragua. The family, Carlos, Daisy, Neysi, and Derwin, collect an annual income of around $1,200. During our time in El Sauce, we learned that a family of four requires around $8,000 yearly to have everything that they need, but still live a pretty minimalist life. Our family makes about 13 percent of that amount.

This level of poverty was certainly evident each day at the worksite. We saw poverty all around El Sauce, but it seemed to worsen significantly when we headed away from the main part of town into the neighborhood in which we were building. Our family was living under a tarp that they had attached to their neighbor’s house. Their bathroom was a doorless hut with a hole in the ground. They bathed and washed their clothes in the same river from which they got their drinking water.

The conditions in which this community lives are absolutely unimaginable. We were heartbroken when we saw the way that they live, but these feelings are what sparked the Vincentian response in all of us. We asked the million-dollar Vincentian question: What must be done?

The answer was plain and simple: hard work. The eight of us, a few masons, and the family started working each day around 8 a.m. We took on such tasks as making cement, moving and laying bricks, forming rebar, and filling in mortar. We were told several times by the masons that we were “como una máquina” (like a machine)!

It is uncommon for 4 Walls groups to see the completion of their project before heading home, and we were told on the first day that we would not see the completed house. That made it even more satisfying when we laid the last brick on our final day of work. We had finished all but the roof, which the masons have to do themselves. The hard work paid off, especially knowing that so many loving hands and hearts went into its success. Seeing Derwin walk around the inside of the new house with a smile on his face and a stuffed Monte in his hands was a real-life image of what we were all feeling in our hearts. It was a reminder of the Vincentian mission and our call to answer it. It was a reminder that even though there is so much injustice in the world, small acts can add up to change it, even if it is just for one person or family at a time.

The absolute perfect touch was Father O’Malley’s blessing of the house and the family. All of the workers and the family stood in a circle inside the house, and Father gave a few words before inviting everyone else to do the same. Carlos thanked God for giving his children a chance for a better life, and thanked us for leaving our country to lend a hand in this life-changing opportunity for him and his family. His wife, Daisy, who had worked tirelessly all week, began to cry, and we found out that this was the sixth time she had applied to get a home from 4 Walls. Niagara University Bienvenidos club helped to finally make it a reality for her. There were few dry eyes as Father blessed the family, the crew, and finally, the house.

We also gave the family a suitcase full of clothes and toiletry items and invited them to a farewell dinner later that night. Their economic and material discomfort, as well their appreciation, was evident when we saw that both Daisy and Neysi were wearing some of the donated clothes to dinner. The kids also received a little touch of an American Christmas when we presented them with stockings full of toys, books, and school supplies. We switched gears after dinner when the evening turned into a Latin American holiday and we all took turns swinging at a piñata. The whole night was the perfect send-off as we were heading back to the States in the morning.

The evening proved to be many things: a cross-cultural exchange; a casual celebration of the week’s physical labor; children innocently enjoying gifts during the holiday season. Engagement in those simple universal pleasures reminded us that despite place of origin, socio-economic status, language, or any of the other factors of our lives that tend to separate us, we are all human and we all deserve the same level of justice.

In addition to the building experience, we were also able to put our Spanish to use, spend time learning from locals, and experience what life is like in a developing country. It was a truly humbling experience, and we hope to return next year with enough people to build two or three houses!

To read more about the service trip, visit Kelly’s blog at www.niagara.edu/serving-abroad-in-nicaragua/.
New dining hall coming this fall!