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FALL 2024

*magazine*



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# LETTER *from* the EDITOR

Earlier this season, I made it to my first Marshall men's soccer game. I don't know why it took me so long to get out and watch a team that won the national championship just a few years ago. Don't judge me.

Of course, the players are different now, but we all know the team's commitment to excellence remains unchanged — and it didn't take long for me to be blown away by the teamwork and talent of the Marshall players I saw. I don't think I'm too off-base in saying that most of us would fall spectacularly on our faces trying the footwork that they have mastered.

I sat next to a woman named Karen (a nice Karen!), who explained things to me, like what "offsides" means and how the players can go out of bounds, but the ball can't. She knew her stuff, and looking around, it was clear how many astute, avid soccer fans filled those stands — and the excitement that exploded with each goal was as fun and infectious as the cowbells and drums being played. I have no idea how many cultures were represented on that soccer field, but sitting in Huntington and watching the world's favorite game being played by such stellar athletes, while being enjoyed by such enthusiastic fans here in our Marshall family, was pretty awesome. At least I thought so, and I hope the story that you see on the coming pages inspires you to attend a game sometime, if you haven't.

Throughout the game, I kept thinking the same thing that ran through my head while watching the Olympics this past summer: Who pours into these athletes to help them foster that kind of talent? How much of it is natural? How much is practice and grit? How much emerges because they know that people believe in them?

What is the recipe for excellence?

It's a question tackled every day here at Marshall and not just in athletics. Our faculty and staff work tirelessly to stay ahead of what students will need to know in their careers and determine the best ways to support each individual learner. In this issue, we're zooming in again to introduce you to a few of our employees who have made it their lives' work to help students reach their fullest potential and make an impact. These pages also include faces of some Marshall alumni who have gone on to make a tremendous impact — not only through their careers but also through their efforts to give back, and there's nothing we like to see more.



You can also read about how we're exploring excellence in the increasingly critical field of cybersecurity. Learn some ways that the team in Marshall's Institute for Cyber Security will be pursuing the best educational opportunities for our students, as well as partnerships and advancements for Marshall to make in this arena.

Knowing that many alumni come back in the fall, we're also offering a brief campus tour in these pages for those who may want to visit some spots on campus to reminisce about the past, and to check out what's new.

If you can make it back to campus this fall, talk to some students about the things they're learning these days, some of which you've maybe never imagined. Get yourself to a game and let our Herd athletes amaze you. Maybe you can get out and cheer our beloved football team. If you haven't yet seen men's or women's soccer, don't miss it. Support the women who tear up the volleyball court in the Cam Henderson Center, or cheer on some of our other incredible teams who represent us so well, in every season. Pour into our students and our student-athletes. Make them greater than they already are. If you don't know anything about the topic or the sport, it's OK. Find yourself a nice Karen and learn. No judgment here.

*Jean Hardiman*

**Jean Hardiman, Editor**

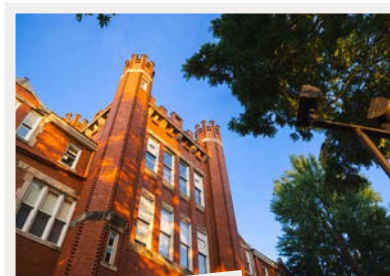


PHOTO BY AUSTIN O'CONNOR



STUDY CENTER



# AN EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER

Marshall soccer fans show up in force, bringing new energy and their own brand of tailgating to create a unique game experience

By Cara Bailey





PHOTO BY AUSTIN O'CONNOR

**O**n a sunny, late November day in 2019, Coach Chris Grassie readied the Marshall men's soccer team for a historic game against in-state rival West Virginia University. The winner would advance to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen and be one game closer to the coveted College Cup.

Outside the stadium, new energy was stirring. Soccer fans mingled together, sharing food, drink and stories. A DJ blasted music, children ran around with a soccer ball, and the mood was a party. The traditional tailgate, a forte of Marshall football fans, made its way down Huntington's Fifth Avenue and had arrived at the other football.

The energy from the tailgate followed 2,126 fans into the stadium and stayed strong as Marshall, then-ranked 11th nationally, defeated the Mountaineers 2-1 before a national audience on ESPN. The game earned Marshall its first NCAA tournament appearance. Marshall was knocked out of the tournament in the Elite Eight, but for fan Jeff Esteves, that November game was a turning point for the Marshall soccer fan base. The 2019 game against WVU was the first time the fans showed their potential — potential that continues to grow.

"It's the best ticket in town," Esteves said of Marshall soccer games.

It's definitely one of the hottest. Marshall soccer fans show up in force, selling out nearly every men's game at the Veterans Memorial Soccer Complex since the national championship run of 2021 and breaking attendance records year after year.

So, the fans are there, but what do they do? Enter Allison Grassie. A Huntington resident since 2017, when she joined her head coach husband here, Allison Grassie is the key to the Marshall soccer tailgating experience.

"I spent many a game by myself in the stands, with a toddler and a baby in a stroller," she remembered. "It didn't take long to figure out we needed something."

That something has turned into one of the most popular fall spots in Huntington: a massive, all-inclusive tailgate that's more of a party, utilizing the adjacent Veterans Memorial Park, operated by the Greater Huntington Park & Recreation District.

Unlike other sports, where people have their spot in a parking lot full of many spots, Allison Grassie strives to create a soccer tailgate that is truly communal, using the neighboring playground, shelter and green space to host one big party.

"The tailgate has become an institution," Allison Grassie said. "This is what we do."

Using her social media skills to organize and promote the tailgates, Allison Grassie draws fans like Tiffany Barbera, a Huntington resident and soccer season ticket holder who started attending the games with her husband, former Herd soccer standout Michael Barbera. The community she found at the tailgate and in the stands keeps her coming back.

"We have an environment where you can still converse as an adult, be with kids and watch them play," Barbera said. "The playground is magic."



The tailgate has become a space where old teammates, decades after their glory days, can meet up again. New friends are made, and community is united, under the green and white banner of Marshall soccer. For some fans, the regular tailgate is like coming home.

"It's family dinner," Esteves said. "I might have a lousy day at work, and I'm tired and grumpy, but I get to the tailgate and I know I'm going to see my friends and we're going to have a great time."

The tailgate energy leads into the game, as fans pack the Vet to stake their spot along the pitch. Seeing the energy grow over the years inspired Esteves and a group of soccer stalwarts to start a grassroots fan group, Annex 2550. Members of the Annex fill section 104 in the stands and often bring flags, chants, horns, bells and a few well-placed jabs for the visiting team.

"Do we troll? Yeah, we troll, but most of the opposing players enjoy it," Esteves said. "When they come here and get to play us, we're rooting against them, but they get to play in front of 2,000 people."

When Marshall's fan base shows up, it really shows up. According to game attendance records, Marshall averaged nearly 2,200 fans at home games in 2023, and more than 3,000 people at four of those games. On the road, the Herd saw an average of 1,200 fans. Remove the game against WVU in Morgantown, and the away average for fan attendance drops to 800. And part of those are Marshall fans, known to travel well.

The environment around games makes it enjoyable for fans, but Allison Grassie is sure it also has an impact on the game. She saw the difference a supportive, rowdy fan base can make during the 2021 run for the College Cup. Herd fans traveled en masse to Cary, North Carolina, selling out the COVID-restricted stadium. Prior to kickoff, fans lined along the street to welcome the Marshall team bus into WakeMed Soccer Park, but the opposing team entered the park first.

"I knew, looking at the faces of the (opposing) players, that we were going to win. They looked dejected just seeing all of the Marshall fans there for the game. And we won," Allison Grassie said. "We were a force to be reckoned with."

The fan base is a big reason Marshall and Huntington continue to keep the Grassie family in town. Chris Grassie just signed a contract extension, committing to Marshall through 2031.

"We know the grass is not always greener," Allison Grassie said. "We couldn't find this environment anywhere else."





For fans who have not yet been to a Marshall game, Allison Grassie, Barbera and Esteves are ready to welcome them. Barbera has a few tips for those coming from other sports, because the loud and physical soccer environment might be surprising.

"Be OK with it being loud, with children running around, a bell ringing in your ear, someone screaming, and someone hugging you," Barbera said. "That is the game. Be prepared."

For Esteves, sharing the love of the game is part of the fun. He enjoys when new fans turn around in the stands and ask him questions.

"Expect to be welcomed; expect a good time," Esteves said. "Come out to learn, love the game and enjoy the game. Cheer the boys and girls on."



## GLOSSARY

### NEW TO MARSHALL SOCCER?

Here are some terms to help:

**PITCH:** The playing field

**BOOTS:** Cleats

**BOOKED:** When the referee shows the player, coach or team bench a yellow card

**THE CUP:** The College Cup is soccer's National Championship. Marshall won this on May 17, 2021.

**KIT:** The team uniform

Want to see Marshall fans across the pond? Check out some fun films from **Daniel Johnson's** Instagram @danieljohnsonfilms.

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# STUDENT SPOT

## What are you involved in at Marshall?

I serve as student ambassador and as a student assistant at the Bill Noe Flight School and was a member in Women in Aviation. I also have volunteered for Community Cares Week.

## Why are you glad you chose Marshall?

One reason I'm glad I chose Marshall is because of the numerous opportunities that have opened up. Marshall has a wonderful reputation, and people are excited and proud when they hear about a young person choosing to study there. Another reason I am glad I chose Marshall is because of the family and community dynamic. Marshall has been welcoming from day one and continues to be so, with me and every other student.

## What has helped you get here?

I am a recipient of several scholarships and grants, including the West Virginia Higher Education Grant, the Pritt Family Scholarship through the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, a scholarship from the Herschel C. Price Educational Foundation, the Shawn Stewart and Shawn Tucker Memorial Scholarship and the Grumman Owners and Pilots Association Scholarship.

## What are some of your favorite experiences as a Marshall student?

Fortunately, my favorite college experience is one I am able to enjoy consistently throughout my college career. Learning to fly and being able to progress throughout my training is a thrilling experience. While it can be challenging and demanding, the feeling after accomplishing something difficult is second to none.

## What are you passionate about?

I'm passionate about learning more and becoming a better pilot. One of the reasons I chose this profession was because of my desire to travel and explore new places.

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, and I try to balance school and time with them as both are very important to me.

I also enjoy going to coffee shops and reading/studying, being outdoors and going on walks while listening to music/podcasts and working out.

## Plans for the future?

My plan for the future is to become a CFI (Certified Flight Instructor) at the Bill Noe Flight School and teach new students while building flight time. I would love to see how far I can go in the aviation industry in any area that opens up, but as of right now I am hoping to fly private jets.



# MCKINZIE QUINTRELL

Major: Professional Pilot with  
a minor in Meteorology  
Graduating in 2026

Hometown: Greensboro,  
North Carolina

# DENT LIGHT



PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL

# STUD SPOT



## What are you involved in at Marshall?

I'm student ambassador for the School of Pharmacy, and I have worked alongside other students as part of the Marshall Medical Outreach program, a student-led health clinic that provides free medical services to those in need in the Huntington community.

I have also served as Student Executive Council chair at the School of Pharmacy and have held leadership roles in Phi Delta Chi, Rho Chi, APhA (American Pharmacists Association), ASHP (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists) and Phi Lambda Sigma.

## Why are you glad you chose Marshall?

The relationships I have formed that will last a lifetime. Marshall has presented me with many opportunities that I could've never imagined were available.

## What has helped you get here? Any scholarships or other forms of support that have allowed you to attend Marshall?

The support from friends, family and staff has gotten me where I am today. The Promise Scholarship was a big financial help while completing my undergraduate coursework. I was also blessed to receive MUSOP's Early Assurance Scholarship.

## Favorite experiences as a Marshall student?

Pulling all-night study sessions with many of the friends I have made along the way.

## Tell us what you're passionate about — why do you love it, why is it important and what should people know about it that they might not realize?

I am passionate about athletics and staying active. Particularly, I am passionate about football and baseball, as I grew up watching and playing. Having the opportunity to play again as a part of intramurals gives me the energy I need to get through the challenges of the course load.

## Plans for the future?

I want a career path that I can enjoy and will allow me to have a family. I want to get married and have kids in the future. I am leaving my career options open to accommodate the life I want to live, but I am considering nuclear pharmacy, clinical pharmacy or opening my own pharmacy.

# DAKOTA PARNELL

Major: PharmD with  
a dual MBA degree  
Graduating in 2026

Hometown: Bluefield,  
West Virginia



# DENT LIGHT



PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL

innovation



# SECURING the FUTURE

The team leading Marshall's new Institute for Cyber Security focuses on national and international partnerships that prepare students to combat the increasingly complex realm of cyber threats

By Leah Payne

PHOTO BY BROCK BURWELL





**F**orty years ago, the U.S. military was well-trained in identifying enemies through an intricate system of threat assessments. Fast-forward a few decades, and the enemy is now more complicated than ever, due to advancements in technology, digital platforms and cybersecurity tools where malicious actors are operating globally, hidden in the dark web. Cyber adversaries come in many forms and include everything from nation- and state-sponsored actors to hacktivists to lone criminal hackers motivated by money. The complexity and anonymity of the digital world make them difficult to track and combat. Neither governments, militaries nor Fortune 500 companies could have truly envisioned the future of the digital world and the vast opportunities for good and evil that exist today.

Enter Marshall University's new Institute for Cyber Security, set to become "the hub of East Coast cybersecurity." It will house the National Center of Excellence for Cybersecurity in Critical Infrastructure, which is modeled after the framework of the University of Texas-San Antonio's National Security Collaboration Center. Marshall's location, just a few hundred miles from the nation's capital, makes it a prime location for a revolutionary, state-of-the-art cyber center, easily accessible by federal government and military officials.

University officials emphasize the importance of a global approach with the new institute, one that includes fostering and maintaining external relationships with foreign partners, ensuring comprehensive collaboration, knowledge exchange and mutual support across international borders. These partnerships were highlighted last April when Marshall students and faculty participated again in Exercise Locked Shields. Hosted by United States Cyber Command's (USCYBERCOM) Joint Force Headquarters-Department of Defense Information Network (JFHQ-DODIN), it is the largest cyber exercise in the world, with over 40 partner countries and dozens of federal and private sector entities that worked together to secure and defend critical infrastructure through cyberspace.

The importance of collaboration is echoed by partners at the federal level including Bill Walker, chief of staff for USCYBERCOM's JFHQ-DODIN and a Marshall alumnus, who said even with the

money, military might and sophistication of the U.S. intelligence and cyber apparatus, the power of many is essential to fighting today's sophisticated cyber adversaries.

"In this day and age, everything regarding security and defense in the cyber domain comes down to partnerships," Walker said. "We know that the Department of Defense cannot do it alone. We need our private sector partners working with our academic partners like Marshall University, West Virginia University and West Virginia State University, among others."

At the recent West Virginia Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Summit, Walker told the audience there are two types of entities that exist today — those who have been compromised and those who just don't know it yet.

Marshall's John Sammons, ICS associate director and professor of Cyber Forensics and Security, agrees that protecting everything and everyone essentially falls under the definition of cybersecurity.

"Most talk about protecting data, devices and networks from unauthorized access, but I don't think we can or should lose sight that protecting people is also a major part of the big picture," Sammons said. "The other thing I would say is that the overall cyber domain has significantly expanded. We used to be focused on computers, servers and networks. Today, it's expanded to include critical infrastructure and the technology used to run, monitor and control it. It includes things like health care, energy, manufacturing, transportation and so much more. This is where the National Center of Excellence and our collaboration with USCYBERCOM come into play."

Just how common is cybercrime? It's estimated to happen every 39 seconds and is forecast to cost the world's economy \$10.5 trillion by next year. Whether it's as simple as a gas card being compromised at the pump or as far-reaching as a large-scale cybercrime taking out a global network, cybercrime is rampant. And there aren't enough cybersecurity-trained experts currently to handle the load, although Marshall and others are leveling up to meet the challenge.

Historically, under the direction of outstanding academic leaders, Marshall University has excelled at educating students in computer and information technology, computer engineering,

management information systems and now cybersecurity. The ICS is a multidisciplinary hub that is leveraging all these programs and more in a laser-targeted effort to meet the world's defense needs. It's a mission that Sammons said will benefit students across the university.

"It's not just a technology problem. It's a policy problem, a people problem and touches all kinds of different disciplines and all kinds of different folks," Sammons said. "All of those feed into Marshall's mission of educating and training the current and future workforce. We are not only expanding cyber offerings here, but we are expanding cybersecurity and awareness across the university — because it literally touches everything."

Sammons said he expects the university's multidisciplinary relationships to grow as cyber issues continue to invade politics, health care and business, etc. And it will all be housed in a new 78,000-square-foot facility that will anchor the east end of the Innovation Corridor currently being developed along Fourth Avenue. Plans call for a five-story building with space for academic, private sector, government and military operations, as well as retail space on the ground floor. It is anticipated construction will begin in early 2025 with the center ready for occupancy in early 2027.

For more information on the Institute for Cyber Security and the academic programs at Marshall, visit [www.marshall.edu/cyber](http://www.marshall.edu/cyber).



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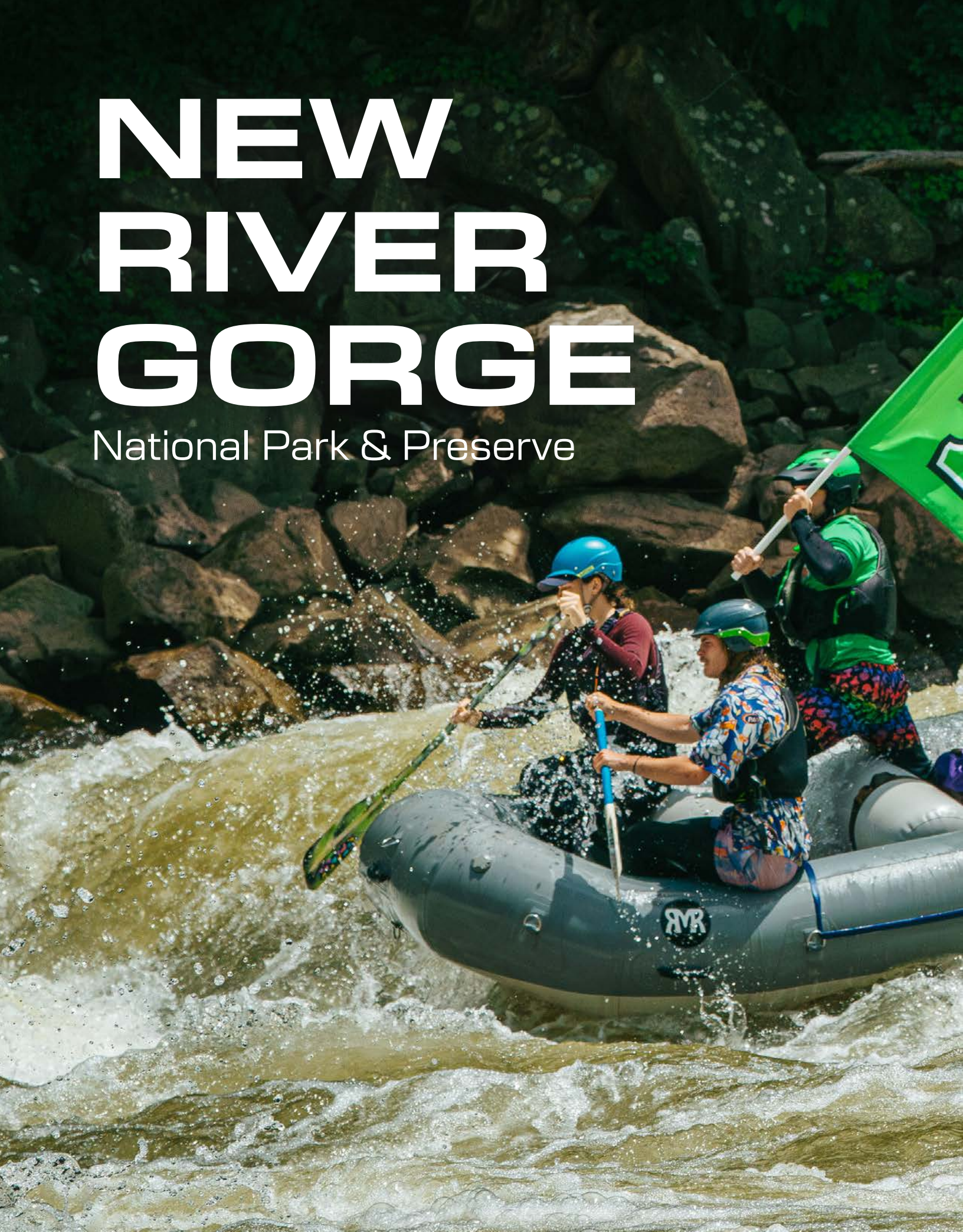




PHOTO BY AUSTIN O'CONNOR



## DID YOU KNOW?

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Marshall University is less than two hours from America's newest national park.

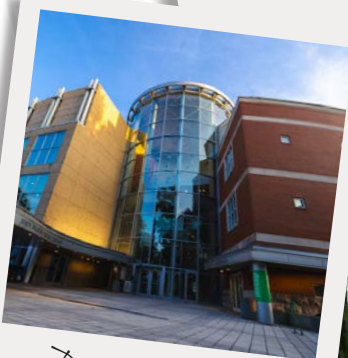
# A day on campus: **WHERE PAST MEETS FUTURE**

From beloved favorites to new wonders, here's our guide to the must-see sights across Marshall University's Huntington campus.

By **Rebecca Stephens & Jean Hardiman**



*Old Main*



*Drinko Library*

**Est  
1837**



*Morrow Library*



**F**rom the timelessness of Old Main to the brand-new Brad D. Smith Center for Business and Innovation, each landmark on Marshall University's campus offers a unique glimpse into the university's rich heritage and forward-looking vision. Whether you are a campus regular, are visiting for a special occasion or have yet to revisit campus since graduation, Marshall's commitment to tradition, progress and community makes campus a sight to see.

## **OLD MAIN**

Built between 1868 and 1908 through a series of connected buildings, Old Main is the most prominent landmark and most photographed building on Marshall's campus. Home now to the university's administrative offices, Honors College and College of Liberal Arts administrative office, Old Main has witnessed more than a century of history and stands as a testament to the university's resilience and evolution.

**DID YOU KNOW?** In the basement of Old Main is the Archaeology and Ethnography Lab, which is managed by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

This lab houses thousands of artifacts from important prehistoric sites in West Virginia, including hunting, cooking and sewing tools, games and jewelry. The ethnographic collection contains hundreds of diverse everyday and ceremonial objects spanning the globe, like masks, musical instruments, dolls and clothing. Though not open to the public, visitors can request a tour of the lab from Archeology Lab Director Marion Coe.

## **MARSHALL LIBRARIES**

Marshall is fortunate to have two libraries on campus. The oldest is Morrow Library, which opened in the 1930s and houses the Morrow stacks and Special Collections. For history buffs, Morrow is the keeper of Marshall history and is open to the public.

**DID YOU KNOW?** On the top tower of Morrow Library are working bells that are electronically programmed to chime on the hour and play randomized holiday music during December. They were donated in 1983 by C.I. and Marie A. Thornburg.

Drinko Library opened its doors in 1998 and is the modern counterpart to Morrow. Drinko hosts study rooms, conference rooms, the Writing Center and the IT department, as well as a new Digital Creation Studio. With the first floor being open 24 hours five days a week, with additional Saturday and Sunday hours, current students have the perfect place for a late-night study session.

**DID YOU KNOW?** One of the architectural features of Drinko Library is the exterior archway that faces Hal Greer Boulevard, which was preserved from the former Northcott Hall and incorporated into the designs for Drinko Library.



*Business School*



*Memorial Fountain*



*The Jack*



## BRAD D. SMITH CENTER FOR BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

The Brad D. Smith Center for Business and Innovation, which opened in the spring of 2024, houses classroom space, a forum and auditorium, computer and finance labs, office space, meeting rooms and study spaces for students. It is designed to be the center for economic development in the region, giving Marshall students access to a first-class education in a dynamic environment that enhances learning and collaboration.

**DID YOU KNOW?** It has its own stock ticker and is the first building on campus that has TIV ThinkHub Education technology, which includes an instructor station and student stations that can work both independently and collaboratively, connecting everyone's devices. The facility's finance lab will house 12 Bloomberg terminals that students will utilize in learning wealth management, with plans to host a student investment fund to help them get hands-on investment training. Also in this new facility are hundreds of electrical outlets. They're on everything from the desks in the classrooms to the furniture in the forum.

## MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

Since its dedication in 1972, the Memorial Fountain has served as the heart of the university and the site of the Memorial Fountain Ceremony held annually on Nov. 14. The ceremony commemorates those lost on Nov. 14, 1970, when a plane crash claimed the lives of 75 Marshall University football players, coaches and supporters. The fountain recently made headlines after being recognized on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

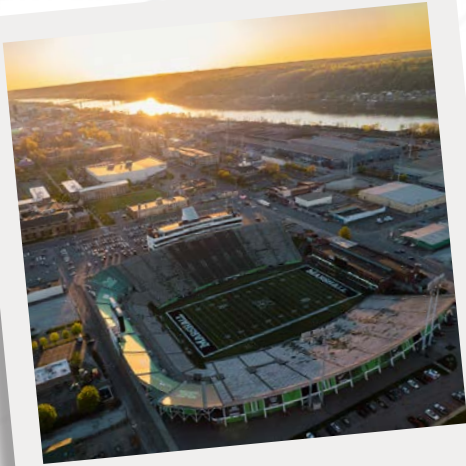
**DID YOU KNOW?** More than 13 feet high and weighing 6,500 pounds, the Memorial Fountain was created by Italian-American sculptor Harry Bertioia. Each year, during the Memorial Fountain Ceremony on Nov. 14, the fountain's water is turned off until the following spring.

## JACK COOK FIELD

For Herd baseball fans, the completion of Jack Cook Field realizes a decades-long dream of having a home baseball stadium. Opened in March, Jack Cook Field is certainly the "stuff that dreams are made of" complete with coaches' offices, meeting rooms, locker rooms, a players' lounge and 1,200-plus seats for fans. A day at the ballpark is a day well spent.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Jack Cook, for whom the field was named, served as coach of the Marshall baseball team briefly in 1955 and then a second time for 22 years, from 1967-1989. He led the team to the NCAA championship tournament in 1973 and again in 1978.





*The Joan*



*Student Center*



*Hal Greer Statue*



## JOAN C. EDWARDS STADIUM

The home of the Thundering Herd football team, Joan C. Edwards Stadium opened in 1991 at the corner of 20th Street and Third Avenue, replacing Fairfield Stadium, which was a short walk from campus. The stadium seats over 30,000 people and features 20 deluxe indoor suites.

Outside the stadium is the We Are Marshall Memorial Bronze, a sculpture which sits on the west side of the exterior. Unveiled in November 2000, the 17-by-23-foot statue was created by artist Burl Jones of Sissonville, West Virginia.

**DID YOU KNOW?** One of the stadium's newest and most striking features is its scoreboard, which is 38 feet tall and 97 feet wide, making it one of the largest in the nation.

## MEMORIAL STUDENT CENTER

If you spent time on campus at any point since the 1970s, then you know the Memorial Student Center has been the hub for student activity for decades. What you may not know is nearly five years ago the student center received a renovation, complete with new furnishings, floorings and lights, a new fireplace, and lastly, a floating staircase that connects all three floors of the building.

The Memorial Student Center replaced the original Shawkey Student Union, which had been constructed in 1933 for \$25,000 and named for then-Marshall President Morris P. Shawkey. The current student center has a conference room named in his honor.

**DID YOU KNOW?** From the 1970s through mid-1980s, the basement of the Memorial Student Center housed Marco's, a place where faculty, staff and students could hang out and have a beer, eat and enjoy local and national entertainers, including bands and comedians such as "Carrot Top."

## HAL GREER STATUE AT CAM HENDERSON CENTER

Harold Everett "Hal" Greer, one of the most revered players to ever step on a basketball court, began his playing career at Marshall in the 1950s, leading Marshall to a Mid-American Conference Championship. He then went on to have a successful career in the NBA and is listed in the Basketball Hall of Fame. He played for the Syracuse Nationals followed by the Philadelphia 76ers, a team that retired his No. 15 jersey. He was a 10-time NBA All-Star. In October 2021, a nearly 8-foot bronze statue of Greer, sculpted by Huntington native Frederick Hightower Sr., was unveiled along Third Avenue and 18th Street outside of the Cam Henderson Center, home to Marshall's basketball arena.



*Engineering Building*



*East Hall*



**DID YOU KNOW?** Greer grew up in Huntington and played basketball for Douglass High School, the city's all-Black high school. In coming to Marshall, he was the first African American to play basketball for a public college in West Virginia. That first year at Marshall, in 1954-55, he was coached by legendary Coach Cam Henderson, who is the namesake of the facility that houses Herd Basketball.

## ARTHUR WEISBERG FAMILY APPLIED ENGINEERING COMPLEX

Opened in 2015, the Arthur Weisberg Family Applied Engineering Complex is the home of the College of Engineering and Computer Sciences and Marshall University Research Corporation. Currently home to some of the university's computer science and cybersecurity lab space, it also gives Marshall engineering students first-rate facilities in which to learn. The WAEC has designated spaces for the following labs: the Advanced Materials Testing Lab, Environmental Lab, Thermal Engineering Lab, Hydraulics and Pneumatics Lab, Fluids and Hydraulics Lab, Controls and Instrumentation Lab, Industrial Controls Lab, Circuits and PLC Lab, and a Machine Shop.

**DID YOU KNOW?** In 2016, the building earned a LEED® Gold certification for its implementation of sustainability initiatives. It was the seventh building in West Virginia to do so and the first at Marshall University. More than 95% of stormwater runoff generated from the average annual rainfall is captured, treated and slowly released. Stormwater collected from the roofs is used for teaching and research projects and is recycled for one of the restrooms in the building.

## EAST HALL

Home to the Center for Student Success and the English Language Institute, East Hall provides a safe, open and welcoming space to students from all walks of life. A popular hub and hangout for international students, East Hall is also home to the Intercultural Center, which in 2022 provided a renovation to East Hall and offered space for the LGBTQ+ Office, as well as the Center for African American Students and the Center for International Student Affairs. In addition to providing services to students, East Hall hosts several cultural events.

**DID YOU KNOW?** East Hall has space that is available to any club on campus. Marshall is home to over 200 clubs and organizations, and new clubs and organizations that form can find meeting space in the basement of East Hall.



The REC

## MARSHALL RECREATION CENTER

The Marshall Recreation Center, which opened in 2009, offers a multitude of health and wellness activities for students, faculty, staff and community members. From youth programs to fitness classes and everything in between, learn more about the Rec Center as we celebrate its 15th anniversary on page 44.

## EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL

Through the years, one of the mainstays on the Marshall University campus is the Eastern Gray Squirrel, or *Sciurus Carolinensis*. The lovely, long-standing trees across campus provide the squirrels shelter and the bulk of their diet, including acorns and other nuts, buds and tree flowers, but Marshall squirrels can also be found munching on an occasional treat shared by a human friend. They've been spotted enjoying spare Cheetos or Chick-fil-A waffle fries found here or there.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Campus squirrels have their own Instagram page. See photos and follow their antics: @the\_thundering\_squirrels.

In town for the fountain ceremony or another Marshall event and want a guided tour of campus? Go to [marshall.edu/visit](http://marshall.edu/visit) for more information. Want to explore Marshall on your own? Check out the self-guided tour option to learn about even more campus favorites.



Buskirk Field



Squirrel!



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Above: Arthur Weisberg Family Applied Engineering Complex

Left: Pullman Plaza

Right: Huntington City Hall

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## EXPLORE WAYS TO GIVE.



PHOTO BY MORGAN NAPIER

# FACULTY FEATURE

**DR. NASIM NOSOUDI**  
Assistant professor,  
Biomedical Engineering



**D**r. Nasim Nosoudi is the first faculty member in Marshall's College of Engineering and Computer Sciences to receive a U.S. National Science Foundation CAREER Award. According to the foundation, the award identifies and supports "early-career faculty who have the potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization."

She will receive \$604,047 over the next five years for her research project, "Exploring the Differentiation of Mesenchymal Stem Cell to Chondrocytes After Electrospaying."

### **Education and career background:**

Bachelor's degree in material engineering from Iran University of Science and Technology, master's in biomedical engineering from Amirkabir University of Technology (Polytechnic), Ph.D. in bioengineering from Clemson University.

Joined Marshall in 2019, following three years at Wright State University.

### **Can you tell us the basics of what your job entails?**

Teaching involves course preparation, lecturing, assessment, office hours, curriculum development, supervising students and academic advising.

In addition to teaching, I spend time conducting research, publishing, grant writing and sharing research findings at conferences, workshops and other academic forums.

As a faculty member, I also have departmental duties like participating in department meetings, serving on committees and other administrative tasks.

### **What are your thoughts on being the first in your college to earn an NSF CAREER Award, and what do you hope to accomplish?**

Being the first in my college to earn the NSF CAREER Award is an incredible honor. It feels gratifying to see my hard work and dedication recognized at such a high level. This achievement is not just a personal milestone but also a testament to the supportive and collaborative environment within our college. I hope this accomplishment can inspire my colleagues and students to pursue their goals with determination and passion.

### **What do you hope is the impact of your work?**

If this project succeeds, using the patient's own adipose-derived stem cells to create a customized population of chondrocytes for cartilage repair, it could significantly enhance the effectiveness of cell therapies and regenerative treatments.

Cell therapies and regenerative treatments are used to address a variety of medical issues. Some of the main areas they can help with include:

- Repairing damaged tissues from injuries, like cartilage damage in joints or heart tissue after a heart attack.
- Degenerative diseases, such as osteoarthritis and Parkinson's disease, where therapies and treatments aim to regenerate lost or damaged cells.
- Autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis, where the therapy can modulate the immune system.
- Wound healing and skin regeneration, especially for burns or chronic wounds.

### **What do you love about your job?**

As a professor, I love my job because it allows me to profoundly impact young lives and shape their futures. Teaching gives me the opportunity to inspire and mentor students, guiding them as they develop their knowledge and skills.

Additionally, I have the privilege of conducting research, exploring unknowns and contributing to advancements in my field. This combination of educating the next generation and pushing the boundaries of science makes my work incredibly fulfilling and meaningful.

### **Based on your work, what have you learned that you wish everyone knew?**

Combining principles from different fields can lead to great advancements. Also, I wish everyone knew that with dedication and effort, anything is possible.

PHOTO BY MORGAN NAPIER





SBC MARSHALL

11

Health Network

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COO SURANCE



STAFF HIGHLIGHT

# CORNELIUS JACKSON

## Men's Basketball Head Coach

**Career with the Herd:** Assistant coach on staff from 2017-2023, named head coach on staff spring of 2024, played for the Herd from 1998-2001.

**You come to work every day, and the sign on your office says Head Coach at Marshall – what does that mean to you?**

It means the world to me. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to serve as the head coach at my alma mater. It's a lifelong dream that comes with great responsibility, and I'm looking forward to continuing to help raise Marshall Basketball to new heights.

**Tell us an interesting aspect of your job that we may not know about.**

Contrary to popular belief, there is no "offseason" or "out of season" in this profession. It's a 24-7, 365-days, around-the-clock role.

**What do you hope is the biggest impact of your work?**

I hope my biggest impact will be in helping to create great fathers, husbands, leaders and citizens who will, in turn, leave a positive impact on this world.

**What do you love most about your job?**

I love the opportunity to serve and mentor young men through the game of basketball.

**What are your favorite Marshall moments?**

I have many favorite Marshall moments, but the two that stick out are winning the 2017-18 Conference USA Tournament and beating Wichita State to advance to the round of 32 in the NCAA Tournament.

**What are your expectations for your first season as the head coach at Marshall?**

My expectation is to continue to elevate Marshall Basketball in a first-class manner — on and off the court — and to create a basketball program and culture that this university, this community and the entire state of West Virginia can be proud of.

**How do you feel as you take over for a coach who had success at Marshall?**

It's a great feeling. I love Coach D'Antoni and am grateful for the opportunity he gave me here seven years ago. I'm super-excited to continue to grow the Marshall Basketball brand.

**Based on your work, what do you know that you wish everyone knew?**

I wish everyone knew the extent of time and preparation that goes into just one single game.



## STAFF HIGHLIGHT

# JULI FULKS

## Women's Basketball Head Coach

**Career background:** Joined Marshall this year after coaching at Transylvania University in Lexington. Was named 2024 WBCA Division III National Coach of the Year following a 2023-24 season in which Transylvania finished 33-1 and advanced to the NCAA Division III Final Four for the second straight season.

### You come to work every day, and the sign on your office says Head Coach at Marshall – what does that mean to you?

Coaching the women's basketball team at Marshall is a tremendous honor and one that comes with responsibilities to our athletes, university and community. Our collective job is to create an atmosphere that enables our student-athletes to become the best versions of themselves on and off the court. It's incredibly humbling every day to walk onto campus knowing the opportunities and responsibilities our staff has been given.

### Tell us an interesting aspect of your job that we may not know about.

As coaches, we get the opportunity to be involved in the community in a variety of ways which lead to new and fun connections. One of my favorites so far was being a judge at Taco-Fest!

### What do you hope is the biggest impact of your work?

Ultimately, our job is to grow and transform our student-athletes as basketball players, students and future professionals. We take their holistic development seriously, and our goal is that each player leaves Marshall University with the confidence to tackle anything in the future.

### What do you love most about your job?

Watching student-athletes take on new challenges, embrace the struggle, put in the work and then find success is my favorite part of the job. Sometimes, this happens on the court, and other times, it's passing a class or test that was incredibly challenging.

### When you look into the future, what are the Marshall moments you hope to experience?

Chasing and winning championships is incredibly rewarding, and I look forward to our group embracing the challenge of being back-to-back Sun Belt Champions. My favorite part of chasing titles is it requires great commitment, sacrifice and a willingness to go all in — and the reward of accomplishing something great with a group exceeds anything you can accomplish in singularity.

### What are your expectations for your first season as the head coach at Marshall?

Our primary goal is to represent Marshall University and our fan base in a manner worthy of this institution. We are going to show up every day, work hard and leave everything we have on the court.

### What's the feeling like as you take over for a coach who had success at Marshall?

It's exciting to have the opportunity to continue the success Coach Caldwell had this past season. She demonstrated the ability Marshall Women's Basketball has to compete in the Sun Belt and raised the expectations of everyone both in and out of the program. Our job is to continue building on last year's success and continue finding ways to compete at a high level.

### Based on your work, what do you know that you wish everyone knew?

I wish everyone understood the level of commitment and work our student-athletes put in daily to achieve success for our team, Marshall and our community. I have been inspired by their effort, competitive nature and willingness to learn.



# MARSHALL ARTISTS SERIES

*created in 1936*

## A LEGACY OF ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

**S**ince 1936, the Marshall Artists Series has served as a unique bridge between Marshall and the surrounding communities — bringing some of the world’s most talented and creative acts to the Tri-State area.

“In a city the size of Huntington, we are fortunate that a professional cultural events business has continued to exist,” said Penny Watkins, executive director of the Marshall Artists Series. “In fact, Marshall University is the only university in the Sun Belt Conference of schools offering students world-class events as a part of their education outside the classroom. We take great pride in providing students free admission to quality cultural and entertainment events as a part of their college education experience.”

### ABOUT THE MARSHALL ARTISTS SERIES...

- It’s the second-oldest “town and gown” professional performing arts organization in the United States.
- Over 500,000 Marshall students have attended an event.
- Over \$10 million has been raised to support student events.
- 2024 marks the 88th season.
- \$40,000 is raised annually for Marshall student employment opportunities.
- It creates 1,500 seasonal jobs annually.



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# 2024-25 MARSHALL ARTISTS SERIES SEASON

SHOWS	DATE & TIME
*A Doll's House	10/19/24   7:30 P.M.
Mountain Stage with Kathy Mattea	10/20/24   7:00 P.M.
International Film Festival	10/26/24   12:30 P.M.
Broadway Show, Mean Girls	11/13/24   7:30 P.M.
The Masters at Marshall Distinguished Speaker Series, Henry Louis Gates	11/15/24   7:30 P.M.
Ricky Skaggs (15-time Grammy Winner) and Kentucky Thunder Christmas	12/12/24   7:30 P.M.
The Masters at Marshall Distinguished Speaker Series, Javier Zamora	3/6/25   7:30 P.M.
BANFF Mountain Film Festival World Tour	4/7/25   7:00 P.M.
Broadway Show, Dear Evan Hansen	4/14/25   7:30 P.M.
*The SpongeBob Musical	4/23/25   7:30 P.M.

All shows will be at the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center.

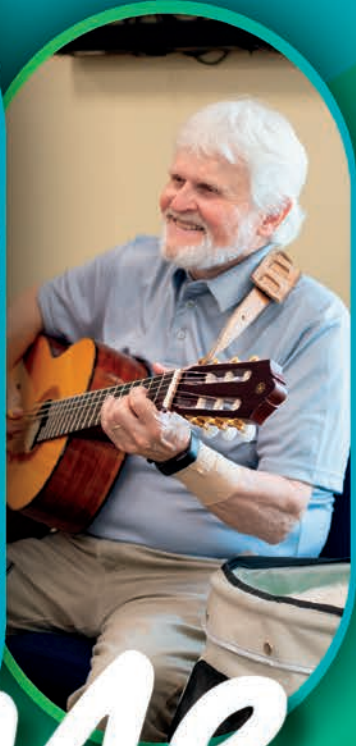
*\*Marshall School of Theatre and Dance Production*

**SPECIAL EVENT:** Two cabaret performances by The Scandalous Stones with Douglas Chirside, direct from London. These take place at Rocco's At The Green Room (226 Main St. in Ceredo) **2/6/25 | 6:30 P.M. & 8:30 P.M.**



MOUNTAIN STAGE  
PHOTO BY JASON ADAMS

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SHAWN  
**BALL**

# THE BUSINESS OF **GIVING BACK**

Board of Governors member Shawn Ball's dedication to the West Virginia education system

**By Kasey Stevens**

**W**hen Shawn Ball stepped onto Marshall's campus in the fall of 1991, he never imagined he'd be back on campus more than 30 years later serving on the Board of Governors.

However, Ball's story isn't about his professional accomplishments — it's about his heart for giving back.

Ball's career path took shape against the backdrop of his father's small used car and mobile home dealership in Boone County, West Virginia. At the time, Boone County was known for coal mining, but Ball said he never felt called to coal mining. Ball's goal was to take over the family business, so he went to Marshall to earn his undergraduate degree in business as a first-generation college student.

In 1993, two years into his degree program, Ball's father became ill. He ultimately passed away shortly after Ball graduated from Marshall. Ball recalled a conversation about two weeks before his father passed away. His father was worried about Ball's future employment and set up a job interview for him at the post office.

"I really wanted to get into the car business and own my own car dealership one day," Ball said.

He started washing cars and driving cars to auction at a car dealership in South Charleston at 23 years old with \$200 and making about \$300 per week.

"I thought, 'As long as I can pay rent, I'll be OK,' and that's what I did," Ball said. "I was really poor and had nothing. I really kind of thought, 'If I ever do this, helping kids is what I'm going to do with it.'"

Ball worked his way up in the company and eventually purchased a dealership in Beckley. He was later able to buy a dealership in Huntington and another in Charleston.

As a business owner, Ball noticed an increasing number of requests for financial assistance from

local organizations. Frustrated by the inability to meet every need, he started to give money to local schools.

"If a kid needs a size 8 boy's tennis shoe, teachers or guidance counselors need to be able to go to the store to buy the shoes," he said.

The first year he was inspired to give back, Ball asked Raleigh County Schools for a list of the coat size and shoe size for every student in need. He got the list of about 1,000 pairs of shoes and coats, went to Walmart and nearly bought the entire shoe section. He then loaded the shoes and coats into his truck and personally delivered them to every school. The project cost him approximately \$15,000.

When his car dealership business expanded to Huntington about eight years ago, he knew he wanted to do more — and he couldn't do it alone.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ball was surprised to discover despite the increase of government grants toward education, many children still lacked necessities. That's where Communities In Schools West Virginia (CIS WV) stepped in.

CIS WV now operates in all 55 counties in West Virginia. Since 2018, CIS WV has connected students and families with community resources, helping students get their basic needs met so they can focus on learning. Communities In Schools also operates on a national level, with the tagline, "In schools to help kids stay in school."

In October 2023, Ball and his brother David donated \$1,500 to 247 public schools in West Virginia to establish "virtual pantries" to provide students with essentials — coats, shoes, food, school supplies and more. Ball noted about 10% of students in West Virginia schools benefit from the Communities In Schools program. CIS WV has improved school attendance by 68% as of January 2024.

“They have no chance of getting out of their situation if they don’t get an education,” Ball said. “I want to be able to change the rut that these kids are in, and it has to start at the school level because that’s the only place some of these kids are going to get fed and be safe.”

Ball partners with the West Virginia Board of Education to distribute the funds, then he receives a monthly report of how schools are spending the money, ensuring every dollar spent makes a difference.

He encourages community involvement, urging anyone who is able to contribute to school pantries. He said even small donations can significantly impact a child’s life, fostering a culture of giving and support within the community.

“If you really pay attention, you can change the world if you look at what the major problems are. You don’t have to have a lot of money to do it, but it helps,” Ball said.

Ball also established the Ball Family Scholarship through CIS WV to cover the remaining cost of college tuition that the West Virginia Promise Scholarship does not cover for four years of study. Of the eight students receiving the scholarship this year, three students are attending Marshall University.

When there was a proposal to expand Marshall’s Food Pantry, Ball stepped up to the plate again and assisted in funding the project. The renovated space will be a combined food pantry and thrift shop, called Marco’s Market and More, and will be 3,083 square feet. It is set to open later this year.

For more information on CIS WV visit [www.ciswv.org](http://www.ciswv.org).





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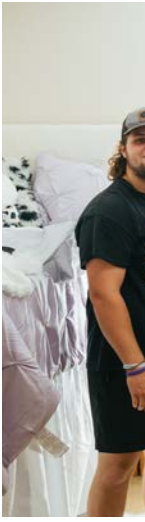


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# LIVING YOUR MARSHALL *Moment*





history

# A moment in Marshall history

Marshall's Recreation Center  
celebrates **15 YEARS**

By Melanie Chapman Whitt





All college campuses have landmark locations that invoke memories with alumni and inspire the newest class of students who trod its paths. From the iconic spires of Old Main to the full-of-life hustle and bustle of the Memorial Student Center, many of Marshall's most loved spots have been around for generations.

One of the newer additions to the Huntington campus, celebrating 15 years this year, is the Marshall Recreation Center — a vital hub of life and activity, with an impact that extends far beyond the bounds of the university.

"In my career, I have traveled to many recreation facilities, and ours continues to shine," said Michele Muth, who serves as director of campus recreation.

Muth has been with the Rec since 2010, a little over a year after it officially opened its doors.

"Our team has worked to bring programming that benefits the community," she said. "We have held multiple special events over the years, including 5K races, pump and runs, climbing competitions, disc golf challenges, pool safety events for kids and even an indoor triathlon.

"The Rec not only helps Marshall University attract new students during the recruitment process, but it also provides a place for current students to socialize and spend time with others through our diverse programming. We provide the space needed for them to foster their physical health and mental well-being."

The Rec has seen its share of events over the years, from regular gatherings like fitness classes to birthday parties and community events. But — there has also been romance. There's just something about shared experiences when endorphins start to flow.

"Something might be in the air!" said Muth, who cited a handful of couples off the top of her head who have met and tied the knot since first walking into the Rec as students.

Kaitlin Horton met her husband Patrick in 2014 while working as a lifeguard at the Rec.

"He was swimming, not very well, and asked me what he needed to do to pass the lifeguard certification since he was looking for a job," Horton said. "I laughed and told him he needed to swim better."

Her love for the pool and his distaste for swimming, along with getting in cold water, laid the groundwork for their romance. After many coaching sessions, Patrick landed a job as a fitness attendant at the Rec, perfect for an exercise science major. Eventually, a proposal came, just outside of the Rec Center doors.

"From the start, I knew he was the one," Horton said. "He was easy to talk to and had a great sense of humor that I loved. I've always considered the Rec Center a special place, fostering many 'RElationships.'"

Horton is now in her 12th year as a full-time staff member, working as assistant director of programs for aquatics and fitness. Her now-husband continues to personal train at the Rec and teach group fitness classes occasionally, simply because, as they say, it's hard to leave such a memorable place.

The 123,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility officially turned 15 on Feb. 5, 2024. Looking ahead to the future, those who have been along for the ride at the Rec hope to continue to challenge themselves to bring compelling programming to the surrounding area.

"I have seen the Rec become part of the community," Muth said. "Our unique advantage lies in our ability to offer diverse programming, thanks to our wonderful facility. When we reach a point where adults reflect on learning to swim at the Rec Center or having their first job there, I think we will have truly accomplished our mission."





*When we reach a point where adults reflect on learning to swim at the Rec Center or having their first job there, I think we will have truly accomplished our mission.*

**- Michele Muth,**

Director of Campus Recreation



*I've always considered the Rec Center a special place, fostering many "REClationships."*

**- Kaitlin Horton,**

Assistant Director of Programs:  
Aquatics and Fitness





LaKeisha Barron-Brown (left), president of MUBA, and Matt James, executive director for Alumni Relations, pose for a photo with Janet Gaither, 2024 Fran Jackson Scholarship recipient, at the Alumni Awards Banquet on April 13, 2024.

# HONORING THE PAST, SUPPORTING THE **FUTURE**

Alumni chapters work to raise scholarship memorial funds for future generations of Marshall students

By Taylor Stuck-Vance

**W**hen Mark S. Walker graduated from Marshall University with a degree in accounting in 1981, he took his love of his alma mater back home to Beckley.

"He was instrumental in founding what our club is today," said Amanda Ashley, first vice president of the Marshall University Southern Coalfields Alumni & Big Green Club. "He and Larry Foster worked hard in those early, slim years to keep it going."

The Marshall University Southern Coalfields Alumni & Big Green Club is one of today's most active alumni chapters. In 2019, the club established a scholarship to send more southern West Virginia students to Marshall. Since then, the club has helped 24 students with scholarship support.

When Walker was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2021, the club decided to name its new fundraiser after him. Coordination efforts between Hospice of Southern West Virginia, BEST Ambulance and the club allowed Walker and his family to attend the event. Nearly 1,000 golf balls were dropped on the putting green to raise \$1,800 for the club's scholarship.

Sadly, the Mark Walker Ball Drop would be Walker's last public outing, as he died just a few weeks later.

"Our club goal to raise funds was far exceeded by the enjoyment on Mark's face and his family's appreciation over this gesture," Ashley said.

With the ball drop now being the main fundraiser for the club's scholarship, Ashley said the club felt it fitting to rename the scholarship in Walker's honor. The name change coincides with the club fully endowing the scholarship, which means it will live on in perpetuity.

"His legacy will forever live on and help students from southern West Virginia," Ashley said. "Someone will get this and change the world."

Memorial scholarships like the Mark S. Walker Memorial Scholarship provide a special way for alumni chapters to bond as they collaborate to honor the memory of a deceased member and support future students. These scholarships recognize the legacy of truly impactful members of the Marshall family.

Nate Ruffin's legacy was cemented when fate kept him home instead of being able to play in the 1970 game at East Carolina University. His leadership on campus did not end with the Young Thundering Herd but continued until he died in 2001.

Members of the Marshall University Black Alumni (MUBA), one of the university's longest-running alumni chapters, knew they needed to do something to honor Ruffin and thus the fundraising for the Nate Ruffin Scholarship began.

"It was a no-brainer that he would be the person we would name our first scholarship after," said Bernard Coston, past president of MUBA and current member of the Marshall University Foundation Board of Directors. "Not only was he active on campus with the football team and alumni, but he was also active in the community with his church. He also worked for 'The Herald-Dispatch' for a time. There were many ways he connected with the community."

When the foundation and alumni association began raising funds to build in 2010 what is now the Brad D. Smith Foundation Hall, home of the Erickson Alumni Center, MUBA was approached about honoring Ruffin by naming the lounge in the building after him. MUBA was able to raise enough money to name the Nate Ruffin Lounge and fully endow the scholarship.

"I really think Nate was the catalyst for the other scholarships we created," Coston said. "Others saw we were doing good work and how we could help assist more students with their education."

The Fran Jackson Scholarship is in honor of Fran Jackson, a past president of MUBA and program assistant for the Marshall University African American Students Program.

"Fran helped students in her role in student affairs, but she also provided personal advice and mentorship," said LaKeisha Barron-Brown, president of MUBA. "With this scholarship, she can still give to students."



The Janis Winkfield Scholarship is in honor of Janis Winkfield, the president of MUBA when the Nate Ruffin Scholarship was created. Winkfield was also a senior financial aid counselor at Marshall at the time of her passing.

“With these scholarships, we can not only recognize the legacy of alumni of the past, but also invest in the future of alumni now,” Coston said. “We have to stay fully engaged. We know every bit helps. So many of our scholarship recipients come to us and say how appreciative they are for the support. Many times, it’s what helped them stay in school.”

Another group taking care of future generations while honoring the memory of those who have passed is the Marshall 75 Family Alumni Chapter. Made up of family members of the 75 individuals who lost their lives in the Nov. 14, 1970, plane crash, this group is now working to continue the Marshall legacy with a new generation through the 75 Legacy Scholarship Fund.

“This scholarship fund will allow descendants of crash victims to attend Marshall at no cost to themselves,” said Leslie Deese Garvis, president of the Marshall 75 Family Alumni Chapter. “What better way to ensure the legacy of the 75 endures through their descendants than to provide a way for them to attend the university they loved?”

Priority for the scholarship is given to the first-generation descendants (sons or daughters) of the 75. If there are no first-generation recipients who qualify for the scholarship, any direct descendants of the 75 beyond the first generation can be considered. To support the 75 Legacy Scholarship Fund or any of the scholarships mentioned, visit

<https://give.marshall.edu/>.



## ALUMNI CHAPTER PHOTOS

1. Mark Walker family: Mark Walker's son and daughter, Troy Walker and Sara Foster, hold a sign with photos of their dad at the Mark S. Walker Ball Drop on May 20, 2024.
2. Mark Walker golf: Mark Walker, third from right, poses for a photo with his team at the Southern Coalfields Alumni & Big Green Club's 2020 golf outing fundraiser. Walker's employees still participate in the event, winning the ball drop in 2024 and donating the winnings back to the club.
3. Scholarship brunch: The Southern Coalfields Alumni & Big Green Club poses for a photo with the recipients of the Mark S. Walker Memorial Scholarship at the 2024 Scholarship Honor Brunch.

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# ALUM Spotlight

**KRISTA (GUARNIERI) BOOTH**  
BA ('00) and MA ('05), Communication Studies

## Current job and location:

Director, People Experience & Technology – Europe Corporate, Amazon. I've just moved from Seattle, Washington, where I lived for nine years with my husband and two girls, to London, England.

## Can you tell us the basics of what your job entails?

I am fortunate to lead the PXT (People Experience and Technology) function across our European corporate teams. This role encompasses managing multi-country human resources (HR) functions across Amazon's diverse business lines, as well as a secondary focus partnering with the Amazon International Stores leadership team.

Through our work, we aim to position PXT as a strategic partner that enhances the employee experience and leverages the latest HR technologies to enable Amazon's long-term success. It's a dynamic and rewarding role that allows me to contribute to the growth and transformation of our European business.

## Can you tell us a little about your career background?

I started working in human resources in the insurance industry, the airline industry, manufacturing and, eventually, Amazon in Huntington. I started as an entry-level HR business partner for our customer service team. Within customer service, I eventually took on PXT responsibility for our U.S. operations, overseeing both physical locations and virtual/remote teams. Nine years ago, I relocated our family to Seattle to lead various PXT teams across several business lines before taking on my latest role within Europe.

At each step, the relationships I built in Huntington enabled me to continue growing, scaling and pursuing incredible opportunities, including my current role.

## How did your time at Marshall help prepare you?

Marshall helped to prepare me for things I knew I would encounter and many I didn't. The sense of community was something I really connected with at Marshall — professors who spent the time to actually educate, not just teach, and classes that helped me apply what I was learning. Marshall and the Huntington area instilled in me a sense of humility and compassion that has paid dividends throughout my life, both personally and professionally.

## Favorite experiences as a Marshall student?

As a freshman in 1996, the football team was simply unstoppable. And then in 1998, we won the MAC championship with an incredible 12-1 record. The energy on campus during those successful seasons was truly electric. Athletics at Marshall have a unique way of bringing the student body and broader community together.

## Are you involved with Marshall Alumni now?

I was recently elected to the Alumni Association Board of Directors, and I'm so excited for the impactful work this group of talented and giving individuals has planned for Marshall students, past, present and future. A key focus of my work with the Alumni Association is ramping up mentorship programs and initiatives to better prepare Marshall graduates for navigating the complex modern job market. It's an area I'm deeply passionate about, and I'm eager to help "decode" that process for our students.

## Can you tell us what you're passionate about? Why do you love it, why is it important, and what should people know about it that they might not realize?

From a professional standpoint, I'm deeply passionate about creating opportunities for the next generation of leaders. As a parent to an 18-year-old daughter and a 25-year-old "bonus" daughter, I believe the most important job I have is to help raise great humans. I think most parents share that sentiment, but allowing them to flourish in their own way is key. We can often limit ourselves to thinking there is only one path forward, when in reality, the journey is full of possibilities. Helping people see that varied path, even when it's rocky, is incredibly gratifying.

Especially in today's world, it's easy to be the person who points out the negative or the downfalls of others. Instead, I believe it's crucial to appreciate the paths people have walked and assume positive intent. Choosing a positive mindset in this way cannot be underscored enough. It will allow you to dig deeper, accomplish more than you thought possible and make a meaningful impact on those around you.



marshall alum



IN MEMORIAM

# A *Life* OF SERVICE

Celebrating Maj. Gen. Albin Gray Wheeler (1935-2024) — a 1958 Marshall graduate who served his country through a remarkable military career and helped established Marshall's Yeager Scholars program

## BY JEAN HARDIMAN

Maj. Gen. Albin Gray Wheeler wasn't originally planning to go to college after graduating from Huntington East High School. It was 1953. He expected he would go work at the C&O Railway, like his father.

But he was dating a girl he didn't want to lose, Beatrice Thomas, and she was only interested in a long-term relationship with a college-bound young man. Plus, some time that he did spend working for the railroad helped him realize he was destined for another path.

So Marshall it was, and while a student, he stayed busy. Wheeler participated in ROTC, joined Sigma Phi Epsilon, served as Student Senate president and advocated at the state capitol for Marshall College to attain university status. Beatrice attended and was active at Marshall as well, as a chemistry major and member of Alpha Chi Omega. They both graduated in 1958 and got married that year.

Afterward, Wheeler launched a career that took him and his bride around the globe. He started in business, taking a job at Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, but after nine months reported to Fort Lee, Virginia, to serve the two-year obligation to the Army, to which he was committed through the ROTC program. Toward the end of that, he applied to become a regular officer in the U.S. Army and was accepted.

"He was very patriotic and felt a duty to his country," Beatrice "Bea" Wheeler said.

His military career took him from Fort Lee to Fort Knox in Kentucky to Bangkok, Thailand, where he stayed two years with his growing family. By the time they left Thailand, they had three daughters, Patrice, Michelle and Dianne.

"He made long-term friends with his Thai counterparts," Bea Wheeler said. "He tanned easily and they called him the 'tall Thai.'"

The move to Southeast Asia was the biggest of more than 30 moves that the Wheeler family would make throughout his career. Wheeler himself also spent time in Saigon, working with Vietnamese high command and supporting intelligence with other countries throughout the war. He would later describe the war as a disaster that was one of the defining moments of his adult life, something that would, after the fact, highlight so many changes that were needed.

After the war, Wheeler continued climbing through the ranks and serving in locations throughout the country and the world, including Hawaii, Kansas and the Pentagon. In Hawaii, he was assigned as a special assistant to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific, Navy CINCPAC Admiral John S. McCain II. In that role, Wheeler traveled over a million miles, meeting with top officials in many countries, Bea Wheeler said.

"He slept on the floor of the plane, since he was so tall," she said, noting that he was 6 feet, 5 inches tall. "This was during the time that McCain's son was a POW."



Wheeler also was stationed in Munich, Germany, where he served as military commander and oversaw the PX system in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The PX, or post exchange system, provides goods and services at military installations.

"For the family, moving around the world was interesting, meeting and knowing so many different cultures," Bea Wheeler said.

Her husband then spent two years leading Corps Support Command for the 7th U.S. Corps in Europe, and then returned to Washington. While there, he was promoted to Major General and to president of Fort McNair's Industrial College of the Armed Forces, where he served four years.

"He worked hard to achieve and keep his family values," Bea Wheeler said. "He tried to be fair and honest and look after his soldiers."

In the 1980s, Wheeler started working with Marshall University to establish the Yeager Scholars program, of which he was a founding board member and for which he helped establish the standards of excellence for students accepted into the program. The Yeager

Scholars program is a rigorous academic scholars program that accepts high-achieving students and covers full tuition and other costs, while providing study abroad and other enrichment opportunities.

"While living at Fort McNair in D.C., Joe Hunnicutt visited and discussed an idea of a scholars program at our dining table," Bea Wheeler recalled. "Albin found this as a way to give back to Marshall and worked many years to make the Yeager Scholars program succeed.

"Marshall gave him the opportunity to lead, which he carried through his career. This prepared him for working with many different people."

Wheeler was on the Board of Directors when Martha Woodward joined the Yeager program, said Woodward, former director of the Yeager program and now vice president of the Yeager Board of Directors.

"He became an instant mentor because of his total investment in the undertaking, because he loved the students, because he knew everybody and because he was a truly savvy guy," said Woodward, adding that he wore his full dress uniform to all Yeager program dinners, which always impressed the students.



"Into 'Marshall Rising' before anybody thought of the slogan, Al began promoting the school and the Yeager Scholarship in new ways, which led to new involvement from distant alums," Woodward said.

In his career, Wheeler went on to serve as commander of the Dallas-based Army/Air Force Exchange System, a worldwide enterprise which at the time was the largest retail organization in the world, and which encompassed food, transportation, goods and services.

He retired from military service in 1993 and then was hired as executive director of an international law firm, Arent, Fox, Kintner, Plotkin and Kahn.

Throughout his career, "he tried his best to give to his country and to Marshall," Bea Wheeler said, adding that his family was dear to him as well. "Family values were important to him. He enjoyed the three girls and gave them sound advice."

On June 10, 2024, Wheeler passed away at the age of 89 after a diverse and illustrious career, raising his remarkable family throughout the world, and after decades of supporting Marshall University in meaningful

and impactful ways. For his stellar contributions and accomplishments, Marshall awarded Wheeler with an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters and as a Distinguished Alumnus.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, his three daughters, three grandsons, two great grandchildren and his brother, John. A celebration of life is planned for 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 28, 2024, at the Fairfax Retirement Community in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Burial at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors is planned for 3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2024.

Anyone wishing to celebrate Wheeler's life through a memorial contribution may send contributions to the Society of Yeager Scholars, Marshall University Foundation, c/o Lance West, 519 John Marshall Drive, Huntington, 25703, or scan the QR code below.



“ ”

Marshall gave him the opportunity to lead, which he carried through his career. This prepared him for working with many different people.

- BEATRICE WHEELER

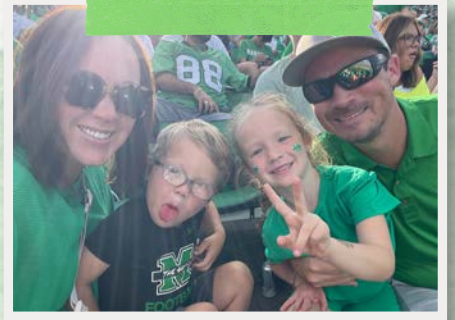
Wife of Maj. Gen. Albin Gray Wheeler



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Bella & Benny Kelley



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The Hunt Family at Lake Louise



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# LETTER *from* the PRESIDENT

Dear Marshall Family,

When the leaves begin to turn, and a crispness fills the air, a renewed energy on campus can only mean one thing: the fall semester has begun at Marshall University! We welcome our students — both new and returning — to the opportunities and accomplishments that await them at this special home away from home. We are excited to start this semester with an increase in overall enrollment for the second consecutive year — and I'm so proud of the collective effort that our faculty and staff continue to showcase every day.

Students are diving into their studies, joining clubs and cheering on the Herd as our fall sports teams take the field. The campus is truly alive with activity.

A highlight of this young season was our recent Homecoming celebration. It was delightful to see so many of you return to campus, reconnect with friends and begin creating new memories. I am amazed by the incredible people who have gone on to do great things while never losing the pride that comes with being part of the Marshall family.

As we move into this new academic year, I'm reminded of the importance of community. It's the students, faculty, staff, alums and supporters like you who make Marshall such a special place. You are our people — you are our community. Your contributions — whether through your presence, support or spirit — drive us forward and make us better.

Thank you for being a part of the Herd. I hope to see you at a game, at an event or back visiting campus really soon.

Go Herd!

*Brad D. Smith*

**Brad D. Smith, President**





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