

# THE MESSENGER

McMURRY UNIVERSITY  
FALL 2022

KICKING OFF OUR  
CENTENNIAL YEAR





“

Today, we are poised for an unprecedented era of growth as we look to the next 100 years.

”

**McMurry University has kicked off the institution's yearlong Centennial celebration leading up to Convocation on September 21, 2023, and the Centennial Gala on October 28, 2023.**

During the past 10 decades, McMurry has contributed to the region's pool of talented individuals by helping graduates fulfill their personal and professional goals through higher education. Our students learn to reason, to lead, and, as graduates, to transform their chosen professions, making a long-lasting impact in their communities. Alumni continue to flourish in their chosen vocations while embracing a growth mindset instilled in them by their McMurry experience. This year, alumni, students, faculty, and staff have a renewed dedication to the institution's relentless commitment to student success.

To further build on the University's vital role in enhancing educational, cultural, and economic development in the region, we continue the *Time to Thrive* fundraising initiative, one of the most ambitious in our history, to support campus renewal, beginning with the Shirley L. and Mildred Garrison United Methodist Student Center. Dedicated donors, including alumni, friends, employees, students, and corporate and foundation partners, are helping McMurry leverage the impact this campaign will soon have on McMurry's campus.

Today, we are poised for an unprecedented era of growth as we look to the next 100 years. As alumni and friends, we ask for your continued help and investment to ensure a bright future for all whom we serve — students, employers, and the community — so our promise of access to a community-changing education remains available to all for generations to come.

For all whose lives have been touched by McMurry, the coming year is an opportunity to celebrate the past, appreciate the present, and plan strategically for the future as we unify through our core values. I hope the Centennial year is marked with thoughtfulness, care, generosity, and a genuine sense of belonging as we continue to build a university that educates successful servant leaders.

McMurry is an exceptional place because of the remarkable people connected with the institution. As we collaboratively commit to student success and hold fast to our values, I know it will be an extraordinary Centennial year. Please join me and stay connected, enlightened, and invested in McMurry as we plan for the second century.

Dr. Sandra S. Harper  
President

**PRESIDENT**  
Dr. Sandra S. Harper

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THE MESSENGER is published  
by McMurry University.  
©2022 McMurry University.  
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# THE MESSENGER

MCMURRY UNIVERSITY  
FALL 2022

A PUBLICATION OF MCMURRY UNIVERSITY

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### Web Extras

📌 Interact with videos and other content through the magazine's web extras. The QR code included with a story signifies there's more to experience online — just scan the code with your cellphone for access.

# Around Campus

► **McMurry University Breaks Ground** in July and construction begins on the reimagined student center – the single largest project in school history.



## ◀ **Chicago**

McMurry Theatre wrapped up its summer theatre season in July with the musical stage production of the movie *Chicago* – an ambitious presentation that included a live orchestra and 19 performers from McMurry and the Abilene theatre community.



## ▲ **Students Sign Up for SOAR**

Student Orientation and Registration (SOAR) events are designed for incoming fall students to register for classes, learn more about campus resources, and officially become a member of the War Hawk flock.



## ► **Welcome Week**

Our newest War Hawks are welcomed to campus and Abilene with a fun week of activities, classes, and events.





▼ **The Centennial Museum** opened in August with artifacts, photos, and mementos from the past 100 years of life at McMurry. The exhibit is open through October 2023.



### ▼ **Lift Off**

Lift Off students work on rockets they will later launch in the Quad. This three-week residential summer bridge program enables STEM majors to earn credits toward an engineering-focused precalculus class and their First-Year Seminar.



### ► **Military Appreciation Day**

Dr. Sandra S. Harper and guests bow their heads in prayer before singing the National Anthem during McMurry's Military Appreciation game on September 10, 2022. Dyess Air Force Base leaders were honored at the game and presented with War Hawk helmets. The University and Dyess have enjoyed a 60-plus year partnership.





### ▲ Gearing Up for War Hawk Game Days

Wally the War Hawk joined students, alumni, and fans for tailgating before every home football game this season. Students especially enjoyed the “Cowboy Car Smash” before the crosstown showdown against Hardin-Simmons in October.



### ▲ Convocation

First Financial Bankshares, Inc. Chairman, President, and CEO Scott Dueser speaks during Convocation on the special partnership between First Financial and McMurry – a relationship that goes back to McMurry’s founding in 1923.



◀ **The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney**, scholar, pastor, preacher, and activist, speaks at Chapel on “A Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church: Year W.”



### ▲ Centennial Kickoff Rally

McMurry magnet school students enjoy some refreshing ice cream from Dad’s Ice Cream truck at the Centennial Kickoff Rally.



### ▲ 100 Alumni 100 Words

Alumni help commemorate McMurry’s Centennial by illustrating their McMurry stories on canvas. The collection is displayed in the hall between Radford Auditorium and the Furr Welcome Center. Submissions are still being accepted at [mcm.edu/centennial](http://mcm.edu/centennial).

### ► Cross Country Champions

Dr. Harper, coaches, and members of the McMurry women's cross country team show off their American Southwest Conference Championship rings after winning their second successive and third all-time title.



### ▲ Lip-Sync Battle

Student groups compete in the annual "Lip-Sync Battle" hosted by Alpha Psi Alpha social club.



### ▲ First Generation Day

McMurry celebrates first-generation students, faculty, staff, and alumni on November 8, in recognition of the national First-Generation College Celebration.



## Share your love of McMurry and its unique traditions

### THE KETTLE CLUB

Invite the kids in your life to "soar with the kettle" – a group of hawks in flight – and enroll them in The Kettle Club, a new program for legacy children and grandchildren of McMurry alumni, faculty, and staff.

Any Legacy under 17 years old is eligible to join for a fee of \$19.23 (the year McMurry was founded) and will enjoy benefits including:

- Enrollment certificate
- Annual birthday cards
- Age-specific gifts on milestone years
- Opportunities to attend Legacy-specific events
- And more ...



# One Magic Day

## McMurry's 99th Convocation

McMurry College welcomed its first incoming class on September 20, 1923, making McMurry University's Convocation 2022 especially significant.



September 22, 2022, was not only a historic day but a beautiful one. Perfect fall weather and a cloudless sky greeted McMurry students, faculty, staff, and friends on their way to Radford Auditorium for McMurry's 99th opening Convocation.

Excitement and wonder were in the air as everyone made their way across campus to Radford, past tents popping up, white T-shirts being laid out, and smells of delicious food being prepared for the Centennial Kickoff Rally set to begin on the Quad just after the ceremony.

Donned in academic regalia, Professor of Sociology and Criminology and Faculty Athletics Representative Dr. Robert Wallace led the faculty and staff procession down the aisles of Radford while students and guests watched.



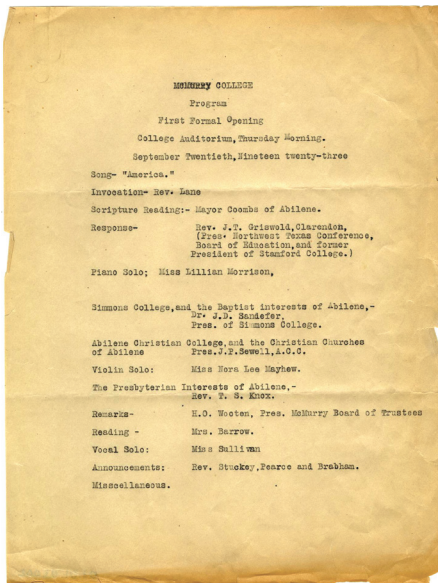




Speaking to a filled auditorium, University President Dr. Sandra S. Harper reflected on the history of McMurry and the future of the institution, highlighting a decade of increased enrollment, the \$25 million reimagining of the student center, and other construction projects. She noted ways McMurry is honoring its past and creating new traditions, from the statue of Grant Teaff installed in the spring to the recent planting of the Centennial Iris Garden. McMurry Student Government President Jarrett Hart and Chair of the Faculty Dr. Edward Donnay offered encouraging words to the newest incoming class just beginning their McMurry journey.

The Convocation's featured speaker was Scott Dueser, chair, president, and CEO of First Financial Bankshares, Inc. — the official sponsor of McMurry's Centennial. Dueser outlined the long relationship between McMurry and First Financial Bank, a partnership that goes back 99 years to Fleming Wills James, founder of the Farmers and Merchants National Bank — now First Financial Bank — and Dr. James Hunt, whose vision of higher education in Abilene, Texas, inspired the creation of McMurry College.

Dueser then shared the importance of giving back to your alma mater, be it through treasure, time, or talent.



**“The McMurry-  
First Financial Bank  
partnership spans 99  
years. Ninety-nine years  
ago, many of McMurry’s  
board members  
concurrently served on  
the First Financial  
Bank board.”**

**–Scott Dueser**





## 100 Years in the Making

### Centennial Kickoff Rally

Following Convocation, attendees filed outside to retrieve a white Centennial T-shirt and head to the Quad for a commemorative photo.

As people approached the center of the Quad in front of Old Main, they could see the faint outline of the number 100 lightly spray-painted on the grass. With the help of the band director and a team of volunteers, several hundred students, faculty, staff, and alumni filled the "100" and waved for the special photo as a drone flew overhead.

Once the photo was taken, the Centennial Kickoff Rally officially began. Dr. Sandra S. Harper, surrounded by the Abilene Chamber of Commerce Redcoats and a crew of McMurry University dignitaries from different decades,

cut the ribbon and proclaimed the Centennial year open. The bright white Centennial flag was raised just below the Stars and Stripes. A new sculpture was unveiled depicting the Centennial logo in 3D, a favorite spot for selfies during the event, which will rest in front of Old Main throughout the next year.





**“I am inspired by the diversity of ages present: 10-year-olds from our magnet school all the way up to 91-year-old alumni. Eighty-one of McMurry’s 100 years are represented here in human form!”**

**–Mike Hutchison '87**  
Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Students, faculty, alumni, and friends then enjoyed a taco bar lunch and dessert from Dad’s Ice Cream truck as they gathered around the Quad to reminisce and enjoy the sunshine.

The kickoff ended with a Centennial Scavenger Hunt. Students received clues about different areas of campus and their historical significance. Each clue led to another until student teams made their way around campus and back to the

Quad. Energized by the food and prospect of wealth — cash prizes — the students raced at lightning pace to finish the hunt.

Ultimately, September 22, 2022, could not have happened without 100 years’ worth of love for McMurry. The University is grateful to all those who have contributed to McMurry’s success — past, present, and FUTURE.





There is something amazing about the legacy of a flower. It warms my heart the most when someone sees my irises and says it reminds them of their grandmother. They remind me of when I was a student here first being introduced to them.



—Dr. Pug Parris '73

## Centennial Iris Garden

### The iris garden tradition returns to McMurry University

The original iris garden was started in 1962 by biology professor Dr. Norland C. Henderson and later tended by Dean Joe Humphrey.

In a new space in Wah Wahtaysee Park — now designated the Centennial Iris Garden — a group of 50-plus alumni and friends gathered on a windy Saturday in September to bless and plant rhizomes, anticipated to bloom in spring 2023.

The more than 100 irises for the garden were grown and donated by retired McMurry professor Dr. Pug Parris '73, who became interested in the garden when she was a McMurry student.

Dr. Parris has fond memories of the first iris garden and hopes future generations will have fond memories of the Centennial Iris Garden.



## McMurry Moments



### A Centennial Video Retrospective

To help celebrate McMurry's Centennial, the University and KTXS have partnered to produce 10 short segments that focus on McMurry's vibrant history and the colorful characters that made the University what it is today. Aired during the fall, segments include the Founding Women, Professor Raymond T. Bynum, great names in athletics, McMurry presidents, and more.



▲ Hosted by George Levesque '96, McMurry Moment segments are designed to help remind and educate Abilene and surrounding communities about McMurry's 100-year history.

# Centennial Museum

The Centennial Museum in Gypsy Ted Gallery II opened in August 2022 and will stay open through October 2023. Gallery Director and Instructor of Photography & Gallery Studies Jennifer Nichols '73 spoke about curating the museum for the Centennial celebrations.

**"I truly believe that institutional memory is paramount in preserving the history of McMurry," Nichols said. "We have a rich, multilayered heritage that is important to alumni and students alike. We need to recognize where we came from in order to enrich where we are going."**

Alumni have come forward with important mementos to display, and Nichols has also retrieved items from McMurry's archives, striving to present McMurry's history accurately and completely, without leaving out important moments in the University's life.

Nichols hopes the museum stirs warm memories in alumni and inspires current students to participate in McMurry experiences — building on our rich heritage and creating new traditions.



◀ The Methodist Church establishes institutions of higher education across Texas



◀ Academic transitions and expansion beyond liberal arts



◀ Convocation and Homecoming traditions



◀ Campus buildings that have come and gone

## Save the Date

**SPRING ALUMNI WEEKEND**  
April 27-29, 2023

**NIGHT OF DISTINCTION**  
April 28, 2023

**IRIS GARDEN DEDICATION**  
April 29, 2023

**100TH CONVOCATION**  
September 21, 2023

**HOMECOMING**  
October 26-28, 2023

**CENTENNIAL GALA**  
October 28, 2023



Coronation of McMurry's Homecoming Royalty



WATCH NOW

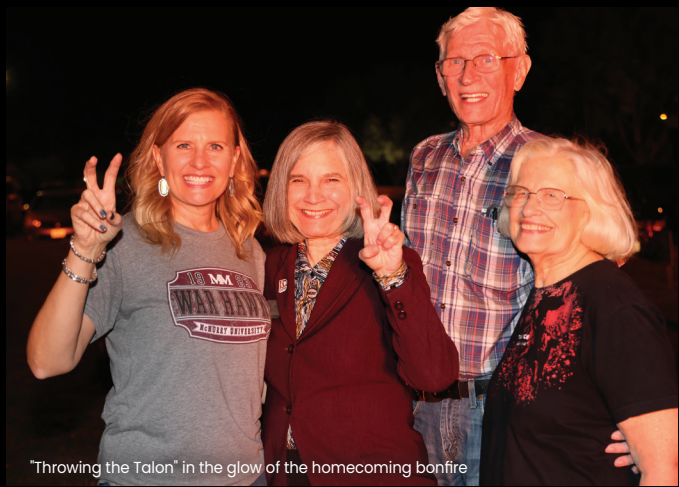
# Homecoming and Reunion Weekend

**McMurry's 2022 Homecoming, A Centennial Celebration, was one for the history books!**

A sense of excitement and optimism surrounded this year's McMurry University homecoming weekend. The University welcomed over 400 alumni and friends back home for an exciting and jam-packed lineup that perfectly aligned with McMurry's goal of "personal relationships as the catalyst for life."



Flowers at the base of the Sacred Wind statue after the Final Ala Cumba



"Throwing the Talon" in the glow of the homecoming bonfire



Live music from country artist Gillian Smith filled the air



McMurry War Hawks take the field against Texas Lutheran University



HEI exes and current members at the Social Club Reunion Breakfast



McMurry Theatre Presents Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*



Procession walkers tap Grant Teaff statue for good luck



The Class of 1972 celebrated its 50-Year Reunion and Induction into the J.W. Hunt Society

# The Centennial 100

**Harness your excitement for the Centennial and show your love for and confidence in McMurry by becoming a Centennial 100 donor**

In its Centennial era, McMurry University is at the forefront preparing the next generation of students. We need to address the critical needs of today and provide a solid foundation of support as we move toward the University's second century. Now more than ever, McMurry's success depends on support from donors like the Centennial 100.

The Centennial 100 is an initiative to inspire 100 alumni and friends to honor and celebrate McMurry's past while helping chart its future. These generous individuals commit to increasing their support of the institution to \$2,500 a year over four years — a combined gift totaling \$1,000,000 for the McMurry Fund.

"Your support will set an example to your peers, encouraging them to actively participate in ensuring the McMurry experience is impactful and accessible for current and future students," said Executive Director of Development Josh Poorman '09.



“

McMurry is home. It is where I forged meaningful, lifelong friendships; was taught the ideals of serving others; and received an education that equipped me to be successful in my profession. I want to make sure that our current and future students are afforded the same opportunities for their life and the lives of their families.

”

—Melody Hunt '79

“

The pride I have in graduating from McMurry still is one of my biggest accomplishments. Serving on the Alumni Board has helped me understand the importance of giving back to my beloved alma mater. I am glad to support McMurry and this fund to help countless students have the same type of experience I had and ensure McMurry's growth for years to come.

”

—Eric Davis '01



“

As a first-generation college graduate, McMurry University gifted me with a nurturing environment that ingrained lifelong character traits: striving for excellence, servant leadership, and putting others before yourself, which I credit for my success today. It seems only fitting that I pay it forward and enable others who are embarking on their journey.

”

—Angie Waldeck '01

For more information about the Centennial 100 initiative, please contact Josh Poorman at [poorman.josh@mcm.edu](mailto:poorman.josh@mcm.edu) or 325.793.4764.





**Vice President for Enrollment Management  
Grant Greenwood and his admissions and  
recruiting team offer future students meaningful  
connections through diligent recruiting efforts.**

## A Look at Admissions from Grant Greenwood

**Our campus welcomed another impressive incoming student cohort this fall. Our first-year class was by far one of the most diverse and accomplished groups of students to join our community in the past decade.**

The academic profile of the freshman class improved across the board compared to our previous incoming classes in the last six years and was second — only in terms of size — to last year's banner class. Additionally, our campus has seen our Dual Credit Academy (DCA) grow exponentially in the past year.

Our DCA serves several public and private schools across the state with many more planning to join in the coming year. Notably, we will begin offering dual credit to students in San Antonio ISD in fall 2023. The DCA is an extension of our commitment to deliver a rigorous, quality, and affordable education to students across the state.

The DCA's expansion will undoubtedly drive recognition and affinity for McMurry University and serve

to develop strong relationships with high schools, secondary administrators, and students. The DCA will also serve as a conduit to recruit future War Hawks.

The admission and recruiting team has been busy traversing the state recruiting. There are simply not enough university representatives to connect with every prospective student and to be present at every high school fair.

### **We need your help**

Our recruiting efforts would greatly benefit if our alumni considered investing their time to support our university's recruiting and engagement efforts. By joining the Alumni Recruiting Ambassador program, you can contribute in meaningful ways to our prospective student outreach efforts.



McMURRY UNIVERSITY  
**Alumni  
RECRUITING  
AMBASSADORS**

Any member of the McMurry alumni community can scan the code above to register and join. When you do so, our team will provide you with access to a recruiting portal where you can engage prospective students. We will provide all the resources and directions within the portal.

All McMurry alumni have valuable experience and expertise that could help further engage prospective students and help them get to know the institution that much more. Who better to speak to the transformative experiences on our campus than someone who has already lived it.

I appreciate your dedication and meaningful contributions to our great university, and I hope you will consider joining the Alumni Recruiting Ambassador team.



McMurry has changed drastically since I came as a freshman at the peak of COVID. Two statues have been installed, the student center is being redone, we're improving the residence halls, and we're even getting another apartment building.



—Baylee Kindrick



New paint, flooring, and furniture brighten the dining hall



## Big Changes Are Happening

Signs of progress are evident as one travels through the storied halls and picturesque open spaces that make up McMurry's 55-acre campus

A student center under construction, renovated residence halls, a newly paved thoroughfare, updated restroom facilities, new finishes in the dining hall, a groundbreaking on a second apartment building — all of these major capital improvements speak to the confidence of the institution as McMurry University emerges from a fraught pandemic environment and into its Centennial era.

Baylee Kindrick, an exercise science major, student ambassador, and first-generation college student, is thankful for the care and attention being given to facilities across campus.

Fundraising made the idea of these projects seem achievable, but it's the maintenance and campus grounds staff who are engaging in the hard work of executing leadership's vision.

Director of Facilities and Campus Projects Carl Scott has been with McMurry for 13 years, the last five overseeing campus projects and maintenance. Since 2017, he's seen a drastic shift in the mentality



Newly paved Sentinel Drive



Demolition of the Mabee Room



Concrete work in former Campus Center Courtyard



Fencing surrounds the student center worksite



Steel starting to go up

of the University's expansion goals related to new buildings and facilities. "We're booming now compared to where we were five years ago," Scott said. "We've purchased and torn down six houses and continue to buy property in the neighborhoods around campus."

Scott recalls the discussions in 2017 that identified the Shirley L. and Mildred Garrison United Methodist Student Center as one of the primary needs for the campus.

"Our student center is the focal point of campus and one of the first buildings prospective students visit. We need to hook them with something outstanding," Scott said.

Kindrick, who commutes, has had to get creative about where to spend time between classes with the loss of the student center as her on-campus "living room." However, she is jazzed about the prospect of being one of the first students to take advantage of the brand-new facility.

"I'm sad that I'll only get to use the new student center my senior year, but it's great that current and future students will have access to such an amazing facility."

The construction fencing, loss of certain pathways, and constrained parking are all daily (and temporary) reminders of the great work being done on the student center, making

it easy to miss the other projects happening at various corners of the campus.

Scott points to the complete reorganization of student living spaces that has been underway for the better part of a year.

"In June McMurry took ownership of Hunt and Martin [residence halls], which had been leased to a private company for over 20 years," Scott said. "We're happy to be overseeing the maintenance and management of these buildings again. We've been making much-needed updates and improvements, including replacing carpet with planking in the hallways and communal gathering spaces."

McMurry's record enrollment numbers present leadership with a good problem in need of fixing — "How do we house all these new War Hawks?" The answer? Expansion!

Beyond elevating the existing residence halls to attract and meet the needs of students, Scott has been busy coordinating bids on a brand-new apartment building. The new housing facility, which will have four-bedroom apartments and a total of 94 student beds, will be located just west of the current apartments.



WATCH NOW

## For the Love of Theatre

**“Theatre is a voice for the voiceless. I do it because I love it!”**

**—LW Miller**

Assistant Professor of Theatre LW Miller’s love for theatre started at age 7 and has blossomed through many different life experiences — theatre schooling, a stint working professionally in New York City and teaching college in Philadelphia. Lucky for McMurry University, his theatre journey has brought him back to Abilene, Texas.

“Coming to teach at McMurry has been a homecoming of sorts,” Miller said. “I am from Abilene, graduated from Cooper in 2003, and I still have family in the area.”

Miller took a position at McMurry as an assistant professor of Theatre in July. He just finished his first homecoming show, *Disney’s Beauty and the Beast*. By all accounts, the show was a hit!

Miller’s journey to teaching theatre included some fits and starts. “I enlisted in the military right out of high school, got out, and did some traveling around the country, living on the streets in various cities across many states,” Miller said. “I got tired of just scraping by, so I started college, re-enlisted, got out once more, finished my undergrad degree, and earned a master’s.”

He graduated from Sul Ross State University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a playwriting emphasis. Then in 2017, after getting out of the military for a second time, he earned a Master of Fine Arts with a technical theatre and design emphasis from Sarah Lawrence College.

Miller worked as a professional designer in New York City, collecting experiences in many different aspects of the theatre. Most notably, he developed a talent for using projection as a light source on stage, which adds a whole new dynamic to the storytelling.

“I’m a bit of a jack-of-all-trades,” Miller said. “I’ve worked as a playwright, technical designer, scene designer, and lighting director.”

### A New Outlook

At the height of Miller’s professional experience in New York, the unexpected rise of COVID-19 shut theaters down and threatened his livelihood. While Miller thought he’d start teaching later in his career, circumstances surrounding the global pandemic expedited his path to the classroom.

“When COVID hit, all of the theatres shut down, and I knew I had to do something to pay the bills,” Miller said. “COVID forced my hand, but I fell in love with teaching.”

When the position at McMurry came around, Miller decided to come back to Texas. He is now sharing his professional experiences and personal talents with the McMurry Theatre department, teaching his students how to be well-rounded theatre makers.

Throughout his work with students, he strives to teach the value of failing.

“

**When a student steps up to a classroom project and feels free to fail, they more readily learn from those experiences and see opportunities to conquer roadblocks in the future.**

”

In addition to embracing failure, Miller wants his students to learn to appreciate the diversity and uniqueness each member of the theatre brings to a production.

“It doesn’t matter what your skin color is, what your gender is, whom you love, or what your economic background is. When we are on stage, our differences work together to bring something unique and beautiful to the stage,” Miller said. “Having that mindset is vital to creating theatre makers who are able to work professionally.”



**LW Miller brings the "Razzle Dazzle" to McMurry's summer production of *Chicago*!**

**The show marked the new McMurry theater instructor's debut. Miller joined the faculty the same month as the performance, heading lights and set design.**

Miller enjoys being able to create a different world on stage and affect visual storytelling. His pure love of the art is clear in his lighting design work and his teaching approach.

Looking forward, Miller is excited to explore new opportunities with the McMurry Theatre department. He credits the University's flexibility and trust in its faculty for giving him the freedom to engage his students in as many aspects of the theatre as he can to help them thrive at McMurry and beyond.

“*Beauty and the Beast* has wrapped, so we will now explore how to tell stories in different ways,” Miller said.

McMurry Theatre is now preparing for *Cirque de Memoire*, a show that is created by students from the ground up, using theatre games, trust exercises, and brainstorming.

“*Cirque de Memoire* is going to be a true exploration of collaboration and storytelling, unlike anything Abilene has ever seen,” Miller said.





## He's Got the Beat



### Assistant Director of Bands and Assistant Professor of Music Dr. Juan "Johnny" Mendoza inspires students' professional and personal growth through percussion instruction

Johnny Mendoza never wanted to be a percussionist. He really wanted to be a trumpet player, but a chance band tryout in sixth grade landed him a spot in percussion.

"I had braces at the time, and our band director said, 'oh no, you cannot be a trumpet player.' My next choice was the saxophone, but I was told there were already too many saxophone players."

Mendoza quickly forgot about these instruments and embraced percussion. And he has pursued it with gusto, earning a Bachelor of Music from the University of Texas at San Antonio, a Master of Music from Belmont University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts from The Ohio State University.

Mendoza finished his doctorate in December 2015 and started teaching percussion at McMurry University in fall 2016. Since his arrival, the Department of Music has experienced steady growth in participation, technical ability, and musicality, thanks in large part to Mendoza and his music faculty colleagues' availability to and passion for students.

“

Every interaction I have with my students is an opportunity for me to speak life into their futures as professional musicians and educators. I want to invest as much as I can into my students so they can reach their true, incredible potential.

”

Mendoza's teaching approach is a rigorous one. In addition to their full class schedules, students involved in percussion are expected to uphold a minimum of four hours of practice a week as well as review their music theory and music history. While his expectations for his students are high, he goes out of his way to support everyone and their unique needs to ensure they can achieve the level of success he has set for them.

"I am always evaluating my approach for each student," Mendoza said. "Teaching to each student's learning style is important to me."

From the stage to the classroom, Mendoza is teaching life lessons. In addition to teaching musicality, Mendoza imparts lessons on how to be kind and professional that he hopes students will take with them into their music careers and wherever else their journeys may lead them.

"I share my expertise and experiences with students to help them get there a little quicker," Mendoza said. "Seeing my students succeed is even better than that moment back in high school when everything clicked for me."



## Extraordinary Service and Philanthropy

Ted Johnson's steadfast support of McMurry was honored in May 2022 when he received the John Wesley Award in an intimate recognition event in Midland

The Midland, Texas, native served with commitment and distinction on the McMurry University Board of Trustees from 1978 to 1987 and from 1989 to 1997, serving as a board chair from 1991 to 1993.

Along with his service to McMurry, Johnson has a deep passion for and commitment to the First United Methodist Church of Midland. He has a reputation for supporting and affirming all of the church's pastors and their ministries. He generously provides funds to the church's areas of need and countless hours of service as a member and chair of multiple committees and campaigns.

The McMurry Board of Trustees honored Johnson's tremendous service and contributions by naming him a Trustee Emeritus of the University in September 2019.

**A loyal McMurry donor for 29 years, Johnson has contributed to the McMurry Fund, supporting the University's greatest areas of need.**

He recently pledged \$1 million to the Shirley L. and Mildred Garrison United Methodist Student Center project.

"Ted Johnson is a consummate friend of McMurry University," said Dr. Sandra S. Harper. "He provided outstanding leadership on the Board of Trustees. In that role, he had to make many tough but impactful decisions. As a recent John Wesley Award recipient, McMurry recognized Ted's generosity, his thought leadership, and his board service."



**Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can.**



*—John Wesley*

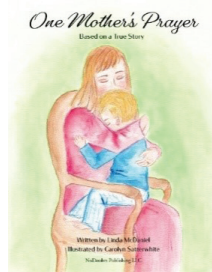
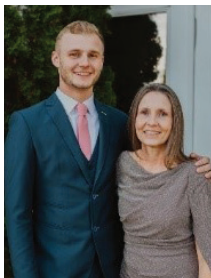
### John Wesley Philanthropy Award

True to the Wesley tenet of servanthood and responsibility for the welfare of others, the John Wesley Philanthropy Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary service and philanthropy to McMurry University or to the causes and needs that complement the institution's mission as a Christian university.

Those who receive the award exemplify good ethical and moral character commensurate with the ideals of the institution.

# Class Notes

**Linda Wells McDaniel '85** is celebrating the publishing of her first children's book, *One Mother's Prayer*. The book is based on a true story between her son, Jonathan, and herself, and it is available for purchase online at major book retailers worldwide.



**Danielle Rogers '21 and Salem Kirkland '22** are celebrating their engagement! The McMurry alumni family wishes them a lifetime of happiness ahead.



**Sara Botello Benavidez '82** recently welcomed her first grandchild, Brooks Manuel Leonard, into the world. Brooks is the son of Benavidez's youngest son, David, and his wife, Brooke.

Congratulations to **Miranda Priddy Shackelford '13**, who received her MBA from Southwestern College in May!



**Dorian Block '15** was selected as one of a cohort of three for OPERA America's 2022-2023 Mentorship Program for Opera Leaders of

Color, where he will work to hone his skills in leadership and progressing intersectional diversity in opera.

After 20 years in education, **Emily Jurecek Hill '01** has hung up her dry-erase markers and started a business with her fiancé called J&E Horse Hauling L.L.C.

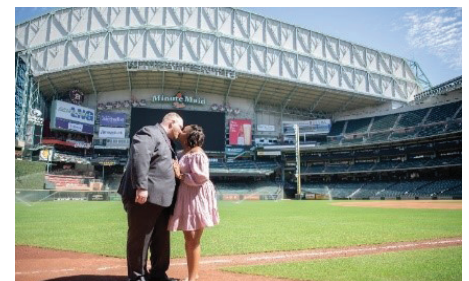
**Bryan Hollis '84** has been living in Kentucky since 2007 and has worked at a plastic auto parts factory since 2013. He loves living in the Bluegrass State!

After teaching at the elementary-school level for 19 years in Abilene and Merkel ISDs, **Laura Beard King '99** has recently taken the position of executive director of Young Audiences of Abilene, Arts for Learning under the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council. Young Audiences provides arts education opportunities to young students to inspire their learning through the arts.

**Amanda Findley Hunter '98** has been selected for Midland ISD's Aspiring Principals Academy for the 2022-2023 school year. Congratulations, Amanda!



**Erica English '09**, a McMurry volleyball alumna, will soon be known as Erica Barney when she marries her fiancé, Carlton Barney, on January 15, 2023. Carlton proposed on September 25, 2022, a few months before Erica received a promotion at work. She is now an outpatient supervisor for the Ambulatory Treatment Center at MD Anderson Cancer Center.



**Becky Goodwin Snyder '84** retired in May 2021 after 34 years in education, 21 as a school librarian. She recently moved to La Grange, after 33 years in Galveston County, Texas.

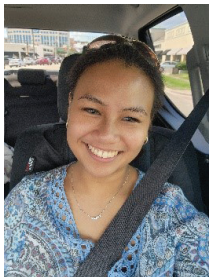


**Dr. Andrea Pobanz '00** was recently appointed as organist at Saint Mary Cathedral in downtown Austin, Texas. Saint Mary

is the cathedral parish of the Catholic Diocese of Austin and serves 127 parishes in 25 counties in Central Texas. Along with playing for services, Dr. Pobanz will also accompany the Schola Cantorum, an ensemble of approximately 35 professional and volunteer singers. She is excited to take the bench and be part of the rich musical history at the cathedral.



**Suzanne Paylor Miller '02 and Steven Miller '00** just celebrated their one-year anniversary. They wed in November of 2021 in Benbrook, Texas, and reside in Haslet, Texas. Steven is a project manager for Lockheed Martin, and Suzanne teaches health science at Northwest High School.



**Francesca Macariola Carlton '19** has been living a simple but fun life since she graduated. She is married with two children — a boy and a girl.

She works from home and recently received a promotion. Her family does community service with friends from Girl Scouts and sells popcorn with friends through Cub Scouts.

On September 9, 2022, **Traya Joiner Brownfield '20** married **Leo Brownfield IV '20**, a football transfer from East Texas Baptist University who played his last year as a War Hawk in 2019.



**Joaquin Rueda V '95** was promoted to officer in charge of the Houston Quarantine Station in September. He is based out of George Bush Intercontinental Airport, where his area of responsibility is the Texas coast and the state of Louisiana.

**Robyn Remschel Grosch '18** recently married and moved to San Antonio, Texas, to work with Comal ISD as a general education assistant at Rahe Bulverde Elementary School.



After 44 years, **Brian Truncali '82** has returned to his hometown of Bridge City in beautiful Southeast Texas to help his second

brother (out of five) watch over their 89-year-old mother and open Truncali Law, P.C., a relaxed practice focusing on family and education law. He closed on his new house in November.

**Shannon ex '89 and Robert Duke Marshall '92**



are glad to be back in Abilene after living in the Panhandle region of Texas for 23 years! Shannon and Robert have two beautiful daughters, Katelyn (and husband, Jacob) and Kyleigh (and boyfriend, Jake), and two awesome grandchildren, Elijah and Riyah. Shannon is the principal at Thomas Elementary School, and Robert is the President and CEO of Hendrick Home for Children — both in Abilene.



**Dr. John Chapman III '96**, previously the superintendent for the Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD in North Texas, was chosen to be superintendent at Comal ISD.



Congratulations to McMurry alumna and professor **Dr. Jori Sechrist '01**, who has been elected as the 2025 president

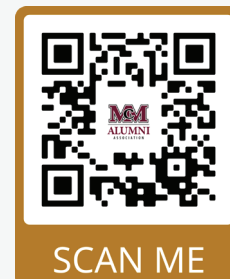
of the Southwestern Sociological Association. Her four-year term begins with her serving as vice president and then president-elect of the organization.

**Crista Hill '03** started a new role as director of veteran and military affairs at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs in July.

## Show your #McMurryPride

Let your McMurry friends and classmates know what you have been up to! Public notes may be shared through alumni social media channels and *The Messenger*.

Scan to submit your updates.





### 2022-2023 Board of Directors

#### PRESIDENT

Shawn Hailey '08

#### PRESIDENT-ELECT

Ken Wheeler '10

#### BOARD MEMBERS

Dorian Block '15

Sarah Bodner '96

Leslie Chalmers '99

Eric Davis '05

Deena Duarte '99

Mary Elizabeth Ferriss '14

Daniel Griggs '09

Amanda Hunter '98

Alana Jeter '01

Charles Jones '11

Robert Duke Marshall '92

Shaun Martin '99

Jeff Matsler '89

Natalie McDaniel '08

Jeremy Mebane '95

Bobby Medford '93

KC Pospisil '05

Michael Qualls '05

Karl Scott '07

Taron Weaver Scott '07

Lindsey Sobehrad '11

Thierry Tchenko '17

Jenny Terrell-Feenstra '99

Cheyenne Wuthrich '02

#### EX OFFICIO MEMBER

Katelyn Scott '97

## Charting a Course for the Alumni Association

### McMurry Alumni Association Board of Directors

The McMurry Alumni Association Board of Directors met in Southlake, Texas, July 29-30, 2022, to kick off the new year at the annual alumni board retreat. The weekend was filled with strategic planning, team building, committee breakout sessions, and board development activities.

The Alumni Board reunited in Abilene October 21-22, 2022, for Homecoming and Reunion Weekend. In addition to hosting homecoming activities and continuing their work to support University strategic initiatives, they co-hosted an Alumni-Student Leader Lunch with the McMurry Student Alumni Association.

### ▲ Alumni-Student Leader Lunch

Twenty student leaders represented social clubs, student government, and various other student organizations. Both students and alumni board members enjoyed swapping stories about campus life, career plans, and experiences and discussing life after college.





## Recognize Alumni Achievement

The McMurry University Alumni Association is seeking nominations for the 2023 Outstanding Alumni Awards to honor remarkable alumni who are leading lives of distinction and who embody McMurry's core values of Learning, Excellence, and Service.

You're invited to nominate deserving alumni to be considered for an award. Nominations will be accepted through **Friday, Dec. 31, 2022.**

Scan to learn more and nominate outstanding alumni!



**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI • YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT • OUTSTANDING ALUMNI**

## Friends We'll Miss

**Royace Aikin '67**  
8/30/2022  
Seattle, Washington

**Jim Arnold '57**  
7/25/2022  
Pinehurst, North Carolina

**Dyana Teeter Ashcraft '81**  
8/19/2022  
Sevierville, Tennessee

**Kay Sanders Babington '73**  
7/3/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Janie Morquette Barnes '50**  
8/21/2022  
Odessa, Texas

**Earl Blair**  
10/13/2022  
Canyon, Texas

**Randy Cassens**  
5/20/2022  
Elk Grove, California

**Judy Willis Colvin**  
6/13/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Dick Countiss '58**  
10/28/2022  
Houston, Texas

**Elmo Cure '60**  
6/18/2022  
Plano, Texas

**Lou Dunn Diekemper**  
6/17/2022  
Lubbock, Texas

**Tom DuBois '62**  
6/30/2022  
Simpsonville, South Carolina

**Christine Rockover Eastus '54**  
8/14/2022  
Dallas, Texas

**Bruce Edwards '70**  
9/11/2022  
Shreveport, Louisiana

**Tommy Estes**  
7/24/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Larry Hall**  
7/25/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Ronald Hamby '66**  
7/18/2022  
Rockport, Texas

**Linda Bryant Harper '64**  
8/30/2022  
Midland, Texas

**Norma Schaefer Harris '59**  
8/18/2022  
Bedford, Texas

**Randy Hisey '76**  
8/30/2022  
San Angelo, Texas

**Mary Dwyer Hoganson '39**  
8/4/2022  
Montrose, Colorado

**Robert Keppel**  
6/2/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Marie Woodard Kidd '48**  
9/29/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Betty Jones Kinnard '66**  
6/25/2022  
San Angelo, Texas

**Janice Thompson Lloyd '52**  
7/8/2022  
Floydada, Texas

**Joan Wurgler McCullough**  
10/2/2022  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

**Reta Beights McGaughey '45**  
6/6/2022  
Richardson, Texas

**Virginia Rogers McNeely '52**  
10/20/2021  
Plano, Texas

**Marjorie Hinds Rives '55**  
9/20/2022  
Borger, Texas

**Mike Rosenberg '72**  
7/12/2022  
Gainesville, Texas

**Caro Russell**  
8/17/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Lucille Wallace Slater '48**  
9/14/2022  
Auburn, New York

**Marj Stout Sledge '78**  
9/16/2022  
Georgetown, Texas

**Gwen McMurry Sonnenburg '60**  
10/6/2022  
South Jordan, Utah

**Louis Stallings**  
7/1/2022  
Big Spring, Texas

**Walter Urban**  
5/16/2022  
Abilene, Texas

**Nell Tankersley Williams '95**  
7/16/2022  
Knox City, Texas

**Doug Wofford**  
6/22/2022  
Llano, Texas

Scan to view this list online or to report the death of a McMurry University alum or friend.





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