

Around THE Green

BETHEL COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2025





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AROUND THE GREEN
SUMMER 2025
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Editorial Board

Oscar Gonzalez, Pam Tieszen, Emily Timperley,
Brad Schmidt and Melanie Zuercher

Class Notes

Ben Lichti

Art Direction, Layout and Design

Oscar Gonzalez

AROUND THE GREEN

Bethel College
300 East 27th Street
North Newton, KS 67117-1716

Comments: magazine@bethelks.edu
Class Notes: class-notes@bethelks.edu

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On the cover:

Above: The Class of 2025 processes toward Mem Hall,
with faculty forming an "honor corridor" in Centennial
Plaza.

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A message from President Jon C. Gering

Building Bethel's Future

Dear alumni and friends of Bethel College,

As you know, Bethel College was founded 138 years ago by three business leaders (Goerz, Krehbiel, Warkentin) who formed a private association. At that moment in the 1880s, people raced to start a college to gain an economic and educational advantage for their community. Bethel served as an anchor institution for Newton and eventually North Newton, which became a municipality 1938 when the college needed sewer lines.

Bethel was just the beginning of collaborative work between the Mennonites and the community. Bethel Deaconess Hospital, a precursor of today's NMC Health, was founded in 1903 by Bethel College leader David Goerz. The Mennonites formalized Midland Mutual Insurance in 1937, started Mennonite Press in 1949, and opened Prairie View in 1954. The list of modern businesses is much longer. Mennonites have provided solutions to the most pressing needs of the community.

Our commitment to build the local economy took on new dimensions a few years ago when we initiated the Employment Experiences program. In this program, students work 80 hours a semester and receive a \$2,500 annual tuition grant. Successful participation in the Employment Experiences program is now a graduation requirement at Bethel College. The graduating class of 2028 will have a complete skill set that makes them employment-ready as they walk across the stage. These skills will be verifiable on their employment transcript and digital platforms, informed by the business community, and immediately relevant to their success in the workplace. We are merging traditions, not replacing them: we will continue our high academic standards, emphasis on faith formation, and liberal learning. We are designing our program to be the finest and most effective skills-based employment experience in the country.

Additionally, we launched our Workforce Development Certificate (WDC) website and marketing efforts on Jan. 23, 2025, after a few months of planning. The industry-recognized certificates are offered in an online, asynchronous format. They are affordable and accessible and help

fast-track career growth for employees and bridge critical skill gaps for employers (see p. 19).

Then, on the evening of April 3, we had an awesome public launch event at the Meridian Center for our business-to-business (B2B) efforts. The event attracted about 25 local businesses, but our reach is nationwide. Certificates represent one of the fastest growing higher education markets in the United States.

Since their arrival in 1874 in Kansas, Mennonites used their skills and industry to build the Newton community, south-central Kansas, and beyond. Yes – they were excellent farmers with their threshing stones and Turkey red wheat. But it wasn't just farming that transformed the community – it was also a keen sense of business opportunities and needs.

I am proud to be the leader of a college that has a rich history of supporting communities. We will continue to build Bethel's future for the next generation of students. I look forward to sharing more developments with you in the upcoming months. Thank you for your support.

Yours on the journey,

Jon

Jonathan C. Gering



TAKE NOTE



From left, junior Jack Denton-Cardew, Jaylen Reedus '25, Eli Wiseman '25, first-year Tyson Chupp, Landon Artaz, Jayson Artaz, Nick Bonner '25, assistant coach Eric Reid, senior Brayden Schilling, Harper Jonas '25, Carter Reid '25 and assistant athletic director for communion Jared Mocaby '24

COURTESY PHOTO

ONE FOR THE BOOKS

A decisive 81-47 victory over Tabor College in men's basketball on Jan. 15 pushed head coach Jayson Artaz '05 into the record books: It was his 132nd win as coach, surpassing the record held by Gerhard "George" Buhr '50 since 1965.

This season, the Threshers entered the KCAC Tournament 22-8, as a 4th seed. They posted a double-overtime victory over Ottawa to advance to the semifinals, where they upset #1 seed Oklahoma Wesleyan.

Making their fourth tournament championship appearance in five years, the Threshers lost by 4 to University of St. Mary, followed by a heartbreaking 3-point loss to Concordia University in the first round of the NAIA Tournament.

Right before commencement, Artaz learned that Maj. Larel L. Bonner Jr., United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Ky., father of graduating senior and men's team member Nick Bonner, had nominated Artaz as a Kentucky Colonel – a rare and possibly unique honor for someone from Bethel.

"Coach Artaz, your unwavering dedication, integrity and commitment to developing athletes both on and off the court exemplify the highest ideals of leadership and service," Bonner said in the presentation. "You have been more than a coach – you've been a mentor, a role model and a positive force in the lives of so many.

"In recognition of your outstanding character and the profound influence you've had," Bonner continued, "I am honored to present you with the title of Kentucky Colonel – the highest civilian honor awarded by the governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear.

"This distinction is given to individuals who have demonstrated noteworthy accomplishments and a spirit of service, and I can think of no one more deserving."

- » **For the third straight year**, a Bethel student won the Newton Mid-Kansas Symphony Orchestra's Dwight Beckham Young Soloist (college division) competition. Peter Buller, oboe, graduating senior from Inman, Kan., played a Vaughan Williams concerto in the NMKSO's Winter Classics concert Feb. 2.
- » For **the first time in at least two decades** (possibly ever), Thresher men's soccer hosted a KCAC tournament quarter-final game Nov. 6, beating University of St. Mary.
- » Allen Jantz '84, professor of education, was named **Thresher of the Year** by *The Bethel Collegian*.
- » In Thresher tennis, Jenna Mahoney, graduating senior from Gardner, Kan., received the 2025 ITA Central Region NAIA Women's Arthur Ashe Leadership and Sportsmanship Award, **a national honor that recognizes excellence** both on and off the court. Also earning ITA Central Region honors: senior Daniela Herrera, Senior Player of the Year; junior Petr Kollar, Most Improved Player; and Jordan Singh '22, Assistant Coach of the Year.
- » **The second Leslie Leupp Award for art** went to juniors Tre August and Nick Collins. Ron Leupp '68 and Vivian Leupp established the award in 2024 in memory of Ron's brother Leslie Leupp '68.
- » Lynnzey Young, graduating senior from Gas City, Ind., **won first place in the annual C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest** with "Shalom – What Would Jesus Do?" The contest is open to undergraduate students at all Anabaptist Mennonite colleges and universities in North America – Young's speech will now compete against the other first-place winners.
- » Bethel had **three coaches named Coach of the Year** in their respective sports of dance, cheer and tennis: Kiley McCord, Joseph Gogus and Gabe Johnson '19.
- » There were also **four Teams of Character** for 2024-25: men's and women's cross country, dance and women's golf.
- » Taryn Paulino received **the Seth Dunn Memorial Award**, which honors an incoming senior who has made a significant contribution to the Bethel community. Dunn's family established the award after his death in an accident in 2011, right before the start of his senior year.
- » **A record 15 students attended** the PittCon conference and exhibition March 1-5 in Boston. PittCon presents the latest advances in analytical research and scientific instrumentation. Funding from Bethel alumni allows students to attend every other year.
- » The Threshpy Awards **celebrate athletic achievements** at the end of each spring semester, this year on May 9. Among the awards presented: Athlete of the Year – Carmelo Yakubu, men's basketball, and Daniela Herrera, women's tennis; George Rogers III '69 Outstanding Male Athlete – graduating senior Harper Jonas, Wichita, men's basketball; Diane Sanders Flickner Outstanding Female Athlete – graduating senior Mia Roman, Prairie Village, Kan., volleyball and women's track and field; Douglas Penner '69 Champion of Character Scholarships – Samuel Hernandez, men's soccer, and Daniela Casique, women's tennis; Loren '59 and Peggy Reusser Spirit Scholarships – Jorge Batista, men's tennis, Josiah Buller, football, Patty Huerta, women's tennis, and Alayna Vines, volleyball; Gerry Sieber Service Award – Adam Akers '03, director of facilities; Athletic Alumni Impact Award – Frank Sticky '71.
- » The Office of Student Life gives **leadership awards each year**, including these individual awards: Emerging Leader, to first-year Emma Graber; Established Leader, to Ben Rudeen, graduating senior from Osage City, Kan.; CA of the Year, junior Tre August; Student Ambassador of the Year, junior Sadie Jensen; and Set the Example/Be the Example, to junior Laynie Mayes.
- » A new KCAC award, the "Game Changer of the Month," goes to students or employees who "have [made] a distinct and noticeable difference and impact on their campus, in the KCAC and beyond, ... not restricted to statistics and objective measures." Bethel had **four Game Changers this school year**: Bethany Schrag, graduating senior from Valley Center, Kan., cross country; sophomore Kendall Locke, women's basketball; Jayson Artaz '05, head men's basketball coach; and graduating senior Mia Roman, Prairie Village, Kan., volleyball and women's track and field.
- » Each year, the English department gives **one or more scholarships in honor of Dorothy Wedel Kaufman** '45. This year's recipients are junior Jasper Krehbiel and seniors Frank Driscoll, Louisa Lehmann and Emilee Phoon. The Writing Fellowship Awards for excellence in English, given by the Center for Academic Development, went to Driscoll, Krehbiel and junior Mason Bolen.
- » The business faculty **gave two awards**: the J. Lloyd Spaulding Award for the highest GPA among business majors, to junior Josiah Buller, and the Ray '48 and Betty Funk '48 Prize for Entrepreneurship, to seniors Damarion Anderson and Taryn Paulino.
- » Bethel was named the **#1 forensics program in Kansas** at "KNIFA," the Nebraska Invitational Forensics Association tournament in March that this year included several Kansas institutions. At the 2025 AFA-NST (formerly AFA-NIET), the national speech and forensics tournament held this year at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, Bethel qualified eight squad members in 20 events (10 categories).
- » Kauffman Museum **hosted the U.S. premiere** of *Where the Cottonwoods Bloom*, a film by Dale Hildebrand about the 1874 migration of Mennonites to Manitoba.

MELANIE ZUERCHER



INDUSTRY EXECUTIVE

CHRIS CORRELL '11

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (ECONOMICS MINOR)

Growing up in Peyton, a tiny town east of Colorado Springs, Colo., Chris Correll dreamed of playing college football.

"I began getting recruited by KCAC schools," he says. "The summer between my junior and senior years of high school, I came to Kansas for the Bethel [football] camp, followed by the Tabor camp. When I met Coach [Mike] Moore and the staff, I felt like I was home.

"The older guys who were there were very welcoming and fun to be around. Most of them were from out-of-state, which allowed me to [hear] their perspective of living in Kansas. The biggest draw overall was the strong academics and the coaching staff from the football team."

Chris met his wife, Rachael (Bachman) '11, at Bethel. Between 2011 and 2015, when Chris began as marketing manager at Glendo LLC, a small manufacturer of engraving equipment in Emporia, Kan., he got married, held two other jobs and completed an MBA at Baker University in Baldwin City. Chris moved to vice president of the company in 2022 and president in January 2024.

What stands out to Chris are relationships with his teammates, faculty and coaches.

"The times spent on the field, working on Friday night videos, hanging outside of football, and growing up together are some of my favorite memories," Chris says. "You grow such strong bonds going through the trials and tribulations of being a student [and] an athlete."

Many of these bonds remain strong today, Chris says. "I had Bethel teammates in my wedding and have attended many of theirs. It has been incredible to watch each of us grow into husbands, fathers and professionals."

Three Bethel staff "had a tremendous impact on my life," Chris says.

"Dr. Brian Epperson was an amazing mentor and professor. He challenged me in new ways and opened my eyes to leadership concepts and business strategies that I still use to this day. Dr. Allison McFarland was a staple in my business degree. Her kind nature mixed with thought-provoking discussion and assignments are things that I look back fondly on.

"Coach Moore understood where I was coming from and the challenges that I had. He welcomed me back to Bethel and to the football team after the three semesters [when I transferred away]. He was a great motivator and role model for many young men."

Chris says, "My Bethel education greatly contributed to where I am today. I use the many factors of my degree to lead an American manufacturing company."



COURTESY PHOTO

When I went on to get my MBA, I was surprised at how much of the information was virtually the same as what I learned at Bethel. The high standard of the professors and the care given to talking about real-world applications allowed me to hit the ground running in the business world.



MELANIE ZUERCHER

POLITICAL ADVOCATE

JENNA RATZLAFF '20
SOCIAL WORK

After completing a two-year degree, Jenna Ratzlaff looked both in and out of state for a place to finish her bachelor's. "Bethel's social work program caught my eye," she says. She liked being able to continue her education near where she grew up, in North Newton, and to deepen relationships in her own community.

One pivotal piece of her Bethel education was a January 2020 trip to Mexico with professors Jen Chappell-Deckert '96 and Ada Schmidt-Tieszen '74 (now retired).

"The most life-changing day was when we went to a small village called Tlmacazapa. It is similar to where I was adopted from, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala — impoverished, in the mountains. On the van ride back to [where] we were staying, Ada and I reflected on that day's experience and, as an adoptee from a similar culture, what that was like [for me]."

Jenna did social work practicums at Central Kansas Community Foundation and at Kidron Bethel retirement community. These taught her about community engagement, philanthropy, working with donors, grant writing, care plans, Medicare, Medicaid and much more, she says.

"Both experiences gave me a whole head full of knowledge. I gained mentors and friends I [still] stay in touch with."

This was especially useful when Jenna went on to the University of Kansas and ultimately chose the macro (administrative) track of the Masters of Social Work.

Jenna got involved with the Kansas chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) right after graduation and has now served on the board for five years, learning what social workers are doing across Kansas and nationally.

Another part of her Bethel experience was joining the annual Social Work Advocacy Day at the Kansas statehouse, in which she continues to participate as an NASW board member — now hosting social work students like she once was.

"Getting to experience ... Advocacy Day is what led me to run for public office [in November 2024]," Jenna says. "I had no clue what I was doing but I did know I have a dedication for the Harvey County community and the people who live in it. I've had conversations with leaders and community members over the last few years who have verbalized needs in the community that have not been met."

"There are social workers who have been and currently are [state] representatives. I spoke with two of them and they were extremely encouraging. So I filed the papers and ran a campaign. The support was amazing."

MELANIE ZUERCHER



My message to the community was, and still is, that they have an individual who is here to listen, advocate and push for change. Even though I was not elected, the advocacy did not stop at the election. I will always advocate for change however I can. I truly feel like my time at Bethel helped deepen and grow the connections I [already] have in the community.



SMITHSONIAN ARCHIVIST

PATRICIA WILLIAMS '89
HISTORY (POLITICAL SCIENCE MINOR)

As a high school senior in Ulysses, Kan., Patti Williams was being recruited by several KCAC schools to play basketball. As soon as she visited Bethel, she says, her choice was made.

"I immediately chose it, not needing to see the other interested schools," she says. "I was thrilled to be able to continue to play basketball, but it was the strong academics that Bethel offered that made my decision."

And it turned out she "loved playing basketball for Coach Lori DeGarmo [Mallory '83]," too.

However, she decided not to play her senior year, opting instead to go on the Europe interterm trip, led by Keith Sprunger, which began her lifetime love of travel, she says (she still travels regularly with a Bethel friend, most recently to southeast Asia).

"Bethel professors made a huge impact on me," Patti says, "from Duane Friesen '62, Dwight Krehbiel '69 and John Sheriff, to of course [history professors] Jim Juhnke '62 and Keith Sprunger, who were both instrumental to realizing how much I love the study of history. I particularly enjoyed being part of the history department's Oral History Project."

Patti continues, "My education at Bethel was crucial for my career. I planned to graduate with a history and teaching degree and to teach history at the high school level for a few years before returning to graduate school. Then I took Public History from David Haury '73 and realized I could have a career in history that was not [in] teaching."

"For that class's paper, I did research in my local county museum, which led to summer employment and the realization of how much I loved working in a museum. The following year, I attended a Bethel convo on aviation by the great Igor Sikorsky, set up by Keith Sprunger and featuring one of his college friends, Von Hardesty.

"Von was a curator at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum (NASM), and mentioned that the Smithsonian offered summer internships. Sprunger strongly suggested that I apply – I did, and was awarded a summer internship in NASM's archival unit."

When Patti returned to Bethel for her senior year, it wasn't long before her intern supervisor contacted her about applying to NASM to work in the archives. She started there in June 1989, just a few weeks after graduation.

Patti spent 34 years at NASM, earning a Master of Library Science degree from the University of Maryland along the way, before moving to head the archives at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. She "even circled back to teaching, with a graduate-level class, Archival Principles, at George Washington University."

MELANIE ZUERCHER



My career is entirely due to the stellar education I received at Bethel and the support I received from the history department."



FITNESS ENTREPRENEUR

SHAVANE MORRISON '19

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

When a Bethel coach showed up at Trenton (N.J.) Central High School in Shavane Morrison's senior year, he saw a chance to keep playing football and also go to college. Coming from a major urban area on the East Coast, Shavane didn't really expect to stay past his freshman year at a small Kansas college in a small Kansas town. Then something happened.

"I made a lot of good friends at Bethel, and I really connected with my host family," Dick '72 and Barb (Delk) Koontz '72, Shavane says. "They were a large part of why I stayed and embraced the culture shock and the new environment. They made me feel welcome and at home. The Host Family Program gave me a chance to get off campus, away from school and sports for a little bit, and create a relationship with my second family."

He and the Koontzes are still connected — now living in the Kansas City metro area, Shavane goes to North Newton every Easter to visit.

"When I look back," Shavane says, "even with periods of boredom, I enjoyed my time [at Bethel] and I made it through. Part of the reason is I am a big advocate for finishing what you start."

"I [decided I] had no other choice but to track it through and continue to move forward. Regardless of the situation, I'd leave with a private school education."

He also found benefits in being able to stay on campus during the summer. He had access to the cardio and weight-training facilities, which helped him keep in shape for football, and he and a couple of friends worked on the events staff team with Ben Jones '96. "Ben took care of us," Shavane says.

One of Shavane's internships for his Health and Physical Education major is "probably what kicked me off into my personal training career, which led up to owning my own gym today."

Shavane interned with one of then-HPE professor Jessica Gillette's past students at a Genesis Health Club and the two "really connected," Shavane says. They still have an important collegial relationship.

Shavane worked at Genesis after graduation until 2021, when he became a full-time personal trainer at Chiefs Fit in Kansas City. In 2023, Shavane made the leap to opening his own fitness facility, Fitness Factory KC in Overland Park, Kan.

MELANIE ZUERCHER



Most of [what I learned as an HPE major at Bethel] translates into what I do now, every day — whether exercise, anatomy and physiology, kinesiology, nutrition, wellness, all of those. To get a degree, and you're able to actually use your degree, it's extremely beneficial. You feel really accomplished and satisfied, knowing it wasn't a waste of time or money

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONAL

TASNEEM NAHAR '92

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Tasneem Nahar wanted to go to college in a different country, but her mother wasn't sure about letting her leave their home in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

"[I was] a 19-year-old from a Muslim country, and my mother was very nervous. She was comfortable for me to find a college that was religiously based. I did not know anything about the Mennonites [but] I had found out about Bethel at the American Embassy's cultural center."

She applied to Bethel, among other colleges, and was accepted. "I said to myself that I would immediately transfer when I got to the U.S. to a city in the East Coast where most Bangladeshis were going, especially from my school."

In the end, however, she stayed. She admits it was partly because adjusting to the United States and American culture was hard, and when she began to feel at ease at Bethel, she didn't want to have to start all over again somewhere else. But also, she began to really enjoy Bethel, "especially the community and my friends."

Two faculty members, Paul and Mary McKay, "were the reasons I became an international development professional," Tasneem says. "I came to Bethel as an engineering major — South Asian families always wanted us to take science, so [at first] I did not question what I wanted to study and what I was passionate about."

"But when I took one of the McKays' classes, I fell in love with the subject matter and the community of students who were majoring in International Development. The agriculture trip I took with them to Guatemala and Honduras cemented my desire and passion to major in international development."

Tasneem has gone on to serve with organizations like Oxfam, Save the Children and CARE International, among many others, in countries such as Bangladesh, Cameroon, East Timor, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lebanon and Thailand, and she is now program director for the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS), an organization she has worked for since 2020 and which focuses on child labor and human trafficking.

As an international development professional, she has more than two decades of experience working with marginalized and vulnerable populations. She specializes in international development programming, managing government, nonprofit and foundation programs; monitoring and evaluation; and humanitarian response with a focus on youth employment and children's and women's rights.

After Bethel, Tasneem went on to earn an M.A. in development management from American University, Washington, D.C.



Studying with the McKays, and taking peace and conflict classes at Bethel, made me want to work on gender and human rights issues. My entire time at Bethel, being with the McKays and being part of their nonprofit work in Central America, really made me choose my path and my career in international development."



MELANIE ZUERCHER



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CLASS NOTES

Information received as of May 18, 2025

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF:

ALUMNI EVENTS: bethelks.edu/alumni/events | ATHLETICS: bethelthreshers.com | FINE ARTS: bethelks.edu/calendar

1960-69

Stanley Reimer '63, Pratt, Kan., exhibited a collection of his photography at the Pratt County Historical Museum during March.

George "Jolly" Rogers III '69, Newton, received the Outstanding Alumnus Award and gave a presentation in convocation on April 7.

Jerry Toews '66, Goessel, Kan., retired from directing the 17-piece McPherson (Kan.) Community Brass Choir after providing leadership for the group for the past 11 years. The group is McPherson's oldest performing musical organization (53 years) and comprises brass musicians, including several Bethel alumni, from central Kansas.

1970-79

David Shelly '76, Wichita, was inducted into the KSHSAA (Kansas State High School Activities Association) Hall of Fame for his 27 years as a Scholars Bowl coach at East High School in Wichita. The school's team qualified for the state tournament every year and won five state titles under his guidance.

1980-89

Carolyn Coon '82, Fresno, Calif., received the Distinguished Achievement Award and gave a presentation at convocation on April 21.

John L. Hobbs '80, Newton, was inducted into the Gravel Cycling Hall of Fame on May 29, at the start of the 2025 Unbound Gravel, a mountain biking endurance event that brings thousands of cyclists from around the world to Emporia, Kan., each spring. John founded and organized the Flint Hills Death Ride from 1982-2001, the success and challenge of which inspired the group that created the Unbound Gravel in 2005.

Mark Jantzen '85, Newton, is president-elect of the Kansas Association of Historians as of the organization's March 2025 meeting. This spring

while teaching, publishing articles in *Antisemitism Studies* (Spring 2025) and *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (January 2025), and making presentations in both English and German, Mark also found time to practice and perform with the Kansas Mennonite Men's Chorus in March and April.

Chad Scott '88, Gainesville, Fla., was elected sheriff of Alachua County.

Mary Sprunger '84, Harrisonburg, Va., had an article published in the journal *Church History*, "John Paget of Amsterdam: Champion of English Presbyterianism-in-Exile." While publication in itself might not be unusual, this article was originally written by Mary's father, Keith Sprunger, Bethel emeritus professor of history, and was not quite finished when Keith died in April 2022. Mary went through Keith's notes and completed the article, submitted it on his behalf, undertook extensive revisions to get it published, and was ultimately listed as co-author along with Keith.

Philip Sprunger '88, Williamsport, Pa., was cited in a May 13 article from *U.S. News & World Report* on the pros and cons of President Trump's proposal to eliminate tax on worker tips.

1990-99

Matthew Caldwell '94, Greenville, S.C., was named one of "Greenville's 50 most influential people of 2024" by *Greenville Business Magazine*. He is market president for the Bon Secours St. Francis Health System in Greenville.

Laurie (Patterson) Dove '97, Valley Center, Kan., released her debut novel, *Mask of the Deer Woman*, with publisher Penguin Random House.

Rachel Epp Buller '96, Newton, professor of visual arts and design, created *Winter Walking*, an audio art piece meant to be experienced while walking in nature during winter. It was installed in four Wichita parks during January and February.

Roz (Royster) McCommon '93, Bellevue, Wash., provided live music for travelers at the

Seattle-Tacoma airport. Photos of Roz performing were featured in an article from the Associated Press published in *The Seattle Times*.

Doug Shima '91, Topeka, Kan., was elected president of the National Conference of Appellate Court Clerks.

2000-09

Jayson Artaz '05, Newton, Bethel men's basketball head coach, became the winningest coach in Bethel men's basketball history with his 132nd victory on Jan. 15.

Brent Martens '01, Goddard, Kan., was part of the football coaching staff at Conway Springs (Kan.) High School which won its second straight 1A state championship in November 2024. Brent is the offensive coordinator and has been part of the coaching staff for seven of the nine state football championship teams at Conway Springs since 1998.

Jesse Nathan '05, Oakland, Calif., participated in "A Prairie Conversation" at Kansas Wesleyan University, Salina, along with Wes Jackson, co-founder of The Land Institute, and poet Robert Hass on April 30.

Luke Schmidt '03, Walworth, Wis., began a position at Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay, Wis., as observatory project scientist.

2010-19

Ryan Stuchlik '17, Newton, joined the Newton branch of INTRUST Bank as a commercial lender.

Jerrell Williams '15, Newton, received the Young Alumnus Award and gave a presentation in convocation on March 31.

2020-24

Abby Harders '20, Lawrence, Kan., was the lead author of a scholarly report on eco-friendly ways to separate and recycle refrigerants, published in the scientific journal *Science Advances*.

Danen Kistner '21, Hartford, Kan., was named head high school boys basketball coach for USD 224 Clifton-Clyde, Kansas.

Oscar Gonzalez '21, North Newton, successfully passed the oral defense of his thesis and graduated in May from Lindenwood University with a master's degree in graphic design. Oscar was also recently accepted into the MFA program in printmaking at the University of Kansas. One student each year gets a full-ride scholarship with teaching assistantship, and Oscar was that student.

Marriages

Erica Buller '12 and Matilda Newton, Kingston, New Zealand, April 12

Births and adoptions

Tyler (Dowty) '19 and Mark Brown (staff), Valley Center, Kan., Hadley Bennett, May 12

Gabe Johnson '19 and Mary Graefe, Newton, Sadie Jack, April 7

Julie (Wedel) '14 and Tim Martens, Inman, Kan., Ruby Louise, May 28, 2024

Allison '15 and **Benjamin Rudeen Kreider** '15, Durham, N.C., Ingrid Sophia, Oct. 24, 2024

Miranda (Snyder) '15 and **Justin Soriano** '17, Newton, Lucia Paige, Sept. 30, 2024

Remembrances

Helen (Bartel) Bargaen '54, North Newton, March 21

Marvin Bartel '60, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 18, 2024

Pauline (Jahnke) Bauman '48, Waterloo, Ontario, June 13, 2024

Leslie Fleming '68, Goessel, Kan., April 21, 2024

Calvin Flickinger '52, North Newton, Feb. 18

Kurt Friesen '88, North Newton, Nov. 22, 2024

Menno Froese '62, Canmore, Alberta, Oct. 24, 2024

John Gaeddert '68, Buhler, Kan., April 23

Dale Goering '53, Santa Fe, N.M., Nov. 12, 2024

Linferd Goertz '52, Bellingham, Wash., July 27, 2024

Anna Marie Harder '63, Newton, Jan. 4

Bernard Willis Harder '53, North Newton, Jan. 16

Richard Harris '71, Carmichael, Calif., Nov. 7, 2024

Eleanor (Claassen) Hiebert '52, Gwynedd, Pa., April 4

Kenneth Hiebert '53, Gwynedd, Pa., Dec. 18, 2024

Ardis (Leder) Jantzen '53, Freeman, S.D., Nov. 4, 2024

Leona (Enns) Kaufman '61, Moundridge, Kan., Dec. 24, 2024

Randall Kaufman '68, Windom, Kan., Dec. 24, 2024

Loyal Klassen '62, Mountain Lake, Minn., Sept. 29, 2024

Edna "Eddie" (Toevs) Krehbiel '54, Newton, Jan. 23

Donna (Regier) Kroeker '59, Inman, Kan., Dec. 2, 2024

Edith (Peck) Maclean '41, Mystic, Conn., Jan. 29

Janice (Preheim) Mendel '53, Freeman, S.D., Feb. 4

Alan Mishler '78, Ransom, Kan., March 3

Rosalie (Bartel) Neufeld '65, North Newton, April 4

Kathryn (Ashbaugh) Nye '47, Newton, Feb. 7

James Parker '68, Buhler, Kan., March 8

Dewayne Pauls '59, Newton, Jan. 2

Kevin Penner '89, Harrisonburg, Va., Feb. 17

Janora (Becker) Ratzlaff '61, North Newton, Dec. 1, 2024

Donald "Rudy" Rudicel '60, Abilene, Kan., Feb. 24

Junia Schmidt '46, Hesston, Kan., Nov. 14, 2024

Howard Schrag '63, Newton, Feb. 13

Orpha (Schrag) Schrag '45, Nashville, Tenn., Jan. 28

William Schroeder '52, Pocatello, Idaho, Nov. 18, 2024

Forrest Dale Stine '44, Southern Pines, N.C., Feb. 11

Thomas Szambecki '03, Newton, Jan. 14

Louise (Dick) Thiesen '61, North Newton, Feb. 22

Glen Unrau '57, Goessel, Kan., March 24

Ronald Werner '65, Wichita, April 4

Darvin Yoder '68, Parnell, Iowa, Feb. 25

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WHAT IS NEW?

Alumni are invited to submit recent news of interest to others—marriage, job change, addition of a child, award, promotion, graduate school, retirement, and so on—to the **Office of Alumni Relations.**

Mail to **300 East 27th Street, North Newton, KS 67117**, e-mail to alumni@bethelks.edu or submit via the Bethel website at www.bethelks.edu/alumni-update

PHOTOS WELCOME!

Please model your information after the current listings below, beginning with name, class year, city and state.

Anyone who earns 24 or more credit hours is a Bethel alumnus, whether a graduate or not. When reaching alumni status, they are assigned a "class year" (later replaced by "grad year" if they graduate).

The year behind each name below is the person's class year, often the same as the grad year unless the individual has told the alumni office that they wish to associate with another reunion year (as in the case of a five-year program, study overseas, etc., that delays graduation).

For additional activities of Bethel faculty and staff who are alumni of the college, go to www.bethelks.edu/news-events/news-room/facstaff-achievements

HONORED TO SERVE

by Melanie Zuercher

After seven years in a presidential spotlight, Jon and Deborah Gering reflect on their complementary roles.

At their spring meetings this year, the Bethel Board of Directors extended Dr. Jon C. Gering's presidential contract to 2030. By a unanimous vote in October 2017, the board appointed Gering Bethel's 15th president, and he took office Jan. 29, 2018.

Gering graduated from Bethel with honors in 1994 with a B.A. in biology, and earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in ecology from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. From there, he went straight into a faculty position in biology at Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo., in 2001. He was the founding dean of the School of Science and Mathematics at Truman and had served nine years in academic leadership roles at the time he came to Bethel as president.

Deborah Ediger, who grew up in both Goshen, Ind., and Newton, graduating from Newton High School, and Jon Gering, who came from Ritzville, Wash., met as Bethel students. After two years at Bethel, Deb finished bachelor's degrees in speech-language pathology and education, and then a master's degree in speech-language pathology, at Miami University. She currently works full-time (remotely) as a speech-language pathologist for students in pre-kindergarten and K-12 at two school districts in east-central Kansas.

The Gerings have three children — Benjamin graduated with honors and bachelor's degrees in architecture and archaeology and a minor in German from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, in May and will start graduate school at Columbia University in the fall, and Emma finished her junior year and Emerson his sophomore at Newton High School, also in May.

Of his recent reappointment, Jon says, "It's a real honor. It's not every day you get to be president of your alma mater and of a place that means so much to your family."

"I echo that," Deb says. "Seven years in, and it's an honor to be in this role."

She sees that role as being "to support Jon in leading the college, and our community in listening to what they have to say."

When she began thinking about the real possibility of Jon in the presidency, she says, her first thought was for how she could be helpful in "bridging gaps" with faculty, staff and the

community at large.

"We moved here from Goshen in 1980" — her parents are Byron '66 and Janet (Goering) Ediger '66. "I went to high school here, and my home church is Faith Mennonite Church. So when we came back [after Jon was appointed president], I already knew a lot of people. In a way, that made it easier, because I knew names and faces. In this community, everyone plays the Mennonite Game, and I could connect right off the bat."

She remembers that when the Gerings moved here in 2018, she didn't realize Keith (professor emeritus of history) and Aldine Sprunger had a home just south of Goerz House, the president's residence, until she went to their estate sale. There, she found a book with her great-grandfather in it, at which point she realized he had been on the Bethel board for 12 years.

"That's an example of how I was already part of this community," she says.

"One way to think about Deb's role is she is often able to answer the questions of who someone is, what do they do, how they fit," Jon says.

He continues, "My goal has always been to make Bethel a place that is sensitive to the needs of the students, and that's changing rapidly. The student body itself is changing fast, which also implies their needs and what they expect of us is changing just as fast."

In that way, what Deb does and especially who she is complements his work as president, he says.

"Deb has a different social style than I do. She's more approachable. She socializes in a different way. We can complement each other and learn about people in different ways."

"Jon has always been able to see the big picture and get things moving forward," Deb says. "He's that kind of thinker."

Jon notes, "Deb also does a lot of receiving energy and thoughts from me at the end of the day. That falls into categories of both celebrating and venting. That's important for me, to have a non-judgmental listener."

"We can provide different perspectives for each other — help each other work through issues," Deb says. "But sometimes I'd like to know about things that are exciting or interesting, and

he's ready to not talk about the college. So I enjoy going to President's Circle events because I can learn more about what's going on."

As president, Jon notes, "you have to be careful what you say, because everyone is listening. You have to be mindful of it all the time [that] you're now the spokesperson for the college. It's hard to appreciate the relationship — the complexity and nuance of it — between the college and the community until you live it."

Deb sees that from a more practical aspect as well. "In Missouri, we lived 15 minutes from campus. Now, living on campus — I can't just go out in the yard in my robe and pajamas, for example! You have to think about what you're doing when."

"But you just make those adjustments. I was very excited to live here in Goerz House. I'd never even been in the house before."

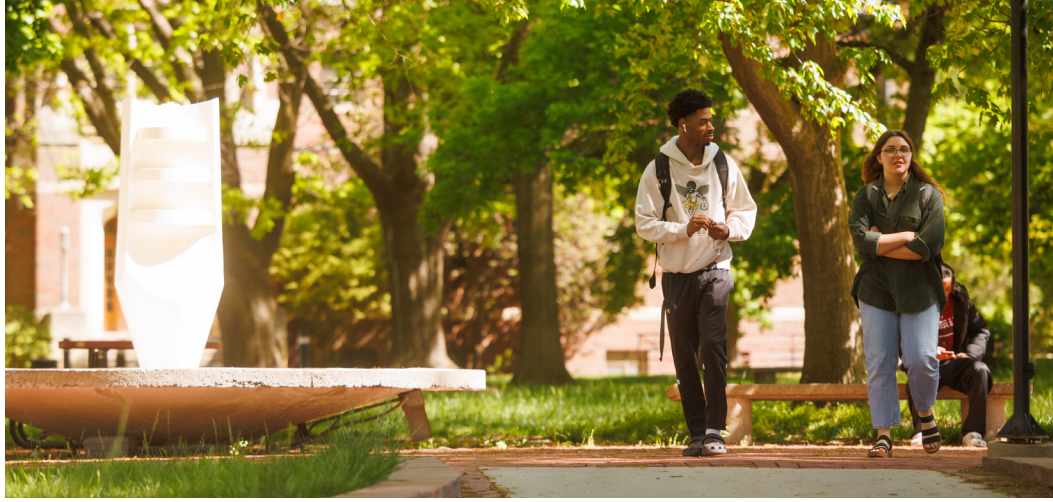
"I would also add that Deb gets the house ready for all of the events, whether campus or community," Jon says.

"I thought it would feel different to raise kids in this setting," Deb adds, "but as it's gone on, it has felt comfortable and normal. It's nice to live close to family — that has been huge." In addition to Deb's parents, Jon's sister, Gretchen Schrag '98, and her family live in the area.

The Gerings are looking forward to attending the Presidential Renewal Program later this year. Sponsored by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), of which Bethel is a member, the program is competitive and selective, and is for experienced college and university presidents with five years or more in their positions.

"I'm excited for being with other presidents and spouses, relating and sharing stories," Deb says. "We go to CIC meetings every year. Now that we've been attending for several years, we've been through things with other presidents. We have a shared experience, and this will be a better chance to connect and to be open and honest."

The Presidential Renewal Program tries to find college presidents who are "at a point of looking at 'What can I provide in my current position? What should be coming next?' They [will help us] look at everything — mental health, social circles, spiritual health, physical health," Deb says.





DAYMON LEVELL

CAMPUS NEWS

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NURSING GRADUATES POST STATE'S HIGHEST NCLEX AVERAGE

Bethel's Department of Nursing continues to rank highly in assessment of nursing knowledge and practice.

"Our program is proud to have the highest 3-year average NCLEX-RN first-time pass rate in the state of Kansas," said Becky Bartell '02, director of the department.

The NCLEX-RN is the exam that all nursing graduates must pass in order to practice. Bethel's pass rate of 97.62% over the past three years is the highest for all associate and bachelor's degree programs in Kansas, as released earlier this spring by the Kansas State Board of Nursing (ksbn.kansas.gov).

The high average came after two straight years of a 100% pass rate (2022 and 2023) and is "a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence in nursing education," Bartell continued.

"This outstanding achievement reflects the strength of our curriculum, which blends rigorous academic training with hands-on clinical and simulation experiences. Our faculty provide personalized mentorship and guidance, ensuring that every student is fully prepared to succeed on the NCLEX-RN and in their future nursing careers."

Bartell further noted that this kind of success would not happen "without the remarkable commitment and dedication of our students, [who] consistently demonstrate a passion for learning and a deep dedication to their chosen

profession, rising to meet the challenges of a demanding curriculum and clinical practice with resilience and perseverance.

"This impressive pass rate not only showcases the caliber of our program but also affirms our role in shaping the next generation of skilled, compassionate nurses who are ready to make a positive impact in health-care settings across the state and beyond."

Also this spring, as it does every year, the department honored its junior students in the annual lamplighting to recognize the 13 members of the Class of 2026.

The lamplighting ceremony has its origin in the Crimean War between England and Russia, 1853-56, when British nurse Florence Nightingale, considered the founder of modern nursing, volunteered to go to Scutari, Turkey, with a group of about 30 women to care for the wounded soldiers.

Nightingale spent up to 20 hours a day dressing wounds, comforting soldiers, assisting in surgery, directing staff and maintaining records. The men called her "the Lady with a Lamp" after the Turkish candle lantern she carried as she provided care, going from soldier to soldier.

North Newton ceramic artist Conrad Snider '84 designed and produces the lamps given to Bethel junior nursing students.

In addition to honoring junior nursing students, the lamplighting has become a time

when the students express their gratitude and appreciation to the families and communities who support them in their studies.

Members of the Bethel nursing class of 2026, pictured above, from left, are: Olivia Keen, Heydi Orteiz-Mezquita, Lisa Legros, Lexi Moore, Maria Cortes-Hernandez, Jenny Mayen-Aragon, Josh Ciers, Dulce Erazo-Tejada, Haydyn Boor, Kennedy Chodak, Aleah Shaw, Janet Sanner and Julie Wilhite.

Bethel nursing faculty, in addition to Bartell, are: Dr. Elizabeth Herbel, assistant professor of nursing; Heather Hosford, assistant professor of nursing; Jenna Lehrman, adjunct instructor; Dr. Sarah Masem, professor of nursing and assistant director of the Department of Nursing; Jeri Melin, adjunct instructor; and Krista Miller, assistant professor of nursing.



NURSING DIRECTOR RECEIVES TEACHING AWARD

Bethel College honored Becky Bartell '02, assistant professor of nursing and director of the Department of Nursing, for teaching excellence at the 132nd commencement on May 18.

The Ralph P. Schrag '37 Distinguished Teaching Award is presented at commencement most years to recognize a Bethel faculty member who has made an outstanding contribution to teaching.

Dr. Robert Milliman, Bethel vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, presented the award.

In his citation, Milliman said, "Professor Bartell is an outstanding teacher. She provides a favorable context for learning with a positive, comfortable, calm and flexible, yet assertive demeanor, to which students respond well."

Bartell's teaching exhibits "ample evidence of her mastery of course content and pedagogical strategies," he added.

The Schrag Award is based in part on student course evaluations. Milliman continued, "Professor Bartell's students affirm those observations with their own positive perspectives on her exemplary classroom instruction."

One student wrote, "Professor Bartell ... cares about us as people and not just students. She cares about how we are mentally and always gives us the extra check-ins on the days we need it most."

Another added, "Professor Bartell is an amazing teacher who is so easy to get along with in class. She is a great part of the nursing program

and I am so glad she is my professor and adviser."

Bartell's teaching colleagues are equally positive. "Becky has been a tremendous asset in the Social Science division," one noted. "She represents the interests of the nursing department clearly and well, but more importantly is able to balance those interests with thinking about the college as a whole. Her insight and experience make the entire division function better."

Milliman also cited Bartell's "[unquestioned] dedication to Bethel College and the success of our students and the nursing department."

"This dedication is evident when looking at the accomplishments of that department. Bethel's nursing program was the only one in Kansas that achieved a 100% NCLEX first-time pass rate for two [consecutive] years, and currently is proud to hold the highest three-year average for first-time pass rate in the state of Kansas with a pass rate of 97.62%.

"This can be attributed to the hard work of the nursing department under Becky's leadership and commitment to her students' triumphs. Through all of this, she also recently orchestrated a near-perfect accreditation visit for the nursing department."

Bartell graduated from Bethel College in 2002 with a bachelor of science in nursing, and earned her master of science in nursing education from Fort Hays State University. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree through Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

CHASE DEMPSEY

HEAD COACHING JOB MAKES DREAM COME TRUE



Coach Josh Lawson
MELANIE ZUERCHER

It took a few decades, but with Josh Lawson's appointment as Bethel College's new head football coach, he's made it to his top career goal thus far.

Lawson was serving in an assistant coach position at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich., when he got a call from Bethel's athletic director, Tim Swartzendruber '81.

"Tim had called the [Calvin] head coach about another person on the staff," Lawson says. "The coach told Tim that person wasn't ready to move on from where he was, 'but I have a guy who's ready.'"

Lawson talked with Swartzendruber on the phone, then went through a Zoom interview. "After four days hearing nothing, I assumed I didn't get the job. My wife Meredith and I were driving to Alabama to visit family for Christmas, and Tim called and offered it to me. We said Yes immediately.

"I was excited — and then it hit me to where I had to pull over. After 41 years, it finally happened."

Lawson grew up in western Alabama coal-mining country, where his dad was "a huge [University of] Alabama fan. We'd listen on the

radio when I was little to Eli Gold, the Voice of the Crimson Tide. That's how we spent our Saturdays in the fall.

"I'm too young to remember his career, but we're still in the shadow of [legendary head football coach] Bear Bryant. I grew up admiring everything about Alabama football, listening to the stories everyone told about Coach Bryant.

"And when I was four years old, I told my family: 'When I grow up, I want to be a head football coach.'"

At his small-town high school, Lawson played three sports, including basketball and football. He was "too small for football," so he went on to Beville Community College in Fayette, Ala., with a basketball scholarship.

After an injury, he transferred to the University of Alabama, with a career goal of coaching basketball. But he didn't forget that childhood declaration, and as an undergraduate in secondary education, and then an M.A. student in human performance (sport management) at Alabama, he served as a student assistant and then a graduate assistant in recruiting for the Crimson Tide.

Not that it was easy — it took more than just wanting to be part of Tide football. A chance encounter on a golf course with a member of

the coaching staff gave Lawson a toehold with Charley North, then director of football operations at Alabama.

Lawson "had to call every day for 30 days," leaving messages until North finally picked up and asked him, "Who are you and why do you keep calling me?"

"He said to come for an interview, and then for two-and-a-half days, I sat outside his office, until his secretary finally told him, 'You have to at least talk to this guy.'" North took Lawson on as a volunteer — "I made zero dollars in my first two years in football coaching."

But that was the start. Lawson went from the University of Alabama to a high school assistant football coach position in Jasper, Ala., and from there to assistant coach jobs at Idaho State University, University of Alabama-Birmingham, Southern Arkansas University, Stephen F. Austin State University (Nacogdoches, Texas), Arkansas Tech University and finally Calvin, before starting at Bethel Jan. 2.

Lawson has "hit the ground running," according to Bethel President Jon Gering '94, following the abrupt resignation of former head coach A.B. Stokes, which led to a number of players not returning after Christmas.

"My goals are, short-term, to build the culture of the football program. We're meeting three times a week for responsibility training — training on what our standards will be.

"Medium term, to recruit about 70 players in order to have 130 by August. That's important, to get [the number] where it needs to be, for our program and for the college as a whole."

According to Swartzendruber, Lawson is on track to meet that numerical goal.

Lawson continues, "Longer term, to have a better season in 2025. And the longest term, to be the standard of the KCAC. We have to be champions in everything — the classroom, the community, the field. We have to do everything step by step, and not skip any steps.

"Football has become transactional [in many ways] — 'What can this do for me?' I want college football to be transformational," Lawson says.

"In a lot of cases, these players are still kids, 17 or 18 years old. I want to grow them into people that can be open and honest about their faith and be proud of it, who can be great in the community."

And maybe also to let them know that sometimes childhood dreams can come true.

MELANIE ZUERCHER



Above: Joel Gaeddert '06, owner of Flint Hills Design in Newton, listens to the WDC B2B panel, April 3

At right: Danny Barrera '14, learning and development coordinator for INTRUST Bank, Wichita, chats with Bethel MarComm staff Oscar Gonzalez '21 and Emily Timperley at the April 3 WDC B2B event.



NEW ONLINE EDUCATION STREAM ENHANCES BETHEL'S LONG-HELD VALUES

The college's founders would never have envisioned the latest educational offering when they filed the charter 138 years ago.

However, the new Workforce Development Certificates (WDCs) that went live at the end of January fit right into Bethel's mission then and now: to empower individuals through education to make a difference in the world.

WDCs are non-credit-bearing, online, asynchronous certificates that are more specific to a given field than a degree. They can usually be completed in weeks or months.

"WDCs are like licenses that prepare people to enter the workforce or develop specific skills within a certain occupation," said President Jon C. Gering '94. "For example, a person with a Health and Human Performance bachelor's degree might wish to complement the degree with a WDC in Personal Training and Nutrition Coaching." People already in the workforce can add skills in their profession or prepare to move into a new one.

"Because they signal advanced preparation and commitment, WDCs often lead to better hiring outcomes and higher salaries," Gering said.

As of Jan. 23, Bethel offers 36 WDCs across seven areas of study: health care (8 certificates, such as Assisted Living Technician); technology (5 certificates, such as AI Engineer); business (6 certificates such as LEED Green Associate); management and leadership (6 certificates, such

as Professional in Human Resources [PHR®]); cybersecurity (4 certificates, such as Certified Information Systems Security Professional [CISSP®]); cloud computing (4 certificates, such as MS Azure Fundamentals); and advanced manufacturing (3 certificates, such as Aerospace Structures Technician). See more at bethelks.edu/certificates/

These were determined through Core Education, an independent contractor, who conducted market research that identified unmet demand in the Kansas job market.

As a long-term operating partner, Core staff handles all enrollment-related inquiries, including monitoring website inquiries. They direct any promising leads interested in becoming full-time students to Bethel's admissions department.

Pam Tieszen, vice president for institutional advancement, noted that the initial WDC launch was business to consumer (B2C) certificates, closely followed by the business to business (B2B) phase – "inviting business partners in the community, region and nationally to use an even broader portfolio of certificates for their employees to enhance their skill sets."

On April 3, a special event at Newton's Meridian Center took place for just that purpose, with members of the Bethel board and representatives from about 25 local businesses attending.

While none of the initial 36 certificates are taught by Bethel faculty, it will be possible down the line for faculty to incorporate a WDC into an existing credit-bearing course or even convert a WDC into a full credit course.

Gering listed several advantages to offering WDCs: "They help individuals flourish in their chosen occupations, which meshes with Bethel's value of increasing human flourishing. WDCs will increase institutional visibility and provide an opportunity to generate revenue."

Bethel College was founded on, and continues to embrace, traditional Mennonite values of community, work, perseverance and growth, Gering said.

WDCs provide the kind of flexibility to make learning something that doesn't only happen in a traditional classroom, and that can work with an individual's needs and desires for education.

"The ancient Greeks said there are three essential human activities: thinking, making and doing," Gering said. "These correspond with Bethel's faith exploration, academic curriculum and employment experiences program, respectively."

"Moving into the area of Workforce Development Certificates supports Bethel's mission to provide 'practical experiences in career pathways,' leading to meaningful lives."

Left, Larry Lee speaks to the Martin Luther King Jr. Day audience in Krehbiel Auditorium; at right, Lee and Vice President for Culture and Belonging Sheryl Wilson.

ANDREW GRABER



CAMPUS LECTURES STRESS *Community, Dialogue, Hope*

Bethel's annual celebration of the holiday dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. this year featured an "unsung hero" of the local community.

That was Sheryl Wilson's term for Larry Lee, a retired pastor and a community activist, who spoke on the evening of Jan. 20 on "A different side of 'The Dream.'" Wilson, Bethel vice president for culture and belonging, introduced Lee following a reader's theater presentation by members of Bethel's Diversity Council and music by Lincoln Moyo '20.

Lee recently retired after 23 years as pastor of a multiracial and multicultural Newton congregation, All Nations Church. He is on the board of the Newton Public Library and was instrumental in helping to create the library's new building as "a beautiful and inclusive space," Wilson said. He is president of the board of Newton Community for Racial Justice (NCRJ).

Lee began his talk by tracing his own life in relation to some of Dr. King's historic milestones.

When King spoke at Bethel College, on Jan. 21, 1960, Lee was 9 years old, living in Joplin, Mo., with his parents and five siblings and, as a Cub

Scout, first heard "the n-word" directed at him.

Three years later, in August 1963, came the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and King's iconic "I have a dream" speech. Lee was "12 years old, almost 13, within a few weeks of leaving mostly white Joplin for an all-Black environment in south central L.A., where I [would] see clearer than ever the differences between Black and white in our society."

Lee made these comparisons in retrospect, he said, because it was only in about 1966 or 1967 that he began to pay attention to King in real time, when King began to speak out against the war in Vietnam and about poverty in America, and his popularity began to falter.

"This is the Martin we don't hear as much about," Lee said. "He's enlarging his field. He won't stay in his lane. I feel like he's moving [away] from 'Black issues.'"

"It took me a few years to figure out he'd been in his lane all along. These issues were part of his dream."

They were what took King to Memphis in April 1968 to join the sanitation workers' strike. On April

3, King spoke at the Mason Temple Church of God in Christ, part of the denomination (COGIC) that Lee grew up in, "the largest Black Pentecostal denomination, so he had my attention. This is where he says, 'I've been to the mountaintop...'" This is what really gets me. He was evoking Moses, who didn't get to go to the Promised Land, but only got to view it."

The next morning, King was murdered at the Lorraine Motel. Two months later, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Lee's hometown, Los Angeles.

"Now here we are in 2025," Lee said. "Where are we now?"

"Has the dream been achieved? No. Is it dead? Absolutely not. It will not die. It is very much alive. I'm old, I'm starting to slow down, but I'm still filled with hope and wonder at Martin's dream."

"We've lived through this kind of [fraught political time] before, and the dream. Does. Not. Die. Don't you let it die in you! I'm still a dreamer, and I pray you'll say that and feel it in your own heart."

Lee spoke of things that give him hope, even

now. "NCRJ is something that excites me. It's diverse – it's people working together, building on the strengths of each other.

"Members of the younger generation give me hope. I've observed students out there, even in high school, who feel deeply about combating racism.

"I know what can be done. There are fights out there that need to be fought. We need to do it the way Martin said we should, nonviolently, loving our enemies. It isn't easy, but it's the way it has to be done." Lee challenged Bethel to embrace its Mennonite tradition of nonviolence and not be afraid to show it to the world.

"It's hard enough to love those who do treat you right, and so much harder to love those who don't," Lee said. "But it's what Jesus teaches – where do you think Martin got all this? We have to protest, but be loving when we protest. The fight for equality has to go on.

"In this age of having people tell you to 'be afraid, be very afraid' of those who speak a different language, come from a different country, are a different color, have a different sexual orientation than you ... Talk to each other. Get to know each other. Share your lives with each other.

"You don't have to agree with everything I say and vice versa, but if we start talking and listening to each other, we will discover more in common than we think. We have to get it done together."

A little over two months later, on March 27, the Bethel community welcomed Sister Barbara McCracken from Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan., for the KIPCOR Peace Lecture that was actually more like a fireside chat, minus the fire.

Keren Kandel, executive director, and Erin Nisly, director of education and training, of the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution sat together in the front of Krehbiel Auditorium for a discussion and then some audience participation through Q&A. The aim was "to build a deeper sense of dialogue, and do some community building," Nisly said.

Sister Barbara grew up in a small Nebraska town and graduated with a degree in political science from the Catholic women's college that

eventually amalgamated into today's Benedictine College. Now in her 80s, she joined the Catholic Benedictine order right after graduation.

Although she wasn't trained as a teacher, only teaching and nursing were acceptable vocations for nuns, so she taught in a variety of schools over the next eight years. She earned a master's degree in education and taught at Donnelly College in Kansas City before, as she said, "making a move down the career ladder" to the Catholic Worker house in Kansas City.

The Catholic Worker movement, founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, exists to offer hospitality to society's most marginalized. In this case, it was unhoused men, many coming out of years of incarceration, addiction or both. Sister Barbara lived in the Catholic Worker house for a decade.

Now officially retired, Sister Barbara helps manage the monastery's investments, for which they have gotten national attention due to the way the sisters use these to try and hold large corporations accountable.

"We own stock in some companies [such as Amazon, Chevron and Netflix], because we somehow got financially ahead, through donations and inheritances and not having to build infrastructure for a number of years, and we had money to invest.

"It only takes \$2,000 to be able to make comments as shareholders. We're most concerned with human rights, racial equity, CEO pay, and drug patents that keep the drugs hard for a lot of people to afford. We file resolutions and we attend annual shareholder meetings, but the corporations make it very hard to participate in the democratic system."

A theme of the evening's discussion was how to live with hope and overcome despair in a time that seems laden with bad news and seemingly hopeless situations.

Sister Barbara referred often to "community," and the importance of trying to live the gospel as part of a group rather than an individual.

"A community can call us out," she said. "We do things so as not to disappoint the community. We hold each other accountable, and learn about

listening, about [healthy] confrontation."

Speaking directly to the students in the audience, she said, "Devices can be divisive. Nothing replaces face-to-face contact in terms of maturing. Find time to talk to other students about things that all of you are concerned about.

"Get new ideas, listen to and hear other people's experiences. Realize we are not in this alone, we have certain commonalities, in the midst of so many differences.

"Dialogue is what's going to save us," she said, "if we can maintain that. That's why we need faith communities."

Sister Barbara expressed her belief that "we can choose to be hopeful. My community loves [the late] Pope Francis, who declared 2025 the Year of Hope, as the focus of the year for prayer and other things.

"We can choose not to despair. Faith is key at this time – that's what keeps you from despair, that you still have God. Try to articulate gospel values. Write it out or say it out loud: what does the gospel teach that is relevant to your life and the way you want to live? Ask yourself: How did Jesus live, and what can we learn from his life?"

Her takeaways from a long life lived in a religious community are "Don't look away. Bear witness to what you see. Take small steps in daily action, and in dialogue with other people."

As part of a Christian community, she said, she firmly believes "there is the thing called hope, which becomes a habit. If you have hope, you can endure a lot. We know God is with us, God loves us, God will help us, and we start over every day."

MELANIE ZUERCHER

From left, Sister Barbara McCracken, Keren Kandel and Erin Nisly

MELANIE ZUERCHER



BOARD EXTENDS PRESIDENT'S CONTRACT TO 2030

The Bethel College Board of Directors announced April 29 that Jon C. Gering '94, who has served as president since January 2018, has been given a contract extension through June 2030. The action was taken at the board's spring meetings April 3-5.

"Dr. Gering has led the college through some extraordinarily challenging circumstances," said Board Chair Wynn Goering '77, Albuquerque. "He's a veteran president now and we wanted to do everything we could to acknowledge that and confirm him in his role here."

"I'm honored by the faith the board has shown in me," responded Gering. "My wife Deborah and I are excited by the prospects ahead." (For more, see p. 14.)

Later this year, the Gerings are slated to be part of a Presidential Renewal Program, sponsored by the Council of Independent Colleges, for a select number of presidents and their spouses or partners. Participants are limited to presidents who have served at least five years, and the application is selective.

In other personnel actions, the board granted tenure and promotion to associate professor to Dr. Cristy Dougherty, assistant professor of communication arts and director of forensics, and promotion to professor to Dr. Jennifer Chappell Deckert '96, associate professor and program director of social work.

Following a discussion of capital priorities led by Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Pam Tieszen, the board affirmed their commitment to the renovation of Haury Hall as soon as practicable.

The board also discussed campus security procedures, with particular attention to feedback received from students and alumni.

The board's next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 1-3, in conjunction with the annual Fall Fest celebration.

GERING SIGNS NATIONAL STATEMENT AFFIRMING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

In late April, President Jon C. Gering '94 signed *A Call for Constructive Engagement*, a national statement issued by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), of which Bethel is a member.

Gering joined more than 530 leaders (as of April 29) from colleges, universities and scholarly societies across the United States in reaffirming the vital importance of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and open dialogue in higher education.

Gering noted that while he does not often sign public statements, he felt "compelled to support this initiative in light of increasing political pressures affecting colleges and universities nationwide."

The statement emphasizes "the essential freedoms to teach, learn, and exchange ideas – principles that are fundamental to Bethel's mission and the broader purpose of higher education."

Read the full statement at www.aacu.org/constructive-engagement



President Jon C. Gering

EMILY TIMPERLEY

Dr. Will Wiebe-Friesen, standing, points out a feature of the chemistry department's new mass spectrometer to major donor Randy Isaac.

MELANIE ZUERCHER

RETIRED SCIENTIST ENCOURAGES NEW GENERATIONS WITH CHEMISTRY GIFT

A brand-new mass spectrometer in Bethel's chemistry lab has its origin story in a friendship between two Mennonite boys who grew up in Meade, a small town in western Kansas.

Both Randy Isaac and Dr. Will Wiebe-Friesen, associate professor of chemistry, loved science and went on to pursue careers in it. However, they only learned to know each other as Isaac was at the end of his career and Wiebe-Friesen was beginning his.

In 2012, when he was a Ph.D. student at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Wiebe-Friesen joined the American Scientific Affiliation, a network of Christian scientists he had first learned about as a student at Tabor College. As executive director of ASA, Isaac, who lived in Boston, was notified of and would follow up with each new member.

"A Friesen? Living in Buffalo?" Isaac remembers thinking. An e-mail exchange ensued, and they quickly discovered that they were both from Meade, and that Isaac had grown up in the congregation that Wiebe-Friesen's grandparents and great-grandparents attended.

"I was actually aware of Randy long before," Wiebe-Friesen says, "because Randy's cousin Ken's son Neil was my roommate at Tabor. I remember Neil talking about his relative who was a bigwig scientist."

Isaac retired in 2005 as vice president for science and technology at IBM. He began at IBM after graduating from Wheaton (Ill.) College, where he majored in physics and French, and earning a Ph.D. in condensed-matter physics at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Isaac worked in semiconductors and then dynamic random access memory (D-RAM). Some call him "the godfather of the super-computer."

In 2014, Isaac and Wiebe-Friesen met in

person for the first time at the ASA annual meeting in Toronto and "bonded immediately," Isaac says.

"We had so much in common: upbringing, people, distant relatives. We have stayed in touch. We're both interested in Mennonite ancestry, so we talk a lot about that, and Will has provided a lot of books and resources. I've followed his progression to Garden City [Kan.] Community College, Hesston College and now Bethel."

About a year ago, Isaac was in the area to visit his sister in Buhler and other local relatives, and he and Wiebe-Friesen went out for lunch. "I was talking about what we're doing at Bethel, and how a mass spectrometer was on our wish list," Wiebe-Friesen says. "We had funding for approximately half of the roughly \$60,000 purchase price."

"That was my first clue that he needed a mass spectrometer, and how much it would enhance his students' experience," Isaac says. "I wondered how long he was going to have to wait for another \$30,000."

"I promise I wasn't fishing for money," Wiebe-Friesen says. His Ph.D. is in mass spectrometry, so "I was just dreaming," he says.

In July of 2024, Greta Hiebert in the advancement office e-mailed Wiebe-Friesen to tell him: "You have a really generous friend. Randy Isaac just gave \$30,000 for a mass spectrometer."

"My life's goal in retirement is to keep an eye out for people who need things and help them out," Isaac says. "We had built a friendship. I gained a lot of respect for Will, and it's reciprocated."

Isaac came to campus in March to visit Wiebe-Friesen and see the new mass spectrometer. He also spoke about his career in science to a group of junior and senior STEM students. And when he left, he added an \$8,000 gift as a mass spectrometer maintenance fund.

"Like a car, scientific instruments require

maintenance and supplies to keep them running, such as solvents and costly compressed helium gas," Wiebe-Friesen notes.

"When I got the final quote for the mass spectrometer, with Randy's gift, it was enough," he says. "Having the instrument means our students can be hands-on with equipment that's readily available at larger universities. What's even better, they get real experience using it – at a large school, you submit samples and somebody else uses the instrument."

He listed some practical examples of use for the mass spectrometer. Water samples from Sand Creek can be injected into the instrument to find what chemicals are there in what concentration and determine herbicide runoff. Organic chemistry students can experiment with trying to synthesize a molecule – the mass spectrometer will confirm success. For a forensic science exercise, over-the-counter medication can be mixed into a "mystery white powder" for analysis.

"Our students submit the samples, prepare them, trouble-shoot and analyze. They can do it all," Wiebe-Friesen says. "Junior and senior research seminars can go into a broad new area that was previously inaccessible. Before now, if we had mass spectrometer work needs, we had to reserve a time to go use the equipment at Wichita State.

"We will use it this summer for Summer Science Institute, for a forensic science unit that includes a small amount of hands-on time. It means I can work on research like what I did in grad school."

"My *raison d'être* is to identify needs that I can help meet," Isaac says. "This was a clear, specific need that's easy to meet. It's something I can do, and I like being able to help complete things."



MUSEUM'S GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBIT TURNS 10

Above : Kauffman Museum photo from "Sorting Out Race: Examining Racial Identity & Stereotypes in Thrift Store Donations"

Kauffman Museum's most widely traveled exhibit in the last several years turned 10 in 2025, at a time when its topic is perhaps more fraught, and certainly more relevant, than ever.

In 2010, Leia Lawrence was the manager of the Et Cetera Shop, a thrift store on Main Street in Newton, and Rachel Pannabecker '80 was the director (now emeritus) of Kauffman Museum. One day, Lawrence came to talk to Pannabecker about a concern she had.

Lawrence had been wondering for some time about donations of items that displayed and perpetuated racial stereotypes, from the blandly insensitive to the extremely offensive. Lawrence didn't think the store should be perpetuating those stereotypes by selling the items, even if the money

made was for charity. But she also wondered if a museum could collect the items and use them to start broader community conversations around race and identity.

It took five years, but the result of that conversation was "Sorting Out Race: Examining Racial Identity & Stereotypes in Thrift Store Donations" — five years of gathering about 500 items with racial imagery into the Thrift Store Collection and then sorting them into the 130 artifacts that became the exhibit. It opened at Kauffman Museum Feb. 27, 2015, staying until May 24, after which museum staff began working to turn it into a traveling exhibit.

Original supporters of "Sorting Out Race" were the Kauffman Museum Association, the Fransen

Family Foundation, the Schowalter Foundation, a Newton Et Cetera Shop Local Giving Grant and the Kansas Humanities Council (now called Humanities Kansas). The exhibit's humanities consultant was Dr. Robert E. Weems Jr., Willard W. Garvey Distinguished Professor of Business History at Wichita State University.

In addition to its initial support of the exhibit, Humanities Kansas also chose to use National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funding for a 2024 "Sorting Out Race" Kansas tour to Dodge City Community College, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Johnson County Community College and Hays Public Library.

"Sorting Out Race" began traveling in 2016. To date, it has been at 26 venues (libraries, museums

and cultural centers) in nine states besides Kansas: Arkansas, Arizona, California, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Oregon, Utah and Washington, with scheduled dates in Nebraska and Oklahoma in 2026.

The traveling exhibit received the 2018 Leadership in History Award, the top award given by the American Association of State and Local History.

Julie Robinson, who began as traveling exhibit coordinator at Kauffman Museum last fall, is now working to schedule the exhibit. The current political climate, with its repudiation of anything having to do with "diversity, equity, inclusion," has affected that schedule, leaving the exhibit available until April 2026.

And that gives an opportunity to "bring the conversation back home, where it started 10-plus years ago," Robinson says. "Now seems a very prescient time to bring it back."

Museum staff are working on whether the exhibit can be mounted on campus, and what that might look like.

"'Sorting Out Race' asks questions, to [make you] think about what's going on in your mind," Robinson says. "Where did you learn these things [that the exhibit brings up]? Do you want to look at them and unlearn them?"

David Kreider '82, exhibit technician, coordinated the travel schedule for "Sorting Out Race" until Robinson was hired to the new position.

"During the past ten years..., it has been gratifying to see the exhibit be a catalyst for local

host sites to engage with their local stories," he says. "They use speaker series, art projects and companion exhibits featuring local objects that highlight their own communities' wrestling with racial stereotypes."

"Kauffman Museum has been able to reach tens of thousands of people more than if the exhibit was only on display in North Newton. When the exhibit was in Montana two years ago, the libraries at both state universities displayed it inside their front doors – every visitor interacted with 'Sorting Out Race'!"

At host sites, Kreider consistently heard expressions of "gratitude for the exhibit and its ability to help visitors have conversations about race that they otherwise would not have. One venue extended their initial booking of six weeks to three months, after seeing how it was making a difference in their community."

"To think this award-winning exhibit was created by a small liberal arts college, through collaboration with a small-town thrift store in Kansas, and has now made a national impact."

Check kauffmannmuseum.org or the Kauffman Museum Facebook page for updates on if and when "Sorting Out Race" will be viewable on the Bethel campus in the upcoming months. To inquire about scheduling "Sorting Out Race" or any Kauffman Museum traveling exhibit, send a message to exhibits@bethelks.edu

MELANIE ZUERCHER



Below, Kauffman Museum photo from "Sorting Out Race"; above, visitors to the exhibit at California State University-Fresno (photo by David Kreider)





75 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP AND LEARNING

In 1950, the official end of World War II was only a few years past, and all of Europe was still in deep recovery mode. One of the post-secondary schools that began in Germany during this time was a teacher's college in Wuppertal, what is today Bergische Universität Wuppertal. A Menonite relief worker in Germany, Erna Fast '43, connected with students at Bethel who wanted to do something to help their German peers. They raised money to send CARE packages of books, Bibles, food and personal items to the Wuppertal students, and from that grew the desire to host a German student at Bethel. In 1951-52, Fritz

Potreck became that very first student. Rudy Wiemann followed in 1952-53. The exchange began in 1953-54 with Otto Driedger '53, a Bethel student from Saskatchewan, as the first to spend a school year in Germany (the exchange has become a semester on Bethel's side). Since then, countless colleges and universities have developed student exchanges and cross-cultural programs, but it's possible Bethel-Wuppertal was the first and is the longest-enduring – in 2026, there will be a celebration of 75 years. During this school year, something unusual happened: There were a total of five Wuppertal students on

campus. Ahmed Abu Baker and Ben Kontetzky were the 2024-25 students. Rabia Can and Louisa Lehmann were the 2023-24 students who decided to come back. And Antonino Mangiapane was a 2019-20 student who got mired in Covid-19 chaos, ended up graduating from Bethel in 2022, married another Bethel student, Krista Loomis '21, and is now employed in the Bethel business office as payroll and benefits administrator and cashier.

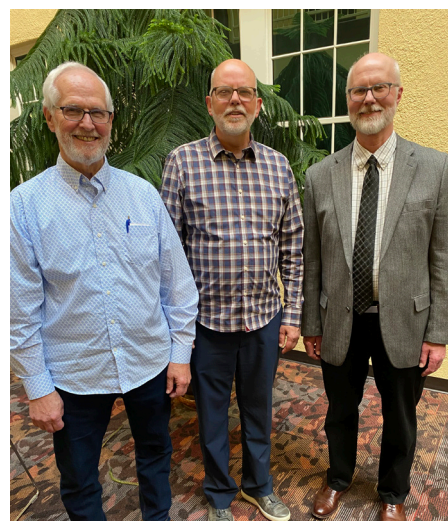
(from left: Rabia Kubra Can, Ben Kontetzky, Nino Mangiapane, Ahmed Abu Baker, Louisa Lehmann)

DECADES OF DEANS

Brad Born '84 (center), professor of English, retired at the end of the 2024-25 school year. He joined the department in 1995. From 2005-15, he served as vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, before returning to

teaching for another decade. At his retirement party on May 2, Born stood for a photo with his predecessor, John Sheriff (left), and successor, Robert Milliman. Sheriff was also a member of the English faculty – he started teaching at Bethel in 1967 and

became academic dean in 1997. He retired from Bethel in 2005, but went on to serve three interim presidencies: 2006-07, 2009-10 and 2017-18.



NEW HEAD COACHES BRING FAMILIAR FACES TO THEIR ROLES



Jara Shoemaker
BC ATHLETICS

Next season will see two new names in the head coach spot in women's basketball and men's soccer, but those names are hardly unknown at Bethel.

When Rocky Lamar retired from leading

Thresher women's basketball at the end of the 2024-25 season, his assistant, Jara Shoemaker, was named to the position.

"Jara did a great job for us this year," Athletic Director Tim Swartzendruber '81 told *The Newton Kansan*. "I believe she will continue building a successful program."

"The excitement surrounding women's basketball is at an all-time high," Shoemaker said, "and I look forward to building on that momentum by fostering strong relationships and continuing to elevate the program."

Shoemaker grew up in Minneapolis, Kan., graduating from Minneapolis High School. She played basketball two years at Barton Community College in Great Bend, then took some time off before finishing her bachelor's degree at Fort Hays State University.

After a decade working in health care, she became assistant girls basketball coach, and later athletic director, at Life Prep Academy in Wichita.

The Threshers were 16-13 last season, 15-7 in conference play, and ended the season tied for fourth. They lost to Friends University 68-66 in the postseason tournament.

In men's soccer, head coach Luka Milicevic announced his resignation in March and, after serving as interim for several weeks, assistant coach Juan Zamora was named to the top position.

Zamora has a B.S. in physical education from Friends University, Wichita, where he was a two-time All-American performer and holds the current record of 56 career goals. He was a key member of Friends' 2020 KCAC championship team.

Zamora has served as Bethel assistant coach since 2023. Jose Rojas '22 will join Zamora as assistant coach.

"We had strong candidates for the position and felt Juan deserved the opportunity," Swartzendruber said. "He has done a great job leading the program since Coach Milicevic left and I believe he is capable of taking over the head coaching position and continuing to build this program."

The Threshers hosted a quarter-final game for the first time in at least two decades, and possibly in program history, on Nov. 6, beating University of St. Mary. They lost to Oklahoma Wesleyan in the next round.

CAMPUS GROUP GATHERS FOR "BBQ & BELONGING"

A group of students, faculty and staff gathered toward the end of the semester to enjoy a barbecue lunch and some small-group discussion on belonging and hope.

In her role as Bethel vice president for culture and belonging, Sheryl Wilson applied for a new grant initiative from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), of which Bethel is a member. The grants were meant to support the CIC's Belong campuses "in their efforts to navigate the evolving landscape of federal regulations and policies," and to "provide

funding to enhance resources, strategies and programming that help independent colleges and universities remain informed and proactive in response to federal updates."

Bethel received the maximum amount of \$1,500 for its Belong "Meeting the Moment" grant, and Wilson used it to put on the "BBQ & Belonging" event on May 2.

After a catered barbecue meal, participants met in four different Circles of Belonging with facilitators to consider these questions: What do we have to gain from belonging? In light of

recent events in the country and on our campus, how are you meeting this moment? Hope, in its essence, is a belief in the possibility of a positive future or outcome, even in the face of adversity. Where do you find hope today?

"Overall, I consider the event a success," said Wilson. "Bringing together 40 students, faculty and staff to discuss how they are doing in this most unusual year in higher education — I will consider it a win. I am so grateful for everyone taking the time out to attend."



Participants enjoy a BBQ lunch before dividing into discussion circles.

SHERYL WILSON

THRESHERS RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE IN ART, MUSIC, FORENSICS AND BIBLE AND RELIGION



Front row, from left: Dr. Christina Liu, Peter Buller, Emil Benavides, Gracie Higgins, Dr. Cristy Dougherty; back row: Peter Goerzen, Dr. Trent Voth, David Long
AKINDOTUN OGUNBIYI

Three graduating seniors received Thresher Awards at the annual end-of-year Awards Convocation, in art, forensics, and Bible and religion/ music.

The Thresher is the highest academic award at Bethel, given to a graduating senior who has demonstrated outstanding work overall, as well as in their senior thesis or senior project.

Emil Benavides, Stockton, Kan., received a Thresher in forensics. She graduated May 18 with a degree in music and will complete her education certification with student teaching in the fall. She was also involved in forensics and theater throughout her four years at Bethel.

Dr. Cristy Dougherty, director of speech and forensics, noted that Benavides "embodies a ... characteristic that proved to be a stabilizing force for this [Bethel forensics] team for the past four years: her integrity and dedication to lifelong learning."

Dougherty cited Benavides' "emotional intelligence and natural ability to foster a space of community care. ... She was often more excited about her peers' success than her own. "She embodies an integral characteristic of a leader that often goes overlooked: her openness to learning and positive response to constructive criticism."

Peter Buller, Inman, Kan., received a Thresher in Bible and religion and also in music. He graduated May 18 with a degree in Bible and religion and a minor in music. He was active in both vocal and instrumental music throughout his time at Bethel, completing a senior recital in oboe and piano.

Peter Goerzen '07, chair of the Bible and religion department, read the citation for Buller on behalf of himself and Dr. Trent Voth, assistant professor.

"For four years, Peter has been a staple of the Bible and religion classroom, contributing insights reflective of careful and mature theological discernment and commitment to Jesus Christ and his body, the church.

"Equally impressive is Peter's warmth, patient respect, and responsible and self-aware curiosity as he deeply listens to and engages with peers, often drawing out further reflection."

Dr. Christina Liu, associate professor of music, said in her citation, "[Our] vision statement says, 'Bethel College graduates students who increase human flourishing (shalom) in society by owning and enacting their faith, demonstrating compassion for the powerless, engaging in critical thought, and bringing value to the workplace.'

"Peter perfectly embodies this with his hard

work ethic, natural leadership skills, eagerness to engage with others in community, and genuine kindness and care for all people, and it is evident too that Peter not only has a strong passion for music but firmly believes in sharing the gift of music to touch and better the lives of those around him."

Gracie Higgins, Tacoma, Wash., received a Thresher in art. Higgins graduated May 18 with a degree in art.

David Long, chair of the visual arts and design department, presented the award, noting that it was chiefly based on Higgins' senior project, which had as its central component a quilt — an art form in which none of the current art faculty has expertise, requiring Higgins to develop and complete her project without faculty assistance.

In the process, Long said, Higgins was able to "cultivate the necessary connections to make this art form a central piece in her exhibit. She created the designs, worked with a company in Canada to have those designs transferred to fabric, and worked with community members both here in Kansas and in Washington. This required her to solve a myriad of design problems, learn new skills and collaborate."

MELANIE ZUERCHER



[photo caption]

AFTER ALMOST 90 YEARS, RELAY BATON RETURNS TO BETHEL

It turns out “Bethel busy” is not a new phenomenon.

Glenn Stevenson (known on campus as Steve), a student from 1933-37, seems to have been a classic example. He came to Bethel from Parsons, Kan. He wasn’t a Mennonite but his father, a physician, had a friend in Newton, which eased Dr. Stevenson’s mind about his son leaving home for college.

As a doctor during the depression years, Glenn’s father often got paid in goods rather than cash, so Glenn had to work to help pay for college. His daughter Judy Rubin says her dad had a job in the college cafeteria as well as being a soda jerk at 10 cents an hour. He was the editor of the 1936 yearbook, the Graymaroon, and president of Student Council his senior year.

Yet he also found time for athletics. His children fondly remember their father telling stories about football and track. He was the center and a linebacker on the football team, once intercepting a pass for a touchdown, and was co-captain his senior year. He boasted that one year the football team figured out they had “beaten” the powerful University of Notre Dame via five degrees of separation. He had a scar on his leg after getting badly spiked in a mishap running the hurdles. He also participated in basketball during the winter season.

Glenn also squeezed socializing into his schedule, since he met and began dating Mildred Krehbiel at Bethel. She came from a Moundridge, Kan., family of 17 (children of Jacob Krehbiel and his first wife, Maria, and second wife, Elisabeth

Wedel Krehbiel).

And Glenn clearly found time for academics. After he graduated from Bethel in 1937, he received a fellowship to the University of Kansas and eventually earned a Ph.D. in chemistry there. That lengthened his romance with Mildred, since they didn’t marry until he had finished his studies in 1941. Mildred taught English upon graduation from Bethel, and her senior yearbook lists basketball alongside numerous scholastic activities.

After Mildred died in 2020 in Fort Myers, Fla. (Glenn had died in 1991), Judy, her two older sisters, Nancy and Penny, and younger brother, Jeffrey, were cleaning out the house and found a relay baton from Glenn’s days on the Bethel track team. As best they can tell from what’s written on the baton and from Bethel’s athletic records from 1931-40, it came from a dual meet with Hays (now Fort Hays State University) in 1937. While Bethel won four of the five dual meets that year, Hays was the only meet they lost.

“Why he kept the baton, no one knows,” Judy says, especially since the Bethel team was soundly beaten by Hays in that meet, as memorialized by the score etched on the baton.

However, the relay time also written there says 3:51. Jeffrey speculates it must have been a mile relay, meaning the team would have broken the 4-minute mile barrier. The 1938 Bethel yearbook pictures Glenn’s relay team of Stevenson, Galle, Jackson and Schrag, which finished third in the Sterling Relays that year.

Even though they grew up in Binghamton, N.Y., the Stevenson children were familiar with

Bethel, as they attended family reunions held there every other year. Many of the Krehbiel relatives still live in central Kansas, in Moundridge, Newton and Hutchinson. Judy fondly remembers those summer trips to the reunions, staying in the dormitories at Bethel and roasting a pig on the college campus to share with all at the picnic.

“Dad was pretty clever with a variety of travel routes,” she says. “We visited several national parks, took a car ferry across Lake Michigan, drove through Santa Claus, Ind., and one year clear to the West Coast — think Yellowstone, L.A. and Disneyland, Hoover Dam and the Grand Canyon.”

It was easy to decide that Bethel College should have the baton. It arrived in Athletic Director Tim Swartzendruber’s ‘81 mailbox earlier this spring.

The three Stevenson daughters (Nancy, Penny and Judy) all followed in their parents’ footsteps in terms of teaching and sports. All three were physical education majors in college (Brockport State in New York and Springfield College in Massachusetts) and taught and coached for many years before retiring. Jeffrey had a career as an actuary but also participated in high school and college athletics.

Even though none of them pursued the path to their parents’ alma mater, they still felt Bethel is “the perfect place” for the baton to find a permanent home.

MELANIE ZUERCHER



1. From left, Loggan Birch, Rodrick Edwards, Jaylen Reedus, Jared Givens, Robin Neely, DJ Ciers and Akindotun professor of social work, and Damon Klassen '98, director of theater; 4. The Class of 2025 on the Ad Building steps; 5. From left, Lilli Reisser, Victor Klassen '25, professor of Bible and religion, and Chase D. Klassen '25, professor of Bible and religion; 6. President Gering congratulates Reese Bennett; 7. From left, junior Lilli Reisser, Victor Klassen '25, professor of Bible and religion, and Chase D. Klassen '25, professor of Bible and religion.



Ogunbiyi "DT"; 2. President Jon C. Gering congratulates Victoria Esquivel; 3. Dr. Jennifer Chappell-Deckert '96, gives the commencement address; 4. Dr. Allison McFarland, professor of business administration, with two business graduates, Brooke Russell, Victoria Esquivel, Madison Bliss, Katie Rose Friesen Birky, Olivia Allen and junior Beth Lloyd; 5. Dr. Trent Voth, assistant president, gives the commencement address.

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