

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN

CAMPUS SCENE

A L U M N I M A G A Z I N E

VOLUME LXII WINTER/SPRING 2017

Go Cruisin' with Carver

page 22



CHANCELLOR'S CORNER

Dr. Keith Carver, *UT Martin Chancellor*

In 1986, then-Gov. Lamar Alexander launched a yearlong celebration called Tennessee Homecoming. The focus was part history lesson, part community heritage, and the event was an opportunity to set future goals.

For Hollianne and me, returning to our West Tennessee heritage is our Tennessee Homecoming 2017. We are excited to come back to a region where we were both born and raised, but we are most eager to work with the students, faculty, staff, alumni and all members of the University of Tennessee at Martin community. This is a special place.

UT Martin has an established reputation throughout West Tennessee as a provider of an excellent education and an economic catalyst for growth in the region. It is my commitment to continue this tradition of serving students and partnering with civic, business and non-profit leaders across the region and state.

Any homecoming contains a look back at the past and a glimpse ahead to the future; you can count on us to do both. As I travel the region, I want to hear what made your UT Martin experience special, and you can expect to hear from me often regarding current student, faculty and alumni successes. I will share these with you through the news, presentations, social media and alumni communications.

Together, we will honor the past, celebrate the present and vigorously pursue educational excellence in the future.

Hollianne and I are ready to begin our journey with you and the UT Martin community. The sky is the limit!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith S. Carver Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Keith S. Carver Jr.

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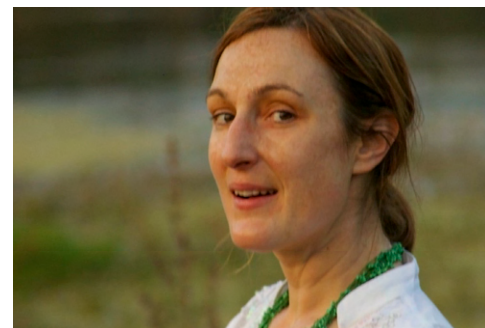
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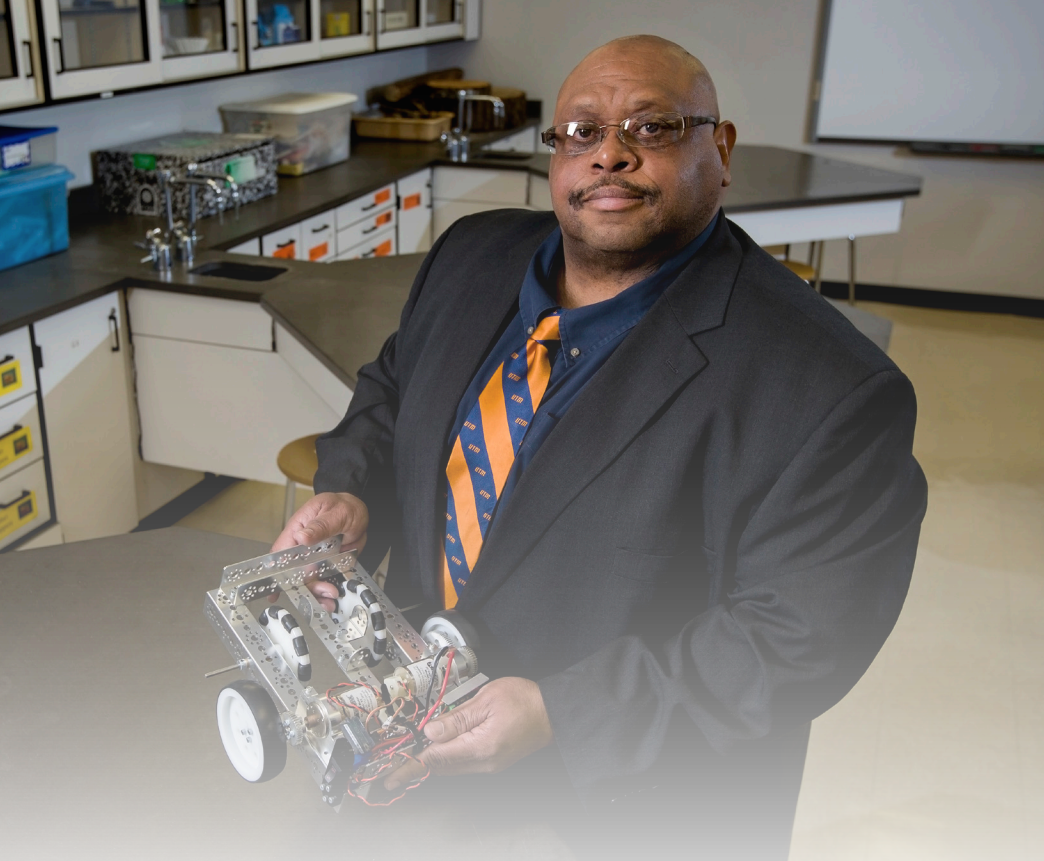
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the **big** picture

FINDING A HOME AT UT MARTIN >>> Students relax on couches in the courtyard of Cooper Hall. Cooper is home to UT Martin's Living Learning Communities, six cohorts of students from the same academic majors who live together in residential suites for the purpose of increasing student success. The majors currently hosting a Living Learning Community are agriculture, criminal justice, engineering, music, nursing and pre-med. <<<<





FACULTY SPOTLIGHT >>> **Dr. Louis Glover**
Department of Educational Studies

Dr. Louis Glover, assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, originally intended to become a chemist until he saw a need for compassionate teachers in secondary education.

During his junior year at the University of Louisiana Monroe, Glover took time off to serve as a permanent substitute teacher. Students would come to his chemistry classroom asking for help in physics because their teacher was absent. "I went to the physics classroom, showed them the problem, and from that point onward I would take both classes and started teaching physics on one side of the board and chemistry on the other," said Glover.

Glover's experience inspired him to change his career path so he could return to his high school and make a difference. He graduated from the University of Louisiana Monroe with a bachelor's degree in chemistry before attending Louisiana Tech University for a master's degree in analytical chemistry. He also holds a doctorate in education from Texas A&M.

After more than 20 years teaching secondary education in high schools from Louisiana to Texas, Glover decided it was time to make the switch to higher education. He has been a part of the UT Martin faculty for five and a half years. "This has been a good fit. I now love higher education, but I miss high school. That's why I do my STEM camps, so I can continue to work with kids," he said.

Glover's STEM camps originated as a way to provide middle school students with programs based on science. The program has grown into three separate camps – STEMulation camp for sixth, seventh and eighth-graders; Skyhawk STEM Camp for ninth and 10th-graders; and Skyhawk Engineering Camp for seventh through 10th-graders. Glover already has plans for a fourth camp focused on computer coding.

CAMPUS SCENE

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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The University of Tennessee at Martin

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Dr. Joe DiPietro, President
The University of Tennessee System

Andy Wilson
Vice Chancellor for University Advancement

Charley Deal
Associate Vice Chancellor for Alumni Relations

Nathan Morgan
Campus Scene Editor, Assistant Director of University
Relations and Coordinator of Photographic Services

Editorial Contributions
Erin Chesnut ('12); Charley Deal ('92, '96);
Bud Grimes ('78); Nathan Morgan; Ryne Rickman;
Holly Seng ('19); Hannah Stewart ('12)

Design and Layout
David Deaton ('10); Beth Bodwell ('16)

Photo Contributions
Adam Brimer; Bud Grimes; Raffe Lazarian;
Nathan Morgan

Copy Editors
Erin Chesnut; Norma Coalter; Bud Grimes

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Nathan Morgan, Campus Scene Editor,
nmorga15@utm.edu, 304 Administration Building,
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SCENE

HEARD

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Dr. Jason Roberts, associate professor of animal science, demonstrates an examination procedure during a student laboratory. See story on page 7.

noteworthy



Jon Kay (left), with BBC Breakfast, took a moment to speak with student reporter Tori Seng (center), production manager with WUTM 90.3 FM "The Hawk," UT Martin's award-winning campus radio station. Dr. Richard Robinson, associate professor of communications and radio station adviser, is also pictured.

BBC BREAKFAST VISITS UT MARTIN >>> Members of the BBC Breakfast show, the British-equivalent of "Good Morning America," visited UT Martin's main campus Jan. 17 as part of a weeklong tour of the United States via U.S. Highway 45.

Jon Kay, senior correspondent; Alex Littlewood, producer; and Andy Alcroft, cameraman, traveled from Milwaukee, Wis., to Mobile, Ala., to gather American opinions and insights on the inauguration of Donald Trump as the nation's 45th president.

The team visited with agriculture students in UT Martin's stocker-feeder cattle course, led by Dr. Emalee Buttrey, assistant professor of animal science, and Mike Pierce, UT Martin farm manager. The students worked with university cattle to practice weighing, examining and vaccinating calves.

BBC Breakfast is the most-watched morning show on British television with an average of seven million viewers each day.

<<<

ROBERTS RECEIVES PRESIDENT'S AWARD >>>

The University of Tennessee System presented **Dr. Jason Roberts (UTM '98, UTCVM '02)**, UT Martin associate professor of animal science, with one of four 2017 University of Tennessee President's Awards after the second-annual "State of UT" address Feb. 21 in Nashville.

This series of awards was created in 2016 to honor the role of UT employees in fulfilling the university's mission and celebrate those whose academic and professional achievements serve as a model for their system colleagues statewide.

Nominations for the 2017 awards were accepted in four categories in accordance with the UT System's mission statement: Educate, which honors accomplishments that enhance educational offerings and diverse learning environments; Discover, which honors discoveries and applications of knowledge; Connect, which honors engagement and service efforts and programs; and Support, which honors efforts in support of educational excellence, discoveries and applications of knowledge, outreach, engagement and service.

Roberts, nominated in the "Educate" category, is director and co-founder of UT Martin's Veterinary Health Technology Program and director of the West Tennessee Animal Disease Diagnostics Lab, which provides support to local livestock producers and veterinary professionals in the case of suspicious animal death.

Roberts holds a Bachelor of Science from UT Martin and received his doctor of veterinary medicine degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He began his work with the UT Martin faculty in 2009 and was promoted to his current rank in 2013. Roberts was instrumental in the design of UT Martin's Veterinary



Dr. Jason Roberts (center) received a 2017 University of Tennessee President's Award from the UT System for his efforts to expand educational offerings at UT Martin.

Health Technology Program in 2010, and his efforts led directly to the program's successful accreditation in 2014. He is also a primary educator in the pre-veterinary science program, which has seen record-breaking numbers of veterinary school acceptances in recent years.

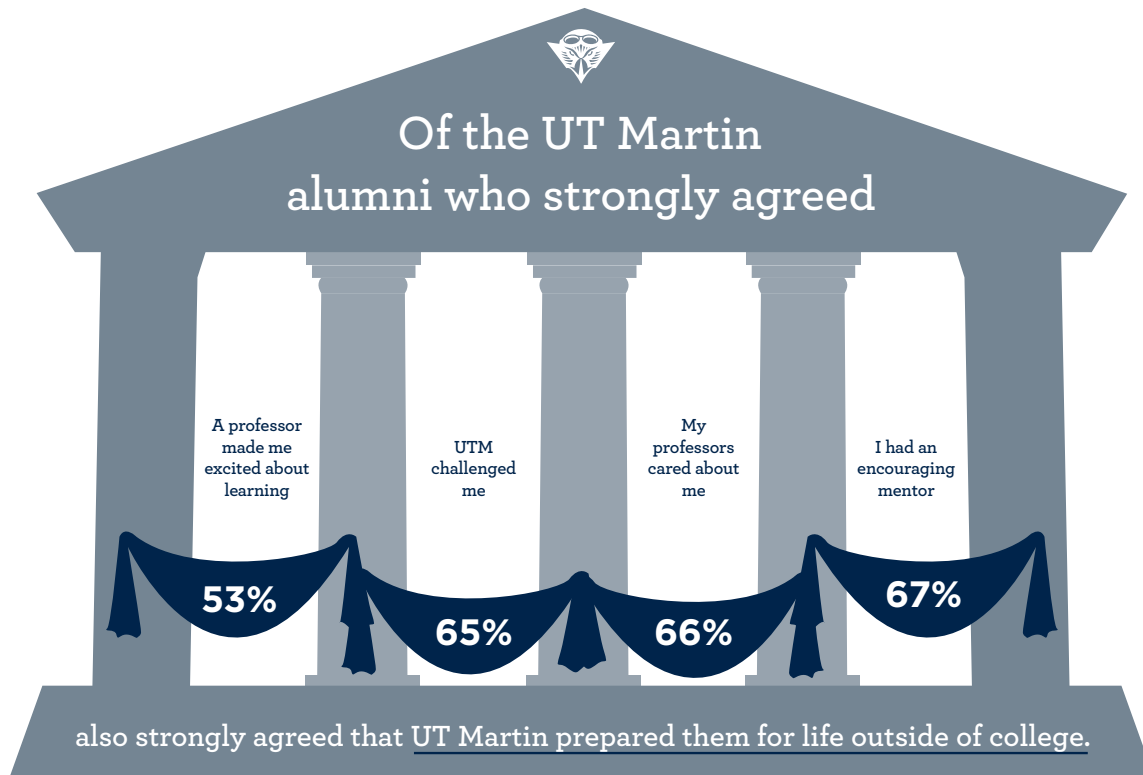
"Dr. Roberts is unquestionably a terrific educator and ambassador for UT Martin pre-veterinary students. He has worked tirelessly to make a difference in students' lives both in the classroom and in their career advancements in both the pre-veterinary and veterinary technician programs," wrote Dr. Jim Thompson, dean of the UT College of Veterinary Medicine, in one of Roberts' nomination letters. "I have not seen one of his students stumble under the rigors of the professional degree program (at UT), and they have uniformly been absolutely excellent colleagues to

their fellow students. These students have all, uniformly, credited Dr. Roberts' leadership for encouraging them to be team players and for helping them to accomplish their educational career goals."

In addition to his regular teaching and research duties, Roberts is also one of six professors who mentors students in the university's Ned Ray McWherter Institute, and he participates annually in the Tennessee Governor's School for the Agricultural Sciences, held each summer for selected high school students.

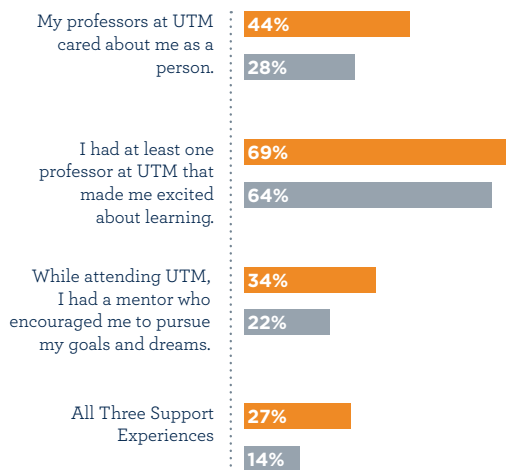
UT Martin faculty members Dr. Julie Hill, professor of music, and David McBeth, professor of art, received two of the three inaugural University of Tennessee President's Awards in 2016 in the "educate" and "connect" categories, respectively. <<<

noteworthy



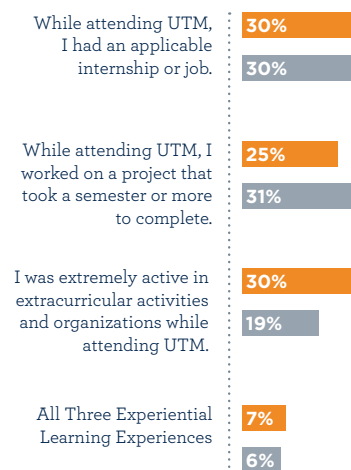
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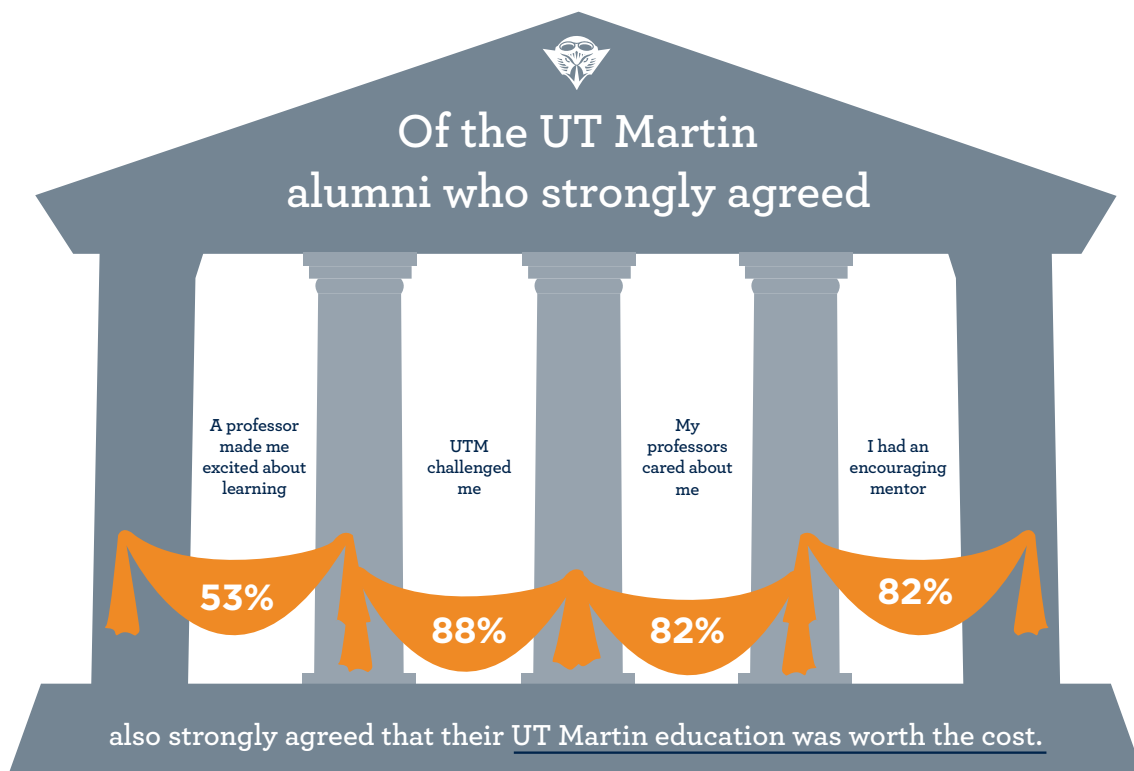
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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

(& Strongly Agree)





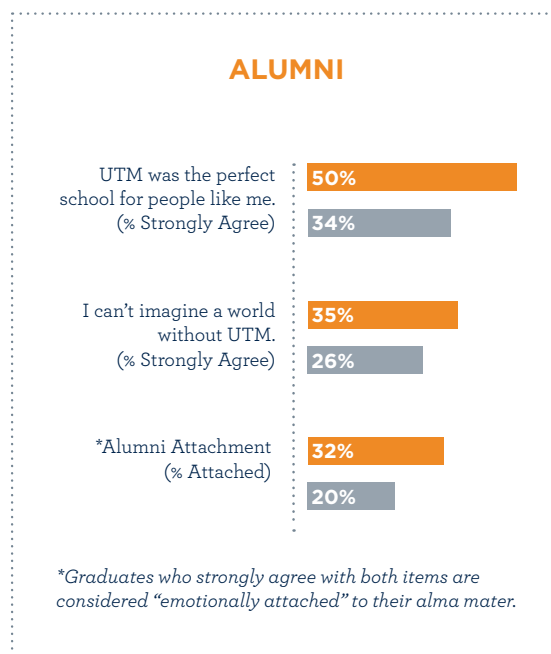
Alumni Show UT Martin Pride

Story by Erin Chesnut & Infographics by Beth Bodwell

UT Martin partnered with Gallup Inc. during the fall of 2016 to survey university alumni and discover how your UT Martin experiences impacted your lives after graduation. The results show intense alumni pride. UT Martin consistently scored higher than the national average for percentage of alumni respondents who indicate a high attachment to their alma mater.

Responding alumni strongly agreed with statements such as “My professors at UTM cared about me as a person.” These results reaffirm UT Martin’s long-standing reputation of caring faculty and a student-centered approach.

UT Martin alumni also indicated higher-than-average engagement with their careers, which includes a sense of teamwork, clear expectations in the workplace, growth opportunities, and individual recognition and sense of accomplishment on the job.



noteworthy

NOTED AGRICULTURE FACULTY MEMBER, ADMINISTRATOR, COMMUNITY LEADER LOSES BATTLE WITH CANCER >>>

Dr. Jerry Gresham, professor emeritus of animal science and retired interim college dean at UT Martin, died March 2 in Memphis following a battle with cancer. He was 73. Gresham advocated for agriculture and experience-based learning, and his long history of service to the Martin community included a major role in creating the city of Martin's successful Tennessee Soybean Festival.

Services were held March 6 at First United Methodist Church in Martin.

"I had the honor of meeting Dr. Jerry Gresham in the winter of 2006. His love for family, agriculture, students, his colleagues and the Martin community was evident in every aspect of his professional and personal life," said Dr. Keith Carver, UT Martin chancellor. "Dr. Gresham was the ultimate ambassador for the UT Martin campus and Northwest Tennessee."

Gresham, a native of Altus, Okla., earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from Oklahoma State University. Following completion of his undergraduate degree, he served four years in the U.S. Army, including a year in Vietnam, and earned the rank of captain before returning to Oklahoma State to complete his education. He and his wife, Carolyn, relocated to Martin in 1973, where he began his tenure as an assistant professor of animal science. The Greshams raised two children: **Darcia ('95)**, who lives in Nashville, and **Darryl ('91)**, of Memphis.

"I knew Dr. Gresham and Carolyn long before assuming my



Dr. Jerry Gresham (center) helps unveil the plaque for the Jerry D. Gresham Classroom during a dedication ceremony April 4, 2016. He is pictured with his son, Darryl (left); wife, Carolyn; and Dr. Bob Smith, then UT Martin's interim chancellor.



Dr. Jerry Gresham is shown speaking at the dedication of the Brehm Hall expansion Oct. 10, 2009.

current position, but I was especially grateful for the opportunity to work closely with Jerry when he served as interim dean from 2011 to 2013," said Dr. Jerald Ogg, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. "He liked to joke about the 'aggie math' he used in his budget presentations, but what I remember most was his incredibly passionate advocacy for his faculty and the students we serve. He believed in this university and its mission, and we are fortunate his legacy continues in our programs, our facilities and our people."

Gresham spent almost 40 years with the university and moved through the academic ranks to department chair and interim college dean, a post he held until his retirement in May 2013. Among his teaching honors, he received the university's Cunningham Outstanding Teacher/Scholar Award in 2003 and was named the University of Tennessee National Alumni Association Distinguished Service Professor in 2005.

His commitment to the growth and development of experiential-learning opportunities for agriculture students led to the creation of the university's teaching and demonstration farm and, ultimately, UT Martin's successful Veterinary Health Technology Program. The primary classroom in that program's renovated building was named for him in April 2016.

In addition, Gresham was director of UT Martin's first Governor's School for the Agricultural Sciences in 2004. He was also involved in the university partnership between academics and intercollegiate athletics that created the Rhodes Golf Center, which opened in fall 2013. Golf course management students were involved in the establishment of turf grass for the state-of-the-art facility.

Gresham was known internationally for his animal science



Carolyn and Dr. Jerry Gresham are pictured at his retirement reception April 25, 2013.

expertise. He worked closely with Australian livestock producers to share U.S. technology on ultrasound techniques for evaluating an animal's meat production efficiency and led multiple educational trips to the continent.

Dr. Todd Winters was named dean of the UT Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences following Gresham's retirement. "Dr. Gresham was responsible for building the agriculture program at UT Martin into a nationally-known brand," Winters said. "He touched many across the state of Tennessee and led the UTM Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources and the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences with distinction. He will be missed."

Active in the Martin community, Gresham was a Rotarian, a member of First United Methodist Church in Martin, and a longtime volunteer for youth sports, serving as a coach, vice president and president for Little League Baseball. He is also credited as founder of the local youth soccer league. In September 1994, the award-

winning Tennessee Soybean Festival began under Gresham's leadership, with Gresham serving as the first director of the joint community/university festival committee. In 2004, he was named to the Tennessee Soybean Festival Hall of Fame for his role as festival co-founder and his many contributions to the event.

"Jerry Gresham has been a real leader in the community," said Martin Mayor Randy Brundige. "Jerry is one of those folks who I would like to see emulated by all of our citizens – someone who works hard and cares about bringing about opportunities to celebrate community." <<<

Memorial gifts can be mailed to the Jerry and Carolyn Gresham Family Endowment, UT Martin Office of Development, 329 Administration Bldg., Martin, TN 38238, or made by calling 731-881-7620. Gifts can also be made to the First United Methodist Church in Martin and the West Cancer Center in Memphis.



the **big** picture
athletics

MEN'S BASKETBALL >>> UT Martin's Chandler Rowe, a senior forward, tips off against Austin Peay State University's Kenny Jones during a home matchup at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center, Feb. 23. The Skyhawk men's basketball team advanced to the postseason for the third consecutive season playing host to UNC Asheville in the opening round of the 2017 Collegen Insider.com Postseason Tournament, March 16. <<<<



athletics



Athletic trainer Alex Reamy (left) tapes Chandler Rowe's ankles before a basketball game. Rowe is a senior forward for the Skyhawk men's basketball team.

ATHLETIC TRAINERS ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES OF SKYHAWK ATHLETICS >>>

The casual fan doesn't know their names and probably never will. They will never score a single point or show up on the local news highlight reels after a big Skyhawk victory. But they are arguably the most important members of the athletic department and own the most trusted opinions of coaches and student-athletes alike. They are the Skyhawk athletic trainers. The National Athletic Training Association defines athletic trainers as highly qualified, multi-skilled health-care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide preventative services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions.

The Skyhawk athletic training team consists of five full-time workers and one intern. **Bart Belew ('97)** is the assistant athletics director for athletic training services, a role he has filled since 2006. He oversees a department that ranks among the best not only in the Ohio Valley Conference, but in the entire Southeast.

"I participated in sports throughout high school but was unable

to continue at the collegiate level," Belew said. "I always enjoyed science-based classes and discovered that athletic training was the definition of sports medicine."

The athletic training lifestyle is much more than just taping ankles and preparing ice baths. A typical day in the life of a UT Martin athletic trainer begins somewhere around 7:30 a.m. and can last until as late as 10 p.m. when their team is in midseason. That day can include several rounds of treatment, rehabilitation, paperwork, practice coverage, new injury evaluations, consultations with coaches and visits to regional doctors.

The lasting impact of an athletic trainer is immeasurable. When asked to name their mentors, Belew, **Cory Scates ('95)** and **Nelson Davis ('97)** each immediately point to Linda Barker, who helped teach the trio of Skyhawk alums while working as a UT Martin athletic trainer from 1982-2000. This past fall, Barker was inducted into the UT Martin Athletics Hall of Fame.

Ask those inside the profession what makes a good athletic trainer and the answers will vary. Belew says "a person who truly

cares for people and is willing to put aside his or her spotlight in order to help others shine “best fits the definition.

“This is not a 9-to-5 job,” Davis said. “You need to be a self-starter and passionate about your career. Perseverance, creativity and teamwork are important attributes to have, while also leaving your ego at home.”

Katherine Malik, who joined the Skyhawk training staff in 2008 after graduating from the University of Florida in 2004, describes the perfect athletic trainer as “having a good sense of humor, strong work ethic, empathy, dependability and (the ability) to roll with the punches and think on your feet.”

Despite the fact that Malik is one of two UT Martin full-time athletic trainers who is not an alum (alongside Alex Reamy, who joined the Skyhawk staff in January), she has found a home in West Tennessee. She raised a family in nearby Milan and has grown to love what UT Martin represents.

“This has become my home away from home,” Malik said. “I genuinely enjoy the people that I work with and rely on them sometimes like family. The coaches bring in great student-athletes, and that makes it easy to come to work and help them all get better.”

While the long hours may sometimes have a slight burnout effect, there are several perks to the job. As a full-fledged member of each team to which they are assigned, an athletic trainer is able to travel to various sites across the country. They even receive a championship ring if their team accomplishes that special feat.



Athletic trainer Cory Scates (right) applies an icewrap to baseball player Carson Shrode's shoulder.

“I enjoy the fact that we don't sit behind a desk all day,” Scates said. “I also like that, during baseball season, you get to enjoy the outdoors in the springtime.”

“I like the active lifestyle that this job brings,” Davis said. “I also have several lifelong friendships that I have made along the way.”

“We are involved with a Division I athletic department – a lot of people in and around Martin take that for granted,” Belew said. “My kids have access to Division I student-athletes. Most people would love to have that opportunity.”

Traveling across the map while seeing faces come and go, it's easy to comprehend where life lessons can be learned in the shoes of an athletic trainer.

“It can be hard to see sometimes, but you have to look at the big picture,” Malik said. “It can be extremely difficult for student-athletes facing a hard road to recovery or who are devastated that they are done for an extended period of time. Playing tomorrow may not be the best for them and ultimately the team. We need them healthier next week or longer because that's what's best for their future.”

“Time management is key to success as an athletic trainer,” Scates said. “This profession is not about the money but about the joy and the sense of accomplishment (from) keeping your student-athletes healthy so they can play the game they love.”

“I've learned that the human body is the most amazing thing that God has ever made,” Belew said. “The human mind will give up long before the human body will.” <<<<



Alex Reamy works with golfer Ross Redmont in the athletic training room.

athletics

BEACH VOLLEYBALL



BEACH VOLLEYBALL DEBUTS AS A UT MARTIN VARSITY

SPORT >>> The nation's fastest-growing collegiate sport has found a home at UT Martin. The Skyhawk beach volleyball program began its inaugural season March 17 with a match in Franklin.

UT Martin athletic officials announced the addition of beach volleyball in early August 2016, around the same time that the sport was one of the most-watched programs in the Rio Olympics. UT Martin is currently one of 53 NCAA Division I schools to sponsor beach volleyball this spring.

For UT Martin head coach Jaclynn Yocum, the last eight months have been a whirlwind of hard work, excitement and anticipation.

"Starting a program from scratch is a lengthy process," said Yocum, who completed her second season as the Skyhawks' indoor volleyball coach last fall. "There were so many challenges along the way, and it was mentally draining, but it was worth it to know that we were making history. How many times can you say that you are a part of the first team in the history of a school? That motivated our staff and our student-athletes to not take any shortcuts and do things the right way."

Although the sport has been a staple of the Summer Olympic Games since its introduction in 1996, beach volleyball did not gain mainstream momentum at the NCAA-level until two decades later. The first-ever NCAA Division I championship took place in 2016, with USC claiming the title in the three-day, eight-team tournament held in Gulf Shores, Ala.

Last season also jumpstarted the beach volleyball movement in the Ohio Valley Conference. Jacksonville State became the first OVC school to incorporate a beach volleyball program in the fall of 2015, while Austin Peay and Morehead State have joined the Skyhawks as programs with NCAA debuts this season.

The rules of the game are simple: each school produces five pairs of players and the first school to win three of the first five matches (played in a best-of-three format) is awarded the victory for the contest. The NCAA allots a minimum of eight and a maximum of 16 dates per season.

UT Martin's 2017 schedule featured 10 dates against six different schools and lasted more than five weeks. As a result of a large senior class in the fall, only eight Skyhawks who competed during the fall volleyball season have also donned the UT Martin beach volleyball jersey this spring.

Yocum believes the fact that the same players are competing at a high level in both sports can only help the growth of each program.

"Traditionally, our indoor team would practice in the spring but it would be more of a team concept," Yocum said. "With beach volleyball, you have to rely so much on your partner to succeed – there is only one teammate out there instead of five others. It's all about communication and knowing each other's tendencies. There are valuable lessons and situations from beach volleyball that will help us during the traditional fall season and vice versa."

Yocum is also excited about the new caliber of recruit she can expect in the near future.

"Adding beach volleyball adds an entirely new dimension in the recruiting realm," Yocum said. "In my first two years here, we had several potential signees who would spurn us at the last minute to go to a school that offered both sports. I didn't blame them, but it was always in the back of my mind what those recruiting pitches would be like if we had both options at UT Martin. Now that we can offer the excitement of a fresh young beach volleyball program, the possibilities are limitless."

One of the first questions that arose when Skyhawk athletics announced their beach volleyball intentions was the location of a new sand facility. After months of research and careful cost comparisons, the sand courts will be built between the Skyhawk varsity tennis courts and the main entrance of the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

The beach volleyball facility will be made up of 1,100 tons of sand spread across three courts. The courts will take up 11,200 square feet and are complete with a state-of-the-art irrigation system.

Although UT Martin's beach volleyball courts were not available in time for the Skyhawks to host a match in 2017, Yocum envisions an advanced sand volleyball facility in years to come.

"Building the courts turned out to be a long and arduous process, but thanks to the dedication of our university officials, we are absolutely on the right track," Yocum said. "We want to host premier tournaments and make UT Martin a yearly destination for top schools in the Southeast to come here every spring." <<<

(opposite page) Junior setter Kelly Lean, of Victoria, Australia.





Putting each
PACKAGE
on the belt

Photos & story by Nathan Morgan

If you've ever used technology to ship a package with FedEx, chances are you've used one of Donald Comer's products.

In his current position as director of digital access marketing at FedEx Services, **Comer ('82)** and his staff of 33 spend a lot of time understanding the needs and preferences of their customers and how each client wants to interact with FedEx through technology, something Comer says 90 percent of FedEx customers around the world do each day.

Retail is steadily moving toward online shipping, and one of the biggest challenges Comer faces is deciding how to provide the right level of technology to support this shift.

In a nutshell, he develops the systems customers use to access and ship through FedEx. He studies customer behaviors and needs, and then he tweaks and refines FedEx systems to create a more efficient customer experience. Comer says every decision works toward a single goal.

"One of the greatest stories I love is when (President) John F. Kennedy walked through NASA, and he talked to the guy who was sweeping the floor, and he asked him what was his job, and he said, 'My job is to put a man on the moon.' Well, everybody's job at FedEx is to put a package on the belt. ... So, my job is to put a package on the belt, to generate incremental revenue – incremental volume – and to do it profitably," he said.

One way to accomplish this goal is to improve the technology experience within the FedEx Office. To facilitate this, Comer and his team created a product called FedEx Ship&Get – a locker where customers can pick up or drop off packages at their convenience. Available 24/7, the self-service lockers are currently being tested in the Memphis and Dallas markets. Not only is the locker system convenient for customers, it also helps reduce the most expensive part of the FedEx delivery cycle: residential delivery.

As a young man growing up in rural West Tennessee, Comer never imagined he would one day be an executive with one of the world's largest express delivery companies.

"I grew up in a very rural part of Jackson. ... Neither of my parents went to college, so they couldn't offer a lot of counsel and guidance on that," he said. "I've been very fortunate along the way to have met people who could influence and help me to synthesize some of the opportunities."

And synthesize he has. Nearly 40 years after graduating as high school valedictorian, Comer has served executive roles with two Fortune 500 companies and holds two degrees – a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in accounting from UT Martin and a Master of Business Administration with a major in strategic management from the University of Memphis.

Comer began his college career at UT Martin in the fall of 1978 and never looked back. He joined the Student Government Association, pledged the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, sang in the collegiate choir, was part of the Black Student Association and even served as a Peer Enabling Program Leader.

Harold Conner, assistant dean of students during Comer's time at UT Martin, had possibly the largest influence on Comer's future.

"It's interesting now when I look back on the holistic set of experiences that I got from the University of Tennessee at Martin. It wasn't like I made decisions about school in ways that I would now (by) looking for very specific disciplines – expertise in areas that I would want to ultimately be in – but the holistic set of experiences have really served me well in terms of personal growth, professional growth and just really being able to come into my own over time," he said.

Holiday Inn, headquartered in Memphis at the time, came to interview students on campus during Comer's senior year at UT Martin. He met a recruiter who took an interest in him and took him to the Holiday Inn worldwide headquarters at the Commerce Center complex in Memphis. Comer remembers pulling up to the building, which had flags from every country flying outside.

From that moment, he knew this was where he wanted to work. However, life had other plans. The job was given to another UT Martin graduate, and Comer instead went to work at a small accounting firm.

Despite the setback, he didn't lose sight of his goal. Instead, he sent his resume to the Holiday Inn recruiter every month for 10 months. His persistence paid off, and he was ultimately hired for the position he wanted.

"I'm at a point now (where) I look back on all those things and think about how impactful it was to have a sponsor. I don't think I realized it at that time, but that individual who recruited me to Holiday Inn and introduced me to things in terms of job opportunities was probably one of my first sponsors," he said. Comer began working at Holiday Inn in 1983 and remained there for four years before following a new opportunity in 1987. International Paper, a leading global producer of pulp and paper products, was relocating its headquarters from New York City to Memphis. A friend at International Paper told Comer about an opening in the company, and he was quickly hired as a senior accountant.

"At every opportunity, there was somebody helping, pulling, sponsoring (me). ... I've really come to appreciate the difference between mentorship and sponsorship, 'cause we're all going to make some mistakes," he said. "So it's always wonderful to have



Donald Comer (center) is pictured as a sophomore at UT Martin in the 1980 Spirit yearbook.

somebody there at the table who's saying, 'Yeah, he made that mistake this time, but let me tell you about the other nine times when he knocked it out of the park.' So, that's really what's been a very key element of whatever success I've had is being able to earn respect and gain somebody who's willing to expend some amount of their personal equity to give me an opportunity that I might not have otherwise had."

Because of this, Comer has spent most of his life trying to do the same for others.

"It's very important for me to coach, mentor and provide some level of sponsorship to those whose story is a little different – and I look now at how lucky and how fortunate I was and I don't think that kind of luck exists today," he said. "You have to be very intentional and deliberate to really move because competition as a whole is a lot stiffer than it was ... when I came about."

Comer stayed with International Paper for two years before finally landing with FedEx. He has held nine positions during 28 years with the company and now "bleeds purple."

Outside of work, Comer sits on the national board of directors for the National Black MBA Association, an organization dedicated to developing partnerships that create intellectual and economic wealth in the black community.

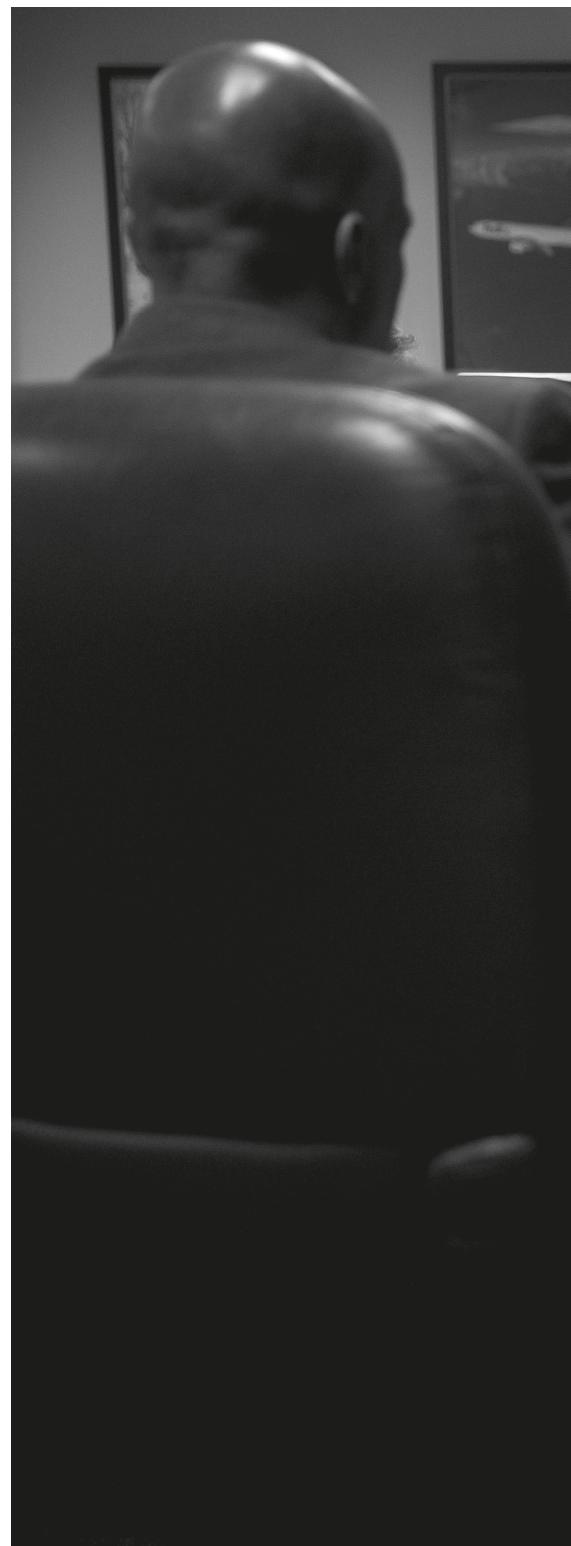
Additionally, Comer works with business students at the University of Alabama through FedEx and was recently asked to sit on the diversity committee for their school of business. He also works with Emory University's Goizueta Business School, Wake Forest University and LeMoyne–Owen College in Memphis.

"To think (about) the number of countries that I've traveled to, the number of opportunities that I've had – I've met a slew of celebrities over time just through relationships through FedEx and just through other organizational opportunities. ... It's been a really good life," said Comer. <<<

CRUISIN' —with— CARVER

Photos by Raffi Lazarian & Nathan Morgan

Dr. Keith Carver began his duties as the University of Tennessee at Martin's 10th chancellor Jan. 3. Two days later, he embarked on a whirlwind tour of West and Middle Tennessee. Through this photo essay, we reflect on Carver's tour, aptly named "Cruisin' with Carver."





Carver meets with executives at FedEx in Memphis to discuss opportunities for UT Martin students.





Carver meets with former UT Martin chancellors, Dr. Charles Smith (left) and Dr. Margaret Perry (right), for a mentorship meeting at the Ron Pace ('62) residence in Nashville.



(right) Carver takes a moment to put on his bowtie before starting his day with an early morning radio interview at The Victory 93.7 FM in Milan.



(above) Carver addresses students in the library of Union City High School on Feb. 17. One of the hallmarks of the tour was Carver's visits with potential UT Martin students at 23 different schools across the region.





(far left) Carver is given a flight lesson in one of the center's simulators during a tour of the FedEx Air Operations Training Center in Memphis. (left) Carver is interviewed by Charles Choate on KYTN Radio in Union City. (below) Carver takes a moment to check his email before meeting with Belmont University President Bob Fisher.



Meet UT Martin's

First Lady



Name: Hollianne Carver

Hometown: Lexington, Tenn.

Education: Bachelor's degree in education from Memphis State, 1995; Master's degree in education from University of Tennessee, Knoxville ('00)

Profession: Teacher, mostly kindergarten

Anniversary: August 5, 1995

Loves: Family, reading, hiking and being outdoors, dark chocolate

Interesting facts: Hollianne ran the New York Marathon in 2014 after being chosen in her first race lottery. The Carvers also adopted a terrier mix after leaving UT Martin in 2010 and named her "Sky" in honor of their time with the UT Martin Skyhawks. Sky is still with the family in their new home.

"It's a team effort. I believe in him; I believe in what he does, and when you love somebody you want to support them. We almost feel like it's a calling to be in the roles we're in. To be a chancellor, for Keith, has not necessarily been a goal of his. It hasn't been a resume-jumping process of taking one role to get to another. We really do feel like it's where we've been led to be."

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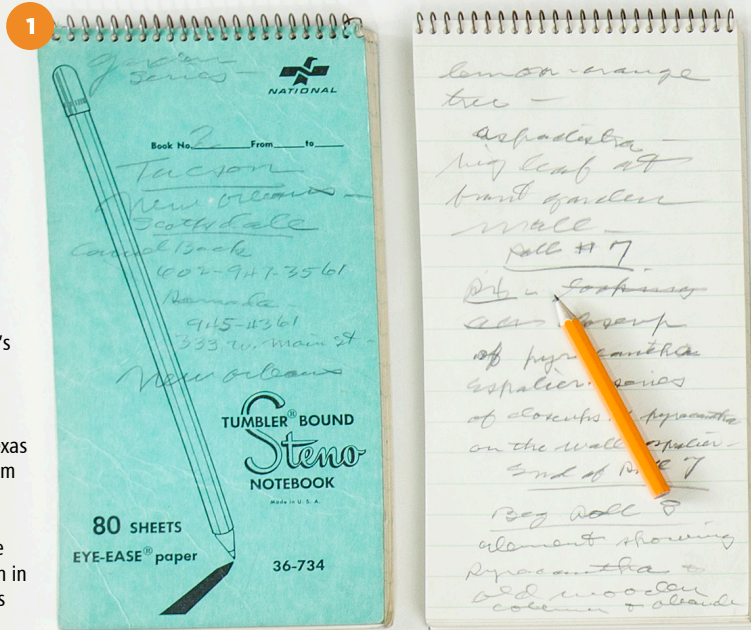
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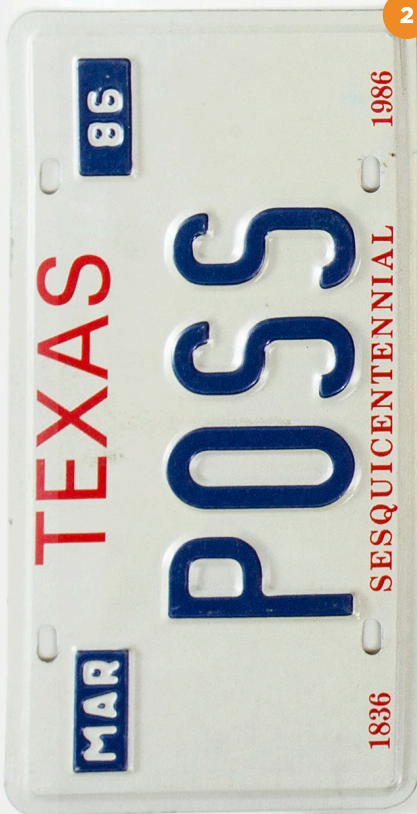
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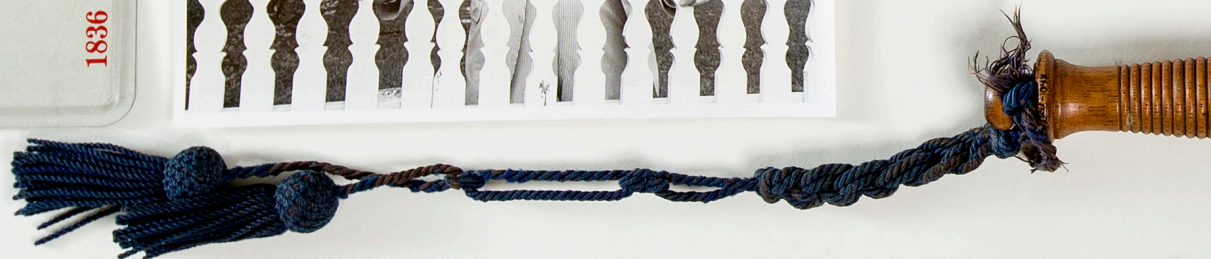
HOLLAND McCOMBS



1. Two reporter's notebooks with story notes from McCombs
2. McCombs' Texas license plate from March 1986
3. Photo of McCombs at the McCombs Ranch in Wheelock, Texas



4. Rubber stamp with the words "news rush"
5. McCombs' pacemaker
6. Oak billy club, which belonged to McCombs' father, Thomas McCombs- A note with the object stated it was "used to keep the peace in wild oil boom towns of Texas and Oklahoma."



AS A BOY, James Holland McCombs spent many days at his grandparents' farm. Known as Woodley Farm, it would later become the campus of the University of Tennessee at Martin. After leaving Martin, Holland went on to have an illustrious journalism career as a correspondent for TIME magazine and later served as bureau chief in Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Dallas. Although he never attended UT Martin, Holland always held a certain fondness for the university. "UTM lies beautifully and pleasantly in the place of my birth and early youth. God bless the institution and you all and thanks for the memory," said Holland during the opening of the Holland McCombs Center and Archives on March 28, 1987. Donated by Holland to UT Martin, the Holland McCombs papers include highlights from his career, most notably TIME's coverage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. "From the Archives" is a feature highlighting unique and interesting items from the Alliene and Jimmie S. Corbitt Special Collections. For more information or to make a donation, contact UT Martin Special Collections and Archives at 731-881-7094 or speccoll@utm.edu. ■



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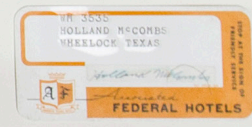
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7. A color photo of McCombs and President Lyndon B. Johnson at the McCombs Ranch in Wheelock, Texas
8. McCombs' business cards from Fortune and Time magazines



STANDING IN THE BREACH

Story by **Erin Chesnut**

Photos by **Nathan Morgan**





“ I have decided to appoint you to represent Lt. Calley.”
Those 10 words changed Houston Gordon’s career, and his life, forever, and put him on a national stage the likes of which he had never planned to see.

The fall of 1971 saw **Gordon (UT Martin ‘68, UT Law ‘70)**, a fresh law school graduate and newly-minted member of the Army Judge Advocate General Corps, preparing to take on what is arguably the most pivotal military case of the 20th century. Lt. William Calley, a former U.S. Army officer, had been found guilty of murdering no less than 22 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians on March 16, 1968, during what became known as the My Lai Massacre.

“In September of 1971, I was called into my boss’s office, and he asked me a bunch of questions, and then he leaned over his desk and said, ‘I have decided to appoint you to represent Lt. Calley in his appeals,’” said Gordon. “I had a lot of time left in the military. I’d only been there 18 months. I thought about it for a day and a half, and I thought, ‘This is the biggest case in the history of the military in the 20th century!’ I mean, it was all over the world, everywhere. And I thought, ‘Well, why not?’ So I accepted it, and I did it, and it changed my history. ...

“It was the most life-changing (case) in that it took a country kid from rural West Tennessee, a history major at UT Martin who knew nothing about Vietnam, and it caused me to learn a lot about Vietnam. ... It caused me to question, to question what people said, to question the propaganda of government,” he said. “It taught me to accept people where they are and how they are and who they are, because there, but for the grace of God, go I.”

The Calley case made headlines in every country with a published newspaper, and Gordon’s role in it was not unnoticed.

“It matured me early. All of a sudden this happy-go-lucky, let’s just go-with-the-flow approach to life got real serious. When you get death threats, and you get bomb threats at your office, and you get Christmas cards with pictures of dead bodies in them, it causes you to step back,” he said, remembering. “It caused me to dig and search and question and try to get to the core of who I am and what’s important to me – what my priorities are. ... I never intended to be a trial lawyer. I got a master’s (degree) in tax law. I’ve never practiced a day of tax law. So it changed my career path. ... The idea of being able to search for the truth begins with, first of all, being honest with who you are. I think that’s what (the case) did for me. It made me look at who I am.”

During his time representing Calley, Gordon often found himself on the banks of the Potomac River in the middle of the night. It was there, under the dome of the Jefferson Memorial, that he found

Houston Gordon outside his law office in Covington.

wisdom from one of the nation's forefathers.

"As I sat there, worrying and meditating, I looked up and read what was carved in the marble around the rotunda – the words, 'I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility toward every form of tyranny over the minds of men,'" said Gordon, addressing UT Martin's fall 2016 graduating class. "The deep truths in Jefferson's words changed my life. The events which caused me to see that truth ever so clearly changed history, mine and our country's."

Since handling the Calley case and his ultimate return to Covington, Gordon has represented hundreds of clients in cases ranging from civil rights and police brutality to corporate liability and death penalty trials. After all that, it's hard to believe his career started with a series of semi-spontaneous decisions – or, as Gordon calls it, "long-range planning."

Gordon's original life plan was to become a Boston Celtic, and then, after ending his professional career, coach high school basketball and teach history. It was this dream that brought him to UT Martin after a failed attempt to make the UT Knoxville basketball team.

"I got to Knoxville and I realized I wasn't going to make that basketball team, so I transferred to UT Martin the very next term," he said. "I sat on the bench for a couple of years at UT Martin and found out I wasn't going to be a Celtic, and I realized I might need to go to college," he added, laughing.

The 1960s were full of turmoil – from civil rights to the Vietnam War – and Gordon needed to find his place in the world before graduation. Near the end of his time at UT Martin, two of Gordon's friends were discussing their upcoming law school aptitude tests. Gordon had two questions for them: "What is that?" and "How much does it cost?"

As fate would have it, Gordon could afford the exam. "I had enough money to take the test, so I rode to Memphis with them. I did well enough on the test to get into law school, and that's called long-range planning: about ninety minutes," he said.

Another spontaneous decision to try out for the National Moot Court team in law school helped determine his future. "One day (a friend and I) were walking down a hallway at the law school and a poster said, 'Try-outs for the National Moot Court Team.' He said, 'Why don't we try out?' So, being a deep thinker and analyzing things for a long time, I immediately said, 'Sure!' So we tried out for the National Moot Court Team," said Gordon, laughing. "I will admit that, at the time, I did not have any idea what the word 'moot' meant."

The challenge given to potential team members was a fraud

case. Gordon, still a first-year law student, hadn't taken any related courses and felt in over his head. He went to the law library in search of help, and the librarian pointed him toward a reference book. It turned out to be the sentinel book on the tort of fraud, and the moot court judges were impressed by Gordon's references.

"You would have thought I was a genius!" he said. "So I made the team. That year I was a first-year law student, and every time I argued, we won ... and every time I didn't, we lost. We went all the way to the finals in New York, and everybody thought I was smart. They were wrong."

However, Gordon's success with the team brought him to the attention of a retired Army colonel named R. McDonald Gray. Under his mentorship, Gordon found his way into the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General Corps Defense Appellate Division, which handles the appeals of soldiers convicted of crimes.

*"Standing in the breach
is what I've done, and I
appreciate the opportunity
to do that."*

"One of the first cases I got was a case out of Vietnam that had to do with a speedy trial issue. I got busy, and I read every case the appellate courts had decided on speedy trial, and I just decided they didn't make any sense at all," he said. "So, not knowing any better, I stood in front of the Court of Military Appeals, which is the supreme court in military cases, ... and I said, 'I've read every case this court has decided and every case the Court of Military Review has decided on the issue of speedy trial, and with respect, your honors, they make no sense at all.' I didn't know you weren't supposed to say that to judges, so I did.

"The new chief judge leaned down, laughed and said, 'Well, Captain Gordon, what do you think we ought to do about it?' I had written down five things that I thought they ought to do, and they accepted three of them. It didn't give my client any relief in that case, but it changed the speedy trial rules in all military cases (after that)," said Gordon. "When that (decision) came down, I went back to the office, and they were fooled too! They think I know what I'm doing!"

That bold move helped lead to his appointment to the Calley case, which ultimately gave Gordon the courage and experience necessary to take on other unpopular cases.

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Courtroom sketches show Houston Gordon during Lt. Calley's appeal.

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"I represented an African-American couple down in Mississippi. In Marshall County, Miss., you could not get white lawyers to represent black people (at that time). Their young son was driving an old Ford tractor across a county bridge when the bridge fell and killed him. The county commissioner's reason for not fixing the bridge was, 'Well it's only a (negro) road anyway,'" said Gordon. "As unpopular as I was in Marshall County, Miss., among white folks, I took that case, and we recovered for that family. I'll never forget it. ... Had it not been for the Calley case, I wouldn't have been able to do it."

Gordon's career is marked by unpopular, controversial cases, but he is not ashamed of his tendency to fight for the "little guy."

"I'm serious about the idea that Providence had something to do with where I ended up and what I do," he said. "(The Calley case) caused me to be willing to stand in the breach, even when it's not popular, even when it's not the accepted thing."

While Lt. William Calley probably played the major role in Gordon's career, he thanks his UT Martin education for providing a foundation on which to build.

"UT Martin's the first place, I think, that I ever thought an original thought. And that's assuming that I have."

"For folks who grew up on the farm, like I did – picking cotton, slopping hogs, milking cows – (public education) was a way for us to learn and see a bigger world. UT Martin's the first place, I think, that I ever thought an original thought. And that's assuming that I have," he said. Gordon's association with the university stretches back to his grandmother, who rode a mule from Henderson County to earn her teaching certificate at Hall-Moody Institute. A long line of family members followed over time, and Gordon has seen the influence of higher education on all of them.

"Good gracious, you think about where I am! I'm practicing law? In a building like this? I remember looking through the floor and seeing the ground," he said. "What education has done for my family and done for me, it's something that everybody ought to have an opportunity for."

Gordon and his wife, Deb, have given generously to the university in support of student scholarship. The couple believes

that giving back is a powerful tool to help shape the upcoming generation and has faith that UT Martin is a place from which a person can go anywhere.

"I don't think we really live unless we give. I think if we spend all of our lives getting, and not giving, then we miss all the joy that comes from giving. And if we see someone who otherwise could not go to college, or someone who needs help along the way, or someone who's struggling to find out what they want in life – to help them in that search or to be able to make it easier for them is a blessing," said Gordon.

Today, the walls of his Covington office are covered in framed letters from clients and their families: a child, disabled in a tragic car accident, now a young man in college; mothers mourning children and families mourning fathers; students, now lawyers themselves, inspired by his courtroom arguments. They all thank Gordon for his time, his help, his understanding in their hours of need.

"I have plenty of 'I-love-me' plaques, but I don't need them," he said. "There was a time when I did. I spent years gathering all this resume-building material, and then I finally realized, 'I have a job!' ... I love being a trial lawyer. ... It's exciting. It's challenging. It's the last great theater! Think about it. You get a new script every time, and you've got at least 12 people who swear they're paying attention to you."

Gordon has been a trial lawyer on the national stage for almost five decades. He's handled cases in 17 states and had clients from multiple countries. "I've represented people from California to New York to Ohio, all from the square in Covington," he said. "Standing in the breach is what I've done, and I appreciate the opportunity to do that."

He may be slowing down and taking a little more time to enjoy his nine grandchildren, but Houston Gordon's impact on the lives of those he's served will never fade. The writers of those thank-you letters, and countless judges, juries, clients and family members, will always remember him standing in the breach. <<<

UT MARTIN
PARSONS CENTER

UT Martin Parsons Center Celebrates 10 years

Story by **Bud Grimes**

Dillon Gibson recalls a fellow student, a woman in her early 70s, who took classes during his first year attending the UT Martin Parsons Center. He remembers that she returned to school “because she wanted to try something new, and she said she loved this center.” Gibson, a 21-year-old K-6 education major living in Parsons, shares this same sentiment with many others as the center celebrates 10 years of changing lives and creating opportunities.

The UT Martin Parsons Center celebrated the milestone with a public reception Jan. 17 as part of the Cruisin’ with Carver introductory tour for Chancellor Keith Carver. The new chancellor, along with Jim Ayers, a co-founder of The Ayers Foundation and major donor and supporter of the center, spoke during a program attended by a crowd of students, community members and elected officials. Faculty and staff who have been with the center since its beginning also received special recognition.

The center was approved in fall 2006 by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees and Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Classes were first offered in January 2007 at Riverside High School in Decaturville, and ground was broken in February 2008 for a new 19,000-square-foot facility, a joint project between the city of Parsons and Decatur County. An open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony April 22, 2009, officially opened the center.

Progress continued in 2013 when the West Tennessee Healthcare Foundation made a \$1 million gift to fund scholarships and help build the center’s 10,000-square-foot West Tennessee Healthcare Foundation Nursing Wing. The Tennessee General Assembly also approved a \$1 million grant for the expansion before the conclusion of the 2013 legislative session. The wing officially opened Aug. 28, 2014, and allows the center to offer a full Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

In addition to nursing, students at the center can pursue degrees in agriculture business, education, criminal justice, social work, psychology, history, business and interdisciplinary studies.

“UT Martin history goes all the way back to about 1900 when it was originally called the Hall-Moody Institute. It has been a big part of West Tennessee ever since then,” Ayers told the crowd, praising the involvement of the local community and its dedication to making the UT Martin Parsons Center a reality 10 years ago. He attended the event with his wife, Janet who is also a major center supporter.

“There are a lot of people in this community (who) dug down

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in a meaningful way and wrote \$50,000, \$100,000 checks. You know, we're a pretty conservative community around here. You've got to have something worthwhile to get people to write checks like that. ... This community and this county (are) already better off as a result of the economic benefits that our children and our grandchildren have achieved by being able to attend school at home," he added.

Ayers introduced Carver as "the right man" for the UT Martin chancellor's position. Carver served as assistant vice chancellor for development at UT Martin when the Parsons location was first considered, and he played a personal role in raising financial and community support for the center. He offered remarks on the center's growth since that time.

"I cannot go any further today than to brag on the Ayers family; Jim and Janet, Jon, the Ayers Foundation, their company and what they represent," Carver said. "You could look all over this state, all over this country, and when you talk about impact and what people do with their philanthropic giving, I would put the Ayers family up in terms of generosity with anybody in this country."

"(The center) was just a great example of what public, private, (and) state partnerships could look like. When you imagined it 10 years ago, and then you fast-forward now with record enrollment ... and a parking lot that's in overflow, that's a tremendous success," he said. Carver stressed UT Martin's goal of student success and regional engagement and called the UT Martin Parsons Center a blend of those ideas.

Carver closed by thanking Dr. Kelli Deere, center director, for her years of service and leadership at the center and in the community. Deere, who emceed the event, noted that the center has had 278 graduates since its beginning and has 340 students enrolled for the spring 2017 semester.

Dillon Gibson's path to college began when he took a year off following graduation from Scotts Hill High School in Henderson County. Once he decided to attend college, he chose the UT Martin Parsons Center and quickly found a home because of the activities and the classes offered to become a teacher. Except for one class that he will take at the main campus, he will not have to leave the Parsons Center. "So that's fantastic to know that I can stay right here and get all the education that I need," he said. Gibson described the center as a "family environment" where teachers reach out directly to students to offer assistance and support. The UT Martin Parsons Center is truly a family affair for Gibson's family as his mother is also taking classes there.

Jamie Creech, is a senior K-6 education major who first enrolled

in college classes at the UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer. She now attends the UT Martin Parsons Center, which provided a more convenient location when her family moved to Beech Bluff near Lexington. "I'm married with three children, so this is the perfect place for me, offering the evening classes," she said. She agrees with others who speak of the "close-knit family feeling" at the center, which appeals to non-traditional students. "I have not passed someone in the hall ... and they not make eye contact with you, and smile, and speak to you, because I think that they generally, truly care about our success."

Elijah Carpenter was raised from a young age by his grandparents. The 20-year-old junior nursing major grew up in Holliday, in Benton County, where he still lives. He graduated from Camden Central High School in 2014 and, because of his grandmother's illness, decided not to attend a college far from home. He considered other schools in the region, but chose the UT Martin Parsons Center for its location and atmosphere. "It was simply the way the people treated you here, and it's not as much a school as it is a family, a home, a collective community here," he said. The center's location allows Carpenter to add valuable experience to his resume at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Huntingdon where he has worked since May 2016 as a nurse intern.

The intern position and the center's nursing program are preparing Carpenter for his goal to become a traveling nurse. "I believe our education is top-grade. It can compete with anybody," he said. "And also our staff and faculty, they mean the world to me, because it's not a teacher, it's not an administrator, they're truly your friends."

Tammie Patterson, a Parsons native, Ayers Scholar and coordinator of the center's education program, has taught for the center since its beginning. She says the small-town atmosphere, community support and committed faculty and staff are among the many reasons the center is such an attractive option for students to obtain their degrees. "We are small enough that I still know them (the students). And a lot of these kids, I know their parents, I know their grandparents, I know their brothers and sisters. ... That's really great," she said.

Besides enthusiastic students and faculty, the center has benefited from stable, strong leadership. UT Martin alum **Jason Rushing ('04)** led the center as its first director followed by Dr. Kelli Deere who assumed the post in June 2012. Students and others see her as the perfect person to lead the center. "She's a leader and an administrator," said Dillon Gibson. "She always comes to us first and asks what we want ... and then she gives



Dr. Keith Carver, UT Martin chancellor, addresses a crowd of faculty, staff and students from the UT Martin Parsons Center, as well as community members who attended the center's 10th anniversary reception Jan. 17.

us her vision, and she has such a purpose and such a plan for this school and this center that it's just unbelievable that somebody has these aspirations."

Deere can point to any number of "brag points" about the center, but she is especially proud that employers actively seek the center's graduates who travel from around the region to take advantage of its academic programs. "I always ask how they (the students) heard about UTM Parsons. They tell me (they heard) from other students," she said in an e-mail interview after the event. "Students are our best recruiting tool. When students have a positive experience, they tell people."

Parsons Center enrollment grows steadily, and Deere sees two reasons for the success. "The first is that the UTM Parsons Center is a family. Every staff and faculty member wants to see students succeed; however, we hold students to high standards," she said. "Our faculty goes above and beyond to create a student-centered learning environment. We care about students. Students also care about other students." These words recently translated into action when the center's student ambassadors and social work

organization joined forces to host a benefit for a fellow student whose house had burned.

"I love my job as the UTM Parsons Center director," she said. "I find satisfaction in seeing our students graduate, find jobs and come back to the center to thank us for helping them along the way. I feel that my job is to make a difference in the lives of my students."

Near the conclusion of his remarks, Jim Ayers told the audience about his own vision for the center's future, which included multi-level parking, high-rise dormitories and a student center. His original vision for a center that serves the educational needs of Decatur County and the surrounding region is alive and well, so no one should doubt what the future might hold.

Congratulations, UT Martin Parsons Center, on your first 10 years. This is only the beginning. <<<



A Non-Linear Road

Story by
Erin Chesnut

Dr. Karoline Pershell ('03), a Michigan native, wears many hats. Right now, she is both director of strategy and evaluation at Service Robotics & Technologies Inc. and lead data scientist with Zenti Inc., two technology startups located on opposite U.S. coastlines. She has also spent time overseas as a Fulbright Scholar and served with the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C. However, her career in mathematics and her experiences since leaving UT Martin may never have happened if not for a bull.

Pershell started her university experience at Saint Mary's College – the all-female sister school to Notre Dame – where she played basketball and traveled around the world during a semester abroad. But the decision to join the Notre Dame Rodeo Club is ultimately what started her journey south to Tennessee.

"I grew up riding horses, but I didn't know anything about rodeo. I joined thinking I would ride saddle broncs. I thought it would be most like breaking out young horses," she said. However, after arriving at the area's only practice pen, a group of young men told her that pen only provided practice bulls, not horses. Instead of backing down as expected, Pershell surprised the group by stepping up to the challenge.

"So, never having planned to get on a bull in my life, I was getting on five minutes later," she said. "I would love to say that I was a natural and from that first ride I knew I would be a bull rider, but the only thing that ride showed was that I had a natural talent for hitting the ground with style. Somewhere between wondering which way was up and if that loud crashing noise came from my body hitting the gate, I remember thinking, 'This is the coolest thing I have ever done.'

"I pursued bull riding on my own for about another year, competing in a handful of rodeos, including the one here at UT (Martin), and I decided I needed to get some professional help for my bull-riding addiction. ... I don't remember exactly, but I think

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the conversation with my parents went something like: ‘Mom, Dad, I want to leave my full-ride scholarship at a private women’s university to attend a school you have never heard of in a state you have never visited to pursue something I’m not very good at,’” she said.

So Pershell transferred to UT Martin and made it her goal to convince the rodeo coach she intended to be a serious competitor.

“Coach (John) Luthi had seen it all and heard it all, and he wasn’t so sure he wanted to deal with me and any potential danger I could put myself in. I finally struck a deal with him when I said I would come, work at practice, ride the machine only and, if he decided, I would eventually get on practice stock,” she said.

At first, Pershell faced skepticism from her teammates who weren’t sure she knew what she was getting herself into in the ring. She never quit, however, and – like all bull riders – gave her best at every practice despite injuries and exhaustion.

“I worked hard at the practice pen; I worked hard at the gym; I worked hard when no one else was watching. That was the piece for me. I wasn’t doing it to change a system; I was doing it for me,” she said. “When I first started, I had been given a host of excuses as to why women didn’t ride bulls. I had been told that my body wouldn’t be able to be strong enough to withstand the physical abuse that is part of bull riding. Absurd. At that time, I was stronger than a few of the guys, faster than some of the guys and a better student than many of the guys. I know I could learn and improve. . . . I didn’t want to be the ‘girl bull rider.’ I just wanted to be a bull rider.

“I never understood how my compadres could be consumed with this adrenaline-filled sport, how they could fight their bodies and their minds to give a personal best performance, how they would be willing to make a deal with the devil to draw the rankiest bull. I didn’t understand how they could love this, and then look at me and ask why I was doing it too,” she added.

Those experiences in the practice ring helped Pershell succeed in the classroom – particularly in mathematics – in unexpected ways.

“I feel that one of the greatest things that prepared me for math was being part of a process where I understood that you didn’t have to be magically good or naturally talented. You practiced and you got better,” she said. “I think having that mental mindset is so important for grad school, particularly in math. . . . It really puts the responsibility and the empowerment back onto you, that you can do this if you put in the work.”

Pershell completed a bachelor’s degree with a major in mathematics and a minor in physics at UT Martin and went on to



Dr. Karoline Pershell rides in the UT Martin Rodeo, April 2002.

earn both master’s and doctoral degrees in mathematics from Rice University. She then returned to her alma mater as a professor, an experience that further prepared her for her current industry roles.

“Coming (back) to UT Martin directly after my Ph.D. dissertation means that I walked out of a very technical world that was all math all of the time into a very different world where the majority of my students each semester were not math majors,” she said. “I very quickly had to become a better communicator to bring abstract ideas to a variety of learners who spanned the math spectrum.”

Pershell, who has learned the benefit of taking chances as they come, always encouraged her students to make the best use of their summer vacations to gain knowledge and experience in ways that might not be open to them after graduation.

“I would tell my students that the most amazing thing about being a student is the summer,” she said. “Never again are you going to be able to take a job for two or three months and then quit and not look like some sort of irresponsible person. It’s important to take advantage of the summer to get experience and exposure to as many different types of people and career options as possible.”

Pershell used UT Martin’s summer breaks herself to work as a principal investigator with the National Science Foundation in 2011 and travel to Qingdao University in China as a visiting mathematics professor in 2012. She also took a semester off when she received a Fulbright Scholars award, which funded her stay at the University of Hyderabad in India as a visiting assistant professor.

Now, her roles with technological startups Service Robotics & Technologies Inc. and Zenti Inc. draw on lessons learned from those opportunities. SRT, based in Washington, D.C., is developing

a prototype for a robotics integration platform aimed at smart buildings and innovative custodial services. Zenti, based in Palo Alto, Calif., works with data mining in social media.

"With Zenti, I work with optimization of the back-end algorithm, and I work with our client to help them understand their customer demographic, the specific customer characteristics and then how we would identify those characteristics through language on social media," she explained. One example of Zenti Inc.'s work can be found in a collaborative project with a Florida State University faculty member that seeks to identify online language patterns indicating suicidal behaviors in an effort to reach out to users before they harm themselves.

Pershell works with many clients who are not familiar with this type of available technology or the process behind it, so her experience teaching mathematics at UT Martin is a valuable tool.

"If you are an engineering professor, you teach engineering to engineering students. When you're a math professor, you

teach everyone," she said. "What I've gotten good at and what has helped me with these jobs is my ability to transfer technical information to a non-technical audience so that they care about it."

Her willingness to take chances and try new things has produced a list of positions and interests spanning multiple fields and continents, and she urges others to set aside their expectations and simply take advantage of the opportunities in front of them.

"You may be able to find my resume, but what's way more interesting is my 'anti-resume' – the long list of learning experiences that did not result in success. If your anti-resume isn't at least twice as long as your resume, you're playing it safe," she says. "Remember that 'hasn't been done yet' is very different from 'can't be done,' but we often conflate the two."

Pershell's non-linear career path shows for certain that whether a student hopes to teach, travel or invent, UT Martin provides a foundation for any future. <<<



Dr. Karoline Pershell interacts with a group of wallabies during a trip to New Zealand.

ALUMNI NEWS

the real deal

The university recently completed the “Cruisin’ with Carver” tour to introduce Chancellor Keith Carver to West and Middle Tennessee. During our stop at Bartlett High School near Memphis, the group was invited to the library to visit with potential students and alumni who work there. During our wait, I noticed our new chancellor intently reading a plaque on the wall. As I moved closer, I could begin to make out the picture and the words “Capt. Brent Morel” inscribed beneath the photo. Brent, a U.S. Marine, made the ultimate sacrifice to our country April 7, 2004, when he ran toward enemy gun fire near Fallujah, Iraq, in order to give his team a chance to retreat to safety. It took only a moment for the group to realize this was the school **Brent** (‘99) attended prior to enrolling at UT Martin.

It was surreal for me to read this plaque and know he died so we could enjoy the freedoms we often take for granted. UT Martin has always been a family; we take care of each other. So when the chancellor began to speak to the students, we already had a connection through Brent. I think Brent would be proud to know we stood in the library he once visited and talked about his alma mater. I am proud to call Brent an alumnus of UT Martin, and I will forever be grateful to him and his family for his service. Always #BeUTMProud! I know I am!

Charly Deal
(‘92, ‘96)

P.S. The History Channel produced an outstanding documentary on Brent and his team of Marines. Capt. Morel’s heroic actions were included in a segment of the History Channel series called “The Warfighters.” The episode “Ambush of April 7” is available online.

SEE MORE ONLINE
For the most up-to-date information, news and event schedules, check out the alumni website at utmforever.com.



spotlight on alums

GET INVOLVED!

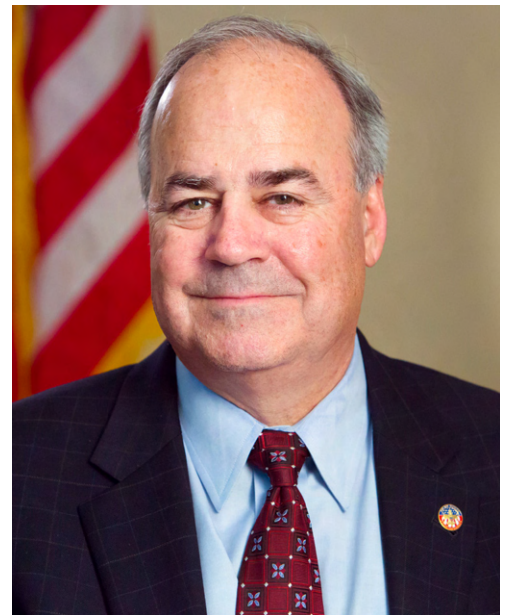
As a UT Martin alum, your continued engagement and involvement are critical to our success. Your personal commitment of time, talent and treasure will ensure our future growth. Visit our website to discover meaningful ways you can impact your university.

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- > Reunions
- > Alumni Council
- > Development Council
- > Mentoring Program
- > Young Alumni Council
- > Speak Out for UT
- > Alumni in the Classroom

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In addition to visiting the website, feel free to write, call or email the UT Martin Office of Alumni Relations for more information.

Office of Alumni Relations
Dunagan Alumni Center
1900 Alumni Way
Martin, TN 38238
(731) 881-7610
alumni@utm.edu



Pat Currie ('77) was not involved in Boy Scouts of America as a child. However, today, he can't imagine life without it.

Currie grew up in Jackson and wanted to become a psychologist after graduating from UT Martin in 1977, but plans quickly changed when he was offered a Boy Scouts of America district executive position serving Obion, Weakley and Lake counties. Currie began working his way up through the organization and also served as a field director and the director of field services before making his way into councils. Before his current position as the Circle 10 Council Scout executive and CEO in Dallas, Texas, Currie was the CEO and Scout executive in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and Greenville, S.C.

Today, Currie operates four camps and two service centers and manages 80 employees and \$100 million in total net assets. His council serves 58,000 youth in 12 counties but will soon be merging with a neighboring council to serve 23 counties.

continued on next page >>>

spotlight on alums

<<< continued from previous page

Currie's job is to make sure the scouting program is growing by recruiting kids, operating a safe, quality program and providing his team with the resources to do it. He spends a lot of his time working on strategic plans with a board of 114 business and community leaders.

"At the very core, we're a sales organization, but we're selling scouting rather than a product," explains Currie. "Our product is youth development."

Currie wants people to know that Boy Scouts of America is more than just an outdoor organization, and outdoor skills are just one of the methods used to develop better citizens for tomorrow. Currie said Boy Scouts of America is really the foremost youth leadership program in the country.

"We're about leadership development, character development, citizenship training and personal fitness," said Currie.

The highlight of Currie's career in scouting has been the people with whom he has had the opportunity to serve, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Tillerson served on the Circle 10 Council board and board of trustees and was also the chair of the largest fundraising campaign in the history of Boy Scouts of America, which raised \$73 million for the Circle 10 Council.

After a successful 38-year career with the Boy Scouts of America, Currie is preparing to pass on the responsibility. He has always dreamed of retiring at 62, which will happen in November, and he is looking forward to his next adventure. <<<



Jacob Crowe ('08) was named community president of the Leaders Credit Union location in Union City, effective Jan. 1. Leaders Credit Union is a member-owned financial cooperative based in Jackson. Crowe will promote the Leaders brand as a passionate, premiere banking partner among its members and the community. He will be responsible for branch office management, business volume, deposits, loan portfolios and banking relationships. A Martin native, Crowe began his career in the financial industry in 2009 as a credit specialist in Jackson, where he was responsible for facilitating and servicing a lending portfolio. He began work at First State Bank in 2010, where he gained experience in consumer and commercial lending, and later moved to Trust Company Bank in 2011, where he held the positions of assistant vice president, branch manager and senior loan specialist. Crowe joined Leaders Credit Union as an underwriter and credit analyst in 2015. (Information courtesy Leaders Credit Union press release.) <<<

FORTY UNDER 40 >>> Candace Zarecor ('06), of Milan, human resources manager and administrative assistant, Milan Public Works; **Amber Harris ('06)**, of Medina, assistant principal and teacher, South Gibson County High School; **Jake Bynum ('06)**, of Dresden, Weakley County mayor; and **John Penn Ridgeway ('02)**, of Paris, assistant director, Tennessee College of Applied Technology in McKenzie, were selected for the Jackson Sun's Forty Under 40 Awards class of 2016. They were chosen for their efforts to make West Tennessee a better place to live and work through contributions to their workplaces, industries, companies or communities. <<<

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Jimmy Settle ('88) is passionate about his faith, family and profession as an award-winning journalist for The Leaf-Chronicle in Clarksville. Even with an active schedule, he also makes time to support UT Martin and the University of Tennessee as a volunteer and leader. His loyalty and love for his alma mater remain strong almost 30 years after earning his degree.

Settle was born in Nashville and has never lived outside of Tennessee. Other than living in Jackson for a few years as a child, Stewart County is home. So when the time came to choose a college, UT Martin offered everything he needed. "It's just a charming town, a wonderful community, a wonderful area of the state," he said. "People are just so congenial in that area, and the education is top notch, and I just love Martin."

A long, successful career in the ever-changing print journalism profession followed Settle's graduation. He's approaching 30 years with the Leaf-Chronicle, and long-standing relationships make it possible for him to be an effective writer, reporter and editor.

"I think first and foremost, it's about building trust in the community that you serve, and we have those kinds of trust relationships where people, I hope, feel like that when they read something that I write, it's going to be accurate and fair and handled professionally," he said. "And so I guess I've been able to build a reputation upon those principles, and that's carried me well."

Although his title is business news editor, Settle does some editing work and occasionally covers local government. "But probably the thing that I'm best known for in this community is covering the local business scene, which is very dynamic in Clarksville," he said. "Clarksville is currently one of the fastest-growing cities in the entire state of Tennessee." Among notable business stories impacting Clarksville are the new Google data center; Hankook Tire, projected to employ 1,600 workers; and, most recently, a new LG Electronics plant that will initially bring 600 jobs to the region. "Being involved in some of those announcements is just a phenomenal opportunity."

While partial to covering business, Settle has other favorite stories to his credit, including one with the late Pat Head Summitt, a Clarksville-area native whom he interviewed the year her Lady Vols won the team's sixth national championship. "I know them (the Head family) well still to this day, and they're wonderful people with good hometown country values," he said. "But I got to know Pat from that perspective, and so she and I were kind of on a first-name basis ... especially the later years of her life."

Besides making a name for himself as a journalist, Settle has also distinguished himself as a dedicated UT Martin alum. He currently serves on the UTAA Alumni Legislative Council and previously served on UTM's Communications Advisory Board, Alumni Council, Alumni Council Past Presidents and UTAA Board of Governors. He credits **Bill Hoy ('77)**, another Clarksville resident and active UT Martin supporter, for inspiring his own alumni engagement. "I love (being involved) because I love to give back to a university that means so much and has done so much for me, and I truly mean that from my heart."

Settle and his wife, Rona, (also pictured) participated in the Cruisin' with Carver tour stop in Clarksville. Taking his personal time to support UT Martin is nothing new for Settle, and he sees a bright future ahead for the university. "I think UTM is in great hands now with a wonderful chancellor in Keith Carver," he said. "He's one of us, and he's going to help lead that university to new heights."

Settle described himself as "very blessed" when he talked about the stories he covers for the Leaf-Chronicle. His readers are, in turn, fortunate to have a journalist who has covered a community he loves for 30 years. <<<

spotlight on alums



(l-r) Current chapter members Austin Brewer, of Rutherford, and Chase Kizer, of Sweetwater, are pictured with Dr. Joe DiPietro, UT System President and Marvin Flatt, chapter adviser.

DIPIETRO ACCEPTS HONORARY BID FROM UT MARTIN ALPHA GAMMA RHO >>>

Dr. Joe DiPietro, president of the University of Tennessee System, accepted an honorary bid to become a member of the UT Martin chapter of Alpha Gamma Rho national fraternity before fall commencement exercises Dec. 10. UT Martin's Alpha Upsilon Chapter became his home chapter following his initiation during the fraternity's national leadership conference in February.

DiPietro joins other honorary members such as Dr. Jim Byford, dean emeritus of the UT Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences; former Tennessee governor Ned Ray McWherter; former congressman Ed Jones; and Dr. Harold Smith, professor emeritus of animal science and dean emeritus of the UT Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences.

"I am very pleased to accept this bid," said DiPietro. "It makes good sense for me because, and I've said this over and over, my hometown (in Illinois) is a lot like Martin. They don't have an agriculture program at Eastern Illinois University, so this is the next best thing."

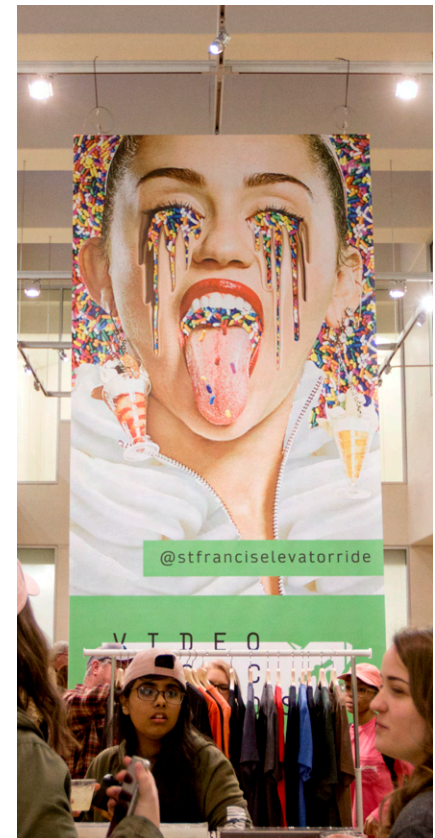
DiPietro expressed interest in becoming an honorary member of the chapter in 2016, and the brothers of Alpha Gamma Rho were happy to accept him.

"It shows that what we've been doing is right, and it stands out on campus," said Austin Brewer, of Rutherford. "I take it as an honor that somebody of Dr. DiPietro's status would want to join (our chapter)," added Chase Kizer, of Sweetwater. Both members were on hand to present DiPietro with his official bid card.

Marvin Flatt ('76), director of career education for Weakley County Schools, and Dr. Todd Winters, dean of the UT Martin College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, serve as co-advisers for the Alpha Upsilon chapter. <<<

RETURNING ARTIST >>> In January, the UT Martin Department of Visual and Theatre Arts hosted a guest exhibition, "Omnivorous Eyes," by artist **Josh Breeden ('07)**, a university alum and Martin native. Breeden currently works for the creative agency Loaded For Bear in Memphis and maintains an extensive list of freelance projects for such clients as MTV, The New York Times Magazine, Volcom Entertainment and Ardent Music. Breeden's work is known under the pseudonym "St. Francis Elevator Ride," and he has shown work in exhibitions across Tennessee and the southeast, as well as in digital galleries worldwide. To see samples of Breeden's work, visit stfranciselevatorride.com.

<<<



(above) An example of Breeden's work for MTV is shown.



CLASS OF 1966 RETURNS TO UT MARTIN FOR 50TH CLASS REUNION >>> Members of the University of Tennessee-Martin Branch class of 1966 returned to campus Sept. 24 to celebrate their golden class reunion. Attendees toured the UT Martin campus and watched the Skyhawks face Tennessee Tech from the new academic/press box building at Graham Stadium. UTMB officially became the University of Tennessee at Martin in 1967. Pictured in the Dunagan Alumni Center are (front row, l-r) Gail Sykes Blair, of Alcoa; Janet Dowdy Daugherty, of Fairview; Carol Warmbrod Avens, of Germantown; Sandra Carney, of Nashville; Ida Bonner Newman, of Lexington; Jerrie Conley, of Martin; Eileen Mitchell Lowery, of Williamsburg, Va.; Emily Pyron Martin, of Cornersville; (back row) Nancy Adams Jones, of Murray, Ky.; Jerry Carpenter, of Martin; Ronnie Armstrong, of Savannah; Paul Blount, of Savannah; Dr. Jim Byford, of Martin; Dr. David Pitts, of Martin; Sam Nailling, of Union City; and Clare Nell Chandler Breeden, of Decatur. <<<

KOREAN CONNECTIONS >>> A group of UT Martin alumni from Korea met with Amy Fenning (center) and Ryan Diffie (far right) during a fall 2016 trip to the country. Fenning is director and Diffie is assistant director with the UT Martin Office of International Programs and International Admissions. The alumni presented a check for \$2,000 to support Korean students attending UT Martin and are enthusiastic about staying connected with the university and mentoring future UT Martin students. <<<



spotlight on alums



(l to r) **Mike Barker ('61)**, **Kathy Simpson Barker ('91)**, **John Barker ('89)** and **Allysia Angus ('89)** are pictured at the Southern Utah Museum of Art in Cedar City, Utah. The Barkers connected with Allysia during a vacation trip to Las Vegas and Southern Utah. She is a landscape architect/land use planner with the Bureau of Land Management at Grand Staircase - Escalante National Monument. Kathy is a research specialist with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, and John is lead consultant for JB Logical Solutions. They live in Memphis. Mike is a retired teacher, lives in Humboldt and is a board of trustees member for the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System.



The Insurors of Tennessee have awarded **Tommy Allmon ('03, '04)** with the association's Arch E. Northington Young Insuror of the Year award for 2016. The award is given annually in honor of former state national director and past president Arch Northington to recognize the vital importance of young insurance agents' active participation in association activities. Allmon is the President of White & Associates in Dyersburg. He has been an active member of the Insurors of Northwest Tennessee local board and an active member of the state association, where he was just elected to serve on the board of directors. He has also played an active volunteer role in the association's government affairs work and is a longtime supporter of InsurPACTN. He has been with

his current agency for almost 13 years, a job he began immediately after graduating from UT Martin with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree with a major in marketing. He also earned a Bachelor of Science in Health and Human Performance. Allmon is active in his community, and supports the Dyer County Chamber of Commerce, the Dyer County Fair and the annual Christmas Parade. "Tommy is a great example of the type of young member that gives us confidence in the Association's future," says Insurors CEO Chuck Bidek, "He is definitely a current and future leader in our industry who only has great things ahead of him." (Information courtesy of the Insurors of Tennessee.)

<<<

in memory

Peggy Chumley, of Parsons, Jan. 2, 2017 (Attended UT Martin and was a dedicated supporter of the UT Martin Parsons Center).

Elige W. Culvahouse, of Pigeon Forge, Jan. 27, 2017 (retired faculty member).

Dr. Fred J. Dorn, of Phoenix, Ariz., Oct. 31, 2016 (current faculty member).

Dr. Lew Dougherty, of Camden, Nov. 4, 2016 (UT Martin supporter; recipient of the Chancellor's Award for University Service to UT Martin along with his wife, Mary Jo, in 2004).

Martha Sue Trevathan Foote, of Martin, Nov. 8, 2016 (retired UT Junior College and UT Martin employee).

Dr. Jerry Gresham, of Martin, March 2, 2017 (retired faculty member and interim dean; see related story on page 10).

Betty Henson, of Martin, Feb. 28, 2017 (UTMB graduate and wife of the late James C. Henson, longtime UT Martin athletics director and coach).

JoAnn W. James, of Dyersburg, April 25, 2016.

Dr. George Chi-Tsing Kao, of Plano, Texas, Feb. 3, 2017 (Retired faculty member).

George Gerald "Jerry" Lacy, of Memphis, Nov. 15, 2016 (UT Martin alum and former UTM employee).

Harold Phillips McLeary Sr., of Humboldt, Jan. 28, 2017.

Spencer Richardson, of Nashville, Dec. 17, 2016.

Nancy Davis Robinson, of Memphis and Paris, Oct. 10, 2016.

Thomas Ray Spann, of Jackson, Jan. 27, 2017.

Darlene Timberlake Sugg, of Dyersburg (formerly of Martin), Dec. 28, 2016 (retired UT Martin employee).

Kevin Howard Tuck, of Dickson, Nov. 28, 2016.

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Your Email Address: _____

Would you like your Email address published in Campus Scene? Yes No

Full Name of Spouse: _____

Did your spouse attend UT Martin? Yes No

Years Attended: _____ through _____ School/College of: _____

Degree(s): _____ Major: _____

Occupation: _____ Business Name of Employer: _____

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Names and Ages of Children: _____

Additional News (honors, promotions, etc.): _____

List your current hobbies: _____

Would you consider taking an active leadership role in UT Martin alumni activities? Yes No

Would you like this information published in Campus Scene? Yes No

If you know anyone who may be interested in UT Martin and is a high school junior or senior, please give us his or her name and address.

Enclose a recent color headshot photo, if possible. No low-resolution digital photos, please! Photographs cannot be returned to you. Every effort will be made to use all color headshots submitted. However, space considerations and/or photo quality may prevent us from using submitted photos in some instances. Email photos to alumni@utm.edu.

Fill out, clip and return this form to:
UT Alumni Association – Martin Office
Dunagan Alumni Center
1900 Alumni Way
Martin, TN 38238



MARTIN

class notes

1963

Judy Forrester Rutherford ('63) is a retired vice president and trust officer with Bank of America. She taught at Westview High School shortly after graduating from UT Martin.

1968



Frank Vestal (above right, '68) is retired. He married his high school sweetheart, Linda Mayfield (left), during his senior year at UT Martin, and the couple has two married daughters. Vestal went on to earn a second bachelor's degree from Murray State University, a master's degree from Loyola University in New Orleans, La., and a Master of Business Administration from UT Nashville, which closed in 1979. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War and a Bronze Star recipient.

1970

Jane Ellis ('70) recently moved back to West Virginia and is happy to be living in a beautiful little cabin in the woods. While at UT Martin, she was co-editor of the Vista magazine and one of the first female playwrights to have work produced by Vanguard Theatre.

1971

Kimball Coburn ('71) is a minister with the California Pacific Annual Conference

of the United Methodist Church. While at UT Martin, he worked in the Department of Public Safety and was a member of the men's tennis team during his last two years. He was ranked first in the 1971 men's singles championship in the Volunteer Athletic Conference.

Carol Massey Davis ('71) is a retired kindergarten teacher. She is the proud grandmother of five with another due to arrive in May 2017.

1973

Robert Hill ('73) is the retired director of technological support and product development at H.J. Baker & Bro. Inc. He retired from the company on Oct. 28, 2016, after 10 years. Hill also spent 35 years in the livestock feed industry. He was a member of the UT Martin Rodeo Team from 1969-73.



Rebecca Russell Jones (above, '73, '75) is a nutrition teacher with the Milan Special School District. She is the author of two cookbooks, "Sassy in the Kitchen" and "SHUGGA Mama," and a children's book. In 2012-13, Jones was selected to teach in Hawaii, where she led a class on hospitality and culinary skills and introduced Hawaiian residents to southern traditions. She also

teaches online courses through UT Martin to help current teachers receive continuing education training credits. Jones is director of "Denim and Pearls," a children's cooking school hosted at Milan High School.

1974

Melina Lawrie Epperson ('74) is the director for Tulane University's Center for Continuing Education. She earned her Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of New Orleans in December 2015.

1975

Lizabeth Wyant ('75) is a retired intensive care and critical care nurse. She established the Bateman-Wyant Scholarship Endowment at UT Martin to provide two annual scholarships to history and nursing students.

1976

G. David Brown ('76) is deputy director for the Meigs County Board of Education. He is also serving as the current president of the Tennessee Association of Administrators in Special Education.

1978

Jeffery McIntosh ('78) attended UT Martin from 1977-78 before finishing a bachelor's degree in engineering at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is currently a project manager with the Spicer Group.

1979

Richard Williams ('79) is an orthodontist and clinic director of orthodontics at the UT Health Science Center. He was the 2016 president of the Southern Association of Orthodontists. His oldest daughter is in the physical therapy program at UTHSC, and his second daughter is applying for admission to the same program.

1982

David Russell ('82) is a pastor with the First United Methodist Church. He earned a Master of Divinity from Memphis Theological Seminary in 1985 and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., in 1995. Russell then served for 20 years as a military chaplain in the Tennessee Army National Guard before retiring in 2013.

1984



Marsha Bullock Dillard ('84) currently works for the state of Tennessee.

1985

Elizabeth Coble ('85) is a human rights policy officer with the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. She retired from the U.S. Army in August 2015 after 30 years of service, 11 of those overseas and almost four in combat zones.

James Dyer ('85) and his wife, **Charlotte Diane Dyers ('84)** are both retired. James taught public school and served as a church minister in Tennessee, Wisconsin and Okinawa, Japan, from 1970-89. He later served as national overseer for the countries of Singapore

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and Malaysia from 1990-92 and spent five years in Southeast Asia as a missionary before retiring in 2008. The couple has two children and four grandchildren. Email: dyer7240@charter.net

1990



Mary O'Neil Blankenship (above left, '90) is a paralegal with Experimental Holdings. She married Allen Blankenship (right) on July 1, 2016.

Lesa Davis Scillion ('90) is a supervisor of instruction with the Obion County School System. She left UT Martin and went on to earn an educational specialist's degree in reading from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She and her husband, **Troy Scillion ('84)** have two adult children, Brett and MiKayla. Email: kevinscillion@yahoo.com

1995



Brig. Gen. Tommy Baker (above, '95) is the assistant adjutant general of the Army – Tennessee National Guard. He visited UT Martin in November 2016 for a military appreciation football game and presided over the coin toss. Baker also presented scholarship checks to three cadets on behalf of UT Martin's ROTC program.

1998



William Winstead (above, '98) is director of advancement for the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Foundation. He currently serves on the Memphis-region UT Martin alumni board, as well as on the University of Tennessee Alumni Association advisory council.

class notes

2000

Leland Burress III ('00) is the new sales director at the Jackson Sun in Jackson. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in marketing.

2003

Ryan McDaniel ('03) was chosen in November 2016 for the Top 40 under 40 by the Memphis Business Journal. Ryan is a senior structural engineer-manager with A2H Inc. in Lakeland.

Tameca Bray McPherson ('03) is a family service worker with Porter-Leath. She and her husband, **Minuard McPherson Jr. ('01)**, celebrated the birth of their third son, Nolan, in April of 2016.

2006

Justin Harris ('06) was named the city of Jackson's "Police Officer of the Year" for 2016.

2009



Roger Dunn (above right, '09) is a program director with the Student Conservation Association. He is currently finishing a master's degree in geography at Central Connecticut State University. He and his wife, Heather (above left), have one daughter, Hannah.



Casey Lee Ridener (above left, '09) is the business practice manager for the Speech and Hearing Clinic, Department of Communicative Disorders and Sciences, at the University at Buffalo in Amherst, N.Y. She received her Master of Business Administration degree from the University at Buffalo in May 2016 and is engaged to **Stuart Clint Dowland (above right, '04)**. Dowland also holds a Master of Arts degree in philosophy from the University at Buffalo.

2010

Myron Driver ('10) is a trading support associate with Raymond James. He married **Courtney Moore ('12)** on Dec. 26, 2015. The couple met at UT Martin.

2013

Marah Vogt Woods ('13) is a graphic designer with Southern Trophy House. She recently married her college sweetheart, **Kevin Woods ('14)**, and began a job in her chosen career field.

2014

Laura Ragsdale Johnson ('14) received the Tennessee Veterinary Technician of the Year Award, presented in October. The award is given by the Tennessee Veterinary

Medical Association each year based on nominations by employers.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT >>> Brittany Harris ('16), *Memphis*



Brittany Harris, a Memphis native and UT Martin graduate is shown working at Walt Disney Animal Kingdom during a post-graduation internship.

>>> **Brittany Harris' ('16)** passion for animal health isn't limited to dogs, cats and other household pets. Harris wanted to reach beyond the ordinary, and she certainly found it at Walt Disney's Animal Kingdom in Bay Lake, Fla. Harris, a Memphis native, graduated from UT Martin in May 2016 and went on to complete almost eight months of internship work with the park, where she served as a conservation educator to help

guests understand the various species housed in the facility.

"I was stationed all around Animal Kingdom spreading conservation messages and animal knowledge while conducting interactive activities with guests," she said. "I assisted with the development and presentation of interpretive guest experiences that inspire wildlife conservation action."

Harris also helped many guests

conquer fears of various species, including arachnids, by offering an interactive experience with these animals and providing background information on the habits and needs of each species.

Now, Harris is working as a dog trainer apprentice to hone her skills with companion animals and improve her training abilities. She eventually wants to become a zoo keeper and return to exotic animals on a larger scale. <<<

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