

2023 V U A A

Alumni Award Recipients



VALPO
ALUMNI

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

HOMECOMING AND REUNION WEEKEND

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

*In Luce Tua
Videmus Lucem*

IN THY LIGHT, WE SEE LIGHT

Distinguished Alumna Award

The highest distinction the alumni association can bestow, this award honors alumni who have enhanced the prestige of the University by virtue of their character, integrity, and nationally recognized personal accomplishments.



Norma Cook Everist '60 earned a bachelor of arts in theology with a minor in education. She was a transfer student from North Iowa Area Community College. After Norma was consecrated a deaconess, her first call was to parish ministry in St. Louis, Missouri. During her service there, she earned an M.A. in religion from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. She earned an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School and a joint Ph.D. from the Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver in the area of American religion and social change.

From 1966–1976, she was a community organizer in the inner cities of Detroit, Michigan, and New Haven, Connecticut, where she worked against oppression and for racial justice. She continues to be a passionate advocate for servant leadership and trustworthy places to be different together.

Norma was ordained to pastoral ministry at Yale and was invited to stay on and teach at Yale Divinity School, the first woman from a liturgical tradition to do so. In 1979, she was called to Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, where she was the first woman to be tenured in a seminary of the American Lutheran Church. Norma taught courses in church administration and educational ministry, working to foster a learning community of shared power and partnership in her theological discipline, ecclesiology.

Norma was the first deaconess to serve as president of the Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA) board, which had traditionally been under male leadership.

Since high school, she has continuously created community through editing newsletters, including “The Persistent Voice” for 37 years. “All voices need to be heard!” She is also a world-renowned speaker: she served as a lecturer, keynote speaker, and guest professor in countries on five continents.

Over the course of her career, Norma published 14 books and over 100 book chapters and articles. She is also a national columnist. Her books include “The Church as Learning Community,” “Transforming Leadership,” “Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration,” “Open the Doors and See all the People,” and “Seventy Images of Grace in the Epistles.”

Valparaiso University, particularly the theology department, provided excellent education to prepare her for diaconal work and to become a teaching theologian. She loved to worship at Valpo’s then new Chapel of the Resurrection and to live in community at Deaconess Hall.

Norma received the Distinguished Alumni Award in Community Service in 1995 from Mason City High School, the 1999 Alumni of the Year Award from Iliff, and the Outstanding Alumni Award from her community college in 2009. She is a 2023 Bicentennial Notable Alumni of Yale Divinity School. After 41 years of teaching at Yale and Wartburg, she retired at the age of 78 as Wartburg’s distinguished professor of church and ministry emerita.

Norma married pastor and teacher Burton Everist more than 60 years ago. They have three sons, Mark, Joel, and Kirk, and four grandchildren. Norma and Burton now live in Mason City, Iowa, where she continues to teach, preach, write, and mentor students from across the country and around the world.

Alumni Achievement Award

Honors alumni who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in their chosen career or area of professional life.



Natalie Krivas '16 M.Ed. earned a bachelor of education (magna cum laude) in teaching English as a second language (TESOL) at McGill University in 2010 while teaching in the Greater Montreal area. At McGill, Natalie was president of the McGill Choral Society and served as a representative in the Education Student Society. After graduation, she continued her TESOL career at College Letendre and Académie Ste-Therese in Québec, Canada, before moving on to serve the Education Consulate of Canada as a senior educator in English and French second

language and culture.

Natalie earned her M.Ed. in humane education from Valparaiso University in 2016 (summa cum laude), fully engaging in the life of the University and community as a member of the Graduate Student Society and Advisory Council. She was initiated into the Athenaeum Honor Society in 2016 and presented her thesis at the Graduate Academic Symposium. In 2018, she joined the Humane Education Coalition as an advisory council member and began deepening her community service here in Valparaiso. Natalie has served on the board of directors for the Valpo Schools Foundation, Opportunity Enterprises, Valpo Parks Foundation, the Valparaiso Creative Council, and is a member of several professional associations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Council for Exceptional Children, National Education Association, and Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

Natalie taught English for Valparaiso Community Schools from 2020–2022 while earning her Ph.D. in managing organizational systems from Saybrook University, specializing in curricular development and teacher training. While teaching, she also founded the Remote Learning Club, LLC, to assist families in Porter, Lake, and LaPorte counties with finding educational opportunities in remote environments. Her dissertation, "Integrating Humane Pedagogy and Whole School Sustainability: A Critical Examination of a Justice-Based, Universally Inclusive Curricular Framework," focused on creating transformative and impactful learning experiences for both teacher and student. In 2022, Natalie joined Valpo's faculty as an adjunct professor, putting her passion to work, teaching in Core and the Bloom Scholars program. Most recently, Natalie joined the University's full-time faculty as lecturer in English

for academic purposes, a dual-degree program in partnership with Dalian Jiaotong University. Since 2016, Natalie has been serving Valparaiso University through various volunteer roles, including co-facilitating faculty learning communities to enhance community off and on campus.

In addition to her teaching, Natalie is founder and chief of Krivas Consulting, LLC, a firm specializing in organizational management, pedagogical counseling, and nonprofit development. After serving Opportunity Enterprises professionally from 2015–2017, she remained active with the organization and was named Volunteer of the Year in 2020. In 2019, Natalie received the Upcoming Women of the Year in Business award from the Northwest Indiana Women Association and presented as speaker at the Courage Summit. Her involvement in community action projects has earned Natalie many distinctions across the greater Valparaiso area.

Natalie, her husband, Peter, and their daughter, Elianna, alongside many animal companions, reside in Valparaiso, Indiana, where they have planted roots and plan to stay for many years to come.



Matthew Martin '87 graduated with a bachelor of arts in journalism and minors in theology and psychology. After his time as a Valpo student and Phi Sigma Kappa, he went on to Kent State University to earn both his master of arts and Ph.D. in communication studies.

It was during his graduate studies at Kent State that Matt first took to the classroom, focusing on persuasion and argumentation, professional and organizational communication, and interpersonal communication. After

completing his Ph.D. in 1992, Matt went on to serve as a visiting assistant professor in communication at John Carroll University before spending a year teaching and developing the communications course programming at Mid Michigan Community College. In 1994, he began his career at West Virginia University as an assistant professor of communication studies. In 2005, he was named professor of communication studies and served as chair of the department from 2001–2019.

Alumni Achievement Award, continued

Matt's publication and research background is extensive; having published over 100 research articles and book chapters, his West Virginia classroom repertoire includes courses on verbal and nonverbal communication in organizational and interpersonal applications, as well as studies in mediation, public relations, bullying, and even film. Recent co-authorships include "Students' perceptions of instructor appropriateness and humor homophily" (2019), "The African American community and professional baseball: Examining Major League Baseball's corporate social responsibility efforts as a relationship management strategy" (2019), and "Workplace bullying in academia: A conditional process model" (2023).

Matt is a life member of the International Communication Association, the National Communication Association, and the Eastern Communication Association, where he was named a centennial scholar in 2009 and research fellow in 2010.

"I am grateful to my family for their support over the years," writes Matt. "My biggest accomplishments are my three sons, but I am also proud of all of my students and colleagues and what they have accomplished in their lives ... I am happy to have played a small role in their lives."

Matt, his wife, Kristy, and two of their sons reside in Morgantown, West Virginia. His other son and daughter-in-law reside in South Bend, Indiana.

from the ground up while strategizing for, designing, and implementing a comprehensive communication plan.

In 2008, Lisa began her tenure as the LDA's executive director. Under Lisa's leadership, the LDA is not only the University's neighbor but its partner and collaborator, continuing to enhance the spiritual life of Valpo students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends through programming and ministry. In her role, Lisa works with the LDA's board of directors, supervises financial, staffing, and building operations, develops programs and services, and serves as the face of the LDA.

Lisa served as vice president of the DIAKONIA World Federation from 2009–2017 and president of DIAKONIA of the Americas and Caribbean from 2009–2017. She currently serves on the DIAKONIA of the Americas and Caribbean board of directors, a role she began in 2001. She is a dedicated member of Immanuel Lutheran Church and of the Valparaiso University Guild, often volunteering with the organization and hosting the board of directors and their activities at the LDA. "I give thanks to God, the Lutheran Diaconal Association, and Valparaiso University for the many opportunities I have had in my life," writes Lisa. "I loved my time at Valparaiso University. I'm grateful to have had amazing roommates and friends."

Lisa and her husband, Carmine, Valparaiso University professor of civil engineering, reside in Valparaiso, Indiana.



Lisa Scherzer '90 Polito completed a bachelor of arts in theology with a minor in geography. Outside of the classroom, Lisa was a member of Pi Delta Chi deaconess chapter, participated in University Programming Council, and proudly studied abroad in Cambridge, England as part of the C-39 cohort. She was consecrated a deaconess in 1990.

Lisa's work is dedicated entirely to diakonia — service to others among others. She began her career as director of chaplaincy services at Good Shepherd Lutheran Home of the

West in Mission Viejo, California, where she worked with numerous congregations to serve and minister to those with developmental disabilities. In 2001, she was named director of development and public relations at the Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA). In this role, she was tasked with building a fundraising and cultivation program

Outstanding Young Alumni Award

Honors alumni, under the age of 40, who have enhanced the prestige of the University by virtue of their character, integrity, and personal accomplishments.



Ashley Lindenmier '08 Haynes, a Christ College Scholar, graduated with bachelor's degrees in political science and Spanish. As a Valpo student, she participated in numerous activities and societies, including Chi Omega (Panhellenic Council chair 2007), cheerleading (captain 2007–2008), Alpha Lambda Delta, Pi Sigma Alpha, Delta Sigma Pi, Rho Lambda, and Mortar Board. She also served on the Greek Judicial Board from 2006–2008, including as chief justice during her senior year. She also received the Lumina and Presidential Athletic Scholar awards.

After graduating from Valpo, Ashley continued her education at Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law, graduating with dean's list honors in 2011. A Ruthenberg Excellence in Legal Writing and Indiana Bar scholarship recipient, Ashley excelled as a law student. She was named the 2010 Honorable Robert H. Staton Moot Court Competition Champion and ranked ninth in the nation in oral advocacy in the Saul Lefkowitz International Trademark Association National Moot Court Competition. A scholar and servant leader, Ashley used her Spanish skills in various internships and in her initial work at Hensley Legal Group, PC, where she served as a translator for all of the firm's Spanish-speaking clients. After a brief stop as director of contract compliance with the Indiana Department of Corrections, Ashley returned to Hensley to serve as a litigation attorney before joining the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2016.

In her work as a special agent, Ashley organized and led FBI teams focused on matters of organized crime, human trafficking, crimes against children, fraud against the government, election crimes, and public corruption, serving as a negotiator for kidnapping cases. In 2019, she received the FBI's highest rating for her work in training state and local law enforcement to respond to such negotiations. She currently serves as special assistant United States attorney, leading multiple federal agencies in cases involving transnational organized crime. In 2021, Ashley received an Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award from the United States Department of Justice as well as the FBI Director's Medal of Excellence.

In additional service to her community, she served as a volunteer with the Make-a-Wish Foundation and as a softball coach for a local high school team. "I often read about the accomplishments of fellow Valpo classmates, so the significance of receiving this

award is in no way lost on me," Ashley writes. "Valpo routinely cultivates the leaders of tomorrow, and I am grateful to be recognized as one. To be nominated for this award by peers of mine is an honor I will hold dearly for the rest of my life. It means so much to be honored by the institution that laid the solid foundation upon which I've built my life."

Ashley, her husband, Paul Haynes '07, and their daughter reside in Dunedin, Florida.



Michael Steffen '07 completed bachelor's degrees in both mechanical and electrical engineering, earning him the University Outstanding Student Leadership and Service Award and Eastmond Outstanding Senior Engineer Award. As a Valpo student, Michael also participated in the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Michael went on to Iowa State University to complete his Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering, where he earned the U.S. National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and published numerous articles in engineering education and his technical fields of expertise. After completing his Ph.D., he joined NVIDIA Corporation as a senior engineer, serving as project lead and optimizing processors — including those in two TOP500 supercomputers — as part of the compute architecture application performance group.

In 2017, Michael joined Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), where he currently serves as a technical fellow and executive. In this role, Michael leads teams that design high performance processors for the world's most advanced supercomputers, helping to earn AMD recognition for 2022's top green computer and for powering the top supercomputer.

Michael and his wife, Deaconess Catherine Jackson '08 Steffen, are also active in the Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA). In 2013, Michael developed the technology necessary for the Lutheran Diaconal Conference to livestream their annual meeting. In 2021, he joined the LDA's board of directors, serving as vice president in 2022. Over the course of his career, he also developed educational engineering activities at both Valparaiso University and Iowa State.

Outstanding Young Alumni Award, continued

“In my education before Valpo, I was a hard-working student, but that didn’t necessarily show in my academics,” writes Michael. “Valpo’s whole-person focus and pre-engineering program allowed me to find the place where I could really find my passions, fueling all the successes that were to come.”

Michael and his family reside in Oviedo, Florida.



Alexander Uryga '15, a Christ College Scholar, graduated summa cum laude from Valparaiso University with a bachelor of arts in political science and history. He is also an initiate in Phi Beta Kappa and a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity. Alexander held the highest student leadership positions on both the 54-member University Council as vice chair and the Student Senate as president of the student body, earning him the Outstanding Leadership and Service Award from Student Affairs. Before graduating from Valpo, Alex

interned for a United States senator on Capitol Hill; after graduation, he worked at a public affairs and government relations firm and at a global, social justice, nonprofit organization, and served at a community learning center through AmeriCorps.

Alexander currently works in the field of education and holds a master of education in teaching and curriculum from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. For continuing professional development, he completed graduate studies at Columbia University, Georgetown University, the University of Notre Dame, and Northeastern University.

Alexander earned countless prestigious fellowships during his career — including from the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation — and has won numerous curriculum grants. In 2019, he was named to the Michiana (southern Michigan and northern Indiana) Forty Under 40 list by the South Bend Regional Chamber for teaching at his alma mater and was recognized as a Distinguished Teacher by Michigan City Area Schools. In 2021, he received the Carolyn & Peter Lynch Award for teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and, in 2022, the Richard Aieta Promising Teacher Award from the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies. Phi Delta Theta named him to their Thirty Under 30 list in 2023.

An ever-loyal Valpo alumnus, Alexander served on a “What Can You Do with a History Degree?” panel in 2016 and as a CAPS mentor in 2022. “Receiving this recognition after years of hard work since graduating from Valpo means a lot to me,” Alexander remarked. “Thank you to all of the professors, especially those in the political science, history, and Christ College, as well as the friends that I made at Valpo, who made my time there as special as it could be.” Alexander resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

First Decade Achievement Award

Honors alumni for outstanding professional achievement, community service, and/or service to the University during the first decade following the completion of their undergraduate degree. Alumni are eligible for this award in their 10th reunion year.



Benjamin Macy '13 graduated with a bachelor of science in electrical engineering. As a Valpo student, he engaged in the campus community as a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, the Student Alumni Association, and as a member of Student Senate, where he served as student body president his senior year.

After Valpo, he went on to earn a master of science in electrical engineering at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, serving as a research assistant in power

electronics and earning him a 2015 publication in the Active and Passive Electronic Components journal.

Ben joined the team at Microsoft as an electrical engineer in 2015, where he led teams focused on battery life, power consumption, and optimization. In 2018, he joined the team at Apple as an iPhone system design engineer, where he continued his work on battery life optimization and thermal studies of various features. He moved on to Amazon in 2019, starting as a hardware development engineer before being promoted to hardware development manager in 2021. As a team leader, Ben works with electrical engineers to improve processes and programs while continuing his work in device and product optimization, including on the contactless purchase Amazon Go stores. He was also named to the Amazon Bar Raiser team for his influential work in increasing diversity in hiring practices at the organization.

At his home in Seattle, Washington, Ben is actively involved in fundraising for Reclaiming Our Greatness, an organization that provides support to communities of color who need social or financial assistance, and Mary's Place, a nonprofit that provides housing assistance to individuals in the Seattle area. At the gym he co-owns, Ben instituted a sliding scale membership program that offers discounted memberships with a goal of ensuring that fitness is accessible to all, even those who have limited ability to pay.

Ben and his wife, Haley, reside in Seattle, Washington.

Alumni Service Award

Recognizes alumni who have rendered outstanding service to the University.



Frank Costanza '73 earned a bachelor of science in civil engineering at Valpo, where he was active as a member of Phi Delta Theta and played on the baseball team. He went on to earn his master of business administration at Western Illinois University.

In 1975, he joined Black & Veatch Engineers – Architects in Kansas City, Missouri, as project director in their management services division. At Black & Veatch, he managed numerous multi-million dollar water, wastewater,

and electric utility project financing assignments; over 40 cost of service utility rate studies; and organizational management studies for investor owned, municipal, and cooperative utilities. After a stop at Havens Steel Company in 1986, he joined Utilicorp United Inc. as vice president of UtilCo Group. At Utilicorp, he managed or assisted in the acquisition of 17 power projects and the development of greenfield power plants all over the world, growing returns on investment over 20%.

In 1994, he was named vice president – corporate development at Utilicorp, then president of its subsidiary, Entrust Energy Solutions. Utilicorp became Aquila Inc. in 1998, and as senior vice president, Frank formulated and received corporate approval for the unit's strategic plan and two billion dollar budget to build and operate plants in 10 states.

Frank formed Upland Capital Investment in 2003, where he served as president and CEO before joining startup Tradewind Energy, LLC — which he'd previously helped to build its first wind power project valued at over \$190 million — in 2006. As senior vice president of corporate development, he directed all aspects of contract negotiation. He was named executive vice president – legislative & regulatory affairs in 2015 and retired in 2019.

In addition to serving on many boards for associated organizations during his time at Utilicorp, Frank served on the boards of directors for Wind on the Wires, now Clean Grid Alliance, (2015–2019) and Wind Coalition (2014–2019), two organizations focused on renewable energy markets and education.

An indisputable success in the field of energy, Frank also finds time to serve his community and alma mater using his leadership expertise. Frank served as president of the Kansas City, Missouri, Chamber of Commerce Centurions Leadership Training

Alumni Service Award, continued

program in 1987, and sat on the United Cerebral Palsy Board of Trustees from 1988–1991. He serves Church of the Nativity in Leawood, Kansas, as a member of the Knights of Columbus organization and, in 2017, answered the call to join the Athletics National Council. He began serving as chair in 2020, thoughtfully leading the council and providing guidance during a time of transition.

Frank and his wife, Donna, reside in Leawood, Kansas.

Alumni Community Service Award

Recognizes alumni for outstanding service to their communities.



Laurie Horlock '94 Dayon graduated with a bachelor of arts in communication, also serving as president of Alpha Phi Delta sorority. She holds a master of science in integrated marketing communication from Roosevelt University.

Laurie began her marketing career at Educational Resources before moving on to marketing manager roles at Ameritech and Motorola. From 2003–2005, she served as an adjunct instructor in marketing at McHenry County College, where she led the marketing portion of a business simulation

course and taught entry-level classes.

Inspired by the notion of creating opportunities to build confidence and strength in her then three-year-old daughter, Laurie founded Girls on the Run Northwest Illinois in 2007. Beginning with a small council of girls, she grew the organization to one that now serves over 1,000 girls a year and over 12,000 in its lifetime so far. As executive director, she developed the organization's brand and developed partnerships with local stakeholders, increasing earned income by 70% in 2021 and donor dollars by 25% in 2022. Laurie built a staff of six that worked with her to manage over 300 volunteers on an annual basis.

In February 2023, Laurie was named executive director of advancement at Youth & Opportunity United in Evanston, Illinois, building on her fundraising and development expertise to find and cultivate donors and manage the organizational brand to grow and sustain a \$3.5 million budget. She continues to serve her Crystal Lake community by volunteering at the food pantry. She also previously assisted with Aquathon planning and served on the Crystal Lake Chamber Foundation board of directors from 2012–2014.

"While it has been part of my core belief system for my entire life, it wasn't until I took a women's health class during my senior year at Valpo that I realized women's equality and empowerment was my 'fire,'" remarked Laurie. "I took that passion for wanting every girl and woman to understand and know how amazing they are and started a Girls on the Run council in Northwest Illinois [that served] 13 girls in the fall of 2007 and grew the organization to serve over 1,300 girls annually. Not even I could

Alumni Community Service Award, continued

have predicted that my favorite part of my career life would have started in a Valpo classroom in 1994.”

Laurie resides in Crystal Lake, Illinois.



Peter Land '88 graduated with a bachelor of arts in sociology with a focus in criminal justice and a minor in political science. He joined the Crown Point, Indiana, Police Department as a patrol officer in 1988, earning a promotion to supervisor in 1995. He served as chief of police from 2002–2004, then from 2008 until he was elected mayor in 2022. He also worked as Crown Point's emergency management director from 2010–2022.

As chief of police, Pete earned the department hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal and state grants, including those for improving 911 operations. He was also responsible for creating numerous community policing programs that earned him an invitation to speak on a 21st century policing panel at the White House.

Pete's incredible experience and expertise made him a top selection to serve on various local enforcement boards, including the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Federal Task Force, Lake County; Federal Joint Terrorism Task Force; Lake County Homeland Security Advisory Board; District 1 Homeland Security Critical Response Team; Northwest Indiana Major Crimes Task Force; District 1 Law Enforcement Council; and Lake County Interoperability Communications board.

In 2016, Pete graduated from the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command and in 2022 was elected mayor of Crown Point, where he manages a \$35 million annual budget in a city of nearly 34,000 residents.

“I am grateful for the professional and personal accomplishments and achievements I earned during my lifetime,” wrote Pete. “The journey started at Valparaiso University, my education and experiences here gave me the foundation I needed.”

Pete is engaged to Darcy Jansen and has three children, Kyle, 31; Benjamin, 22; and Jack, 16. They reside in Crown Point, Indiana.



Cheryl Lapain '87 Plummer, graduated with bachelor of arts degrees in theology and psychology. She was a member of Pi Delta Chi deaconess chapter and was consecrated as a deaconess in 1987.

Cheryl began her current role as chaplain for William Beaumont Hospital (now Corewell Health) and Beaumont Hospice (now Corewell Hospice) in 1988. Cheryl helped to initiate the “Midnight God Squad,” an on-call team of chaplains for crisis and level one trauma situations in the emergency center, intensive care units, and all over the hospital. She also previously provided spiritual services in the antepartum, pediatric, and neonatal intensive care units as well as in oncology.

Drawing on her experience in pediatric and antepartum/high-risk pregnancy settings, she helped lead an effort for a hospital foundation grant to develop a perinatal program, founding “A Child Remembered” that provides spiritual support, photographs, a memory box, cremation, and interment of ashes at no cost to grieving parents as well as a yearly perinatal and newborn loss memorial service. Cheryl also started the yearly multifaith pediatric memorial service for the hospital, which included readings from sacred texts from the Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Native American traditions and also photographs of the children and special memorial gifts for the parents. She also developed and served as editor for “A Prayerbook for Chaplains” that draws on multifaith texts and religious rituals to assist in spiritual care for the sick, dying, and bereaved.

Cheryl also taught numerous classes for the hospital staff, patients, and families on guided imagery, breaking bad news, talking to children about dying, and grief and coping, also leading support groups and bible studies for families and patients and retreats for hospital staff.

Cheryl worked as a hospice chaplain for the past 18 years, not only for dying patients but also for their close family and caregivers to help them find peace and comfort for end-of-life through a spiritual lens. She served on the frontlines of patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping dying patients to connect with their loved ones. Cheryl is also trained in ethical consultations involving end-of-life issues among families and patient care directives. In recognition of her work, she received several

Alumni Community Service Award, continued

service awards from Beaumont Health System and was nominated for Pillar awards from Beaumont Hospice.

Over the course of her career, Cheryl directed youth and special ministry programs at Immanuel Lutheran Church (Mount Pleasant, Michigan), St. John's Lutheran Church (Redford, Michigan), and Lutheran Church of the Master (Troy, Michigan). She has attended courses toward her master of divinity at Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, and has volunteered as a Boy and Girl Scout leader as the reflections chairperson for the PTSA and as a youth minister throughout her life.

"My mother died when I was a young child. My beloved stepmother died while I was a student at Valparaiso. The deaconess staff of the Lutheran Diaconal Association, my Valparaiso theology professors, and the chapel counselor provided so much love and care and support for me as I finished my college education, sorted out my call to ministry, and grieved for both my mother and stepmother," wrote Cheryl. "Valparaiso is such a special university. I am so grateful to be an alumna."

Cheryl and her husband, Mike, reside in Rochester Hills, Michigan, and Cheryl is very grateful for the continued support of her husband and their wonderful children and grandchildren.

O.P. Kretzmann Award

Recognizes alumni for long-time and exemplary service as a University employee.



Judith Miller '70 graduated with a bachelor of arts in English with minors in history, theology, and German. After working in cataloging at the University's Moellering Library from 1973–1975, she went on to earn a master of library science at North Texas State University (now University of North Texas) in 1976.

Judy returned to Valpo in 1978 as an assistant reference librarian, spending 1979–1990 in periodicals before assuming the role of assistant University librarian – collections and then special collections librarian in 2006.

As head of rare books and archives, Judy served as subject matter expert on the University's history, all the way back to its days as Valparaiso Male and Female College. She managed a vast archival collection of speeches and sermons by past University presidents, student and faculty publications, event programs and flyers, and photographs of everything from basic college life to famous campus guests to history-altering construction and destruction.

Judy served as a resource for numerous historical exhibits around campus, including those in the Duesenberg Welcome Center, Heritage Hall, the Athletics-Recreation Center, and the Chapel of the Resurrection. She served on numerous steering and search committees on campus, rendering notable service to Athletics. Judy served on the Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics from 2005–2018, the Athletics Hall of Fame Committee from 2008–2022, and served as official scorer for women's basketball games from 2004–2020. She and her team exhibited archival materials around the Valparaiso community and at Homecoming, where Judy served as guide for the historic bus tour for many years (and even provided the voiceover for a virtual version in 2020).

Notable publications include photobooks "150th Anniversary Archives Exhibit – Connecting 150 Years of Distinction" (2008), "The Founders of Valparaiso University" (2009), "Turkey Through Our Lens" (2015), and "Valparaiso School of Pharmacy" (2021). Judy also appeared as a historical reference in the 2016 film "Making Paradise," which was shown on campus at Homecoming 2017. She was also an active member of and volunteer at Immanuel Lutheran Church.

O.P. Kretzmann Award, continued

“Valpo played an important part in all facets of my life. I met my husband the first day of class my freshman year,” writes Judy. “The director when I worked at Moellering Library as staff, Daniel Gahl, Ph.D., was one of the most stellar human beings I have ever known. It has been a delight to work in this place and to study its rich history. Simply put, I loved my job. I love this University.”



(Suzanne) Kim Genovese '22 G.C., earned her associate and bachelor of science degrees in nursing from Indiana University Northwest, master of science in administration from the University of Notre Dame, master of science in nursing from Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis with a specialty in high risk obstetrics, and her Ph.D. from Indiana State University in 2009. In 2022, Kim was in the initial cohort and completed the graduate certificate in trauma informed care, adding her long-standing employer to the list of fine institutions of which she is an alumna.

Kim began her career as an RN in the emergency room and advanced to assistant director in perinatal services at Methodist Hospital in Merrillville, Indiana. In 1990, she served as program director for Lake County Prenatal Substance Use Prevention Program, serving in a similar role as project director for Porter County's Substance in Pregnancy and Parenting Program (SIPP) until 1996. Prior to joining the faculty at Valpo, she served as executive director of Nursing 2000 North for eight years, and seventeen years at Purdue North Central (now Purdue Northwest) as an associate professor of nursing, including serving as program director and acting chair.

College of Nursing and Health Professions Dean Karen Allen wrote, “Although [Kim] was tenured as a nursing professor, her years of experience as a leader in the health care industry led to her being asked to serve as program director for two programs – health care leadership and health administration.” Her success with those programs also led her to the helm of the master of health administration degree, whose graduates boast notable success in the local and national health care industry. Kim also assisted with clinical and internship placement for programs throughout the College of Nursing and Health Professions and currently holds the title associate professor of nursing emeritus. During her time in the classroom, she taught 22

different Valpo courses and, as program director for the health care leadership degree, helped increase program enrollment in the college by 300%.

Kim had a passion for serving Valpo's international student population: she served as a teacher and mentor in the classroom; as an advocate on the International Affairs Committee; and as faculty, program coordinator, and advisor to international graduate nursing students. She initiated a “Health Care in Thailand” study abroad course and led six other study abroad experiences to different countries.

Kim is an author or coauthor of numerous chapters and publications on teaching, nursing, and hemorrhagic disorders in maternal health, including in “Core Curriculum for Maternal-Newborn Nursing, Fourth Edition” (2010) and “Maternity and Women's Health Care” (seventh, eighth, and ninth editions). She was a member of Sigma Theta Tau International, Alpha Chapter (1986–2022); Indiana Organization of Nurse Executives (IONE) (1992 – present); and American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) (1995 – present). She currently serves on First Things First Porter County advisory board. She has received numerous grants and awards throughout her career.

Kim resides in Valparaiso, Indiana.



Cynthia Atwater '75 Felton graduated with her bachelor of nursing before going on to earn a master of science in nursing from Indiana University Purdue University - Indianapolis while working as a critical care nurse.

After her husband, Jack Felton '74, completed medical school and residency, they moved to Monroe, Wisconsin, where Cindy worked as a medical surgical nurse and taught nursing in the area. In 1989, they returned to Valparaiso, Indiana, and in 2004, she joined the faculty of the College of

Nursing and Health Professions as a professor and clinical coordinator.

According to Dean Karen Allen, Cindy “was responsible for making sure that more than 500 undergraduate nursing students had multiple and varied clinical experiences that prepared them to graduate, pass boards, and provide care.” She also notably developed Castlebranch, an information management system that helps local nursing

O.P. Kretzmann Award, continued

programs and hospitals coordinate clinical sites. Several institutions and other programs within the College of Nursing and Health Professions and across the institution continue to use this system. Dean Allen also points to her stalwart presence in assisting students navigate clinicals and practicum during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to her service to her college, Cindy also sat on the Campus Planning Committee and the Forever Valpo: The Campaign for Our Future leadership team. She is also a former member of the College of Nursing National Council and Alumni Association board of directors. She and Jack have been generous in philanthropy to Valparaiso University, establishing four endowed funds and supporting Athletics as both donors and super fans. They are also dedicated to serving local organizations like the YMCA, First Tee, Porter County Community Foundation, Valpo First United Methodist Church, and Sunrise Kiwanis.

Cynthia and Jack reside in Valparaiso, Indiana.



Cheryl Eggers '78 Slack '15 DNP graduated with a bachelor of science in nursing before earning her master of science in parent-child health nursing at Rush University in 1983. She is a member of the Hospice and Palliative Nursing Association, American Nurses Association, and Sigma Theta Tau.

In what would prove to be an important specialty throughout her career, Cheryl's first job was in the pediatric intensive care unit at Children's Memorial Hospital (now known as Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago). While completing her master's, Cheryl served as a teaching assistant in Rush's Psychomotor Skills Laboratory. Until 1986, she worked as staff development coordinator – clinical nurse specialist at Chicago's La Rabida Children's Hospital, where she returned in 1989 before serving in various clinical and leadership capacities at Porter Memorial Hospital; in-home health care agencies; and at St. Margaret Hospital's Hammond and Dyer, Indiana, campuses. She also served as a clinical instructor in pediatrics at Indiana University Northwest.

Cheryl returned to her alma mater to teach in 2005, serving as clinical assistant professor. As an active clinician, she served as a critical resource to students entering the field of nursing. As a servant leader, she took Valpo students on mission trips to disaster-affected areas and regions lacking in medical care, notably to flood-ravaged Texas and the White Earth Native American reservation. In 2015, she earned her doctor of nursing practice at Valpo while teaching and practicing.

She is an advocate and ambassador for the Visiting Nurses Association, Stephen Ministry caregiver, and Meals on Wheels volunteer. "Of great importance to her is her faith," wrote College of Nursing and Health Professions Dean Karen Allen. "She spoke it, she lived it, and it was integrated into the context of the teaching of nursing to her students." Most recently, she served as health director for Lutheran Summer Music at Valparaiso University.

Cheryl remarked "I am always ready to talk to potential students about Valpo and still tutor nursing students to help them become excellent clinical decision makers at the bedside. I was surprised and grateful when I was notified that I received this prestigious award. It increased the value of my years of service to the students of the College of Nursing and Health Professions."

Cheryl's son, Michael, resides in Indianapolis, Indiana. She and son, Matthew '16, reside in Valparaiso, Indiana.

Laurel Wreath Award

The Valparaiso University Fraternity and Sorority Laurel Wreath Society was created to recognize the accomplishments of fraternity and sorority alumni for their contributions to the greater society. Alumni are recognized for their contribution to philanthropic initiatives and/or public service, or for their commitment to advancing the fraternity and sorority experience on the local, national, or international level. No more than two fraternity and sorority alumni are to be recognized each year. The inaugural recipient of the Valparaiso University Fraternity and Sorority Laurel Wreath Society award was Dolores "Dody" Ruosch '51, Alpha Phi Delta. Dody served as the dean of women and director of sorority affairs for more than 30 years and was selected as the inaugural recipient as part of the Centennial Celebration of Sorority Life at the University in 2017.



Eric W. Johnson '87, Ph.D., earned a bachelor of science in electrical engineering from Valpo before going on to earn both his master of science and Ph.D. in computer science and engineering from the University of Notre Dame.

Eric joined the faculty in the electrical and computer engineering department at Valpo in 1997. During his tenure, he has held the Paul and Cleo Brandt Professorship, served as chair of the electrical and computer engineering department, and helped create the Valparaiso international engineering programs. His research interests include modeling electronic components using nanodevices and engineering education pedagogy. In January of 2013, he was named dean of the College of Engineering. During his tenure as dean, he focused on adding new programs in bioengineering and environmental engineering, providing holistic educational experiences, and developing an entrepreneurial-mindset in every student. In 2021, Eric was named provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. As provost, he serves as the chief academic officer, directing five academic colleges and the Christopher Center Library. He also oversees Student Life, International Programs, and the Division of Calling and Spiritual Life.

Eric is a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and has served in a number of leadership roles in the IEEE Calumet Section. He has also been an active member of the American Society of Engineering Education and served in leadership roles within the Illinois/Indiana Section.

Eric joined the Indiana Epsilon chapter of the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity at Valparaiso University in the spring of 1984 and was an active member during his undergraduate

Laurel Wreath Award, continued

years. When he returned to Valpo in 1987, he immediately reconnected with the chapter, serving as their academic advisor from 1997-2004 before becoming the study abroad director in Reutlingen, Germany. After returning from Germany in 2007, he resumed serving as the academic advisor through 2021. For his work with the chapter, he was named the Fraternity Chapter Advisor of the Year in 2001. He credits his undergraduate fraternity experience for the development of many of the lifelong skills, values, and attitudes that have made him successful. He continues to remain friends with many of the fraternity brothers he graduated with and always looks to give back to the Indiana Epsilon chapter whenever he can.



Michelle Savinski '88 Kocar transferred to Valparaiso University as a junior communications major and business minor in the summer of 1985, following in the footsteps of several family members who graduated from Valpo (she was then followed by her sister and nephew). Michelle's connection to Valparaiso University remained strong upon graduation: she returned in March 1989 to marry her husband, Kenneth '86 (Theta Chi), at the Chapel of the Resurrection, where she was joined by many of her Alpha

Phi Delta sorority sisters.

After graduation, Michelle went on to earn a master of education from Baldwin Wallace University and an Ed.D. from Northcentral University with a focus in educational leadership. Michelle served in various education leadership roles, including building principal, student services supervisor, curriculum director, and director of analytics and strategic initiatives for various Ohio school districts. In July 2021, Michelle returned to Baldwin Wallace University as the coordinator of educational leadership programs for principal and superintendent licensure as well as an associate professor. As part of her university service at Baldwin Wallace, Michelle serves as faculty adviser to Alpha Gamma Delta; she was initiated into the organization a year ago at Valparaiso University's Homecoming 2022.

As an upperclassman transfer student, Michelle knew the best way to make friends quickly was to join a sorority and she quickly found her home in Alpha Phi Delta. Michelle learned after joining Alpha Phi Delta that her aunt was also an Alpha Phi

Laurel Wreath Award, continued

Delta sister. This began a lifelong commitment to fraternities and sororities. Michelle served as Alpha Phi Delta alumnae president and vice president, alongside Lisa Gann Campbell '88, for almost a decade, organizing important milestone reunion events, including the 105th anniversary celebration of Alpha Phi Delta as the oldest fraternal organization at Valparaiso University during Homecoming 2022. It was at that time that both Michelle and Lisa became alumni initiates of Alpha Gamma Delta Beta Phi chapter at Valparaiso University. In January 2023, additional Alpha Phi Delta alumnae also initiated into Alpha Gamma Delta, further strengthening this new bond of sisterhood.

Michelle attributes her level of professional success and important core values to not only her education at Valparaiso University, but also her experiences with the Alpha Phi Delta and now Alpha Gamma Delta sisterhoods. She is honored to be recognized with the Valparaiso University Fraternity and Sorority Life Laurel Wreath Award for 2023.



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