

Quantum Leaps p. 5 ... A Landing Pad on the Moon p. 9 ... Can We Enhance Carbon Capture? p. 14 ... Tips for Young Learners p. 26 ... Q&A With a *Bake Squad* Star p. 38 ... On the Taylor Swift Beat p. 40

"I've watched my community overcome so many obstacles. And I'm ready for whatever the next fight is." p. 30

Northwestern

SPRING 2024



Unexpected Treasures

University Archives is full of intriguing artifacts.
Historian Kevin Leonard offers an inside look.

p. 20

Sharp Design

Theater professor Ana Kuzmanić's costume design brought a school of piranhas to life in the Metropolitan Opera's production of *Florença en el Amazonas*. Directed by performance studies professor Mary Zimmerman '82, '85 MA, '94 PhD, *Florença* follows a Brazilian opera singer as she searches for her lost lover in the jungle. Lead costume designer Kuzmanić '04 MFA developed the concept for the segmented headpieces, which were crafted from fosshape (a nonwoven fabric that hardens when heated). Flexible connectors were added between the fish head and tail to create the illusion of fish swimming as the dancers move. Master of fine arts design students in Kuzmanić's Opera at the Met course learned about costume and set designs and traveled to New York City to observe production rehearsals for the show, which ran from Nov. 16 to Dec. 14, 2023.



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Building on the Moon

Researchers plan to 3D-print a lunar landing pad using the moon's own materials. But first they need to analyze what moon dust is made of (and nope, it's not cheese).

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How Do Kids Learn Best?

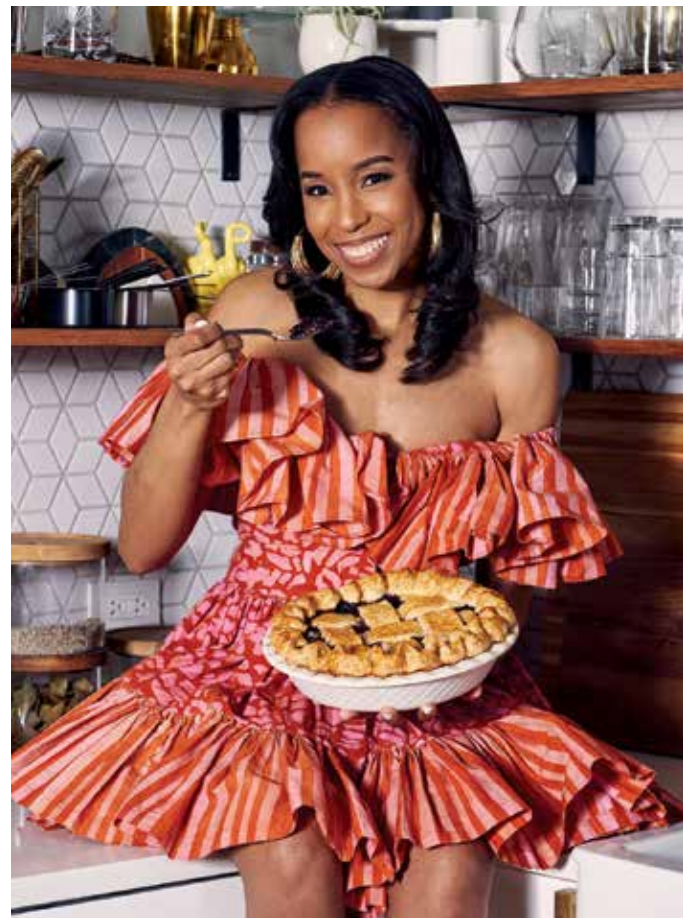
Northwestern researchers and alumni offer tips to help young children reach their full potential. *By Clare Milliken*



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Global Rhodes Scholar

With this prestigious award, math and physics double major Nia Robles Del Pino aims to increase access to STEM education for marginalized groups.



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A Guy Walks Into a Bar

Art Johnston '75 MFA, left, met the love of his life, Pep Peña, right, 50 years ago in a gay bar. Together they founded an innovative nightlife spot that became a hub for the queer rights movement in Chicago.

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← “People don’t always buy what you make — they buy *why* you make it. ... So when I’m crafting a new recipe, I’m always thinking, ‘How can I tell a story on a plate?’”

— *Maya-Camille Broussard '04 MA, bakery owner and star of Netflix's Bake Squad*

JOHNSTON AND PEÑA: ZOE RAIN; ILLUSTRATION: PETER AND MARIA HOEY; BROUSSARD: DAN GOLDBERG



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Big Research on Tiny Things

Examining underwater microbes, glacial shifts and blinking lights from a star.

SCUBA: ADOBE STOCK; BARBIE: GARY GANTERT



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Give Me an N! ... Give Me a U!

University Barbie, a 19th-century spyglass, a well-traveled typewriter — historian Kevin Leonard '77, '82 MA shares some of his favorite University Archives treasures. *By Kingsley Day*

On the cover: A Dawk, a hippie protest doll, from University Archives' Lloyd Thaxton '50 collection. Photo by Shane Collins.

SPRING 2024

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Views expressed in *Northwestern Magazine* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the University.

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Talk Back



KUDOS FOR PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM

In my 70-some years as a Northwestern student or alumna, I have never been prouder of my university than I am now, reading about the Northwestern Prison Education Program ["Making History," Moment, winter 2024]. Awarding Northwestern bachelor's degrees to 16 incarcerated people is a first for a major U.S. university and a life-changing event for the 16 recipients. Congratulations to the new graduates and to all involved in this historic program.

The photo of the seven graduates who earned bachelor's degrees from Northwestern was thrilling and deeply moving. It is heart-wrenching to think of the bright men and women who languish in prison without the opportunity to accomplish something meaningful in their lives. I'd like to convey my admiration for the graduates and my congratulations to Northwestern for making this program possible.
*Joan Mathews '85 PhD
Englewood, Fla.*

MORNING SHOW STAR

My mornings are not complete if I have not had coffee with Sheinelle Jones ['00] ["Stepping Into Today," winter 2024]. Your depth of preparation and your freshness are a compliment to your stint on Sheridan Road.
*Bishop Perry '74
Oakton, Va.*

I met Sheinelle some years ago at my very first National Association of Black Journalists conference. I still remember her advice and words to this day.
*Sierra Boone '17
Detroit*

BRAVE, SELFLESS PEOPLE

Your winter 2024 edition includes a wonderful feature on Matthew Vacca ['21 MBA] ["Marine Veteran Supports Ukraine," Class Notes, winter 2024] and his tremendous support to Ukraine. In the same edition, your In Memoriam section included Andrew Webber '19 JD, who passed away on July 29, 2023, while serving a humanitarian assignment with the 59th Motorized Brigade of the Ukrainian Army Ground Forces. We are fortunate to have such brave, selfless people in this world. Thank you, Matthew, for your service, and Andrew, for your service and ultimate sacrifice.
*John Klingenstein
Franklin, Mass.*

MISSING PODCAST PRODUCER

The winter 2024 issue omitted Paula Kaplan '83 from the article about the *Wiser Than Me*

podcast hosted by Julia Louis-Dreyfus ['83, '07 H] ["Wiser Than Me," Creation, winter 2024]. Paula is a producer of the podcast and should have been mentioned. Additionally, Paula was Julia's Northwestern roommate, and they remain good friends today.
*Jennifer Dunn Moyers '83
Atlanta*

LOVE AFTER LOSS

I don't usually respond to stories on the internet, but the story of Annie Kuo '08 MS and Matthew Becker '01 ["On Finding Love After Loss," Class Notes, fall 2023] touched me. I met my wife, Miriam Bashore ['72], at Northwestern in an organic chemistry lab — we were lab partners — in 1969. We married in 1970 and both graduated with bachelor of science degrees in chemical engineering in 1972. Our planned family of two became three when the second pregnancy in 1976 was twins.

In 1980 my wife entered medical school at the age of 30, and I worked full time and raised our three children as best I could. As my wife received her MD, she was diagnosed with cancer and died in August 1984. I was devastated.

But like Annie and Matthew, I knew I had to go forward. I was blessed to work with an outstanding woman chemist who had recently divorced. We found love again with each other and will celebrate 38 years of marriage this year. God bless, and never lose hope.
*James Harper '72
Hudson, Wis.*

Editor's Note: A few months after the publication of "On Finding Love After Loss," Annie Kuo and Matthew Becker got engaged. They're busy planning the wedding.

SHANE COLLINS

Voices

TECHNOLOGY OF TOMORROW

What's the Buzz About Quantum?

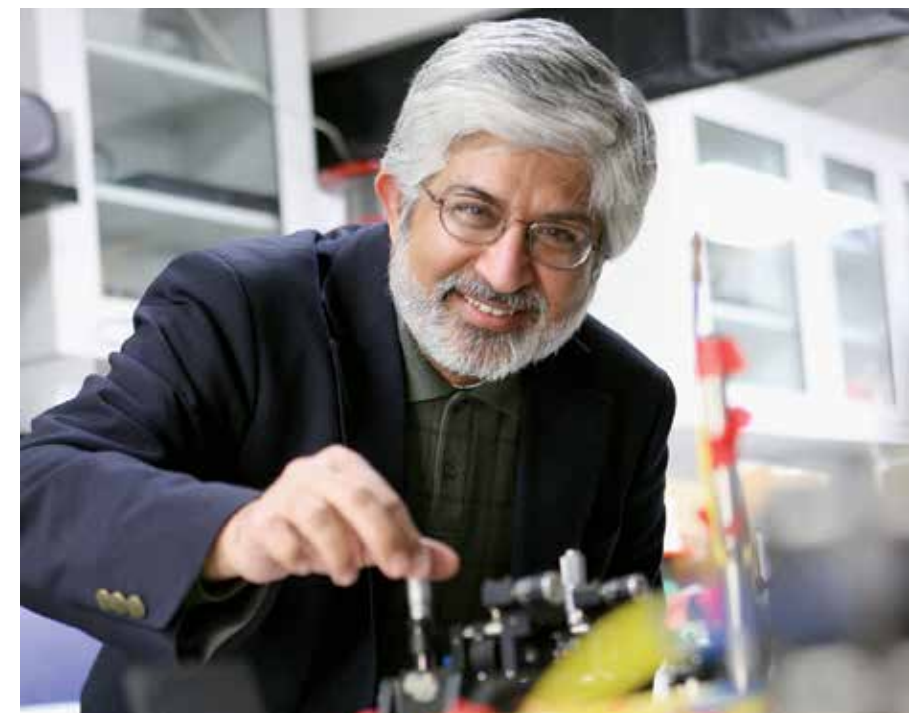
By Prem Kumar

A global quantum revolution is underway. Quantum physics is an exploration of light and matter at the most fundamental level. More than an intriguing curiosity, it is essential to creating real-world technologies that will revolutionize our lives.

Certainly, quantum physics will continue to yield deep insights into the fundamental workings of the universe, such as the behaviors of black holes. But the field is also providing

insights into how individual atoms and molecules interact with light, forming a basis for new electronic and photonic technologies. Quantum scientists today are conducting applied research that could lead to the creation of more secure communication systems; enhanced navigation devices for use in difficult environments; and superior computational capabilities that can simulate the interactions between atomic and molecular structures. Such simulations could help speed up the development of pharmaceutical drugs and materials for solar energy harvesting.

For example, in one test of an emerging quantum technology, scientists from China used a low Earth-orbit satellite to distribute entangled photons (particles of light) to two ground stations that are more than 1,000 kilometers apart. (Entanglement is a quantum property that describes the connecting of two particles such that changing the state of one particle changes the state of both,



↑ Prem Kumar is director of the Center for Photonic Communication and Computing.

STEPHEN ANZALDI '10 MS

no matter how far apart they are.) This technological achievement is a harbinger of future possibilities for globally secure, encrypted communications.

To understand the role quantum technologies will play in our future, consider the rapid progress that classical computer processing has made since the mid-1900s. Technological development has generally followed Moore's law — the observational principle that the number of transistors on a microchip doubles every 18 months or so. The results are stunning: A smartphone today is more powerful than most advanced supercomputers of the 1990s.

But after being on such an exponential trajectory for more than four decades, Moore's law is running out of steam because the size of individual transistors is rapidly approaching its fundamental limit: single atoms. Quantum computing could allow us to surpass these material limits and process calculations that would overwhelm current supercomputers.

The challenges of building — and controlling — a quantum computer, however, are multifold. For example, the qubits (quantum bits that form the computing substrate) on one hand must be isolated from their environment to maintain their quantum behavior, but on the other must also interact with the outside world in just the right way to accept and follow the instructions of a quantum algorithm and generate a result. This delicate balance makes controlling quantum computing systems extremely difficult. Continued development in quantum engineering will require technological innovation along the interface of quantum and the world as we know it — that is, the world that obeys the classical laws of physics.

Quantum engineering cannot happen in a silo. It will require a concerted effort across traditional branches of science and engineering. We must create and sustain research communities that will be equally versed in quantum physics and their own area of technology. And we must create quantum technologies in an environmentally conscious way. The sustainability of quantum technologies must be a forethought from the outset.

Prem Kumar is professor of electrical and computer engineering in the McCormick School of Engineering.

SOUND OFF

Lessons Learned

What wisdom did you learn the hard way?

Scott Freidheim '87, '91 MBA, managing partner at Freidheim Capital

At the 2006 World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, I was invited to a lunch hosted by the chairman and CEO of ABN AMRO, a large Dutch bank. There were 10 of us,



including the marquee guest, Jean-Claude Trichet, head of the European Central Bank. The conversation was a master class on central bank policy; every other guest at the table was a CEO with about 50 years of relevant experience.

Among such formidable intellectual adversaries, I was weaponless, naked. The two-hour lunch felt endless. Just because you're invited doesn't mean you belong. Achievement stands on a foundation of preparedness.

Felicia D. Henderson, associate professor of radio/television/film

As a writer, director and producer for more than 20 years, I spent a lot of time as a Hollywood pretzel — bending and twisting myself into what



others suggested I had to be. I wasn't smart enough. I was too smart. I fought too hard for my vision. I didn't fight hard enough. "You should work on making others

more comfortable with you," an agent once told me. After too many years of playing the pretzel girl game, I was suffering from anxiety and debilitating migraines, deftly hidden by a smile. I've learned

you can contort yourself into a million doppelgangers, but someone will still have an issue with who you are. So, I've chosen to be my authentic self. The only changes I need to make are the ones that help me become a more kind, giving, ambitious, creatively courageous version of the person I already am.

Cydney Brown, sophomore majoring in communications from Philadelphia

It took almost giving up on my dream for me to learn that the only opinion of yourself that matters is your own. Writing poetry has always been the best way to express myself, but in February 2020 I almost quit because of negative comments I had received. So I took a self-love workshop. I did daily affirmations and continued to write about topics close to my heart. With this newfound confidence, I became the 2023 Northeast Regional Youth Poet Laureate.



Stephanie Boron '12 MS, assistant clinical professor of communication sciences and disorders

I like to joke that I got a master's degree in speech and language pathology to get better at making small talk. I didn't know about my highly masked autistic brain at the time. More than a decade into my career, I stumbled upon online spaces where autistic folks were sharing their lived experiences. I began to notice the voices that were absent from my training — and I realized our practice may have been unintentionally perpetuating neuro-normativity. Then I became curious about the workings of my own brain. I began to center autonomy, accessibility, consent and genuine connection in my work. Now, in all that I do, I ask, "How might we amplify autistic voices?"



SOCIAL FEEDS

John Franklin '18, right, and his brother Greg, left, won first place 🏆 on the reality show *The Amazing Race* in December 2023. And the (alumni) crowd went wild!



You two are fabulous. I watched every episode rooting for you all the way! Congratulations! 📺❤️

Beverly Roberts Charles '75, '76 MS

They were so fun to watch — nice to one another and the other contestants, and their intelligence was so evident. Go 'Cats!

Mandy Pope '00

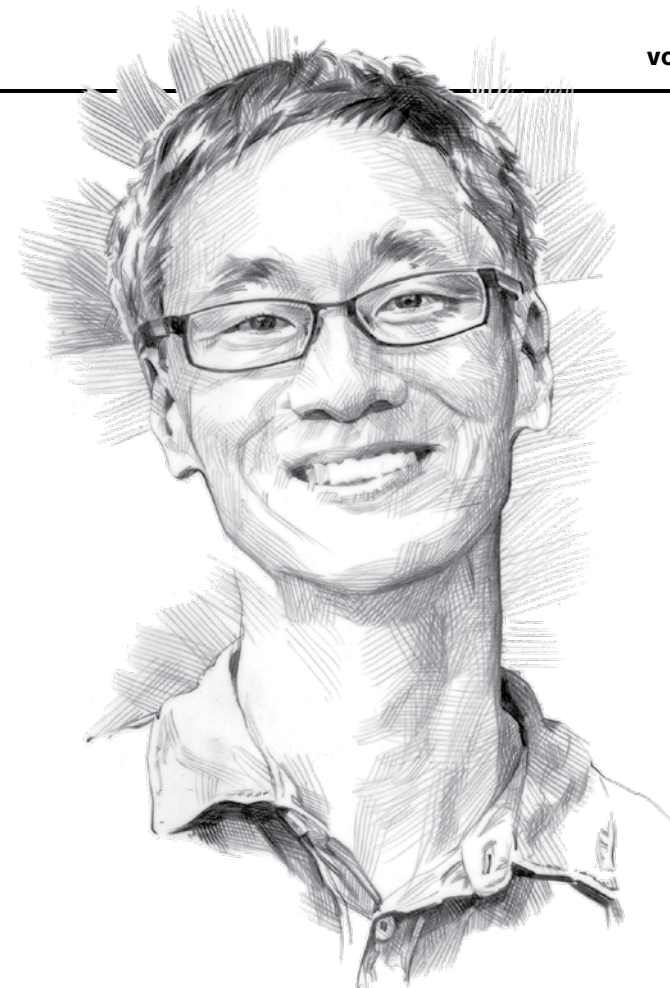
We were cheering for them the whole time! NU represent!

Anne Sucharda Swoboda '03

Congratulations — the best *Amazing Race* so far. The top three teams were all great, but Greg and John were A! Go Purple!

Luisa Ginnetti '72

FREIDHEIM: ADVANTAGE MEDIA GROUP; HENDERSON: MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH © 2023; BROWN: MARCO CALDERON



By Andrew Youn '06 MBA, '19 H

Andrew Youn is co-founder of One Acre Fund. He lives in Kigali, Rwanda.

MY NORTHWESTERN DIRECTION

One Acre at a Time

During my first year at the Kellogg School of Management a speaker from Abbott Laboratories came to campus to describe their work providing HIV tests in sub-Saharan Africa. I grew up in St. Paul, Minn., and had not traveled abroad extensively. But that speech inspired me to pursue a summer internship in South Africa.

During my internship, I visited Kenya and met two farmers: One was shockingly poor, and her family was clearly suffering, while her neighbor thrived, producing four times as much food. Both farmers were some of the most industrious people I had ever met — but one lacked access to basic farming tools and techniques. Those two women sparked the idea for One Acre Fund: Could we

equip the hardest-working people on Earth with the basic farm inputs and training required to thrive?

It takes a village to turn an idea into a nonprofit organization. The first time I asked someone for donations — I asked classmate Matt Forti '00, '06 MBA for \$20 a month — I was so nervous that my voice was shaking. He not only supported me but enlisted the help of a hundred other classmates, formed our original board of directors and joined the staff full time. Since then, he has helped raise tens of millions of dollars for our work. Larry Levy '66, '67 MBA, Carol Neims Levy '64 and an anonymous donor provided major seed funding, together with several Northwestern-affiliated families, including the Knights, Combes and Wilsons. Kellogg professors

“I stayed overnight with a farming family in Bungoma, Kenya. I witnessed their affection for each other. I sang with them and listened to their hopes and dreams.”

such as Harry Kraemer '79 MBA and the late Barry Merkin and Wally Scott '53 jumped in. And One Acre Fund got off the ground.

Today we provide training and small loans (in the form of farm inputs such as seed, micro-dosed fertilizer and tree seedlings) to 4 million farm families across nine countries in eastern and southern Africa. We have 8,000 full-time staff, and more than 20 Northwestern alums have worked with the organization to date.

In the early days of One Acre Fund, I stayed overnight with a farming family in Bungoma, Kenya. I witnessed their affection for each other. I sang with them and listened to their hopes and dreams. The next morning, I joined them in the field. But after 20 minutes of hoeing the field, I had to stop — I just couldn't keep up. This helped me understand just how hard farming is.

This understanding is a foundational reason that we've been successful. Our staffers live in close proximity to the farm families and listen to them. We recruit humble people with potential and then invest in their careers. And farmers have a stake in our organization; they pay for part of our services, and we are invested together in their future.

We also learn from failure. Farming is a tough business, and I have seen families grapple with weather catastrophes, health issues and other disruptions to their economy. Every time we fail, we learn. After a crop disease caused losses for many of our farmers, for example, One Acre Fund started a tree-planting program. Today we help farmers plant more than 50 million wood and fruit trees each year.

Our goal is to serve 10 million families a year by 2030. No matter the numbers, however, I remain inspired by the individual farmers we serve. Every single day, it is my privilege to serve the hardest-working people on Earth. And every single person we serve matters.

WHAT INSPIRES ME

Hip-Hop History

Melissa Foster believes rap music should be accessible to everyone.

Melissa Foster '96, '01 MMus, Charles Deering McCormick Distinguished Professor of Instruction

Hip-hop culture is in everything we do. It's in the television shows and movies we watch, the way we speak and the way we see the world. You can see it in TikTok dances and feel it in almost every major city in the U.S. Yet people don't always seem to see this massive influence — they love listening to the music and doing the dances, but they don't always understand the deep cultural elements that inspire the pop culture we all know and love.

I specialize in pop singing styles, and that includes rap, a subgenre of hip-hop.

Y'all, rapping is hard work. Doing it well takes an incredible amount of skill. I have a lot of students who are intimidated by rapping, especially white students. They love rap but don't think they could or should rap.

But rap is for anyone and everyone. Learning about hip-hop's history, the how and why it was born, and tracing its 50-year timeline takes time and investment, but it's worth it. Understanding the history makes rap more accessible.

Melissa Foster has worked as a recording studio musician and as a vocal coach for Broadway and rock stars. Now she teaches courses on the vocal techniques and history



↑ Melissa Foster

of musical theater, pop and rock. Her recent book Don't Sweat the Technique: A Performer's Guide to Hip-Hop and Rap provides an overview of hip-hop history, as well as a technical guide to rapping. This quote is adapted from the book's introduction.

HEARD ON CAMPUS

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Faculty, staff and alumni take notes from the past as they dream of a better future.

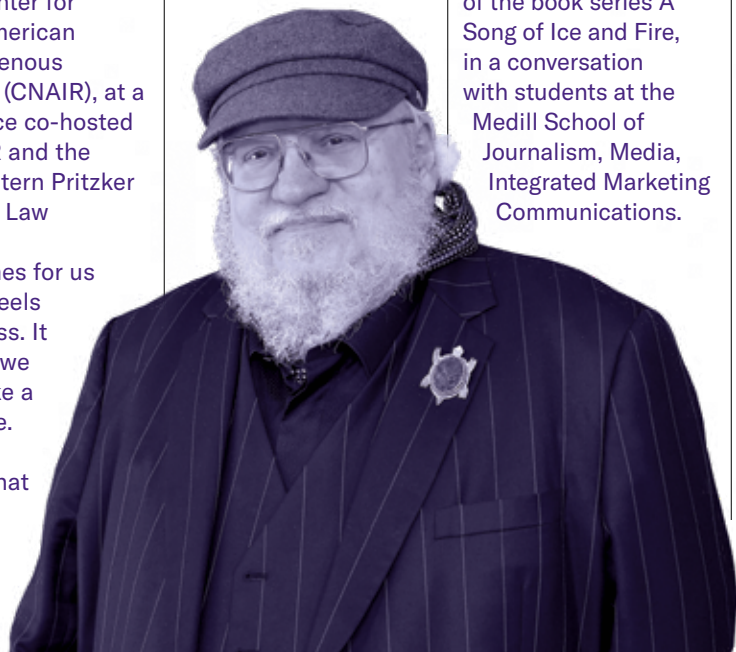
"We hope that people will recognize that Indian law is American law, and there [should be] no [law-making] or policymaking ... that does not consider Indigenous peoples."

Megan Bang, professor of learning sciences and director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research (CNAIR), at a conference co-hosted by CNAIR and the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law

"Sometimes for us today, it feels ... hopeless. It feels like we can't make a difference. But if you look at what [Martin

Luther King Jr.] went through, if you look at what he survived ... it fills us with the sense that we can go on."

Jonathan Eig '86, author of *King: A Life*, in his keynote address at Northwestern's Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration



"Write the kind of stories that you like to read. ... The publishing world is very variable. Things get hot, and things get cold. ... [Write] something that's uniquely you."

George R.R. Martin '70, '71 MS, '21 H, pictured at left, author of the book series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, in a conversation with students at the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications.

Martin visited campus for the investiture of the George R.R. Martin Chair in Storytelling.

"There was no evidence that slavery would ever end. And yet ... our ancestors resisted. Most of them didn't see the end in their lifetime, but they planted that seed in the next generation. ... I'm inviting people to strengthen ... our collective imagination and ... question those things that we're told are impossible."

Ruha Benjamin, associate professor of African American studies at Princeton University, in conversation with School of Education and Social Policy Dean Bryan Brayboy

FOSTER: MATT BORES; MARTIN: NEILSON BARNARD/GETTY IMAGES; LUNAR LANDING PAD: ICON/BIG-BJARKE INGELS GROUP

News

Global research on tiny things yields big results p. 11

Vintage-inspired fashion trends p. 13

Get to know the Wildcats' scoring king, Boo Buie p. 12

Farming might offer a climate change fix p. 14

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Moon Bricks

Northwestern mineralogist analyzes lunar soil for moon-based construction.

Through the Artemis program, NASA plans to build a permanent base on the moon. And the first step in developing a lunar outpost is creating a reliable landing pad.

Without the landing pad, every time a lunar lander touches down, it will kick up dust that could gum up equipment and damage the surrounding habitat.

"Each particle of [moon] dust is jagged and angular," says Katie Koube '14, a materials scientist at robotics and AI company ICON Technology Inc. "So, if a rocket lands directly on the moon's





↑ Katie Koube, left, and Steven Jacobsen

As the project's principal investigator, Jacobsen is working closely with Koube, his former student, to analyze various samples of simulated moon dust using Northwestern's facilities. Their goal is to create a library of potential soil sample compositions. Laura Gardner and Tirzah Abbott, doctoral students in Jacobsen's lab, are using microscopy techniques to analyze eight lunar simulants designed to mimic the real thing. (Real moon soil is in limited supply.) They will also analyze synthetic plagioclase, a mineral that is a major constituent of moon rock. Then, the team will compare the lunar simulants to actual samples collected from the Apollo missions.

The researchers will study how the soil composition can affect the melting process used in 3D printing. Because no two scoops of lunar soil are the same, the 3D-printing technology needs to be nimble enough to handle subtle differences. Equipping the 3D printer with a library of all potential soil compositions will allow it to perform autonomous diagnostics of each scoop and then adjust its laser parameters for heating and cooling.

That way, says Jacobsen, "the printer will know how to process each scoop of moon soil to produce the best ceramic. That detailed library will play a part in making the imagined outpost a reality."

surface, it stirs up dust that sandblasts the whole area."

In 2022 NASA selected ICON for a \$57.2 million grant to develop lunar construction technology. Because the cost of bringing traditional building materials from Earth is incredibly high, ICON is exploring the feasibility of 3D-printing a lunar outpost using the moon's resources. (ICON already uses such technology to build homes on Earth.)

Using a 3D printer, ICON plans to scoop up the moon's soil, melt it down and then cool it to form ceramic material that could be used to build structures. But before that can happen, the team first needs to understand the soil's exact composition, which can vary drastically from one sample to the next.

That variability poses a unique challenge, says Northwestern mineralogist

Steven Jacobsen, because "different minerals in lunar dirt melt at different rates, [and] the 3D-printing process is very sensitive to changes in mineralogy."

Jacobsen, a professor of Earth and planetary sciences, has received funding from NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center to help unravel the mystery of this destructive, varied moon dust. Jacobsen is a faculty affiliate with the Paula M. Trienens Institute for Sustainability and Energy and the Center for Engineering Sustainability and Resilience.

"Off-world construction comes with many challenges," he says. "On the moon, soil is formed from meteoroid impacts that have crushed the surface. So, the moon is essentially coated in a thick layer of pulverized flour. The types of minerals and glass found in lunar soil ... can vary widely within a small area."

SMALL TEMPERATURE CHANGES HAVE GLACIAL CONSEQUENCES

Greenland

Greenland's coastline is dotted with glaciers that are separate from the island's central ice sheet — and those glaciers are in a state of rapid retreat, according to a Northwestern and University of Copenhagen study. Led by Laura Larocca '21 PhD, the research team compared current satellite images with historical aerial photographs of the coastline to track the changes in the lengths of more than 1,000 glaciers over the past 130 years. Although Greenland has experienced glacial retreat throughout the last century, the rate has accelerated over the past two decades, which have been marked by warmer summer air temperatures (up to 2 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1971–2000 baseline) and reduced snowfall. "Our activities over the next couple decades will greatly affect these glaciers. Every bit of temperature increase really matters," says Larocca, who is an assistant professor at Arizona State University's School of Ocean Futures.



SMALL WONDERS

Big Research on Tiny Things

These researchers are studying tiny creatures and sometimes unseen changes to develop important research conclusions.

IN THE BLINK OF A STAR

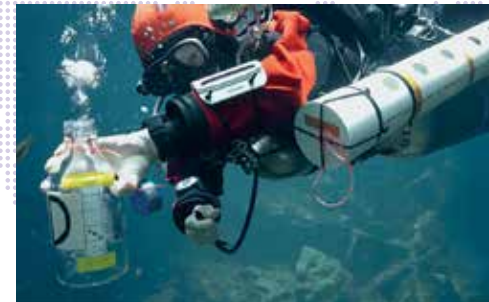
Puerto Rico

An international team, including Northwestern astrophysicists, detected a new population of gravitational waves that are too big and change too slowly for current technologies to detect. As a workaround, researchers instead study pulsars, a type of rotating neutron star that spins rapidly, sending radio waves sweeping through space. "We see little flashes of light that tick like a clock," says Caitlin Witt, a postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern's Center for Interdisciplinary Exploration and Research in Astrophysics and at the Adler Planetarium. Using ground-based radio telescopes at Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico as well as in West Virginia and New Mexico, the researchers look for changes in the timing of the flashes. "If the clock ticks arrive a little early or a little late, this is a sign that [the flash of light] could have been affected by a [monstrous but elusive] gravitational wave," Witt says.

LIFE IN AN UNDERWATER CAVE

Mexico

The Yucatán Peninsula in southeastern Mexico is "a Swiss cheese of cave conduits," says Magdalena Osburn, associate professor of Earth and planetary sciences. The region's underwater cave system contains areas of freshwater, seawater and mixtures of both, in a variety of zones, including deep pits with no direct access to the surface and shallower sinkholes. Millions of people draw their drinking water from this cave system, says Osburn, "so whatever happens with the microbial communities there has the potential to be felt by humans." With help from a cave-diving team led by Earth and planetary sciences professor Patricia Beddows, researchers constructed a map of the microbial communities to better understand what lives in these submerged labyrinths.



TAKING NOTE OF INAUDIBLE SOUNDS

Iceland

Suzan van der Lee deciphers Earth's secret seismic language. Movements in Earth's crust are inaudible, but van der Lee compresses seismic frequencies so they can be heard via Earthtunes, an app she co-developed. For example, as seismic activity intensified ahead of a volcanic eruption in Iceland last fall, the region experienced hundreds of earthquakes per day. On Earthtunes, the activity sounded like a cacophony of doors slamming, hail pelting a tin roof and people cracking ice cube trays. The Sarah Rebecca Roland Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences, van der Lee applies data science to millions of records of seismic waves to gather valuable insights about the Earth's interior dynamics.

THE MOLECULAR BASIS FOR CANCER

Mali

According to the World Health Organization, by 2040 more than 70% of cancer deaths are expected to occur in low- and middle-income countries. Research associate professor of preventive medicine Mamoudou Maiga studies the molecular mechanisms underlying diseases, with an emphasis on infectious diseases and cancers. He identifies molecular indicators that are crucial for signaling the presence or progression of cancer. Maiga, director of translational research at Northwestern's Center for Innovation in Global Health Technologies, seeks to improve public health outcomes in the developing world, where the majority of cancer cases are detected at late stages, leaving limited treatment options. For nearly two decades, he has focused on the development of preventive strategies and diagnostic tools in West Africa, including in his home country, Mali.

KOUBE AND JACOBSEN: SHANE COLLINS; GREENLAND: THE DANISH AGENCY FOR DATASUPPLY AND INFRASTRUCTURE; SCUBA: NATALIE GIBB; VOLCANO: TOBY ELLIOTT FOR UNSPLASH; TICKER ILLUSTRATIONS: LESLIE-ANNE MOCK

The Ticker

Introducing four new University leaders

● An award-winning composer with 20 years of music education experience, **Jonathan Bailey Holland** is dean of the Bienen School of Music. Says Holland, "[With] new generations wanting more variety [and] genres blurring [together, we need to] understand how we're preparing our students to be successful out in the field."



● A faculty member since 2002, **Eric J. Perreault** is the new vice president for research. "Interdisciplinary collaborations ... allow us to tackle complex global problems," says Perreault.



● McCormick School of Engineering Dean **Christopher Schuh '01 PhD** says engineers need to be cognizant of their impact on humanity. "How often have we seen engineers solve a problem, only to discover ... that they created a bigger problem? ... McCormick is ... poised to [address this] because [of our] culture of collaboration."



● A citizen of the Lumbee Nation and an anthropologist and scholar, **Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy** is dean of the School of Education and Social Policy (SESP). He sees in SESP students "an unbelievable brilliance [and] optimism in wanting to change the world. ... Our job is to create the conditions for them to thrive."



→ Read more about Wildcats star Boo Buie at alummag.nu/Buie.



HISTORY MAKER

Flex Time

All-time leading scorer Boo Buie helped usher in a golden era for Northwestern basketball.

For Wildcat guard Boo Buie, it all comes back to family. Growing up in Albany, N.Y., he learned to play basketball from his older brothers. His brother Talor Battle, Penn State's all-time leading scorer, is now a Northwestern assistant coach — and Buie's toughest critic. And among the many tattoos on his arm, Buie's favorite features his mother's initials alongside a lion and a rose because, he says, she's sweet but also incredibly strong, having raised nine children.

At Northwestern, Buie '23 has found a second home. "From the time they recruited me, it was a family environment," says Buie, who is pursuing a postgraduate certificate. "Northwestern's coaches were the first ones who believed in me. And once I got here, I capitalized."

In fact, Buie has become the face of Northwestern basketball, helping to revitalize the program.

In 2023–24 Buie, an All-Big Ten first team selection, led the Wildcats to the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive season and only the third time in history. He's been a part of 76 wins during his five-year tenure.

In February Buie became Northwestern's all-time leading scorer in a 76–62 win over Michigan. After he broke the record, Buie soaked in the moment. Northwestern head coach Chris Collins embraced him as the crowd roared. "When I got here [as a freshman], there were so many open seats in the stands," Buie said after the game. "Now, [I'm] walking off the court to a whole stadium standing on their feet, clapping. That's what I'm most proud about, the change [my teammates and I] brought to the program."

Collins says he feels lucky to be a small part of Buie's journey. "Boo is like family to me," he says. "His growth as a young man, as a leader, as a teammate, as a friend — it's been unbelievable."

BUIE: GRIFFIN QUINN/NORTHWESTERN ATHLETICS; DUDLEY: MICHAEL GOSS; MEDILL-NORTHWESTERN JOURNALISM INSTITUTE; NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

A PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

Nia Robles Del Pino has been named a 2024 Global Rhodes Scholar.



A senior majoring in math and physics at Northwestern, she is the first Argentinian to receive the prestigious honor and the University's 20th Rhodes Scholar to date. "I've met many brilliant Indigenous and brown girls who were ... simply told they weren't smart enough for science," says Robles Del Pino, an Andean Indigenous woman. She aspires "to increase the access to STEM education for Indigenous and Black people, especially for Latin American nonbinary individuals and women." Robles Del Pino plans to study mathematical physics at the University of Oxford in England.

'CAT TALES

Reporter Boot Camp

Last summer, 84 rising high school seniors from around the world came to Northwestern to attend the Medill-Northwestern Journalism Institute. The four-week immersion program is not all that different from when it began under another name 90 years ago — offering aspiring journalists the chance to learn reporting, writing and editing from Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications faculty and alumni media professionals. As the industry has changed dramatically over the decades, the institute continues to provide state-of-the-art journalism training.

Many program participants, or "Cherubs," go on to study at the University, making up nearly 1.5% of all current Northwestern undergrads. Program alumni include Emmy Award-winning broadcasters, Pulitzer Prize-winning writers and media magnates.



↑ Senior Elizabeth Dudley is writing her honors thesis on cottagecore, a viral fashion trend.

NOW TRENDING

Timeless Threads

A study of the sewing machine's origins leads art history senior to a new perspective on vintage-inspired fashion.

Growing up in St. Paul, Minn., senior Elizabeth Dudley loved sewing and working with textiles. Now, her hobby is a focus of her studies at Northwestern.

As part of her History of Innovation class, co-taught by Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation director Hayes Ferguson and adjunct lecturer and startup founder Michael Saunders, Dudley did a deep dive into the history of the sewing machine, an invention that accelerated the evolution of fashion as a vehicle for personal expression. Today,

social media has created a space for people to continue sharing and creating new fashion trends, says Dudley.

Dudley, an art history major with a focus on the history of costume, is writing her honors thesis about one such trend: cottagecore — an aesthetic that reflects a pastoral way of life, expressed through fashion, home décor and other lifestyle elements. Cottagecore exploded in popularity in 2020 with the onset of the pandemic, drawing appeal from the peaceful vibes and escapism it provided during an otherwise chaotic time.

Dudley's thesis explores the effects of technology — from the invention of the sewing machine to the rise of social media — on fashion trends and self-presentation. Cottagecore, she says, represents a new form of cultural discourse emerging at the intersection of art and technology; though the trend itself romanticizes rural life and an escape from modern technology, its existence and popularity stem directly from the ease of sharing images online. "Cottagecore is a way for individuals to filter and revitalize the world," says Dudley.

Discovery

CLIMATE

Is Farming the Key to Carbon Capture?

Northwestern and Chicago Botanic Garden researchers will study the carbon capture effects of soil additives on agricultural fields.

For the world to meet the global average temperature goals set forth in the 2015 Paris Agreement, we need to actively decarbonize. One way to decrease carbon emissions, suggests Earth and planetary sciences professor Andy Jacobson, is to capture atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) and lock it away for a few thousand years. Earth science could help with that.

The chemical weathering of rocks is a natural process that converts atmospheric CO₂ into a stable mineral. Carbon dioxide dissolves in water to form carbonic acid, which breaks down rocks. Chemical weathering liberates calcium and other elements from silicate rocks while transforming CO₂ into bicarbonate. Over millions of years, bicarbonate combines with calcium to form calcium carbonate, the building blocks

for coral reefs and limestone. This process sequesters carbon in solid form and ultimately serves as Earth's natural, long-term climate stabilizing mechanism.

"Over much shorter human timescales, bicarbonate is a sink for atmospheric CO₂," says Jacobson. "Can we accelerate the weathering process and actively remove carbon from the atmosphere" at rates fast enough to help mitigate modern climate change?

Enhanced rock weathering was proposed as a decarbonization strategy decades ago but only recently gained interest. A 2020 *Nature* article estimated that enhanced weathering could remove up to 2 billion tons of CO₂ annually from the atmosphere by 2050.

Jacobson is leading an interdisciplinary team of researchers at Northwestern

and the Chicago Botanic Garden to investigate this "negative emissions technology" with a two-year demonstration grant from Northwestern's Paula M. Trienens Institute for Sustainability and Energy.

In a series of mesocosms (experimental systems that simulate natural conditions) at the garden, researchers will test the effects from adding different types of crushed rock to soils used to grow various crops. The soil additives will include basalt, a volcanic rock that chemically weathers faster

than other rocks and minerals, potentially expediting CO₂ capture and storage.

"In a greenhouse environment, we can measure the bicarbonate coming out of the mesocosms. And we can trace how much of that bicarbonate is coming from the weathering of silicate minerals," says Allegra Tashjian, a doctoral student in Earth and planetary sciences who is leading the initial experiments. Basalt also could help improve the soil and boost crop yields. The long-term goal is to move the



ADOBE STOCK

experiment into a field test.

"Farmers already have much of the infrastructure needed to implement enhanced weathering as a CO₂ removal strategy," says Brad Sageman, professor and director of undergraduate studies in Earth and planetary sciences. "Crush up the rocks, put them on the field and wait. That said, the idea itself is so new that we don't yet have sufficient empirical data to know the best way to approach it. How will soil amendments affect the soil microbiome and plants, and how much carbon

will be converted? Our goal is to answer those questions."

The market for enhanced rock weathering is skyrocketing, with startups already partnering with farmers on carbon offsets. "It'll be awesome if enhanced rock weathering works well at scale," adds Tashjian, "but we also want to understand any limitations to ensure that carbon offsets from this technology are accurate."

The project begins in May, but don't expect results overnight, says Jacobson. "Enhanced weathering doesn't

mean instantaneous," he says. "Many geologic processes are slow, even ones that are enhanced."

For Sageman, a geologist who has spent his career "studying events that happened millions of years ago," this project is a perfect capstone. "Studies of climate change through Earth's history provided the foundation for realizing the potential of enhanced weathering," he says. "Building on that work, we now have an opportunity to make the world a better place for our grandchildren."

ALUMS IN THE FIELD

Carbon Capturers

Earth and planetary sciences alumni are working at the forefront of climate change mitigation.

Grace Andrews '14 MS, '17 PhD is executive director of Hourglass Climate, a nonprofit **conducting research into mineral-based carbon removal strategies** to facilitate responsible technological scaling of the carbon removal industry. Her academic research in professor Andy Jacobson's lab examined the rates and mechanisms of chemical weathering over geologic timescales.

Tyler Kukla '16 is a researcher at CarbonPlan, a nonprofit that **analyzes climate solutions based on the best available science**. CarbonPlan focuses on carbon offsets, carbon removal and climate risks, with the goal of ensuring scientific integrity and transparency.

Claire Nelson '18 MS, '21 PhD, also advised by Jacobson, studied basalt weathering in Iceland and then developed a novel carbon sequestration method during her postdoctoral work at Columbia University. It involves **injecting CO₂ underground into basalt, where it converts into a mineral**. This led her to found Cella, a venture capital-backed carbon storage technology startup. As chief technology officer, she is demonstrating the technology in the field.



RESEARCH

Combating Food Insecurity

A generous gift from Melih and Zeynep Keyman is fueling research on innovative approaches to monitoring plant health.

As the world's population rises and the effects of climate change threaten crop yields, food insecurity is an urgent matter. With the support of University Trustee Melih Keyman and Zeynep Keyman, Northwestern researchers are pursuing

a novel approach to farming with the potential to make a substantial impact on the global food crisis.

Traditional agricultural methods rely on the use of fertilizers to provide vital nutrients that help plants remain healthy and grow.

But the amount of nutrients needed — based on soil conditions — is, at best, a guess. The most common strategy is to oversupply those nutrients, but this approach raises a host of sustainability issues and environmental concerns.

Faculty in Northwestern's Center for Synthetic Biology (CSB) are working toward a unique solution: Researchers are exploring the possibility of using "sense and respond" biosensors that, if successful, could create a state-of-the-art, data-driven soil monitoring system to trigger the release of compounds as needed to ensure plant health.

"The global food crisis presents a great challenge, and we need innovative approaches to help feed the world's ever-growing population," Melih Keyman

← Sarah Sobol '23 conducted synthetic biology research as an undergraduate.

says. "Zeynep and I believe strongly in the work being done at the Center for Synthetic Biology, which can open up new scientific advances in agriculture that will profoundly address the issue of world hunger."

Using tools from a range of disciplines, synthetic biology allows scientists to reuse, repurpose or reconfigure biological systems to combat some of society's most pressing problems.

Since its launch in 2016, CSB has become a leader in the emerging field, laying the groundwork for research that can lead to advances in medicine, agriculture, manufacturing and sustainability. Researchers have developed new approaches for drug delivery, data storage methods using DNA and processes for creating synthetic proteins that can be used in products ranging from regenerative medicines to sustainable materials. Several faculty members have also parlayed their discoveries into startup companies, turning ideas into viable products with real-world applications.

"Synthetic biology holds so much potential for innovation to solve complex challenges," says Eric Perreault, Northwestern's vice president for research. "We are grateful to the Keymans for recognizing and investing in this dynamic and evolving area of research."

Existing technologies for soil monitoring face several limitations. Current sensors are low resolution, provide data only by the acre and measure a small number of soil components.

By leveraging the power of biology, Northwestern researchers have been able to repurpose naturally occurring microbial proteins to create high-resolution biosensors that detect more than 100 environmental compounds. With the research funding provided by the Keymans' gift, this work can be extended to address agricultural needs.

The first step will be to develop sensors that can more precisely monitor relevant soil components — including nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and other micronutrients — as well as plant stress signals. Then researchers must find a way to encapsulate the platform in a soil environment. The final piece will be to develop a system for remediation, using data from the biosensors to release compounds needed to maintain the health of the crops. Together these measures will allow for a high-tech plant monitoring system that can boost crop production.

"These approaches would not have been possible even two years ago, but new research suggests that our goal of developing biosensors with agricultural applications is achievable today," says Danielle Tullman-Ercek, who co-directs CSB with fellow professor of chemical and biological engineering Julius Lucks.

"With the help of research funding like the gift from the Keymans, we can create new technologies that will help to solve challenges in agriculture and address global needs," she says.

Testing the Water

The collaborative research led by Julius Lucks, who co-directs the Center for Synthetic Biology with Danielle Tullman-Ercek, has two crucial and closely related components. First, Lucks and fellow researchers seek to uncover how natural biological systems sense and adapt to changing environments. Second, they use this knowledge to engineer synthetic biological systems that benefit humanity.

This ambitious agenda spurred the Lucks Laboratory to develop a home test that can detect common contaminants in water, such as lead, pesticides or other chemicals. The technology, called ROSALIND, harnesses the "molecular taste buds" found in bacteria and programs them to glow when they detect a contaminant. Funding from the National Science Foundation will underwrite a

multiyear pilot study to use the water test kits in Chicago-area households.

"We are working hard to get the technology into the hands of the people who need it the most," Lucks says.

Lucks received a 2023 Guggenheim Fellowship to advance his research on RNA, a fundamental component of living systems with many potential biotechnology applications. By combining deep technical expertise with a multidisciplinary, big-picture approach, Northwestern can "responsibly innovate synthetic biology technologies that will benefit the most people," he says.

↓ Julius Lucks, right, and other Northwestern researchers are engineering synthetic biological systems that will benefit humanity.



Center for Synthetic Biology

\$32M
research funding awarded

7
faculty startups founded

100+
faculty awards received

JASON BROWN / JB CREATIVE

JASON BROWN / JB CREATIVE

ANNUAL GIVING

Strength in Numbers

Members of NU Loyal give to Northwestern year after year, and their gifts have impacted more than 1,500 areas across the University.

Alumni, parents and friends support Northwestern in many ways, from cheering on the Wildcats to making philanthropic gifts. Anyone who makes a gift of any size for three or more consecutive years is recognized as a member of NU Loyal, the University's largest giving society, with more than 42,000 active donors.

Some members, like Dulce Vasquez '08 and her husband, David Leuchter '07, have been giving since they were students or became alums. When Vasquez, a philosophy and political science major at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, was about to graduate, she gave \$20.08 to Northwestern as part of her

senior class gift. Sixteen years later, she is unwavering in her support.

"As a formerly undocumented Mexican American woman, I found the Northwestern experience transformative," says Vasquez, who is assistant vice president of strategic advancement at Arizona State University.

"Having a diverse student body is essential for every student to see beyond their unique perspective."

— Wendy Wilson

"Growing up, my family was on food stamps. I certainly was not able to pay out of pocket to attend Northwestern without a scholarship."

Vasquez relied on financial aid and the Gates Millennium Scholars Program to fund her education and graduated debt-free. Today she says, "I give back because I want more students who come from backgrounds like mine to be able to access Northwestern."

Leuchter also has been a dedicated donor since earning his degree in civil and environmental engineering from the McCormick School of Engineering. "The time I spent at Northwestern was foundational to my life now," says Leuchter, who is vice president and western

U.S. area manager at Mass. Electric Construction Co. "So many friends and important connections in my life, especially Dulce, are a direct result of my time there."

Vasquez and Leuchter give regularly to Northwestern Engineering, the Wildcat Fund and University scholarships. They shifted their support to the Student Emergency and Essential Needs Fund during the pandemic. Vasquez is also a founding donor to the student performance group Mariachi Northwestern.

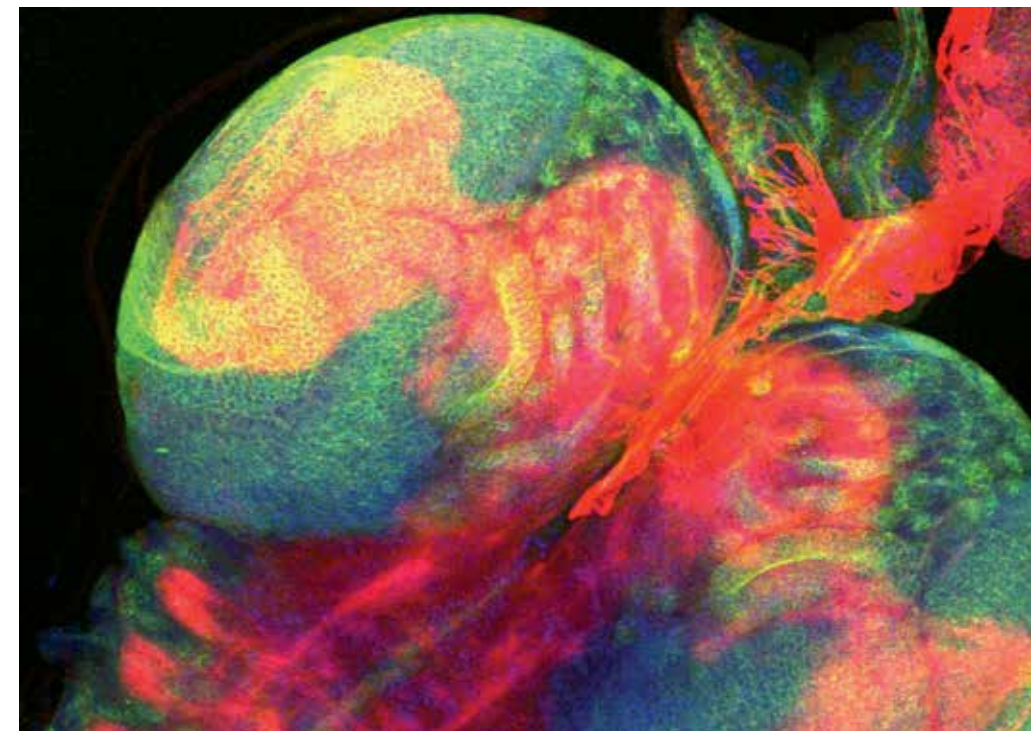
Another longtime NU Loyal member is Wendy Wilson '89, who has been giving to Northwestern for over 20 years. As an English major at Weinberg College, Wilson benefited from scholarships and received financial aid. Today she regularly gives to the University's scholarship fund. "Having a diverse student body is essential for every student to see beyond their unique perspective," says Wilson, who worked most recently as vice president of marketing at ChargePoint.

When Mary Olson-Menzel '02 MBA, founder and CEO of MVP Executive Development, began giving to Northwestern five years ago, she chose to support the professional school that helped her take steps to advance her career path: the Kellogg School of Management. The NU Loyal member also stays connected with fellow alums through the Kellogg Executive Women's Network and volunteers through Northwestern's Alumni Admission Council. "Kellogg gave me the incredible learning and life experiences that helped shape me into the executive and the person I am today," she says.

← NU Loyal members David Leuchter, left, and Dulce Vasquez



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID LEUCHTER AND DULCE VASQUEZ



← Studying the brain of a young fruit fly helps scientists achieve a mathematical understanding of how living systems learn and adapt.

Approximately 80 faculty — 40 from each university — will be involved in the institute's work, including quantitative biologists (both experimental and theoretical), computer scientists, physicists and mathematicians. NITMB will be located on the 35th floor of 875 North Michigan Avenue (formerly the John Hancock Center) in Chicago's Streeterville neighborhood, ensuring access to Northwestern and University of Chicago researchers as well as collaborators from the U.S. and around the world.

NITMB builds on Northwestern's successful NSF-Simons Center for Quantitative Biology, established in 2018 to develop interdisciplinary research between mathematics and developmental biology, which has yielded scientific successes and the growth of a robust research community. The new institute will take this center's foundation and expand it with new partners and an international reach, a broader scientific vision and dedication to training a diverse workforce across disciplines.

Not just a research center, NITMB will create curricula and support research opportunities for students through graduate school and beyond, and will host public lectures that communicate the wonder of the living world and how it is understood through the lens of theory. The institute's K-12 educational outreach component will take advantage of existing local programs and develop new ones to improve equity and inclusion of those underrepresented in STEM.

COLLABORATION

Revolutionizing the Study of Biology

The new National Institute for Theory and Mathematics in Biology brings together researchers across disciplines.

Northwestern has been awarded \$50 million over five years from the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Simons Foundation to establish the National Institute for Theory and Mathematics in Biology (NITMB) — the first institute of its kind in the U.S.

NITMB researchers will use mathematics to investigate some of the most important fundamental questions in the life sciences. The institute offers bidirectional opportunities: Discoveries in biology will motivate new developments in mathematics, and vice versa.

The University of Chicago is Northwestern's key partner in this initiative. Together

the two universities will create a nationwide collaborative research community that will generate new mathematical results and uncover the "rules of life." The institute will foster international collaborations at the interface of the

"We hope to revolutionize the study of biology, much like physics has benefited from an alliance with mathematics."

— Richard Carthew

mathematical and biological sciences as well, helping establish a vibrant worldwide research network for decades to come.

"There are many deep questions about human life and all branches of biology," says Richard Carthew, the Owen L. Coon Professor of Molecular Biosciences in Northwestern's Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, who is director of NITMB. "Our goal is to better understand the mathematical basis underlying both the capabilities and constraints of living systems. We hope to revolutionize the study of biology, much like physics has benefited from an alliance with mathematics."

Tales From the Vault

Step into Northwestern University Archives with historian Kevin Leonard for a close-up look at the artifacts he loves most.

BY KINGSLEY DAY

University Archives is home to documents, artifacts and mementos that showcase the rich history of Northwestern and its community, “items that will help people better understand the University we love,” says University Historian Kevin Leonard ’77, ’82 MA. The collections span 25,000 linear feet and include everything from a limited-edition Northwestern University Barbie to a real taxidermized wildcat. “If you arranged the boxes end-to-end,” says Leonard, “they would reach nearly 5 miles.” We asked Leonard, a longtime archivist for the University and a master raconteur, to name his most-treasured artifacts — and share the stories behind them.

I Spy Alaska

One of the Archives’ oldest objects is a spyglass (right) used by 19th-century explorers Robert Kennicott and Henry M. Bannister, an 1863 graduate of Northwestern. Kennicott and Bannister were part of a team that explored Alaska in the mid-1860s to investigate the feasibility of running a telegraph cable from North America to Europe by way of Alaska, the Bering Strait and Siberia. Although the idea was ultimately abandoned, the explorers reported their findings to then-Secretary of State William Seward. “The indirect result of their work,” says Leonard, “was the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867” — an acquisition derided at the time as “Seward’s Folly.”

The explorers’ spyglass and their journals — with exquisite handwriting and intricate drawings of boats and sled dog trains — from their Alaskan travels were passed down through Bannister’s family until James Alton James, a longtime Northwestern history professor (1897–1935), contacted the descendants and acquired the artifacts for the University. The wealth of materials that James collected over his lifetime became the genesis of University Archives. “His plan late in his career was to write a history of Northwestern,” says Leonard. “He never realized that dream as a publication, but he is the person who began Northwestern’s archival program, so we owe him a great debt of gratitude.”

Type This Up, Quick!



Georgie Anne “Gee Gee” Geyer ’56, ’93 H achieved fame as a *Chicago Daily News* foreign correspondent and a nationally syndicated columnist. “This is the portable typewriter (left) that she carried with her on her travels,” says Leonard. “It’s relatively compact, something you could put under your feet on an airplane. What’s funny is the sticker on the outside of the case — bright red lips — because she wore bright, fire engine-red lipstick as part of her signature look.” (See detail on page 25.)



The typewriter and its case accompanied Geyer all over the world, including to Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. She interviewed a who’s who of 1980s and ’90s geopolitics: Iraqi president Saddam Hussein; Cuban president Fidel Castro; Palestinian political leader Yasser Arafat; the Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran; Argentine president Juan Perón; and Libyan political leader Moammar Gadhafi.

Archives also holds the U.S. Army-issued military blouse Geyer wore while reporting in Vietnam, along with a large collection of her personal papers.

“Gee Gee Geyer was a delightful woman,” recalls Leonard, “and it was a great honor to become her friend.” On a 1968

Vietnam trip, Geyer met Chicago Cubs star Ernie Banks, who was there entertaining the troops, and they became lifelong friends. Although she eventually relocated to Washington, D.C., Geyer returned regularly to Chicago, where she would host gatherings at the Drake Hotel. On one such occasion, she invited both Leonard and Banks.

“I had grown up a Cubs fan, and she knew it would be fun for me to meet him,” says Leonard. “She was a very generous soul who looked out for her pals.”

The Ultimate Wildcat

When Leonard started collecting materials on behalf of the Archives, “I made a list of people whose materials I’d really like to get,” he says. “Otto Graham was at the top of that list.”

Unquestionably the greatest athlete in Northwestern history, Graham ’44 came to the University from Waukegan, Ill., on a basketball scholarship. “During his freshman year, he was playing intramural football over at Long Field,” says Leonard. “The story goes that he was discovered by one of the football coaches. And so Otto came out for football as a sophomore. He was outstanding from his first game, ultimately winning All-American honors in both basketball and football. He was also a very fine outfielder on the Northwestern baseball team and even Northwestern’s intramural ping-pong champion.

“After leaving Northwestern to serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II, he played one season of professional basketball, and his team [the National Basketball League’s Rochester Royals] won the championship [1945–46] in a precursor to today’s NBA. Then, as quarterback for the Cleveland Browns, he became one of the all-time greats in professional football. Graham kept track of his accomplishments in scrapbook form, and his family generously gave a large collection of those scrapbooks to Archives.” (See detail on page 25.) The holdings also include films, sound recordings and other objects and records associated with Graham’s career, including the 1943 Chicago Tribune Silver Football (above), awarded to the Big Ten’s best player.



(Continued on page 24)

WHAT'S IN KEVIN'S OFFICE?

Kevin Leonard's Deering Library office is filled with objects that hold special meaning to him or the University. Here are a few fun items found on his shelves:

1 Conversation Starter

During a clean-out of Cahn Auditorium, the theater department offered University Archives a massive painted backdrop from The Waa-Mu Show. Leonard declined, but when he saw a large wooden brace painted with the words "People Are No Damn Good!" — the name of a Waa-Mu Show skit — he had to have it. "I ripped it off the canvas, sawed it down to size and brought it back to my office."

2 Breakfast of Champions

To commemorate Northwestern's thrillingly (and surprisingly) successful 1995 football season, Wheaties featured the Big Ten champs on its cereal box. The archived Wheaties boxes include one with an intact bag of cereal.

3 A Stand-Up Guy

Former Northwestern All-American basketball player Joe Ruklick '59, '90 MS was a frequent patron of University Archives and a regular at Wildcats' men's basketball games. He and Leonard became good friends. Sadly, Ruklick died in September 2020. When Northwestern offered fans the opportunity to purchase life-size cardboard cutouts to fill Welsh-Ryan Arena during COVID-era games, Leonard paid to have Ruklick's cutout in the stands. "I thought it would be nice to have Joe watching a game," Leonard says. "Now I keep it here as a reminder of a good friend."

4 Automatic Otto

During a previous renovation of Ryan Field, Northwestern Athletics asked Leonard if he wanted any memorabilia from the trophy cases that were filled with Otto Graham's awards. Leonard, who is a huge Graham fan, gladly took the bust and the 1943 Chicago Tribune Silver Football (see page 21), which was awarded to the Big Ten Conference's best player.



A LIFETIME IN THE ARCHIVES

After working full time in University Archives for more than four decades and serving as University archivist since 2009, Kevin Leonard was appointed to the newly created post of University historian on Jan. 1, 2024, by Xuemao Wang, dean of libraries and University librarian. Leonard's long and distinguished archival career dates back to his undergraduate years.

"One day I visited Archives for a project I was working on," Leonard recalls. "The then-archivist, Patrick Quinn, a gregarious soul, engaged me in a conversation, and we hit it off

immediately. He needed help, and I needed a job, so he hired me and put me to work organizing collections. I took great pleasure in reading through old correspondence and diaries, examining photographs and familiarizing myself with the school's past and the lives of its people."

In 1980 Leonard joined University Archives as a full-time employee, and when Quinn retired, Leonard succeeded him, "which was like giving me the keys to a shiny new car," he says, "or even better — the keys to a classic old car."

Leonard significantly expanded the volume of holdings over his tenure. "He would knock on doors and make cold calls," says Sarah Pritchard, former dean of libraries. "He would drive or fly to wherever the materials lived and would even help drag boxes out of a dusty storage unit."

Leonard notes that his new appointment will allow for a smoother transition to his successor. As far as his own eventual retirement, Leonard whimsically asks, "Who knows what the future holds for someone who has spent his life looking to the past?"



The Queen of Fresh Prince

Best known as Aunt Vivian on the 1990s TV series *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, Daphne Maxwell Reid '70 has had a prolific, successful career in TV and film. But what people might not know, Leonard says, is that she is incredibly multitalented and broke significant early barriers — and luckily, “we’ve been able to document all facets of her career, from a very young age to the present.”

Maxwell Reid became the University’s first Black homecoming queen in 1967 and months later she joined the cohort of Black students who occupied the Northwestern Bursar’s Office in 1968. She began working as a fashion model while still a student and was the first Black professional model featured on the cover of *Glamour* in 1969 (above). Maxwell Reid designed and sewed much of her own clothing for auditions and worked with the McCall Pattern Company to create the Daphne Maxwell Reid Collection. She is also a photographer who has published several photo collections.

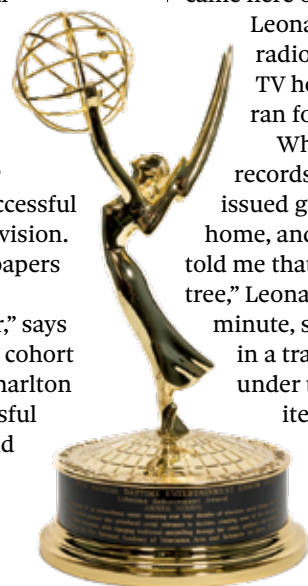
“We have scripts, awards and other artifacts from her television career,” Leonard says, as well as original clothing that she created for her McCall’s line and her photography books, calendars and cookbooks. “We even have her baby book!”

Soap Opera Legend

Creator of the long-running daytime series *All My Children*, Agnes Nixon '44 was one of the most successful writer-producers in the history of soap opera television. Archives holds a large collection of her personal papers and professional records.

“Agnes came here in the 1940s to study theater,” says Leonard. “When she looked around at her theater cohort at the time — including Patricia Neal '47, '94 H, Charlton Heston '45 and others who would go on to successful movie careers — she thought, ‘Maybe I should find some other path.’ So, she became a writer.”

While a student, Nixon wrote a semi-autobiographical radio play that channeled her grief about losing her fiancé in World War II. Now

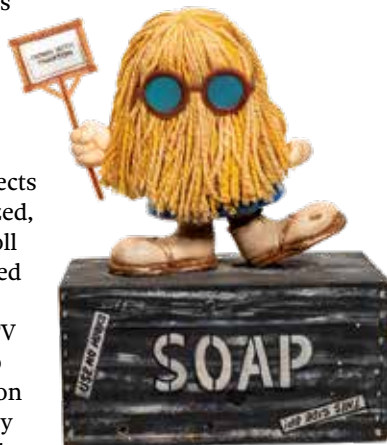


a treasured archival artifact, the script for *No Flags Flying* led to a job writing for serial broadcast pioneer Irna Phillips, which in turn led to Nixon’s long and illustrious TV writing career. In 2010 Nixon won the Daytime Emmy Award for Lifetime Achievement (below center), and when she returned to campus four years later to receive an Alumni Merit Award, she brought Leonard to the ceremony as her plus-one.

“When she arrived and got out of her car, she handed me that Emmy,” he recalls. “I was too timid to put it down the whole night, so people thought I was an Emmy winner and kept coming up to congratulate me.” Her legacy lives on through Northwestern’s Agnes Nixon Playwriting Awards, established in 1981.

What the Dawk Is That?

Among the more unusual objects in the Archives is this motorized, foot-tapping, silent protest doll — a Dawk (right) — as featured on *The Lloyd Thaxton Show*, a 1960s nationally syndicated TV program promoting rock, pop and R&B music. “Lloyd Thaxton '50 had served in the U.S. Navy at the end of World War II and came here on the GI Bill,” says



Leonard. “He had a huge, antic personality and became a radio disc jockey.” In addition to his eventual career as a TV host, he co-founded *Tiger Beat*, a teen magazine that ran for more than 50 years, starting in 1965.

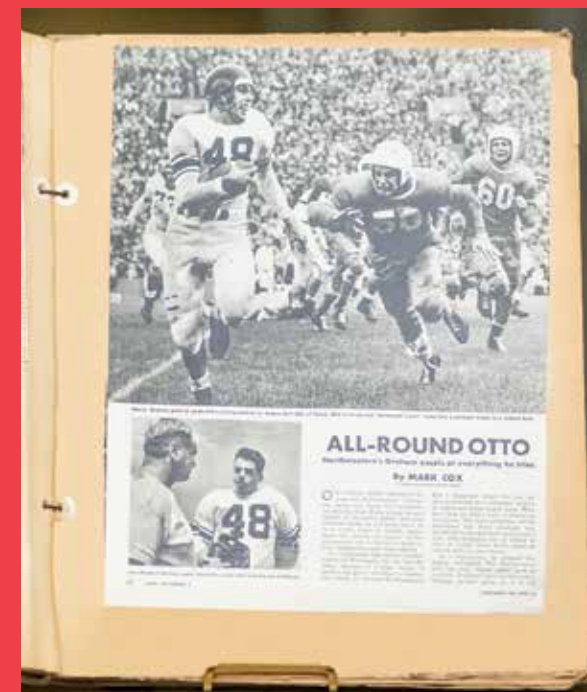
When his widow agreed to place Thaxton’s archival records at Northwestern, she also donated his military-issued grave marker (see detail on page 25). “I visited her home, and she pointed to this grave marker in her yard and told me that Lloyd wanted to be buried under his favorite tree,” Leonard recalls. “After pausing to let that sink in for a minute, she said, ‘But he’s not buried there.’ He was buried in a traditional cemetery, so she had put his grave marker under the tree instead. It’s a little unusual as an archival item, but it’s a future display item and a way of paying tribute to Thaxton and his service to the nation.”

Kingsley Day is a freelance writer and editor and the former lead publications editor in Northwestern’s Office of Global Marketing and Communications.

WHAT MAKES THE CUT?

Is there a secret to judging whether something is archives-worthy? First of all, Kevin Leonard says, University Archives is the official repository for “anything related to the high-level administrative functioning of the University.” Official publications — *The Daily Northwestern*, newsletters, Northwestern alumni magazines — are also automatically included. When it comes to personal papers, Leonard looks for “things that relate to the research and curricular strengths of the University.” Beyond that, “if it looks interesting and will bring people into Deering Library to do research, I go for it.”

→
 “[Lloyd’s widow] pointed to this grave marker in her yard and told me that Lloyd wanted to be buried under his favorite tree. After pausing to let that sink in ... she said, ‘But he’s not buried there.’ ... She had put his grave marker under the tree instead.”



←
 “[Otto Graham] was outstanding from his first game, ultimately winning All-American honors in both basketball and football. He was also a very fine outfielder on the Northwestern baseball team and even Northwestern’s intramural ping-pong champion.”

→
 “What’s funny is the sticker on the outside of the case — bright red lips — because she wore bright, fire engine-red lipstick as part of her signature look.”





TIPS TO BOOST YOUNG MINDS

**Northwestern experts share
the ABCs of early learning.**

BY CLARE MILLIKEN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER AND MARIA HOEY

We all want to give children the best possible foundation. Northwestern researchers and alumni across disciplines are working hard to understand how kids learn best, what tools and activities can bolster their development, and how families can use that information to help children reach their full potential.

MEET
THE
EXPERTS

Courtney King Blackwell '10, '15 PhD: associate professor of medical social sciences at the Feinberg School of Medicine whose research focuses on early childhood well-being



Sarah Pila-Leiderman '20 PhD: research assistant professor of medical social sciences at Feinberg who studies the intersection of technology and child development



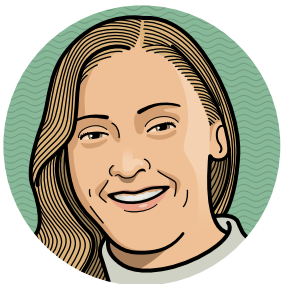
Onnie Rogers: associate professor of psychology at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences who researches children's identity development



Terri Sabol: associate professor of human development and social policy at the School of Education and Social Policy and former first grade teacher who researches early childhood education and policy



Jennifer Schwarz '98 MA, '05 PhD: vice president of learning and public programs for the Chicago Botanic Garden



Open Their Eyes

If you're going for a walk with a child, make observations about the nature around you. Splash in puddles or grab a handful of leaves and explain that rain makes puddles and leaves fall from trees. Allow children to explore the world around them.

Put Down Your Phone and Be Present

Engagement with parents and primary caregivers protects young children from stress and promotes well-being. Engagement can be simple: Count how many cars go by while driving with young kids. Identify colors or sounds in your surroundings. Use tub toys with your child during bath time.

Get Outside

Experiences in nature are "really important to kids' development," says Schwarz. Unstructured time outside — digging in the garden or standing on a hill of snow — teaches children to take calculated risks.

Support Interactive Play

"The concern that kids lost out academically during the pandemic is leading preschools to push out play and focus more on rote instruction, which is misaligned with how we know children develop and grow," says Sabol. "Not to say that academics are not important, but our research shows that play helps young children develop creativity, curiosity and problem-solving skills."

PLAY

Make Sure It's Made for Kids

Young children can learn from screen media. Make sure the media they're watching is made for children and educational in nature. Think PBS, not CSI.

Talk About the Tough Stuff

There are ways to ensure a conversation is developmentally appropriate and supports learning, even when broaching difficult topics. "When kiddos feel connected to you, they're paying attention," Rogers says. "So when it comes to talking about issues of racism or sexism or violence — heavy, complex topics — [that] foundation is key."

Keep It Relatable

Young kids don't understand concepts like race or ethnicity in the abstract; they understand them in what they observe, so keep things connected to their lived experiences. "If you ask a 5-year-old, 'What is race?' without providing any context, they might say, 'I'm going to [run faster than] you,'" Rogers says. "But if you talk about the concept of race by discussing where your family is from, the different skin colors in your community, the cultural traditions you celebrate, you can describe what race and ethnicity look like and how they are experienced."

Avoid Background Noise

If no one is watching the TV, turn it off. Having screens on in the background prevents play and interrupts opportunities to engage with your child and help them develop language.

Do TV Time Together

Prescreen a children's show to make sure it's not too scary or fast-paced. Ideally, watch the show with the child and ask questions — for instance, "Why is Elmo sad?" — to help kids understand what they're seeing.

Find a Balance

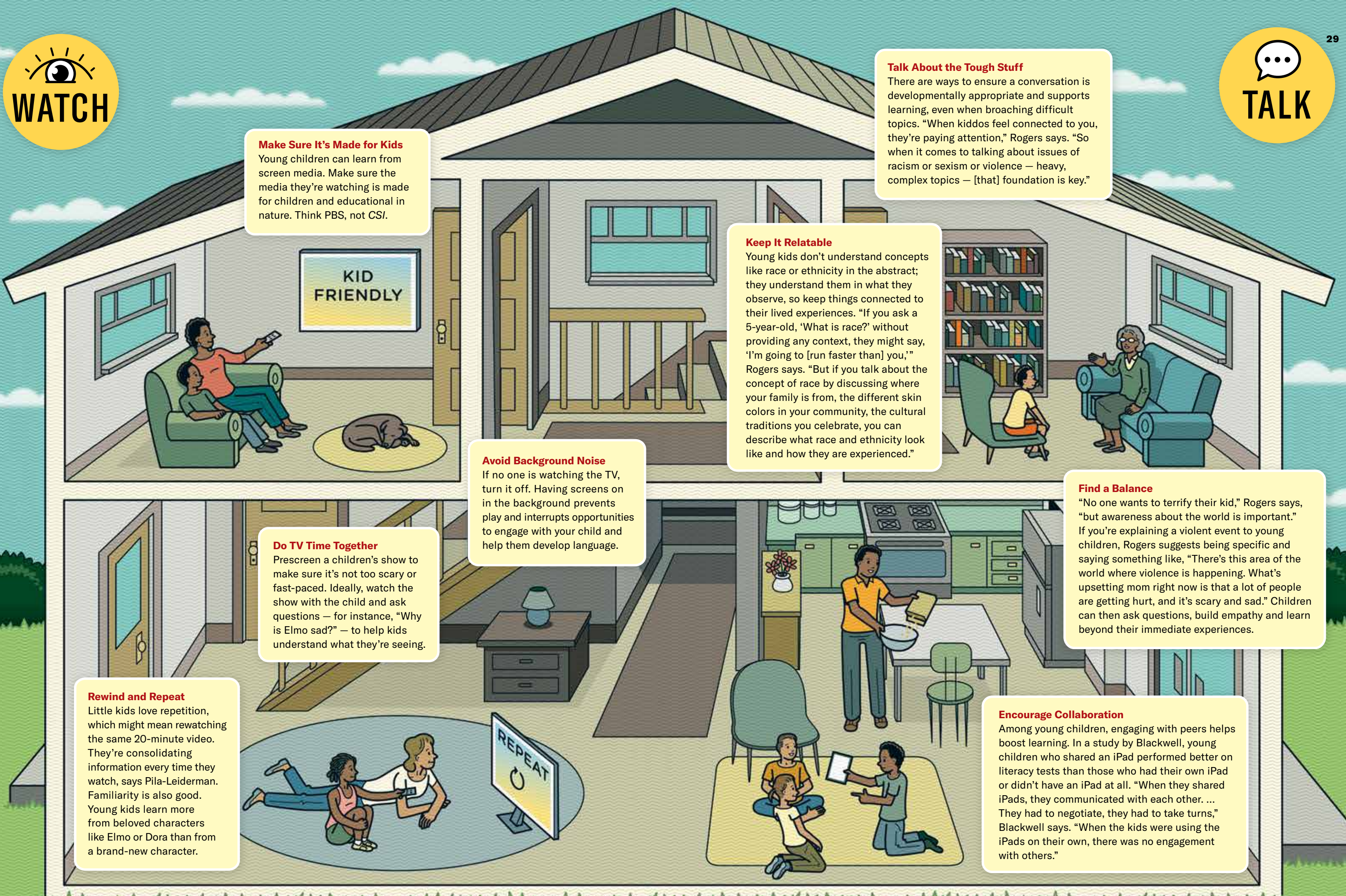
"No one wants to terrify their kid," Rogers says, "but awareness about the world is important." If you're explaining a violent event to young children, Rogers suggests being specific and saying something like, "There's this area of the world where violence is happening. What's upsetting mom right now is that a lot of people are getting hurt, and it's scary and sad." Children can then ask questions, build empathy and learn beyond their immediate experiences.

Rewind and Repeat

Little kids love repetition, which might mean rewatching the same 20-minute video. They're consolidating information every time they watch, says Pila-Leiderman. Familiarity is also good. Young kids learn more from beloved characters like Elmo or Dora than from a brand-new character.

Encourage Collaboration

Among young children, engaging with peers helps boost learning. In a study by Blackwell, young children who shared an iPad performed better on literacy tests than those who had their own iPad or didn't have an iPad at all. "When they shared iPads, they communicated with each other. ... They had to negotiate, they had to take turns," Blackwell says. "When the kids were using the iPads on their own, there was no engagement with others."





THE **Art** OF **ACTIVISM**

When his dreams of directing theater fizzled, **Art Johnston** instead became the leader of a legendary gay bar — and a relentless advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights. BY DIANA BABINEAU

A

RT JOHNSTON LEANS FORWARD ON HIS BARSTOOL AND SETS THE SCENE.

It was June 1977, and singer Anita Bryant was scheduled to perform at Chicago's Medinah Temple. Leveraging her celebrity status, the TV commercial star and former Miss America runner-up was also promoting her national anti-gay political campaign.

"She had enormous cultural influence," says Johnston. That year, Dade County, Fla., where Bryant lived, had passed an ordinance that made discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal. "But because of her influence, the voters turned back the law," he recalls.

In response to Bryant's Chicago tour stop, queer activists in Chicago planned a protest. Johnston joined the organizing team. On June 14, the day of the event, he saw something he'd never imagined possible: 5,000 queer people and allies, picketing in the streets in broad daylight.

"The idea of marching — outside, in the daylight, in downtown Chicago — it was exhilarating in a way I had never felt in my life," he says. "And I wasn't the only one. You could see it in people's eyes. It was like we were present at an awakening. Suddenly we're marching with thousands of other people — more gay people than I've ever seen, more gay people than I knew *existed*. Suddenly, we all started thinking, 'This has ... power.'"

A Seat at the Bar

Sitting down with Johnston — even for the first time — feels like reconnecting with an old friend. He is disarming, warm and kind.

"I have to warn you," he says with a grin. "I tend to ramble ... so you may have to stop me."

It's difficult, however, to interrupt someone with so many stories to tell about the origins of the queer liberation movement in Chicago. At 80, Arthur "Art" Johnston '75 MFA has spent more than four decades working as a civil rights champion. He co-founded Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest LGBTQIA+ rights organization. As part of the "Gang of Four," he lobbied for the groundbreaking passage of Chicago's 1988 Human Rights Ordinance, which banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. And he helped raise awareness and support when the AIDS crisis gripped Chicago in the 1980s.

But Johnston and his husband, José "Pep" Peña, are perhaps most widely known as co-owners of the largest gay bar in the Midwest: Sidetrack.

Today Sidetrack occupies nearly half a city block in Chicago's Northalsted neighborhood, formerly known as Boystown, the queer capital of the city. Inside, the bar boasts eight separate rooms, each with its own vibe — some neon-lit and loud, others quieter. Rainbow-painted stairs lead to a rooftop patio. The walls are lined with dozens of TV screens,

all perfectly synced, cycling through pop hits from Sidetrack's 40-plus years of music video archives.

On this Monday afternoon, Johnston sits at a high-top table, the video for Billy Joel's "Uptown Girl" playing at a low volume behind him. As he speaks, it is easy to see the love he has for his bar, his staff (many of whom have worked here for decades), his patrons and, most of all, his business partner and husband.

And it's impossible to tell the story of how Sidetrack and this neighborhood — and Chicago itself — became a hub for LGBTQIA+ people without telling Johnston's story.

Art's Two Loves

The first in his family to attend college, Johnston grew up in the blue-collar town of North Tonawanda, N.Y., near Niagara Falls. "My parents worked very hard, but they were very poor," he says. "They couldn't afford to send me to college."

Fortunately, Johnston earned a full scholarship to study French at the State University of New York at Albany (now the University at Albany, SUNY). After graduating, he worked at a private boarding school in Virginia, where he taught French, coached soccer and ran the theater program. He loved directing but had no formal training in it. So he applied for a one-year master's degree in theater at Northwestern — "the best school I could find," he says. "I was shocked when they admitted me."



↑ Art Johnston and Pep Peña, both members of Chicago's LGBT Hall of Fame, co-founded Sidetrack in 1982 and have run it together ever since.

Arriving in Evanston in 1972, Johnston planned to get his degree and return to Virginia. But when the boarding school's new headmaster eliminated Johnston's job, "I felt completely lost," he says.

His theater department friends wouldn't let him mope. They dragged him out for an evening on the town.

Johnston had never before ventured into Chicago — or into a gay bar for that matter. He was stunned. "I didn't know there were that many gay people in the *world*, let alone in a few bars in Chicago," he says. That night, he met Pep Peña, a charismatic bartender, and "instantly fell head over heels in love." The two started dating.

"I knew I was the luckiest human being in the world," Johnston says. "Pep came home with me one night to my Evanston apartment and never left."

So Johnston looked to extend his time in Chicago and at Northwestern. Dreaming of becoming a theater director, he successfully lobbied the head of the theater department to convert his one-year master's program into a three-year master of fine arts in directing. Upon graduating, Johnston

taught the "Cherubs" in the National High School Institute theater program. And in 1978 he co-founded the Dyad Theatre Company with Judith Rieser '68, '82 PhD. Dyad was "the culmination of six years of planning and hope," Daniel Rubin '78, '80 MS wrote in *The Daily Northwestern* that year.

Johnston had fulfilled his dream, he thought. But when the reviews came in for Dyad's shows, they were ... so-so.

"I've never talked about this," he says, frowning his brow. "I had to confront the fact that I was not as good as I thought I was. Everything I'd directed had been successful in that the people in my shows had loved it. But the shows didn't get the rave reviews I wanted. A professor once said to me, 'The fact that your actors like you does not make it a good production.' That was really hard to hear."

Until recently, Johnston viewed this as a failure. But looking back, he sees that experience as indicative of his talent for bringing people together and motivating them to act — in both the theatrical and political sense.

"I was always successful in building the team," he says. "It was always about the people for me."

Art Gets Sidetracked

In 1982 Johnston and Peña co-founded Sidetrack, a gay bar with an innovative, musical twist. On opening night, they set up a single projector screen and began playing songs they loved, set to visuals from old films.

“We rented VHS tapes,” recalls Peña. “This was before Blockbuster. ... The first video we ever played was the 1953 film *The War of the Worlds*, which had great sci-fi visuals, set to music from Jeff Wayne’s 1978 album by the same name. It was an obvious pairing, but it worked really well.”

The windowless, 800-square-foot room with no sign on the front door — so as not to draw unwanted attention — soon became a nightlife hotspot. “We ran out of beer on the first night,” Johnston says. After that, “we were jammed every night of the week ... except for Mondays.”

That gave Peña an idea: On Mondays, he suggested, they should host a show tunes singalong night. “And I said, ‘That’s a terrible idea,’” Johnston says, laughing at how wrong he turned out to be. In fact, Peña’s idea was so successful that bars across the country copied the format. (See “In the VJ Booth,” page 36.)

Sidetrack’s popularity, however, also made it a target. In the late 1970s and early ’80s, Johnston and Peña faced a hostile, homophobic environment. No Illinois laws prevented discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people.

“Being gay, or even being perceived as being gay, meant being excluded from jobs [and housing], and it also meant facing police harassment or arrests,” says Timothy Stewart-Winter, author of *Queer Clout: Chicago and the Rise of Gay Politics*. Up until the late ’70s, police often raided gay bars and arrested people for being there. Though the frequency of such raids dwindled in the ’80s, Johnston and Peña were both jailed at various times.

“We just accepted our second-class citizenship, which was sad. But that was just the way it was,” Johnston says.

Still the Sidetrack owners persevered. In the mid-1980s they bought the building that Sidetrack occupied and expanded the bar over time. In 1994 they finally put up a sign.

Sidetrack became a refuge for those who had no other place to be themselves. It also provided a space for Johnston and like-minded activists to strategize and gather strength for the civil rights fights ahead.

In Times of Crisis

Johnston’s talent for rallying his community and creating spaces of mutual care proved vital through the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s.

The virus, which emerged in the U.S. in 1981, began claiming the lives of gay men and other minorities at a disproportionate rate. Fear and confusion reigned, with no clear public health guidance about how to avoid contracting or transmitting the virus. Meanwhile, widespread stigma left many people with HIV/AIDS feeling completely abandoned.

Johnston’s tone is somber but resolute as he recalls this dark time. “We lost over half our staff,” he says grimly. “We had trouble even getting funeral homes to bury us.”

The community they’d built felt as though it might crumble. But Johnston took action. After it became clear that sexual contact was a primary mode of HIV transmission,



↑ Johnston chats with customers from behind the bar. He is committed to keeping Sidetrack accessible, he says, because this space is about building community. “Sidetrack does not charge cover. We don’t do it and will never do it.”

Hear more of Johnston’s stories in our video at alummag.nu/Sidetrack.

Johnston asked a Chicago public health clinic to disseminate safe sex information. The clinic refused.

“One of the horrible things that AIDS taught us is that we can truly only rely on each other,” Johnston says of the queer community. “We had to save ourselves.”

So Johnston called other cities’ health departments and received permission to reprint their safe sex materials. He and Sidetrack staff distributed the materials and handed out condoms to bar-goers. They also partnered with Open Hand Chicago, a program that delivered meals to those who were ill, as well as the Chicago chapter of ACT UP, an AIDS activist group that challenged institutions to respond to the crisis. For several years, Sidetrack held fundraising nights, where “every penny that came in went to the organizations,” says Peña.

“We learned resilience,” Johnston says. “We learned how the government works. We learned to register voters and to run people from our community for office — that’s why we have marriage and other rights today. We learned how to have influence.”

Art Joins the Gang

Johnston says his proudest achievement was lobbying for passage of the 1988 Chicago Ordinance for Human Rights, which prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation, disability, marital status, race, age, religion and more. First introduced in 1973, the legislation stalled for a decade. To revive the ordinance, activists formed the Gay and Lesbian Town Hall, which Johnston joined. He and his

“The idea of marching — **outside, in the daylight**, in downtown Chicago — it was **exhilarating** in a way I had never felt in my life. And I wasn’t the only one. You could see it in people’s eyes. It was like **we were present at an awakening**.”

— Art Johnston

three main organizing allies, Laurie Dittman, Rick Garcia and Jon-Henri Damski, the powerhouses of the group, were dubbed the “Gang of Four” by local newspapers.

Chicago Mayor Harold Washington ’52 JD voiced his support for the ordinance, and a vote was set for July 29, 1986. The Gay and Lesbian Town Hall planned a rally at Chicago’s Daley Plaza a few days before the vote and suggested closing all gay bars that day to encourage people to attend.

Johnston opposed the idea; instead, he said, keep the bars open and provide transportation to the rally. “The response was, ‘OK. You’re in charge!’” says Johnston. “And I thought, ‘What has my big mouth gotten me into?’”

After fundraising money from other gay-bar owners, Johnston rented buses from the Chicago Transit Authority. The rally on July 27, 1986, was a success. But the vote failed.

Johnston didn’t give up. His knack for persuasion (and his “stubbornness,” he says) came in handy as he lobbied for politicians’ support.

“Art’s work to pass the ordinance was transformational,” says Laura Washington ’78, ’80 MS, a longtime investigative reporter who served as Washington’s deputy press secretary. “This was at a time when many white Chicagoans would

not work with a Black mayor. But Art and his allies eagerly reached out to Washington and his administration. Art realized that they shared a common goal: to ensure justice for everyone in the city [and] to leave no one out. He was building bridges [with] communities of color and others on the fringes, long before it became fashionable.”

The ordinance passed in 1988. And in 1991, Johnston co-founded Equality Illinois (formerly the Illinois Federation for Human Rights), now the Midwest’s largest statewide LGBTQIA+ advocacy organization. Equality Illinois led the effort to pass an amendment to the Illinois Human Rights Act that added sexual orientation and gender identity to the state’s list of protected classes in 2006. “We decided early on that we were not going to give up on any vote, whatever their political affiliation,” says Johnston. “I became the person who worked most with the Republicans. If you go deep enough, you’ll usually find

something to communicate about with someone.”

Notably, Johnston “insisted that the Illinois bill include gender identity,” says Stewart-Winter. “That was a really big deal at the time, to care about trans people.”

Johnston has continued that commitment to inclusion. In 2014 he and a friend created OUTspoken, a monthly storytelling show at Sidetrack that received Chicago’s LGBT Hall of Fame recognition in 2022. This spring Johnston, Peña and their friends Edie Moore and Kevin Hauswirth (executive producer of the 2022 documentary *Art and Pep*) are opening the city’s first queer- and person of color–owned dispensary, called Sway, right across the street from Sidetrack. During the AIDS crisis, Johnston notes, queer people who were sick used cannabis to ease their pain.

“It used to be a cop bar,” he says of the Sway space. “You can’t have a better origin story than this. The gays are buying the cop bar to sell marijuana.” Inside the dispensary, Johnston and Peña’s arrest warrants will be proudly displayed.

At Sidetrack on this Monday evening, Johnston has more stories he could share. But the show tunes crowd has started to trickle in, and the bartenders inch the volume up on the TVs, now playing Ariana Grande’s “God is a woman.” It is

striking how full of joy Johnston is, despite the injustices he’s faced and the personal travails he’s overcome — including beating throat cancer in his 70s and surviving a COVID-19 hospitalization.

What gives him the strength, the courage, the resolve to keep fighting?

Johnston chuckles and leans back, thinking. After a moment, he nods.

“Because I know we are on the right side of history,” he says. “I’ve watched my community overcome so many obstacles. And I’m ready for whatever the next fight is.”

Through it all, it is love that has sustained him. “Pep makes me laugh every day. And to know that, no matter how much crap I fall into, no matter what happens — to know that there’s somebody at home who loves you? Oh, my God,” Johnston says, looking over at his partner of 50 years. “What a remarkable thing.”

Diana Babineau is senior editor and writer in the Office of Global Marketing and Communications.

IN THE VJ BOOTH

While other bars have imitated Sidetrack’s show tunes singalong format, no one has managed to replicate Pep Peña’s unique talent. “What sets us apart from everybody else is, when he’s Vjing, he’s putting on a show,” says Johnston.

“Vjing is a combination of the two things I’ve loved all my life: music and movies,” says Peña. The Monday night show tunes playlists are “all done live, so you’re making decisions in the moment. That’s the fun part, trying to connect one video to another.”

“It can be a visual connection, a sound connection, a story connection,” Johnston adds. “When Pep puts something on, he’s got eight other things that could follow it. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen people come in here who want to start a video bar, and they’re in the audience for two weeks, every day, writing down every song we play — as if that’s going to be the secret.” Johnston smiles. “There’s nothing Pep hates more than a shuffle button.”

Alumni

A HAT FOR EVERY HEAD

Chicago has welcomed more than 35,000 migrants from the U.S.-Mexico border since Texas began busing migrants to “sanctuary cities” in August 2022. Knowing many migrants would be experiencing their first Midwestern winter, longtime knitter and Chicagoan Margie Chan ’78 rallied her crafting community to donate hats for new arrivals. In September 2023 she launched the 500 Hats for Refugees initiative. Chan, herself a child of refugees, has gathered over 3,000 hats and partnered with public libraries and schools to distribute them. Learn more at alummag.nu/Chan.



MICHAEL GOSS

Creation



BAKING WITH PURPOSE

Five Questions with Maya-Camille Broussard '04 MA

Owner of the Chicago-based bakery Justice of the Pies and star of Netflix's *Bake Squad*, Broussard talks inspiration, accessibility and her fave pie flavors.

1

What do you love about being one of the four bakers on *Bake Squad*? I love that it's a friendly competition. We don't win anything. There's no money involved. Each of us is tasked with baking a beautifully designed dessert for a special event, such as a birthday or wedding, and then the guest client chooses their favorite dessert. The joy we get comes from seeing the client be absolutely amazed with what we've created for them — that's the value for us.

2

You founded Justice of the Pies in honor of your father. Did you grow up baking together? It wasn't until after my father [criminal defense attorney Stephen J. Broussard '70, '73 JD] passed away in 2009 that I began baking pies. My father was obsessed with baking pies. But I never really baked with him; rather, it was my Aunt Sandy who baked cakes and cookies with me. My dad loved to hoard his recipes, and he would not share them with me, probably because he wanted me to come up with my own!

3

Social justice is baked into the name of your business. What issues are important to you? I am an advocate for people living with disabilities because I have an invisible disability and I understand how it feels to not be accommodated. So I made sure that the brick-and-mortar store for Justice of the Pies was accessible. We have a wheelchair ramp and Braille on all our signage. Each room has a different textured floor, so anyone with a walking cane can determine the space they are in simply from the floor texture. The countertops are accessible in height too. We also fight food insecurity by providing culinary workshops for children who reside in lower-income communities that are affected by food apartheid. The goal is to help children become more self-sufficient in the kitchen.

BROUSSARD: DAN GOLDBERG

4

You published a cookbook! What are your favorite recipes? *Justice of the Pies: Sweet and Savory Pies, Quiches and Tarts + Inspirational Stories From Exceptional People* features people whom I consider to be stewards for equality and justice. There are profiles of them in the book alongside recipes I created inspired by them. For example, my ginger, carrot and asparagus quiche is inspired by Lauren Bush Lauren, co-founder of FEED, an organization that fights to end childhood hunger.

The strawberry basil key lime pie is one of my most creative flavors. And the deep-dish chilaquiles quiche is one of my favorites because I love the flavor of corn tortillas mixed with my quiche custard, savory black beans and homemade salsa.

5

How have you used your Northwestern degree? My master of arts in theater has been important to my career because I am essentially a storyteller. People don't always buy what you make — they buy *why* you make it.

One of my favorite professors was Rives Collins. In his storytelling class I learned about the nuances that come into play when you are sharing a story, and I've applied that to how I tell stories through food. So when I'm crafting a new recipe, I'm always thinking, "How can I tell a story on a plate?"

Read more at alummag.nu/Broussard.

ELSWIT: LOGAN WALLACE; DOWN BELOW RECORDING SESSION: ALEX KNAPP



DANCING WITH DATA

From left, Kate Elswit '02, Harmony Bench and master Dunham dance technique teacher Rachel Tavernier discuss motion capture as certified Dunham technique teacher Celia Benvenuti demonstrates. In their 2022–25 project *Visceral Histories, Visual Arguments: Dance-Based Approaches to Data*, Elswit and Bench investigate how dance-led approaches to data can enhance understandings of history, making visible the knowledge acquired and transmitted through bodily experiences. The demonstration recording took place in January 2023 at the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design at Ohio State University, in collaboration with the research project *Artificial Intelligence for Creative Movement Analysis and Synthesis*. Elswit is a professor at London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Read more on page 52.

RECORDING IN PROGRESS

Music From the Deep

A film director knows that music has the power to take viewers on an emotional journey. For independent filmmakers Collin Davis '11 and Matthew Valdez Litwiller '11, this rings especially true. Music is integral to the plot of their in-progress feature film, *Down Below*.

The film follows Alex, a classical composer experiencing writer's block after a public meltdown. Seeking inspiration, Alex visits her family's Midwestern lake house, where she hears a mysterious sound emanating from the bottom of the lake. As the sound grows louder, she begins to lose her grip on reality.

Davis and Litwiller, the film's co-writers and directors, say the sound functions as "an important character in the film." Once they developed the script, music was their top priority, an unusual



Travis LaBella, right, in Galvin Recital Hall

next step. (Music is typically added in postproduction.) In October 2023, Davis and Litwiller called upon Northwestern student musicians to record two original works for the film in Galvin Recital Hall. "It's cool to have this music exist before the film does, because it's going to inform the [film's] tone and feeling," Davis says.

The *Down Below* team also includes executive producers Scott Williams '12 and Nathalie Rayter '11, director of photography Travis LaBella '11, producer Alex Schwarm '09 and composer Zach Robinson '12. Filming begins this spring.



THIS SICK BEAT

Bryan West's 'Dream Job' Era

Journalism grad covers Taylor Swift's every move.

When Bryan West left journalism in 2018, he joked to a friend that he would only return to it if he could report on Taylor Swift every day.

Five years later, his dream job is a reality. West '11 saw the job post

for a full-time reporter to cover the pop star for *The Tennessean* and *USA Today* and immediately put together an application, including a video with 13 reasons he should be hired — namely his love of Swift's music and his familiarity with the Swiftie fandom. After two months of intense interviews, he was chosen from hundreds of applicants.

His Northwestern education, he says, gave him a leg up on the competition by making him “a true one-man band, multimedia journalist.” After he

completed his journalism residency at the NBC affiliate in Phoenix, the station hired him as a producer. He worked his way up to broadcast reporter and won two Emmys before taking a break to focus on his mental health.

Now, West is back in the game, covering everything from handmade soaps inspired by Swift's music to the star's relationship with Kansas City Chiefs player Travis Kelce. “I had never watched the NFL,” West admits. “Now I'm watching football every single weekend, and I can't believe I'm saying this, but I'm a fan.”

West is covering Swift's Eras Tour, which runs through 2024. It's a round-the-clock job, especially because Swift is known for making surprise announcements about new music and concerts. West knows he might have to drop everything for a story.

“She really — in an exciting way — kind of controls my life,” he says. “I am truly living a dream job that I am grateful for every day.”

Read more at alummag.nu/West.

MEMOIR

Leading Lady

by Charles Busch

Tony Award-nominated writer and Broadway playwright Charles Busch '76 contains multitudes. The author of *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*, one of the longest-running plays in off-Broadway history, Busch is also a cabaret performer, actor, director and drag legend. In *Leading Lady: A Memoir of a Most Unusual Boy*, Busch details his journey into the world of drag.

Upon arriving at Northwestern, Busch writes in his book, he was determined to “be a force to be reckoned with” in the theater department. His breakthrough moment came when he starred in *Sister Act*, a play he wrote as a student. He and his roommate Ed Taussig '76 “strapped into a red sequined [conjoined twins] costume with matching curly red wigs, fishnet stockings and platform shoes,” Busch writes. “For the first time ... I felt comfortable onstage.”

In the book, Busch shares memories of his ever-supportive Aunt Lil and the impact of his mother's death when he was 7 years old. The memoir also chronicles the celebrity encounters that came with Busch's drag fame.



WEST: JOSE ROMERO; LEADING LADY: SHANE COLLINS



Ridwell founders, from left, Ryan Metzger, Aliya Marder, Justin Gough and David Dawson

RECYCLING SQUAD

Good Riddance

The Metzger family's efforts to cut down on household waste became a multicounty recycling operation.

In late 2017 Ryan Metzger and his 6-year-old son, Owen, filled a room in their basement with plastic bags, Styrofoam, batteries, lightbulbs and clothes — things they knew could not easily be recycled by local public works services in the

Seattle area. One weekend, Metzger '01, '09 MBA started calling around to see how he could recycle old batteries.

Eventually, the Metzgers shared their recycling plans with neighbors and began collecting their hard-to-recycle items too. Soon 4,500

Seattle households wanted in on the service.

The father and son dubbed their operation Owen's List.

“It was a big ‘aha!’ moment to see that people have an unmet need that we may be able to solve,” says Metzger.

That “aha!” moment led him to create Ridwell with co-founders Aliya Marder '11, Justin Gough and David Dawson. Since 2018, Ridwell has helped divert more than

21 million pounds of plastic

and other hard-to-recycle materials from the waste stream. For a monthly fee, the Seattle-based company provides a biweekly, doorstep pickup of such items and responsibly recycles or reuses them through partnerships with over 200 local and national businesses and nonprofits.

Plastic bags, for example, are used to make composite decking. Old blankets become nestling material for animal shelters. Styrofoam is reused in picture frames or as packing peanuts.

The company is intentional about transparency. “A lot of recycling works through

brokers, and that has created a lack of trust between consumers and recycling companies. We flip that,” says Metzger. Now with

a team of more than 200, Ridwell has expanded operations to Atlanta; Austin, Texas; Denver; Los Angeles; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn.; Portland, Ore., and the San Francisco Bay Area.

“And we'd love to go to the Chicagoland area,” adds Metzger. “It's on the shortlist.”

FOR FOODIES

Baby's First Tikka Masala

Food industry veteran Erica Beth Levin '05 wanted to introduce her young children to global flavors, textures and spices. But when she searched her local grocery store for baby food brands, she found only a limited selection of pureed apples, sweet potatoes, peas and other common American flavors. So Levin founded Globowl, a company that creates baby and toddler food featuring flavors from around the world.

Globowl currently sells four flavors, including Pad Thai for Tots and Veggie Tikka Masala. Levin hopes to help parents take advantage of the “flavor window,” a period of time between 4 months and 6 months of age during which babies are most open to trying new foods. Diversifying babies' palates early on can help stave off picky eating and mitigate food allergies down the road, she says. Soon, each jar of Globowl also will include a QR code that opens a video describing the origins of the recipe's flavors and why they're important to a particular culture. “This [helps] set kids up for more curious thinking, open-mindedness [and] tolerance,” says Levin.



RIDWELL: COURTESY OF RIDWELL INC.; GLOBOWL: JUSTIN PARIS



Bryan West '11 has good reason to hog the spotlight these days — he's the first journalist assigned full-time to the Taylor Swift beat for *USA Today*. Learn more on page 40.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: SARINA BENOIT; SWIFT: FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES



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Career points scored by guard Boo Buie '23, who became Northwestern's all-time leading scorer in February. Buie earned first team All-Big Ten honors in his final season.

Read more on page 12.

