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... Diary of a Circumnavigator p. 11 ... Big Mama and the Campus
Maples p. 12 ... Paging Doctor AI p. 28 ... DJ, Drop the Beat p. 40

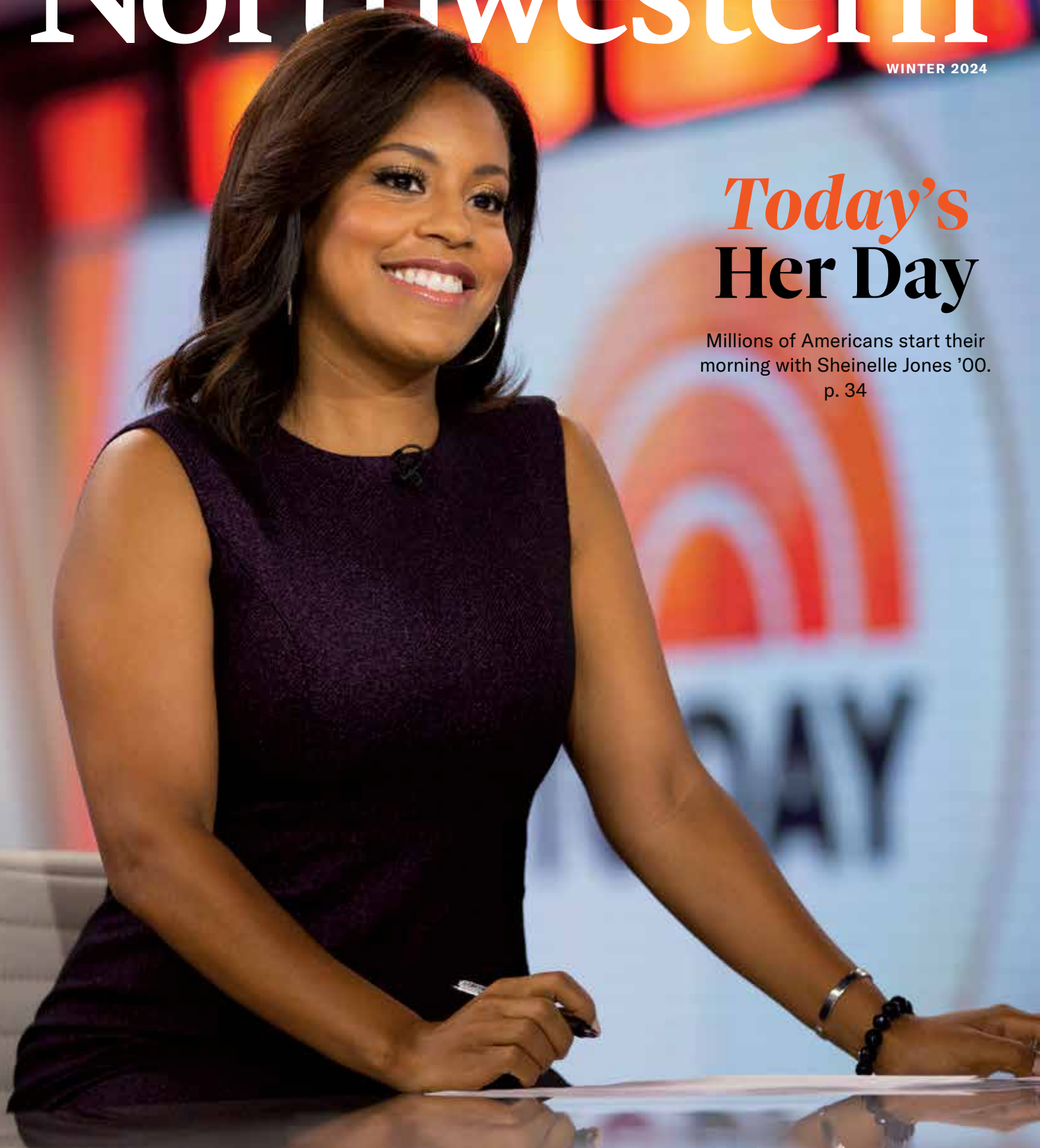
*"It was like somebody called central
casting and said, 'Hey, send in the
penguins.'"* p. 20

Northwestern

WINTER 2024

Today's Her Day

Millions of Americans start their
morning with Sheinelle Jones '00.
p. 34



Making History

Joy, excitement and camaraderie filled a theater inside Stateville Correctional Center in Crest Hill, Ill., as members of the Northwestern Prison Education Program (NPEP) became the first incarcerated people in U.S. history to earn bachelor's degrees from a top 10 university. Acclaimed author and activist Ta-Nehisi Coates delivered the commencement address, praising the NPEP class of 2023 for this "tremendous achievement."

The 16 graduates, including, from left, Taurean Decatur '23, Demetrice Crite '23, Robert Cloutier '23, Justin Cavazos '23, Lester Carroll '23, Michael Broadway '23 and Robert Boyd '23, each spoke briefly before receiving their diploma, as family, friends and other NPEP students cheered them on. "It's everybody's moment — it's not just ours," said Boyd to a crowd of more than 300. "We're here now because ... family carried us, professors carried us, we carried each other."

See the celebration at northwestern.edu/NPEP-graduation.



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FoundHer Physician

Inspired by her newborn's struggles with cradle cap, Ruchi Gupta created a probiotic scalp treatment. Now Gupta is one of three fellows in FoundHer, a program that supports women faculty who are first-time entrepreneurs.

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Loaves of Plenty

Suyash Mohan '23 MS came up with an inventive way to use old bread: Brew with it.



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Unexpected Hobbies

We're never *really* surprised to find out that Wildcats are multitalented. But these hobbies are seriously impressive. Meet a champion whistler and a prof who curls.



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← “In Philly, there was a little Black girl [who] said, ‘I watch you every morning, and whatever color you’re wearing, that’s what color I wear to school.’ ... That’s representation. And that gives me strength.”

— *Sheinelle Jones '00, co-host of the 3rd Hour of Today*

JEFFREY COLEMAN: CURLING: SHANE COLLINS;
BREAD: JOSIE NORTON; JONES: NBC; WALRUS: JOSH ANON '03

SEINFELD: NBC; AI ILLUSTRATION: THE BALUSSO TWINS



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Pop Culture Throwbacks

Jennifer Keishin Armstrong '96 breaks down five influential TV and movie premieres.



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Artificial Intelligence, MD

Researchers and clinicians across Northwestern are using AI to uncover genetic underpinnings of disease, reduce prenatal stress and help patients live healthier lives. *By Clare Milliken*

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Frame Worthy
Landscape and wildlife photographer Josh Anon '03 goes to extremes to capture awe-inspiring views.



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Talk Back

IN MEMORIAM

In Memoriam [fall 2023] notes the regrettable passing of Pamela Pierce Hepple '79 PhD. Pam was a good friend and was also associate dean of women [at Northwestern]. She was a source of good advice and counsel and a substantial contributor to many of the positive actions that came out of the Associated Student Government during that somewhat turbulent era [of the 1970s]. She will be missed. Dave Conant '72 St. Louis

ASIAN AMERICANS IN THEATER

I am concerned that none of the actors were named in the caption for the story “An All-American Road Trip” [Creation, fall 2023], especially when Jessica Ko '02 was in the center of the five actors. Once again, Asian Americans in theater are unacknowledged, [which is] ironic since the entire article is about a play featuring Asian Americans. Joanne Park '98 Foothill Ranch, Calif.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

It was heartening to read what Heather Harding '92 is doing to encourage inclusive education in our schools [“Democracy Depends on Inclusive Education,” My Northwestern Direction, Voices, fall 2023]. I recently returned from a trip to Germany. On May 10, 1933, the National Socialist German Students’ Association’s propaganda office organized a nationwide day of book burning to

eradicate books incompatible with Nazi ideology, including books by Jewish, communist, liberal, pacifist and gay authors. Today, in Bonn, Germany, this shameful event is commemorated by several plaques in the ground that look like the spines of the books that were burned. Among them were the works of 19th-century poet and author Heinrich Heine. In the Berlin Opernplatz [now Bebelplatz plaza] these words written by Heine in the early 1820s are displayed in German: “That was but a prelude; where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people as well.”

Instead of relics of a distant past, these are warnings about the ever-present risk of what oppressive governments and societies are capable of, beginning by banning books, which is happening today in Florida, Texas and other states. Stephen Rohde '66 Sebastopol, Calif.

THE CHICAGO MARATHON

The Chicago Marathon [“What I Love: In It for the Long Run,” Voices, fall 2023] is like another Christmas for me. I discovered the joy of running in my 30s, and the marathon weekend is my favorite weekend in the city. I especially looked forward to this year’s marathon — my 11th time participating and the 11th for my wife, Jennifer Cheng '00 — along with my 25th Northwestern class reunion, which took place the same weekend. Kinnier Lastimosa '98 Chicago

I completed the Chicago Marathon twice — I ran it in 2016 and again in 2018, that year raising money for the Pat Tillman Foundation. I can say without reservation that it is as fun and well-run an event as anything, anywhere in the world. I would never have guessed that running 26 miles would be fun, but it really is. Scott G. Sanders '93 MBA Atlanta

KNITWESTERN

If I lived anywhere near campus, I’d join Knitwestern [“Knitting Us Together,” News, fall 2023]. Then again, I wouldn’t be surprised if some alum Knitwestern-like groups were to organically spring up. Audrey Honig Geragosian '89 New Britain, Conn.

What a wonderful idea! I love to craft, but I’m not always sure I need another hat or scarf or sweater. We need an alumni extension. I think it would also be a good networking opportunity for diverse communities. Andrew Davidson '16 MBA Chicago

STRIKE UP THE BAND

Such a joy to see these photos and looking forward to watching the videos as they become available [“Strike Up the Band,” Alumni, fall 2022]. Many of the pictures are from the early 1980s, during the time that Jackie Kalmes was assigned to take photos during the band season. I had the pleasure of helping her edit them into a slideshow. I loved my time in NUMB [the Northwestern University “Wildcat” Marching Band]. It was the quintessential college experience, even during the [football team’s] losing streak! Stacey Silverman Singer '83 Englewood, Colo.

Voices

NAVIGATING THE WORKPLACE

Women Leaders Must Overcome Self-Judgment

By Ellen Taaffe

Women are completing college and graduate programs, entering the workforce and striving for higher-level positions in greater numbers than ever before. Today 70% of high school valedictorians are women, yet in 2023 only 10% of the Fortune 500 CEOs were women.

To be sure, navigating workplaces

that were built for a different time and a different employee population is a challenge. Becoming a leader when you haven’t seen someone in leadership who looks like you is not easy. And research shows that women are expected to lead the same way men lead, which creates institutional obstacles in some work cultures.

But my contention is that women face another powerful, often invisible obstacle that we must break through to make it anywhere close to bigger leadership roles. It is not the glass ceiling — it is the mirrored door.

At some point in their careers, many women encounter this mirrored door phenomenon — the internal place where, when presented with opportunities, we reflect inward and hesitate, seeing ourselves as unworthy or unready to move forward. This self-judgment can cause us to hold back from raising our hands or applying for a new role. And so, despite our hard work and comparable

performance, we halt our own growth and get left behind. When we hesitate, awaiting a more perfect time and self, gathering the energy to feel more prepared and certain, we avoid the risk of imagined failure — but we also forget the value we can bring. Meanwhile, the men in our workplaces jump at new opportunities more frequently and with far more ease.

Clearly, women may be locked out at times by biases and systemic issues, but the metaphor of the mirrored door suggests that we also may be locking ourselves in. Frequently we hold ourselves back, fearing failure, doing what has worked before. And in doing so, we miss seeing that all the growth is on the other side of action. But there is a way to break through and overcome the gendered, sky-high, unrealistic expectations that women have internalized over the course of our lifetimes — expectations that keep us from reaching our full potential.

In my recent book, *The Mirrored Door: Break Through the Hidden Barrier That Locks Successful Women in Place*, I explain why the five perils of success — preparing to perfection, eagerly pleasing, fitting the mold, working pedal to the metal, and patiently performing and expecting rewards to follow — get us to a certain level, and then may prevent us from taking the next step in our careers as expectations rise. For example, the perfectionist who relies on hours of preparation can become seen as someone who can’t make a decision or delegate, someone you want on your team but not to lead it.

When we become more aware of how societal perceptions of women have distorted our self-reflections to the point that they hold us back, we can more consciously and courageously move forward. We learn that courage is the prerequisite to action, and confidence is the outcome.

When we do take the risk — by asking questions, putting our less-than-perfect ideas forward, speaking up for ourselves and what we want — we strengthen our self-belief, learn from trial and error, and build a brighter future for ourselves and the women of future generations.

Ellen Connelly Taaffe '97 MBA, '12 CERT is a clinical associate professor of management and organizations at Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management.



CATHERINE HEATH

↑ Ellen Taaffe directs the Women’s Leadership Program at the Kellogg School of Management.

SOUND OFF

Unexpected Hobbies

Northwestern community members share their surprising recreational activities.

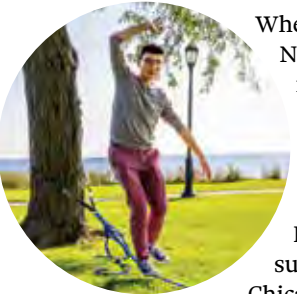
Xiaomin Bao, assistant professor of molecular biosciences and dermatology

My hobbies — snorkeling and diving and antique hunting — enrich my life journey as an explorer. My love for animals is deeply satiated when I snorkel or dive, allowing me to observe marine creatures in their natural habitats. I also appreciate fine art and often collect unique pieces from estate sales and antique shops. A common thread binding these hobbies is the element of surprise. Whether it's a chance encounter with an eagle ray near the shore or the discovery of a mid-century carved stone owl, the unpredictability enhances the thrill.



Jason Wang, assistant professor of physics and astronomy

When I started at Northwestern in 2022, I was looking for ways to stay active that didn't involve going to the gym. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Chicago has an active circus scene — and that the Actor's Gymnasium near campus offers classes in aerial arts such as trapeze, lyra [aerial hoop], silks and tightrope walking. Aerial arts combine strength training, flexibility, balance and performance in fun and interesting ways. It also makes you really appreciate Cirque du Soleil!



→ Jeffrey Coleman on the ice

Jeffrey Coleman, associate professor of Spanish and Iberian studies

After watching the 2018 Winter Olympics with a bunch of my friends and seeing the U.S. men's curling team's gold medal victory, I was like, "Where can we do this? It seems really fun." I live in Milwaukee, and lo and behold, Wisconsin is the No. 1 place in the country to curl. The sport is completely enthralling to me. I'm a big strategy nerd, and one of the greatest things about curling for me is that it's essentially chess on ice.

Ricardo Hernandez Alcala, doctoral student and graduate researcher for the Scheidt Group

My father introduced me to the world of analog watches. Collecting them is a tradition in our family that started with a small timepiece from my great-uncle and has evolved over the past 40 years into the collection my father and I maintain. My father taught me everything there is to know about these machines, and yet I'm still perplexed by their intricacies. One of the most rewarding experiences is thinking it will be impossible to restore a piece and then, through sheer luck, having all the components harmonize to create the ticking sound.

Jay Winston '98, choral and vocal music teacher at The Pingry School

I've always whistled. Whenever I'm walking, I'm whistling — and probably

annoying people. But I never knew about the Masters of Musical Whistling International Festival and Competition until May 2023. I submitted my audition videos just before the cutoff date. A few weeks later I was invited to the live auditions in Hollywood to compete against whistlers from all over the world. This was the first time I had an opportunity to express my musicality where whistling was considered the instrument. I prepared all summer but I did not expect to win the competition. I was in absolute shock when they named me the new world champion whistler.



Catherine Carrigan, assistant professor of instruction in the Department of Radio, Television and Film

I took my first woodworking class the year my grandfather died, as a way to feel connected to him again. I had always assumed he was the only handy person in our family, but it turns out that handiness, like most things, is a learnable skill. Woodworking requires my complete attention — I'm operating heavy machinery, after all — and it allows me to make beautiful, functional objects for myself and my friends.

Read about other surprising hobbies and share yours at alummag.nu/hobbies.

BAO: COURTESY OF XIAOMIN BAO; WANG: MARTIN WILSON '10 MS; COLEMAN: SHANE COLLINS; WINSTON: JIM SABO PHOTOGRAPHY



MY NORTHWESTERN DIRECTION

To Find the Truth, Cut Through the Noise

Armed with a love for Shakespeare and a degree in languages and literature, I graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2009 amid the Great Recession. I applied to doctoral programs in English, thinking, "I am going to be a professor!" Never mind the warnings that the job market for college educators was collapsing, with more PhD graduates than tenure-track positions. I would be the exception (I hoped). What sold me on Northwestern — and sustained me through seven years of study — was the school's motto: *Quaecumque Sunt Vera*, a Latin phrase that means "whatsoever things are true." I was inspired to pursue truth wherever it led. And I found studying literature to be the ultimate pursuit of truth.

The PhD program was difficult. Three years in, I choked on a qualifying exam, putting my status in jeopardy. The department let me decide whether to continue or call it quits, essentially saying: "Stay if you believe in this — but don't do it for the sake of maintaining inertia. Search your soul, because it will only get harder." Staying was the right choice. I buckled down, and four years later I was a doctor of philosophy. I was hired onto the core faculty for the McGaw Bioethics Clinical Scholars Program at the Feinberg School of Medicine. Despite the odds, I was finally teaching at a university. But what surprised me even more was that, somewhere along the way, Northwestern's interdisciplinary excellence had made me an entrepreneur as well — without me even realizing it. I had a side

By Aaron Greenberg '12 MA, '17 PhD

Greenberg is co-founder of Biograph and teaches at Lake Forest College and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He wrote *Recorded Time: How to Write the Future*. He lives in Chicago.

hustle as a writer for folks who wanted to tell their life stories. This gig evolved into a business, and Northwestern had given me the skills to run it.

Years of graduate research taught me how to cut through noise to find truth. Presenting at conferences alongside physicians, philosophers, political scientists and playwrights prepared me to repurpose insights from one field to another and pitch ideas to diverse audiences. Writing a dissertation trained me to identify gaps and stake claims in the marketplace of ideas. The path toward a PhD, like entrepreneurship, requires inexhaustible stores of self-motivation. When nobody is dictating how to invest your time, you must find direction within.

In an age deluged with information, discerning what is true is essential. As a storytelling species, we find truth by sharing authentic stories that emerge from experience. If we lack resources to tell our tales, we risk forgetting who we are or letting others misrepresent our experience. Autobiography is the power to speak for oneself. Once I understood this, I wanted to share this magic with the world.

In 2018 my brother AJ and I co-founded Biograph with a mission to empower everyone to tell their own stories. We write, design and publish custom biographies for families and organizations. We also created a free storytelling app that guides folks to create family history collections that include visuals, voice recordings, texts and intergenerational conversations.

We've had the privilege of hiring Northwestern students and alums. And we've partnered with Northwestern's Center for Civic Engagement to design an intergenerational storytelling project, training undergraduate and graduate students on best practices of oral history.

As Biograph continues to grow, I remain a student of truth. In the end, Northwestern has given me many avenues to pursue it.

“Three years in, I choked on a qualifying exam, putting my status in jeopardy. The department let me decide whether to continue or call it quits.”

WHAT INSPIRES ME

Family Matters

Filmmaker mines her past to break through political divides and explore universal truths.

Maryam Keshavarz '97, writer and director of *The Persian Version*, a film based on her experiences growing up in a boisterous Iranian American family

Even though I was born in America, I learned how to be “American” by watching TV. I loved all the '80s sitcoms, but I never saw myself reflected in those shows. And I just took that as a given. But later, there was a lot of xenophobic rhetoric on the rise, and I really wanted to create a story that was reflective of my community, that was full of joy. Anyone can watch this film and feel connected to this wild family, regardless of your political background. Comedy and the absurdity of family can be a way to break through all our political

differences. It is the film I’ve always wanted to see on the screen. I love things that are very personal to filmmakers. I loved Lulu Wang’s *The Farewell* and Barry Jenkins’ *Moonlight*, films that are based on the writer’s personal experience. I find inspiration in people who are truthful and take risks to tell something about their communities — communities where often we’re told that we shouldn’t talk about certain things to save face.

Maryam Keshavarz became a filmmaker in the early 2000s. *The Persian Version*, a Sony Pictures Classics film, ran in theaters nationwide last fall. It won the Audience Award and the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival.



↑ *The Persian Version* opened in theaters nationwide Nov. 3.

Keshavarz is the only director in Sundance history to claim the Audience Award twice. Her 2011 film *Circumstance* also won the honor. Read more at alummag.nu/Keshavarz.

IN THE NEWS

Faculty Speak Up

Northwestern faculty weigh in on improving life expectancy, monitoring the white nationalist movement, the importance of disaster medicine and protecting the freedom of the press.

“Aggressive tobacco control and taxation policies are about the quickest way [to help increase longevity in the short term]. But for the long term we [must] launch our children into healthier trajectories [by providing] educational ... opportunities and access to clean air and water and healthy foods.”
Donald Lloyd-Jones, chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine, to *Politico*

“The Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers [who have been] sentenced for seditious conspiracy [are] part of a ... movement of white power activists ... who have waged war on the United States since the 1980s. ... It would be a huge mistake to think that these sentences will slow the activity of this movement. This ... is like cutting the head off a Hydra.”
Kathleen Belew, associate professor of history, to *PBS News Hour*

“I was ... compelled to bear witness to atrocities that some people experience only in words and images — or opt to ignore. It was a way of ... [connecting] with local doctors and patients, many of whom feel ... isolated. ... Being physically present ... let my fellow physicians know that they are not forgotten.”
Samer Attar, associate professor of orthopedic surgery, in a *New York Times* essay about his work in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine

“Unfortunately, there’s an atmosphere that’s been created by public officials that the press is the enemy of the people, that the press is working contrary to the public good, when, in fact, the opposite is true.”
Tim Franklin, senior associate dean of the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications, to *Voice of America*



BELEW: SHANE COLLINS; ATTAR: © 2011 NORTHWESTERN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL; FRANKLIN: JENNA BRAUNSTEIN PHOTOGRAPHY; THE PERSIAN VERSION: COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

RACE CAR: LESLIE-ANNE MOCK



Around the world in 80 days — or less p. 11

Students race to build a track-ready car p. 13

News

MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH

Implant Detects Organ Rejection

A first-of-its-kind device sends health alerts to transplant patients.

For the more than 250,000 people in the U.S. living with a transplanted kidney, monitoring their organ’s health is an ongoing journey. To monitor kidney health, physicians can track markers in patients’ blood samples, an unreliable method that sometimes leads to false negatives or positives. Or physicians can conduct a



Illustration by Dan Page

“You worry about the possibility of kidney rejection. ... You’re walking a tightrope of anxiety.”

— Transplant recipient Joaquin Brieva

biopsy, an invasive procedure that carries risks of infection, bleeding and even inadvertent damage to nearby tissues.

For Lorenzo Gallon, a transplant nephrologist at Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine, neither option is ideal to monitor kidney health after a transplant.

“Many of my patients feel constant anxiety — not knowing if their body is rejecting their transplanted organ or not,” Gallon says. “They may have waited years for a transplant and then finally received one from a loved one or deceased donor. Then they spend the rest of their lives worrying about the health of that organ.”

Searching for a more comfortable, continuous monitoring method, Gallon called bioelectronics pioneer John A. Rogers, director of the Querrey Simpson Institute for Bioelectronics at Northwestern. Renowned for developing biocompatible devices for clinical-grade monitoring and diagnostics, Rogers worked with Gallon to create the first electronic device to monitor transplanted organ health continuously and in real time.

Immediately after performing transplant

surgery, physicians could implant the ultrathin, flexible, soft device directly onto the surface of the transplanted kidney, where it would be able to detect temperature irregularities associated with inflammation. (Gallon hypothesized that sensing temperature increases and unusual temperature variations might provide an early warning sign for potential transplant rejection.) Then, the device would alert the patient or physician by wirelessly streaming data to a nearby smartphone or tablet.

The device could be especially helpful because organ rejection can occur at any time — immediately after the transplant or years down the road — and it often happens silently, without symptoms. If rejection is not caught soon enough, the patient will become seriously ill — likely needing yet another kidney transplant or ongoing dialysis to avoid death.

“If rejection is detected early, physicians can deliver anti-rejection therapies to improve the patient’s health and prevent them from losing the donated organ,” says Rogers, the Louis Simpson and Kimberly Querrey Professor of Materials Science and Engineering,

Biomedical Engineering and Neurological Surgery. “If rejection is ignored, it can be life threatening.”

Joaquin Brieva, associate professor of dermatology at Feinberg, is familiar with the anxiety that accompanies transplant surgery. Born with a congenital form of kidney disease, Brieva received a kidney transplant in September 2022. “Within two days of my transplant, my kidney function was back to normal,” says Brieva, who was not involved with the study. “But then you worry about the possibility of kidney rejection. ... You’re walking a tightrope of anxiety.”

This past summer, researchers in Gallon’s lab tested the device on small animal models and saw promising results. In the study, the device sensed warning signs of kidney rejection three weeks earlier than current methods. Those three weeks could make all the difference.

“Having this device would be reassuring,” says Brieva, who has lost nine family members to renal failure. And for other organ recipients, a device that continuously monitors organ health could help avoid unnecessary medications while providing much-needed peace of mind. While the primary studies were conducted with kidney transplants, the researchers assume the device could also work for other organ transplants, including the liver and lungs.

AN OPEN MIND TO THERAPY

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Hyun started her journey in Buenos Aires, where she interviewed psychologists who focus on trauma. She worried that interviewees would be reluctant to discuss how the Dirty War — a period of military dictatorship in Argentina in the 1970s and ‘80s — affected their work. But instead she found that acceptance of mental health struggles is a cultural norm. “When I asked the psychologists about stigma around receiving therapy, they all said there is no such thing in Argentina,” Hyun says. “Buenos Aires has one of the world’s highest ratios of psychologists and therapists to citizens.”



Elizabeth Hyun’s Circumnavigators Travel-Study Grant was provided by Northwestern’s Office of Undergraduate Research and the Chicago Chapter of the Circumnavigators Club. Learn more about her research at alummag.nu/Hyun.

ICYMI ILLUSTRATIONS: LESLIE-ANNE MOCK; BUENOS AIRES: ISTOCK; OTHER MAP PHOTOS COURTESY OF ELIZABETH HYUN

MENTAL HEALTH

Around the World in (Under) 80 Days

With a Circumnavigators Travel-Study Grant, senior global health and neuroscience double major Elizabeth Hyun traveled to five post-conflict nations in 10 weeks to study how historical context contributes to trauma diagnoses.



IMMERSED IN HISTORY

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Hyun interviewed psychologists in Belfast and visited sites related to the Troubles, the late-20th-century period of conflict between unionists who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom and nationalists who wanted to join the Republic of Ireland. “It was overwhelming to be where these car bombings and shootings happened,” Hyun says. But she was impressed with the Regional Trauma Network because of its holistic approach to treating trauma. “They collaborate with community organizations, and their team includes many different roles — not just therapists.”

COMFORT IN COMMUNITY

Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

After a month of solo travel, Hyun landed in Sarajevo, where she explored the city with other Northwestern study abroad students. “It was so different to go from traveling by yourself and knowing no one to being in a place where people are looking out for you,” Hyun says. Continuing her research, she interviewed staff at Wings of Hope, a nonprofit that promotes human rights, education and mental health support. One interviewee told Hyun that his background in peace-building projects has proved useful in his work as a psychotherapist, as many of his clients experience trauma related to the Bosnian War of the early 1990s.



AN UNEXPECTED CHALLENGE

Tokyo, Japan

After arriving in Tokyo, Hyun spent a week preparing for interviews. But then she was hospitalized for an illness unexpectedly. Though she recovered after one week, Hyun had to cancel most of her interviews as a result. Still, her time in Japan taught her a lesson in prioritizing her well-being while abroad. “When you’re traveling for 10 consecutive weeks, you have to check in with yourself,” she says. “It’s OK to rest. It doesn’t mean you’re wasting a day.”



CULTURE SHIFT

Seoul, South Korea

Hyun ended her trip in her birthplace, South Korea, her “home away from home.” Having grown up “between American and Korean cultures,” it was interesting to assess the mental health landscape in Seoul from a research perspective, she says. She noted a shift in the public’s perception of trauma following recent events such as the 2014 sinking of the Sewol ferry, when 250 schoolchildren died, and the 2022 Halloween crowd crush in Seoul’s Itaewon neighborhood, which resulted in 159 deaths. In recent decades, the nation has shifted from “perceiving trauma as something one needs to suppress to something that is deserving of help,” Hyun wrote on her travel blog.

ICYMI: Top Digital Stories of 2023

Scan code or visit alummag.nu/icmyi-2023.



● Did you know that during World War II a **Northwestern music student served in the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion**, the only U.S. Army unit comprising all women of color? Read about Margaret Sales Semmes.



● Northwestern’s creative writing program prepared dystopian fiction writer Veronica Roth ‘10 for **the toughest part of being a bestselling novelist**: learning how to take criticism.



● From building an automated aquaponics system to advocating for Arab American health, members of **the class of 2023 left their mark** on Northwestern. See them all in action.



● In these cold months, let your heart be warmed by a few **stories of alumni romance**. Valentine’s Day inspired our most popular digital exclusive of 2023.



MAPLE TREES ON TAP

A Sweet Study

Students tap campus maples for lessons on Indigenous culture and climate change.

Walking around the Evanston campus this winter, you may notice 1-gallon jugs attached to maple trees, slowly filling with a clear liquid — raw sap.

Students in the Maple Syrup and Climate Change course, taught by assistant professor of instruction Eli Suzukovich III, are tapping sugar, silver and Norway maples on campus to examine the local effects of climate change on soil and plant life. They record air and ground temperatures around the trees, sap flow rates and more.

Students also learn about the maple syrup industry, including maple tapping by both Native American and non-Native harvesters, farmers and companies, as well as how Indigenous people today use maple tapping for food sovereignty — a people’s right to food that is healthy, culturally appropriate and sustainably produced.

“We learned a ton about Indigenous culture and the importance of trees, spices and sugar,” says Julianna Zitron,

a fourth-year journalism student who took the course last winter. “I loved [that] this class was more than just [classroom] learning. ... My favorite days were when we walked around and learned about the plants and animals that [live here].

“It was super interesting to see the impacts of climate change on our own campus. One of the trees we tapped, the big maple tree on Deering [Meadow] lovingly known as Big Mama, produced a ton of sap, while some of our other trees produced very little.”

Big Mama is located close to Sheridan Road, where car emissions and concrete sidewalks have had notable effects on the tree. “The levels of lead and copper [in the soil near] Big Mama were the highest of all our [samples],” Zitron says. “Luckily Big Mama’s size allowed her to [keep producing] a ton of sap.”

At the end of the course some of the students boil down their sap collections for a sweet reward — pure, homegrown maple syrup.



↑ Journalism student Julianna Zitron checks on tapped trees on Northwestern’s Evanston campus.



ZITRON: SHANE COLLINS

ALL THAT JAZZ

This winter, Nitasha Tamar Sharma offers a new Black studies course for students: **New Black Music in Chicago: Artists’ Reflections on Music, Race and Entrepreneurship**. “Being a musician today is not just about the music,” says Sharma, Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence in Black studies and Asian American studies. “Students in my class will learn about music entrepreneurship: How

do you work with a manager? What does a publicist do?” The class features Q&A sessions with artists and industry professionals, as well as open-to-the-public master classes with select musicians. Students will then organize a free public jazz event for the community, which will take place March 4 as part of the Department of Black Studies’ annual Leon Forrest Lecture Series.

'CAT TALES

Still Amazing



The lineup of once and future stars who performed at Amazingrace — a student-run coffeehouse turned performance venue — still impresses: folk singer and civil rights activist Odetta, songwriter and composer Randy Newman, the Grateful Dead and many, many more.

Launched by students in 1971, Amazingrace began serving coffee and pastries and hosting small performances in the basement of Scott Hall. After moving into Shanley Hall, a decades-old wooden shack on campus, Amazingrace soon became Evanston’s hub for countercultural expression and live music and entertainment. The performance venue eventually moved off campus to south Evanston. Amazingrace hosted folk, rock, jazz and bluegrass concerts, as well as poetry readings, comedy shows and theater performances. Though Amazingrace closed in 1978, many of the original organizers, self-described ‘Gracers, still meet virtually every Friday.

Learn more about the history at northwestern.edu/Amazingrace.

AMAZINGRACE: COURTESY OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES; RACE CAR: COURTESY OF CAMERON ESTRADA '25



↑ From left, Cameron Estrada, Sarah Yung, Charlie Seifert, Drake Vogelpohl and Joshua Feist '23, '23 MS

START YOUR ENGINES

Race to the Finish Line

Students design and build a Formula-style race car in less than 10 months.

Last fall, students buzzed around the University’s Ford Motor Company Engineering Design Center, dry-erase markers in hand, covering several whiteboards with sketches of wheel assemblies, machine dimensions and other design ideas for a fast-moving project: building a race car. And by late spring, more than 60 Northwestern undergrad and grad students will bring those plans to life. Each year, Northwestern

Formula Racing designs and manufactures a Formula-style race car. These single-seat vehicles have open cockpits and wheels outside the car’s main body. At a Society of Automotive Engineers competition each spring, Northwestern students race their car against hundreds of other college teams’ entries. Judges evaluate each car for its overall design, acceleration, endurance and more. Open to students with all levels of engineering

experience — including no experience — Northwestern Formula Racing is a “barrier-free organization,” says project manager Skye Garcia, a junior journalism major. This year, the team will build an electric vehicle for only the second time in the club’s history. With less than 10 months to prepare, students must learn and work quickly. “I’ve made some of my best friends here and [gained] a lot of cool new skills,” says Garcia. “I made a fuel tank!”

Innovation

PROBIOTIC POWER

Dr. Entrepreneur

Pediatrician and FoundHer Fellow Ruchi Gupta created a scalp-relief startup to help her child.

Ruchi Gupta could barely sleep. Her infant daughter had cradle cap, a skin condition causing chronic irritation on the scalp. “She would wake up so frustrated, wanting to scratch,” Gupta recalls. “I had to put her hands in gloves.”

The only treatments available at the time were chemical steroids and oils — and the moment she stopped using them, the cradle cap came back. “It became my mission to find a better way to treat this,” says Gupta, professor of pediatrics and medicine and founding director of the Center for Food Allergy & Asthma Research at Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine.

That was 2006. Today, she can proudly say: Mission accomplished.

In 2018 Gupta co-founded Yobee, a startup that makes

an all-natural scalp mask that is clinically proven to reduce flakiness and itching. The topical scalp treatment is a blend of probiotic extracts, honey, turmeric and vitamin B12 — a mixture Gupta invented in her kitchen in 2008. It resolved her daughter’s cradle cap so well that “I started giving it away in my clinic,” says Gupta, who is a clinical attending physician at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago.

Northwestern’s Innovation and New Ventures Office (INVO) helped Gupta file a patent for her probiotic blend. Then, in spring 2023, Gupta was chosen to be part of the inaugural cohort of FoundHer Fellows, along with Yevgenia Kozorovitskiy, associate professor of neurobiology, and Julie Kim, the Susy Y. Hung Research Professor of

Obstetrics and Gynecology. Hosted by the University’s Querrey InQbation Lab, FoundHer supports women faculty members at Northwestern who are first-time entrepreneurs. Fellows receive one-on-one mentorship, pitch presentation training, networking opportunities and more.

“Women aren’t founding companies at the same rate as their male counterparts,” says Lisa Dhar, Northwestern’s associate vice president for innovation, who also oversees INVO. “So we established FoundHer to address this gender gap.”

This past summer, the FoundHer Fellows attended a networking event in Boston, where they pitched their startups to venture capitalists and received feedback.

“I learned how to turn my academic lingo and ideas into something compelling and easy to understand for consumers,” says Gupta.

This fall Yobee launched a new shampoo, conditioner and body cream. And Gupta has something in the works for our furry household companions too.

“Expect itch-relief products for pets in the near future!” she says.



Learn more about Ruchi Gupta’s work at alummag.nu/Gupta.

SHARING IS CARING

Why buy when you can Borrow? Founded by Kellogg School of Management student Rahul Srivathsa and Elliot Hall ’23 MBA, Borrowough is an online platform that allows residents of the same building to rent common household items and tools from each other rather than purchasing their own. The startup promotes a sustainable economy while cutting down on overconsumption. Borrowough took first prize in Demo Day 2023, the culmination of the Jumpstart pre-accelerator program run by The Garage at Northwestern.



GUPTA: SHANE COLLINS; TOOLS: GETTY IMAGES

INVENTION

Brewing With Bread

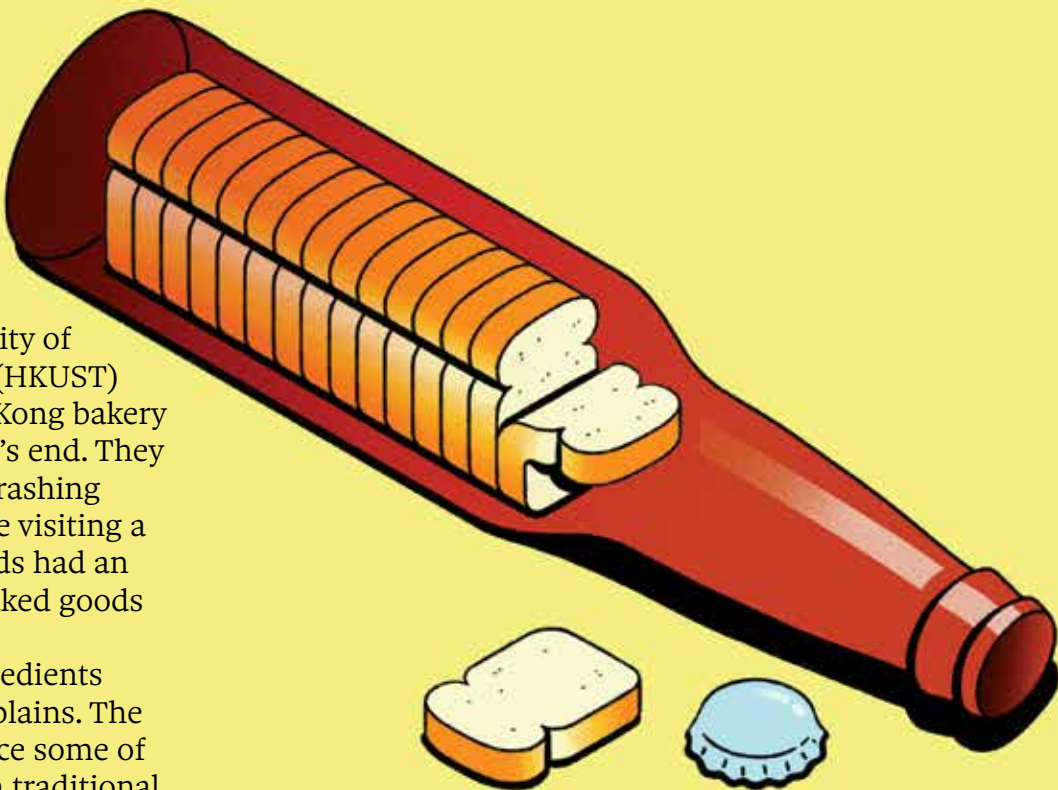
In 2020 Suyash Mohan ’23 MS and classmates from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) stopped by a local Hong Kong bakery to celebrate the semester’s end. They noticed bakery workers trashing unsold bread. Later, while visiting a bar, Mohan and his friends had an idea: Turn the surplus baked goods into beer.

“Most of their raw ingredients are the same,” Mohan explains. The grains in bread can replace some of the malted barley used in traditional brewing. So Mohan and three HKUST classmates created Breer, a Hong Kong-based startup that upcycles unsold bread from local bakeries into craft beer.

The team went through nearly two dozen experimental batches before landing on the right recipe for their first beer, a pale ale. They’ve since created specialty and seasonal brews, some of which incorporate other food waste, including a stout flavored with used coffee grounds and an IPA made from leftover pineapple buns (a popular sweet treat in Hong Kong).

Breer launched commercially in 2021 and is now available at more than 300 Hong Kong businesses. The Breer founders made *Forbes’* 30 Under 30 list for social impact in Asia in 2023.

Read more at alummag.nu/Breer.



FROM BREAD PAN TO PINT GLASS

Breer uses cast-off bread instead of malted barley in its brewing process. For a 500-liter (132-gallon) batch, Breer starts with roughly 700 loaves of bread, broken into small pieces. Because bread has so much volume, it takes up a lot of space. “The first few times we brewed, we spent seven or eight hours in a room full of bread, tearing it all into pieces,” says Mohan, who earned a master’s degree in economic and social policy from Northwestern in 2023.

The dried bread pieces are then steeped in water, mashed, drained and boiled to form wort, a sugary liquid. Then hops are added at different pH levels and temperatures depending on the desired flavor for the brew.

The wort is added to the fermentation tank, followed by yeast, which converts the sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide. The beer is carbonated near the end of, or after, the fermentation process.



LIBRARIES

Northwestern Archives Acquires Garry Marshall Papers

Thanks to a generous gift, Northwestern is now home to a one-of-a-kind collection documenting the life and work of an American film and TV icon.

With his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and storied career as a writer, actor, director and producer, Garry Marshall '56 made an indelible mark on American film and TV. Best known for creating a slew of hit sitcoms — including *The Odd Couple*, *Happy Days*, *Laverne & Shirley* and *Mork & Mindy* — Marshall also directed popular feature

films such as *Pretty Woman* and *The Princess Diaries*. Throughout his career and up until his death in 2016 at age 81, Marshall — a proud Northwestern alum, parent and grandparent — stayed connected to his alma mater. His legacy lives on at Northwestern with the donation of the Garry Marshall Papers to University Archives.

The collection includes original scripts from film, TV and live performances — often with handwritten notes in the margins. It contains personal scrapbooks that Marshall drew upon for writing projects as well as correspondence, photos, business records, storyboards and memorabilia, including awards and movie posters.

↑ A draft script from *Runaway Bride* and film slate from *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*, films Garry Marshall directed; a photo of Marshall as a student from Northwestern's 1956 *Syllabus* yearbook; a piece of memorabilia from the TV show *Happy Days*, which Marshall created

ARTIFACTS COURTESY OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

SLATE, CAN AND CHAIR: PHOTOS BY GREG REIGH; PORTRAIT: SYLLABUS YEARBOOK/STUDENTS PUBLISHING CO.

University historian Kevin Leonard '77, '82 MA played a major role in bringing the materials to Northwestern. The collection was organized for research use last summer and opened to library patrons in the fall, Leonard says. In all, the collection spans about 70 linear feet of shelf space — the length of two school buses.

As an undergraduate student in the Medill School of Journalism (now the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications), Marshall wrote for *The Daily Northwestern* and performed in The Waa-Mu Show. His early career featured stints as a writer for *The Lucy Show* and *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. Marshall's papers include material he wrote for comedians Joey Bishop, Vaughn Meader and Jack Paar, among many others, in the early days of late-night TV. The collection also contains routines penned for celebrity roasts of Dean Martin and former presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Even as his fame grew, Marshall visited his alma mater often as a speaker and served as a trustee. For more than 25 years he was a member of

the Northwestern University Leadership Circle, which recognizes donors who make cumulative annual gifts of \$1,000 or more. He helped create and support several campus spaces as well — including the Barbara and Garry Marshall Studio Wing in John J. Louis Hall, the Marjorie Ward Marshall Dance Center (named for Marshall's mother, who ran a tap dance school in the basement of her New York City apartment building) and the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Center for the Musical Arts.

Leonard believes Northwestern's acquisition of the papers will provide a treasure trove for scholars, students, fans and future biographers interested in American comedy from the 1950s to the early 2000s.

"Performing arts is one of the collecting areas I've been chasing after because of Northwestern's stature in the arts and the stature of many alumni in those professions," Leonard says. "It's a curricular and research strength of the University."

All three of Marshall's children are Northwestern alumni. Two of his grandchildren have also studied at the School of



Communication. Marshall's family, including his wife, Barbara, strongly supported the effort to organize and house the materials at the University, Leonard notes.

"It is a great record of American comedy from a much-admired son of Northwestern," he says.

↑ One of Garry Marshall's director's chairs; one of many handwritten jokes Marshall penned for *Tonight Starring Jack Paar*

Alumni interested in contributing archival materials to Northwestern can email Kevin Leonard at KBL767@northwestern.edu.

Pretty in Pictures

University Archives now possesses storyboards for scenes from blockbuster movies directed by Northwestern alum Garry Marshall, including the 1990 hit *Pretty Woman*.



INNOVATION

A Growing Network for Good

Kellogg’s Youn Impact Scholars program celebrates a decade of inspiring social change.

Imagine the energetic feeling of dozens of innovators gathered in a room, exchanging ideas and advice, brainstorming with one another, and sharing their experience with students and faculty. Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management makes this vision a reality.

Since its launch in 2014, Kellogg’s Youn Impact Scholars program has recognized, supported and convened 100 talented creators from Northwestern and beyond, helping them tap into an exceptional global network of leaders, all working toward effecting change in social and environmental areas that matter most.

Each year the program selects five “Emerging Changemakers” and five

“Impact Leaders” who demonstrate meaningful past accomplishments as well as promising potential and vision. Although awardees have diverse interests — from education to environmental sustainability — they share a passion for using their business skills to make the world a better place.

Among the 2023 honorees are young entrepreneurs such as Nicole Cuervo ’22 MS, MBA, who founded Springrose, a startup that seeks to improve the quality of life for women with limited mobility. The business has developed adaptive intimate apparel that women can put on painlessly and independently.

“I want to increase awareness and information about disabilities and

the need for inclusive design within the general population,” Cuervo says.

Seasoned professionals such as Michael Monteleone ’12 JD, MBA also comprise the 2023 cohort. In his role as economic growth division chief for Asia at the U.S. Agency for International Development, Monteleone leads the design and management of innovative

“My family and I wanted to support like-minded, socially conscious changemakers.”

— Keech Combe Shetty

development projects focused on agriculture, trade and other areas.

“I’m a big believer in inclusive economic development being the key to bringing people out of extreme poverty,” Monteleone says. “For that to happen, it not only requires effective government policymaking but also private sector innovation and support from civil society organizations.”

The Impact Scholars program is named for Andrew Youn ’06 MBA, ’19 H, founder of the One Acre Fund, which provides smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa with resources to grow crops and support their families. Youn’s Kellogg classmate, Matt Forti ’00, ’06 MBA, serves as managing director of the nonprofit.

The scholars program was endowed by a generous gift from the Combe family, longtime benefactors of Kellogg.

“Andrew Youn and Matt Forti are arguably the most successful graduates of our class and two of the most successful social entrepreneurs of our generation,” says Keech Combe Shetty ’99, ’06 MBA, who attended Kellogg with Youn and Forti and is the daughter of University Trustee Chris Combe ’70. “My family and I wanted to support like-minded, socially conscious changemakers to create the next generation of Andrews and Matts.”

The next convening of scholars is scheduled for spring 2024.

← Michael Monteleone, left, and Nicole Cuervo are 2023 Youn Impact Scholars.



CUERVO: PAUL JUNG ’22 MBA, MS



BUSINESS

Zell Family Foundation Endows Program for Entrepreneurs

The gift ensures the Zell Fellows accelerator program will exist in perpetuity at Kellogg.

Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management has received a landmark gift from the Zell Family Foundation that will be combined with past gifts from Sam Zell to endow the Zell Fellows Program. Prior to his death last May, Sam Zell expressed the desire to honor the program’s 10th anniversary by creating a permanent home for it at Kellogg. The gift from his family cements the school’s commitment to fostering entrepreneurs for generations to come.

Launched in 2013, the Zell Fellows Program is open to select MBA candidates interested in starting a new venture or acquiring an existing one. Up to 20 Zell

Fellows are chosen at the beginning of their second year on the basis of their ambition, drive and desire to be part of a cohort of entrepreneurs aiming to run small businesses upon graduation.

“With Sam’s passing, we lost a visionary entrepreneurial leader and a dedicated champion of our school and students,” Kellogg

Over the past decade, nearly 200 Kellogg students have participated in the Zell Fellows Program.

Dean Francesca Cornelli says. “The best way to honor Sam’s memory is to continue improving the Zell Fellows Program, which has made and will continue to make the aspirations of some of our incredibly creative students possible.”

As part of the Zell Fellows Program, students benefit from mentorship by Kellogg faculty, outside experts and dedicated executive coaches. They also are exposed to distinctive experiences such as regional and international treks to meet with successful entrepreneurs and global industry leaders. In addition, fellows receive stipends and other resources to advance their businesses. Upon

← David Schonthal, left, is faculty director of the Zell Fellows Program as well as clinical professor of strategy and director of entrepreneurship programs at the Kellogg School of Management.

graduation, they join the Zell Global Entrepreneurship Network of Zell Fellows alumni from Kellogg and two other top schools.

“In the decade since Sam created the program, our Zell Fellows have accomplished incredible things,” says David Schonthal ’09 MBA, faculty director of the Zell Fellows Program. “They’ve created and grown businesses in wide-ranging fields, from medical devices to global logistics and sustainable agriculture. This gift will enable Kellogg to provide this incredibly unique platform to our students for years to come.”

Nearly 200 Kellogg students have participated in the Zell Fellows Program. To date, Zell Fellows have launched 127 ventures, with 66 currently active, and Zell acquisition entrepreneurs at Kellogg have completed 14 acquisitions, with an additional 24 alumni running active searches. An estimated 3,600 jobs have been created by Zell Fellows alumni businesses.

“The Zell Family Foundation is proud to continue Sam’s legacy of supporting entrepreneurs who have big ideas, the passion to execute and the drive to go for greatness,” says Helen Zell, president of the Zell Family Foundation. “Sam’s vision with the Kellogg Zell Fellows was to invest in talented people and help them pursue their dreams. We look forward to seeing the results as the Zell Fellows continue that vision going forward.”

ZELL FELLOWS: JEFF SCIORTINO

VIEW

FINDER

In a world awash with images, **Josh Anon** shares rare visions of the natural world.

BY SEAN HARGADON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSH ANON



Understandably, Josh Anon wondered if he was wasting his time. The photographer had taken three weeks off from his full-time gig, caught a once-a-week flight from San Francisco to the Falkland Islands, then traveled nearly 900 miles by ship over two days to reach South Georgia Island, a 100-mile-long spit of land in the South Atlantic that “for a few months of the year has the densest concentration of wildlife on the planet,” Anon says. Fur seals, elephant seals, king penguins and more go there to breed.

On this morning in 2015, a break in the weather promised a glimpse of sunrise. So Anon woke at 2:30 a.m., put on a GoreTex heavy jacket, waterproof pants and Arctic muck boots, and hauled his cameras and gear to the sandy shoreline of St. Andrew’s Bay. The stage was set — but where were the penguins? “They just weren’t showing up. I’m thinking, ‘Am I wasting a morning? Should I move somewhere else?’” recalls Anon ’03. “And then it was like somebody called central casting and said, ‘Hey, send in the penguins. Yeah, just send them all. Keep them coming.’ And for maybe an hour or two I had *March of the Penguins* right in front of me. ... It was just an utterly spectacular morning.”

Anon has had his share of awe-inspiring encounters — with penguins, polar bears, walruses and more. Raised in Erie, Pa., in a family of photographers, he got his first camera at age 4, bought his first digital SLR camera with savings from his campus job at Northwestern, and has been photographing wildlife and landscapes for more than two decades, co-authoring eight photography books with his mother, Ellen, along the way.

Driven to capture rare and unexpected images of fragile landscapes, he started traveling to remote places — Iceland, Norway, the Falkland Islands. In 2014 he ended up in Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago in the high Arctic, “and the polar virus bit me. ... I really got into chasing polar bears,” he says.

When the pandemic halted travel, Anon looked for opportunities closer to home. He went storm chasing with friends and ventured to Yellowstone National Park in the winter. In Los Angeles, where he’s lived for six years, he shot star trails



↑ **St. Andrew’s Bay, South Georgia Island.** “Sometimes the best photography involves a bit of discomfort!” Anon says. In this case, Anon knelt and lay in the ice-cold surf to capture a shot of king penguins reflected in the wet sand against the mountains.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Port Lockroy, Antarctica.* Three penguins check the water for predators. Using an underwater housing, Anon captured a unique perspective showing the penguins’ two environments.

— images that capture the arcs of light that the stars paint across the sky as the Earth turns — above iconic landmarks. Anon had discovered a way to manipulate digital photography to capture star trails in urban environments, where light pollution often obscures the stars. “It’s a [huge] amount of work,” he says, “but suddenly I was motivated to photograph all these landscapes that a million people are shooting every day — because I can do something totally different [and provide] a perspective that nobody has seen before.”

Anon also became interested in abstract expressionism, especially color field painting, a style of art characterized by large swaths of solid color. To achieve similar results with photography, “I started going into the ocean around sunset, using ... different combinations of

“
**AND FOR MAYBE AN HOUR OR TWO
I HAD MARCH OF THE PENGUINS
RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.**
”

lenses and [camera] settings,” he says. “I got some neat color field minimalist surf photographs — while periodically going for washing machine rides in the waves.”

Ironically, when travel resumed after the pandemic, Anon celebrated with a weeklong trip to a remote cabin in an isolated part of northwest Iceland to photograph arctic foxes. In January he is headed to the steppes of Mongolia to shoot the elusive Pallas’s cat, which has rarely been photographed in its natural habitat. The species is considered near-threatened due to habitat degradation. That’s exactly why Anon is seeking them out. “These places are suffering more from climate change than anywhere else,” he says. “I appreciate that I’m able to bring back images and share those experiences while those environments still exist.”

Fortunately, he’s found a career that has allowed him to work at the intersection of art and technology. And his photographic skills have consistently helped him level up professionally. After studying computer science at Northwestern, Anon worked at Pixar, first on the software side and later in the camera department. His credits include

The Incredibles and *Up*. Now he is a product lead at Roblox, a gaming platform.

In all his work, Anon wants to create art that makes people pause. “If you want to [develop] a [distinctive] voice, you have to push yourself as an artist,” he says. “I’m always driven by the question, ‘How do I bring something unique to this visual conversation?’”

Sean Hargadon is editor-in-chief of Northwestern Magazine.

Read more at alummag.nu/Anon.

↓ **Saunders Island, Falkland Islands.** It had been storming all day, but around sunset the clouds began to clear. Anon hiked out onto a cliff and lay down by a group of rockhopper penguins. They gradually inched closer as they became comfortable with him. His patience paid off.



Svalbard, Norway.
Anon was on a seven-day boat trip when, on his first night aboard, he encountered this polar bear walking along the edge of the ice. “She was curious,” he says, “walking past us twice, with her full, white coat glowing beautifully in the setting sun.”





OPPOSITE PAGE:

Falkland Islands. An adult king penguin guides its chick back onto its feet amid their penguin colony.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Los Angeles. Over the course of six hours, Anon used an ultrawide lens to capture the trails of light made by stars as they moved across the sky.

Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, Iceland. Anon spotted a rare blue morph arctic fox, whose coat stays dark in winter. “I

was fortunate enough to find a female fox running around after a snowstorm,” he says. “As I crawled closer, she pushed her nose into the snow and then promptly licked it off!”

Antelope Valley, Calif. A California poppy stands out among a cluster of filaree flowers.

Bleaker Island, Falkland Islands. A rockhopper penguin calls out as the sun rises. “Four a.m. mornings can pay off!” Anon says.



The AI Will See You Now

With the power to analyze large datasets, detect disease and enable autonomous navigation, artificial intelligence can help improve the lives of millions of patients.

BY CLARE MILLIKEN

AI Artificial intelligence is all around us. And if AI is not already in your doctor's office, you can bet it's coming soon — with the potential to create major improvements in our health care and well-being.

"AI is able to do things that we never thought possible," says Northwestern professor and physician Abel Kho. "For example, with relatively little human input, AI can predict important clinical outcomes such as hospitalization or mortality risk. It can diagnose conditions. AI can cut the time it takes doctors to write notes or find important information.

"In short, AI is going to allow us to practice in ways that are simply better for patients," says Kho, a professor of medicine and preventive medicine at Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine and director of the Institute for Artificial Intelligence in Medicine (I.AIM).

When it comes to AI and medicine, "I generally talk about three areas," says professor and cardiologist Sanjiv Shah. "One is diagnosis. There are many diseases, common and rare, that are misdiagnosed or underdiagnosed. AI can alert clinicians that they may be missing a diagnosis or that they have the wrong diagnosis."

"Automation is another huge growth area for AI in health care," Shah says. "For example, on an echocardiogram [heart ultrasound], a cardiologist or ultrasound technician can make up to 100 measurements, which takes a long time — but the computer can do that automatically within seconds.

"The third area is classification: grouping or classifying patients who have heterogeneous diseases or conditions, which have varied root mechanisms but similar presentations. Even diseases we think we know — diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery

disease — they each have varying underlying subtypes that require specific treatments to achieve optimal outcomes. By helping clinicians decipher heterogeneous medical conditions, AI can move health care toward more personalized precision medicine."

Shah '97, '00 MD, the Neil J. Stone, MD, Professor at Feinberg, is now focused on using AI to classify cardiovascular disease patients. He's just one of many medical researchers and clinicians across the University who are incorporating AI into their work. Others are using AI tools to uncover genetic underpinnings of disease, reduce prenatal stress and even allow patients with severe mobility impairments to gain greater independence and autonomy.

Personalized Cardiac Care

More than 6 million people in the U.S. have heart failure, which is among the

leading causes of hospitalization in the country. As the population ages, an estimated 8 million people will experience heart failure by 2030.

The increasing prevalence of the condition is driven largely by a syndrome called heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF), which is characterized by a stiffened heart muscle. Blood can't pump into the heart efficiently, which results in pressure buildup in the lungs and elsewhere in the body, causing exercise intolerance and fatigue. The condition is associated with a high mortality and hospitalization rate. More than 50% of heart failure patients have HFpEF, and compared with other forms of heart failure, which respond well to current treatments, HFpEF has been much more difficult to treat.

"It's been hard to find treatments because it is a heterogeneous syndrome with a variety of subtypes with

different mechanisms and biological underpinnings," says Shah, who in 2007 started the first clinic in the world dedicated to HFpEF study and treatment. "We need to move toward precision medicine to make more accurate diagnoses and tailor therapy to the specific subtypes."

In 2014 Shah's team used unsupervised machine learning (where AI finds patterns in unlabeled or ungrouped data) to sort through the information he had compiled on his HFpEF patients, including lab test results and data from physical exams, echocardiograms and electrocardiograms (EKGs).

The machine learning algorithm found three mutually exclusive, independent subtypes of HFpEF. "Nothing like that had been done in heart failure or in HFpEF or really in cardiovascular medicine," Shah said on Northwestern Medicine's *Breakthroughs* podcast in 2022. The use of machine learning "really took off after that, not just in cardiology but in a lot of other fields."

Using machine learning, the researchers are now looking into the mechanisms behind — and potential treatments for — the various subtypes. In late 2023, Shah and his colleagues reported in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that the popular diabetes drug semaglutide reduced symptoms of heart failure in patients with one of the HFpEF subtypes that Shah's team identified.

Shah is also using machine learning algorithms to find patterns in electronic health record data, echocardiograms and EKGs to help physicians diagnose HFpEF, its subtypes and related heart muscle diseases. "Once we've found a HFpEF subtype and have a treatment for it, we can use machine learning to train



Brenna Argall, right, and her team test their wheelchair technology at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in downtown Chicago. Argall is using artificial intelligence to make the world more accessible for people with severe motor impairment. Her team developed an "active assistance paradigm" that can steer power wheelchair users around obstacles autonomously.

an algorithm to auto-diagnose or flag a patient with that specific subtype, so the clinician doesn't miss the diagnosis and [can then treat] the patient appropriately," he says.

"What we've done in HFpEF is applicable to so many medical conditions: diabetes, schizophrenia, depression, hypertension — you name it," adds Shah, who is director of the Center for Deep Phenotyping and Precision Therapeutics within I.AIM at Feinberg and director of research at Northwestern Medicine's Bluhm Cardiovascular Institute.

"There are a lot of skeptics of precision medicine — the right treatment for the right patient at the right time," Shah says. "But I'm a

believer. With the AI technologies we have today, we can identify subtypes within broad constructs of diseases, and that knowledge can be harnessed to create tailored treatments."

New Pathways for Power Wheelchair Users

Half a million people in the U.S. rely on power wheelchairs, and yet, due to the extent of their impairments, more than 15% of that population cannot use a conventional joystick to maneuver their chair. But AI can help wheelchair users safely navigate the world more independently.

Engineer and roboticist Brenna Argall is leading efforts to develop AI-enabled power wheelchairs for



Sanjiv Shah is using artificial intelligence to classify cardiovascular disease patients.

SHAH AND ARGALL: SHANE COLLINS

people with severe motor impairment, such as individuals living with multiple sclerosis or a spinal cord injury.

“The more severe a person’s motor impairment, the more difficult it can be for them to operate the machines that might enhance their quality of life,” says Argall, an associate professor of computer science and mechanical engineering at the McCormick School of Engineering. “The goal is autonomy for everyone.”

Power wheelchair navigation can be cumbersome and taxing for users with severe motor impairment. Furthermore, it can be difficult to adjust the wheelchair’s speed, putting users at risk of collisions.

“Despite decades of ‘smart robotic’ wheelchair research within academia and despite all the advances in driverless cars and other mobile robots, this technology did not translate to power wheelchairs until 2021,” Argall says. That’s when LUCI Mobility became one of the first commercial providers of

a sensor-based safety system for power wheelchairs.

Argall, who is also an associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Feinberg, has partnered with LUCI to further expand its offerings for power wheelchair users. Her team developed and embedded an “active assistance paradigm” called REACT that can steer around obstacles autonomously.

With REACT, the artificial intelligence in the chair divides the surrounding area into eight zones and uses sensor data to calculate a safety score for each zone. If the user commands the chair to move to an area with an unsafe score, the chair will modify that command.

The chair’s sensors use millimeter-wave radar — the same technology used in vehicle crash detection and crash avoidance systems — as well as camera data to calculate depths and distances around the chair.

“What you get is a 2D grid of centimeter-resolution cells,” Argall says.

The wheelchair’s AI operating system can “use that to reason about the world and build safe paths.”

The same sensor technology allows the chair’s intelligence system to construct digital maps, Argall says, allowing the user to “map out a known environment by driving the chair through the space” — the user’s home, for example. “Sensor information from the chair will build a map of that environment.” The user can also add location tags to the map — say, for the kitchen or bathroom — and then be driven autonomously to those locations.

And when a user is moving on that path to the kitchen or bathroom, the chair’s sensors account for dynamic obstacles in real time, such as a cat running across the hallway.

“A lot of this technology would be helpful for any wheelchair user,” Argall says, “just as driver-assist technologies on today’s cars are helpful even if you already know how to drive. Even for wheelchair users who don’t have severe



ILLUSTRATION: THE BALBUSSO TWINS; KHO: MONIKA WNUK '14 MS, '19 MS

“AI will absolutely transform most aspects of care in very positive ways. Diagnoses will be much more precise and aligned with therapies, and we’ll see tailored medications based on AI.” — ABEL KHO

motor impairments, this technology could still increase their access to the world.”

Less Stress During Pregnancy

Prenatal stress can lead to perinatal depression, preterm birth and low birth weight, among other complications.

A Northwestern team led by Feinberg associate professor of preventive medicine Nabil Alshurafa is developing a machine learning algorithm that incorporates wearable devices and app-based surveys to predict a pregnant person’s next-day stress and offer tools to reduce and prevent stress.

“We have the tools to address stress in the moment,” says Maia Jacobs, an assistant professor of preventive medicine at Feinberg and of computer science at McCormick. “This new algorithm gives us a way to not only provide an intervention when a person is in the throes of stress but also to look for ways to reduce stress across the pregnancy.”

Jacobs and her team are working with Alshurafa to understand how best to embed the machine learning tool into the daily lives of pregnant people.

It’s just one of several projects that Jacobs is leading at the Northwestern Personalized and Adaptive Technology for Health Lab, where her team works directly with patients, as well as researchers, to explore how AI tools can be better utilized in health care settings.

“We are focused on understanding how people want to interact with these tools and how they can be designed to best support the end goals of patients, physicians and researchers,” says Jacobs, who is also the Lisa Wissner-Slivka and Benjamin Slivka Professor of Computer Science at McCormick.

Artificial intelligence has allowed Alshurafa, Jacobs, Shah, Argall, Kho and

SHARING DATA IS KEY



Abel Kho has been working to improve data integration and data sharing, which, he says, are key to the successful implementation of AI in health care. After all, he says, AI is only as good as the data we give it.

Kho directs the Institute for Artificial Intelligence in Medicine (I.AIM) at Feinberg. Founded in 2020, I.AIM brings computational methods together with clinical expertise to advance health care and “be more efficient and scalable in how to make AI available for medical research,” says Kho.

Additionally, the institute’s Center for Medical Education in Digital Healthcare and Data Science integrates AI into Feinberg’s first- and second-year medical school curriculum and offers a “health data gymnasium,” an academic resource that allows students to interact with data. “We’re training future leaders in this space,” says Kho.

many others at Northwestern to probe deeper into their work in the hopes of advancing both research and patient care. And with continued investment in and exploration of AI, the researchers are confident that we will see even greater benefits to come.

“AI will absolutely transform most aspects of care in very positive ways,” says Kho. “Diagnoses will be much more precise and aligned with therapies, and we’ll see tailored medications based on AI.”

“We’re trying to make a difference in the lives of our patients,” Shah says of Northwestern’s focus on bringing AI to real-world patient applications.

“It’s exciting to come up with AI algorithms, but if they don’t change how we practice medicine or serve the health of our patients, what good are they? We focus on building AI that will improve patient care.”

Clare Milliken is senior writer and producer in Northwestern’s Office of Global Marketing and Communications.

Learn how AI is helping to identify the genetic underpinnings of autism, watch Brenna Argall’s AI-enabled wheelchair at work and more. **See alummag.nu/AlinMedicine.**

Stepping Into Today

With intentionality and purpose, **Sheinelle Jones** has willed herself into the morning show spotlight.

BY ADRIENNE SAMUELS GIBBS

At the *Today* show's Rockefeller Plaza studio, Sheinelle Jones, co-host of the *3rd Hour of Today*, sits at the anchor desk beside Dylan Dreyer and Al Roker and makes small talk before the show goes live. Then, with a cue from the stage manager, Jones is ON. She cheerily welcomes viewers back to the program with her signature, casual effervescence. It's a little before 10 a.m. on this Tuesday morning, but the hosts of one of America's most-watched morning shows have been at work for hours, jumping deftly from segment to segment.

Inside the studio, three cameras quickly pan to the left. Italian celebrity chef Lidia Bastianich is promoting her latest cookbook, chatting with Jones' colleague Carson Daly.

The cameras swing back to Jones and her co-hosts, who are seated at a high-top table. Plates are set with Bastianich's famous eggplant rollatini. The anchors eat the smallest morsels possible. Banter. Make appreciative noises. Somehow avoid dripping sauce. Then, time's up — and Jones heads upstairs for a segment with ballerina Misty Copeland. Let's go.

By 10 a.m., Jones '00 has changed on-air locations no less than four times before she finally ditches her heels, slips on some flats and catches the elevator up to the third floor of 30 Rockefeller Plaza, where she pauses, at last, for a breather in her impeccably organized office, decorated in soft shades of white. Displayed prominently is her Medill Hall of Achievement Award and a framed selfie of Jones with Oprah Winfrey.

"Alright," she says, leaning into her chair. "Let's just dig in."

Where to begin? There's raising three talented children with her husband, Uche Ojeh '01 (see

"Let Love Be Your [Tour] Guide," page 38), training for the New York City Marathon, writing a book on advice from celebrity moms, maintaining friendships and expertly managing a high-voltage career.

As one of a handful of Black women helming a national TV broadcast, Jones thinks it's important for people to see her full self: accomplished, Black, a woman, a mother, a daughter, a wife, a volunteer, a pray-er, a proud Midwesterner — a human who embraces joy, who sometimes falters, sometimes loses her nerve ... but persists nonetheless.

"The Sheinelle you see on the *Today* show is the same entertaining, funny and compassionate person we all know off-air too," says her former *Weekend Today* co-anchor Peter Alexander '98, who first met Jones while both were students at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications. "Sheinelle is one of those people you just want to be friends with, and I proudly say that as a friend of hers."

She keeps it real. And that's a big reason so many viewers love her.

"You feel like you know Sheinelle," says Roker. "She is your sister, your friend. ... She says the things or asks the questions you would want to ask."

In her work on *Today* and beyond, Jones has never been afraid to ask tough questions or break the silence on taboo topics. Inspired by her friends' experiences with infertility, she executive-produced the 2021 documentary *Stories We Tell: The Fertility Secret* (with director and co-executive producer Andre Gaines '01). The film spotlighted the issue and its impact on women of color, and Jones centered them unapologetically. She has also

“I grew up surrounded by the power of intentionality.”

(Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act. Twenty-four states have now enacted some version of the law, which makes it illegal to discriminate against someone based upon their hair texture.

“I’m trying to use this chair to make things better,” Jones says, “for myself and for others.”

STEP 1: VISUALIZE IT

If you ask Jones the secret to her success, she answers with a story. “I grew up surrounded by the power of intentionality,” she explains, recalling her childhood in Wichita, Kan. At home, her mother would post inspirational quotes everywhere: the kitchen, the living room, you name it. It’s part of a matriarchal mindset, Jones says, passed down by her grandmother to her mother and now to her: a blend of affirmations, imagery and probing questions to guide the next generation down a path of success.

“There were quotes in my bathroom when I was in eighth grade, [like] ‘If you can see it, you can be it,’” says Jones, who also kept a small jewelry box full of Post-it notes with her favorite quotes. Her bedroom walls became a vision board, covered with images of pop star Janet Jackson and TV news anchors, including hometown legend KWCH 12 anchor Cindy Klose. When Jones spoke at the Medill convocation in 2018, she shared the power of seeing “those words, those affirmations day in and day out. ... I visualized myself in a black-and-white glossy headshot right along with those anchors on my wall until, essentially, it became my reality.”

publicly addressed wearing her natural hair on TV. Her decision to go public with the hair care needs of, and expectations imposed on, Black women helped educate and empower viewers — and helped bolster the CROWN

STEP 2: MAKE THE ASK

Jones acknowledges that her career and family success requires much more than vision boards and inspirational words. It demands hard work and perseverance — and being unafraid to ask for what you want.

She remembers telling her grandmother, “I want to be a news reporter.” And her grandmother responded, “If you were going to be a news reporter, what would you have to do?”

Jones, then a high school junior, mapped it out. Her grandmother called a friend from church — who happened to be a secretary at the local CBS affiliate — to ask if her grandbaby might get an internship.

“I know now that high schoolers are not [typically] in local newsrooms, but I was there — in my cheerleading skirt after school, running [the] teleprompter for Roger Cornish and Cindy Klose,” Jones recalls, her eyes widening. “I was fascinated by it. I liked the lights. I liked the intellect. I liked the fact that you could ask questions and nobody told you to stop asking.”

STEP 3: BE PERSISTENT

So, Jones knew she wanted to be a journalist. She also knew she would need to find a university capable of supporting her fully and completely. After all she was a high achiever: a high school cheerleader, a clarinetist in the marching band and a member of the student council.

One visit to Northwestern’s Evanston campus was all it took. Surrounded by ambitious and energetic students who seemingly had “a billion” internships, she could picture her future there immediately.

Jones started at Medill in fall 1996 and studied with professor Ava Thompson Greenwell ’84, ’85 MS, ’09 CERT, ’14 PhD. She took articulation classes and studied Spanish. She joined the Northwestern News Network and pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha.

She was determined to have a billion internships too. The summer after her first year, Jones interned at the NBC affiliate in Wichita. Then, during her sophomore year, she cold-called BET Networks and asked for a summer internship.

The human resources contact at BET was perplexed because summer was still 10 months away at the time. Jones just kept asking. Finally, they said, “We’re just gonna say yes because you’re so [eager] about it,” Jones says, laughing. That summer, she interned with BET in Washington, D.C. “I slept on [my sister’s] couch — she was [studying] at Howard [University College of Medicine],” Jones says. “And I worked at Rainbow [a clothing store] at the mall to make money, because [I wasn’t] getting paid.”

At BET, Jones picked up another affirmation, overheard in the company cafeteria: “Ask for what you need. Take what you get. Use what you get to get what you want.”

“I was like, ‘Ooh, I’m writing that down,’” says Jones.



Jenna Bush Hager, left, and Sheinelle Jones on the set of *Today*. Opposite page, from left, *Today* co-hosts Al Roker, Sheinelle Jones, Craig Melvin and Dylan Dreyer.

That quote has motivated her through every job. She carried it with her when she took her first job at WICS (then an NBC affiliate in Springfield, Ill.), where she reported, shot and edited her own standups ... and when she moved to the Fox affiliate in Tulsa, Okla., where she served as an evening news anchor and reporter ... and when she returned to her birthplace, Philadelphia, where she anchored Fox’s Emmy-winning *Good Day Philadelphia* for nine years. It sustained her when she started as an anchor for *Weekend Today* a decade ago and kept her afloat when she later added daily *Today* duties to her plate in 2019, ratcheting up her work schedule to six days a week at the time.

“It’s been a climb,” she admits.

STEP 4: FIND YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

To be sure, there were soul-shaking moments of self-doubt. Jones recalls one of her first live broadcasts on NBC — when she choked. Al Roker was sitting across the studio. And despite the teleprompter being right in front of her, she couldn’t focus on her lines. Intrusive thoughts ran through her mind as she imagined the millions of faraway viewers watching her.

“My voice started quivering,” she says. “In this business, when [you get nervous], it’s hard to get [your voice] back. I remember tossing it back to Al, and in my head [I] just [knew I]

had to get out. [After that broadcast,] I was like, ‘OK, that can’t happen again.’”

She needed to reset. So, she went home to Wichita. And like most kids who move away from a childhood home where faith and family are front and center, she returned to where it all started: her church — the same church that, decades ago, accelerated Jones’ path to journalism, Northwestern and, eventually, the *Today* show.

“Everybody was so proud of me,” she says. “[At church] they’re all like, ‘Stand up, Sheinelle. Tell [us] what you’ve been doing.’ Little did they know that I went home because I’m [thinking], ‘Oh, can I do this?’”

“I’m trying to use this chair to make things better, for myself and for others.”

Their affirmations lifted her spirit. “They poured back into me,” she says. During that visit home, “I remember grabbing a [random] pen from my [grandpa’s house, and] I thought, ‘OK, I’m gonna hold this pen [whenever] I start feeling less than.’” It was a reminder to steady her voice, a reminder that she had the support of her friends

PHOTOS LEFT AND OPPOSITE PAGE: NATHAN CONGLETON/NBC

and family, her church — her whole community — behind her.

Until recently, astute viewers might have noticed a pen in Jones’ hand during almost every broadcast. “Now [I] just [remind myself] who I am and that the good Lord didn’t bring me this far to just drop me off,” she says. “I don’t have to hold [the pen anymore] ’cause I have it inside.”

Now Jones is paving the way for other Black women in broadcast media. She is a mainstay at National Association of Black Journalists conventions, always stopping to talk with an aspiring broadcaster. Those connections can make all the difference, she says.

“I remember in Philly, there was a little Black girl [who] said, ‘I watch you every morning, and whatever color you’re wearing, that’s what color I wear to school.’

“That’s representation,” Jones says after a pause. “And that gives me strength. So when I look around, and I’m the only [one who looks like me in my workplace, I remember that] for people on the other side of the screen [they see someone who looks like them]. In that sense, they’re never alone.”

STEP 5: OVERPREPARE

Each success in Jones’ narrative is linked back to the ask, the intention, the visualization — and tons of hard work. In April 2023 she met her idol, Janet Jackson — and even danced with Jackson onstage during her tour’s opening weekend. In 2022 Jones interviewed another one of her heroes, Oprah Winfrey. Last fall

her interview with a survivor of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., highlighted the importance of the continued examination of racial strife in the U.S.



LET LOVE BE YOUR
(TOUR) GUIDE

Sheinelle Jones first met Uche Ojeh (above, with Jones) when he came to visit Northwestern as a high school senior. Many stories about their meet-cute claim that she was a Wildcat tour guide at the time, but Jones is setting the record straight.

“I was a fake tour guide ... I was just walking to class,” Jones says, laughing. “[I was like, ‘Are you guys lost?’ And] I told him I would take him around because he was cute. I was like, ‘This is the Black House. ... This is the Plex (aka Foster-Walker Complex), and if you need real tidbits, I’m probably not the one.’”

They eventually started dating, and Ojeh proposed to her — in the rain, along the Northwestern lakefront. They married in 2007 and have a son, Kayin (center in photo, with Jones), and twins Uche (right) and Clara (left).



When it comes to these interviews, Jones does the bulk of the work off camera. And she overprepares. For the Oprah interview, for example, Jones and her team spent all night refining the questions at a hotel restaurant.

“There’s no phoning it in,” Jones says adamantly. “There’s no winging it. You can’t just sit down as a fan. The words are not just gonna come to you. You have to be prepared, forwards and backwards. I don’t allow myself to sit down [for an interview] until I’m ready. And if that means staying up the night before — OK.”

Jones won’t let up when it comes to pursuing the next step — and that includes running her first marathon. After months of balancing her training with work and the care of her children, Kayin, Uche and Clara, she finished the New York City Marathon in early November. “[The marathon] forced me to be even more organized. Every moment of my day [had] to be accounted for,” she says.

The one nonnegotiable? Being present for her children’s after-school pickup. It’s the highlight of Jones’ day.

It’s hard to fathom how she fits it all in. In addition to the *Today* show, Jones also hosts *Wild Child*, an animal docuseries aimed at tweens, and the popular series *Through Mom’s Eyes*, which features interviews with the mothers of celebrities. She’s picked up some hilarious tales, like when NBA player Steph Curry was in middle school, preparing for his first basketball game. “They expected him to come and kill it. And his mom wouldn’t let him play because he didn’t do his chores the night before,” Jones says, laughing. “I would’ve caved!”

Those parenting gems would make a good book, a friend said.

Say less. Jones is now working on a book based on the series. It will likely come out in 2025.

That’s the plan for tomorrow. For today, Jones knows she’s been blessed. “I’m thankful for being in a place where I can dance with Janet Jackson one moment and sit down with Jill Biden the next,” she says. “What a gift for the little girl who had Cindy Klose on her wall. What a gift.”

Adrienne Samuels Gibbs ’99 is director of content at Medium and a Chicago-based freelance writer.

Watch our interview at alummag.nu/Jones.

JONES AND CHILDREN: NATHAN CONGLETON/NBC; JONES AND OJEH: GETTY IMAGES/BENNETT RAGLIN

Alumni



CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN

Ultrarunner Jamie Aarons ’01 set a world record last June for scaling all 282 Munros — mountains in Scotland that are taller than 3,000 feet. Compressing what many hikers set as a lifetime goal into just one month, she traversed all the Munros in 31 days, 10 hours and 27 minutes, traveling only by foot, bike and kayak. Aarons beat the existing record for Munro-climbing by more than 12 hours and raised over \$33,000 for Chicago-based World Bicycle Relief. Read her story at alummag.nu/Aarons.

ALEX KANE

Creation



DJ, PLAY THAT MUSIC

Five Questions With Karen Valencia '15
Known as Karennoid, Valencia works as a DJ in some of Chicago's trendiest nightclubs, serving up reggaeton beats. She shares how Northwestern shaped her worldview.

1

How did you break into DJing? I worked as a people manager for Uber until 2020, when I decided to quit my job and become a DJ. During quarantine I really learned how to DJ, and I officially started performing in 2021. I DJ at underground venues across Chicago. I play bars in the Pilsen neighborhood and made my Smartbar debut in Wrigleyville [in 2023]. I play all over the Midwest, including Wisconsin and Michigan, and internationally in Mexico City.

2

What attracted you to reggaeton? Reggaeton is a music genre and culture with Afro-Latino roots. The dance music originated in the late 1980s and became popular in Puerto Rico. It's danceable, but it's also tied to passion and to the body. It's so rhythmic and celebratory. It's a genre for any occasion. In 2018 I discovered alternative reggaeton, which was being made outside of Puerto Rico — in Spain, in Chile and in other South American countries. It has this very cybernetic sound. It is futuristic and femme forward, with an underground, minimalist sound.

The other flavor that I really love is neoperreo, a movement that started in Chile. It's women-led with a lot of Auto-Tune. It changes the party when I play that. Right now, I'm playing a lot of Latincore and Mexican reggaeton in the clubs. Latincore incorporates heavy drums, fun nostalgic samples and fusions of other genres like techno. Mexican reggaeton has a lot of humor and honesty in it. It's very campy.

3

How did Northwestern help prepare you for your musical career? I majored in English

Mexico is my happy place, where I feel most like myself. I say yes to any DJing opportunity that comes my way. Because I did this all on my own, I never want to shut something out until I try it.

VALENCIA: ALEX ZANDRO

4

What was it like to come to Northwestern as a Mexican American, first-generation student? It was one of the loneliest times of my life, but it was rewarding as well. I experienced a lot of growth at an accelerated rate, and it was a bit of a culture shock. It's an interesting sensation when you're making a lot of people around you proud but you're not necessarily 100% confident in the choices that you're making. But I also feel so privileged to have gone to Northwestern. I'm thankful for the people I've met and the education I received. If I could go back, I wouldn't change it, because I had a great academic experience.

5

What do you love most about DJing? Maybe other DJs don't think of it this way, but at the end of the day, when I go out and perform for you, I'm telling you a story. I'm curating the environment. I'm choosing the songs. I'm taking you on a journey! I love that I can express myself through music and showcase my passion for fashion, dance and visual media. For some people DJing is their job, but this is my life.

[Read more at alummag.nu/Karennoid.](#)

ASTERID: YOSHIHIRO MAKINO; BOOM CHICAGO: ©WESLEY VERHOEVE



LIGHT THE WAY

As you walk into asterid by Ray Garcia — a Michelin-starred restaurant in downtown Los Angeles — a warm, yellow glow illuminates the underside of the bar. Along the walls, recessed lights shine softly against an ethereal blue backplash, creating the illusion of flowing water. Lauren Dandridge Gaines '04 is co-founder of Chromatic, the Los Angeles-based lighting design firm behind asterid's new look. Think of a building as a human body, she says. "Lighting is the soul. You're providing an experience. You can be in the most beautifully decorated place, but if the color [or placement] of the light is [wrong], then the optics don't work." Dandridge, who became fascinated by the possibilities of stage lighting as a theater major at Northwestern, helps clients use lighting more intentionally to promote healthier, safer, more inviting spaces. In 2022 she launched Light Privilege, a project by Chromatic that brings awareness to lighting as a social justice issue, especially in Black neighborhoods. The idea that more light is safer is not always the case, Dandridge says. "The privilege of having good light quality is having it be both not too dark but also not overlit." [Learn more about her work at alummag.nu/Dandridge.](#)



COMEDY LEGENDS

Boom Chicago

For 12 days in July, Amsterdam was the center of the comedy world as Boom Chicago celebrated its 30th anniversary. Above, from left, Seth Meyers '96, '16 H, Saskia Maas, Stacey Smith and Boom

Chicago co-founder Andrew Moskos '90 gathered at the annual Boom Chicago Comedy Festival. The event included acts from *Late Night* host Meyers, *Rick and Morty*'s Heather Campbell '00 and others. Moskos and Pep Rosenfeld '90 first met in elementary school before attending Northwestern together. They went on to found Boom Chicago, a comedy club in Amsterdam, which over the years has featured some of the top names in comedy. Moskos met and married Maas, an Amsterdam local, who co-owns the business. Moskos and Rosenfeld, along with Maas and Matt Diehl, also co-wrote *Boom Chicago Presents the 30 Most Important Years in Dutch History*, featuring a foreword by Meyers. The book includes interviews with some of the club's biggest stars as well as behind-the-scenes snapshots and images from live performances.



A SWEET ENTERPRISE

The Beekeeping Buzz

Nonprofit works with Kenyan communities to cultivate a sustainable honey business.

Mimi Scheffler Gordon '94 first visited Africa in 1992 while studying abroad in Spain as a Northwestern undergrad. She spent winter break exploring Morocco and Algeria and was instantly captivated. “The people, the markets, the food — everything was mesmerizing,” she says. Since then, she’s dreamed of working in Africa.

Three decades later, Gordon is executive director of operations for Global Health Connections (GHC), a Denver-based nonprofit founded in 2004 that runs community health and economic empowerment projects in western Kenya. Gordon joined GHC in 2020 and helped the nonprofit expand its operations into 15 villages in the Kisii and Homa Bay counties.

GHC helps residents learn skills that promote sustainability within their villages, including vegetable gardening, food storage and sanitation practices. But one project in particular, Gordon says, has generated a lot of local buzz: beekeeping. Western Kenya’s diverse flora and

rainy climate make it a prime location for apiaries, as rain encourages bees to stay in their hives and produce honey. Yet the honey market is largely underdeveloped in the country.

“Kenya right now imports the majority of its honey. The market is just huge,” says Gordon, who graduated with her MBA from the University of Colorado Denver in July 2023. After village residents expressed interest in beekeeping, GHC brought in consultants from the National Beekeeping Institute in Nairobi to teach residents on-site. Together, community members and GHC set up apiaries in 10 villages with more than 400 beehives total. The honey is sold in local markets under the label Greener Hills Honey Cooperative, and proceeds are split equally between the villages and GHC.

“It has become one of our most lucrative projects for the local community thus far,” says Gordon, who travels to Kenya from her home in Asheville, N.C., to visit the villages and bond with her team. “And we have plans to keep growing.”

PODCAST

Wiser Than Me

hosted by Julia Louis-Dreyfus

In *Wiser Than Me*, actor, comedian and producer Julia Louis-Dreyfus '82, '07 H “gets schooled on life” by women over the age of 65. Launched in April 2023, the podcast features one-on-one conversations with guests from across entertainment, literature, politics and fashion, including Jane Fonda, Carol Burnett, Isabel Allende and Diane von Furstenberg.

“It is stunning to me that older women are so easily dismissed and made invisible in our culture, which seems to just celebrate youth, youth, youth,” Louis-Dreyfus says in the trailer for *Wiser Than Me*. Her guests offer guidance on navigating friendship, family, career and all the joys and fears of getting older.

Louis-Dreyfus, who studied theater at Northwestern, is known for her roles on *Saturday Night Live*, *Seinfeld* and *Veep*. She has won 11 Primetime Emmys — eight for acting and three for producing. *Wiser Than Me* is produced by Lemonada Media.



PODCAST: RYAN PFLUGER AND AUGUST IMAGE/LEMONADA MEDIA

INTERVALLIC: COURTESY OF OVERTURE GAMES; POP CULTURE (FROM TOP): MPTVIMAGES.COM, BETTMANN, NBC, NORMA JEAN RAY/MPTVIMAGES.COM, CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE

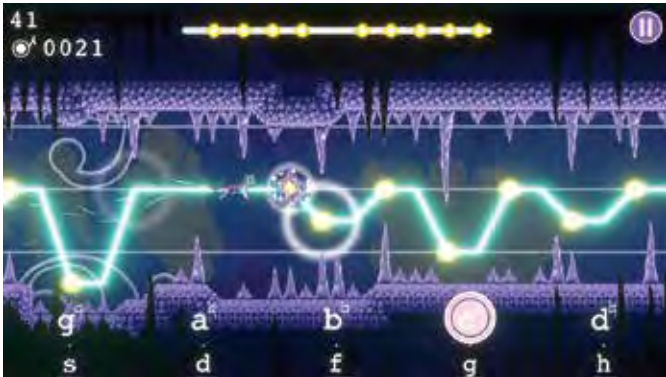
PLAYFUL NOTES

Intervalllic

Alum’s game makes music practice fun.

You’re 15 years old, and it’s a school night. Your mom tells you to practice your instrument before dinner. Usually you respond with a groan. But this time you pick up your electric violin, plug it into your computer, boot up the game *Intervalllic* ... and suddenly you are a robocat flying through outer space. A techno beat rumbles rhythmically in your

computer, and the game responds in real time by moving an animated character up and down on the screen, as if following successive notes (or “intervals”) on a music sheet. Users advance through an intergalactic storyline by playing preset scales and songs, some of which are composed by Buckingham. “There are a lot of reasons people get frustrated [with



ears. Then asteroids appear, blocking your path. You must use your lasers to destroy them — lasers that can only be activated with ... musical notes!

You play a melodic sequence on your violin, blasting the space rocks to bits. Imagine if music practice were this fun, says Aspen Buckingham '23, founder-in-residence at The Garage, Northwestern’s innovation and entrepreneurship space.

This past fall, Buckingham, who majored in computer science and music, and Northwestern senior Steven Jiang, a clarinetist majoring in economics, launched *Intervalllic*, a video game that turns music practice into entertainment. Users connect any electronic musical instrument — such as a bass guitar or keyboard — to their

music practice],” says Buckingham: perfectionism, lack of time, not feeling talented enough. *Intervalllic*’s various characters struggle with those same obstacles. But the game’s design encourages players to overcome those challenges, replay tough music phrases and keep progressing even after making mistakes.

“Our goal is to motivate people to pick up their instrument every day,” says Buckingham.

He and Jiang participated in Jumpstart, The Garage’s pre-accelerator program, in 2022 and co-founded their startup, Overture Games, that same year. *Intervalllic* is their first title.

See the game in action at alummag.nu/Intervalllic.

POP CULTURE

Media Moments That Changed History

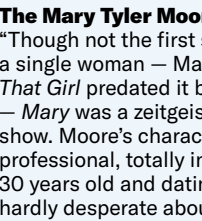
Pop culture expert Jennifer Keishin Armstrong '96 releases her new book *So Fetch: The Making of Mean Girls (And Why We're Still So Obsessed With It)* this January. Below, she identifies five TV and movie premieres that made their mark:

1950



The Hazel Scott Show “Scott made history as the first Black woman to host her own national primetime TV show in the U.S. She was a gifted jazz pianist who could play two pianos at once. But her variety show was canceled after just a few months, in part because Scott, a civil rights activist, refused to play segregated venues.”

1970



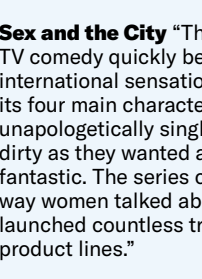
The Mary Tyler Moore Show “Though not the first show about a single woman — Marlo Thomas’ *That Girl* predated it by four years — *Mary* was a zeitgeist-defining show. Moore’s character was professional, totally independent, 30 years old and dating but hardly desperate about it. She was emblematic of a new kind of TV woman — one who was single and fabulous.”

1989



Seinfeld “Its pilot episode aired in the dead of summer on the day after a national holiday, and that should have been it. But one NBC executive, Rick Ludwin, loved the show and fought for it. The series went on to make TV history, spawning scores of catchphrases, upending the sitcom format and amassing an audience of nearly 30 million weekly viewers.”

1998

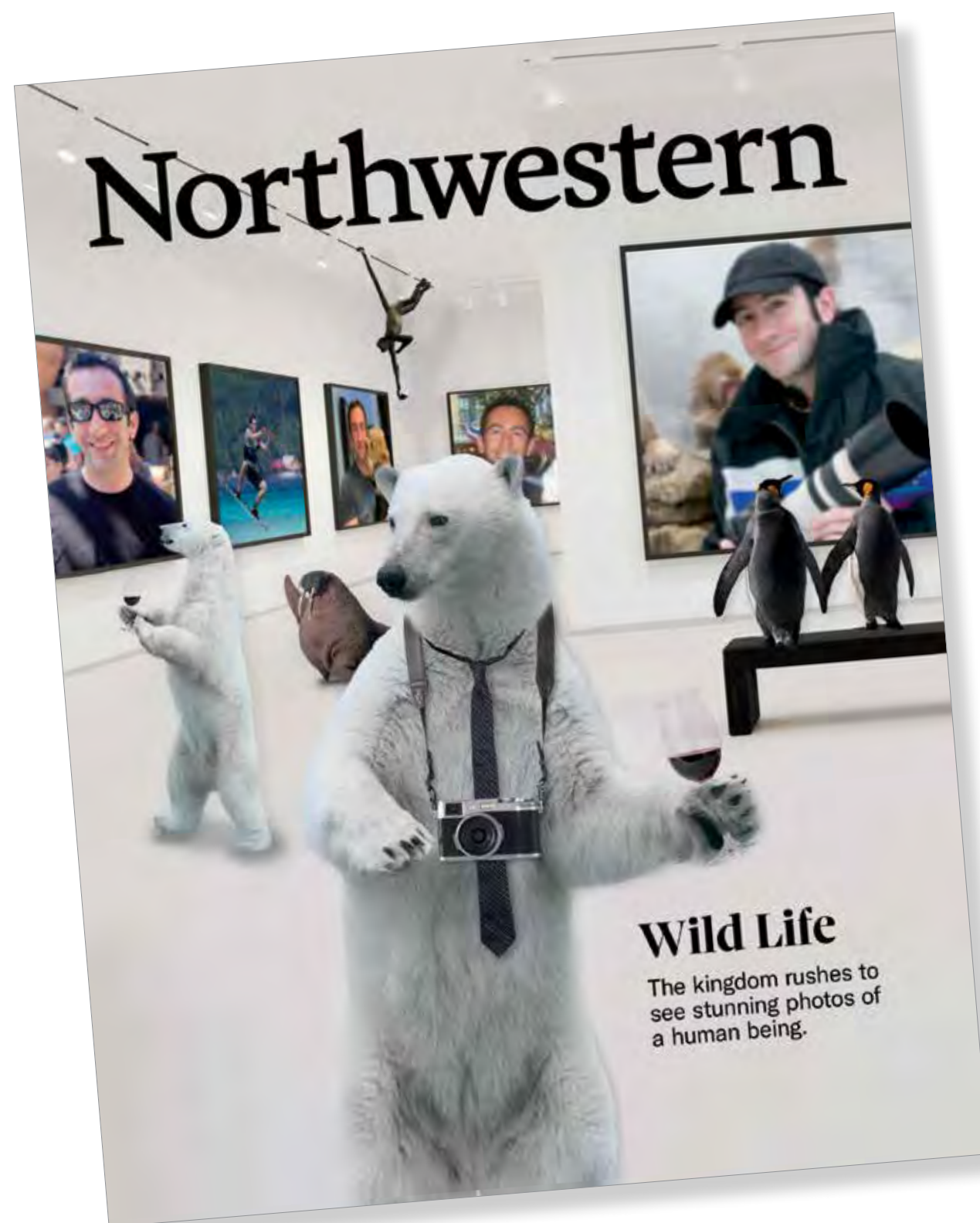


Sex and the City “This R-rated TV comedy quickly became an international sensation by allowing its four main characters to be unabologetically single, talk as dirty as they wanted and look fantastic. The series changed the way women talked about sex and launched countless trends and product lines.”

2004



Mean Girls “A defining movie for millennials, this cultural phenomenon caught on with successive generations because of its girl-powered bite, timeless messages about bullying and cliques, and endlessly quotable lines written by Tina Fey. It became a building block of internet culture.”



Josh Anon '03 has been photographing the animal kingdom for more than a decade. See his landscape and wildlife photography on page 20.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: SARINA BENOIT



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Built to Race

Sarah Yung, a senior in the McCormick School of Engineering, sits behind the wheel of the electric race car that she and her Northwestern Formula Racing peers built last year. *Read more on page 13.*

