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Northwestern

FALL 2026



Heart Helper

Professor and alum Sadiya Khan is on a mission to reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.

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MOMENT

Netting a Victory

Northwestern lacrosse goalie Jenika Cuocco '26 MA cuts the net after the team's NCAA championship win on May 24. The Wildcats beat North Carolina 14-11 to earn their ninth title in program history. Northwestern hosted the semifinals and title game, marking the first time the championship weekend was held outside the Eastern time zone. Wildcat players each took home a piece of netting to memorialize their win. Northwestern finished the season 19-3.



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Talk Back

A WELL-DESERVED HONOR

In fall 1991 I took European Economic History with Professor Joel Mokyr [“The Optimistic Economist,” spring 2026]. This was no ordinary class — it was a sermon. Pencils scratched across notepads, our index fingers blistered. For three months we sat rapt, absorbing every word like scripture. Mokyr had an unmatched passion for his craft multiplied by an encyclopedic knowledge of history. His ability to narrate the past and connect seemingly unrelated dots made economic history the most important subject during my undergrad studies.

Mokyr taught me to recognize the transformative power of technological change — not just as a force for societal progress but as a phenomenon whose long-term consequences often emerge from the most unexpected origins. Thirty-five years on, that lesson lingers most vividly: The footnotes of history sometimes matter most. Costas Anastassiadis '93 Athens, Greece

I’ve always considered it an honor to have had Joel Mokyr as my PhD adviser, to work with him as a colleague and to have him as a lifelong friend. It’s gratifying to see him and his work get this justly deserved recognition. Lynne Kiesling '93 PhD Chicago

KUDOS FOR VERONICA BURTON

I reveled in reading the feature on Veronica Burton '22 [“Leap

Year,” spring 2026] by Lia Assimakopoulos '22. It gave me a newfound appreciation for Burton’s full history. Her grit, determination and commitment to growth make her one of my favorite WNBA players.

The influence of her coaches’ approaches also resonated with me. Joe McKeown at Northwestern and Natalie Nakase with the Valkyries not only saw her but also drew out her natural strengths.

If you haven’t yet watched Burton, the Valkyries or a WNBA game, it’s worth your time. Wren Venvertloh '90 Vancouver, Wash.

FOREVER SHINE

The article “New University Campaign Will Help Students Shine” [Impact, spring 2026], about a current fundraising campaign to provide financial aid for middle- and lower-income students, reminded me of a much earlier piece — for which I was an unwitting poster boy.

In my senior year, the March 1978 issue of Northwestern Alumni News ran an article titled “Going to Northwestern — With a Little Help From Our Friends.” It described how scholarships and other aid enabled students like me to attend what would otherwise have been a prohibitively expensive private university (after all, by then tuition had climbed to over \$4,000).

The article included a prominent photo of a student walking through the Arch toward Sheridan Road, a laundry sack slung over his

shoulder, his back to the camera. Friends in my dorm, Willard Hall, recognized my distinctive “book bag” and realized it was me — which I readily confirmed. I had no idea the photo had been taken.

The image felt fitting, however — and still does. I could not have even considered attending Northwestern without the generous financial aid I received. I later framed the article, and it hung in my law office for 40 years as a reminder that I achieved my goals, quite literally, with a little help from my friends. Thanks to all those who donated then and who do so now. Larry Serlin '78 Havertown, Pa.

REMEMBERING IRWIN WEIL

Seeing the obituary for Professor Irwin Weil [In Memoriam, spring 2026] brought back many precious memories. In addition to all his mentioned wonderful qualities, he was a genuinely kind soul. And he was a gifted prayer leader.

In 1971 and 1972 he led Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services in Harris Hall. He led our prayers with sensitivity and Kavanah (spiritual intensity), and his mastery of Nusach (Hebrew prayer chanting) was extremely moving.

I think of him often when I lead High Holy Day services — trying to emulate both his tunes and his sincere piety. Rabbi David Ostrich '75 State College, Pa.

Northwestern Magazine welcomes signed letters from our readers. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Email letters@northwestern.edu.

Voices

NATURE'S BOUNTY

The Roots of Modern Medicine

By Karl Scheidt

The natural world has long served as humanity’s pharmacy. Largely discovered through trial and error, the medicinal benefits of plants, fungi, bacteria and animals have been crucial to our survival and will continue to provide inspiration for new medical advances.

Perhaps the most transformative and well-known example is the discovery of antibiotics. Before the 20th century, a simple infection or case of pneumonia

could be a death sentence. That changed in 1928 when Alexander Fleming discovered that a common mold was killing bacteria growing in his petri dish. The compound responsible, penicillin, has since saved countless lives.

Another example is salicylic acid, a compound found in willow tree bark. Extract from willow bark was found to soothe pain and reduce inflammation as early as 3,500 years ago. At the end of the 19th century, scientists developed a more powerful synthetic derivative of this acid: acetylsalicylic acid, better known today as aspirin, the most used drug in the world. More recently, new breakthroughs in diabetes treatment and weight loss are rooted in a molecule found in Gila monster venom.

Why does nature produce such effective medicines? The answer lies in evolution. Over millions of years, living organisms have evolved to produce an astonishing variety of molecules for their own survival. Unlike many drugs

specifically designed in a laboratory, many natural molecules interact with human biological processes with less predictability, and we as scientists have learned to harness those beneficial coincidences. My translational chemistry research group at Northwestern is dedicated to understanding natural compounds, unlocking their secrets and using them to address some of the most difficult medical challenges of our time.

Natural compounds have been transformative in cancer treatment, for example. In fact, it is estimated that over half of current chemotherapies are derived from or inspired by nature.

The ability to divide indefinitely is one of the most troubling properties of cancer cells. Healthy cells have a built-in limit on the number of times they can divide, which acts as a natural safeguard against age-related damage and uncontrolled growth. Cancer cells can switch off this limit, becoming virtually immortal.

My lab has identified new compounds derived from chrolactomycin — a natural product found in soil bacteria — that block this mechanism, shutting down the cancer cells’ immortality switch while leaving healthy cells unaffected. This selectivity is crucial: An effective cancer treatment must distinguish between a patient’s tumor cells, which need to be stopped, and healthy cells, which need to be protected.

These examples share a powerful theme: Nature can show us how to modulate and control our own biology through chemistry. The molecules we study are not ready-to-go medicines waiting to be plucked from the forest, the soil or the sea. They are starting points — structurally precise molecules that have evolved over millennia and that guide us toward new medicines.

At Northwestern we are integrating chemistry, biology and rapidly emerging computational resources to advance our discoveries toward the clinic. But even with the tools of modern science at our disposal, we continue to face challenges. Some debilitating diseases remain without a cure, while others are evolving resistance to current treatments.

Our goal is to make the future of medicine brighter than ever. In our search for new medicines, nature remains our greatest inspiration and partner.

Karl Scheidt is a professor of chemistry.



SHANE COLLINS

↑ Karl Scheidt leads the Scheidt Research Group at Northwestern.



HOW I GOT HERE

Diplomacy on Stage

An alum finds her calling in international arts exchange.

Anne-Sophie Lacombe García '25 was selected for the Buffett Post-Baccalaureate Fellowship, established in 2025 by Northwestern's Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. Lacombe García spent eight months in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, as an artistic producing associate for Broadway Across Borders.

I can proudly say that I produced the first Broadway musical fully translated into Bosnian in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I have adored musical theater my entire life. I also have a deep passion for international relations. I am Mexican and French, and I grew up in the U.S. because my mom worked for the Mexican government as a diplomat. Growing up,

I was navigating multiple languages at once, so expressing myself with words was difficult at times. I loved musical theater because when words were no longer enough, people sang. Music felt like its own language. That was incredibly freeing.

Northwestern let me pursue both of my passions with an unconventional double major in theater and international studies. But when I started thinking about a career, it terrified me that I did not see a way to combine my interests.

Then I learned about Broadway Across Borders, an organization founded by my music professor, Ryan Nelson. He planned to produce a Broadway musical in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the goal of strengthening connections between local institutions, artists and future cultural leaders in the country. I was like, "This is it!"

Thanks to a fellowship from the Buffett Institute, in August 2025 I joined Broadway Across Borders in Sarajevo to produce *Be More Chill*. I was responsible for marketing, rehearsals, scheduling and forming critical partnerships.

For example, there are three arts-based academies at the University of Sarajevo — for performing arts, fine arts and music — which, to my surprise, had never collaborated with one another. So I had to create a bridge between them, because you need actors, designers and musicians for a musical.

In March we staged three performances at the Sarajevo Youth Theatre. There was a palpable sense of excitement, as though people were witnessing not just a musical but also the growth of a new creative economy.

This experience has changed my life. I get emotional thinking about this, because my mom passed away when I was 13 and this would have made her the happiest. This is exactly what she would have wanted for me.

Northwestern gave me the opportunity to study theater and international relations. And Buffett gave me the opportunity to develop expertise in a profession that combines both. Now I can enter the field of cultural diplomacy saying, "I know what I'm doing. Hire me, and let's make this happen."

SANELA ZUKIC



MY NORTHWESTERN DIRECTION

Rewriting Stories, One Family at a Time

When I was 12, my mother received a housing choice voucher that allowed her to move me and my two brothers from our small apartment in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood to a much larger two-flat nearby. I was too young to understand what opportunities that voucher provided. But I did notice that, for the first time, I had a quiet space of my own.

Even without having the words to describe it, I understood then that the right support at the right moment can profoundly rewrite a family's story. That voucher and other services from the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), which provides housing assistance to people and families with low incomes, had rewritten mine.

A few years after we moved to that two-flat, my mother graduated from CHA's Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which provides financial coaching, employment resources and other support. It changed what was possible for our family.

My own drive to work in public service began in the early 2000s at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), my undergraduate alma mater, where I worked as an education specialist in a program for first-generation college students and students from lower-income backgrounds. I worked with students whose backgrounds mirrored my own, helping them build the confidence and social capital needed to navigate the transition to college.

While I had a deep commitment to service, I knew that passion alone couldn't sustain the work.

By Ebony Baity Campbell '05 MS

Ebony Baity Campbell is deputy chief of resident services programs for the Chicago Housing Authority. She lives in Oak Forest, Ill. Campbell works with students through the Northwestern Network Mentorship Program, the Northwestern Externship Program and the Affinity Leaders and Learners Mentorship Program. Last spring she helped pilot the Master of Science in Communication Mentorship Program at the School of Communication.

To lead with the same intentionality I brought to serving, I needed a new set of tools. So after UIC, I came to Northwestern's School of Communication for my master's in communication. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

In my classes on bargaining and persuasion, I learned how to navigate the psychological stages of resistance. Professor Michael Roloff's lectures on the reinforcement approach gave me a name for something I had been doing by feel for years: meeting people exactly where they are and then building the trust needed to move forward together. And Professor Irving Rein's crisis management class forced me to abandon my usual scripts and learn to speak extemporaneously.

These weren't abstract academic concepts — they were my tactical manual. I stopped operating on instinct alone and started building relationships with intention. Northwestern gave me the clarity to see that communication is leadership.

Today I am deputy chief of resident services programs for the CHA. I oversee youth development, educational mobility and economic opportunity for Chicago residents navigating systemic barriers. And I am proud to oversee the LevelUp Program — the same Family Self-Sufficiency Program from which my mother graduated many years ago.

As I lead initiatives to improve Chicagoans' quality of life, I see the indelible marks of my time at Northwestern on every decision I make. Managing a \$30 million budget and a staff of more than 100 demands the skills I learned in my communication classes. Whether I'm drafting policy or a strategic plan, I'm constantly thinking about how communication can open doors — or accidentally close them. It is high-stakes work, and words have consequences.

I don't know exactly what my mother had to go through to get what our family needed. But I know what I want the experience to feel like for the families I serve.

“I stopped operating on instinct alone and started building relationships with intention.”

SOUND OFF

Professors Learn Lessons Too

Faculty members share what students have taught them.

Carine Nemr, assistant professor of instruction in chemistry



During my first quarter at Northwestern, I met with a student who didn't do well on the first general chemistry midterm. After our conversation, the student committed to trying new study strategies. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, they later had to withdraw from the course. The next year, the student rejoined the course, putting in the work, attending student hours and participating in class. The student ended up doing well in the course and in subsequent courses, even noting that they actually enjoyed chemistry! One of my key roles as an instructor is to guide my students; sometimes this means providing them space to step away and come back when they're ready.



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

One of my former students was about to drop out because he was suffering debilitating migraines. As a migraine sufferer myself, I empathized. We came up with a plan to keep him in school one week at a time. He finished the quarter. The next quarter, we continued our schedule: He'd come to my office to work through his challenges and complete his homework. I'm happy to report that he finished

that school year and returned again the following year. I learned a lot about what not giving up can look like. I also learned that sometimes we, as faculty, have to show students that they are stronger than they think and remind them they can make it.

Jill Hardin Wilson, associate chair and director of undergraduate studies, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences



I build my classes on dialogue, always asking questions and encouraging students to do the same. Some of my most memorable students were the ones who were not afraid to ask, "Yeah, but why?" or the ones who were quick to say, "I don't get it." It takes courage to show that vulnerability, and it reminds me that it's always OK to push back and question, that I should never accept an unsatisfactory answer. It also reminds me to give students plenty of space to express confusion and to wrestle with ideas.

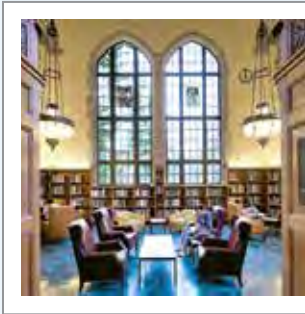
Scott Sowerby, associate professor of history



When I started teaching at Northwestern, I was afraid that students would ask me questions I didn't know the answers to. History is vast, and we can't possibly know more than a small part of it. But in my first class, I learned there is nothing to be afraid of, as long as you don't pretend to know more than you do. It's important to model curiosity, to explain what you would need to know to answer the question and perhaps to suggest what you think the answer might be, based on what you know already. Now I welcome difficult questions, because they lead to the most interesting conversations, even if I may not know the answers off the top of my head.

SOCIAL FEEDS

Following a 16-month closure for restorations and updates, Deering Library reopened last fall to rave reviews.



"A brilliant update for a truly revered library 🙌"

Susan Alexander '64 MA [in](#)

"One of my favorite places on campus. I'd hide out in the comic book collection, and no one knew where I was for hours."

Larry Irving '76 [in](#)

"Despite the uncomfortable chairs, I loved the atmosphere, the open stacks and even the trudge to get there. I'm glad she's gotten some sprucing up!"

Kim Toigo '79 [in](#)

"I spent many hours in that beautiful library. Happy that more generations have the chance to do the same."

Mo Moorman '03 MS [in](#)

DEERING LIBRARY: MATTHEW GILSON; SOWERBY: NATE BARTLETT '13

CHIANG: SHANE COLLINS; ILLUSTRATION: LESLIE-ANNE MOCK

News

Remembering swimming legend Sybil Bauer p. 13

A comedy club in the attic p. 12

Video game improves stroke survivors' mobility p. 14



PLEASE WELCOME ...

Our New President

Meet Mung Chiang, an innovative researcher and highly regarded leader in higher education.

Mung Chiang, former president of Purdue University, took the reins as Northwestern's 18th president on July 1.

Chiang assumed the role following an extensive global search led by representatives of Northwestern's Board of Trustees and select faculty, staff, students and alumni. He succeeds the University's 17th president, Michael Schill, who stepped down in September 2025.

"I am humbled and excited to serve the Northwestern University community," Chiang said in a video message after



The Ticker

Here’s how AI is at work at Northwestern.

● The McCormick School of Engineering’s computer science department now offers **an undergraduate major in artificial intelligence**. The major will focus on human-computer interaction systems and explore the ethics of AI. Undergraduate students from across the University can add AI as a second major.



● FORGE, the Northwestern Network for Collaborative Intelligence’s hub for data science and AI experimentation and collaboration, welcomed its inaugural student cohort in June. Housed in The Garage, **FORGE aims to address real-world challenges** by providing a space to build, test and prototype data-driven and AI-powered solutions.



● A Northwestern Medicine study revealed that open-source **AI technologies produce more comprehensive cancer pathology reports than physicians do**. The study found that AI is particularly adept at capturing molecular and genetic findings that are critical for treatment decisions. This can help physicians make clinical decisions more efficiently and allow them to focus more on patient care.



● This summer the Generative AI + Journalism Initiative at Northwestern invited teams of journalists, developers and technologists from around the globe to explore how **AI can help investigative journalists comb through documents and uncover leads** more efficiently. Top submissions of proposed prompts, tools and workflows from the Agentic AI Investigative Journalism Challenge will be presented at a symposium in Evanston in October.



↑ Mung Chiang, center, visits chemistry professor Ted Sargent’s lab.

the University announced his appointment in May. “My first priority is to listen and learn about Northwestern’s distinct culture and this community of scholarly and creative minds.”

Chiang has built a reputation as an innovative researcher, an award-winning educator and an exceptional leader in higher education. He arrives at Northwestern after serving as Purdue’s 13th president, a role he assumed in 2023. (He first joined Purdue, one of the nation’s largest public research universities, in 2017 as dean of the College of Engineering.) During his tenure as president, Purdue achieved a record-high graduation rate and admitted its most selective class of students. The university had its most successful fundraising year and received its largest federal research grants and largest industry research grant in school history. Purdue invested in 27 construction or major renovations projects while freezing tuition. The university also launched its first urban campus in Indianapolis and secured \$3.9 billion in investments to build an AI memory chip advanced packaging facility at Purdue Research Park.

Chiang is Northwestern’s first Asian American president. A first-generation immigrant from China, he studied at Stanford University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering and mathematics as well as a master’s degree and doctorate in electrical engineering. Chiang joined the Princeton University faculty in 2003 and taught electrical engineering, computer science, and applied and computational mathematics for nearly 14 years.

Widely recognized as a pioneer in edge computing — a method of localizing data processing to improve computing speed and efficiency — Chiang has conducted research on network deployment and optimization. He founded the Princeton EDGE Lab in 2009 and is co-founder of several startups and industry consortia. As of June, he held 26 U.S. patents, most of which are licensed for network deployment.

Chiang has garnered national recognition and numerous distinguished awards for his work, including the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’

Founders Medal, a National Science Foundation Alan T. Waterman Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2020 he became the first engineer to serve as a nonpartisan science and technology adviser to the U.S. secretary of state, and in 2024 he was appointed by the U.S. secretary of energy to the inaugural board of the U.S. Foundation for Energy Security and Innovation, which he currently chairs. Chiang helped design and implement the federal CHIPS and Science Act of 2022.

“Mung Chiang is a distinguished scholar who brings understanding and experience in the complexities of research-intensive universities along with a proven ability to grow the resources that power discovery,” says Susan Quaggin, who served on the presidential search committee and chairs the Department of Medicine in Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine. “His genuine commitment to faculty, students and staff and his ability to bring people and ideas together across disciplines to deliver results are exactly what Northwestern needs to remain at the forefront of innovation.”

President Emeritus Henry Bienen ’09 H, who served as Northwestern’s interim president through the end of June, believes Chiang is uniquely equipped to lead the University into the future.

“Mung’s energy, intelligence, accessibility and humility combine to make him the right leader at the right time,” Bienen said in May. “I am confident that his presidency will inspire our faculty, staff and students to new heights ... and remind our faithful alumni just how proud they are to be Northwestern Wildcats.”



→ Denzel Higirowith the podcast *Mama I Made It*.

GRADS TO CELEBRATE

Endless Possibilities

A member of the class of 2026 shares how he found his way.

Before he even set foot on campus, Denzel Higirow ’26 fell in love with Northwestern. “Watching YouTube and seeing what it would be like to be a Northwestern student, I had a feeling this was the right place for me,” he says.

The first in his household to attend college, Higirow started at Northwestern as an engineering major but switched to learning and organizational change in the School of Education and Social Policy.

Born in Namibia and raised in Tempe, Ariz., Higirow

co-founded the East African Alliance at Northwestern and served on the executive board of the International Studies Society. “I also love dancing,” says Higirow, a member of the ELEL Dance Group, which specializes in traditional Ethiopian and Eritrean dances.

With support from The Garage, Higirow also created *Mama I Made It*, a career-focused podcast to show “there’s not one specific path to success.

“The mission,” he says, “is to make sure that young people can see themselves in our guests and hear about

different career paths and what it took to get there.”

After graduation Higirow joined a private credit firm. He plans to apply to business school in the future.

“My sixth-grade teacher told me, ‘No one can take away what’s in your head. What’s in your head is your superpower,’” Higirow says. “An education is not just a piece of paper. It’s a transformative experience. Northwestern showed me endless possibilities.”

Meet more grads at alummag.nu/grads2026.

CHIANG: SHANE COLLINS; TICKER: LESLIE-ANNE MOCK

SHANE COLLINS

WATCH YOUR HEAD

Pop-Up Comedy

An off-campus attic became a stand-up space.

In early 2025, Mateo Garcia-Bryce '26, Jackson Heller '26 and Luca Hirsch '26 bought 30 cheap lawn chairs and hauled them up to the attic of an off-campus three-story brick house on Pratt Court in Evanston. They hung multicolored string lights from the ceiling and put movie posters on the walls.

The three housemates had been involved in stand-up and sketch comedy groups on campus, but they wanted to create “a space where anyone could try comedy regardless of experience,” says Garcia-Bryce.

With the lawn chairs set up in a semicircle around a microphone and a cardboard banner announcing the space, they went all in on “the Prattic,” Hirsch says.

“Our first show was in mid-February of 2025, and it was mostly just our friends, like 15 people,” says Garcia-Bryce. “Four or five weeks later we had 90 people up there.”

For the next 16 months, every Monday night at 9:30, as many as 15 comedians — from first-timers to more

seasoned stand-up acts — performed in the Prattic. Garcia-Bryce, Heller, Hirsch and others took turns hosting shows each week. The space, with its tight quarters and cathedral ceilings, was always part of the appeal.

“A lot of comedy on campus is performed in big lecture halls,” says Hirsch. “And unless you’re able to bring out hundreds of people, it ends up being a lot of empty chairs. That’s really tough for comedy, which needs to be infectious.”

Last spring, Hirsch, Heller and Garcia-Bryce organized Prattic Fringe Fest, a five-day comedy festival across venues in Chicago, Evanston and Wilmette, Ill. All proceeds benefited the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

The Prattic had its last show on June 8. During its run, over 105 people performed. Even though they’ve graduated and moved from Evanston, the founders hope the Prattic has inspired “other people to use their spaces in creative ways,” Heller says.



← Luca Hirsch co-founded a comedy club with his college roommates.

THEATER IN UNUSUAL SPACES

A new course brings small-scale theater to children’s hospitals, preschools and museums. Last May, students in Northwestern’s Bedside Pediatric Theatre class performed *Let’s Go Camping!*, a show co-developed by theater professor Elizabeth Brendel Horn, for patients at Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago. The class focuses on theater programming for pediatric audiences.

'CAT TALES

Champion Swimmer

One of the greatest athletes of her time, Sybil Bauer set 23 world records in women’s backstroke in the 1920s.

By the time she enrolled at Northwestern in September 1922, she already held world records in the 100- and 150-yard races. Later that fall, she dominated the 440-yard backstroke at a race in Bermuda, setting a new world record for women — and eclipsing the men’s world record by more than four seconds. She became the first woman to break a men’s world record in swimming.

“Fans and foes alike associated her victory in Bermuda with women’s rights, especially because it came on the heels of the 19th Amendment,” says Caitlin Fitz, associate professor of history.

At the 1924 Paris Olympics, Bauer won gold in the 100-meter backstroke. At one point, she held all existing backstroke records for women. However, Bauer’s career was cut short. She died of cancer on Jan. 31, 1927, at age 23, just shy of earning her Northwestern degree. She was one of two women inducted into the then-newly created Northwestern Athletic Hall of Fame in 1984.

BAUER: GETTY IMAGES



HIRSCH: SHANE COLLINS



→ Aanya Dhruv takes in the green space near her home in Los Altos Hills, Calif.

EARTH ADVOCATE

A Case for Open Spaces

A student’s nonprofit fights to protect access to nature.

As a teenager, Aanya Dhruv frequently visited O’Keefe Open Space Preserve, an 8-acre wildlife area near her home in Los Altos Hills, Calif., a San Jose suburb. “I didn’t really have access to nature before,” says Dhruv, who grew up in more urban parts of California prior to moving to Los Altos Hills at age 13.

Now a sophomore majoring in learning and organizational change at Northwestern, Dhruv has become an advocate for preserving such green spaces. Her interest in environmental advocacy began during a family trip to

Dahanu, India, when she was a high schooler. Dhruv noticed a large power plant in Dahanu, installed to supply electricity to nearby Mumbai. After speaking with friends, family, and local produce and fish vendors, she learned that the plant was contributing to poor air quality, water pollution and wildlife habitat destruction.

Environmental degradation and pollution do not affect everyone equally, says Dhruv, “but some people are forced to bear these burdens.” The experience inspired her to found EJ Grassroots, a nonprofit offering educational materials and workshops

on environmental justice, in 2022, when she was just 15 years old.

Then, in fall 2025 — her first quarter on campus — Dhruv learned that Los Altos Hills officials had proposed to rezone the O’Keefe preserve for multifamily residential development.

Ready to fight back, Dhruv launched Save Open Spaces, an EJ Grassroots campaign to alert neighbors and protect the O’Keefe preserve. They raised \$33,000 to hire legal counsel in defense of the land.

Learn more about her work at alummag.nu/Dhruv.

Discovery

MUSCLE MEMORY

Video Game Enhances Stroke Rehab

A new therapy for survivors improves arm mobility and function.

An old-school video game may offer a surprisingly futuristic option for stroke recovery.

A Northwestern study recruited patients who were living with moderate to severe arm impairment — meaning they were only able to slightly move their arm and extend their elbow — due to a stroke that occurred at least six months prior to beginning the study. Participants played a '90s-style video game on a laptop for 90 minutes a day, five days a week at home and one day in the lab for six weeks while wearing small sensors on their impaired arm. The sensors measured the speed and strength of electrical signals traveling through the participant's nerves in their arm muscles. The sensors then translated those signals

into movement inputs in the game. Players were asked to complete tasks in the game — such as flying a helicopter around the screen to land on a moving target — using only those electrical inputs.

A stroke can disrupt brain signals that control movement, causing muscles to fire in an uncoordinated way. Called abnormal coupling, this phenomenon can make it difficult for stroke survivors to extend an affected arm forward with a straight elbow. For example, someone might try to reach straight ahead, but their elbow bends because their biceps activate at the wrong time.

The video game and sensor system, called myoelectric interface for neurorehabilitation (MINT) conditioning, identifies

abnormally coupled muscles and retrains them to move independently again.

The video game is customized so that electrical activity from each of the coupled muscles causes a cursor to move in perpendicular directions. For example, a participant's biceps might move the cursor to the right and their deltoids move the cursor up. When those muscles are abnormally coupled, the cursor thus moves on a diagonal (up and right, like turning both dials on an Etch-a-Sketch).

"We have them hit targets that are farther and farther away from that diagonal until they have to separate their muscles and can only hit it by activating one of the muscles and not the other," says the study's co-corresponding author Marc Slutzky, professor of neurology and neuroscience at the Feinberg School of Medicine. The more the muscles decouple, the higher the person's score in the game.

After six weeks of the game-based therapy, some stroke survivors improved arm function by nearly eight

times as much as those in the control group. Being able to play the game at home allowed for better access to the therapy and increased arm extension reps. Participants also said the game made rehab more fun.

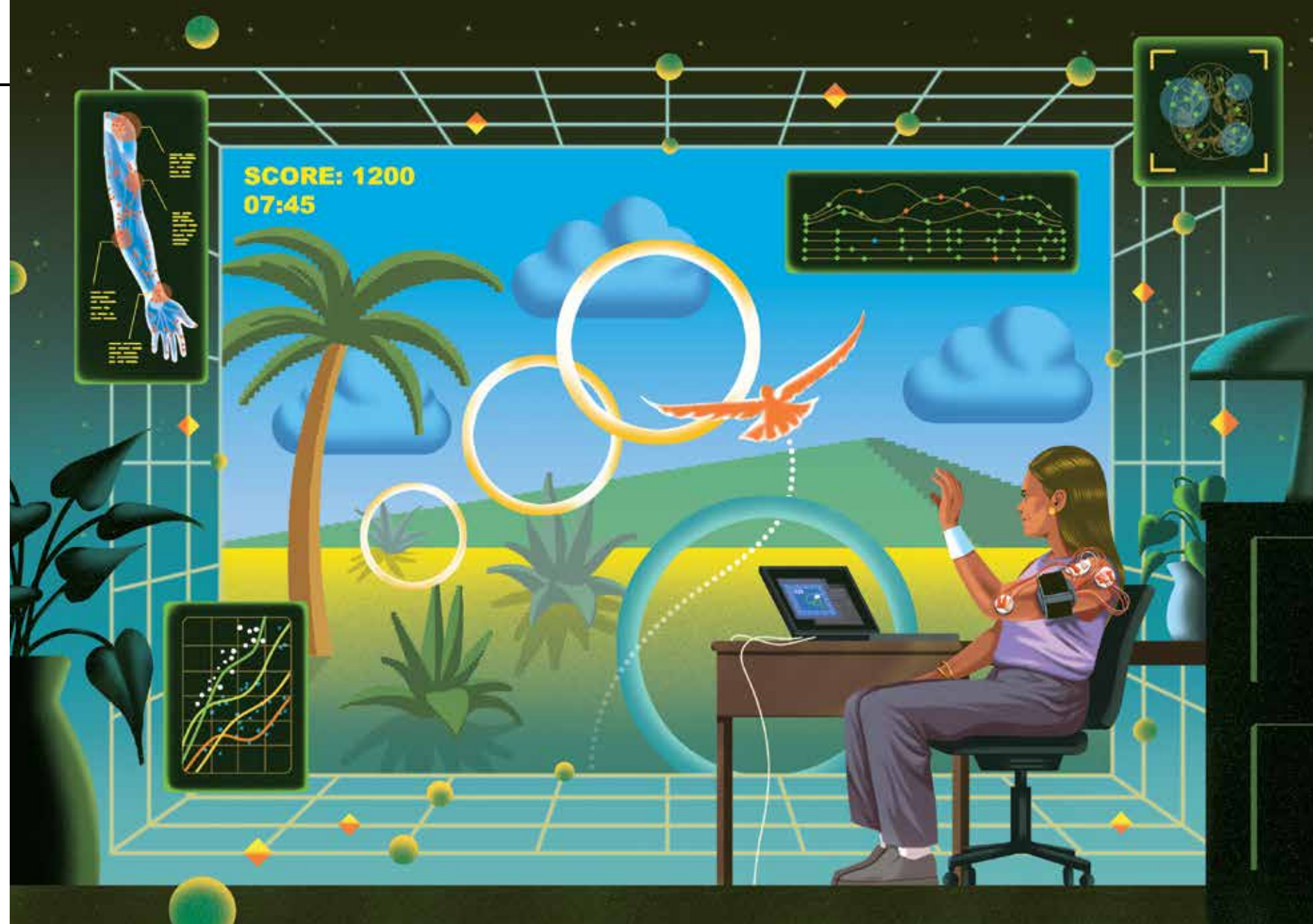
The study assessed improvement using a timed test that measures function in daily activities. The scientists noted that participants in the experimental group completed daily tasks more quickly than those in the control group. Participants in the experimental group also saw improvements in

their impaired arm's range of motion, and that functionality continued to improve one month after ending the therapy.

"We've been working on this approach to stroke rehab for 15 years, so hearing participants report they're regaining movement in their arm and that it's helping them in their daily life is so rewarding," says Slutzky '01 PhD, '02 MD, '03 GME, '06 GME. The game was designed by members of the Slutzky Neuroprosthetics Laboratory at Northwestern.

Most stroke rehab today focuses on helping stroke survivors perform daily tasks, which often results in stroke survivors compensating for their impaired arm function. For instance, a patient might lean forward with their whole body to reach for an object rather than reaching for it with just their arm.

"We're doing something different," Slutzky says. Rather than working around the impairment, "we're treating the impairment directly and measuring how much the arm improved."



NEW RESEARCH

Health Literacy Challenges

Northwestern researchers found that one in three adults ages 35 to 64 cannot consistently understand medical forms, follow prescription instructions correctly or recall details from doctor visits regarding chronic condition diagnoses. These health literacy skills are crucial for managing common conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

While previous research has looked at health literacy among adults 65 and older, the new study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, is the first to focus on middle-aged adults.

The study included 1,000 adults receiving care at hospitals and health centers in Chicago. Participants completed interviews and hands-on tasks, such as interpreting prescription labels, recalling physician instructions and reviewing written care materials. Nearly 33% had limited health literacy skills.

The researchers also found that lower health literacy was linked to unemployment, lower income and less education.

"Improving understanding could significantly improve outcomes and reduce harm," says professor and senior author Michael Wolf '02 MPH, '07 MA, director of Northwestern's Center for Applied Health Research on Aging.

Innovation

POWERING UP

OnSight Insights

A sensor analytics startup helps gym managers optimize equipment layout and repairs.

Angel Mendoza '26 and Matt Martinez '26 are gym guys. But equipment breakdowns and long wait times for popular machines kept them from getting the most out of their workouts.

They're not alone in their discouragement. Industry data suggests that well over 30% of gym-goers cancel their memberships each year. That's at least partially due to dissatisfaction with the available equipment, Mendoza says. "We wanted to find a solution."

Mendoza and Martinez spoke with gym managers, who reported that they lacked solid data on equipment usage. In response, the two mechanical engineering majors developed OnSight, a sensor analytics platform to improve gym management and organization.

"We use noninvasive sensor technology to tell the gym operators what's happening in their facility so they can make data-backed decisions," explains Mendoza, CEO of OnSight. "We put privacy first, so we don't use cameras. We use radar to track movement."

The OnSight dashboard provides "a heat map of an entire facility," he says. "You can see peak usage hours for every machine and a list of most-used versus least-used equipment. We give managers buying and selling suggestions too."

The data from OnSight helps gym managers know when to schedule manufacturer-recommended maintenance to avoid equipment breakdowns. And it provides guidance on the ideal placement for machines.

Mendoza and Martinez, OnSight's chief operating



→ OnSight's Matt Martinez, left, and Angel Mendoza

officer, hope to provide benefits to gym-goers too. A QR-code system allows users to report equipment malfunctions. In future iterations, the co-founders plan to create a platform that allows members to see equipment availability in real time and identify the optimal time to visit the gym based on their workout plans.

In a pilot launch, OnSight implemented its sensor technology at Cheetah Gym in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood. Mendoza and Martinez landed that contract thanks to the new Manufacturing Fund at

The Garage, Northwestern's student startup hub. The fund provides student teams with awards of up to \$25,000 to cover critical production expenses, including prototyping, tooling and minimum order quantities required for initial manufacturing runs.

In mid-March, OnSight won the Innovation Alley Pitch Fest at the Health & Fitness Association conference in San Diego, beating out 15 other startups for the top prize. This past summer the OnSight co-founders also participated in The Garage's Jumpstart Pre-Accelerator program.

ONSIGHT: SHANE COLLINS; BUG: GETTY IMAGES

DON'T BUG ME

Ali Lee '25 discovered lotion-based bug repellents while studying abroad in Singapore. Unlike many spray-based repellents, Lee says, the lotions were lightweight and more comfortable for daily use. With support from The Garage at Northwestern, Lee launched **Swarm, a picaridin-based insect-repellent lotion that doubles as a skin moisturizer.** Pending Environmental Protection Agency approval, Swarm is slated for launch in 2027.



TOP-LEVEL OVERSIGHT

HaptE builds a digital dashboard for warehouse administrators that shows the real-time status of all goods in a facility. It also creates a virtual inventory of all the shelves in a warehouse, a "digital twin" that allows administrators to optimize where items are stocked and how items move throughout a facility.

FEEDBACK ON THE FORKLIFT

HaptE places cameras and small computers on all forklifts. The AI-powered cameras use optical character recognition to read labels and item codes and track products as they move throughout a warehouse. The computer flags mistakes in real time.

FINAL VERIFICATION

HaptE cross-checks inventory with order details to make sure the correct items are selected and loaded onto trucks.



TABLET-BASED INTEL

Forklift operators using HaptE have access to a tablet that shows what items need to be selected and where the items are located. They also receive on-screen error notifications. For instance, Abbott says, the notification might say, "This order needs four pallets of this product, but you only picked up two."

INVENTION

A Smarter Supply Chain

Warehouse inventory errors can be costly and ruin client relationships. Student startup HaptE is using AI to improve warehouse efficiency.

Founded by Trevor Abbott '26 and Victoria Israel '26, HaptE provides real-time feedback to forklift operators to ensure they're selecting the correct items off warehouse shelves, in the

correct quantities, and loading those items onto the correct trucks for shipment.

"Mistakes and inefficiencies account for 10% to 30% of profit loss for warehouse operators," Abbott says. "For a business that's bringing in up to \$500 million a year, 10% to 30% adds up. We are preventing those losses."

HaptE recently won the \$100,000 grand prize at VentureCat 2026, Northwestern's startup competition, and deployed its technology with its first customer, a Chicagoland manufacturer.



← Kellogg alum Matt Caldwell, center, met with veteran students in the MBA program last spring.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Helping Veterans Thrive

A new program offers financial support, resources and a community to military veterans studying at Kellogg.

After five years of combat operations in Iraq and peacekeeping in Kosovo, Matt Caldwell '10 JD, MBA was ready to trade the structure and identity of military command for civilian life — a transition that led him to Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management.

"I went to West Point, the first class after 9/11, and then to the 1st Infantry Division, 'Big Red One,'" says Caldwell, a Bronze Star recipient and former U.S. Army captain. "Coming out of the military, my first civilian experience

was moving to Chicago and coming to Kellogg." For many veterans, the decision to pursue an MBA and select the right program can be financially daunting and create a sense of isolation. That's why in 2025 Kellogg

"I hope this initiative inspires more veterans to pursue enrollment at Kellogg."

— Matt Caldwell

launched the Matt Caldwell Veterans Program to give veterans the tools to build successful civilian careers.

"The Kellogg curriculum was instrumental in my development after retiring from the military," says Caldwell, who earned a joint MBA and JD from Kellogg and Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. "I hope this initiative inspires more veterans to pursue enrollment at Kellogg."

A graduate-level education in management enables veterans to transition into business careers while positioning them to succeed

in all sectors of the economy or as leaders in government. Their service experience adds value to the classroom, to the culture of the University and to employers who recruit for the qualities veterans possess.

Named in honor of Caldwell — who is CEO of the NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves and the WNBA's Minnesota Lynx — the Matt Caldwell Veterans Program advances veteran student recruitment, provides support for veteran students throughout their MBA experience and creates connections for alumni who are veterans via networking events and mentorship. It also established the Kellogg Veterans Council, an advisory group of distinguished veteran alumni who help guide future initiatives at Kellogg. The program has expanded scholarship opportunities as well, helping reduce financial barriers.

CALDWELL: NATHANIEL SMITH PHOTOGRAPHS

In addition, Kellogg has launched a \$30 million campaign to raise funds for scholarships for military veterans; so far, it has raised \$7 million toward the goal. Veteran alums of Kellogg have gone on to careers in industries ranging from healthcare to manufacturing.

Military veterans are increasingly selecting Kellogg for their business education, and scholarships help ensure they can bring their perspectives and experiences to the school and to the Northwestern community. Kellogg aims to raise significant scholarship support for these students, fully leveraging the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Yellow Ribbon Program — which helps cover the cost of private, foreign or out-of-state tuition and fees.

Northwestern is putting support for its students front and center with a new fundraising campaign. Through the Forever Shine Campaign, announced in May, the University aims to raise at least \$625 million for scholarships and supplemental programs — including those offered through the Matt Caldwell Veterans Program — to benefit undergraduate, graduate and professional school students.

Former U.S. Navy intelligence officers Gabrielle Fong '26 MBA and Crysta Gonzalez '26 MBA both received the Janet and Craig Duchossois Veteran Scholarship — one of several scholarships at Kellogg that support veterans. The married couple credits the scholarship with helping them decide to attend Kellogg together.

"This reduced financial pressure allowed me to fully explore and pursue opportunities that I felt were most aligned with my values and vision for my post-Kellogg career," Fong says.

Gonzalez also recalls how the leaders of the Kellogg Veterans Association — a student-led group dedicated to educating, equipping and empowering veterans throughout their MBA journey — reached out to them even before classes began.

"When we got admitted to Kellogg, the association leaders were so accommodating, so welcoming," Gonzalez says. "They wanted to know how they could help."

Strengthening that sense of belonging is central to the veteran experience at Kellogg.

"Veterans bring extraordinary leadership, perspective and knowledge to the Kellogg community," says Dean Francesca Cornelli.

"We are grateful to the donors who have already helped make it possible for veterans to gain access to the opportunities they need to succeed here and beyond, and we look forward to growing support for our program so that future veteran students can also thrive."

Learn more about the Forever Shine Campaign at giving.northwestern.edu/ForeverShine.

↓ Former U.S. Navy intelligence officers Gabrielle Fong, left, and Crysta Gonzalez both received the Janet and Craig Duchossois Veteran Scholarship.



Kellogg's Veteran Community

100+

veterans are enrolled across Kellogg's programs

9%

of students in Kellogg's two-year MBA class of 2027 are veterans

1,200+

Kellogg alumni are veterans

MEDICINE

Preserving Brain Health

The long-term health of the human brain is the focus of a new Northwestern institute.

Imagine a future where our brains last as long as our bodies. That’s the goal of the Simpson Querrey Brain Health Institute (SQ-Brain), a new initiative made possible by the philanthropy of longtime Northwestern benefactor and University Trustee Kimberly K. Querrey.

SQ-Brain envisions a future where brain health can be continuously monitored, measured and modified across a person’s lifespan. It also strives to prevent cognitive decline and brain injury through

neurovascular biology and precision medicine.

The institute brings together physicians, scientists and engineers at the intersection of their fields to facilitate cross-boundary discoveries that address fundamental questions hindering brain health research. It will integrate research with clinical care to generate actionable discoveries and accelerate early detection of diseases and disorders. Community partnerships will help expand prevention.

“Kimberly’s wonderful gift to establish SQ-Brain ensures that Northwestern’s urgent work to advance our understanding of brain health and improve the lives of patients can move forward rapidly,” says Dr. Eric G. Neilson, vice president for medical affairs and the Lewis Landsberg Dean at the Feinberg School of Medicine.

According to the World Health Organization, by 2030, brain-related disorders will drive half of the global economic burden of disability. SQ-Brain will build on recent

advances in neurovascular science to address this burden. It also will accelerate progress in Alzheimer’s disease prevention. Finally, the institute will evaluate the brain-health implications of the rapidly expanding use of GLP-1 medications.

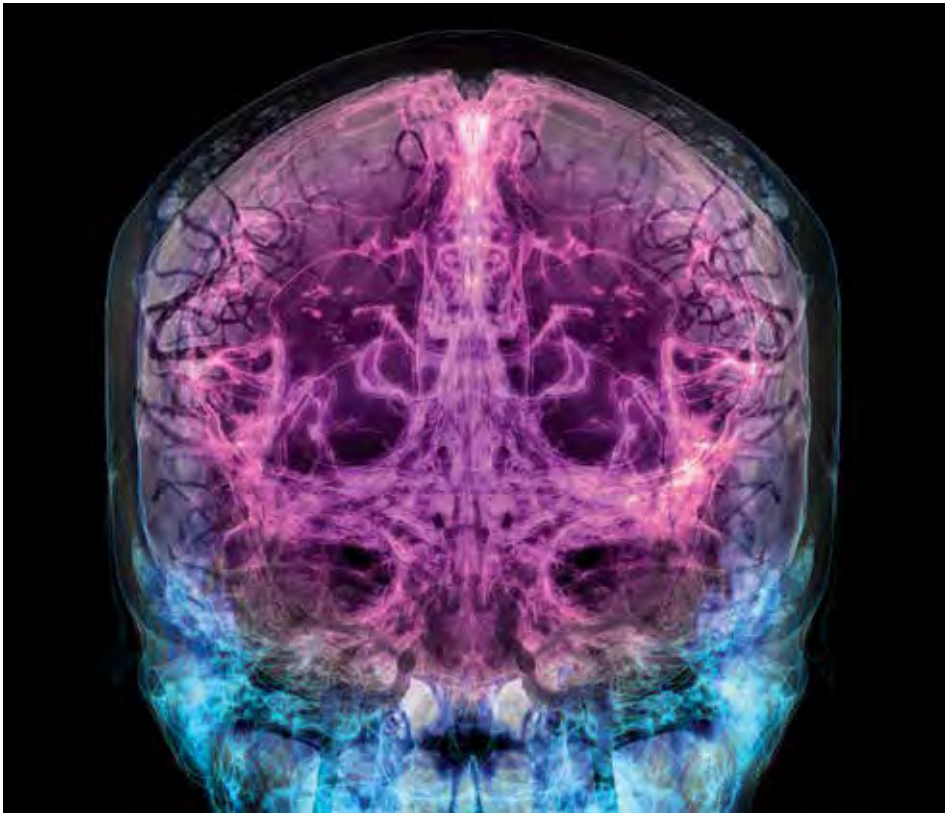
SQ-Brain is led by founding director Dr. Farzaneh A. Sorond, vice dean for faculty affairs at Feinberg and the Dean Richard H. Young and Ellen Stearns Young Professor of Neurology in the Ken and Ruth Davee Department of Neurology.

“Preserving brain health across the lifespan may be one of the defining health priorities of the 21st century,” says Dr. Sorond, a physician-scientist with training in vascular neurology and neurocritical care who is also starting a brain health clinical program at Northwestern Medical Group. “Lifespans are rising — brain health must keep pace. SQ-Brain will achieve its vision through a convergence of scientific thought, fostering collisions of perspectives, questioning entrenched assumptions and embracing experimentation at the boundaries of disciplines.”

SQ-Brain builds on Northwestern’s strengths in neurological science.

“The Simpson Querrey Brain Health Institute represents the kind of bold, interdisciplinary effort that is needed to address one of the greatest challenges in medicine,” Querrey says. “This is an investment in longer, healthier lives — and in a future where more people can age with their independence and dignity intact.”

← According to the World Health Organization, by 2030, brain-related disorders will drive half of the global economic burden of disability.



WELL-BEING

Investing in Adolescent Mental Health

A new institute is advancing research and programming to benefit students at Northwestern and beyond.

Mental health challenges among adolescents and college students are on the rise in the U.S., and Northwestern is responding with a major investment in student well-being.

Supported by a generous gift from an anonymous donor and launched in 2025, the Institute for Adolescent Mental Health and Well-Being brings together scholars and campus leaders to study young adult psychology and translate discoveries into programming.

Housed in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Psychology, with affiliates across academic and administrative units, the institute leverages Northwestern’s strengths

in clinical, developmental and social psychology. It also fosters research and programming collaborations across the University to improve student outcomes at Northwestern and beyond.

This initiative comes at a critical time: According to the 2024–25 Healthy Minds

“Young minds thrive in settings that support their need for excitement, social understanding and mental flexibility.”

— Vijay Mittal

Study, which surveyed more than 84,000 students across 135 U.S. colleges and universities, 37% experienced moderate or severe depressive symptoms, while 33% experienced moderate or severe anxiety symptoms.

A defining feature of the institute is its strategic partnership with Northwestern’s Division of Student Affairs. Beginning with the class of 2030, the institute and Student Affairs will launch a first-of-its-kind longitudinal survey of students to assess mental health and well-being and track risk and resilience over time. This unprecedented dataset will inform targeted campus interventions, help direct research priorities and

← The Institute for Adolescent Mental Health and Well-Being’s founding donor saw an urgent need to support the social, mental and emotional wellness of college students.

generate empirical findings with national relevance.

“The insights we gain will allow us to focus on evidence-based support that can improve our students’ wellness and serve as a model for universities across the U.S.,” says Vice President for Student Affairs Susan Davis.

Last February the Institute for Adolescent Mental Health and Well-Being introduced a cross-disciplinary speaker series that convenes Northwestern faculty and external experts and encourages interdisciplinary collaboration.

For example, a talk led by Jessica Schleider, associate professor of medical social sciences, focused on scaling single-session interventions to bridge gaps in youth mental health ecosystems.

“Young minds thrive in settings that support their need for excitement, social understanding and mental flexibility,” says the institute’s director, Vijay Mittal, who is also the David S. Holmes Professor of Brain Science.

“By facilitating research across disciplines — from neuroscience and psychology to AI and engineering — we can identify the most effective ways to support healthy adolescent brain development.”

Current research includes a study by professor of mechanical engineering and communication studies Elizabeth Gerber, who is exploring how AI is shifting the way students “self-concept,” or view themselves, their capabilities and their possibilities.



At **Home** on the Trail

Scott and Lisa Jenkins rehabbed a rundown Virginia farmstead into a bustling bed-and-breakfast, just steps from the Appalachian Trail.

BY ALLISON SALERNO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN WESTERGREN

It's 6 in the morning. Gray catbirds and house wrens warble in the cherry and maple trees outside. Lisa Tracy Jenkins '85 MBA clears a space on the kitchen island to chop vegetables. She scrambles eggs and puts slices of multigrain bread in the toaster.

A few minutes later, her husband, Scott Jenkins '85 MBA, descends the pinewood stairs from the second floor and joins her in the kitchen. He chops strawberries, kiwis and bananas, assembling fruit plates for each of their bed-and-breakfast guests.

Nearly every day begins this way for the couple, who rise at 5:30 a.m. to prep the morning meal at their Mountain Home Bed & Breakfast near Front Royal, Va. On this spring day, they are serving nearly two dozen guests staying at the historic home, which Lisa and Scott have lovingly rehabilitated and maintained for more than a decade.

Love is the key ingredient in this story — a love that began at Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management and a love for the legendary trail that’s only a few steps from their front door. Mountain Home is 120 yards from the Appalachian Trail (AT) and sits just a few miles from Shenandoah National Park. The home’s location in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern Virginia makes it a prime destination for anyone looking to enjoy the region’s golf courses, wineries or outdoor adventures. It’s also a haven for AT hikers.

The B&B began as the Jenkinses’ audacious dream. And despite rounds of false starts and daunting odds, they persisted. Their business name says it all: Anything’s Possible LLC. “If you have faith, determination and persistence,” says Scott, “anything is possible.”



Scott and Lisa met while they were both graduate students at Kellogg in the mid-1980s. With a card and a half dozen roses, Scott proposed on Valentine’s Day 1985 in the basement of Leverone Hall.

They both built successful careers in the Washington, D.C., metro area and eventually settled in McLean, Va., a suburb of the nation’s capital. Scott managed global information technology teams at Sprint and later Ericsson. Lisa employed the marketing and information management skills she learned at Kellogg, first in marketing consulting and then for 28 years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

As Scott and Lisa pondered their next phase of life, they dreamed of retiring to a rural community “where we could live sustainably, even be an example to others, as good stewards of the natural world,” Lisa says.

In May 2012, Scott, then 51, took a six-month leave of absence from Ericsson to backpack the Appalachian Trail with the couple’s then-21-year-old son, Tracy.

“My two favorite guys were going out into the wilderness. But I’ve hiked enough,” says Lisa, who has explored portions of the AT in each of its 14 states. “I knew they were very capable hikers and they had each other, so I didn’t worry too much. I was basically their support team while they were hiking — sending



resupply boxes, shuttling between home and the trail, while also working, paying the mortgage, taking care of the dog, that sort of thing.”

Father and son began their trek at the northern terminus by summiting Mount Katahdin, the highest mountain in Maine, with Lisa. Tracy, who had just graduated from the College of William & Mary, hiked more than half the AT with Scott, then left the trail at Harpers Ferry, W.Va., to begin graduate school. (He returned to finish the AT eight years later, after earning his doctorate in archaeology. The Jenkinses also have a daughter, Marina, who lives in Texas.)

Hiking southbound, Scott carried on by himself. There were days when he wouldn’t see anyone, but he was never *really* alone. More than 3,000 people

attempt to thru-hike the AT every year, traversing the nearly 2,200 miles in one go. During the solo portion of his hike, Scott felt a strong sense of support among hikers on the trail. “If you could bottle that experience and take it home with you, the world would be a much better place,” says Scott, who fittingly went by the trail name Possible. (Hikers often adopt a special moniker on the trail.)

“We discovered that hikers and their supporters were very generous and helpful,” adds Lisa. “There is trail magic — trail angels seem to appear just when you need them. We wanted to continue to be part of that positive, giving community.”

The AT is lined with dozens of hostels where backpackers can restock on food, take a shower and put their feet up. When Scott took a brief respite

at Harpers Ferry, he and Lisa hatched the idea of buying a property for a trailside hostel they could run during retirement. The more they discussed it, the more they thought, “Why wait until retirement? We could get started now!”

When Scott’s trek entered Northern Virginia, he and Lisa met up to scout potential properties to buy. They wanted something close enough to home that they could continue working their full-time jobs while also operating a hostel.

The Jenkinses found a 3.7-acre parcel just outside of Front Royal. The property had been on the market for four years — and had clearly been neglected for much longer. Several realtors declined to show it.

“They had given up on selling it,” Scott says. “We came up here ourselves

and found a rusted-out for-sale sign buried under 3 feet of grass.” The land was so overgrown, he says, that nearby residents hadn’t even realized some of the buildings were there. The main house and its outbuildings had been neglected for 10 years.

“The roofs had failed. There was no electricity, no septic system, no plumbing, no heat,” Scott says. “There were animals and graffiti, holes in the walls and floors, tire marks in the parlor, and vines growing through the broken windows.”

But Scott and Lisa saw potential. “This place just spoke to us,” Lisa says. “We knew we could fix it up and have some nice B&B rooms.”

After talking with structural engineers and collecting cost estimates for the

← Scott Jenkins stands in the dining room of Mountain Home’s main house, chatting with guests at breakfast.



↑ Jars of preserved fruits sit on shelves in the Mountain Home kitchen. As business has grown, the Jenkinses have woven sustainable practices into their operations by minimizing waste and serving local produce and eggs. Scott also makes cider from scratch, pressing apples from a friend’s orchard.

↓ Scott slices bananas in the kitchen. Every breakfast plate is customized to accommodate each guest’s preferences.





↑ Scott and Lisa Jenkins walk along the Appalachian Trail near Mountain Home. Scott thru-hiked the AT in 2012, and Lisa has trekked portions of the AT in each of its 14 states.

At times they slept in a tent on the main house’s front porch.

A few years after the B&B opened, the couple worked with two research interns and a genealogist to shed more light on the property’s origins and the people who had lived and worked there.

Originally owned by Samuel B. Gardner and his descendants, the estate had been a working farm and orchard comprising 3,000 acres. The Gardner farm produced hay and corn and was known for raising high-quality horses as well as cattle, sheep and hogs.

Further research uncovered a disturbing part of the estate’s history. The 1860 census indicates 32 enslaved men, women and children lived on the property, and records show that Gardner sold and rented enslaved people, trafficking some as far away as Missouri.

“The institution of slavery was brutal and dehumanizing,” Scott says. “This is a part of Mountain Home’s story we are working to bring to light, so the people who lived and worked here are not forgotten.”

The property includes a three-story, 7,000-square-foot Greek Revival-style main house, which was built in phases between the 1780s and 1870s. There are

also numerous outbuildings, including a corn shed, a meat house and the “Cabbin,” a mid-19th-century building that once housed people enslaved by the Gardners.

Now retired from their Beltway gigs, Scott and Lisa have lived at Mountain Home year-round since 2017. They

rehabbed the buildings one at a time, opening the Cabbin in 2014 and the main house in 2018. More than 20,000 guests have stayed at the property since 2014.

The B&B has three private guest rooms in the main house and more than a dozen beds for hikers in communal spaces in the



← Backpacker Anne Vereen, who goes by the trail name Five Lives, returns to the trail after a night at Mountain Home in May. Vereen, of Nashville, is hiking 650-mile sections of the AT each year.



↑ AT thru-hiker John Ezzy enjoys a rest day on the porch at Mountain Home in May. A few months later, Ezzy, who lives in Umina Beach, Australia, and goes by the trail name van Gogh, was diagnosed with Lyme disease in New Hampshire, just before he was to ascend the White Mountains. He planned to complete his trek despite his illness.

main house and Cabbin. About half the guests each year are AT hikers.

Once in a while the Jenkinses even host a famous person. U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine stopped by in 2019 looking for a place to crash. The former Virginia governor was solo backpacking all 550 miles of the AT in Virginia. His trail name? Dog Bowl.



While Scott and Lisa continue preparing breakfast, hikers gather in the parlor adjacent to the dining room to plan their days.

John Ezzy, a data engineer from a coastal city near Sydney, Australia, was granted a six-month visa to thru-hike the AT. Ezzy, whose trail name is van Gogh, says hiking the AT was part of his answer to a midlife crisis. Mountain Home reminds him of his own home. “I think it’s the pine floors, the artwork on the walls ... the sense of space and peace,” he says.

Rainbow Sunshine — yes, that’s her legal name — goes by the trail name Plain Jane, an ironic moniker given her bright purple hair. Sunshine, who lives in Cottontown, Tenn., had trekked hundreds of miles northbound from the AT’s southern terminus at Springer Mountain, Ga., before she fell and broke her shoulder in Marion, Va. Now she is doing day hikes on the AT, using Mountain Home and other hostels as her home base.

Anne Vereen, of Nashville, is hiking the AT in 650-mile sections each year. A survivor of breast cancer, a heart attack, a burst appendix and sepsis, she goes by the trail name Five Lives. Vereen has



↑ Backpackers’ family and friends send care packages and supplies to Mountain Home, where the Jenkinses hold them for hikers.

← Hiker Rainbow Sunshine spends a rest day at Mountain Home in May. Sunshine, whose trail name is Plain Jane, fell and broke her shoulder while hiking in Marion, Va. After recovering for two weeks, she returned to the trail, doing a series of day hikes from her car. As of July, Sunshine had trekked to the border between Massachusetts and Vermont.



TAKE A HIKE!

▶ **The Appalachian Trail (AT) is the world’s longest hiking-only footpath**, spanning 2,198 miles and passing through 14 states from Georgia to Maine. Mountain Home sits 973 miles from the trail’s southern terminus.

▶ **More than 3,000 people attempt to thru-hike the AT each year**, and roughly 33% complete their trek. Thousands more section-hike the trail, completing the journey over years — or a lifetime. The trail received nearly 17 million recreational visits in 2025.

▶ **The AT was officially connected in 1937.** The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has led trail management since 1925. The ATC monitors wildlife and rare plants, manages invasive species and protects the 370,000-acre trail corridor. Thirty AT Clubs and 5,000 volunteers help maintain the trail, including the shelters, privies and bridges.

“I’m really proud of the work we do,” says **Jeri Ward ’01 MEM MBA**, the ATC’s chief growth officer. “National scenic trails like the AT are gateways to the natural world. It’s essential that we protect these trails, and public lands in general, so that future generations can enjoy that sense of wonder and respite from our busy lives.”

stopped by Mountain Home in part to pick up a resupply box she had mailed there that includes her heart medication.

“We’re not promised tomorrow,” Vereen says. “I would like to think that when I go, it will be said that I did everything in life that I possibly could.”

One gift of serving hikers, the Jenkinses say, is the wide range of people they encounter. “Every hiker comes in smelly, tired and dirty, but that doesn’t tell you anything about them,” Scott says. “You have to spend time with people to get to know who they are. You’ve got to be open and receptive and not judge. ... A lot of people are in some sort of transition phase in their life, and the trail is helping them think through and prepare for those transitions.”

Lisa says the gratification of serving guests from all over the world — helping them with hiking logistics or talking with them about travel — motivates her, even in moments when their routines seem relentless.

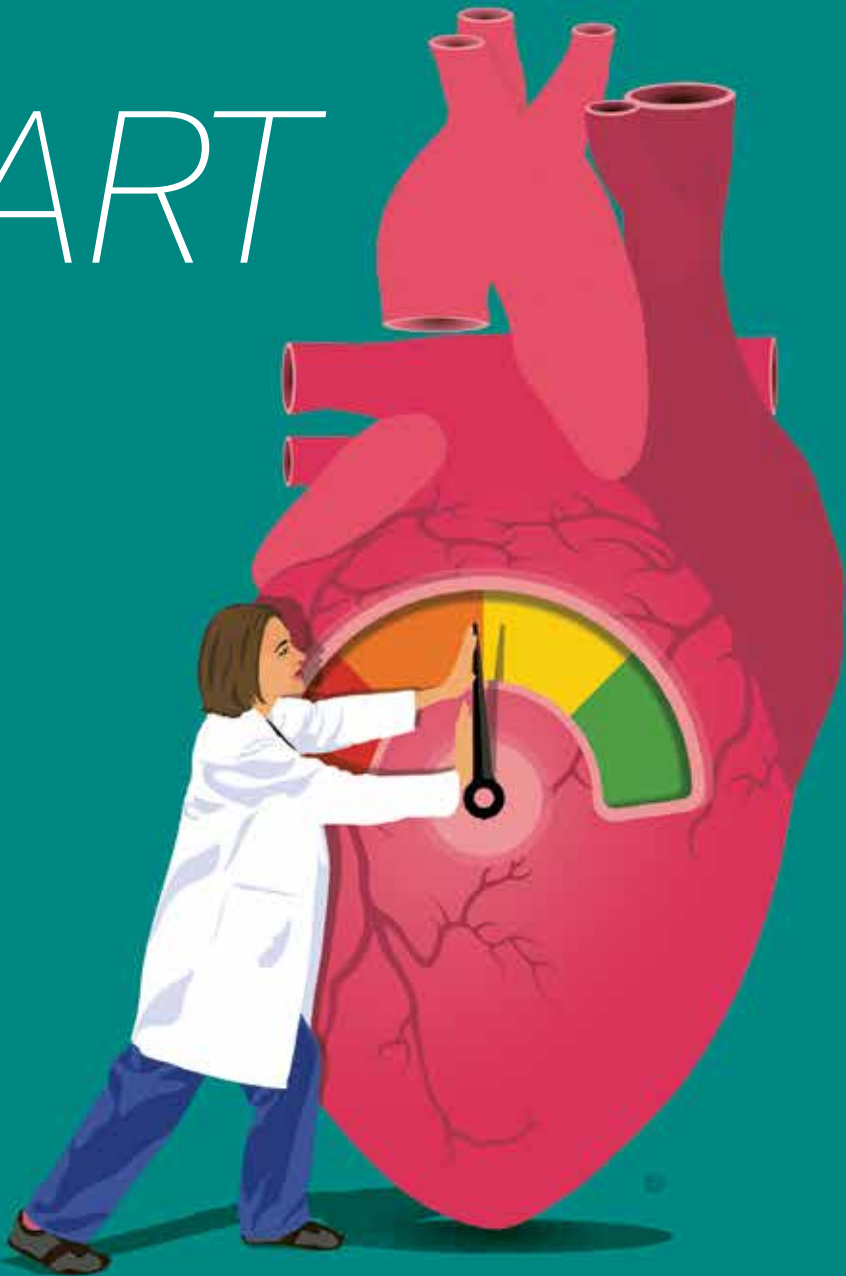
It’s equally fulfilling, she says, to be a part of the trail community that supports and encourages AT hikers. “It is people helping people,” she says. “It’s a microcosm of what you’d like the rest of the world to be.”

Allison Salerno ’88 MS is a freelance writer based in Athens, Ga. She is section-hiking the Appalachian Trail.



Learn more about Mountain Home.

CHANGE OF HEART



Sadiya Khan helped develop a tool to predict and prevent cardiovascular disease.

BY CLARE MILLIKEN

In a single day, your heart pumps around 100,000 times, circulating about 2,000 gallons of blood through your body — enough to fill an 8-by-10-foot swimming pool.

This muscular, fist-sized organ is the centerpiece of the cardiovascular system, a 24/7 courier service delivering oxygen and nutrients to your organs and tissues and carrying away waste through roughly 60,000 miles of blood vessels.

Ideally, this system runs like clockwork, without us having to think about it — though Northwestern's Sadiya Khan '05, '09 MD, '12 GME, '14 MS, '16 GME would argue that we should all give it a little more thought.

That's because cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the No. 1 cause of death worldwide, accounting for 1 in 3 deaths globally. In 2024 more people in the U.S. died of CVD than from cancer and accidents combined.

Risk factors for CVD include obesity, smoking and a sedentary lifestyle. Other important risk factors — high cholesterol, high blood pressure and uncontrolled diabetes — can be silent: People may not know their levels are high until they experience a heart attack or stroke.

CVD encompasses all diseases that affect the heart and blood vessels, including coronary heart disease, heart attack, stroke, arrhythmia and heart failure (see "Three Major Types of Cardiovascular Disease," below). Many people believe these issues arise only in middle or old age.

But in truth, "risk begins early in life, even before age 40," says Khan, the Magerstadt Professor of Cardiovascular Epidemiology in the Feinberg School of

Medicine. "You don't just wake up one day at 65 and have a heart attack. It's something that has been building for a long time. So the earlier we can pick up on the risk, the better we can reduce that risk."

This begs the question: How can we know if we're at risk ... and what can we do about it?

Khan, who specializes in the prevention of CVD in both individual patients and broader populations, has dedicated her career to finding the answer. Inspired by her father, who was a primary care doctor for 45 years, Khan pursued her medical education and clinical training at Northwestern, earning a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering, followed by her medical degree and a master's degree in clinical investigation. She also completed a residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in cardiovascular diseases at Northwestern-affiliated hospitals.

After meeting a cardiologist who specialized in heart failure — a chronic condition that occurs when a person's heart cannot efficiently pump blood throughout the body — Khan planned to become a cardiologist specializing in advanced heart failure. But treating heart failure meant "we were always trying to catch up to damage that had accumulated over years or decades," she says. "Being able to focus on prevention felt like an opportunity to make the greatest difference."

So Khan looked for a way to help patients before the onset of heart failure. She became laser-focused on the idea that cardiovascular disease could be predicted and, importantly, prevented.

And in 2023, she worked with the American Heart Association (AHA) to develop a tool to prove it.

Drawing on decades of research and carefully synthesized data from over 6 million adults, Khan helped launch the AHA Predicting Risk of Cardiovascular Disease EVENTS (PREVENT) calculator, a free online tool that estimates an individual's risk for heart attack, stroke and heart failure over 10- and 30-year periods. Available on the AHA's website, PREVENT has been shown to be more accurate than older prediction tools.

Khan's groundbreaking work landed her on this year's TIME100 Health list, acknowledging the most influential people in patient care, healthcare policy and medical innovation. She is now part of a team working to incorporate PREVENT into electronic medical record platforms. Slated for completion this fall, that project will allow primary care clinicians to seamlessly integrate the tool into patient care, Khan says.

She believes PREVENT can get people to talk about heart health — and make meaningful changes — before it's too late.

"There are about 260 million people in the U.S. over the age of 18, and about 11 million have a diagnosis of some form of cardiovascular disease," Khan says. "That means 250 million people could benefit from having a

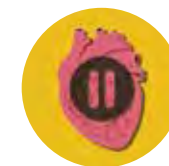
THREE MAJOR TYPES OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

These account for the majority of CVD cases.



Coronary heart disease

Plaque buildup reduces blood flow to the heart. Plaque can also trigger blood clots that can cause a heart attack.



Heart failure

The heart muscle is too stiff or too weak to efficiently pump blood throughout the body.



Stroke

A blood vessel inside the brain bursts, or a blood vessel that feeds the brain gets blocked.

THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN WOMEN

“If you Google heart disease or heart attack, you get a picture of an older man clutching his chest,” professor Sadiya Khan says. “That sets up an entire structure of how women think about cardiovascular disease.”

While cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in women, less than half of women recognize that. When surveyed by the American Heart Association, most women in the U.S. picked breast cancer as the leading cause. The actual ratio of CVD deaths to breast cancer deaths among women is approximately 10 to 1.

CVD is also a leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. In a 2022 study, Khan and colleagues found that approximately 60% of pregnant women in the U.S. have poor heart health. Better cardiovascular health during pregnancy is associated with better health later in life. Furthermore, babies born to mothers with poor heart health are more likely to be born early or have low birth weight, both of which can negatively impact a child’s long-term growth and development. A subsequent study co-authored by Khan also found a link between high blood pressure during pregnancy and poorer cardiovascular health among offspring decades later.

conversation about their cardiovascular risk and how to reduce the chance that they’ll get CVD down the line.”



LONG-TERM RISKS

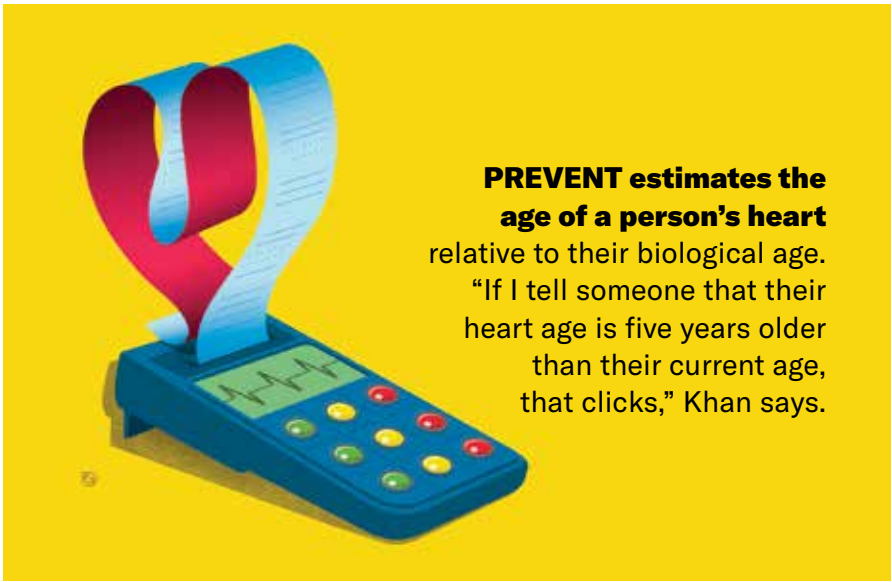
Alarmed by rising rates of obesity, diabetes and kidney disease starting in the late 2010s, a group of scientists from universities and medical centers across the U.S. established the framework for PREVENT.

Co-led by Khan, this group developed the new equations for CVD risk, selected

the specific datasets to inform the tool and determined how to present calculations to patients and physicians. Khan was lead author on the AHA’s scientific statement announcing the new PREVENT tool in November 2023.

Whereas previous calculators only predicted risk of heart attack or risk of heart attack *and* stroke, PREVENT also predicts risk of heart failure, the rate of which increased 43% in the U.S. from 1988 to 2023.

PREVENT considers biological sex alongside standard CVD risk factors



PREVENT estimates the age of a person’s heart relative to their biological age. “If I tell someone that their heart age is five years older than their current age, that clicks,” Khan says.

like age, cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and smoking status. It also accounts for body mass index, metabolic health and kidney function.

While other tools are targeted toward people 40 and older, PREVENT is intended for adults ages 30 to 79 who do not have known CVD. And while previous calculators only assess 10-year risk, PREVENT calculates both 10- and 30-year risk. Khan’s research shows that while most U.S. adults ages 30 to 59 have a low 10-year risk of CVD, about 1 in 7 have a high 30-year CVD risk.

“If I’m 35 with obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, the odds of having a heart attack before I’m 45 are still pretty low,” Khan says. “But the odds that I have a heart attack before the age of 65 are actually pretty high. PREVENT can get people thinking about what they need to change today so that in 30 years that doesn’t happen.”



UNDERSTANDING THE NUMBERS

From the outset, Khan says, her research group made patient accessibility a critical attribute of PREVENT. The clinical information used to determine someone’s risk of CVD can be found in a standard lab workup that is part of routine primary care.

Khan and her team were equally intentional about how the tool presents



↑ Professor Sadiya Khan demonstrates the American Heart Association’s Predicting Risk of Cardiovascular Disease EVENTS (PREVENT) calculator, which she helped develop.

its calculations. In addition to providing a person’s CVD risk, PREVENT also estimates the age of a person’s heart relative to their biological age — and their risk percentile relative to age- and sex-matched peers.

“Even doctors have a hard time explaining what 10-year risk means,” Khan says. “When you’re told that your 10-year risk of having a heart attack is 1%, that can be confusing. What a 10-year risk of 1% means is that if there were 100 people your age and sex who had the same exact numbers as you, over 10 years one of them would have had a cardiovascular event.

“That is a hard thing for anyone to understand, and understanding can vary depending on your level of health literacy,” Khan explains. “But if I tell someone that their heart age is five years older than their current age, that clicks.”



CHANGING SYSTEMS AND LIVES

For now, Khan and her team are focused on integrating PREVENT into routine

patient care and incorporating the tool into electronic medical records.

“Next, we have to determine what the levers of change are,” she says. “We can put the best calculator in all the clinics, and the best doctors can explain it in the best ways. But if we can’t actually change individual and environmental factors, it’s all Band-Aids.”

In addition to her work on CVD prevention, Khan provides counseling and testing for inherited conditions related to cardiovascular disease. Her research also focuses on assessing specific risk factors for CVD in women, particularly pregnant and postpartum women (see “The Leading Cause of Death in Women,” opposite page).

Khan is adamant that a diagnosis of CVD is no one’s fault, and that reducing CVD rates is a society-level responsibility.

“A lot of conversations around cardiovascular health focus on the individual, but this is not about one person being motivated to change their behaviors,” Khan says. “We need to have a much broader conversation around the food environment and the activity environment that we live in. How do we actually change policy to ensure that we can support healthy lifestyle choices?”

“We need to totally reframe how we talk about cardiovascular disease.”

At the same time, there are things we can all do to protect our cardiovascular health. Khan recommends following the AHA’s Life’s Essential 8 (see “Eight Keys to Heart Health,” right). Even small tweaks, she says, can make a world of difference.

“What you change today matters,” Khan says. “The earlier you start, the more impact you can have. It’s never too early, and it’s never too late. Even if you’ve had a heart attack, the better your lifestyle, the better your blood pressure and your cholesterol going forward, the better you’ll do.”

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



Learn more about professor Sadiya Khan.

EIGHT KEYS TO HEART HEALTH

The American Heart Association’s recommendations for improving and maintaining cardiovascular health



EAT WELL
Get plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and unsaturated fats like nuts and seeds.



MOVE AROUND
Aim for 2.5 hours of moderate physical activity per week. “People who are sedentary are more likely to have higher blood pressure and a higher risk of diabetes,” says professor Sadiya Khan.



DON’T SMOKE
Avoid secondhand smoke too!



GET ENOUGH SLEEP
Most adults need seven to eight hours each night. “Sleep health is critical to your cardiovascular health,” says Khan.



CONTROL CHOLESTEROL
According to the American Heart Association, 1 in 4 U.S. adults has a high level of low-density lipoprotein — cholesterol that raises the risk of heart attack and stroke.



MANAGE WEIGHT
“Obesity leads to high cholesterol and diabetes and high blood pressure, but obesity itself is an inflammatory condition that causes stress on the heart,” Khan says.



MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR
Diet, weight and activity level all impact blood sugar levels.



MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE
“High blood pressure is recognized and controlled in less than 30% of cases, and 120 million people in the U.S. have high blood pressure,” says Khan.

Outstanding Alumni

LASTING IMPACT

In October the Northwestern Alumni Association will present its highest honor, the Alumni Medal, to three graduates whose achievements and service exemplify leadership and excellence.

BY ELIZABETH STATION

Learn more at alumni.northwestern.edu/medal.



Dr. James A. Hill '71, '74 MD, '79 GME

Healing With Purpose

Dr. James Hill doesn't hold back when he reflects on the impact his alma mater has had on him — academically, personally and professionally. "Northwestern hasn't just helped me," he says. "It has given me everything I have."

Northwestern connections shaped Hill's trajectory from an early age. As a youth he frequented a boys club in his West Side Chicago neighborhood. When Northwestern students who tutored at the club invited the youth members to visit the Evanston campus, "that sparked my interest in the University," Hill says. "When I grew up, African Americans didn't go north of Chicago Avenue [a street north of the Chicago Loop], so the North Shore was a whole new world."

Later, as a first-generation college student and scholarship recipient, Hill earned a bachelor of science in medicine. He then completed his medical degree and residency and embarked on a distinguished five-decade career as an orthopaedic surgeon and professor — all at Northwestern. "My experiences taught me to persevere and not let the world dictate what I could do," he says. "I learned at Northwestern that I have no limits. I can only limit myself."

Hill met Sandra Small Hill '71, '74 MA at a new-student orientation, and the couple wed as undergraduates. Married for 50 years, they raised three children, including Melanie

Hill '12 MBA, before Sandra died in 2020.

In 1968 both James and Sandra were among more than 100 students — now known as the Black 100 or B100 — who peacefully occupied the University's Bursar's Office to protest the Black student experience at Northwestern. Their activism led to increased Black student enrollment, the creation of the Black House and other changes.

As a medical student, Hill attended classes by day and worked nights at the U.S. post office in Evanston, sorting mail to earn extra money. He chose orthopaedics, specializing in sports medicine and shoulder and elbow surgery, because he enjoyed helping patients heal. Today, he says, "I look at being a physician as an

opportunity to make people better every day."

Hill joined the Feinberg School of Medicine faculty in 1980 as an instructor and became a professor of orthopaedic surgery in 1994. He has since taught and mentored countless students, presented and published widely in his field, and served on the Northwestern Memorial Foundation's board of directors and as chief of staff of Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

An inveterate volunteer, Hill tutors in public and Catholic schools in Chicago and has served on the boards of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boys and Girls Club of Chicago and Talladega College. He has provided care and taught orthopaedics in Ethiopia and was a team physician for the 1988 U.S. Olympic Team in Seoul, South Korea. As a founding member and past president of the J. Robert Gladden Orthopaedic Society, Hill also has worked to increase inclusion within the orthopaedic profession and promote high-quality musculoskeletal care for all.

Hill has remained deeply involved with his alma mater as a board member and past president of the Northwestern University Medical Alumni Association and member of the Northwestern University Black Alumni Association (NUBAA). He was inducted into NUBAA's Hall of Fame in 2007 and received a Northwestern Alumni Association Service to Northwestern Award in 2024.

"Northwestern has been pivotal in my life because it allowed me to live up to my full potential and be my authentic self," he says.

Sherry Lansing '66, '95 H

Changing the Script

Sherry Lansing knows what makes a compelling story. A great script, she says, must evoke an emotional response and make you care about the people in it. That rule guided her for nearly 30 years in the movie business and helped shape her second act.

Over her career, Lansing helped produce, market and distribute more than 200 films, including Academy Award winners *Forrest Gump* and *Titanic*. But back in 1962, when she enrolled in Northwestern's School of Speech (now the School of Communication), she wanted to be an actor. She studied theater and communication while also training to be a teacher. "I got an incredible education," Lansing says. Along with her academic foundation, she gained the confidence to pack her belongings on graduation day and drive west to chase her acting dream.

After arriving in California, she taught high school English and math in Los Angeles and quietly tried to break into film. But after landing a few roles, she says, "I found I couldn't stand being anyone but myself."

Changing course, Lansing took a job reading scripts at MGM, giving her opinions and writing synopses for film producers and executives. She'd found her calling.

Lansing worked her way up from script reader to head of readers, then executive story editor and vice president at Columbia Pictures. In 1980, at age 35, Lansing became the first woman to head a major film studio as president of 20th Century Fox. She later became an independent producer, responsible for successful films including *Fatal Attraction* and *The Accused*. In 1992 Lansing began a 12-year tenure as chairman and CEO of Paramount Pictures. She currently chairs the board of Universal Music Group and serves on the board of directors of Paramount Skydance as well as several nonprofits.

At every step, Lansing believes her Northwestern education prepared her to succeed. "Learning about literature helped me understand what a good script was," she says. "Math taught me how to read a budget. Studying communication, I learned to express myself and listen."



JESSICA STERLING

When Lansing's passions began to shift from filmmaking to philanthropy, she discovered meaningful work beyond the studio lot. After retiring at 60, she launched The Sherry Lansing Foundation in 2005 to honor the memory of her mother, who died of ovarian cancer. The foundation supports cancer research as well as public education, encore career opportunities and other causes.

Over the next three years, Lansing co-founded Stand Up To Cancer, which has raised more than \$825 million for collaborative research. She also created EnCorps, a nonprofit that recruits STEM professionals to teach math and science in underserved schools.

Philanthropy is a bit like filmmaking, Lansing says. "If you have a good idea, you have to gather other people around you who care. You have to raise the funding to support that idea. And if you do those things, I think you can change the world."

Ever devoted to Northwestern, Lansing joined the School of Communication's Board of Advisors in 1989 and remained a life member until the board concluded its work in 2021. She has received both the Alumnae of Northwestern University's Distinguished Alumnae Award and an honorary degree from the University.

But it's not public recognition that inspires Lansing's loyalty. "I want to give back to Northwestern because it shaped me, formed me and made me who I am," she says. "I want the University to continue to thrive, and I'll do anything I can to help it."



STEVE BOXALL

Lawrence Levy '66, '67 MBA

Thinking Big

Before arriving at Northwestern to study business, Larry Levy had no grand plans for himself. A first-generation college student, he grew up in a middle-class family in St. Louis and applied to Northwestern at the encouragement of a friend and future Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity brother.

Once on campus, Levy found peers and opportunities that raised his expectations. "My fraternity class was full of brilliant, ambitious, charismatic people like I had never met before," he recalls. "I knew I had to up my game."

He upped it — and then some — earning a spot on the freshman basketball team while pursuing new business ideas. By his sophomore year, Levy had started a campuswide laundry service, a music band-booking operation, a popular coupon booklet for local businesses and a gig arranging students' summer flights to Europe.

Levy says those hands-on experiences and the people skills he honed at Northwestern set him up for success. "I had to learn how to be persuasive while being honorable, set a good culture and deliver what I had promised to customers," he says. "What's more, I heard the word 'entrepreneur' for the first time, and I said, 'That's for me.' I haven't stopped since."

After earning his MBA at Northwestern's School of Commerce (now the Kellogg School of Management) and serving in the

Green Beret reserves during the Vietnam War, Levy joined a fledgling Chicago commercial real estate firm, became its president and launched his own company by his late 20s.

One of Levy's first real estate ventures, One Magnificent Mile, became a landmark Chicago development — but not without risk. He borrowed \$100 million to launch the high-rise building project in the late 1970s just as interest rates were surging. "I made no money," he says. "But I made my reputation on that project, because I didn't give up and made sure everyone got paid."

In 1978 Levy and his brother, Mark, opened D.B. Kaplan's, a delicatessen in Chicago's Water Tower Place, drawing on their family's love of food and their mother's recipes. The deli's success led to Levy Restaurants, a Chicago-based food service operation built on a disruptive idea: bringing restaurant-quality dining and Midwestern hospitality to sports and entertainment venues, where the standard fare had always been hot dogs and peanuts.

The company grew to serve more than 450 venues and opened a network of restaurants. They also catered marquee events, including the Super Bowl and Grammy Awards. Levy sold the company in 2006. With his sons, he now manages Levy Family Partners, which includes a portfolio of real estate, operating businesses, venture capital and other investments.

Through it all, Northwestern has stayed central to Levy's life. He joined the University's Board of Trustees in 2004 and later became a life trustee. As a longtime member of Kellogg's Global Advisory Board, Levy has championed entrepreneurship. He and his wife, Carol Neims Levy '64, endowed the Larry and Carol Levy Institute for Entrepreneurial Practice at Kellogg, a springboard for student and faculty ventures. Levy also invested in The Garage, Northwestern's space for student innovators, and supports VentureCat, an annual student startup competition.

Today Northwestern "is on fire with entrepreneurship," Levy says. He and Carol also underwrite the Levy Inspiration Grant Program and Levy Inspiration Treks, which give Kellogg students immersive opportunities to meet founders and research their business ideas.

"My biggest learning was not in class — it was experiential," Levy reflects. "And that's what we're trying to create for students."

Mark Your Calendar!
CATSGiveBack
is Tuesday, December 1.



CATSGiveBack is Northwestern's celebration of GivingTuesday, a global day of philanthropy following the Thanksgiving holiday.

On December 1, make an impact on Northwestern by joining thousands of alumni, parents, students, and friends in giving back to hundreds of areas across the University.

Learn more at giving.northwestern.edu/CATSGiveBack.



Alumni

PYRAMID OF FRIENDS

Langley Lublin Danowitz '64 holds fond memories of friends she made during her first year on campus. This photo was taken in April 1961 on the fourth floor of Willard Hall, which housed only women students until 1970. Danowitz and her roommate, Margaret "Pedge" McCandless '64, had matching bedspreads in Room 411B and remain friends to this day. Top row, from left: Hazel Fee '64 and McCandless. Middle row, from left: Jody Mutz Linquist '64, Barbara "Bobbie" Parkin Miller '64 and Sylvia Kashian Holdampf '64. Bottom row, from left: Susan Moore '64, Barbara Parr '64, Danowitz and June Hanson Baumler '64. Lying on floor: Judith Jones Colwell '64.



STUART-RODGERS PHOTOGRAPHY

Creation



RIDDLE ME THIS

Five Questions With Sandy Weisz '98

Chicago-based puzzle maker talks about the Mystery League, his puzzle-hunt company, and Raddle, his online daily word game.

1

What is Raddle? I launched Raddle in March 2025. It's a word transformation ladder game where each word changes into a new word at every step. There are clues that tell you how the words transform, but the clues are out of order, so you have to figure out which clue refers to which step. I have about 10,000 people a day playing Raddle.

I love word puzzles because they demand a different connection in your brain every day. It's a quick

2

What is the Mystery League? The Mystery League is a puzzle-making company I started in 2014 in Chicago. I design and stage live puzzle hunts for groups.

A puzzle hunt is kind of like a scavenger hunt, but instead of looking for objects, it's a collection of puzzles, and figuring out how each one works is part of the challenge. You are given material that helps you extract a word or a phrase from your environment or the materials you have, or both. I've run puzzle hunts at the Field Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Atlanta Motor Speedway and on a private jet. I even ran one on the Evanston campus as part of the One Book One Northwestern program back in 2016. I do these hunts a lot for corporate clients as well, as team-building activities.

3

Where did your interest in puzzles come from? As a kid I read *Games* magazine and was really into their puzzles. I also was on the committee for social activities at a summer camp, so I built games and puzzles for all the campers. I also read *If at All Possible, Involve a Cow: The Book of College Pranks* by Neil Steinberg '82 and

SHANE COLLINS

feedback loop: You see something. It's difficult. You solve it. You feel good. Repeat.

I think people like the game because it's got a voice, and people enjoy engaging with other human expression. Every puzzle is a work of art.

loved it. Northwestern didn't really have a subculture of elaborate pranks. But I lived in Communications Residential College on campus, and we did some goofy stunts.

4

How did you get into designing puzzles? I was in my 20s, living in Chicago and working in web design. I had just gotten married. I gave myself a deadline of my 30th birthday to build my first hunt. It worked: At my 30th, I put on my first puzzle hunt for my friends, a lot of whom were from Northwestern. A lot of things went poorly. (I chose to do it outside, in *November*.) But I learned a ton. I kept doing more hunts, and they got better and better.

5

What makes a puzzle fun for you? The fun factor comes when you discover an elegant pattern in something inscrutable. The best kinds of puzzles are ones where two things naturally fit together in a way that you've never seen before, and they turn into a hidden message.

It's very fulfilling to solve a puzzle. You're in a state of confusion until you're not. A puzzle can seem insurmountable until you find the "aha!" and then you break through. And when you look back at all the clues, you recognize the path to get there was clear and available to you the whole time.

To play Northwestern-themed Riddles and learn more, visit alummag.nu/Weisz.

GREENBERG: ROBERT ARMADA; PHONE APP: COURTESY OF DOUBLES SOCIAL



GUESS THAT GADGET

Innovation expert Steve Greenberg '82 DDS, left, invites audiences to test their "gadget IQ" on his guess-the-gadget game show *What the Heck Is That!?*, which he launched in 2020 and hosts on YouTube, TikTok and DBTV. Each episode features a panel of contestants who try to determine the function of a mystery gadget, like the Rockit Rocker, above, a device that attaches to a baby stroller and vibrates to help babies sleep. The Rockit Rocker episode featured *Morning on Merit Street* anchors Dominique Sachse, center, and Fanchon Stinger, right. Greenberg, a former TV news reporter and 12-time Emmy winner, wrote *Gadget Nation: A Journey Through the Eccentric World of Invention* and appears regularly on NBC's *Today Show* and other national news programs. He is often a judge for innovation competitions.

FRIEND FINDER

This App Doubles the Fun

In her 30s, Jourdann Lubliner '10 noticed a change in her New York City social scene.

As people around her got married, had kids and moved to the suburbs, it became harder for Lubliner and her husband, Matthew Wender, to schedule social time with other couples.

So Lubliner created Doubles Social, an app that matches couples with other twosomes for new platonic connections. Couples make a profile of themselves as a unit, and the algorithm matches them with other couples based on shared interests and responses to prompts, such as, "What's your favorite trip you've been on as a couple?" Rather than asking users to swipe endlessly, the app presents a curated selection of couples every day for

users to like or skip. After couples match, the app connects all four individuals in a group chat so they can plan a meetup.

Thanks to the app, Lubliner and Wender have enjoyed many double dates, including dinner and drinks, ping-pong duels and more.

The app is available to users in Miami, New York City and Los Angeles. Doubles Social also hosts monthly events for app users in those cities: comedy shows, wine-and-cheese tastings and happy hours. Lubliner hopes to expand to other cities as demand grows. The goal, she says, is to get people interacting in the real world. "It makes me happy to foster friendships and connections between people who otherwise would not have met," Lubliner says. "That really is the point."





FOODIES UNITE

Welcome to Imanistan

A chef shares generations' worth of culinary tips.

Growing up in Toledo, Ohio, Iman Sedique '14 MA, '19 PhD remembers the aroma of onions, cardamom, turmeric and curry powder filling her kitchen as she and her mother prepared meals.

Sedique's family had fled the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. After settling in the Midwest, Sedique learned to make "Afghanified" American dishes — lasagna stacked with ricotta, green onions and lentils, for example — along with traditional Afghan recipes, like borani banjan, a fried eggplant dish.

Now a full-time content creator, Sedique proudly shares her family's rich culinary history and recipes with about 20,000 followers on her food blog and social media platforms — which she collectively calls Imanistan.

"Food is an opportunity for people to explore cultures and parts of the world they would never experience otherwise," says Sedique, who appeared recently on Season 16 of the hit Fox show *MasterChef*.

Sedique shares a glimpse of Imanistan in this recipe for one of her favorite sauces, Afghan chutney.

AFGHAN CHUTNEY

Ingredients

- 1 small bunch of fresh mint
- 1 bunch of cilantro
- 2 jalapeño peppers
- 4–5 cloves of garlic, peeled
- 8 walnuts, raw and unsalted
- 2 tsp of salt
- Juice from ½ a lemon

Instructions

1. Wash the cilantro and mint and take the leaves off the stems.
2. Slice the jalapeños in half and discard the seeds.
3. Add the cilantro, jalapeños, mint, garlic, walnuts, lemon juice and salt to a food processor.
4. Blend until mixed well. If needed, open the food processor, scrape down the sides and blend once more to ensure the chutney is smooth.
5. Serve with any dish that needs a kick of flavor, or spread it on fresh bread.

For more, visit alummag.nu/Imanistan.

NEW FICTION

The Hitch

by Sara Levine

Sara Levine '92 weaves biting humor together with explorations of loneliness in her second novel, *The Hitch*. In this quirky family drama, yogurt company owner Rose Cutler can't wait to look after her 6-year-old nephew, Nathan, for a week while her brother and his wife are on vacation. But after Nathan witnesses Rose's Newfoundland kill a corgi in the park, Nathan begins acting as though he is possessed by the corgi's spirit. Skeptical at first, Rose realizes she must try to find a way to exorcise the corgi's spirit from her nephew before his parents come home. Things spiral further out of control for Rose as she deals with a disaster at her company.

Levine is a professor in the writing department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She lives in Evanston with her family, including her cockapoo, Lenny. Her first novel, *Treasure Island!!!*, was published in 2011.



THE HITCH: SHANE COLLINS



LEVELING UP

Chicago's New Women's Sports Bar

Former 'Cat launches a fan space.

Clarissa Flores '01 doesn't mind competition.

This spring she opened Level Sporting Club, a sports bar in Chicago's Wrigleyville neighborhood, which boasts more than 45 other watering holes. But Level does something the others don't. It's leveling the playing field by "building a home for women's sports," says Flores, a former Wildcat women's basketball player. "This is bigger than a movement. This is a cultural shift."

According to NBC News, the number of women's sports-focused venues was projected to quadruple nationally in 2025, coinciding with a boom in pro and collegiate women's sports viewership. For Flores, Level isn't about capitalizing on a trend but offering something fans have been seeking for a long time. "The fandom, the crowd, the support for women's sports have been there," she says. "The infrastructure has not."

Level is located just blocks from Wrigley Field. That's on purpose, says Flores, who has spent two decades working in Chicago's hospitality and nightlife scene. "Wrigleyville is the entertainment corridor of Chicago, so why not? Women's sports belong at the center of this conversation."

At Level, she adds, "I want everyone who walks through this door to feel the energy and passion for women's sports. That energy is second to none."

Creating spaces for communities that haven't always had them is a theme in Flores' career. She is co-founder of two event-planning groups geared toward queer women, including Chicago's Lesbian Social Club. The Chicago Cubs recognized her efforts with an invitation to throw out the first pitch at its 2026 Pride Celebration.

Flores says attending Northwestern gave her the tools to succeed. "Playing basketball and taking classes taught me so much resilience, teamwork and discipline that translate into my everyday life in my 40s," she says.

Northwestern Horror Story

The 13th season of *American Horror Story* premieres this fall. Several alumni have featured prominently in the award-winning FX series.



DENIS O'HARE '84 was cast in Season 1 as Larry Harvey, owner of the Victorian house dubbed the "Murder House" by fans. The role earned him an Emmy nomination, and he went on to appear in seven more seasons, playing various characters, including transgender bartender Liz Taylor (left) in Season 5.

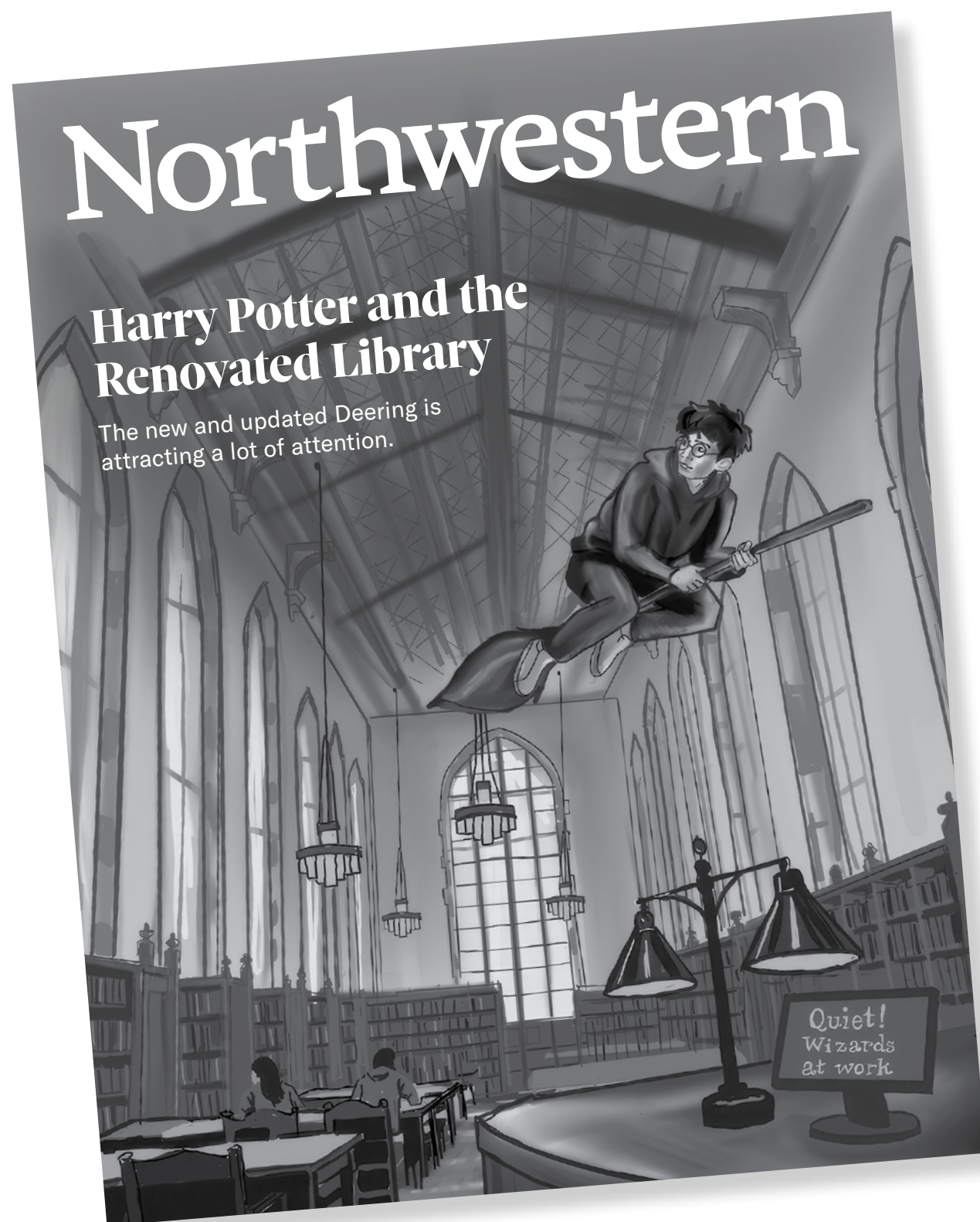
NAOMI GROSSMAN '97 played a microcephalic woman and mental health asylum patient named Pepper (right) in Season 2 — and fans adored the character. When the season aired in 2012–13, "Pepper for President" posters began appearing around Los Angeles. Grossman reprised the role in Season 4. She then played two other characters, in Season 8 and the spinoff series *American Horror Stories*.



BILLY EICHNER '00 joined the cast for Seasons 7 and 8 as multiple characters, including Harrison Wilton (left), who is a fitness trainer, beekeeper and gun enthusiast. In Season 8 he played both an apocalyptic nuclear scientist and a TV executive.

LILY RABE '04 appeared in Season 1 as Nora Montgomery, a deceased socialite who haunts Murder House as a ghost. Rabe went on to appear in nine seasons, playing 10 different characters, including Sister Mary Eunice McKee (right) in Season 2. She most recently starred in Season 10 as both a pregnant woman named Doris Gardner and as aviator Amelia Earhart.





Alumni share their favorite memories of Deering Library. See page 8.

LESLIE-ANNE MOCK

It's Your Year!

Homecoming and Reunion Weekend is October 9–11, 2026. Join a fun-filled weekend of reconnecting with classmates, revisiting favorite destinations, attending special events, and cheering at the Homecoming football game at the new Ryan Field.

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HOMECOMING & REUNION

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REMEMBERING 9/11

This Callery pear tree survived the 2001 attack in New York City. Today the Survivor Tree is part of the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. Learn about the work of Ian Kerrigan '00, the organization's senior vice president for exhibitions, on page 52.

