

GEM

of the hills



m o u n t a i n m u s i c



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DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

It's been 140 years since Gov. Edward O'Neal signed a bill establishing the State Normal School in Jacksonville, Ala. What began on February 22, 1883, with 12 acres of land, one building, five faculty and staff, and 272 students has grown into the university we proudly call our alma mater.

Today, JSU continues to reach new heights. We shattered enrollment records again in Fall 2022, surpassing 9,600 students for the first time in university history. We also continue to expand our degree offerings, enrolling the first cohort of students in our new Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program this spring.

With this growth comes the need to invest in the future of the university. We are breaking ground this spring on three new capital improvement projects: a North Village residence hall behind Sparkman Hall, a

new dining facility behind Curtiss Hall and the Loring and Debbie White football complex at JSU Stadium. Soon, we will re-dedicate the old Jacksonville Hospital, which has been transformed into a state-of-the-art training facility for JSU Nursing.

As you will see in the pages ahead, JSU students, faculty, staff and alumni continue to make a mark on the world. Together, we are building a legacy that will last the next 140 years and beyond!

Sincerely,
Dr. Don C. Killingsworth Jr.,
President

**GREETINGS, GAMECOCKS!**

Another spring semester has concluded with nearly 1,000 graduates receiving their degrees. Our Gamecock family is growing!

Speaking of growing, have you heard about our latest alumni legacy program, Growing Gamecocks? Please see the back cover for more details. We have also added new benefits for JSU National Alumni Association members, upgrading the program to better benefit you (page 35)!

Homecoming will be a little earlier this fall: Sept. 22-24. We hope you will be able to join us for a weekend full of activities (page 24). We are also counting down the days for the Marching Southerners Tour de France in 2024 for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day. Have you registered yet? We invite you to join us (page 22).

Thank you for all you do to support your alma mater. From enrollment to fundraising, we are experiencing record growth because of alumni like you. Learn how you can get involved at www.jsu.edu/alumni/get-involved.

Go Gamecocks!

Dr. Emily Messer,
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MOUNTAIN MUSIC

JSU'S COUNTRY ROOTS RUN DEEP

BY BUFFY LOCKETTE

Gordon Mote remembers the first time he heard "My Home's in Alabama" on the radio. Growing up in Attalla, Ala., the piano prodigy dreamed of becoming an entertainer. Witnessing the meteoric rise of country superstars Alabama, from nearby Fort Payne, made him feel like anything was possible.

"When I heard them sing and then they

started having hit after hit, I thought if they can do it maybe I can do it too," Mote told the audience at JSU's spring commencement in May 2022 upon receiving an honorary doctorate for his contributions to music. "Hearing the group Alabama gave me license to dream much bigger than maybe I ever would have."

This sentiment has become a common

refrain among singer/songwriters from the State of Alabama. At JSU, a pattern has emerged with aspiring artists following in the footsteps of Alabama frontman, **Randy Owen** – first to Jacksonville State, where he received a



GORDON MOTE

bachelor's in English in 1973, then on to Nashville. Mote was first among them.

Blind since birth, Mote was blessed with profound musical talent. At age three, he amazed his family on Thanksgiving by sitting down at the piano and playing "Jesus Loves Me" with both hands. As a young man, he became one of the first blind students in the country to be mainstreamed into the public school system. When it came time for college, he decided to study music at JSU.

After three years on campus, Mote transferred to Belmont University his senior year to be closer to the Nashville music scene. Just two days after graduation, he was hired by Lee Greenwood's band and the rest is music history. In addition to a long stint with Greenwood, he has shared the stage with numerous country and gospel music legends including Porter Wagoner, The Gaither Vocal Band, Brad Paisley, Carrie Underwood, Rascal Flatts, Blake Shelton, Trisha Yearwood, Tanya Tucker, Martina McBride and Alan Jackson.

Mote is also one of Nashville's most sought-after studio musicians. His big break came when fellow keyboardist, Hargus "Pig" Robbins - who also happens to be blind - asked him to fill in on a session for country superstar Alan Jackson. That recording session yielded Jackson's

iconic 9/11 tribute song, "Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning?" Mote went on to grace the recordings of artists such as Brad Paisley, Blake Shelton, Martina McBride, Bob Seger, Rascal Flatts, Sheryl Crow, Carrie Underwood, Lionel Richie, Josh Turner, Darius Rucker and Alison Krauss.

In addition to touring and recording with legendary musicians, Mote has enjoyed a successful solo career in his own right. His 11 albums have earned several Dove and Grammy Award nominations and the Academy of Country Music has named him Piano/Keyboard Player of the Year three times. Life came full circle when he joined the 50th Anniversary Tour of Alabama in 2021.

"I am grateful to Randy for what he meant to me before he even knew who I was," Mote said of his boyhood hero who has become a friend.

Mote's story is similar to that of one of the newest members of the Grand Ole Opry, **Jamey Johnson**. Born in Enterprise, Ala., he fell in love with music while growing up in the hometown of country music legend, Hank Williams - Montgomery. One of the first songs the lifelong Alabama fan learned to play on guitar was "My Home's in Alabama" and the first concert he attended was Alabama's famed June Jam festival in Fort Payne.

"It just kind of took my breath away," Johnson recounted to CMT in 2006. "It was a remarkable experience for me, wanting to play and sing and seeing these guys up there doing that stuff for a living and turning on the crowd the way they did."

After graduating from high school in 1993, Johnson - like Mote - decided to enroll in college at Randy Owen's alma mater. For two years, he played mellophone in the Marching Southerners and studied music education before leaving college to join the Marines. He served eight years in the Reserves while working to get his music career off the ground.

After moving to Nashville in 2000, Johnson gigged on Broadway and recorded demo tracks for other songwriters. His big break came when he landed a songwriting contract and began penning hits for other artists such as Trace Adkins' hilarious "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk" in 2005. That same year, he signed his first record deal.

With a voice that CMT says "comes at you like a bulldozer pushing gravel," Johnson is regarded as



one of the greatest country singers of our time. The 11-time Grammy nominee is one of the only artists in country music history to win two Song of the Year Awards from both the Academy of Country Music and the Country Music Association.

The latest Gamecock turned Nashville star is **Riley Green**. Born in Jacksonville, he learned the spirit of songwriting and performing at a young age while spending time with his grandfather, Bufford Green, who ran the Golden Saw Music Hall. After graduating from Jacksonville High School, he enrolled at JSU, where he was a walk-on quarterback for the football team.

While performing at the iconic Florabama, located where the Florida and Alabama line meets on the Gulf Coast, he was scouted by CMT and cast in the fourth season of "Redneck Island" in 2014. Seeing it as an opportunity to promote his music, he agreed to star in the reality

series. The exposure – followed by a lot of hard work – paid off. Just four years later, his debut album – “Different ‘Round Here” – achieved two Billboard Hot 100 hits. In 2020, days after releasing the five-song EP, “If It Wasn’t For Trucks” – which features a duet with Randy Owen – Green was named the New Male Artist of the Year at the 55th Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards.

Gordon Mote. Jamey Johnson. Riley Green. All three count **Randy Owen** as a musical influence. All three passed through JSU’s campus on their road to stardom. “Talk of Country” mused about this connection recently, surmising that “When there’s a living, breathing country superstar an hour up the road, it’s a little easier to think you can follow.” But Green said Randy Owen’s influence extends far beyond the Yellowhammer State.

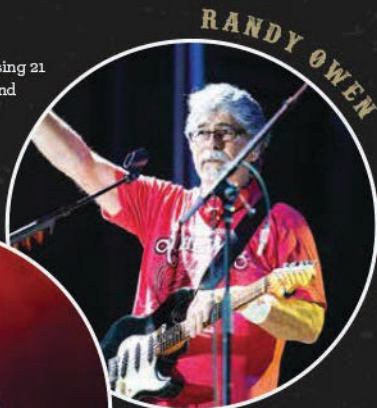
“Randy Owen was huge in Alabama,” Green told “Taste of Country,” “but the crazy thing is, he’s huge everywhere. Alabama – I put them up there with the Eagles.”

From the start, Alabama attracted a younger, more diverse audience than traditional country music acts. While rooted in country music, the band had a Southern rock edge – resulting in major crossover appeal.

“In contrast to vocal groups such as the Oak Ridge Boys or the Statler Brothers, Alabama was a self contained unit, playing instruments as well as singing,” wrote Geoffrey Himes for the Country Music Hall of Fame. “This was unprecedented for a country music band as successful as they were.”

Within a decade of forming, Alabama had popularized the idea of a country band – blazing a path for others to follow. They dominated country music throughout the 1980s

and 1990s, releasing 21 gold, platinum and multiplatinum albums. Their songs are among the most



RANDY OWEN



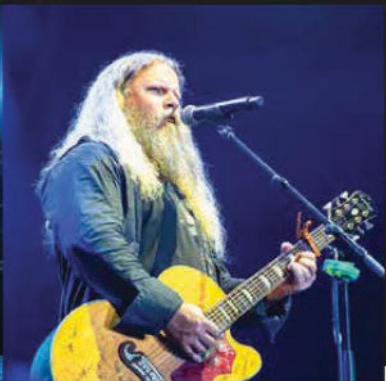
RILEY GREEN

named Artist of the Decade by the Academy of Country Music in 1989 and Country Music Group of the Century by the Recording Industry Association of America in 1999. In 2005, three years after retiring, the band was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Owen was inducted into the Musicians Hall of Fame in 2019.

memorable in country history, including “My Home’s In Alabama,” “Tennessee River,” “Old Flame,” “Love in the First Degree,” “Lady Down On Love,” “The Closer You Get,” “Dixieland Delight,” “Feels So Right,” and “Mountain Music.”

Along the way, the band picked up two Grammy Awards and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. They were

Nothing in Owen’s background could have predicted he would become one of the most successful Alabamians in state history, his name synonymous with the place he still calls home. Born in Fort Payne, Ala., in 1949, he grew up on a farm



atop Lookout Mountain. Despite being a straight A student, he had to drop out of school in ninth grade to help his family make ends meet. Encouraged by an educator who recognized his potential, he returned to school a year later, graduated from Fort Payne High School, and enrolled at JSU.

understood I was the first in my family to go to college," he said. "It was a place where there was a certain amount respect and I really felt like my voice meant something."

He supported his studies performing at barn dances in Summerville, Ga., for \$15 a show, as well as doing odd

Owen said, "I think, for me, it's the setting. Rural, downhome. It's a beautiful place. Even the times I was here when it snowed it had a little charm to it."

When that setting was struck by an EF-3 tornado in 2018, Owen reunited the band and pulled together Mote, Johnson, Green and

— and they have continued to perform and record together since then, including on campus.

The Randy Owen Center for the Performing Arts, planned for campus, will pay tribute to Owen's contributions to the university, country music and the state. It will ensure his legacy will

66 WHEN THERE'S A LIVING, BREATHING COUNTRY SUPERSTAR AN HOUR UP THE ROAD, IT'S A LITTLE EASIER TO THINK YOU CAN FOLLOW. 99

- TASTE OF COUNTRY

"I thought, if I can go through all this, I want a college degree," he said about returning to school.

On campus, Owen enjoyed taking creative writing and other courses with English faculty like Janet LeFevre and Ethel Reaves, who treated him with kindness. "I found that the professors here

jobs in the summer. "I am very thankful there was a place like this that I could afford to come to," he said. "I had a great experience here and made some great friends and Pi Kappa Phi brothers."

When asked why he thinks JSU and the surrounding area attracts and inspires musicians,

several other country greats like Charlie Daniels to perform at a benefit concert that raised more than \$1.2 million for the university's recovery efforts. The event strengthened the bond between JSU's country star alumni — it was actually the first time Green had a chance to meet Owen

live on in the Gem of the Hills, which served as inspiration for his "Mountain Music," so that the next country music star who passes through town will also proudly say, "My home's in Alabama, and my heart's at JSU." 🍷





JSU MUSICIANS

take Manhattan

A Cappella Choir and Piano Professor Perform Back-to-Back at Carnegie Hall

BY BRETT BUCKNER

In 1891, when steel magnate Andrew Carnegie dedicated the New York City concert hall bearing his name, he proclaimed that it was probable the venue would "intertwine itself with the history of our country."

More than 132 years later, performing at Carnegie Hall is so prestigious it's considered the pinnacle of an artist's career. It's an honor both the JSU A Cappella Choir and Assistant Professor of Piano Rachel Park both, coincidentally, experienced in March.

Dr. Park was the first to take the stage on March 13. Originally scheduled to perform at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall in 2020, her appearance was postponed until now due to the pandemic.

"As history proves, performing at Carnegie Hall means more than just an honor for artists," said Park, who joined the JSU faculty in 2018. "Debating at Carnegie Hall is such a great opportunity for artists to prove their artistry that will also lead them into more celebrated opportunities for future scholarly and artistic activities."

Dr. Park presented the following selections: Four excerpts from the "12 heilige

Glockenklänge für Klavier" by MW Johann Kim, a very unique composition written with the new harmonic system called bell harmony, "Estampes" by Claude Debussy; "Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109" by Ludwig van Beethoven, "Alborada del gracioso" from the "Miroirs" by Maurice Ravel; "Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23" by Frédéric Chopin and "Arirang," which is Dr. Park's own arrangement.

"Although the pandemic delayed my recital almost three years, it was a meaningful time for me to build up a new program as well as contemplate on the purpose of my debut recital in Carnegie Hall - sharing a hopeful message to the world to overcome dark situations we are facing in our days," Park said. "I would like to express my most grateful heart to my God and all the loving people of my life and share this great joy with all who supported me."


Two weeks after Dr. Park's performance, JSU musicians again took the stage at Carnegie Hall when, on March 27, the A Cappella Choir performed as part of the Debut Series sponsored by Manhattan Concert Productions.

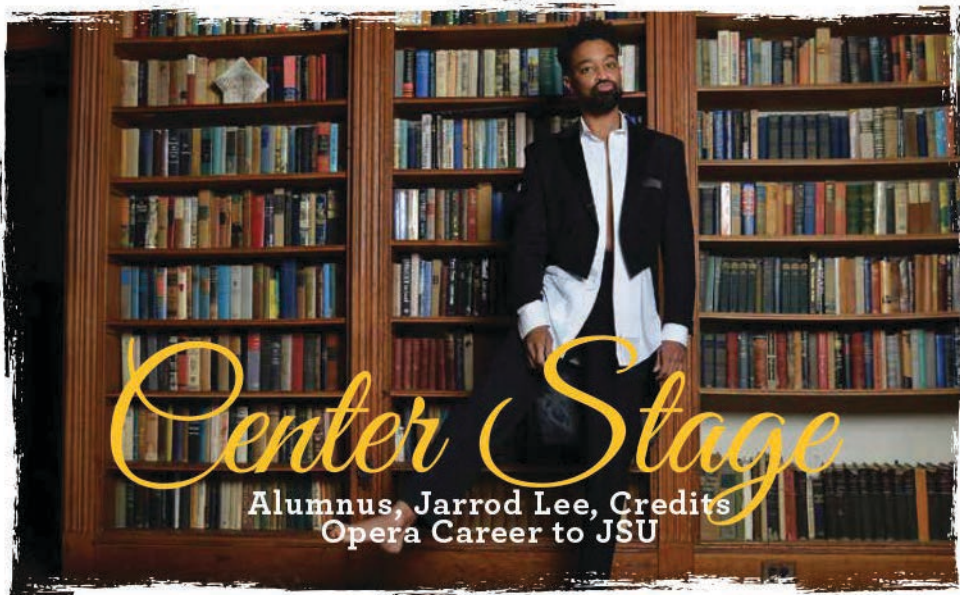
"It's a tremendous honor to be invited," said Dr. Eliezer Yanson, Jr., JSU associate

professor of music and director of choral activities. "There's a very strict audition process. They don't let just anyone perform at Carnegie Hall, so it's a big deal."

The 40-plus member student ensemble was given 28 minutes to perform six selections: "Hosanna to the Son of David" by Thomas Weelkes, "Abide" by Dan Forrest, "O Love" by Elaine Hagenberg, "Papanok a Lakitan" by Nilo Alcalá, "Che interminabile andirivieni" from "Don Pasquale" by Gaetano Donizetti and "O! What a Beautiful City," arranged by Shawn Kirchner.

For Yanson, who is in his fourth year at JSU, it marked his third appearance at Carnegie Hall. Having performed at the famed venue in 2015 and 2018, he understood what this opportunity meant for his students.

"I treat my rehearsals the same way I treat performances, but clearly this was something special," he said. "I wanted the students to appreciate that, to respect this opportunity. It was a chance for them to showcase their talents and what they've been working so hard for. You only get one shot at this." 



BY BRETT BUCKNER

Jarrod Lee knew he wanted to be a performer. He wanted to be on stage, to stand in the glare of the spotlight and bask in the applause of the audience. What he didn't know was how to get there. That's what he found at JSU – a path from aspiration to reality; the guidance necessary to make childhood dreams come true while discovering new ones along the way.

"JSU nurtured my curiosity and supported me in my efforts to get hands-on experience as an opera singer," said Lee, 39, a Sylacauga, Ala., native now living in Maryland. "I was lucky and found that others saw my ambition – from the faculty and alumni to the guest teachers who offered master classes to the performing opportunities with Jacksonville Opera Theatre and the acting classes in the theatre department."

Since graduating from JSU in 2008 with a degree in music education, the baritone vocalist has become a successful opera singer – performing with the Annapolis Opera, Atlanta Opera, Baltimore

Concert Opera, Maryland Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Opera Delaware and the Washington National Opera. Some of his past roles include Angelotti in "Tosca," Henry Davis in "Street Scene," Bonze in "Madama Butterfly," and covering Kaboom and Pastor in "Fire Shut Up in My Bones."

Having first graduated from Central Alabama Community College, Lee remembers what it was like coming to JSU and feeling intimidated by his upper division classes. But he also remembers the encouragement from the faculty members, who supported his decision to become a classical musician and believed he had the potential for a successful career. One experience, in particular, stands out.

It was after choir practice and he was considering declining a potential scholarship because it required applicants be able to sight-read music and serve as a section leader. Lee expressed his concerns to his first voice instructor, Dr. Richard Armstrong and the director of choral activities, the

late Dr. Patricia Corbin. Both listened to his concerns and told him that, while it would take time and effort, he'd get there.

"They believed in me, and I trusted them," Lee said. "I clearly had no idea what I was getting into, but I knew I loved to sing, and classical music and opera really fascinated me."

While at JSU, Lee perfected his craft in solo recitals and as a member of the Jacksonville Opera Theater, the A Cappella Choir, the Chamber Singers, the Show Choir and Gospel Choir. He also spent hours at Houston Cole Library practicing reading sheet music while working in the computer lab. He would research stories about opera singers before going to the listening room to hear recordings of past productions.

"My mantra at JSU became, 'your gifts will make room for you,'" Lee said. "I didn't know what was outside of Alabama within the industry of opera, but I knew that I liked performing and telling stories as a singer. There was always a curiosity there."

Since becoming a professional singer, Lee's mantra has changed to "shake every tree." It's a philosophy he believes others can learn from, too.

"Whatever falls will be to my advantage because I'm worth the lesson learned from the experience, and someone will benefit from my experience," he

said. "I believe the goal is bigger than what I thought, and it keeps me going. Shake that tree with every intention and dream bigger."

An advocate for new works, Lee premiered the roles of Joe Louis in "Shadowboxer" by Frank Proto and John Chenault, as well as Levi in the Afro-Futurist opera ballet, "Cloud Nebula," by composer Scott Patterson. He has also collaborated as a writer on a few operas, including "Spirit Moves" with composer Timothy Amukele for the IN Series in DC and "Oshun" with composer BE Boykin commissioned by the Washington National Opera - which premiered at the Kennedy Center as part of the American Opera Initiative.

"I have had a diverse experience in the field of opera which benefited from the diverse support of friends, family and sometimes working in jobs that were not directly related to opera but didn't rob me of my peace," Lee said. "My dreams will continue to come true. There is no traditional trajectory. There is only what you want and how are you gonna experience it without hurting anyone along the way." 🚫

"They believed in me, and I trusted them."



HISTORIC MARKER DEDICATED

in Honor of

FIRST BLACK STUDENT



PICTURED ABOVE: Dr. Don Killingsworth, Jr., president; Charlicie Pettway Vann, director of diversity and inclusion; Jewelshia Johnson, SGA president; and Curry-Story's nephews, Kelsey Crook and Garland Herd.


JSU kicked off Black History Month 2023 by dedicating a historic marker in honor of the university's first African American student, Barbara Curry-Story. Located in the Angle Hall courtyard near the Miriam and James Haywood Memorial Fountain, the marker highlights how Ms. Curry-Story bravely integrated the university in 1965.

Born Barbara Crook in Ohatchee, Ala., on Nov. 24, 1941, she graduated from Calhoun County Training School in 1959 and briefly attended Alabama A&M before moving to New York City to raise money for college. Five

years later, she returned home to Alabama and enrolled at JSU in Fall 1965, determined to give her two-year old son a better life.

When she walked into Angle Hall (formerly Bibb Graves Hall) for the first time to attend a history class, she made history herself as the first black student to enroll at the university. During her time at JSU, she was advised by future JSU President Theron Montgomery. She graduated in 1969 with a Bachelor of Science in Education with a concentration in vocational home economics. On the Monday following graduation, she started working at Alabama Power.

She spent her entire career at Alabama Power, first as a home service advisor, demonstrating electric appliances at schools. Later, she worked with duct-design layout, electric heat pumps and water heaters. She was one of the first women of color to hold these types of positions.

Curry-Story died on Oct. 20, 2020, at the age of 79. She was married to the late Henry Curry of Anniston, a Civil Rights leader, for 23 years until his passing. She spent the final five years of her life married to Roger Story. She was the proud mother of two adult children, Starla and Joseph. 



University Selects Dean of the College of Business and Industry

After serving on an interim basis for the past year, Dr. Brent J. Cunningham has been named the official dean of JSU's College of Business and Industry (CBI), effective Jan. 3.

"Dr. Cunningham has been a part of the JSU fabric for over 22 years," said Dr. Christie Shelton, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. "He has a passion to serve others, to support faculty and to see students succeed. We are fortunate to have Dean Cunningham at the helm of the CBI. I am eager to work with him as he operationalizes his vision for the college in the years to come."

Cunningham first joined the JSU faculty in 1999 as an assistant professor of marketing. He served as Faculty Senate president in 2009-2010 and was promoted to full professor in 2012.

In 2017, Cunningham was named interim head of the Department of Management and Marketing, then official head of the department in 2018 – a role he served in for four years, until becoming interim dean of the college on Jan. 3, 2022.

A JSU alumnus, Cunningham received a BS in marketing from the university in 1987. He went on to earn an MA in marketing

from the University of Alabama in 1990 and a Ph.D. in marketing from the University of Mississippi in 1999. Before arriving on campus, he began his academic career as a member of the marketing faculty at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., from 1990 to 1998.

"Jacksonville State University is a remarkable institution and I am honored to serve as the dean of the College of Business and Industry at such a special place," Cunningham said. "I am grateful to President Killingsworth and Provost Shelton for entrusting me with such an important role." 🍷

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POLICE ACADEMY TURNS 50



PICTURED ABOVE: Top Left: Sheriff Jimmy Abbett of Tallapoosa County (left) and Chief R. Alan Benefield (right), executive secretary of the Alabama Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission, present President Don Killingsworth a plaque honoring the police academy's 50th anniversary. Top Right: JSU Police Chief Michael Barton (center) chats with Cherokee County Sheriff Jeff Shaver (left) and Hartselle Police Chief Justin Barley (right).

BY BUFFY LOCKETTE

On Dec. 6, 1972, 24 police officers became the first graduates of the Northeast Alabama Law Enforcement Academy at Jacksonville State. Fifty years later, the program's founders gathered on campus to celebrate a half century of the pursuit of excellence in law enforcement.


In 1971, the Alabama Legislature established the Alabama Peace Officers Standards and Training (APOST) commission and mandated police officer training statewide. A year later, JSU and APOST partnered to create a police academy housed at JSU and operated by APOST. Since then, 15,000 basic law enforcement officers have been trained on JSU's campus.

"The commission is committed to bringing the best of training and the best of regulation of law enforcement that can possibly be

brought," Chief R. Alan Benefield, executive secretary of APOST since 1996, said during the anniversary celebration. "Certainly, the venture made here at Jacksonville State University is a pinnacle of the delivery of that kind of training of law enforcement in the State of Alabama."

For the first three decades of its existence, the academy was housed at Brewer Hall, alongside JSU's political science, criminal justice and sociology departments. In 2005, after the Army closed Fort McClellan, the university purchased and renovated Building 3181 on the former base, renamed it JSU McClellan and moved the academy there, where it remains today alongside the JSU Department of Emergency Management, Center for Applied Forensics, Continuing Education and the teachers' In-Service Center.

In 2017, JSU established the Center for Best Practices in Law Enforcement to further support the education and training of Alabama police officers, followed by the Investigator Academy in 2021. Soon, it will open the Southeastern Leadership Command College to train law enforcement professionals to lead departments and agencies.

"Jacksonville State University wants to be known as the training capitol of law enforcement for the State of Alabama," said JSU President Don C. Killingsworth, Jr. "We acknowledge the need for initial and continued training for law enforcement, which is why we are investing in law enforcement training opportunities here at our university. JSU is proud to have served with the academy for the past half century and we look forward to another half century." 

MOVING ON UP

GAMECOCKS PREPARE FOR HISTORIC MOVE TO CUSA

BY BRETT BUCKNER

JSU Athletics has never shied away from a challenge. So, when an invitation came for the Gamecocks to join Conference USA, the department answered the call.

"It all happened really fast," Athletics Director Greg Seitz said. JSU received an initial call from representatives of CUSA in

Fall 2021 to gauge the university's interest in joining.

That Zoom call was soon followed by a visit to campus, then an official invitation.

"Jacksonville State has and always will be eager to listen to opportunities that put our university and athletics department in the

best situation possible, so when Conference USA reached out to us, we were excited to listen," said President Don C. Killingsworth, Jr. "With the landscape of collegiate athletics changing more rapidly now than ever, we are thrilled to be able to align with a league with such an outstanding tradition as CUSA."

On July 1, 2023, JSU will officially become a member of the new conference in all sports, joining fellow newcomers Liberty, New Mexico State and Sam Houston State. Kennesaw State will be joining in 2024. Existing schools in the conference include Florida International, Louisiana Tech,

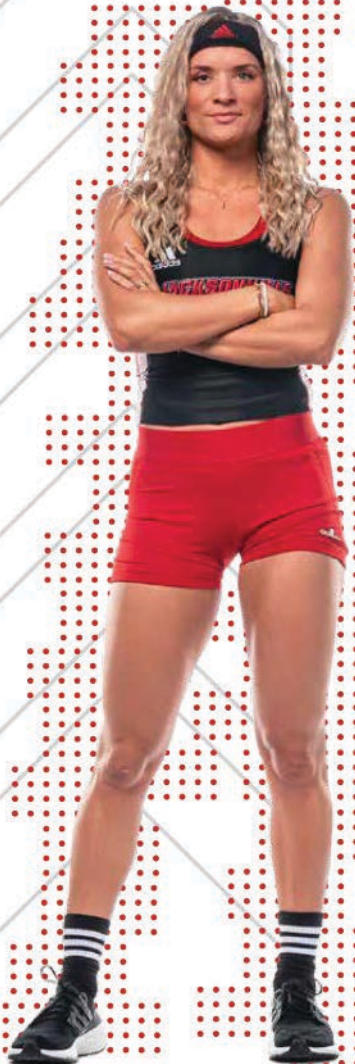
Middle Tennessee State, UT El Paso and Western Kentucky.


The move brings Gamecock Football from the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) – a change fans have been requesting for years. The Gamecocks have won 10 conference championships and reached the playoffs 10 times in the FCS, advancing to the national championship game in 2015.

"We are certainly proud of the tradition that has been built by Gamecock Football, one that spans well over a century," Seitz said. "We've solidified ourselves as one of the most successful and consistent programs in the FCS over the past decade, so the opportunity to compete at the game's highest level is one we couldn't pass up."

The move will also have a positive impact on the other 17 sports in JSU Athletics. Longtime Softball Coach, Jana McGinnis, expects the competition level to be equal to what her team faced in the A-Sun Conference, especially for the top five schools. She looks forward to seeing how the move will lift her program.

"I know that JSU has to elevate facilities and budget and expand our recruiting areas in





order to attract another level of player,” McGinnis said, “especially because the major goal of our new conference is to be a multi-bid league.”

Over the past decade, JSU has invested millions of dollars in its athletics facilities, while also implementing projects across campus that provide students and student-athletes one of the top collegiate experiences in the region. Highlights include the new Recreation and Fitness Center, upgrades to Pete Mathews Coliseum, the expansion of Jim Case Stadium and the forthcoming Loring and Debbie White Football Performance Center.

“To compete at the highest level has been a goal for Jacksonville State athletics for many years,” Seitz said. “In order to make that move, we knew we would have to continue to progress in many areas, including facilities. Since 2010, we’ve been able to provide upgrades to every on-campus athletic facility, and we have multiple upgrades planned for the near future.”

Being a member of CUSA will open the door for nationwide recruiting for all sports, McGinnis said.

“More kids will become familiar with our school when we are traveling into Texas on a regular basis,” she said. “I feel that the media exposure from basketball and football will help all sports.”

During his 40 years as the play-by-play announcer for the Gamecocks, Mike Parris has seen it all. But when he started back in 1983, he said JSU joining the likes

of CUSA was beyond anyone’s dreams.

“When I started, I’d never have imagined that little old Jacksonville State would become a Division I school,” Parris said. “It’s been real neat seeing it grow and now to have football reach that highest level. It’s going to change everything, especially for football, but really, for all the sports.”

JSU will soon enjoy unprecedented visibility, as CUSA recently signed a new multimedia rights deal with CBS Sports and ESPN, beginning with the 2023 football season.

“This is a major step forward for Conference USA in terms of our multimedia rights as it relates to streamlined exposure, accessibility for our fans and greater financial resources for our members,” CUSA commissioner, Judy MacLeod, said. “Building on our strong relationships with CBS and ESPN enabled us to provide increased exposure and consistent broadcast homes for our membership and fans as we continue to see the landscape of Conference USA and college athletics evolve.”


The agreement positions CBS Sports Network with tier one selection status for CUSA football and men’s basketball – 18 games annually for both sports – over the length of the partnership, while also televising the football conference championship, men’s basketball semifinal and conference championship games, the women’s basketball conference championship game, and baseball and softball conference championship games.

As for football, all October league games will be played on mid-week evenings. The broadcast partners will share CUSA’s October weeknight football games across CBS Sports Network, ESPN, ESPN2 or ESPNU.

As someone who’s witnessed JSU’s growth firsthand, Parris said these are exciting times.

“As the old saying goes, ‘Athletics are the front porch of the university’ and this type of move is going to put us in a spotlight for people who might not have seen us before,” Parris said. “With these mid-week games on ESPN, we’ll be the only game in town at that time. It’s like a three-hour commercial for not only the football program, but the entire university.”

The move to CUSA has also provided the university the opportunity to add its 18th varsity sport, Women’s Bowling, which will begin competing in CUSA during the 2023-24 season. The team will practice and host matches at Big Time Entertainment in Oxford, which features lanes that meet NCAA standards.

“Women’s Bowling is a sport that’s popularity is on the rise, specifically with the younger crowd, and that is evident by the fact that 219 high schools within Alabama offer the sport,” Seitz said. “This will create an opportunity for another group of student-athletes to compete at the next level at JSU.” 



JAX STATE FOOTBALL

GAMECOCKS



SPORTS

2023 Schedule



08.26
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
AT EL PASO
Hall of Fame Weekend



09.23
EASTERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY
Homecoming



10.10
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY



11.04
SOUTH CAROLINA
UNIVERSITY
COLUMBIA, SC



09.02
EAST TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY
Band Day



09.28
SAM HOUSTON
STATE UNIVERSITY
HUNTSVILLE, TX



10.17
WESTERN KENTUCKY
UNIVERSITY



11.18
LOUISIANA TECH
Southerners Reunion



09.09
COASTAL CAROLINA
UNIVERSITY
CONWAY, SC



10.04
MIDDLE TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY
MURFREESBORO, TN



10.25
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY
MIAMI, FL



11.25
NEW MEXICO
STATE UNIVERSITY
LAS CRUCES, NM

HOME

AWAY

Tickets are available for purchase online
at JSUGamecockSports.com or
by calling the ticket office at 256-782-8499.



GROWING FUTURE DATA SCIENTISTS

A \$1.5 Million NSF Grant Aims to Increase STEM Graduates

BY BRETT BUCKNER

At first glance, Joshua Smith couldn't believe what he was reading. "I thought, there's no way," said the 21-year-old Piedmont, Ala., native, "It's got to be one of those fake emails."

Hoping for the best, he went straight to Dr. Jan Case, head of JSU's Department of Mathematical, Computing and Information Sciences, and

learned that it was true. He was among the first students selected to participate in JSU's new Jump Start Data Science Project.

Funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation, the program aims to increase the number of JSU students earning degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields with minors or concentrations in data science.

Over the next six years, 60 students with academic ability, talent, potential and financial need will be recruited to participate in the program. Those selected will be

immersed in the world of STEM, with cultural events, guest speakers and mentors to guide their academic development. To support their studies, they will each be awarded \$5,000 per semester, for a total of \$10,000 per year, funded by the national grant.

"This prestigious program will fund scholarships for students who have an unmet financial need and are majoring in a STEM field with a concentration or minor in data science," said Lynn Garner, assistant director of the JSU Office of Sponsored Programs. "This is a wonderful opportunity for JSU to make a positive



$$2 \times 2 = 4$$



impact on the STEM workforce in the United States and provide a much-needed boost to the students in the area.”

Ethan St. John is just such a student. The 20-year-old computer science major from Talladega, Ala., enjoys working with technology – both with hardware and software – being so far as to build his own computer last summer. He was in the middle of studying for midterms when learned he was chosen for the Jump Start program. The first thing he did was call his mother.

“I was in class, but I rushed out that day so I could let my mother know,” St. John said. “It was nice to hear her words of encouragement. I knew that was only a beginning. Now I must dedicate myself to becoming an expert in the field so that I can apply myself to a variety of problems present within our world today.”

Chandler Jones appreciates the financial burden the grant helps relieve for both him and his family. “It was a very great feeling hearing that I had qualified for the grant, and I felt a huge weight come off of my shoulders,” said the 19-year-old from Valley Head, Ala. “This grant helps tremendously with payment for college, as well as avoiding debt, and I feel like I will be able to better focus on my studies without those worries.”

To qualify for the scholarship, students must be majoring in a STEM field with a minor or concentration in data science. They must also maintain a GPA of at least 2.75 in STEM and data science courses.

With the scholarship reducing outside pressures, the students can now focus solely on their futures. For Smith, that means first completing his contract with the National Guard. Then, after graduating from JSU, he plans to move to Huntsville – home of NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center.


St. John also has his sights set on Huntsville, perhaps using his skills in data science to secure “a dream job” of working for NASA, such as Redstone Arsenal. He believes being part of the NSF grant is just the vehicle to help get him there.

“I hope for this award to symbolize my dedication towards my degree and the field of computer science,” St. John said. “One of the largest problems within a lot of research done today is a lack of proper data for usage in generating accurate statistical models, so I hope to be as helpful as I can to the problems looked at within the data science field.”

So far, 15 students have been selected for the program. The goal is to fund at least 20 students each year and

graduate at least 60 students over the six-year period of the grant, through 2028.

“We hope that this opportunity attracts future students to JSU,” Dr. Case said. “It’s an amazing opportunity – \$5,000 a semester for up to eight semesters – and the students will graduate with one of the most marketable degrees currently offered.”

If you know a current or incoming JSU student who might be a good candidate for the program, tell them to visit jsu.edu/stem for more information. 

FIRST CLASS OF DATA SCIENCE SCHOLARS

- Christopher Adkins
- Ace Arnold
- Tybrea Baker
- Jakobbe Brewster
- James Nicholas Clifton
- Seth Elkins
- Ryan Eubanks
- Chandler Johnson
- Joshua Smith
- Micah Smith
- Ethan St. John
- Kaylin Taylor
- Tristan Wells
- Devian Wilkerson
- Haley Williams

Work Hard. Stick To It. Use Common Sense.



*Alumnus Loring White Shares His **Keys to Success***

BY BUFFY LOCKETTE

As Loring White watched the bus pull away with his football teammates, heading to the Gamecocks' first away game of his freshman year back in the fall of 1974, he vowed he would never get left behind again.

After talking to a few friends and coaches – who explained there simply weren't enough seats for everyone – he realized he was going to have to become one of the team's most versatile players if he wanted to guarantee himself a spot on the bus and on the field. So, he learned to play nearly every offensive position, making himself indispensable.

That tenacity, first demonstrated on the football field, would propel White through college and on to a highly successful business career. "I decided if I spent as much time working as I had practicing football, I could be successful," he said. "I just outworked my competitors."

After graduating from JSU with a bachelor's degree in education in 1978, the Prattville, Ala., native returned to the area to help coach football at Montgomery's Jefferson Davis High School. Despite winning a state championship his first year on the job, his head coach thought White was destined for bigger things. "He told me, 'You can stay in coaching, but you

should get into sales – you have a real gift there,'" he said.

But White argues it was hard work more than raw talent that led to his success. "I woke up every morning and went to work real early, cold calling on customers across the South," he said. "That type of work ethic was instilled in me at Jacksonville State."

He started out at the Montgomery-based Capitol Business Equipment, Inc. (now known simply as CBE) working straight commission, plus \$40 a week for expenses, selling cash registers, typewriters and adding machines.

"From there, I steadily built my customer list," he said. "I worked with oil jobbers that owned gas stations, back when the idea of convenience stores hadn't really taken off yet. I told them, 'One day you're going to need a cash register in here, and when you do, I'm going to be your cash register man' – and that's what happened."

Anticipating where the industry was headed, White positioned himself at the forefront of the nation's conversion from full-service gas stations to convenience stores. Using the client list he had the foresight to build, he shifted to selling point-of-sales equipment for CBE.

A few years later, when the owner retired, he bought the company and spent the next 40 years building it into a national brand.

Again predicting where the industry was headed, White made the decision – as owner and CEO – to sell CBE in 2022 to a private equity group, merging with OWL Services. This merger provided him with the opportunity to add the installation of electric vehicle charging stations to CBE's suite of technology solutions and become the nation's leading supplier. The move doubled the company's number of employees overnight and is expected to have a similar effect on revenue.

Relinquishing the reins at CBE has allowed White more time to wrangle his latest passion – ranching. In what he calls “the best sales job I ever pulled,” he convinced his wife, Debbie – a self-proclaimed city girl native to Alabama's capital – to pull up stakes and move to a cattle farm in Five Points, Ala. Up until then, the beautiful wiregrass oasis had belonged to the Day family since the Louisiana Purchase.

“I have to admit, he got me here kicking and screaming,” said Mrs. White, a real estate developer and interior designer. “But when I got here, this lifestyle was just so peaceful. The family loves to come visit. It's become a great lifestyle, so much more laid-back than we were used to.”

When they are not working the farm and chasing after their six grandchildren – who range in age from a newborn to a 13-year-old – the Whites enjoy giving back to JSU. They host reunions for the football signing class of 1974, follow Gamecock sports and talk to students.

“Today, kids need mentors,” Mrs. White said. “The coaches can tell them and the teachers can tell them, but to meet someone who has really done it can make all the difference. That's why I respect Loring so much – he wants people to know that if he can do it, really anyone can if they are willing to do the work.”

After years of being some of JSU's most generous but anonymous donors, the Whites recently agreed to



“I woke up every morning and went to work real early, cold calling on customers across the South. That type of work ethic was instilled in me at Jacksonville State.”

let the university name the football performance center at JSU Stadium in their honor. It has been christened “The Loring and Debbie White Football Performance Center.”


“I’ve been very blessed, and I like to give back to people in need,” Mr. White said. “It’s an honor to have your name put up there, but that’s not really what it’s about.”

Previously, former head coach Jack Crowe convinced him to let the university dedicate The Loring White Lobby in the field house to the couple, arguing it would inspire other student-athletes to hear the story of a first-generation college student who put himself through JSU on a football scholarship and went on to achieve great success.

“If I can go to Jacksonville State for four years and come out of there with a college degree and do what I’ve done, they should be able to do the same thing,” White said. “By just letting them see it can be done, that’s honor enough.”

Whether he’s speaking with JSU students or his own employees, White stresses that the key to success can be narrowed down to eight simple words: “work hard, stick to it, use common sense.” Otherwise, he said, “you’re not going to blossom.”

White also has some important words for fellow alumni.

“When you’re an alum, that means it’s your school, and when it’s your school that means you’ve got to take care of it,” he said. “It’s our school, we have a piece of paper that says it’s ours. If everybody gave \$10, we could really do some great things. If you want to give more, feel free.” 



THE MARCHING SOUTHERNERS

Tour de
FRANCE
2024

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

**ALUMNI AND FRIENDS ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE
SOUTHERNERS IN FRANCE!**
SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE AND TO REGISTER.



RED TIE


Dinner + Auction

The Office of Alumni Relations and the JSU Annual Fund Board hosted JSU's sixth annual Red Tie Dinner and Auction on Feb. 10. The donor recognition and record-breaking fundraising event generated more than \$292,000 benefitting the colleges, departments, programs and scholarships across campus through the JSU Annual Fund.

An elite group of JSU supporters kicked off a new year of annual fundraising while recognizing loyal annual donors. The formal event featured dinner, silent and live auctions, and entertainment.



The seventh annual Red Tie Dinner and Auction will be held on February 2, 2024 in the JSU Recreation and Fitness Center. The Office of Alumni Relations encourages all those who support JSU with annual gifts to consider maintaining and increasing leadership-level giving to \$2,500 or more in the calendar year to secure an invitation to next year's gala.

The Annual Fund is the cornerstone of philanthropy at JSU. Through various means, it solicits gifts annually from alumni, friends, corporations, foundations and government entities to support and enhance the various colleges and programs of the university. 

Jamie Armstrong *Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations*

Jamie Armstrong has joined University Development as director of foundation and corporate relations. The Gadsden native has spent the past nine years as director of professional outreach and physician recruitment at Gadsden Regional Medical Center. She and her husband, Luke, are the proud parents of Evan, 5, and Emma, 3.



Save the Date



HOMECOMING

SEPTEMBER 22-24

Friday, Sept. 22

- CLASS OF 1973
"GOLDEN GAMECOCK"
50-YEAR CELEBRATION
- ROTC ALUMNI BANQUET
- BLACK ALUMNI WEEKEND

Saturday, Sept. 23

- PRESIDENT'S OPEN HOUSE
- HOMECOMING PARADE
- GAMECOCKS VS. EASTERN
MICHIGAN EAGLES, WITH
HALFTIME RECOGNITION OF
THE ALUMNI OF THE YEAR
AWARD WINNERS AND
HOMECOMING COURT

Sunday, Sept. 24

- UN DAY TEA

*For more details on
Homecoming, visit*

JSU.EDU/HOMECOMING

or

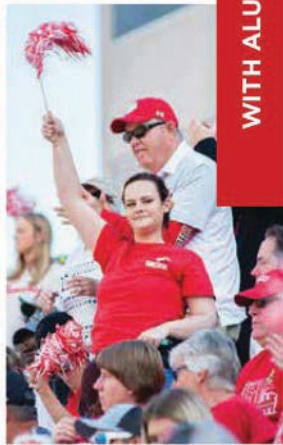
SCAN THE QR CODE



FEAR
THE
BEAK



JAX
STATE



WITH ALUMNI

Nominate 2024 Alumni of the Year Honorees

Do you know an outstanding alum who deserves recognition? Applications will open soon for the **2024 Alumni of the Year** awards organized by the JSU Alumni Association. Categories include:

- ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR
- ALUMNA OF THE YEAR
- MILITARY ALUM OF THE YEAR
- YOUNG ALUM OF THE YEAR

Visit jsu.edu/alumni for awards criteria and nomination forms.



Mark your calendar!

SEPT
22-24

Homecoming
Weekend and
Black Alumni
Network Weekend



OCT
27

Cocky Classic



NOV
17-18

Marching
Southerners
Reunion Weekend




DEC
2

JAX Jingle 5K

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON ALUMNI NETWORK
EVENTS AT JSU.EDU/ALUMNI

Connect with the
Alumni Association!

 /JSUALUMNIASSOCIATION

 /JSUALUMNI  /JSU_Alumni

JOIN AN
ALUMNI NETWORK!



DID YOU KNOW THE JSU
NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
HAS ADDED TWO NEW NETWORKS
IN THE PAST YEAR?

- The West Georgia Alumni Network, led by Ashley Teal ('18)
- The Sigma Phi Epsilon Alumni Network, led by Clay Blackwell ('12)

The Atlanta Area Alumni Network has been reorganized into the North Metro Area, led by Chris Stokes ('11), and the South Metro Area.

We are currently seeking leadership team members for both areas. Let us know if you are interested in getting involved.

ADDITIONAL ALUMNI NETWORKS:


- Art
- Auburn/Opelika Area
- Ballerina Alumni
- Birmingham Area
- Black Alumni
- Blount County
- Calhoun County
- Central Alabama Area
- Etowah County
- GOLD (Graduates of Last Decade)
- Greek Alumni
- Grey Echelon
- Huntsville Area
- J-Club (Former athletes)
- LatinX Alumni
- LGBTQ+ Alumni
- Marshall County
- Northwest Georgia Alumni
- Omega Psi Phi Alumni
- Rome, Georgia Area
- ROTC Alumni
- Student Alumni

LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH
NETWORK AT
JSU.EDU/ALUMNI.



JSU ROTC MARCHES ON

The JSU ROTC program was established under Dr. Houston Cole's presidency in 1948. Col. Thomas Whitted was the first commander of the unit and several of the first cadets fought in World War II. Initially, all men studying on campus were required to take two years of ROTC courses. After 1971, it became an elective. The program has commissioned more than 1,400 officers since its inception.

Just as JSU ROTC remains active – typically commissioning a few officers each semester – the ROTC Alumni Network is also still going strong. The network recently welcomed Jason Benefield ('92) as its new president. He and his leadership team are excited to support cadets and alumni through events and scholarships. They are currently working to endow all the current KIA memorial scholarships for cadets. If you would like to support these efforts, please contact the network. 

Do you know a future Gamecock you believe would benefit from JSU ROTC? Share the top three reasons for choosing the program:

1. It offers a variety of scholarships that can offset the cost of college
2. Its courses provide invaluable leadership and critical thinking skills, valued by both the military and civilian organizations
3. With a 35-foot rappel tower, a zodiac tactical boat and paint ball, it's an exciting, challenging experience

Learn more at jsu.edu/rotc.



HELP US RECRUIT FUTURE GAMECOCKS!

Do you know someone who would be a great Gamecock? Let us know about them by completing the Prospective Student Referral Form on the alumni website at jsu.edu/alumni/student-referral.html.

You can work with our admissions counselors to engage prospective Gamecocks in your area! Sign up at jsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/recruiting-team.html

ALUMnotes

BIRTHS

2020-2022

1 Samaria Mayo Davis ('17) and her husband, Pierre Davis, welcomed their first child, Warren Pierre, on 12/13/22. Samaria works in the emergency room at Northside Duluth and will be earning a Doctorate in Nursing Practice from JSU later this year.

2 Cory Lane Deerman ('20) and Sarah Martin Deerman ('20) welcomed their first child, Bennett Lane, on 11/27/22. Cory was a member of Pi Kappa Phi, SGA, Student Alumni Association and the Alabama Collegiate Legislature. He is the owner of CD Medical, working as a surgical sales representative in orthopedics. Sarah was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha and Freshman Forum. She is a registered nurse at Gadsden Regional Medical Center.

3 Keaton Brooks Glass ('17, '21) and Jessica Ann Glass ('22) welcomed their first child, Brooks Atlas, on 6/30/22. Keaton serves as director of the First and Second Year Experience program in the Student Success Center at JSU. Jesi is a Family Nurse Practitioner in Oxford, Ala.

4 Brandon Scott Harvey ('02/'10) and Valene Singleton Harvey ('06/'11) announce the birth of their second child, Owen Scott, on 10/18/22. Brandon is a systems administrator at the Anniston Army Depot and Valene is an IT support analyst at JSU. Their first child, a daughter named Raegan, was born 1/2/20.

5 Holly McCormick Hurst ('12, '20) and her husband, Neal Hurst, welcomed their second daughter, Caroline Ellis, on 4/6/22. Their first daughter, Savannah Leigh, celebrated her second birthday on 12/7/22. Holly served as alumni advisor of Delta Zeta for five years, having held the office of president as a student in 2011.

6 Trey Phillips ('18/'21) and Megan Ogle Phillips ('19) welcomed their first child, Jay Alexander, on 7/14/22. Trey is a sixth grade English and language arts teacher at Alexandria Middle School. Megan, who was involved in Freshman Forum and the Student Alumni Association, is an administrative associate in the JSU Dean of Students Office.

7 Amanda Wheeler Pierson ('16) and Nathaniel J. Pierson ('16, '18) welcomed their

second child, Michael Grant, on 10/21/22. Nathaniel was a member of the Honors Program.

Jessica Martin White ('13, '14) and Zackery White ('14) announce the birth of their second child, Molly Kate, on 3/19/22. Jessica serves as a kindergarten teacher in Phenix City, Ala. Zackery, a former sports radio host at WLJS, earned an MBA from the University of North Alabama in 2021 and currently leads software engineering teams in FinTech.

WEDDINGS

2020-2022

8 Randall Edward "JR" Dove II ('10) married Carly Ann Padgett on 8/13/22. JR, a member of Kappa Alpha Order, works for BL Harbert International.

9 Joshua Howell ('17) and Lacy Blalock Howell ('20) kicked off Marching Southerners Reunion weekend by saying "I Do" on 11/11/22. The couple met while he was on drumline and she was on colorguard as undergrads.

10 Hannah Elizabeth Hurst ('17) married William Karl Loeffler on 10/22/22. Hannah was vice president of recruitment for Panhellenic and a member of Zeta Tau Alpha, Order of Omega

and Phi Alpha Social Work Honor Society. She works for Spartan Invest.

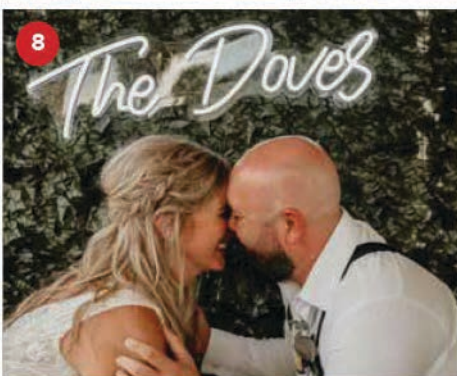
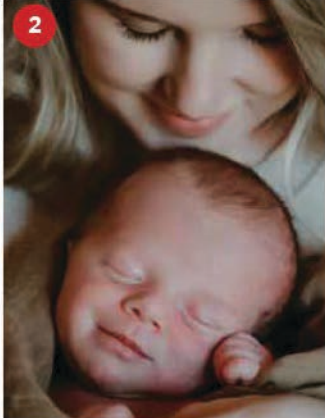
11 Tori Lonergan ('22) married Lucas Riley on 11/19/22. Tori was president of Zeta Tau Alpha, a member of Sigma Theta Tau Nursing Honor Society and the Jacksonville Association of Nurses, and served as a JSU Nursing Ambassador. She is a registered nurse in the Medical Intensive Care Unit at UAB Hospital.

12 Alyssa Paige Thompson ('19) married Matthew Benjamin Reid on 11/11/22. Alyssa works at Regions Bank.

13 Former JSU basketball player Jeremy Watson ('16) married JaBria Mitchell on 8/21/22 in Sugar Hill, Ga. He currently works as a senior accountant for corporate Home Depot.

ALUMNOTES

Michelle Allen ('91/'94) has been named community superintendent for Fort Knox, Ky. She has spent her entire 32-year career in education, working her way up from a teacher's aide to principal. In addition to her degrees from JSU, she holds an educational specialist degree from Troy University and is pursuing a doctorate in



1. Warren Pierre Davis
2. Bennett Lane Deerman
3. Brooks Atlas Glass
4. Owen Scott Harvey
5. Caroline Ellis Hurst and Savannah Leigh Hurst
6. Jay Alexander Phillips
7. Michael Grant Pierson
8. Randall Edward "JR" Dove II ('10) and Carly Ann Padgett
9. Joshua ('17) and Lacy Blalock ('20) Howell
10. Hannah Elizabeth Hurst ('17) and William Karl Loeffler

curriculum and instruction. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha and was a Peer Counselor.

Christina Almanza ('05/'07) was recognized as one of WVMT, NBC-13's "Women Breaking Barriers" in September 2022 for her impact on her community as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. She serves as director of corporate business development for coffee, tea and allied sales at Buffalo Rock. Native to Mexico, she came to JSU as part of the International House program.

Danielle Anderson ('15) was presented the 2022 Innovation Award from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama in honor of her innovation in the medical and primary care industry. She serves as a family nurse practitioner at Riverbend Family Medicine in Scottsboro, Ala.

Paul Benefield ('80, '81) was inducted into the Alabama High School Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2023. He just completed his 13th undefeated season as head football coach at Fyffe High School. He was named Alabama Coach of the Year in 2007 and 2014.

14 Cheryl Bevelle-Orange ('90) published her first book, "The Courage to Continue: Navigating Your Corporate Journey," in November 2022. The 2020 JSU Alumna of the Year went on to

earn an Executive MBA from Christian Brother's University in Memphis, Tenn. She is director of information technology at FedEx in Houston, Tex. As a student, she was involved in SGA and served as a Peer Counselor.

15 Staff Sgt. Liliana Joie Byrd ('16) was crowned Ms. Veteran America in October 2022. The former Marching Southerners drum major and flutist served four years in the US Army as a fife instrumentalist in the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, performing in more than 230 missions and ceremonies. Upon completion of her enlistment in 2020, she moved to St. Thomas, where she continues to play flute and steel pan in the US Virgin Islands National Guard while working as band director at a local school.

Daffie Magby Dillard ('80) retired on 5/28/21 from the Randolph County Board of Education. She was also employed with the Roanoke City School System and the Chambers County Board of Education for 33 years. She was active in JSU's Baptist Campus Ministry. Her husband, William Marvin Dillard, attended JSU and played football from 1978 to 1981. He retired after 35 years in law enforcement, working for both the Randolph County Sheriff Department and LaGrange Police Department, and

now pastors Pleasant Grove and Friendship Missionary Baptist Churches.

Chris Glover ('98), managing partner of the Atlanta office of Beasley Allen, was recognized as one of three finalists for 2021 Georgia Lawyer of the Year. The Delta Chi served as SGA President in 1997-1998 and was named JSU Young Alumnus of the Year in 2005. His wife, Erin Glover ('99), serves on the Board of Directors and volunteers with Read Together ATL. She was president of Zeta Tau Alpha in 1998-1999 and was an SGA senator.

Tracy Hulgán ('84) has been inducted into the Dekalb County Sports Hall of Fame. He spent 23 years as head junior high basketball coach at his alma mater, Crossville High School, until becoming head coach at Arab High School in 2014. He is currently assisting with boys and girls basketball programs in Dekalb County.

16 Chuck Isbell ('96) was named Teacher of the Year in September 2022 at Westside Elementary School in Cedartown, Ga., where he teaches music. The former Southerners trumpet player previously served as assistant band director at Rockmart High School and Cedartown High School.

Brett Johnson ('15, '20) has been named Chief of Staff of the

Mayor's Office for the City of Gadsden. The 2014 SGA president has worked for the Higher Education Partnership, the Alabama Education Association and Liberty Learning Foundation.

17 Tim Lockette ('97) was presented the 2022 Whippoorwill Book Award for his second novel, "Tell It True." The award recognizes young adult books that challenge stereotypes about rural and small-town life. The book was also named a Gold Standard Selection by the Junior Library Guild and a Kirkus Reviews Best YA Book. A sequel to his first novel, "Atty at Law," is in press with Seven Stories. He serves as a visiting English instructor at JSU.

18 Dr. Janekia Mitchell ('98/'05/'07) was named dean of student services at Gadsden State Community College in August 2022. It marked her return to GSCC, as she departed in 2018 after 16 years to serve as a counselor at Emma Sansom Middle School. In addition to her JSU degrees, she earned a doctorate in professional counseling and supervision from the University of West Georgia. She is married to Ruben D. Mitchell ('07), band director at Anniston High School, and they have two children.

Eddy Peacock ('78) was named to the Board of Directors of the Alabama Winemakers and Grape Growers Association in



11

11. Tori Lonergan ('22) and Lucas Riley
12. Alyssa Paige Thompson ('19) and Matthew Benjamin Reid
13. Jeremy Watson ('16) and JaBria Mitchell
14. Cheryl Bevelle-Orange's ('90) book, "The Courage to Continue: Navigating Your Corporate Journey"
15. Staff Sgt. Liliana Joie Byrd ('16)
16. Chuck Isbell ('96)
17. Tim Lockette's ('97) novel, "Tell It True"
18. Dr. Janekia Mitchell ('98/'05/'07)
19. Benjamin Chad Spradley's ('04) novel, "A Long Road to Redemption"



12



13



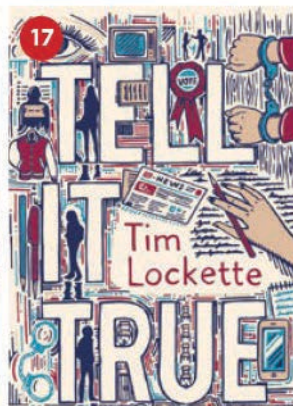
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16



14



17



18



19

August 2022. He is affiliated with Wills Creek Winery, located in Duck Springs, Ala.

Dale Pruitt ('79, '01) has been inducted into the Dekalb County Hall of Fame. He has spent much of his career as head football coach at his alma mater, Plainview High School, in Rainsville, Ala. His son, Jeremy, was head coach at the University of Tennessee in 2018-2020 and now works for the New York Giants.

19 Benjamin Chad Spradley ('04) published his first full-length novel, "A Long Road to Redemption," in

March 2022. He teaches special education at Childersburg High School and previously taught 9th-12th grade history.

Brigett Stewart ('01, '08) has been recognized by the US Secretary of Education with a prestigious Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. She was also named Alabama Principal of the Year in 2022 for her work at Piedmont Elementary School. Her daughter, Lily Grace Vernon, was crowned Miss JSU 2023 in January and is a secondary education major.

Nicole Killough Walden ('92/'93) has been named associate commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division. She previously served as the substance abuse treatment and development director for the agency. The Alpha Xi Delta member is married to Scott Walden and has two children, Nicholas and Ava.

Patrick M. Williams ('93, '98) has been inducted into the Marshall County Sports Hall of Fame. He is assistant principal and athletic director at his alma mater, Boaz High School. He is also head coach of the Boaz Swim Team and an announcer for Gamecock sports, Boaz football and the AHSAA state basketball tournament.

Laura Christian Cotter, 8/31/2022
Larry Gene Elam, 10/1/2022
June Crayton Gallagher, 5/14/2022
LaMahta James Griffin, 9/19/2020, Southerners
Kenneth Joe Hicks, 5/30/2022
Mary Elizabeth Harris Jackson, 5/31/2022

Vivian Comer Kemp, 9/24/2022
Eric Meeker, 5/31/2022, Southerners
Pam Hodges Pratt, 1/11/2023
Wilfred Leon Powell, 3/9/2022, Southerners
Kerry Scott Reed, 1/2/2023

Carl Tom Reid, 6/9/2022, Baseball and Football

Vickie Glosson Stewart, 12/17/2022

Joyce Hagood Thompson, 7/4/2022

Michael J. Turner, 1/13/2022

Guy Neal Wardlaw, 5/15/2022, Football

Sandra Cooley-Watson, 11/2/2022

Darius Ryjohn Whited, 7/28/2022, Southerners

Margaret Louise Moore Woodall, 9/28/2022

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OBITUARIES

YEAR UNKNOWN OR DID NOT GRADUATE

Joseph Hugh Bland, 10/14/2022, Football

Mary Janice Byrd, 5/30/2022

Robert Charles Calin, 7/6/2022

Natalie Smith Carlson, 9/11/2022

John Sears Casey, 6/16/2022

Kelley Mitchell Cobb, 7/24/2022



1940-1949

Inez Roebuck Adams
(‘46), 12/21/2022

Lillian Wallace Nicholson
(‘49), 2/26/2021

Margaret Ann Swann
Smith (‘48), 9/3/2022,
International House

1950-1959

Mabel Lucile Weaver
Carlton (‘55), 9/2/2022

Dr. Charles David Cook
(‘56), 9/3/2022

William “Billy” Audry
Noles, Jr. (‘55),
5/25/2022

Ruth Wingard Dyer (‘58),
6/1/2022

Lt. Col. Rex Milford
Wallace, Sr. (‘51),
5/18/2022, ROTC

William Douglas Larry,
Jr. (‘58), 9/13/2022

Virginia Price Love (‘52),
8/19/2022

Dorothy Jane Warren
Nisbet (‘59), 9/24/2022,
International House

Dr. Norman L. Padgett
(‘59), Southerners

Kenneth L. Page (‘57),
1/02/2023

George Auston Smith, Jr.
(‘54), 12/28/2022

Arnold D. Wallace (‘59),
5/8/2022, BCM

Averill “Boots” Parsons
Williams (‘53), 7/16/2022

Ted Wilson, Jr. (‘57),
11/6/2022

1960-1969

Martha Ann “Marty”
Justice Abernathy (‘60),
9/23/2022

Paul R. Allison (‘61),
12/14/2022

Dr. William Melvin
Battles, Jr., LCDR US
Navy (‘62), 10/20/2022

Diane Redfearn Broome
(‘69), 9/12/2022, BCM
and International House

Robert Ray Calloway
(‘60), 7/7/2022

John Perry Carruth,
Jr. (‘64), 11/15/2022,
Southerners

Thomas William Dennis
(‘63), 6/19/2022, BCM

Judith “Judy” Tidwell
Fulford (‘60), 12/5/2022

Rebecca Ruth Wood
Fulton (‘68), 5/18/2022,
Southerners/Ballerinas

William Harold Guthrie
(‘61), 11/26/2022

James Kermit McDow
(‘67), 11/24/2022,
International House and
BCM

Donnie Mac Myers (‘64),
6/21/2022, BCM

Gerald Cleveland
Patterson (‘62),
12/31/2022, BCM

Hiram J. Powell (‘62),
1/9/2023

Garvis Wyatt Prater
(‘64), 6/17/2022

Terry Segers (‘63),
5/17/2022, Southerners

Johnny Hiram Shook
(‘68), 12/21/2022,
Southerners

Wanda Thompson
Paschall Smith (‘68, ‘71),
10/30/2022

Barbara McCraw
Studdard (‘62),
2/18/2022

Gilbert Jerome Turley
(‘65), 2/7/2022

Arlin Burl Turner (‘65),
8/10/2022

Jackie Dean Wood (‘68),
4/20/2022, Football

1970-1979

Meredith Ferrol
Aderholdt (‘75),
12/11/2022

Jerry Glenn Burgess
(‘76), 2/9/2022

Hetty Hamilton Cox
(‘73), 6/15/2022

Brian Wade Davenport
(‘75), 6/8/2022

Jane May Dotson (‘76),
8/24/2020

Myra Jane Thomas
Downs (‘73), 3/25/2022,
Alpha Xi Delta

Rita Nall Dunaway (‘79),
9/4/2022

Windy Gale Elrod (‘79),
8/3/2022, Zeta Tau
Alpha

Col. William Michael
Ford (‘75), 2/1/2022,
ROTC

Donald Ray Hamlin (‘70),
6/4/2022

Albert Thomas “Tom”
Harris, Jr. (‘70),
11/10/2022

Ruth Ann Hobbs (‘71),
1/28/2022

Elizabeth Anne Forster
Knight (‘77), 6/28/2022

Louise Williams Lokey
(‘77), 12/25/2022

MG Carlos Dwight
“Butch” Pair (‘70),
9/11/2022, ROTC

Anita Lynne Cobb Parker
(‘73), 5/31/2022, Phi Mu

Ronald Curtis Strange
(‘76), 8/7/2022

Nancy Diane Carlson
Sloman (‘75), 10/8/2022,
Southerners

James Milford Thomas
(‘72), 7/20/2022

Thomas Mark Watkins
(‘70), 11/28/2022

Clyde Michael “Mike”
Williams (‘72),
11/18/2022, ROTC

Marie Steele Riley Wilson
(‘75), 12/1/2022

1980-1989

John Billy “Johnny”
Coley, Jr. (‘89),
7/26/2022

Lori Hughes Costanzo
(‘87), 7/24/2022

Catherine Lynn Mason
Crook (‘88), 7/17/2022

Brian Scott Hall (‘85),
10/1/2021, Delta Chi

Stephanie Phillips
McGhee (‘82),
10/20/2022

Kimberly Jo Hutcherson Scoggins ('84),
5/29/2022

Solomon Yinke Sholanke ('81), 11/25/2022

Mitchell Dee Staples ('85), 11/27/2022

Beverly Kay York ('84),
10/18/2022, Phi Mu

1990-1999

Onnie Eugene Hithcox ('97), 6/24/2022

Lloyd Dale Hounshell ('94), 2/20/2022

Russell F. House ('94),
6/15/2022

Joyce Faye Miller LaTaste ('93), 9/14/2021

Penny Lynn LaTaste ('91), 9/19/2021, Delta Zeta and Southerners

Gloria Jean Sanford ('99), 11/30/2022

2000-2009

Andrew Chesser "Ches" Garner ('03), 6/14/2022, Delta Chi

Benda Hepinstall Hay ('00), 3/7/2022

Antonio Michael Solomon ('08),
10/29/2022, Ambassadors and SGA

2010-2019

Joshua Caleb Colar ('12),
1/3/2023

Monica Shea Nabers Phillips ('19), 7/3/2022; Delta Zeta, Student Alumni Association, Zeta Phi Eta

Victoria "Tori" Elizabeth Wheeles ('14), 7/8/2022

La'Tonya Denise Whitson ('10), 5/27/2022

2020-2022

Leah Grace Tarvin ('22, posthumous), 11/3/2022, Alpha Phi Sigma and Lambda Phi Epsilon

EMPLOYEES

Alice "Juanita" Draper Barnwell, 7/26/2022, International House

Billy R. Butterworth, 8/29/2022, Purchasing

Judy Lynne Jones Jennings, 11/14/2022

David Lee Hightower ('75), 7/29/2022, Football Wide Receiver Coach

Edmond Weaver Landers, 12/24/2022

Calvin Magee 5/20/2022, Football

Rev. Calvron Deontrae Marshall, 11/3/2022

Joseph Ernest Miller, 10/24/2022

Gene Padgham ('74), 8/24/2022 Finance, Real Estate Professor

Dot Hall Reaves, 10/28/2022

John Lewis Richardson, ('71, '77), 10/11/2022, Accounting Professor

James M. "Jim" Summers, 12/28/2022

Cyrus E. Wagner ('85), 3/15/2022, Sigma Nu, Graduate Studies/ Continuing Education

Nancy Mae Weeks, 12/6/2022

Wanda Lou Watson Wigley ('61), 1/2/2023, Professor and Department Head, Special Education



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