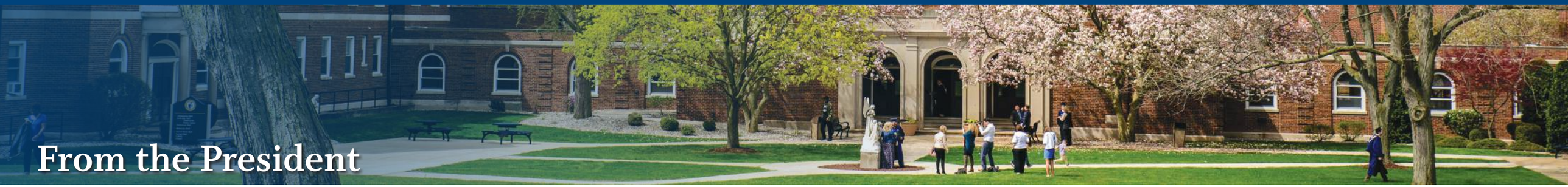
The Magazine for Alumni and Friends of Siena Heights University Winter 2024

REFLECTIONS

Douglas B. Palmer:
BELIEVE in SHU



From the President

Douglas B. Palmer, Ph.D.
President

When I ask students, faculty, staff, and alumni what draws them to Siena Heights, time and time again, the reply is "It feels like home." This has been my experience too. My family and I are so grateful for the welcome we have received from the Siena Heights and surrounding communities. Between service in the Army, school, and career, my family and I lived in nearly every corner of this country. This has been the most welcoming and friendly place we have ever been. We are home. Thank you, Saints!

We have our challenges, both as an institution and as a wider Southeastern Michigan community. As an institution that takes pride in our personal connections and sense of community, the COVID pandemic hit Siena Heights especially hard. Economic shifts, which had begun before the pandemic, have shifted populations from the industrial Midwest to the Sun Belt and coasts. There are fewer traditionally aged students within our traditional recruiting area than at any time in history since the Second World War. We cannot recruit students who were never born. A recent poll, furthermore, says that 1 in 4 Michiganders under the age of 50 anticipate moving away from their home state to pursue job opportunities.

At Siena Heights, we are choosing to believe in a better future for us and our region – and we have plans to make the future happen. We are increasing our engagement with local businesses, healthcare, and government so that Siena Heights is ensuring our graduates are well prepared for the jobs of the 21st century. We aspire to contribute to "brain gain" and the jobs this creates rather than "brain drain." We also are actively expanding scholarships and other opportunities to those who have not always had access to the benefits of a faith-based, private college education. These include students who are the first in their families to attend college, Hispanic students, and students who are currently in our prison education program. We are proud of all our Saints, no matter where they take their classes—in Adrian, online, at one of our community college partner sites, or in a correctional facility.

Mostly, we believe in our future because we know that armed with our faith, a compelling mission, and the legacy of our founders, the Adrian Dominican Sisters, we cannot fail. It is appropriate that we have just concluded our Christmas season and remember the words of the Angel Gabriel to our Holy Mother, Mary "Nothing will be impossible for God (Luke 1:37)." We continue to serve our home, which is ultimately found in our faith in God, for whom nothing is impossible. God bless you all, and God bless Siena Heights University.

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REFLECTIONS

Winter 2024

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The mission of Siena Heights, a Catholic university founded and sponsored by the Adrian Dominican Sisters, is to assist people to become more competent, purposeful and ethical through a teaching and learning environment which respects the dignity of all.

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Campus News

CAMPUS ADDITIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Siena Heights Named as a 2023-2024 College of Distinction

Siena Heights University (SHU) has been named a College of Distinction for the 2023-2024 academic year, marking its commitment to providing a high-quality undergraduate education that focuses on hands-on learning, strong student-teacher relationships, a vibrant campus life, and successful outcomes. In addition, SHU's Business Program and Education Program were both recognized as College of Distinction's outstanding and exemplary undergraduate programs.

Colleges of Distinction's selection process comprises a sequence of in-depth research and detailed interviews with the schools, accepting only those that adhere to the Four Distinctions: Engaged Students, Great Teaching, Vibrant Community, and Successful Outcomes. As a College of Distinction, Siena Heights has shown excellence in each of these areas, providing its students with a well-rounded, practical education that prepares them for successful careers and lives.

"We believe that engaged students are successful students," said Tyson Schritter, Chief Operating Officer at Colleges of Distinction. "And SHU's dedication to experiential learning shows us that each of its students has the opportunity to play an active role in their education." To be named a College of Distinction, Siena Heights University demonstrated excellence in undergraduate education in such factors as student engagement, teaching excellence, outcomes-based learning, and community involvement. This evaluation process differs from those of popular college rankings publications, whose formulas grade institutions based on things like faculty salaries, endowment size, and peer opinion.

"We don't rank our schools," said Schritter. "Every student has individual needs and flourishes in a specific environment. We prefer to focus on the innovative ways that colleges all around the country are providing an enriching undergraduate experience." Siena Heights' inclusion as a College of Distinction is a testament to the way it caters to its own students' potential and goals, helping them achieve success in unique ways that cannot be ranked against others.

Siena Heights University's Business and Education programs were also acknowledged as outstanding undergraduate programs by College of Distinction. Both programs were evaluated with several similar criteria, including the program's stability, accreditation status, multidisciplinary nature, practical experiences, dedicated advising/counseling, high-impact practices, and industry connections. Program-specific criteria were also evaluated, with SHU's business program receiving this distinction for the presence of collaborative learning and business ethics, and the education program criteria included non-education specialization.

"We are deeply inspired by how Siena Heights immerses students in their academic pursuits, fostering a welcoming community that provides unwavering support throughout their college years and beyond," Schritter continued. "For Siena Heights University, this is especially prevalent in their Business and Education programs. SHU's Business Program equips future leaders with adaptability as they evolve alongside their industries, and the Education Program produces future educators who possess not only in-depth knowledge, but also the skills to be effective mentors, providing empathetic support and employing innovative teaching methods."

SHU RANKINGS

Siena Heights University Nationally Recognized for Social Mobility by the U.S. News & World Report

Siena Heights University was recognized as a top performer in the regional Midwest for social mobility by the 2023-2024 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings.

According to the U.S. News & World Report, economically disadvantaged students are less likely to finish college. However, some institutions are more successful than others in advancing social mobility—this is done by enrolling and graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students awarded with Pell Grants. Of the over 1,700 students enrolled at Siena Heights University, approximately 35% received a Pell Grant for the Fall 2023 semester.

Of 164 colleges and universities ranked for social mobility, Siena Heights was tied with a ranking of #28, increasing their position from last year's ranking of #61. Of the institutions listed in the state of Michigan for social mobility, SHU was placed fourth. Additionally, Siena Heights University tied at #55 for Regional Universities in the Midwest out of 167 ranked institutions. This ranking was 49 places higher than last year.

Of this distinction, Douglas B. Palmer, Ph.D., President of Siena Heights University, said, "Siena Heights University's latest ranking is a direct reflection of our ability to meet financial needs. It is a testament to our commitment to providing all students with the opportunity to succeed. We are proud to be a place where students from all backgrounds can come together to learn and grow, and where they can achieve their academic and personal goals."

The overall rankings from the U.S. News & World Report assessed more than 1,500 U.S. bachelor's degree-granting institutions on various metrics, which were modified in preparation for this year's rankings. In an effort to place more emphasis on social mobility and outcomes, factors such as first-generation graduation rates and performance, as well as the proportion of college graduates earning more than a high school graduate, were included in the 2023-24 methodology. Other factors used to determine these rankings include undergraduate academic reputation, faculty resources, graduation rates, first-year retention rates, and more. In addition, five long-standing factors were dropped from this year's calculations, including the proportion of graduates seeking federal loans, high school class standing, alumni giving rate, terminal degree faculty, and class size.

"This ranking is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff, and students," Dr. Palmer continued. "We are committed to providing our students with the resources and support they need to succeed and to have that recognized by the U.S. News & World Report is extremely rewarding."

Siena Heights University's Online RN to BSN Program Receives Two Top-Five Rankings

Siena Heights University's Online RN to BSN Program received two terrific rankings in the past year, including a fourth-place ranking on AllNurses "15 Best RN to BSN Programs in Michigan" and a fifth-place selection to RegisteredNursing.org on their "2023 Best Online RN to BSN Programs in Michigan" list.

Siena Heights University's (SHU) Online RN to BSN Program was recently ranked fourth on AllNurses "15 Best RN to BSN Programs in Michigan" for 2024.

With over 20 accredited Online RN to BSN programs in the state, AllNurses evaluated factors such as length of program, curriculum, cost, availability of online courses, academic reputation, specific nursing school accreditation, graduation rate, and more. Siena Heights University was ranked fourth and was the first private institution to appear on the list. Notable features, as recognized by AllNurses, included SHU's flexibility and commitment to recognizing prior learning. Siena Heights accepts credit for previous college work, certifications, work experiences, and licensures, which helps students earn their degree in the fastest, cheapest way possible. In addition, another stand-out feature was Siena Heights University's Online Program, which has been recognized by the U.S. News & World Report for ten consecutive years. In most of these years, SHU was the top-ranked institution in the state of Michigan.

Of this accomplishment, Karen Howatt, DNP, RN, Director of the RN to BSN and MSN Programs at Siena Heights, said, "We are honored that our RN to BSN program has received this recognition. Our faculty is committed to providing a student-centered educational experience that exemplifies individualized support and faculty-student interaction, as well as a curriculum that is both relevant and innovative. We recognize the nursing expertise of each student and strive to broaden their knowledge through innovative and relevant academic experiences."

To compile information for the RegisteredNursing.org ranking, RegisteredNursing.org used data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), and the Council for Community and Economic Research. Points were given to each institution based on accreditation, presence of online programs, ratio of total nurse program completions versus total program completions awarded by the institution, annual tuition and fees adjusted for each county's cost of living, ratio of tenured instructional faculty, acceptance rate percentage, and graduate rate at 150% of normal time. After the points were totaled for each Nursing Program, the schools were ranked from highest to lowest total points.

Of this accomplishment, Assistant Dean of Academics-Nursing and Health Sciences Division, Dr. Joanne Yastik said, "We are extremely proud of our online RN to BSN program. This recognition serves to validate the hard work of our dedicated faculty to ensure a relevant, quality curriculum that addresses the knowledge and skills needed by RNs practicing in today's healthcare environment."

This curriculum for SHU's RN to BSN program is designed to give graduates the knowledge and adaptive thinking skills that develop the ability to recognize unexpected situations, quickly consider possible responses, and decide on the best one. Now more than ever, these skills are essential in the world of healthcare and nursing. By incorporating these principles into the courses, nurses from the program are better prepared to adapt to changing work conditions in any environment, while also helping integrate Siena's mission of being competent, purposeful, and ethical into their workplace practices.

Online Learning Program Nationally Ranked by the U.S. News & World Report for the Tenth Consecutive Year

For the tenth consecutive year, Siena Heights University's undergraduate Online Learning Program was ranked nationally by the U.S. News & World Report. Additionally, for the seventh consecutive year, Siena Heights was the top-rated in Michigan among all institutions.

Siena Heights tied for 30th among all public and private institutions and was the sixth highest-ranked private institution. Siena Heights was also the first Catholic institution to make an appearance on the list. In addition to its Online Program taking 30th, Siena Heights was also ranked 26th in the nation in the Best Online Bachelor's Program for Veterans category. That was also the highest ranking by a Michigan college or university in that category.

U.S. News and World Report's methodology included student engagement, faculty credentials and training, expert opinion, and student services and technology to determine the rankings. The publication released its 2023 Best Online Bachelor's Programs rankings on January 24, 2023.

"Now more than ever, students are in need of a quality online educational experience, and for more than ten years, we have systematically invested in creating and maintaining an online program worthy of this recognition," said SHU Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success, Cheri Betz, Ed.D. "The U.S. News and World Report ranking provides current and potential students with an assurance that as an online student at Siena, they will be in a learning environment intentionally designed for student success."

Siena Heights also ranked first nationally in faculty credentials and training with a perfect 100 score, and ninth in student engagement, according to the publication. SHU has offered online bachelor's degree completion programs in selected majors since 2004. In previous years, Siena Heights' undergraduate Online Learning Program has received the following rankings by the U.S. News & World Report:

2014: 131st

2015: 25th

2016: 72nd

2017: 24th

2018: 23rd

2019: 29th

2020: 33rd

2021: 34th

2022: 35th

2023: 30th

Siena Heights University is proud to receive a distinction as tremendous as that from the U.S. News & World Report and extends a sincere congratulations and thank you to all involved in supporting our top-notch Online Program.

To view the complete U.S. News and World Report rankings, visit

https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/rankings

For more information about Siena Heights University's Online Learning Program, contact 1-866-937-2748 or visit start.sienaheights.edu/online.

Siena Heights University Recognized as MVAA Silver-Level Veteran-Friendly School

Siena Heights University (SHU) was certified as a silver-level Veteran-Friendly School for the 2023-24 school year. This certification was granted by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA).

MVAA's Veteran-Friendly School Program recognizes higher learning academic institutions committed to supporting the needs of student veterans and dependents. The program awards Gold-, Silver-, or Bronze-level status to institutions that offer veteran-centric services and programs.

To be certified as a Veteran-Friendly School, an institution must meet specific criteria, including having an established process for the identification of current student veterans and having a veteran-specific website. In addition, an institution must have an on-campus veterans' coordinator or designated staff point of contact, as well as the presence of a process to evaluate and award academic credit based on prior military training and experience.

"I am incredibly proud of our institution for being recognized as a Veteran-Friendly School by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. This designation is a testament to our commitment to support our student

veterans and military-connected students in their pursuit of academic excellence," said Douglas B. Palmer, Ph.D., President of Siena Heights.

Dr. Palmer happens to be a veteran himself, having served as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Following his enlistment, Dr. Palmer used the G.I. Bill® to fund his undergraduate education. "At Siena Heights, we understand that transitioning from military service to civilian life can be challenging, and we are here to help our student veterans succeed," he continued. "We are committed to providing them with the resources and support they need to succeed in their studies and achieve their goals."

Siena Heights University Partners with Henry Ford Health to Combat Michigan Healthcare Worker Shortage

Siena Heights University announced a partnership with Henry Ford Health designed to address the critical worker shortage in Michigan's healthcare sector. Under this collaboration, Henry Ford Health full-time employees can use a $1,000 tuition benefit to enroll in any one of 20 online healthcare certificate programs offered at SHU. Additionally, full-time employees can apply a $3,000 benefit toward undergraduate or graduate degrees through SHU's online educational platform, SHU Global. Part-time employees are eligible for tuition benefits, as well.

In Michigan, the healthcare industry continues to grapple with a staggering 27,000 job vacancies within its hospitals. Since 2020, staffing has remained the top concern for hospital CEOs across the state. Nurses, technicians, and medical assistants are the top categories. Notably, SHU's Workforce Development program offers seven technician certificates as well as a Medical Assistant program, and SHU Global offers an RN to BSN 16-month accelerated program.

In 2022, The American College of Healthcare Executives emphasized the importance of "longer-term creative solutions" that healthcare systems can adopt to attract and retain their workforce. Offering employees opportunities for career growth is one strategy they identified to help address the national worker shortage.

Employee upskilling not only enhances career mobility for hospital workers but also addresses critical gaps in the healthcare system where qualified workers are in high demand.

"We're very excited to partner with Henry Ford Health," said Siena Heights University President Douglas B. Palmer, Ph.D. "Our goal from the beginning with launching the Workforce Development program was to help shape the future of the healthcare workforce. This partnership absolutely helps us work toward that mission."

Henry Ford Health employs over 33,000 individuals and has more than 250 locations across the state. Hospitals collectively employ 208,000 people in Michigan, making them one of the state's largest employers.

STAFF UPDATES

Brooket and Betz Accept Leadership Roles

Jennifer Brooket, CFRE, '06, '10, Vice President of Institutional Advancement

Siena Heights brought aboard new leadership for the Vice President of Institutional Advancement role. Brooket is a two-time Siena Heights graduate, receiving degrees at the baccalaureate and master's level from SHU. Her bachelor's degree is in multidisciplinary studies while her master's is in organizational leadership.

She previously served in Siena Heights' advancement office as a Coordinator of Donor Relations and then as Director of Development spanning from 2008-2017. Her years at Siena Heights created the baseline for extensive experience in the higher education landscape, as she then went on to work as the Associate Vice President at Jackson College for several years. Brooket rejoined the SHU community from the University of Toledo, where she occupied the role of Associate Vice President for Advancement. She is a Certified Fund-Raising Executive and has significant experience with major gifts and donor relations.

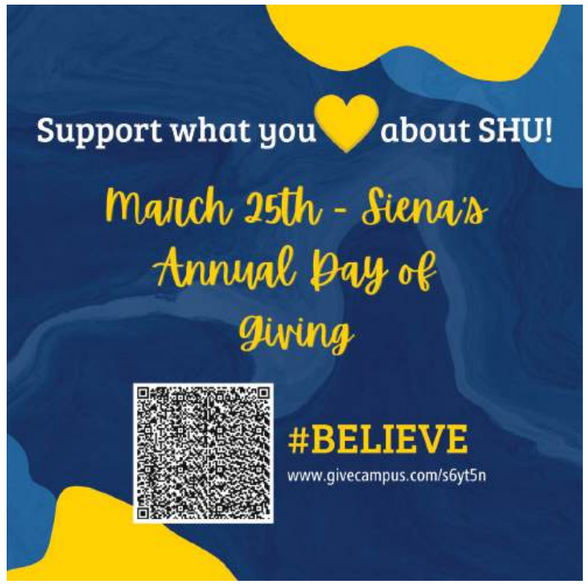
"Jennifer is a proven leader with a track record of success. She has a deep understanding of the relationships necessary to advance Siena Heights, and I am confident that she will be a valuable asset to our leadership team." Dr. Palmer remarked.

Brooket began her new role on September 5, 2023.

Cheryl Betz, Ed. D., Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success

In December 2023, Cheryl (Cheri) Betz, Ed.D., accepted a new role at Siena Heights as the Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success. Betz was hired at Siena Heights in 2002 as an Admissions Representative for the College for Professional Studies at the Southfield location and quickly progressed to the Southeast Michigan Regional Director overseeing the Southfield, Henry Ford, and Monroe campuses. From there, Betz was promoted to Dean for Graduate and Professional Studies and took on two new roles as the Vice President of Administration and Innovation and Executive Vice President. Most recently, Betz accepted her new title as the Executive Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success.

Betz completed her bachelor's degree from Olivet Nazarene University in Illinois and in 2007 she became a Saint and earned her master's degree in organizational leadership from Siena Heights. She returned to Olivet Nazarene to complete her Doctor of Education degree and now sits on their Board of Trustees. In 2012, Betz was honored with the Siena Heights University Staff Excellence Award. She has a knack for making everyone feel welcomed and valued. She admirably represents the mission of Siena as she consistently 'walks the talk' and always places the best interest of Siena Heights University at the very center of her decisions.



Theatre Siena Makes its Mark on Croswell's 'Jersey Boys'

In June 2023, the Croswell Opera House in Adrian, Michigan, was the third of 27 locations in the United States to put on a production of 'Jersey Boys.' While this is an impressive accomplishment for Lenawee County as a whole—Siena Heights University (SHU) had a special connection to the show: 15 of the 21 cast members were part of the Siena Heights community.

The involvement of Theatre Siena with the 'Jersey Boys' production started at the top, with Mark DiPietro '83, current Theatre and Speech professor, serving as the director. He was assisted by Michael Yuen '09, assistant professor of Musical Theatre at Siena Heights, as well as Danielle Bluteau taking charge as stage manager.

On the casting side of things, several recent graduates played important roles, including Adam Baker '23 as Nick Massi, Gabe Kucera '23 as Joe Pesci, Will Strickland '23 occupying several roles, Jeremy Pastoria '23 playing Bob Crewe, and Anjewel Lenoir playing several roles, including that of an angel. Another SHU alum was part of the cast—Sarah Nowak '12, dance and choreographer at Siena Heights, is playing Frankie Valli's mother, an angel, and other roles.

In addition, there were several student actors from Siena Heights within the musical, such as seniors Cordell Smith (as Bob Gaudio), Amber Woollcott (as Mary, Frankie's first wife, and other roles), Olivia Skierski (as Francine, Frankie's daughter, and other roles), Savannah Ritter (playing Loraine and other roles), Griffin Yeater (playing several roles, including Donnie), Autumn Bradford (as an angel and additional roles), and Wyatt Duford.

Outside of the senior students involved in the production, underclassman Eli Statchowski and incoming first-year student Abby Knight played several roles, as well. One of Knight's roles is that of Nick's girlfriend.

SHU Receives $1 Million Grant for "Improving STEM Education in the Community" Project

The STEM Program received a $1 million grant for the "Improving STEM Education in the Community" project from the Department of Education. The grant provides $1 million for scholarships, equipment, and supplies for advancing education in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) over the course of a three-year period. The project plans to address the national need for well-trained STEM professionals by supporting the education, retention, and graduation of STEM majors at SHU.

"Students love experiential learning, and I'm so thankful for this opportunity to provide more state-of-the-art equipment and workforce development for our STEM majors," said Jun Tsuji, Ph.D., who served as the primary spearhead for this grant. As the Assistant Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Dr. Tsuji has committed himself to improving the STEM experience at Siena Heights.

A combined $300,000 of the total grant was awarded in STEM scholarships, with the amount increasing each year from $50,000 in the first year, $100,000 second year, and $150,000 in the third year. The scholarships are available for full or part-time students majoring in biology, chemistry, environmental science, environmental engineering, general engineering, mathematics, data analytics, or cybersecurity. In addition, recipients must meet Title IV residency requirements.

The remaining $700,000 is being used in the first year for STEM equipment. The Siena Heights University STEM program plans to buy FANUC robotic arms, Stratasys industrial 3D printers, Universal Laser engraver, 3D scanner, CAD software, demonstration solar arrays and wind turbines, drones, and more.

The grant assists in producing graduates who are prepared to address local, regional, and national STEM workforce needs. As part of the grant proposal and agreement, Siena Heights has committed to tracking the progress on these goals through data collection on the number of students, student survey responses, retention rates, and graduation rates.

Siena Heights University has been the beneficiary of federal funding for STEM over the past five years. In March of 2018, Siena was awarded a National Science Foundation S-STEM Track 1 grant for nearly $650,000. Building on its previous success, Siena was approved for the National Science Foundation S-STEM Track 2 funding of $1,500,000 in July 2022.

Of the grant, Douglas B. Palmer, Ph.D., President of Siena Heights University, said, "This grant will help us attract and retain the best and brightest STEM students, and will provide them with the resources they need to succeed. Siena Heights is confident that this funding will help us prepare the next generation of STEM leaders, who will leave the workforce more competent, purposeful, and ethical than they found it."

A New Era of Unity and Belief:
Dr. Douglas B. Palmer's Vision for Siena Heights University.

By Madelyn Birmingham

Douglas B. Palmer, Ph.D., saw potential in Siena Heights University all the way from Canton, Missouri. Siena Heights was taking steps to set itself apart—Workforce Development Certificates, a highly successful Online Program, and a notable STEM program that received consistent funding from various organizations. Additionally, the Visual and Performing Arts Division was robust and contained many opportunities for continued growth. These distinctions aside, the most notable part of Siena Heights University was its Catholic heritage and mission statement, which contributes to a tradition of assisting communities and people— reaffirming Dr. Palmer's hope for the future of quality, faith-based, private education.

When he stepped onto campus for the first time, the sense of community was tangible. It wasn't just about holding doors or saying "hello" to strangers. It was about the aura of peace and purpose, of innovation and inspiration, and the eagerness to embrace change and move forward. Dr. Palmer accepted his position as Siena Heights University's 11th President on March 3 and began on July 1, 2023. He entered the role with a distinct vision: Believe.

Believe in the power of education. Believe in those around you. Believe in Siena Heights University.

Since assuming his role as President, Dr. Palmer has embarked on a campaign of unifying the Siena Heights University community and rallying support for the institution's future. With those goals in mind, Dr. Palmer has pursued several initiatives for the future of SHU.

A central pillar of Dr. Palmer's vision is the university's aspiration to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In July 2023, Siena Heights was named an affiliate member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and a member of the Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. With a growing Hispanic population in Michigan and beyond, Dr. Palmer recognized the need for educational institutions that cater to the specific needs and aspirations of the community. In addition, the mission of the university—to assist people in becoming more competent, purposeful, and ethical in a teaching and learning environment which respects the dignity of all—directly aligns with the desire to create an accessible and quality education for people of all walks of life.

"The Hispanic and Latinx populations are amongst the fastest growing in the United States," Dr. Palmer said. "As a

Dr. Palmer and his wife, Cathy, with sons Theo, Charlie, and Jack.

Catholic institution, built on the principles of Dominican tradition, we believe that education is a transformative force that can empower individuals and communities to build a more just and compassionate world. We strive to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where all students can thrive, especially those who may have been underserved in the past."

Dr. Palmer's vision is not just limited to the walls of campus but extends out to the wider community. He strongly believes that Siena Heights can play a crucial role in promoting "brain gain" in the state of Michigan. Currently, the state is struggling to retain its graduates—following the completion of their degrees, many are leaving Michigan to pursue economic opportunities in other places. In fact, one staggering statistic found by the Glengariff Group revealed that one in four people under the age of fifty are leaving Michigan. This is an issue that Dr. Palmer knows Siena Heights can assist in solving.

By attracting and retaining talented students and graduates, SHU can contribute to the state's economic growth and development. Dr. Palmer looks to inspire individuals to buy homes, raise families, and contribute to their local economies after graduation. This commitment to the community is exemplified by the university's partnerships with local businesses and organizations, internship opportunities, research collaborations, and emphasis on experiential learning.

"At Siena Heights, we understand that our success is intricately linked to the success of the surrounding community.

"We strive to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where all students can thrive, especially those who may have been underserved in the past."

We are not just an educational institution; we are a vital force for positive change in Michigan," Dr. Palmer said. "We have our sights set on becoming southeast Michigan's premier, private, Catholic institution—but it has to start with attracting and retaining bright minds."

Additionally, the development and progress of Siena Heights University's Online Program, SHU Global, and Workforce Development Certificates, have to remain at the forefront of Siena Heights' initiatives. "There are millions of people who have college experience but no degree," Dr. Palmer explained. "It is our job to reach out to those audiences, welcome them to Siena Heights, and be a positive addition to their educational and professional development."

Beyond his professional pursuits and aspirations for Siena Heights, Dr. Palmer is also devoted to his family. He and his wife, Cathy, share the joy of raising three sons and have immersed themselves in the Lenawee County community. "My wife and I have lived in a lot of places," Dr. Palmer explained. "We've lived in Ohio, Pennsylvania, down south, and over on the West Coast—and from the second we got here, we realized that this is the friendliest place we've ever lived. It has been such a blessing and made the transition for me and my family much easier."

Their move to Michigan symbolizes Dr. Palmer's commitment to Siena Heights University as more than just a workplace; it's a community where he and his family can grow and thrive alongside faculty, staff, and students, where successes are not just limited to one person but rather represent the repeated pattern of excellence that Siena Heights helps inspire.

As Dr. Palmer enters his first full academic year as the President of Siena Heights, the momentum is palpable. The Siena Heights University community is vibrant and committed to their belief in the institution, its mission, and its future. This is a new era for Siena Heights University, one marked by unity, belief, and a shared vision for a brighter future.

Saints Highlights

Student GPA

668 Siena Heights student athletes earned a 3.16 GPA in the Winter semester of 2023.

Leading the way in the classroom was the softball team with a 3.69 GPA, followed by the women's lacrosse team with a 3.66 GPA, and the women's golf team with a 3.62 GPA. Rounding out the top five was the women's soccer team with a 3.60 GPA and the dance team with a 3.55 GPA.

Nine of the 10 women's teams earned a 3.0 GPA or higher with an aggregate GPA of 3.42. Five of the 11 men's teams earned a 3.0 GPA or higher. The men's cross country team led the way with a 3.38 GPA followed by the men's golf team (3.35), the men's lacrosse team (3.25), the men's track and field team (3.15), and the baseball team (3.14). The aggregate men's GPA was 3.01.

With the co-ed sports, the dance team led the way with their 3.55 GPA. The cheer team earned a 2.92 GPA, and the esports team earned a 2.82 GPA.

The 668 student-athletes maintain a 3.24 cumulative GPA for their careers. Leading the way by program is the women's soccer program with a 3.64 GPA, followed by the women's cross country program with a 3.63 GPA. The softball program holds a 3.62 and the dance program carries a 3.59 GPA. The men's cross-country program rounds out the top five with a 3.58 cumulative GPA.

NEW COACHES

SHU Alum Parker Saenz Named New Men's Volleyball Coach

Siena Heights athletic director Sue Syljebeck announced the hire of alum Parker Saenz '18 as the SHU head men's volleyball coach. Saenz was a three-year player for the Saints in 2016-18 and becomes only the second school alum to hold the men's volleyball head coach position.

"We are excited to bring someone like Parker in who has been part of building our men's volleyball program from the early stages," Syljebeck said.

Saenz, a 2018 SHU grad, joined the Saints' coaching staff after a two-year stint as assistant coach for both the men's and women's teams across town at Adrian College. He is also director of player development for the MICA Volleyball Club, which is run out of his hometown of Concord, Mich., and was a two-year coach at Olivet High School prior to his time at Adrian.

Saenz graduated with a bachelor's degree in fine arts, with a concentration in digital media. Saenz was part of the first men's team under Coach Kim Berrington, who guided the men for five seasons before solely focusing on the women's squad in 2020.

"I'm very excited to be part of Siena Heights again," Saenz said. "I'm excited to bring this program back to what it was for me and even what it was just two years ago. There's a good group of guys here who have put in the work and want to continue to work. It's a great school and a great program."

Saenz competed in volleyball and cross country/track and field during his time as a student-athlete at Siena Heights. While running, he was a mid-distance competitor, focusing on the 600, 800, 1,000, mile, and 3,000 steeplechase. In three years on the volleyball court, he competed in 66 matches and totaled 68 kills, 54 blocks, 36 digs, nine assists, and nine aces.

Ioanou Named as SHU Golf Coach

Andrew Ioanou '16, '22, was hired as the SHU head men's and women's golf coach. Ioanou officially took over the program from the previous coach Al Sandifer, who was Ioanou's collegiate coach.

"Andrew had the tough job of taking over our program after legendary coach Al Sandifer accepted a job in our athletic administration," Sue Syljebeck, athletic director said. "I am grateful to both: Al Sandifer for his leadership, and Andrew who stepped into the interim position. Andrew pushed our golfers to be better and installed new technologies to assist them in doing so. I look forward to our continued success in both golf programs."

Ioanou, a 2016 SHU grad, joined the Saints' coaching staff as a graduate assistant in 2020. He had previously attended Siena Heights from 2014 to 2016 after transferring from Schoolcraft. He graduated in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in business administration and then earned his master's in accounting from Siena Heights in 2022. Ioanou was part of a Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference championship team in 2015-16 when the Saints won the regular-season crown.

"Thanks to Coach Sandifer for teaching me everything and showing me the ropes," Ioanou said. "Thanks to Sue and every other coach. I'm excited to get started."

The SHU golf teams racked up a collection of awards during Ioanou's interim year, including a pair of All-WHAC awards (Benjamin Ellis, First Team men, and Skylar Whitman, Second Team women). The Saints' golfers totaled six Academic All-WHAC awards. At the WHAC Championships, the men placed third while the women were fourth.

Whitney (Conder) Cox Named Women's Wrestling Coach

Siena Heights athletic director Sue Syljebeck announced the hire of Whitney Cox as the SHU head women's wrestling coach. She is the second head coach in program history.

Cox, a native of Puyallup, Wash., was a 2x placer in boys state in high school. She wrestled for two years at Northern Michigan University before moving to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., in 2008. An Army veteran, Cox served in the military from 2012 until 2023 January and competed as a wrestler and team leader for the Army's World Class Athlete Program at Fort Carson, Colo.

Cox has competed on the international stage for more than a decade. Wrestling at 50 kilograms (110 pounds), she was a five-time U.S. World Team member and six-time U.S. Open champion. Cox was an alternate for the U.S. Olympic Team that competed at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She was a Junior World Champion in 2007.

Cox is also a two-time Pan American Games champion (2015, 2019). In 2019, she was the silver medalist at the World Military Games. She was also a Military World Silver medalist and a Pan American Champion in 2018.

"I'm excited to get this program up and running, and have some fun, and get working with these girls," Cox said.

Cox, who was recently married to J'den Cox in January. Her maiden name is Whitney Conder. They also have four dogs (Reggie, Orion, Roo, and Zailey), she is also a graduate of Trident University in Cypress, Calif., with a bachelor's degree in Science and Leadership.

Richards Now Coach of Both Men's and Women's XC/T&F Programs

Kirk Richards was named as the SHU head men's XC/T&F coach. Richards, who will enter his 15th year on campus, takes over the men's programs from longtime coach Tim Bauer.

"With such big shoes to fill, it became clear to me and my administration team that there was only one person that could fill these shoes," Sue Syljebeck, athletic director said. "We needed someone that could match Coach Bauer's success and care for our track athletes. Kirk has been a tireless recruiter and phenomenal coach. He has the ability and credentials to lead our storied program into the future."

While Richards will be in his first year as head coach of SHU's men's cross country and track and field teams, he will also enter his 13th season as head coach for SHU women's cross country and track and field. Richards has coached 129 All-Americans, 94 individual conference champs, and 16 national champions. The SHU women won WHAC Outdoor Track and Field championships in 2016 and 2017 under Richards.

"It has been a dream come true to be coaching here at Siena Heights, Richards said. "I consider my time here the best years of my life. I would like to thank athletic director Sue Syljebeck for providing me with the opportunity to become the head coach of the men's and women's track and field and cross-country programs. With Coach Tim Bauer retiring from after 43 years here at Siena, I have big shoes to fill. With a history of track and field and cross-country success throughout his tenure, I hope to add to Coach Bauer's rich tradition here at Siena Heights University."

Before joining SHU, Richards coached in the Michigan high school ranks for 18 years. He helped develop 14 regional championship teams in cross country and track and field during that time. He has also earned 42 conference championships and many individual state champions in the pole vault, hurdles, distance, long jump, and sprint relays.

SHU Adds Women's Flag Football

Siena Heights University is proud to announce the addition of women's flag football, a new varsity program that will begin competition during the 2024-25 school year.

Siena Heights President Dr. Douglas Palmer and athletic director Sue Syljebeck helped usher in the new era of women's flag during a conference on Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at the SHU Fieldhouse.

Women's flag football, which is played in the spring, is an emerging sport in the NAIA. A total of 23 schools are set to compete during the 2024 NAIA season. Siena Heights plans to begin its inaugural season in Spring 2025. After the announcement on November 1, Siena Heights became the first NAIA school in Michigan to adopt a women's flag football program. It is also the first school among others in the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference and the Mid-States Football Association to sponsor the sport.

"We are thrilled to be the first university in Michigan to offer a flag football program," said Siena Heights University President Dr. Douglas B. Palmer. "This is an exciting opportunity to provide new opportunities for female students to participate in sports. Flag football is a fast-growing sport that is popular among women of all ages, and we are confident that our program will be a success."

The International Federation of American Football reports that flag football has similar characteristics to the contact game, with offensive teams having four downs to reach a certain point on the field while the defense attempts to stop them. If a team reaches the endzone, they score six points and have the option to add one or two additional points through extra plays. If the team chooses to start five yards from the endzone, they can earn one point, while a twelve-yard starting point earns two points (The International Federation of American Football (IFAF)). In addition, flag football has been accepted as a 2028 Summer Olympics.

A search for a coach will begin immediately.

Athletic Roundup 2022-2023 Season

Women's Basketball

The SHU women's basketball team had an impressive 2022-23 season, logging a record of 24-7 overall and going 16-4 in the WHAC. In addition, an at-large bid allowed for the women's basketball program to take a shot at the NAIA Women's Basketball National Championship, although SHU fell in the opening round against #12 Rio Grande.

Prior to championship play, the Saints had several players receive WHAC Women's Basketball Player of the Week Awards, beginning with senior Sha'kyia Parker following an upset win over Indiana Tech.

ShaKyia Parker

Parker scored 28 points against Indiana Tech and followed that performance with 12 points in limited minutes over Aquinas. She would receive this distinction one more time during the season.

Peyton Banks

In addition to Parker's WHAC Awards, Peyton Banks also experienced many accomplishments on a WHAC and school level. Banks was the recipient of the WHAC Women's Basketball Player of the Week award three times throughout the 2022-23 season and also broke several school records for Siena Heights. Most notably, Banks became the all-time leading scorer in Siena Heights basketball history for both men's and women's programs. She finished her career with 2,193 points.

Parker and Banks were the receivers of NAIA All-American titles, with Parker being named to the NAIA All-America Third Team while Banks was designated as an Honorable Mention.

The final Saint to receive a WHAC Women's Basketball Player of the Week Award was Kayla Hinton. Hinton received this distinction following wins over Michigan-Dearborn and Lawrence Tech. The junior guard averaged 23 points and six rebounds, shooting .571 from the field. In the game against UMD, Hinton scored a career-high 27 points with six rebounds, four steals, and two assists. Against LTU, she had 19 points, six rebounds, and one steal.

All three WHAC weekly award winners were named to All-WHAC teams at the end of the regular season. Parker and Banks were named to the All-WHAC First Team, while Hinton was selected to the Second Team. Eight Saints were named to the Academic All-WHAC Team, including Banks, E'Anna Won, Eva Alcock, Olivia DeLong, Jillian Gelso, Hadley Gratz, Jenna Harrison, Cam Tripp, and Rebecca Zilka. DeLong was selected as the Saints representative for the WHAC Champions of Character Team.

Women's Volleyball

In the 2022-23 season, the SHU Women's Volleyball program had a winning record of 24-8, with several WHAC honorees throughout the course of the season. One of the most notable games came after a sweep over WHAC opponent Madonna, breaking a nine-year loss drought. This game began a series of wins for the Saints Women's Volleyball program, winning nine straight matches. Following a win over Concordia (Mich.), setter

Aubrey Bates

Aubrey Bates won the first WHAC Setter of the Week award for the season. At the time of her first award, Bates completed the week with an impressive 11.78 assist/set, ranking second in the WHAC and 18th in the NAIA in that category with a 9.73. She would receive this distinction three other times throughout the season and would also claim a title as the Siena Heights Women's Volleyball Program's first-ever NAIA All-American. Of the season, Bates led the Saints with 1,174 assists (13th highest total in the NAIA), and 10.12 assists per set was also the 13th highest mark in the NAIA. Bates led the Saints in service aces with 53, good for the 28th-highest mark in the NAIA. She played in all 32 matches, notching 109 kills (sixth highest for the Saints), ended with a .206 hitting percentage (third best for the Saints), and her three solo blocks, 51 assisted blocks, and 54 total blocks were also the third highest in each category for the Saints this season.

Bates was also named to the First-Team All-WHAC along with teammates Olivia Norman, Devyne Eisenhauer, and Aubrey Bates. Kinsey Wagner was named to the Second-Team All-WHAC. Norman broke all of her previous personal records, holding 269 kills and 121 blocks for the Saints, while Wagner had a tremendous year with 77 blocks and 243 kills. Eisenhauer also earned the title of Newcomer of the Year with an outstanding college debut, totaling 325 kills and 360 digs. Norman and Wagner joined teammates Karsyn Wolf, Kadie Carsten, and Victoria Nerkowski on the All-Academic list. Wolf was the Saints representative on the Champions of Character Team.

Carsten, Nerkowski, Norman, Wagner, and Wolf were also recognized as 2022 Daktronics NAIA Women's Volleyball Scholar-Athletes, along with teammates Lyndsey Benschoter, Rachel Haft, Payton Osborne, and Claire VanDyke.

Women's Track and Field

During the 2022-2023 Indoor and Outdoor seasons, the Women's Track and Field Team demonstrated success on and off the track. During the Indoor season, the Saints had nine athletes qualify for the NAIA Indoor National Championships, including two high jumpers (Emma Valentine and Morgan Lutton), five pole vaulters (Tyler Fugate, Samantha Nowell, Margherita Conrad, Erica Albrecht, and Chasity Mies), and two hurdlers (Faith Jackson and Linnearia Richards).

During the indoor season, Jackson earned the title of WHAC Women's Track Athlete of the Week after running an automatic-qualifying time of 8.81 in the 60m hurdles. Fugate received the Indoor Field Athlete of the Week two times during the indoor season. She received additional WHAC and NAIA recognition during outdoor season, earning one more WHAC Field Athlete of the Week award and one NAIA Field Athlete of the Week distinction. Teammates Conrad and

Erica Albrecht

Albrecht received WHAC Field Athletes of the Week awards twice and one time, respectively. At one time, the Siena Heights women's pole vaulters received these awards four weeks in a row.

Emma Valentine

Prior to Nationals, the team had several notable performances, including at the WHAC Conference Championship. At Indoor Conference, first-year Emma Valentine won her first Conference title in the high jump and later claimed a third-place finish at the NAIA Indoor National Championships, which would be her first All-American distinction. In addition, teammates Margherita Conrad, Tyler Fugate, and Erica Albrecht claimed statuses as All-Americans, finishing second, third, and fifth at Indoor Nationals. At the end of Indoor Nationals, the SHU Women's Track and Field Team tied for tenth place.

Margherita Conrad

Tyler Fugate

During the Outdoor season, the Saints had several National Qualifiers across four events: high jump (Valentine), pole vault (Albrecht, Conrad, Fugate, Mies, Nowell), and two hurdlers (Faith Jackson in the 100mh hurdles and Linnearia Richards in the 400m hurdles). Valentine, Conrad, Jackson, and Richards all claimed Conference titles in their respective events, with Valentine clearing 5'5", Conrad hitting a new personal record of 12'11.5", Jackson running a new personal best of 14.09, and Linnearia Richards hitting an automatic-qualifying standard for Outdoor Nationals with a

Chasity Mies

time of 1:02.87. At the NAIA Outdoor Nationals, four out of eight athletes walked away as All-Americans. Valentine took seventh in the high jump and pole vaulters Albrecht, Conrad, and Mies finished third, fourth, and eighth.

Men's Lacrosse

In 2022-23, the Siena Heights Men's Lacrosse Team had an overall record of 9-6 while going 6-2 in the conference. They were ranked third in the WHAC preseason poll and eighth in the NAIA. Throughout the course of the season, several players had notable

Jake Gallaher

performances, including Jake Gallaher, who became the all-time points leader in a 15-9 win over Madonna. Gallaher entered the night with 182 career points—tying with then-coach Spencer Macek and Shane Lewandowski—before scoring a first-period goal. He is now a record-holder for the University.

Additional successes were found on the defensive end as Fernando Robison received a WHAC Defensive Player of the Week award following two dominant performances over Lourdes and UM-Dearborn. Robison had an impressive 29 of 34 wins inside the faceoff circle with 22 groundballs (85.3 percent). These performances would lend Robison to receiving the NAIA Men's Lacrosse Defensive Player of the Week Award, as well.

Ethan Wissink

Additional WHAC Awards were given out in late April, where Gallaher and Ethan Wissink were named to the All-WHAC First Team while Eric Csizmadia and Robison were honored on the Second Team. Csizmadia led the team with 39 goals and 57 points while tying for second on the squad with 18 assists. Robison ended the regular season with a total of 117 ground balls and a faceoff win percentage of 64.5 (167 of 259). Two athletes—Chance Snyder and Trey Strand—were named as Academic All-WHAC. Joe Turner was selected as the Saints representative for the WHAC Champions of Character Team.

The Saints' excellent record throughout Conference Play would lead them to receive an at-large bid to the National Tournament in Pensacola, Florida. The Men's Lacrosse Team received the No. 7 seed for the NAIA event and was selected to play the second-ranked and WHAC Champion Indiana Tech. The Saints' season would end in Florida in 19-6 loss against Indiana Tech.

After the National Tournament concluded, Gallaher and Wissink were named to the NAIA All-America Team. Wissink was selected to the First Team while Gallaher was honored on the Second Team. Wissink, a sophomore long-stick midfielder, was strong on both ends of the field for SHU. On the offensive side, he had 14 goals and three assists and was one of the top ball-controllers with 25 caused turnovers. Additionally, he was second on the team with 62 groundballs. Gallaher registered his title as a three-time All American as the program's all-time career leader in goals (144), assists (80), and points (224). For the 2022-23 season, Gallaher was second on the roster with 40 goals while ranking third in assists (19), points (59), and groundballs (47).

Football

The Siena Heights Football team went 5-5 in 2022 with a conference record of 4-3. As a whole, the team experienced a blend of both wins and losses, but certain players' individual performances allowed for weekly awards and distinctions. The first player to be recognized was kicker Anthony Secchi, who was named the MSFA Mideast Special Teams Player of the Week after making his first two field goals for the 2022 season and adding an extra point for the upset win over Saint Francis (Ind.) on homecoming weekend. At the time of this distinction, Secchi had a perfect 10-10 in extra point attempts and led the Saints with 16 points.

After Secchi's award, senior running back Kaleb Jefferson snagged a distinction as the MSFA Mideast Offensive Player of the Week after recording his first 100-yard rushing total of the season while scoring three touchdowns in the game against Madonna. This was Jefferson's second time earning this distinction during his career.

The final MSFA honor was awarded to linebacker Kole Murlin, who led the Saints with 13 tackles, two sacks, and three tackles for loss over Lawrence Tech. At the time, he led the MSFA Mideast

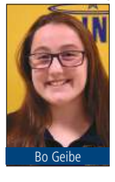
Kole Murlin

League with 11.9 tackles per game—a mark high enough to rank him fifth in the NAIA. Murlin would also be selected to the First Team MSFA Mideast and earn the distinction of MSFA Mideast Defensive Player of the Year for the third year in a row. His highly successful season would lead him to be recognized as an AFCA-NAIA All American, as well. This accomplishment lent Murlin to be the first Saint in program history to receive All-America recognition in three seasons.

Additional Saints representatives on the First Team included Antonio Simley, Vincent Walker, and Joseph Wharton. Representing the Saints' backfield was Armand Childs, and special teams kicker Secchi was also named to the First Team. The lone Siena Heights selection to the Second Team was Eric Williams II. Honorable mentions were given to SanTangho Reynolds, Andrew McGaughy, and Jefferson.

Women's Wrestling

The Women's Wrestling Program had their inaugural season in 2022-2023 and came out strong. Early on in the


Bo Geibe

season, two wrestlers broke into the NAIA rankings for their respective weight classes, with Valeria Ahumada and Bo Geibe ranking 17th at 109 pounds and 16th at 170 pounds, respectively. These accomplishments marked the first time in school history that a Siena Heights women's wrestler was ranked among the top 25 in the NAIA.

Ahumada and Geibe would increase their overall standings as the season progressed, with Ahumada securing a No. 16 ranking while Geibe would climb as high as No. 6 at the 170-pound weight class. They would later be joined by teammate Phoenix Waters, who was ranked No. 18 at 136. Ahumada and Geibe would end their seasons at the NAIA Championships, where they both would wrestle three matches and earn victories on the mat. Geibe entered Nationals as the No. 10 grappler in her weight class and would win via fall in 5:33 over a seventh-ranked opponent. Geibe then fell to the No. 2 in the quarterfinals, then to an opponent ranked 12th. Ahumada bounced back from an initial loss against a second-ranked opponent from Iowa Wesleyan with two victories via fall and decision. Her day at Nationals concluded with a fall to an opponent 8-0.

Additionally, Geibe would become the first Siena Heights women's wrestler in school history to participate in the United States Marine Corps Women's National Championships. She participated in two different age groups at her weight class of 76 kilograms. In the U23 division, she placed seventh and became the program's first USMC Women's National Championships All-American.

Dance

The Siena Heights University Dance Team had a great season, with notable highlights including winning the "Halo Classic" and dual meet against Madonna University. In both these events, the Dance Team scored over 82 points with no deductions. At the WHAC Dance Championships, the team logged a third-place finish with 80.13 points. At season's end, first-year Kaya Robinson was named the WHAC Dance Newcomer of the Year and was also placed on the All-WHAC Second Team. Robinson was joined by teammates Olivia Fortress, Rafe Jacobs, and Ayanna Johnson. Seniors

Sydney Bramlett

Sydney Bramlett and Logan Richardson were selected to the All-WHAC First team and were given All-America honors. Bramlett was placed on the All-America Second Team, and Richardson received an All-America Honorable Mention. Richardson and Bramlett were also recognized as NAIA Scholar Athletes alongside teammates Zain Khankan, Haylee Miller, Sierra Tennyson, and Amber Woollcot. To receive this distinction, an athlete must maintain a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale, must appear on the eligibility certificate for the sport, and must have attended for one full year.

Logan Richarson

Women's Soccer

The Siena Heights Women's Soccer team had a highly successful 2022-2023 season but recently concluded an even more spectacular 2023-24 season. The team ended their season with a record of 15-1-6, going 9-0-2 in the WHAC. They were ranked fourth on the WHAC Preseason Poll but went undefeated in the regular season and were named as co-WHAC champions with Aquinas College. Throughout the season, several athletes were given WHAC awards, beginning with goalie Caitlyn Harwood. Harwood was named WHAC Defensive Player of the Week following two games, where she played all 180 minutes in goal. In the two games, Harwood compiled a 0.50 goals-against average and .833 save percentage. During these games, SHU tied Mount Vernon Nazarene and defeated Goshen. Harwood had three saves in each game.

The second player to receive a WHAC distinction was Marissa Young, who was named the WHAC Offensive Player of the Week following a 5-0 win over Lawrence Tech and a 2-0 victory against Madonna. In both games, Young scored two goals. Her first goal against Madonna was the game-winner, increasing her all-time game-winning goals count to 17 in her collegiate career. At the time of this honor, she was ranked second in Saints' history.

Parker Cheney

The final Saint to earn a WHAC award during the regular season was Parker Cheney, who scored two goals on the week prior. Her first goal came against University of Michigan-Dearborn in the third minute of the game, while her second goal was against Cleary University. This served as a game-winning goal for Cheney. With that game-winning goal, the Saints became Co-WHAC Conference Champions, the one seed in the conference tournament, and earned an automatic bid into the National Tournament. The Siena Heights Women's Soccer Team would defeat Trinity Christian in the opening round with a score of 2-1 but would ultimately fall to the No. 2 ranked Spring Arbor in the second round.

At the end of the season, the team had an extraordinary number of WHAC Women's Soccer Awards, highlighted by sophomore Parker Cheney and head

coach Scott Oliver. Cheney was named the WHAC Midfielder of the Year after leading the team in goals scored as well as total points. She earned 10 goals and five assists on the season for a total of 25 points.

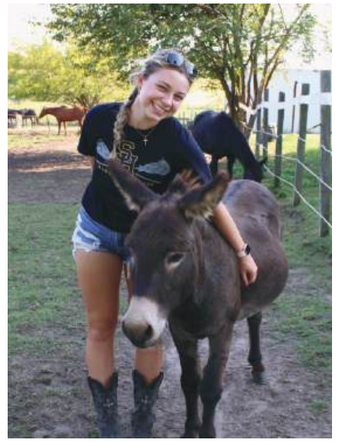
Additionally, head coach Scott Oliver was selected as the WHAC Coach of the Year. Oliver, in his 23rd season as the coach for the Saints, led his team to a share of the WHAC Regular Season Championship and the No. 1 seed in the WHAC Tournament, as well as a bid to the NAIA National Championship Tournament. This is the third career WHAC Coach of the Year Award for Oliver, who also won the award in 2002 and 2009.

MacKenzie Stenzel

Cheney and teammates Marissa Young and MacKenzie Stenzel were named as First Team All-WHAC Performers. Sarah Ammon and Caitlyn Harwood appeared on the Second Team All-WHAC, and Kailey Lambert was honored as part of the All-Newcomer Team. Junior goalkeeper Evelyn Marx was recognized on the WHAC Champions of Character Team.

Rounding out the award winners were a league-high total of 25 student-athletes recognized for their work in the classroom. In order to earn the Academic All-WHAC award, a student must be a sophomore or better academically and maintain a 3.25 cumulative GPA or higher. The Saints who earned this award were Stenzel, Young, Harwood, Cheney, Marx, and Ammon, as well as Olivia Emert, Maria Brixner, Sophie Zelek, Allie Balasico, Lily Tiplady, Morgan Llewellyn, Kennedy Hyde, Gia Diaz, Laura Kaceli, Kayla Rivers, Alyssa Fischer, Christina Ibanez-Merino, Kaitlyn Jacobs, Rachel Lynch, Maddie Morris, Alyssa Naso, Maddie Chronister, Maya Ruffles, Ashton Parker, and Reagan Fennelly.

In addition to their WHAC honors, Cheney and Stenzel were also recognized as United Soccer Coaches All-Americans.



Women's Lacrosse Out in the Community

On September 22, 2023, the Women's Lacrosse Team spent several hours at the Two Wild Hearts Sanctuary helping out with various projects.

Two Wild Hearts Sanctuary has a mission to help every at-risk equine they can through rescue or private surrender. They provide medical and emotional rehabilitation as well as any training needed. Their goal is to find each and every horse a new, loving home through our adoption process. The Sanctuary has a diverse team of equine professionals and volunteers run by a board of directors, who work endlessly to impact the lives of every horse that comes through their welcoming doors. While they know they can't save every horse, for the fortunate few that they can, their lives are completely changed. Two Wild Hearts Sanctuary believes that every horse, no matter its past or future, deserves respect, kindness, and love.

The almost 20-acre sanctuary consists of a large horse barn, including three broodmare stalls and three quarantine stalls. There are two round pens with a third in their plans. There are seven large pastures and a huge run-in that has direct access from several of the pastures. Their hay is stored in the barn which has a tack room, feed room, office, and restroom.

During their time at the sanctuary, the Saints worked on cleaning out stalls, moving hay, cleaning up broken fences and branches from the latest storm, and cleaning out the horse, donkey, and goat water tubs. They also helped to groom horses and helped to walk the horses so they could graze the grass.

Head Coach Alexa Matta stated, "This is such a great opportunity for our team. Julia Tar, our school Massage Therapist, put us in contact with Jane at Two Hearts two years ago and we have been helping out there ever since! The girls look forward to getting off campus for a bit and loving on the horses. The best part is a handful of the girls find additional days throughout the year to help out and visit the horses they become attached to. I believe it's become a nice little break from being a 'student-athlete' for them."

Siena Heights, Lenawee ISD Partner for Special Education Classroom

Siena Heights University (SHU) and the Lenawee Intermediate School District (LISD) Adult Transition Support Services (ATSS) program partnered together to open a special education classroom on Siena Heights' campus. On Thursday, October 5, 2023, SHU and the LISD hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the new partnership.

ATSS is a program for post-secondary students (age 18-26) who receive special education services. The goal of ATSS is to develop sustainable independence through purposeful programming that is specific to the needs of each student. Programming is based on volunteerism, daily living skills, communication skills, and community involvement. These activities and experiences aid students in gaining independence in their homes and communities.

"This program has been a goal for many years, and this type of partnership is a rare opportunity across the state," said Jody Howard, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Strategic Initiatives. "We are excited by the early engagement and involvement by Siena Heights University staff and students, and we look forward to building on that momentum."

The new partnership allows students with disabilities to integrate into a college campus environment, allowing for greater and more meaningful peer-to-peer interaction. This partnership also enhances diverse opportunities for the university students by promoting awareness, collaboration, and community partnerships. This initiative reflects the Adrian Dominican tradition of supporting and connecting with community, as well as the University mission of "assisting people to become more component, purposeful, and ethical through a teaching and learning environment which respects the dignity of all."

Dr. Carrie Mitchell, Chair of the Special Education Department at SHU, said, "This has been a longtime vision for both entities. Through this collaboration, a mutually beneficial partnership has been established. Strategically designed to implement data-driven decisions and research-based instruction, this program is being established as a model for best practices in transition programming for the students and as a model for teacher candidates to implement and practice transition-based teaching."

The ribbon-cutting ceremony consisted of hors d'oeuvres, introductions and recognition, and speeches from Dr. Douglas Palmer, Siena Heights University's President, and Mark Haag, the superintendent of the LISD. In addition, Kurt Kominek, a supervisor for the LISD, spoke on what LISD ATSS at SHU looks like now, and what it will become in the future. Following the ribbon-cutting, a tour of SHU was provided for students and families.

"Our emphasis in this program is social-emotional learning and growth," said Joel Musielewicz, a LISD ATTS teacher at Siena Heights. "To practice these skills with age-like peers in a natural college setting is a gift to these students and is something very much needed in our world today. Every student has their own individualized needs, and we can cater to those needs through the curriculum."

The LISD also operates an ATSS classroom at The HOPE Center, which focuses more on community resources and recreation, as well as a classroom in a house on the LISD TECH Center campus, which is designed to build life skills for greater independence.

#SAINTSPRIDE FOR SIENA!

CAMPUS UPDATES AND ADDITIONS

This photo is Sacred Heart Hall merged from a 1920s photo with a current one.

When was the last time you were on our Adrian Campus?

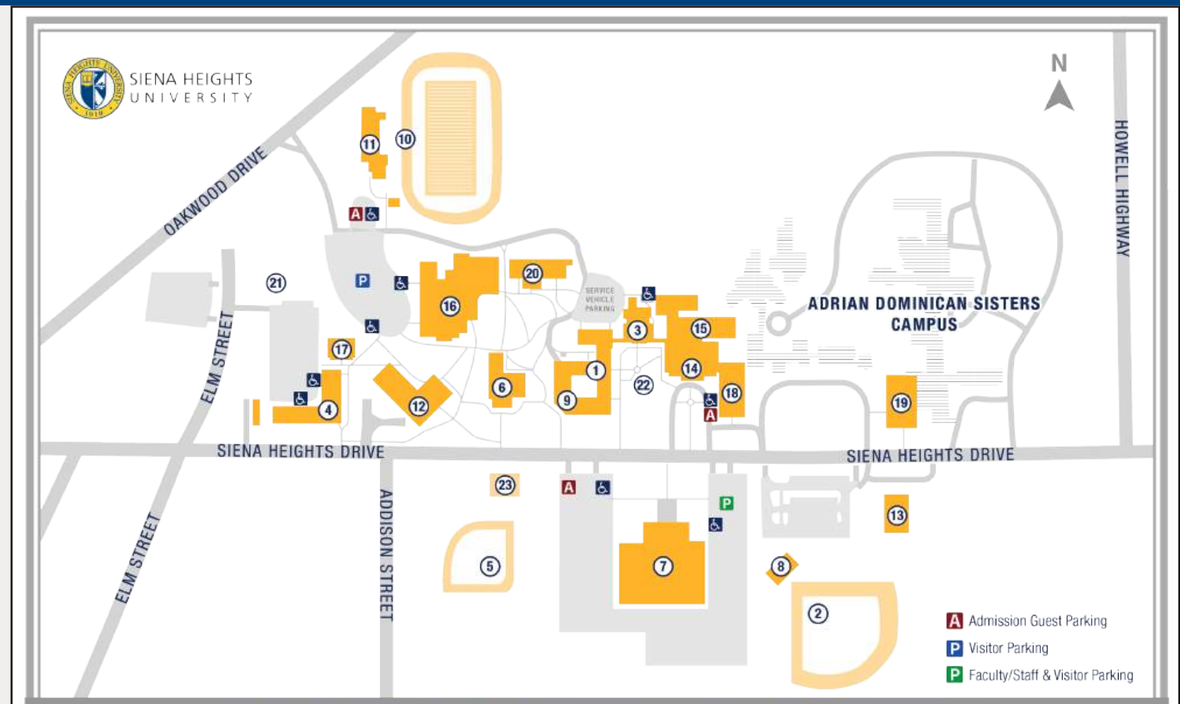
If your response is 'my commencement,' we wanted to share what campus looks like now, especially if you graduated prior to 2011. Campus' actual footprint has grown and has had some wonderful updates. We invite you to take a look at these photos and the associated map to get your bearings.

We hope when you are considering where to send your children or someone you know has college-aged children, you will think of suggesting Siena as a fabulous option! You are our best source of referrals!

We welcome our alums back for a tour anytime. Please give the alumni office a call and let us know you are coming. It would be our pleasure to show you around!

Contact us at 517-264-7143 or alumni@sienaheights.edu

The performing arts now have double the spaces to perform! The Spencer Performing Arts Building now has both a Music Hall and a separate Theatre. This complex also boasts a large band space to accommodate practice, as well as a dance room and much more!



SIENA HEIGHTS UNIVERSITY ADRIAN CAMPUS

1. Archangelus Hall
2. Baseball Field
3. Benincasa Hall
4. Campus Village Apartments
5. Christensen Softball Field
6. Dominican Hall
7. Fieldhouse
8. Joseph K. McLaughlin Baseball Stadium
9. Ledwidge Hall
   Campus Safety, Counseling & Health Clinics, Residence Life
10. O'Laughlin Stadium & Dawson Field
11. Mary & Sash Spencer Athletic Complex
12. McLaughlin University Center
    Bookstore, SHU Shop, Dining Hall
13. Patricia A. Erickson Enrollment & Welcome Center
    Undergraduate Admissions Office, Graduate & Professional Enrollment Office, Financial Aid Office
14. Sacred Heart Hall
    Library, Student Accounts, Registrar
15. Science Building
16. Spencer Performing Arts Center
17. St. Catherine Hall
18. St. Dominic Chapel
19. McLaughlin Health Sciences Building
    Formerly St. Joseph Hall & St. Joseph Academy
    Nursing, Teacher Education programs
20. Studio Angelico
21. Track Throwing Areas
22. Trinity Gardens
23. Volleyball Courts

10

Where the baseball field once was is now O'Laughlin Stadium & Dawson field, that contains an Olympic sized track, and hosts track, football, lacrosse, and soccer.

11

Mary & Sash Spencer Athletic Complex is nestled under the stadium bleachers and contains a new weightroom and offices for associated sports.

17

A newer option for student housing is available at St. Catherine's Hall (or St. Cat's), where students can choose double suite style living.

12

The new heart of campus is the McLaughlin University Center or the 'UC' where the bookstore, dining hall, and student life offices are located. This was once where the old tennis courts stood.

7

Updates to the Fieldhouse lobby have recently been completed with a wall wrap and digital hall of fame.

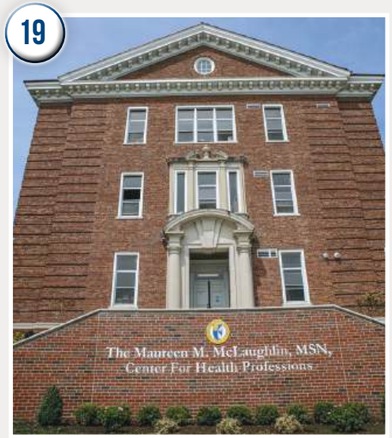
13

SHU Admissions has relocated down the block by the Motherhouse within the Patricia A. Erickson Enrollment & Welcome Center.

5

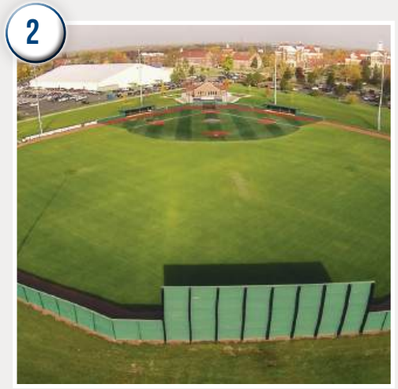
Christensen Softball field has remained in the same spot, but has been updated with new lights, seating, and gameday complex for a state-of-the-art experience. It was even named 'Best Field' in all of the NAIA in 2023!

19



What was once St. Joseph Academy is now the Maureen M. McLaughlin Center For Health Professions, affectionately known as the 'MHB'.

2



The new baseball field (Joseph K. McLaughlin field) is located next to Zoller field.

Siena Heights and Shark Week:

STUDENT INTERNS IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Madelyn Birmingham

Junior Biology student Taylor Eppard spent a month of her 2023 summer vacation in a 5mm wetsuit, hat, gloves, and winter coat as part of her internship in South Africa.

As a first-generation college student from Perrysburg, Ohio, Eppard has found a multitude of ways to involve herself in the Siena Heights community. From her position as an infielder for the SHU softball team to her status as a member of Beta Beta Beta, the National Biological Honor Society, she keeps herself busy throughout the school year. But at the end of her sophomore year, Eppard took a chance to fill her summer with the same busyness: she applied for a month-long internship in South Africa.

One of Eppard's biggest goals in life is to be featured on Discovery's Shark Week. Through her internship experience with GoDive, she is one step closer to achieving that goal.

She learned about the internship through a family friend, whose daughter had participated in it. The internship was based in Mossel Bay, South Africa. Despite some nervousness, Eppard submitted her application. After a month of waiting, she was informed that she had been accepted. She put her deposit down and prepared for two big firsts—her first time leaving the country, and her first time flying by herself. Then, during the summer of 2023, Eppard joined students from Florida, Maine, Texas, New York, and more, for a month-long internship full of research, recording, and enriching her knowledge and understanding of marine life.

Before they began the research, Eppard completed her open-water certification and passed her advanced scuba diving course, making her an advanced scuba diver. Once certified, she participated in a variety of activities, including documenting nudibranch locations and species, taking care of penguins at a local rehab center, and helping on the White Shark Africa boat.

White Shark Africa is an organization that takes clients aboard for cage diving with sharks. This process began with creating a chum-slick mixture with sardine oil. The current would pull those oils outward, attracting the sharks toward the cage. Once a shark was spotted, they lowered clients into the water with 5mm thick wetsuits—any sooner than that, and they were at risk of hypothermia! Sometimes, Eppard would help the boat crew with whatever tasks they needed. Other times, she recorded data based on the number of sharks she saw. Then, on other occasions, Eppard was cage diving, seeing the sharks up close.

In addition, Eppard fish-tagged sharks—a time-sensitive process that

Photos courtesy of Taylor Eppard (far left)

included lifting sharks out of the water, recording their sex and size, and recording if they had been tagged before or not. For the sharks that had already been tagged, Eppard and the other interns would record the tag number and date of catch. These measurements and evaluations were done over the course of three minutes, where water had to be continuously splashed onto the gills of each shark to keep them breathing.

About two weeks into Eppard's internship experience, something extraordinary occurred. While the other interns were spending the day in Cape Town, Eppard and two other interns stayed back and boarded White Shark Africa for a routine day on the water. While aboard, Eppard and two others witnessed and recorded an attack from two orcas upon two young Great White sharks. The orcas, named Starboard and Port, are well-known in Mossel Bay. Easily recognizable by their bent fins, Eppard and two others watched and recorded as the two orcas attacked, killed, and consumed two juvenile sharks. This was the first time this event had been witnessed in person, which generated interest from National Geographic after the internship leader alerted them to the situation.

The 30-second video taken by the interns served as the second-ever recorded predation from killer whales on sharks, making this a significant moment in marine science. The only other video of a similar situation was shot from a drone. National Geographic caught wind of the video and ended up purchasing the rights, which Eppard was compensated for, given her likeness is in the video.

"If you listen in the video, if they post it anywhere, you can hear me crying in the back," Eppard said. "There were a lot of emotions for everybody. It was really cool, but these are juvenile sharks, they're babies—the orcas are three times their size. And you don't want the sharks to leave the bay, because you are there to research them."

Following the attacks, Eppard and the other remaining interns waited out on the water for six hours to spot additional sharks. The waters were still, and the sharks were gone. For the remaining two weeks of her internship, the sharks did not return to Mossel Bay. But the Siena Heights student's time with the sharks of South Africa isn't finished, as she has already put down her deposit to return next summer.

2023 Alumni Award Winners:

Sister Ann Joachim Award

Jeremy J. Romer 08
Canton, MI

After graduating from Siena Heights, Romer attended Thomas. M. Cooley Law School and was hired as a law clerk in 2013. From there, Romer has rapidly risen among the ranks, which ultimately led him toward his current position as the Corporation Counsel for the City of Dearborn, and concurrently serves as the City's Chief Labor Negotiator. In April 2023, Romer was recognized as an "Up & Coming Lawyer" by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly. At the time of this recognition, he was the only City attorney and municipal attorney selected. The Sister Ann Joachim Award is presented in memory of faculty member Sister Ann Joachim, O.P., and recognizes significant contributions to the University and/or community through activities that demonstrate strong leadership, the ability to get things done, and the capacity to confront issues head on while maintaining the image and spirit of the University.

Outstanding Alumni Award

Douglas (Doug) Small '82
Grand Rapids, MI

The Outstanding Alumni Award recognizes outstanding professional achievements and/or volunteer contributions to promote Siena positively to the community, demonstrate strong leadership characteristics, and serve as significant role models for others. Small serves as the President and CEO of Experience Grand Rapids, an organization that brings tourism and conventions into Grand Rapids to find new ways to attract people to the city. Amongst many impressive accolades, one of the most notable includes his appearance in the Grand Rapids Business Journal, where he was listed as one of "200 Most Powerful Business Leaders in West Michigan." He has received state and national acclaim for the work he has done and is continuing to do in a way that directly reflects the mission of Siena Heights.

Recent Graduate Award

Tammy R. McCrory '12
Farmington Hills, MI

McCrory is a Public Health Project Leader and Entrepreneur, a venture that allowed her to open the McCrory Center, a case management clinic, while managing a team of social workers and clinical professionals to help mothers and infants in Oakland and Wayne counties. As the current CEO, McCrory supports families and children with psychological conditions. As a result of her terrific accomplishments within her community, McCrory was acknowledged as a 2023 Crain's Notable Leader in Behavioral Health and one of the "Oakland Together 40 under 40" members for 2023. The Recent Graduate Award is given to alumni who have graduated within the past ten years and whose professional achievement, community involvement and/or civic commitment demonstrate dedication to Christian values and the spirit of Siena Heights University.

Honorary Alumni Award

Sister Beth Butler, O.P.
Pontiac, MI

The Honorary Alumni Award recognizes non-alumni of Siena Heights who demonstrate exceptional commitment to and support for the mission and spirit of the University. This year's Honorary Alumni Award winner was Sister Beth Butler, O.P., who served as a professor and advisor for Siena Heights University from 1978-1983. Her involvement in the criminal justice program has inspired many students and was known to see promise in people when they couldn't see it in themselves—and, more than just seeing that promise, Butler brought it out of people. She still maintains relationships with her former students, always rooting for their success, and embodies the spirit of Siena Heights in doing so.

Courtside to Community: Greg McPherson's Journey to Inspire Change

When Gregory McPherson '05 was in high school, he had a Siena Heights University mousepad. To this day, he insists that he has no idea how it got there—but it helped lead him to the university years later when he came to Siena Heights to play basketball. When he enrolled at Siena Heights, he was initially attracted to the education program but graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor's in Business Administration. In the coming years, McPherson would make a positive impact on many organizations. In fact, his latest position as the Vice President of Foundations and Institutional Relations for the Boys and Girls Club of Southeast Michigan would serve as the basis of his recognition on The Michigan Chronicles "40 Under 40" list. This accomplishment stands as one of several that McPherson has had since completing his BBA, many of which he credits to the lessons he learned at Siena Heights University.

Immediately after graduating, McPherson stepped into a leadership role at CVS Pharmacy, where he served as a front-line manager. He was eventually promoted to assistant store manager but found that his job was not feeding his passion. Of this passion, McPherson remarked, "I want to be a blessing to others. I want to be an individual that helps people."

As a result, McPherson found work in the Detroit Urban League in the nonprofit sector as a job developer and counselor. In this position, McPherson helped others gain employment and economic mobility while simultaneously serving as a mentor to those he knew. It was during this timeframe that McPherson fell in love with the nonprofit sector and began an extensive career in the area. After the Detroit Urban League, McPherson worked for the NAACP and the Neighborhood Service Organization, though his big break came with the company Matrix Human Services.

At Matrix Human Services, McPherson started as a manager and worked his way to a director position. In this role, McPherson learned how to effectively fundraise and how to position a place to receive grants. "Nonprofits don't exist without grants and fundraising," McPherson said. "You have to fuel and fund the work you do while building capacity for the organization."

The development of his work was largely influenced by his Siena Heights University education. McPherson's business classes helped to foster his intellectual understanding of businesses and nonprofits, but the real impact was made from the liberal arts factor. He noted, "One of the real impactful components of my Siena Heights education was the smaller class factor. Being a business major, a lot of our classes required us to collaborate and do group work with our fellow students. For me, in the role that I play and the work I've done, being able to collaborate with my peers, colleagues, and students—both in my professional life and at Siena Heights—really gave me a real-life example of what I would experience in my professional life."

But the educational value isn't the only thing McPherson has carried with him into his life beyond Siena Heights. "A lot of lessons I learned from being a student-athlete," McPherson said. "I received tutelage and mentorship from my coaches, especially Coach Fred Smith and Al Sandifer. These people stood for integrity and fair play and wanted us to be our best selves. A lot of the lessons I learned in my life outside of the classroom were because of sports and because of the coaches."

These takeaways have helped McPherson in his professional endeavors and will continue to do so. Recently, McPherson started his own company called Innovative Nonprofit Strategies. This company was designed with the goal to help organizations build capacity through grant writing and fund development, while also offering additional services such as project management, talent acquisition, marketing and onboarding, and performance coaching, among other things.

In addition to his responsibilities with the Boys and Girls Club and his own business, McPherson continues to keep Siena Heights at the forefront of his life. As of late 2023, McPherson was chosen as the Vice President of the Alumni Board after only one year on the board. He noted, "Siena Heights is an exceptional institution. It took me a while to realize the value of my education and my time at Siena Heights to the point where I decided to start giving back, and will probably do so for the rest of my life."

Photos from Homecoming 2023

From the Alumni Office

Kate Hamilton '15/MA
Associate Vice President for
Advancement & Alumni
(517) 264-7143
khamilt2@sienaheights.edu

Hello Saints:

I hope the recent holidays were wonderful and you are excited like I am for new possibilities in the New Year! We had a busy fall semester at Siena and things will be ramping up for winter semester very shortly.

We welcomed Jennifer Brooket back to the Advancement Office in September and are very excited to have her join us again in her new role of Vice President of Advancement. She brings tremendous experience and enthusiasm to our department and is excited to connect or reconnect with you!

Fred Smith and Tim Bauer are also working part-time in advancement after retiring from SHU athletics and have been out visiting and hosting alums back on campus all fall. Recently an alum from the class of '78 came to campus and shared how amazed he was at the changes and improvements. This was his first time back since graduation. He felt we were still the same Siena he knew and loved, but with some incredible additions to our campus footprint.

I encourage you to take a look at the photos shared within this issue that highlight the updates made to campus over the last decade or so. I think you will find that we are still the same Siena you knew from taking classes or attending commencement, but with some major additions. If you haven't been back in a while, or if you have never stepped on the Adrian campus before, know that you are most welcome!

I hope to see you soon. Make plans to join us at a regional event, come to campus for a tour, or to Homecoming 2024 (October 4-6).

Take care and Go Saints!

Photos from Homecoming 2023

Class Notes

1968
Tomissa (Spencer) Smittendorf was recently promoted to Senior Director of Commercial Capabilities at Kellanova.

1984
Frank R. Beven graduated in 1984 with a BFA in Drawing, Ceramics, and Art History. He went on to work in the commercial graphic arts industry and automotive industry. He became a Creative Director and worked with Ford Motor Company. Eventually, he teamed up with his wife and created a minority-owned screen printing and embroidery business in North Oakland County. They supplied all three automotive companies with shirts, hats, and jackets, and also worked with local profit and non-profit organizations. Frank currently works with traumatic brain injury patients and shares his talents with fine arts.

1986 and 1990
Ron 1990 and Barb (DeVantier) 1986 Schmidt both graduated from Siena Heights and now live in Blissfield. Ron is a middle school history teacher for Britton Deerfield Schools while Barb is retired from teaching at Adrian Public Schools. They have been married for 34 years and have three children and seven grandchildren, with their eighth due in March. In their free time, they both enjoy spending time with their grandkids and Ron enjoys coaching varsity girls basketball and varsity baseball at Blissfield. Barb enjoys going to those games and volunteering her time to help others.

1987
Elizabeth Faz Cote graduated with a BA in Criminal Justice and was a Juvenile Probation Officer for 32 years. She is currently loving retirement!

1998
Tara (Severhof) Kimball reflects on her four years at Siena Heights being the best of her life. She lived on campus, worked as an Ambassador for Admissions, and worked in Student Activities. She was also a member of Phi Sigma Sigma. She played softball at SHU and received the Outstanding Student of the Year award in 1998 at graduation. She is part of the 1995 softball team that was inducted into the Hal of Fame in 2012. She worked for the State of Ohio for 23 years. She graduated with a Master's degree from Lourdes University in 2014. She is married and has a son (17) who had the chance to play summer baseball on the Siena Heights campus.

Dr. LaJoyce Jones Brown was named Director of Admissions at Eastern Michigan University. Brown will oversee recruitment and admission processes for all first-year, transfer, graduate, and international students. She graduated from Siena Heights University in 1998 with a Master's degree in Human Resources Development. Before coming to EMU, Brown served in multiple leadership roles in higher education, including associate director for Undergraduate Recruitment and Outreach and interim director of Admissions and New Student Orientation at Wayne State University. Most recently, she served as the senior associate director for the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at Wayne State, where she developed and implemented strategic recruitment plans to enroll first-year and transfer students, utilized data to drive programming and partnership efforts, and managed the university's outreach efforts, among other priorities. She's also held positions in admissions counseling and as a faculty member.

2001
Danielle (Bellant) Emery graduated with a BS in Social Work. She has worked for the State of Michigan for almost 20 years! The first five were spent as a Youth Specialist at the Adrian Training School and the remaining at DHS as an Eligibility Specialist for food and Medicaid assistance.

2001, 2002
Sara (Brondige) Nelson '02 and Michael Nelson '01 both attended Siena Heights. They got married in 2003 and have four amazing kids. Sara is an English teacher for 6-8 Honors ELA students in Sylvania, Ohio. She loves her job and inspiring teens to love books. She is on the board for JustWrite, Inc. and teaches EDU599 courses at Lourdes. Michael is the Executive Director and founder of JustWrite Inc. (JustWrite Michigan & JustWrite Ohio & JustWrite Pennsylvania). The organization supports the importance of writing and literacy. It is for 7-12th grade students—and they get to compete in narrative writing, meet authors, and have fun celebrating the written world.

2003, 2008
Trisha (Galindo) Barth graduated from SHU in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in Communications and 2008 with a Master's in Organizational Leadership. She has many fond memories at Siena Heights. During her undergraduate studies, she was the Feature Editor for the Spectra newspaper and did an internship with Melissa Tsuji in the Career Services office. While interning, she met and became friends with Sr. Marilyn Barnett, who introduced her to the founder of a software company called ParishSOFT. Trisha was hired by ParishSOFT as a support rep in November 2003 and has spent the past 20 years serving Catholic organizations. During that time, she has lived the Siena mission of becoming more competent, purposeful, and ethical, which helped her grow in a career of service. Earlier this year, she was promoted to the Vice President of Services at Ministry Brands. She is blessed to lead a team that serves nearly 90,000 purpose-driven and faith-based organizations helping them reach their goals through technology and positively impacting the lives of so many around the world. She lives in Tecumseh with her husband and two daughters.

2004
Nancy R. Eaton-Gordon graduated with a bachelor's in English and a certificate from the pre-law program. She has since earned her Juris Doctor from Cooley Law School and has been a practicing lawyer for almost 10 years. She just recently opened up her own firm in Adrian, called the Law Offices of Nancy R. Eaton-Gordon & Assoc, where she helps people with estate planning, probate matters, Criminal defense, real estate, and other areas of law. She is glad to be home in Lenawee County and serving the legal needs of her community! Nancy also volunteers with Hospice of Lenawee's Planned Giving Board, serves on the Board of Community Mental Health, and volunteers with many other community activities.

2005
Ashley Edwards graduated from Siena in 2005 with a Bachelor's in Social Work. She got a partial scholarship to attend Siena Heights' sister university (Barry University) and was accepted into the Advanced Standing Social Work program in Miami Florida to complete her master's degree. Ashley began her social work career working with children and families in South Florida. Then, she moved to Colorado and worked at the community mental health center in Boulder for several years. She moved back to MI and did hospice work in Detroit for several years. In 2019, Ashley moved to PHX, Arizona, and helped a new holistic clinic get started and helped people with chronic pain and opioid addiction. She also helped build a new program in a major hospital in PHX to help pregnant women get clean/sober. She began her own private solo practice two years ago and provides individual therapy to adults in Arizona. Her website is www.switchbacktherapy.com. She remains so thankful for the Social Work program at Siena Heights and Ann Lauderdale, who got the program accredited back in the day.

2011
Julie (Okuley) Wagner is a 2011 graduate. She is a Senior Manager of Youth Audience & Engagement at Playhouse Square in Cleveland. She oversees the school performances team and works with agents and the VP to build the youth performance season.

Stephanie Blumenau has started her own law firm, Blumenau Law, which specializes in immigration law, especially serving refugees. She got married to MJ Jackson in 2022 and had a baby girl named Zippora Dolores Rozelia Jackson in July of 2023.

2012
Josh White graduated in 2012 from the Adrian campus with a degree in Liberal Arts and endorsements in K-12 Special Education and K-5 Comprehensive Elementary. He earned his master's degree in K-12 Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan and is currently an assistant principal in a PreK-8 building in NW Denver. He and his wife are eagerly expecting their first child this March!

Marcella Lynn (Ehmann) Boatright graduated with a Bachelor of Science from SHU in 2012. With a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry, she had intentions of utilizing her degree toward medical/dental school but life threw her "some lemons and a plot twist!" Marcella joined Auto-Owners Insurance Company as a Personal Injury Claims Representative out of Lansing, MI in 2014. Since then, she has advanced within the company a few times, moving her and my family across a few different states. She is currently in Charleston, SC, where she works as a Marketing Representative for AOIC. Marcella married Eric Boatright in 2022 and has a five-year-old daughter, Elliana Claire, and just welcomed their son, Warren Atlas David, on November 1, 2023.

2013
Tricia (Stankiewicz) Maule graduated in 2013 with a B.A. in Theatre/Speech Communications and a focus

in Business Management. She currently works for Mott Community College as their Transcript Evaluator/Processor as well as one of the VA reps. She is starting her Master's degree at SHU with an anticipated graduation in December 2025.

Kelci (Schock) Hensley graduated with a Bachelor of Biology and a Chemistry minor. She went to PA school at Ohio Dominican University and graduated in 2015 with a master's degree. She has worked in private practice, at Michigan Medicine, and now at ProMedica—all in family medicine. She went to flight school, received her commercial pilot's license, and even got a certificate to teach others how to fly! She is now pursuing a functional medicine program and hopes to add that to her practice in the next year. She has been happily married for almost three years and has two dogs and a cat.

2014

Kaily (Sims) Enbody graduated with her bachelor's degree in 2014 and then with her Master's in 2017 from the Clinical Mental Counseling program. She works as a substance use disorder/mental health therapist. She had her daughter in 2020 and got married in 2022.

Michael Cleary graduated in 2014 Bachelor's in English and a Minor in Physical Education. He earned his MFA in Writing at Lindenwood University while coaching lacrosse at their sister school Lindenwood-Belleville. Michael is currently a high school teacher and coach in SW Detroit. He is recently engaged and a "proud SHU Alum always!"

William McMillan graduated with a BA in Theatre, Speech/Communication. He moved to Seattle, Washington, where he spent several years managing social media for the Multiamory Podcast before stepping away from that for his current role as a general manager.

2014, 2020

Anthony Cerroni completed his undergrad and graduate degrees at SHU in 2014 and 2020. He has recently been promoted and credits his SHU education in helping him achieve that!

2015

Elizabeth (Treece) Bauman played softball all four years and was a part of the Education program. She graduated in 2015 and became a teacher. After teaching for six years, Elizabeth transitioned to a school administrator. She got married in 2017 and has two amazing girls!

Jennifer Sylvester graduated in 2015 Bachelor's in Sport Management. She received her MBA from Ball State University and has been working in Minor League Baseball with the Fort Wayne TinCaps in Fort Wayne, Indiana, since 2015. Her current title is "Assistant Director of Corporate Partnerships" and she is responsible for selling groups, season tickets, and sponsorship packages.

Mackenzie Tomasik graduated with a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice. While she was on campus, she was part of the Campus Ministry program, an RA, and a basketball player. After graduating, she went on to receive her Master's in Social Work ("Thank you, McNair Scholars Program!") Since then, she has become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and has worked with the severely and persistently mentally ill, children and families involved in the child welfare system, homeless youth and adults, and several court-ordered programs. She is now a Clinical Director for an agency serving youth and their families in the Clearwater, FL area.

Scott Ketchum has worked as a corrections officer and left to become an arborist in June 2023. He became a certified Arborist and started his own tree care business.

Jake Helsel graduated with a BS in Biology and a Chemistry minor. He went on to pursue medical school in West Virginia at the Osteopathic school. He graduated medical school in 2020 and went to Morgantown, WV, to complete his internal medicine training in 2023. He is now working at Mon Health Medical Center in Morgantown as a Hospitalist.

Emily Peters earned her BS in Biology and Chemistry minor in 2015. She has been working at Pfizer since 2018, most recently on the Quality Assurance Team for the Covid-19 vaccine since 2020. She helped ensure EUA for the vaccine and that all were good to be shipped out to the world. She was recently promoted to a Product Engineer and is continuing her career at Pfizer.

2016

Madison (Burbo) Mattei graduated in 2016 with a BS. She has since joined the veterinary field and is graduating as a veterinary technician in the summer of 2024. Madison got married two months ago to her husband, whom she met while attending SHU.

Amber (Denomme) Faraji graduated in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science. She graduated from PT school in 2019 and completed a PT Neurological residency in 2021. This year, she'll be completing a movement disorder fellowship for physical therapy.

Corinne Skinner is a 2016 graduate of the Nursing Program. She is currently traveling as an ICU nurse and working to obtain her Captain's License. She and her fiancé just purchased their dream boat in 2023 and started their own charter fishing company, Reel Therapy Sportfishing LLC, on Lake St. Clair.

Alexa (Vakratsis) Dougherty moved to Florida, got married, had a baby girl, and has been working for the Clermont Police Department since 2018. She is currently a Detective in the Criminal Investigations Division. She graduated in 2016 with a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice. She notes, "My education set me up for success in my field and I love what I do!"

Emily (Hines) Urquidez graduated from Siena Heights in 2016 with a BA in Psychology and from Eastern University in St. David's, PA, with an MA in Psychology in 2019. Since then, she has started her own mental health private group practice for teens, adults, and couples that operates in four states. Arizona is the primary state of service. Emily got married in 2021 and moved to Phoenix shortly after getting married—prior to that, she had lived in Philly.

Amanda Bryant is a proud graduate of the Master of Healthcare Leadership program in 2016. Since then, she started a business as a Career Coach showing people how to get high-paying jobs (https://www.linkedin.com/in/careermatch). Amanda is grateful for the education and memories from her time at Siena Heights University. "Cheers to lifelong learning!"

Lauryn (Dempsey) Reau graduated from SHU with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, double majoring in Special Education and English. Throughout college, she thought that she wanted to teach in a classroom setting, but quickly found out upon graduating that she did not want to do that. Lauryn knew she still wanted to work with adolescents/teens and ended up landing a position at a local elementary school providing behavioral/emotional support for students. Fast forward eight years later and she is currently pursuing an MSW to continue social work within the school setting. She currently works as a Student Service Provider (similar to social work) at a local high school, working with ninth graders. She and her husband have two beautiful children (Parker, 5, and Reese, 3) and reside in Monroe, MI.

2017

Tabitha (Ferguson) Jasinski graduated in 2017! She played lacrosse all four years as a goalie and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts (sculpture) and a minor in Psychology! Now she is a stay-at-home mom to two beautiful girls (Violet and Daphne) and another on the way! She remarks that this is "a wonderful way to share my love for art with my kids!"

Rachel Fox has completed an MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She is currently an LLPC and works as a counselor in a group practice!

2018

Azalea (Miller) Jacquay graduated in 2018 with a Bachelor's in Biology. She went into the Radiation Therapy Technology program at Wayne State, passed her boards, and has been a Radiation Therapist for a little over a year. She is currently at Henry Ford Health and got married in October!

2019

Hannah Walters graduated in 2019 with a BSW and is currently working on her Master's in School Counseling. She works at MIWorks! As a PATH Case Manager. She also got married in September.

Makenzie Edson went on to do foster care for 3.5 years after earning her Bachelor of Social Work. She finished her MSW in August 2023 from SAU and is doing home-based therapy in Kalamazoo County at Family & Children Services.

Alexa Anderson graduated from SHU's master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in 2019. She is now working locally at Family Medical Center of Michigan as a therapist specializing in substance use, children, and severe mental health concerns. Alexa is also their full-time School-Based Behavioral Health Supervisor for Lenawee and Monroe Counties. They are currently expanding into new schools in the area as well as expanding and creating programs in many of the schools we currently provide services in, to improve access to mental and physical health for children and their families. She notes, "It's very amazing and exciting to see the positive impact our school-based behavioral health centers and soon our health centers will have in our communities."

Makayla Kopriver graduated with a BS in Biology. Last year, she graduated with an MS in Biology with a focus in conservation from Miami University. Since graduating, Makayla has been in the zoo field at a couple of zoos in Ohio including Cleveland Aquarium, Akron Zoo, and African Safari Wildlife Park. She has worked at African Safari Wildlife Park as a Zookeeper since 2020, and last summer got promoted to Lead Zoo Keeper.

2021

Sophie Cantrell graduated in December of 2021 with a BA in Community and Human Services. She has worked for the State of Michigan for two years. Last April, she was promoted to Departmental Analyst.

Justice Manchester graduated with a BSW in 2021 and a MSW from Barry University in 2022. Justice is a licensed social worker and currently works as a Social Emotional Learning Coach.

Taylor Villasurda graduated with a Bachelor's in Special Education (cognitive impairment). Since graduating, she now teaches adults with disabilities ranging from 18-26 at an employment/daily living training center. In her last three years of teaching, she has made many positive relationships with friends, students, and parents. She was also on the bowling team at Siena Heights for all four years and now coaches her high school program alongside her dad. Taylor hopes to marry her best friend in the next year, continue to grow as a teacher and former Saint, and reflects fondly on the amazing memories at Siena Heights.

Abigail LaMonde graduated with a BFA in 2021. She has gone on to own a mural business and has painted some large-scale murals for well-known places like Michigan International Speedway. She is married now with one beautiful daughter.

Aaron Joseph graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and is completing the Business Communications degree. Since then, Aaron went back to work as a normal laborer but is still pushing forward his career with the Walt Disney Company while trying to get back in shape, which is going well. Additionally, he has become a gaming YouTube while also doing vlogs and cool videos, with the possibility of expanding into MV's and Q&A's. He plans to make money with this channel down the road. He hopes to try new things in his life to help expose him to more things he couldn't bring himself to do when he was younger.

2023

Isabel Remar graduated in May 2023 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She was just recently hired as a Research Assistant for The Cancer and Hematology Centers of West Michigan! She hopes to make positive and effective improvements in the world of cancer research.

Rachel Heicher works in an ICU step-down unit and has already been named Employee of the Month. She just had her six-month evaluation and her manager thinks she would be a great leader for the unit

DEATHS

Alumni

Catherine Ahern, O.P. '60
Mary Christine Asker '65
Mary Max Bachrach '56
Mary J. Beaubien, O.P. '55
Eleanore M Becker '75
Judith Bisignano, O.P. '68
Marie Geraldine Brownell, O.P. '55
Rosalie A. Bulanda, O.P. '71
Barbara Carroll, O.P. '56
Margaret Che-Hsi Chi '82
Phyllis Marie Coscarelly '53
Timothy James Costello '97
Dolores Dawson '64
Michelina E. DeRose '45
Elizabeth Ann Demirgian, O.P. '65
Mary Katherine Drouin, O.P. '70
Frances Evans '74
Mary Catherine C. Gagliano, O.P. '64
Deborah M. Gugala '74
Whitney Hames, Sr.
Mary Jane Hamilton '60
Kathryn Hartnett, O.P. '61
Mary B. Hoffmann '83
Charles Thomas Houghtby '81
Candace Introcaso
Jeanette Marie Jabour, O.P. '58
Golda I. James '93
Aileen Marie Jarema '50
Mark Patrick Kelly '90
Mary Kay Knuth
Marlene Kuhnlein, O.P. '57
Bonita Landmesser '69
MaryAnn LaLonde LeTourneau '59
Rosemary G. Lepell '68
Geraldine Maloney, O.P. '59
Joan A. Marconi, O.P. '61
Eileen M. Meyers, O.P. '55
Joan Murphy, O.P. '52
Mary Paulette M. Persyk '56
Maria C. Pinuela '64
Marlene Ptaszynski, O.P. '63
Judi Marie Schafer '92
John M. Schneider '74
Richard John Sutton '82
Paul James Villemure, O.P. '50
Tanya Ann Wright '10
Joan Helen Yaroch '53
Barbara J. Young '82

SIENA HEIGHTS UNIVERSITY'S ROBERT BLOHM SR.

Creates 660-Flag Tribute for Suicide Awareness Month

Robert Blohm Sr., a Lieutenant with Siena Heights University's Department of Public Safety, took it upon himself to place 22 small American flags every day on the front lawn of the SHU Fieldhouse for the entire month of September. The significance of this number? Every day, an average of 22 veteran lives are lost to suicide. With September being Suicide Awareness Month, Blohm wanted to bring attention to this issue. At the end of the month, the lawn was covered with 660 flags and lights.

Blohm is a veteran himself, having served in the United States Coast Guard (USGC) from August 1992 to May 2001. He ended his career in the USCG as a Food Service Specialist 2nd class petty officer. After leaving the Coast Guard, he felt a void in his life and joined the Michigan Army National Guard in August 2001. Following 9/11, he was activated to active-duty status and served in the Army National Guard until August 2007.

The inspiration for the tribute happened after Blohm attended a meeting through the Lenawee County Veteran's Coalition, of which he is a member. The meeting, led by Erika Behm, helped bring the idea to life by providing the supplies needed for the tribute and garnering community support. Behm is currently the Veteran Navigator for Community Mental Health Partnership of Southeast Michigan. As Blohm recounts, "She was the pioneer for the original tribute and has gained a large amount of support through the community." He also mentioned that there were at least six other tributes for veteran suicide in Lenawee during September.

While Siena Heights has done several displays for various causes, including human trafficking, domestic abuse, and others, SHU has not yet served as a platform for awareness and change regarding veteran suicide. Thus, Blohm brought it to fruition and was fully supported by Dr. Douglas B. Palmer, the President of Siena Heights University. Blohm knew he wanted a visual display of what the veteran suicide statistic looked like over one month and wanted to bring attention to the number of suicides that occur daily.

But this number is more to Blohm than just a statistic. Blohm's uncle, SFC Christopher Lance, an Army veteran who served in Iraq, took his life in December 2021 after a long battle against his inner struggles. "I have many brothers and sisters in arms that have struggled with thoughts of suicide, and many have made attempts," Blohm said. "I am included in that number, as well."

Blohm's transparency and continued efforts serve as a testament to his commitment to breaking the stigma around mental health, especially for veterans. He expressed that help is available for veterans, especially within the SHU community including faculty, staff, and students. From a local standpoint, veterans can contact Veteran's Affairs (VA) at 734-222-7160 for either the Adrian VA Clinic or the VA Ann Arbor Hospital. The local VA office that can assist with other veteran resources is in the Human Resources building in Adrian and can be contacted at 517-264-5335. To contact the National Veteran's Suicide hotline, dial 988 and select option 1. In addition, a veteran can text 838255 to get help. On the Siena Heights University campus, the Department of Public Safety is available 24/7, 365 days a year.

Blohm hopes to reinstate the veteran's group on campus, which is all-inclusive for faculty, staff, and student veterans. He would like to get this group together and would like to complete at least one community project per year.

"My goal was to get people talking," Blohm said. "I am looking forward to next year's tribute and hope that it draws more attention."

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