

Medaille

WINTER 2020

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF MEDAILLE COLLEGE

THE FUTURE IS NOW

MEDAILLE RESPONDS TO THE ESPORTS PHENOMENON



IN THIS ISSUE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATHARYN KETTER-FRANKLIN



ON THE COVER

As the esports industry rapidly expands across the globe, Medaille responds with innovative academic and extracurricular offerings. Read on Page 4.

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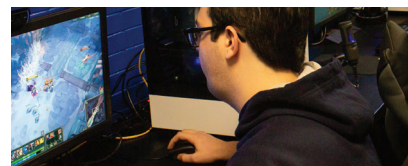
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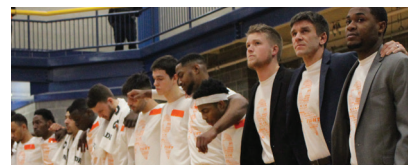
- MARCH 26** WRITE THING READING SERIES PRESENTS BRANDON WILLIAMSON, SLAM POET AND CO-FOUNDER OF PURE INK POETRY GROUP
- APRIL 4** UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE OPEN HOUSE
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Events listed here are held at Medaille's Buffalo campus, unless otherwise indicated. For event updates, visit medaille.edu/calendar.

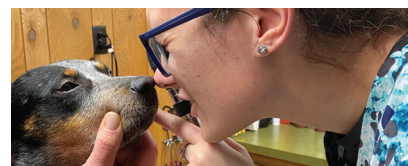
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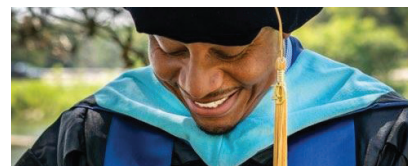
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



PHOTO BY NANCY J. PARRIS

As always, it is a great day to be a Maverick!

Thank you for your continued support of Medaille College. Whether you are an alum or friend of the College reading this issue, Medaille is better because of your connection to it.

There is a lot of press these days about the value of higher education. That being said, how does a college stay relevant? At Medaille, we believe it is by expanding our curricular and co-curricular offerings, along with finding partners who recognize that success and want to add to it. Those are the things you will read about in this issue.

Medaille continues to add new, highly relevant programs, like our new esports management major that prepares students to enter the rapidly expanding, multi-billion dollar industry. We also continue to create partnerships with other colleges and universities to create real value and increased opportunities for our students, like our 3+1 partnership with the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. With the stroke of a pen, Syracuse and Medaille established a joint degree program, which saves students a year of tuition and gets them into the workforce one year earlier. Look for more of these partnerships in the near future.

Additionally, the College has always prided itself on prioritizing hands-on learning, which is why the gift of ten acres of wetlands from Frank and Jeanette Levin is so incredible and so ... Medaille!

This academic year, with increased federal, state and private grant funding, we have been creating even more avenues for students to reach their full potential, impact the community and make their way to a successful and timely graduation. Our new Higher Education Opportunity Program and our expanded Say Yes to Education Program help Medaille continue to be Western New York's College of Opportunity.

Lastly, in our efforts to provide comprehensive services to students, alumni and families, we have partnered with Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC), a nonprofit corporation that assists students and families in their efforts to plan and pay for college. ECMC will be reaching out to several students and alumni to help them take advantage of multiple financial solutions.

As we begin 2020, our future is looking bright, thanks in no small part to people like you. I can't wait to see what we can accomplish together moving forward!

DR. KENNETH M. MACUR, PRESIDENT

Let's stay connected! Follow me on LinkedIn (KenMacur) and Twitter (@KenMacur).

The Medaille community congratulates Dr. Macur on being named to the 2020 Buffalo Business First "Power 250" list, recognizing him as one of the most influential business leaders in Western New York!

MEDAILLE

A FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR:

ESPORTS IS TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM, AND MEDAILLE RESPONDS WITH INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

BY JEFF BUCKI

When past generations went to college, video games offered a break from classes and a chance to hang out with friends. Back then, video games were a time out from academics. Today, they are driving academic programming.

Yes, the burgeoning electronic sports (esports) industry is a real thing, and a profitable one at that. In fact, in 2019 the North American esports industry generated approximately \$300 million in revenue, and on a global scale, revenues topped \$1 billion. Hundreds of millions of fans across the world gather in arenas or watch live streams of competitive video game tournaments each year, and viewership is continually growing.

All in all, the phenomenon has proven to be quite lucrative, and some major moneymakers are starting to catch on. Today, the billionaire owners of professional sports franchises are purchasing esports teams. The NBA launched an esports counterpart, NBA 2K League, in 2018, and the U.S. Army even has its own competitive esports team.

As an institute of higher education, Medaille College is committed to analyzing and adapting to these kinds of changes in the global landscape, in order to

prepare its students to become leaders in emerging fields. According to economic trends, the growth of the esports industry has created a need for technology-forward, business-minded professionals who have a penchant for professional gaming culture, and the market demand is not predicted to slow down any time soon.

Fittingly, “A Future Worth Fighting For” is the renowned tagline of *Overwatch*. The popular, team-based, multiplayer game boasted a cumulative prize pool for worldwide tournaments that fluctuated between \$5 million and \$7 million (U.S. dollars) between 2018 and 2019. With numbers like that, it is undeniable that the world of esports is the wave of the future.

With an eye continually looking forward, Medaille has gotten behind the esports trend in a big way. The school launched an esports club and has created the first esports management bachelor’s degree program in Western New York, which will debut this fall with an innovative new curriculum.

“With our focus on esports, we are preparing students for the economy of tomorrow,” says Medaille College Provost and Senior Vice President

“THE WORLD KEEPS CHANGING,
AND MEDAILLE IS WORKING TO CREATE EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES THAT PREPARE OUR STUDENTS FOR IT.

— DR. LORI V. QUIGLEY”

MEDAILLE ESPORTS

for Academic Affairs Lori V. Quigley, Ph.D. “The esports management degree and club are proof that Medaille is in line with the latest trends and is committed to providing the best possible college experience.”

Just as *Donkey Kong* predated *Super Mario Bros.*, the success of the esports club at Medaille paved the way for the esports management major.

The headquarters of the Medaille College Esports Club are located in the Main Building on Medaille’s Buffalo campus, and the room includes gaming computers, interior and exterior monitor displays, and a lounge area. Dan Snyder, system support specialist at the College, serves as head advisor to the club.

“Our team was looking for something new that Medaille students would find interesting,” says Snyder. “We conducted research and underwent planning phases over the course of several months before launching our club. Right out of the gate, dozens of students expressed interest.”

While a callused thumb is never going to compare with a torn ACL, there are a number of similarities with collegiate sports. “It is team play under the

watch of coaches,” says Snyder. “There are regular practices, and everything from workout regimens to psychological approaches factors in.”

“With esports, the medium is different, but everything else is the same as traditional sports,” says Katharyn Ketter-Franklin, creative manager at Medaille and marketing and gaming event advisor to the esports club.

Over the past 25 years, the College has become known for its strong sport management program, retaining faculty and producing graduates who demonstrate expertise within the sports industry. With a concentration on administration, advertising and video game media, esports management is merely the latest extension.

According to professor and acting chair of Medaille’s Department of Social Sciences Richard L. Jacob, Ph.D., the esports curriculum crosses disciplines as a natural progression of the established bachelor’s degree in sport management. He credits Dr. Quigley for helping to lead the esports charge at Medaille.

“The decision to create the esports program makes perfect sense, as it meets the needs of a new generation of students,” says Dr. Jacob. “Course topics include



WKBW-TV Senior Reporter Eileen Buckley '85 visited campus last fall to cover the announcement of Medaille's new esports management major. Pictured left to right are Ryan Scumaci, Daniel Snyder, Eileen Buckley '85, Jacob LaPort and Katie Caito.

computer science, data analytics, event and facility management, sport psychology, economics and game design.”

A skeptical parent may wonder about the career outlook for this area of study. Rest assured, the job opportunities are there — and they are growing exponentially.

“The opportunities extend well beyond being the best *Fortnite* player,” says Ketter-Franklin. “Students will develop their skills and be prepared to enter a dynamic industry.”

Dr. Jacob expands on the job prospects within the field. “The foundation will be set for students to enter careers in recruiting, broadcasting, analytics, content creation or team management,” he says.

According to Snyder, the west coast of the U.S. and the Toronto area are hotbeds for the esports industry, though there are increasing opportunities within the Buffalo region. Globally, countries like Japan and South Korea have helped propel competitive gaming into what it is today, and

the technology that makes esports possible has created an unparalleled global connectedness and the means to compete with players from any nation.

Through the esports club, Medaille students can participate in competitive or non-competitive gaming options, and all members have access to the gaming lab on campus, video game social events and the club's Discord (digital gaming and communications platform). Club members also have the opportunity to try out for Mavericks esports teams to represent the College in competitive tournaments. Currently, Medaille is a member of Tespa (a North American collegiate esports organization) and College League of Legends (CLOL), and is undergoing the process of becoming a member of the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) esports league.

As Dr. Quigley explains, the investment in esports is all about the school's focus on what is next. “The world keeps changing, and Medaille is working to create educational opportunities that prepare our students for it,” she says.

One of the College's challenges is countering the perception that the major is merely students goofing around playing video games. “It is going to take time for us to dispel that line of thinking with some people,” says Snyder. “But this is an enormous growth industry.”

Interest in the new major is already high. As one might expect, a number of members of the esports club have enrolled. Admissions also has more than 20 incoming students who are looking to major in esports.

Medaille officials are working hard to ensure that the first esports management program in Western New York is also the best. According to Dr. Jacob, that support starts at the top. “The school is putting full-court administrative support around the major,” he says. “President Macur and his cabinet stand behind the development of the program.”

Additions to Medaille's esports offerings can be expected in the years to come, as the College is keeps its finger on the pulse of this rapidly expanding industry. “The intent is to grow this and raise awareness of opportunities on the horizon,” says Dr. Jacob. “Five years from now, we want Medaille's esports program to be top of mind, both in Western New York and statewide. We will host high-level training sessions and marquee esports events, and our faculty members will be at the forefront of the industry.”

To learn more about Medaille's new esports management program, visit medaille.edu/esm.



“THE INTENT IS TO GROW THIS AND RAISE AWARENESS OF OPPORTUNITIES ON THE HORIZON.”
 — DR. RICHARD L. JACOB



PHOTOS BY KATHARYN KETTER-FRANKLIN

Medaille student-athletes have long been known for their academic achievement, in addition to their community involvement and success on the field. So far this academic year, the teams have earned an average GPA of 3.21, which puts them on pace to once again receive the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference (AMCC) Peak Performance Award. Medaille won this prestigious award for top academic performance in the conference in 2017, after 106 of its student-athletes earned a 3.2 GPA or higher. Throughout the years, several Mavericks teams have also claimed AMCC Team Peak Performance Awards for having the highest GPA in the conference among individual sports. Impressively, in the 2018-19 academic year, baseball and men's lacrosse received the team honors for the third consecutive time.

MAVERICKS ON TRACK FOR AMCC ACADEMIC HONORS



INTRODUCTION OF WOMEN'S FIELD HOCKEY

Medaille has announced the addition of women's field hockey to its suite of 18 other competitive NCAA Division III teams come fall 2021. Field hockey will be introduced as a club-level team in fall 2020, making Medaille the only college in Western New York to offer that sport.

FALL AND WINTER SPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- First-year Men's Soccer Head Coach Craig Wilkinson led the team to an AMCC Regular Season Championship for the first time since 2013. Wilkinson was named the 2019 AMCC Coach of the Year, and midfielder Mitchell Ali was named AMCC Offensive Player of the Year.
- The women's bowling team won the Medaille Invitational, as well as the Redhawk Fall Rally Tournament hosted by Roberts Wesleyan College.
- The women's tennis team made their first AMCC Championship appearance in program history.
- The men's golf team won the Medaille Invitational, along with the Spartan Shootout hosted by D'Youville College. Sophomore John Dref won an individual medal at the Spartan Shootout Tournament and was named to the AMCC All Conference Third Team.
- Sport management alumnus, former basketball standout and 2019 Medaille College Athletic Hall of Fame inductee Keith Hack '10 was hired as the Mavericks men's basketball head coach in fall 2019.



PHOTO BY LINDY FEIDER



PHOTO BY MEGAN CONNELLY-WHITE



PHOTO BY CONNOR PRIESTER

These are just a few recent Medaille athletics successes. For more on all of the College's sports and the latest Mavericks news, visit medaillesports.com. To learn about community rental opportunities at the Medaille Sports Complex, visit medaille.edu/rent.

MEET THE MEDAILLE COLLEGE ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2019

Medaille College honored the remarkable athletic careers of four alumni by inducting them into the Medaille College Athletic Hall of Fame on February 21.

PHOTOS FROM MEDAILLE ARCHIVES



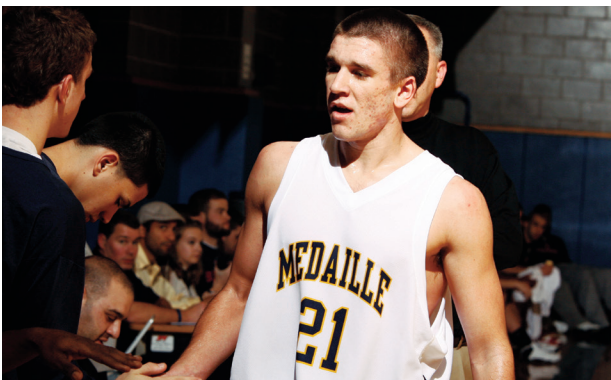
CORY CWIKLINSKI '07

A pivotal member of the Medaille men's soccer team from 2003 to 2006, Cory Cwiklinski's athletic accomplishments have left their mark on the program's record book. Cwiklinski captained the 2005 team that won the AMCC Championship, which sent the soccer team to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in program history.



MARISA (CLARK) HARTMAN '08

A four-year member of the women's basketball team from 2004 to 2008, Marisa (Clark) Hartman remains one of the best players in program history. She finished her illustrious career by scoring 1,321 points, 581 total rebounds and 656 assists, and defensively was credited with 408 steals.



KEITH HACK '10

Now the team's head coach, Keith Hack was a four-year member of the Medaille men's basketball team. As a student-athlete playing from 2006 to 2010, he became one of the most dominant players in the AMCC, finishing his career as a Maverick with 1,211 points, 544 rebounds and 150 assists.



BROCK LEVICK '14

Brock Levick is one of the most accomplished men's lacrosse players in school history, and to this day, holds the record in almost every statistical category for Medaille. He ranks first in points, points per game, goals, goals per game, shots attempted, shots on goal and shots on goal per game. Levick amassed career totals of 228 goals and 66 assists, equating to 294 total points in 57 games played.



CONQUERING MISCONCEPTIONS

MEDAILLE'S ONLINE VETERINARY TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM COMBINES FLEXIBILITY WITH HANDS-ON LEARNING

BY TARA ERWIN

What comes to mind when you picture an online student? Does it involve a leisurely morning, sleeping in, then eating breakfast while clicking back and forth between required reading and your social media feeds?

While the idea of learning in your pajamas sounds appealing, according to Medaille College Program Director for Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Veterinary Technology Renee Bugenhagen, DVM, this scenario could not be further from the truth.

“There seems to be a misconception that online coursework is easier than on-site classes,” says Dr. Bugenhagen. “But because this is a professional degree based on science and math, the program is extremely rigorous.” In fact, she says online students enrolled in the AAS veterinary technology program can expect to spend anywhere from 40 to 60 hours per week studying and completing assignments, not to mention the 360 required hours of clinical experience needed to graduate.

Michaela Tersmette '19, who works at a local animal hospital, just graduated in December from Medaille's online AAS program. Even though she already had a bachelor's degree in environmental biology, her goal of becoming an elephant trainer led her to pursue a vet tech degree.

“Being an online student is more difficult and time intensive than the average person might believe,” says Tersmette. “To get all of my work done, I woke up early every morning to do homework before I left for work. While at work, I tried to spend as much time as I could gaining experience, asking questions and practicing tasks.”

Current students Casey York of Conneaut Lake, Pennsylvania, and Chelsea VanGrol of Rochester, New York, say they absolutely love the flexibility that learning remotely affords them. York, who expects to graduate this spring, balances her full-time job working at a veterinary clinic with taking courses online. VanGrol is also currently employed at a veterinary clinic, and she appreciates being able to learn at her own pace. “I feel very blessed that I am able to earn a vet tech degree online through Medaille,” she says. “The fact that I am able to have a job while learning and going to school on my own time is ideal.”

The rise in students similar to Tersmette, York and VanGrol, who are working while attending school, is why online learning has been steadily gaining in popularity in higher education over the past few years. Medaille rolled out its online veterinary technology program in



2017, with the third cohort graduating in fall 2019. The program is accelerated and offered in sequential semesters, and students are admitted every spring, summer and fall. Full-time students take 12 credits each semester and are enrolled in two courses at any given time. Courses run for either seven or 15 weeks.

Students pursuing a degree in veterinary technology have many career options, depending on how far they take their studies. Vet techs can work at small or large animal practices, universities, research facilities, zoos, animal shelters or wildlife rehabilitation centers. In addition, there are opportunities to work at animal-related companies, such as pharmaceutical or feed companies, or at government jobs with agencies like the United States Department of Agriculture. Graduate technicians can also pursue specialty certifications in fields such as emergency medicine, dentistry, internal medicine and behaviors.

According to Dr. Bugenhagen, Medaille's online vet tech program stands out as one of only 10 or fewer that are well known across the country. Successful completion of the program provides students with the necessary credentials to sit for the Veterinary Technician National Exam (VTNE), and the program satisfies the New York State requirements for professional licensure as a veterinary technician.

However, getting a vet tech degree online may seem counterintuitive. After all, how can students expect to get hands-on experience at a keyboard? It is a viewpoint the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) echoes. The AVMA requires certified schools to provide proof that every student has successfully mastered the approximately 200 hands-on activities that it considers essential to practice veterinary technology, and this is a consideration that Medaille has worked into the design of its program.

Tasks such as drawing blood, performing lab tests and conducting physical examinations definitely need direct participation, which is why all students enrolled in Medaille's AAS program need to complete 360 clinical hours at veterinary facilities. Whether completing the program on campus or online, students must identify facilities that

are willing to assist in educating them. They are required to work with dogs, cats, rabbits, rodents, sheep and goats, and even larger animals such as cattle and horses.

Medaille's commitment to online learning allowed for some resourceful thinking that has proven to be both convenient and effective. While other programs call for remote students to be videotaped at their internship location, Medaille instead requires that site supervisors meet specific credentials. This way they can function as faculty members and sign off on task completion. Site supervisors must be veterinary technicians or veterinarians who have graduated from an accredited AVMA program. Like all Medaille adjunct faculty, they must submit their college transcripts and a resume or curriculum vitae, and they are instructed on the specific manner in which they have to evaluate the student.

All in all, the road to becoming a veterinary technician through an online AAS degree is not an easy one. But, according to Dr. Bugenhagen and her students, it can be extremely gratifying, given the right attitude.

"Highly motivated individuals with excellent time-management skills succeed in a program like this," says Dr. Bugenhagen. "Our online program already has successful graduates working in the field, so it is quite possible. It just requires a lot of dedication and determination."

Students can attest to those same keys to success. "I absolutely love being an online student, and would recommend Medaille to anyone who has self-discipline," says York. VanGrol, who wants to pursue her bachelor's degree after gaining a few years of experience in the field, confirms that personal drive is essential. "Ever since I was a little girl with stuffed animals, I have adored animals and wanted to work with them," she says. "The online program is wonderful, as long as you are organized and truly passionate about this career path."

A good support system is instrumental, as well. "Dr. Bugenhagen is one of the main reasons why I was able to succeed in this program," says Tersmette. "No matter what challenge I faced or how many questions I had, her main goal was always to help me and other students succeed."





THE LEVIN LEGACY

LIVING LABORATORY INSPIRES FUTURE GENERATIONS OF BIOLOGY STUDENTS

BY KATHARINE CASSENS



Frank and Jeanette Levin have made a lasting difference in many areas and industries. To this day, they are still protecting the environment and changing lives with their altruism, yet they are still humble in talking about the impact they have made.

In the 1970s, Frank and Jeanette, now 93 and 90, respectively, conducted market research in the Western New York area through their business, Buffalo Survey & Research, Inc. “Market research was really a foreign concept back then,” says Jeanette Levin. People had a little knowledge about it from their studies, but nothing that made headlines.”

The husband and wife, nationally trained in conducting surveys and polls, were commissioned by a New York City firm and the then *Buffalo Evening News* to conduct election polls. Frank and Jeanette educated their staff in non-biased, ethical interviewing, and their work helped dignify the field of market research, both locally and beyond. As Buffalo Survey’s reputation continued to grow, the team earned commissions to conduct market research and focus groups for national companies.

When Frank and Jeanette’s son, David Levin, took over the operations of Buffalo Survey in the late 1990s, the couple shifted their focus to another venture — real estate. “There is a saying that you go to the edge of town and buy the closest land that has not been used yet,” says Frank Levin. “I was always interested in investing in land for future use.”

So, approximately 25 years ago, the Levins invested in 40 acres of farmland off of French Road in Amherst. They sold half of the land in the mid-1990s to the home builders who constructed what is now Daven Drive. It was during the development of that project that approximately 10 acres of wetlands were discovered on the property.

The area was officially designated as wetlands by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1996. Wetlands, according to the DEC, are areas saturated by surface or ground water that are sufficient to support distinctive vegetation and serve as a native habitat for many species. Guidelines from the DEC aim to preserve wetlands in their natural state. With this designation, the Levins’ land was never, and may never, be developed.

Fittingly, the Levins have long been interested in environmental conservation. In 1993, they donated significant funding to preserve Strawberry Island, part of the Niagara River near Grand Island. The couple’s contribution allowed the land to be stabilized, thus preventing further erosion, changes to the current or damages to the river’s ecosystem.

Given the Levins’ interest in preservation, they wanted to keep the wetlands on their property in a forever-green state. “We want to see that the water is preserved,” says Frank Levin. “We want to see that the trees and wildlife are maintained, and not just for a season or two, but forever.”

Enter Bernadette Clabeaux, Ph.D., '05, assistant professor of biology at Medaille College. Dr. Clabeaux is active in environmental and wildlife conservation, and in 2015, she was featured in a “2 The Outdoors” news segment on WGRZ meant to highlight the importance of wetlands.

“Wetlands are nurseries for fish and amphibians,” said Dr. Clabeaux. “They are essentially the kidneys of the Earth, and the vegetation filters water, taking out toxins and contaminants. The biodiversity sustains a number of different species, and when you witness the diversity of life that exists, it changes your entire view of the land. It makes it all so special.”

When the story with Dr. Clabeaux aired on WGRZ, Robert Strell, real estate agent and longtime friend to the Levins, was watching the news. “In the short time that Dr. Clabeaux was on the air, she gave such an articulate talk about wetlands,” says Strell. “Meanwhile, I had just discussed the Daven Drive property with Frank and Jeanette, and what the donation possibilities were with local organizations or colleges.”

Shortly thereafter, Strell contacted Dr. Clabeaux to learn more about Medaille and its biology program. And the rest, as Frank Levin says, is history. The Levins and Dr. Clabeaux fostered a quick kinship over shared ideologies, and they talked about how the property would fit into the College’s programming. They worked together for more than two years to satisfy the necessary legal and environmental regulations related to the land donation.

The Levins wanted the 10-acre wetland property, located at 3725 Millersport Highway, to be utilized in a meaningful way. By donating the land to Medaille, the couple is assured that it will be put to good use by biology students who can use the land as a “living laboratory” to study ecology. The property, which the College has appropriately named “The Frank and Jeanette Levin Living Laboratory,” will allow students to study the ecosystem and various factors that affect the flora and fauna on site.

Given the earth’s fluctuating climate in today’s day and age, environmental education is extremely important for everyone, especially aspiring biologists. Medaille College President Kenneth Macur, Ph.D., understands this significance. “The generosity of Frank and

PHOTO BY NANCY J. PARISI



“

EXPLORATION AND OBSERVATION

ARE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

— DR. KENNETH MACUR

”



Jeanette Levin will go a long way in providing our students with firsthand experience in learning about the environment,” he says. “Exploration and observation are key components of the educational experience, and the donation of this property has presented the opportunity to learn about impactful issues beyond the traditional classroom.”

In October 2019, Medaille officials were joined by the Levins, students and faculty to take official possession of the property in an intimate ceremony. At the ceremony, Frank Levin expressed the couple’s intentions in giving the land to Medaille. “My wife and I believe we have an obligation to help make a better world through the education of our youth and through protecting the environment,” he said. “Happily, this donation allows us to do both.”

According to Dr. Clabeaux, the Levins are indeed passing down their passion for conservation. “I believe the legacy of the land donation is beginning, as we already have a number of students using the site for investigations or independent study research projects,” she says.

Some biology majors are using the wetlands to investigate the impacts of invasive species on forest dynamics. Sophomore Jay Bortel, who has focused his research on the ecological importance of the great blue heron species, plans to keep revisiting the site to continue to study the birds and their behavioral patterns.

“It is really cool to see wildlife thrive without really much human interaction,” says Bortel. “And there are vernal ponds (a kind of temporary wetland) there, which is rare. It is awesome to see stuff like that in the wild, with your own eyes, versus reading it out of a textbook.”

The intent is that students can now practice what they have learned in the classroom, and that such application will help prepare them for biology-based careers in fields like research, medicine or ecology. The Levins’ donation also provides the opportunity for Medaille to get more involved in the community by promoting environmental awareness. Moving forward, Dr. Clabeaux hopes to create community workshops or forums where students can educate others on the importance of land preservation.

Since meeting Dr. Clabeaux, Frank and Jeanette have attended several student capstone



presentations at Medaille. They find it gratifying to hear students discuss environmental issues, and when Frank Levin is asked to share his advice with younger generations, he goes back to the basics. “Do the right thing, be sensitive to people and have integrity,” he says.

Thanks to the Levins, biology students at Medaille will continue to use the wetlands in Amherst to conduct research and collect data, both for coursework and independent studies. Not only does the land provide unique, in-depth learning experiences, but it also helps carry on the mission and passion of Frank and Jeanette Levin.

“All the right things came together at the same time,” says Strell. “It is such a beautiful match. Students will be out there inventorying species and doing their work, and it will be a wonderful way to remember the Levins.”

PHOTOS BY GAVINITY MCGHEE AND DR. BERNADETTE CLAREBAUX



“ MY WIFE AND I BELIEVE WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO **HELP MAKE A BETTER WORLD THROUGH THE EDUCATION OF OUR YOUTH AND THROUGH PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT.** HAPPILY, THIS DONATION ALLOWS US TO DO BOTH. ”

— FRANK LEVIN



SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

GRANT ALLOWS MEDAILLE STUDENTS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS WNY

BY PATRICIA JETTY

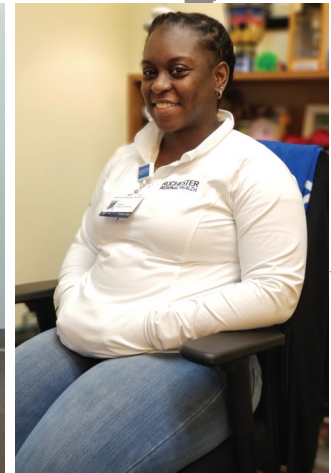
There is a lot of buzz generated these days around integrated healthcare. This approach, characterized by a high degree of collaboration and communication among mental and physical healthcare professionals, aims to meet the holistic needs of each patient.

Medaille College's Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, led by Associate Professor and Department Chair Lynn Horne-Moyer, Ph.D., is committed to serving the Western New York (WNY) community by helping to fulfill the mental health component of integrated healthcare. While historically there has been a stigma associated with mental health, President and CEO of BestSelf Behavioral Health Howard K. Hitzel, PsyD, MPA, also a member of Medaille's Board of Trustees, says there has been some improvements to the perception of mental health care in recent years.

"The opioid crisis, for example, has made the general public more aware that mental illness and substance abuse disorders really do affect every community and socio-economic group," says Dr. Hitzel. "As a result, there has been a greater acceptance that many people struggle with these difficulties and that there is a significant need for treatment."

As the stigma around mental health is broken down and the emphasis on holistic wellness grows, the industry is increasingly tasked with providing access to care for all. "The needs are greater than ever," says Dr. Hitzel. "One in five people has a diagnosable behavioral health disorder, so it affects families in every community. More and more people are seeking treatment, but in order to provide access, we need well-trained, qualified professionals to provide services."

This is where the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, comes in. HRSA's Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program aims to develop and expand the behavioral health workforce serving populations in medically underserved areas, placing



special emphasis on establishing or expanding clinical internship programs. The program focuses on the poorest metropolitan areas in the country. It allows for interdisciplinary training for students, faculty and field supervisors, in order to provide quality behavioral health services to communities in need.

Medaille first applied for the BHWET program grant in 2017 for its clinical mental health counseling (CMHC) master's degree program. The College was ultimately selected to receive over \$1.3 million over the course of four years, from August 2017 to August 2021, with plans to reapply if the BHWET program continues federally after that time.

Thanks to the grant, 92 CMHC students completing internships are receiving a \$10,000 stipend over the course of those four academic years. Students must apply to receive the stipend, and recipients must agree to stay working within the identified areas of greatest need for a number of years after graduation. The benefit of the stipend is twofold: it allows students to spend more time focusing on their studies and training without having to take on additional jobs, and the community receives more accessible integrated healthcare.

Under the guidelines set out by the grant, CMHC students have been completing their internships at a wide range of sites within Buffalo, Rochester

“

THE GRANT SUGGESTS TO OUR STUDENTS THAT THIS PARTICULAR WORK WITHIN UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS IS REALLY THE MISSION OF WHAT WE DO AS CLINICIANS.

— CLINICAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR MICHELE BAUMAN '08

”

and the surrounding areas. Their clients include those struggling with intimate partner violence, substance use disorders or self-harm tendencies. One of these internship sites that emphasizes comprehensive clinician training and same-day access to care is BestSelf Behavioral Health's Delaware Park Community Counseling Clinic.

Located on Medaille's Buffalo campus, the BestSelf clinic provides close supervision and training for CMHC students working with underserved populations. "Our clinic does a lot of work serving immigrant populations and low-income families, and we place a premium on making sure services are accessible in those communities," says Dr. Hitzel. "Poverty is a very real concern in Buffalo, and so the need for readily accessible services is significant."

Taken together, the BestSelf clinic and the BHWET program create an opportunity for Medaille's students to offer assistance where it is needed most. One stipend recipient who completed her internship

at the BestSelf Delaware Park clinic in 2019 is Stefie Massara '19. "Something I heard from several of my clients was that they felt the clinic and I advocated for them much more than their previous providers," she says.

Massara primarily worked with chronically mentally ill clients battling schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder or personality disorders. She hopes to continue working with a behavioral health agency in the future. "My experience was incredibly helpful in my development as a counselor, and having support from the grant provided many of my classmates and I some reprieve from financial stress," she says. "In return, this greatly affects the community we serve. Having personal concerns alleviated allows us to be more present in each session, and this is especially vital for clinicians working with underserved populations who have previously received little or no assistance."

Clinical Assistant Professor and Psychology Program Director Michele Bauman '08 is another CMHC alumna. The former clinical training coordinator for the CMHC program, Bauman has seen how the field placements under the BHWET program have expanded student opportunities and reinforced their calling as mental health professionals. "The grant suggests to our students that this particular work within underserved populations is really the mission of what we do as clinicians," she says.

CMHC alumni and students confirm that sentiment. "Being selected to receive the stipend helped me to see the importance of mental health in urban areas," says Patrice Anderson '19, who completed her internship at Rochester Rehabilitation Center. The agency serves 2,500 people in the Rochester area living with disabilities or behavioral health issues.

"I worked with clients from the Salvation Army's addiction treatment ARC program, and it showed me a different side to mental health," she says. "Through the BHWET program, I was able to assist clients who I probably would not have been able to reach otherwise. It was valuable training, because I am currently working with a similar population dealing with serious and persistent mental illness."

Another stipend recipient Colton Rodgers is currently completing an internship through August 2020 at Genesee Community College (GCC). "GCC is a truly spectacular micro-representation of the population that exists within WNY, and we attend to individuals

of various cultures and ethnicities.” says Rodgers. “The unique array of clientele directly embodies the diverse population I hope to serve through my ministry as a counselor following graduation.”

Rodgers says that the grant afforded him a meaningful opportunity to serve a region of WNY that was not necessarily within his immediate consideration. “I now have the means to travel to a largely neglected area to provide mental health resources to individuals who would otherwise be unable to access clinics or hospitals. Through the therapy provided, I have seen suffering diminish, fundamental needs met and the stigma that prevails against mental health gradually reduced.”

In addition to the direct student and client benefits, the BHWET grant helps fund workshops to provide training to students, faculty, alumni, site supervisors and other WNY clinicians in areas like integrated healthcare and safety in behavioral health. The money also covers student memberships to professional organizations like the New York Mental Health Counselors Association, allows students and faculty to attend conferences, and has helped expand the CMHC curriculum.

With the assistance of the grant, Medaille’s CMHC students are able to provide holistic mental health services to many of the individuals and communities with the greatest need in WNY. Additionally, this impact would not be possible without the leadership

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE PEROTTI



Pictured left to right are CMHC students and BestSelf interns Monica Ocasio, Hannah Braun, Madeline Ryan, Hannah Spaulding, Steffe Massara and Danielle Frazone.

provided by Assistant Clinical Professor and Director of Medaille’s BHWET Program Marguerite M. McCarty, Ed.D., LMHC, and Assistant Professor Donald E. Nowak, Jr., Ph.D., CRC, the education director under the grant. The fact that several stipend recipients have been hired at their placement sites before they even graduated is a testament to the impact they are making in the lives of their clients.

“Hoping to make a difference is why we all go into this field,” says Massara. “So seeing how the work we do as clinicians really does help others is a tremendous and rewarding motivator.”

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WHAT IT TAKES

RENITA DISTEFANO '13, '15 ESTABLISHES HERSELF AS A LEADER IN HER PROFESSION, FAMILY, ALMA MATER AND COMMUNITY

BY JANA EISENBERG



PHOTO BY BOB ZELONKA

When Renita DiStefano '13, '15 joined Seneca Gaming Corporation in 2006 as a customer care manager, she had not yet envisioned that she would one day be responsible for strategically leading a critical piece of her employer's business and managing a team of 65 people, all while continuing to serve her community, her alma mater and her family.

Fast forward to 2017, when *Buffalo Business First* named DiStefano, now Seneca Gaming Corporation's vice president of information technology and chief information officer (CIO), one of its "C-Level Executives of the Year." She was asked to describe herself in one word. The mother of five and grandmother of 10 did not hesitate: "Matriarch," she said. Serving as a leader across her many roles has become second nature to DiStefano. But how did she get to this place of realizing her potential and being able to make a difference?

A tribally enrolled member of the Seneca Nation, DiStefano worked at a well-regarded, Buffalo-based information technology (IT) company for eight years before joining the Seneca operation. When she accepted her first position with the company, she knew there were opportunities for advancement. "Throughout my early career, my intent was to be a student of my craft from a technical perspective," she says. "I wanted to build myself as a leader, and increase my technical and business skill sets."

She has earned a number of information technology and information security certifications and credentials throughout the years to supplement her formal education. This dedication and focus reflect DiStefano's commitment to growth. "With each promotion came more responsibility. Eventually, I decided to aim for the CIO job, which requires a bachelor's degree," she says. "I knew that the degree was something I had to do, but I wanted to do more than just 'check the box.'"

She found Medaille's Bachelor of Business Administration & Information Systems (BBA-IS) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs, with their combination of business strategy and information systems, particularly attractive. "Medaille's curriculum offers a strong foundation of organizational behavior, which helps shape a systems thinking approach, and the BBA and MBA programs provide a good background on

finance,” she says. “At the C-level, the desired skill set is less about technology and more about business acumen.”

Online learning served DiStefano well, and she found the predictability and timing of deadlines to be helpful. Time management habits carried over from decades of running a home and raising a large family while working. “I did the same thing I had done with my personal life: wake up early, work for a few hours, then go to my day job,” she says. “I have a 45-minute commute, so I used my car as a classroom by writing papers in my head or listening to the textbooks on tape.”

She continued working while earning both of her degrees online. She found that doing both well was manageable, not only because she could apply her work experience directly to the curriculum, but also because the knowledge she was gaining was immediately applicable to her daily work.

“Part of my role is to create a departmental culture that aligns with the overarching business culture,” says DiStefano. “That means defining who we are as a department, aligning strategic resources, establishing behaviors and norms, and making sure that the IT department brings value in many ways. Another part of my role is to set the direction and define success for my team, then to get out of their way and let them do their best work.”

DiStefano says the personalized education she received at Medaille helped her achieve her career goals. “The program’s infrastructure includes advisors, instructional staff and professors, and they are all very accessible and committed to creating relationships conducive to their students’ learning styles,” she says. “They took the time to get to know me as a person.”

Chair of Medaille’s Department of Business, Management and Leadership Susan Steffan is one of the faculty members DiStefano credits for contributing to her positive learning experience. “Medaille has always strived to offer flexibility, and the College was a pioneer in adult learning,” says Steffan. “Getting your education online is not a solitary endeavor, and Renita is a perfect example of someone who took advantage of all the available resources and benefited from the format’s flexibility.”

DiStefano says that her choice to pursue a second degree immediately after earning the first was a natural progression, and she credits her husband, Mike, for taking on the lion’s share of responsibilities at home while she was

balancing studies and work. “I am really proud of accomplishing my educational and career goals, but I could not have done it without my family’s support,” she says.

Her sacrifice and dedication have not gone unnoticed by her employer, either. “Renita is a critical member of our senior management team,” says Seneca Gaming Corporation President and CEO Holly Gagnon. “She brings a balanced approach and a professional expertise that enhances our operations. The investment she made in her MBA is evident in the impact she continues to make in our organization.”

“Overall, I try to act as a servant leader,” says DiStefano, when reflecting on her role in the organization. “This journey has helped me see that being a leader is less about being my best self and more about helping others shine.”

In addition to work and family responsibilities, she volunteers on several boards, including the Medaille College Department of Business, Management & Leadership Advisory Board, the TribalNet Board of Directors and the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute Board of Directors.

Steffan explains how when she asked DiStefano to join the department’s advisory board, there was no hesitation. “Renita gives Medaille a lot of credit for helping her become who she is,” says Steffan. “She does not just come to meetings, but will also email ideas or send checklists of things students can do to get the most out of online classes. She is a great resource, and we are proud to have her as an alum.”

DiStefano reciprocates the same level of endorsement. “Being on the advisory board is a direct reflection of my commitment and belief in the College’s business programs,” she says. “The fact that I leveraged all that was available to me, to get my degrees, made me want to share the same opportunities with others.”

Now that DiStefano has completed her education and attained her professional goals, she remains deeply dedicated to her family and spending time with her husband, children and grandchildren. To her, being a matriarch at home, at the office or in her volunteer roles, really comes down to helping others. Even some of her hobbies, like quilting and gardening, are about giving back. “I made a commitment that each of my grandchildren will have a quilt from me, so I spend a fair amount of time in the sewing room,” she says. “Human nature is to care for others, and I strive to give back in any way I can.”

“RENITA BRINGS A BALANCED APPROACH AND A PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE THAT ENHANCES OUR OPERATIONS.
**THE INVESTMENT SHE MADE IN HER MBA IS EVIDENT IN THE
IMPACT SHE CONTINUES TO MAKE IN OUR ORGANIZATION.**”

— SENECA GAMING CORPORATION PRESIDENT AND CEO HOLLY GAGNON



#MEDAILLECONGRATS . . .

Medaille College is so proud of all of our alumni! We send our #MedailleCongrats to recognize the life achievements of these empowered individuals who embody Medaille's mission of academic achievement, career success and civic engagement. Visit medaille.edu/congrats to learn more and submit your own class note.

1980s

Media communication alumna **Eileen Buckley '85** received a 2019 national media award from Mental Health America for excellence in reporting and portrayal of mental health conditions for her work at WBFO. Buckley now works as a senior reporter for WKBW-TV.



MAOL alumna **Rasheed N. C. Wyatt '89, '19** was re-elected to the Buffalo Common Council representing the University District.

1990s

United States Army Sergeant First Class **William "Roland" Hayes '94** was honored with three Purple Heart medals and a Bronze Star for his service and injuries during the Vietnam War. Congressman Brian Higgins presented the honors to Hayes at a ceremony held at the Purple Heart Memorial at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park in July 2019.

2000s

Ken Kinton '01 published a book about religion and politics titled *Pulpit Friction*.



Jamie Culican '05 (J.A. Culican) published *Finding the Sun*, the sixth book in her Legends of the Fallen series. Culican is a USA Today international bestselling author of the fantasy series Keeper of Dragons. Her other accolades include Best Fantasy Book of 2016 and 1st place for Best Coming of Age Book from the Next Generation Indie Book Awards.

MAOL alumnus and member of the Medaille College Department of Business, Management & Leadership Advisory Board **Larry Mictus '05** was quoted in the August 2019 issue of *HR Magazine* in an article titled "How Leaders Can Make Better Decisions." *HR Magazine*, published by the Society for Human Resource Management, is the most widely read and respected HR publication in the world.

MAOL alumna **Diane (Morphis) Schlabig '06** was promoted to community business unit division leader with LassiterWare, an insurance company in Leesburg, Florida.

Education alumnus **James McNeil III '08** earned his Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision from Duquesne University. Dr. McNeil currently works as a rehabilitation specialist at Prudential Financial, and is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

MBA alumna **Heather Platt, P.E., '08** was appointed to the Facility Guideline Institute's Health Guidelines Revision Committee for the 2019-20 term. Platt has been in the mechanical engineering industry for nearly 25 years, and she works as a senior project manager at Dewberry, managing healthcare-related projects from the company's Raleigh, North Carolina, office.

MAOL alumna **Jessica (Gregoire) Marsillo '09** was promoted to senior consultant at HCL Technologies, a multinational information technology service and consulting company.

2010s

BBA alumna Rose Dibble '10 was promoted to accounts payable manager at Uniland Development Company. In this role, she will support the operations of the financial and tax services departments.

MBA alumnus **Thomas Molfese '10** was appointed as sales manager for North America at Fermanac, a company that designs, manufactures and installs equipment for decoration of glass objects. Molfese is responsible for all sales efforts throughout the U.S. and Canada.

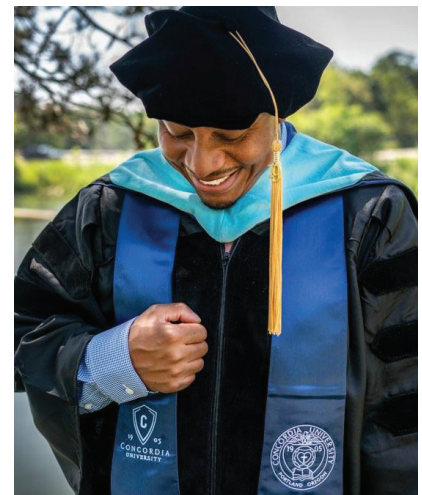
Business administration program alumnus **Eric Schnirel '10**, the founder, president and managing partner of Great Lakes Transport Solutions, led the company to a spot on the 2019 *Buffalo Business First* list of Buffalo-based "Fast Track Companies." Great Lakes Transport Solutions was featured as the first of the "Fast Two Young Companies" that have grown exponentially in less than five years of being open.

MAOL alumna **Stephaine (Jones) Huston '11** was promoted to senior manager of training, learning and development at HealthNow New York Inc.



Communication program alumna **Sommer O'Donnell '12** was promoted to office manager of DigiStream Investigations, Buffalo.

Communication program alumnus **Doug Page '12** was promoted to sports information director at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania.



MAOL alumnus **Gary Damon Jr., Ed.D., '13** was appointed as the executive director of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act at Southwest Human Resource Agency in Memphis, Tennessee. In 2019, Dr. Damon also completed his doctorate of education (Ed.D.) in transformational leadership degree from Concordia University in Portland, Oregon.

BBA alumna **Angela Rinella '13** was promoted to vice president of GEICO's regional operations in Lakeland, Florida.

Business administration alumnus **Brian Cleary '15** co-founded and launched Interlace Digital, a modern digital marketing agency that specializes in social media growth and e-commerce development services. The agency is based out of New York State and Los Angeles.

Business administration alumnus **Charles Krug '15** was promoted to wastewater treatment plant operator level 2 for the Buffalo Sewer Authority's Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Clinical mental health counseling alumnus **Kristopher Smith '15** started a new position as the psychology associate with the Washington State Department of Corrections. In his role, Smith works with incarcerated individuals housed in the Segregation Management Unit and those who are identified as high risk for engaging in suicidal behaviors.



Phil Bifulco '16 was promoted to senior account manager at Safetec of America, Inc. Bifulco started as an intern at the company during his undergraduate years at Medaille, and he is now giving back by providing internship and job opportunities to current students and graduates.

MAOL alumna **Kimberly Brown '16** was promoted to executive director of Community Access Services (CAS), an Evergreen Health affiliate. CAS is a nonprofit organization committed to addressing the epidemic of HIV and other diseases across Erie County by assuring the availability of comprehensive care services.

MAOL alumnus **Deshawn King '16** was promoted to financial analyst at FedEx Logistics, based out of Memphis, Tennessee.

Clinical mental health counseling program alumna **Lynn M. Lauria, MA, LMHC, '16** started her own private practice in 2019. Lauria works with children, adolescents, adults, couples and families, offering a holistic, integrative approach to person-centered therapy.



MBA alumna **Emily Wilhelm '16** was promoted to associate commercial appraiser with KLW Appraisal Group, Inc. Wilhelm also earned her certification from NYS as a Certified General Real Estate Appraiser.

BBA alumnus **Patrick Johnson '17** began volunteer work at the Buffalo VA Medical Center. He helps transport over 150 patients per week with free round trip van service, all provided by veterans. Johnson himself is a veteran of the United States Navy.

BBA alumna **Dawn Ventola '17** published her first children's book, *Chef Mootza Rella*. Ventola also works as a claims customer service specialist at Travelers.

Christopher Walker '18 was promoted to banking services operations associate III at M&T Bank. A communication program alumnus, Walker also works as a producer and board operator at WBEN radio.

Communication program alumnus **Cole Johnson '19** started as a play-by-play announcer at Le Moyne College, in addition to working as a football and basketball beat reporter at Syracuse University. Johnson is currently earning a master's degree in broadcast and digital journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

The graduates highlighted here are a small sample of recent alumni successes. Follow Medaille College on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn to catch all #MedailleCongrats updates and to join the celebration of our Maverick community.

MAVERICK MILESTONES

#MedailleCongrats education program alumni **Jessica (Newcombe) Kozar '13** and **David Kozar '13, '14** on the birth of their first child. Their daughter, Riley Marie Kozar, was born on August 24. Jessica also works as an academic advisement counselor at the College.





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