A CELEBRATION OF
Outstanding Adult Students
TUESDAY  ■  APRIL 26, 2022
UNION SOUTH

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON
Outstanding Adult Student Celebration and Reception

Welcome
Martin Rouse, associate dean and director, Adult Career and Special Student Services

Opening remarks
Nidia Bañuelos, assistant professor, Liberal Arts and Applied Studies

Recognition of Badger Ready graduates and transfer students
Autumn Sanchez, Badger Ready Program manager, Adult Career and Special Student Services
Ace Hilliard, Badger Ready Program outreach coordinator, Adult Career and Special Student Services

TRANSFER STUDENTS
(successfully completed Badger Ready requirements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligh Alvarez</th>
<th>Edward Herzberg</th>
<th>Jaime Wendt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Calvert</td>
<td>Kristy Jorgensen</td>
<td>Alexander Yelinek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Forseth</td>
<td>Annie Lewis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nolan Frank</td>
<td>Joshua Miller</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Gniadek</td>
<td>Jessi Mirick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRADUATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashley Fearn-Semenas</th>
<th>Jeffrey Hickel</th>
<th>Alex Smith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Glomp</td>
<td>Tyler Johnston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of Scholarships
Martin Rouse, associate dean and director, Adult Career and Special Student Services
Anne Niendorf, scholarship coordinator, Adult Career and Special Student Services

The following scholarships are funded by the listed organization and private donors to the Adult Student Scholarship Fund.
ALMA BARON SECOND CHANCE FOR WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP
Phadrian Glenn Ashley Mills

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN-MONONA/MADISON BRANCH SCHOLARSHIP
Meg Mercy

MARY K. ROUSE AND ROGER P. BRUESEWITZ BEYOND BARS SCHOLARSHIP
Robert Hall

JOE CORRY AND BARBARA WESTON CORRY SCHOLARSHIP
Diana Thomawong Melady Vue

CRANKSTART REENTRY SCHOLARSHIP
Amy Bartosiak Jed Heckman Rebecca Parmentier
Tami Elizabeth Burns Nicole Knutson Zalissa Zongo Kafando
Nolan Frank Christopher Malecki
Robert Hall Meg Mercy

STUART DAILY SEEDS OF LEARNING SCHOLARSHIP
Emily Akins Melady Vue

NANCY W. DENNEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
Meg Mercy Rebecca Parmentier

KINDNESS MATTERS SCHOLARSHIP
Shue Gottschalk

BERNICE D. KUNEY SCHOLARSHIP
Diana Thomawong Jenna Riedi

PLATO (PARTICIPATORY LEARNING AND TEACHING ORGANIZATION) SCHOLARSHIP
Emily Akins Kristi Kimote
Nolan Frank Mary Pulchinski

RETURNING ADULT SCHOLARSHIP
Emily Akins Nicole Gregorich Molli Pauliot
Vera Leone Brown Ashley Mills Melady Vue
Britt-Marie Zeidler

**SINGLE PARENT UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP**
Tierney Cushman  Michelle Kelley  Amanda Sauri

**UNIVERSITY LEAGUE SCHOLARSHIP**
Ashley Mills

**CYNTHIA MCCREARY HOLBROOK YOUMANS UNIVERSITY LEAGUE SCHOLARSHIP**
Kelly Johnson

**BERNARD OSHER REENTRY SCHOLARSHIP**
Amy Bartosiak  Jed Heckman  Joshua Miller
Tami Elizabeth Burns  Michelle Kelley  Joseph Nicgorski
Tierney Cushman  Nicole Knutson  Nathaniel Shaver
Amy Elbe  Ali Luedke  Amie Swanson
Robert Hall  Christopher Malecki  Zalissa Zongo Kafando

**Outstanding Undergraduate Returning Adult Student Awards**
These awards were established in 1981 by the Dean of Students Office to honor returning adults who have arrived at senior status while juggling all the commitments of adult life. As the call for nominees states, these are students “whose unusual determination and perseverance have enabled them to pursue academic goals and to contribute to the community by demonstrated leadership and/or service.”

**Presentation of Adult Student Awards**
Mari Magler, director, McBurney Disability Resource Center

Autumn Sanchez, award coordinator, Adult Career and Special Student Services

**NOMINEES**
Mariah Antigone  Lawrence Gann

**FINALISTS**
Kathy Kemnitz  Jessica Ward

**WINNERS**
Christine Gerbitz
Carly Major
Danielle Tolzmann
After making the difficult decision to take a break from school due to financial challenges, **Emily Akins** was able to return to her studies in the fall of 2021. She is currently a graduate student in the master of social work program at UW–Madison with a focus on mental health. After she graduates and earns her license as a clinical social worker, Emily will open her own private practice. Emily’s goal is to serve a wider population as a Spanish-speaking psychotherapist, and wants to make her services accessible and affordable to all clients. She also has a strong desire to work on social justice issues as she breaks down the walls of mental-health and substance-use stigma.

**Eligh Alvarez**’s first experience with college at Northwestern University did not go as he had hoped. He left school and joined the Air National Guard to train as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician; one of the most difficult training programs provided by the military. He worked hard and learned reliability, discipline, and professionalism; all skills he knows will help him succeed at UW–Madison. He started with the Badger Ready program and was admitted to start this spring as a transfer student.

As a paramedic, **Mariah Antigone** began to question why their most vulnerable patients struggled to get the health care that they needed. They decided to become a nurse with the hope it would give them a better understanding of the health of communities. They graduated with a registered nurse (RN) license but found they still didn’t have answers to their questions, so eventually they came to UW–Madison. While working towards a BSN, they started taking classes through the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies where they finally began to learn how to seek out and understand the causes of structural health problems. They will graduate this year with a bachelor’s degree in nursing and environmental studies along with certificates in food systems and global health. They achieved a 3.86 GPA while continuing to work, volunteer, and maintain their certification as a paramedic.

**Amy Bartosiak** is a determined, resourceful single female student who loves the outdoors, her faith, and healthy living. She has not always had those values but over the years she has come to embrace their simplicity and power in her life. She has always been sensitive and never wants to see any living thing suffer. She knows what it feels like to suffer in different ways. If she can help alleviate suffering of a plant, animal, or person, she is there. She realizes every living thing is connected and deserves a healthy life to coexist in. She hopes she is resilient as she reaches middle-age and continues on her journey of education.

**Vera Leone Brown** lived and worked in eight states across the United States—as well as in Chile, Belgium, and Italy—before making her home in Madison to pursue dual degrees in law and Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian studies at UW–Madison. Along the way she organized with peace and justice activists from across the Americas to resist U.S. imperialism, joined a worker-owned hostel in the Blue Ridge foothills, solo toured the TransAmerica Bicycle
Trail, advocated for marine wildlife from the coastal redwoods of California, and supported the local food movement in the Ozarks. She hopes to become an environmental lawyer fighting for collective liberation alongside frontline communities at home and abroad.

**Tami Elizabeth Burns** is a transfer student in the RN to BSN@Home program. She earned an associate degree in nursing in 2015 from Madison Area Technical College. Since graduation she has worked at Mercyhealth Hospital in Janesville as a clinic nurse in neurology, in Madison as a dialysis nurse, and is working at UW Health as a bedside nurse in their vascular progressive care unit. These past two years she, like many nurses, has had an abundance of new experiences when all intermediate care (IMC) prepared nurses were needed to assist in staffing COVID—19 units. She plans to continue working bedside while pursuing first a bachelor’s degree, then a master’s degree in nursing.

**Stefanie Calvert** has been fascinated with weather since she was just shy of age five. Experiencing a tornado inspired her desire to study meteorology. She attended community college but had to take a break from school when she developed serious health issues. When she regained her health she started back at school. After a visit to UW—Madison and the Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies (CIMSS) building she knew she wanted to major in atmospheric and oceanic sciences. She applied as a transfer student and was referred to Badger Ready. She successfully completed the program requirements and was admitted as a transfer student starting in fall 2021.

**Tierney Cushman** is a single mother to a beautiful 8-year-old boy named Jax. After graduating from high school, she moved among three states for work. In 2013, she delivered her son one month earlier than his due date. After a traumatic delivery, he suffered from two spots of brain damage. Tierney and her son worked together to fully recover from the complications of his delivery. When he was ready for school, she moved home to Wisconsin to pursue her lifelong dream of attending UW—Madison. She is a competitive bodybuilder and strives to continue her education in kinesiology and nutritional sciences, and potentially work as an occupational therapist in a neonatal intensive care unit.

**Amy Elbe**’s family has attended and graduated from UW—Madison for generations, including her grandfather, father, uncle, and both children. Being UW alumni is a goal and source of pride for her entire family. Amy moved to Madison after high school to attend the UW. After completing general education courses, she transferred to Madison Area Technical College to complete two associate degrees. She took a break from college to raise a family and start a career as a veterinary technician. She has been active in the veterinary community working in private practice, doing community work with Madison Cat Project, helping educate veterinary students at Madison College and UW—Madison, and working on the Access to Veterinary Care Coalition Project.

**Ashley Fearn-Semenas** was a nontraditional undergraduate student who graduated in December 2021 with a major in human development and family studies. She hopes to apply this degree to a career in higher education; more specifically, advising or career engagement. Ashley is married with three children, all under the age of eight—it’s a crazy house! Her family is from Middleton where they love to be outside doing just about anything. She loves to read and dance, but above all her favorite thing is being a mom.
Alex Forseth took a gap year abroad in the United Kingdom after graduating from high school in 2009. He continued his travels abroad, settling in Shanghai, China. Alex enrolled in intensive language courses in preparation for a bachelor’s program at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU). In 2011 he took a break from academics to focus on his health. He went on to open Fluidhause LLC, a hydraulic components distribution business and enrolled at UW-Milwaukee. Reevaluating his plans when COVID-19 started, Alex decided to apply for Badger Ready. Today he finds that his studies click in a way they hadn’t previously and he credits this to his focus and persistence. He was admitted as a transfer student at UW–Madison for fall 2021 after completing his Badger Ready requirements.

Nolan Frank is a loving, growth-based individual, intimidated by life, and currently studying human development and family studies (HDFS) within the School of Human Ecology. He is a creator, networker, healer, and facilitative educator trying to meaningfully respond to both the large-scale and niche problems facing his sphere of influence. He is excited by the way values-based judgement-and-decision-making inspires his personal and social practices of innovation and creative problem solving. Recently he began an independent study with Professor Burkholder in HDFS and is learning more about methods of qualitative research (like interviewing) and techniques of analysis. Nolan is an adult child who still naively cleaves to the power in heart-based cognition. He wants to remind you that you’re a beautiful but very mortal organism, and exhorts you to live according to your deepest values now, today, and in all your relationships.

After successfully completing two years at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Lawrence Gann left college simply because he and his family could no longer afford it. He worked various jobs—retail, food processing, and battery packaging—before a friend helped him secure a job in IT. After five years in that field, he relocated to Madison from Peoria, Illinois. A year later he enrolled at Madison Area Technical College where he graduated with honors in spring 2021. He started at UW–Madison in fall 2021 and will graduate this fall. He works full time and maintains a 4.0 GPA. He loves the exposure to new ideas and people that the university offers and intends to pursue graduate studies after completing a bachelor’s degree in English.

Christine Gerbitz comes from a family of teachers and always wanted to be a teacher herself. After two years of college, she met her husband and assumed she’d be able to complete her education after marrying but it didn’t work out that way. For the next 30 years she raised their five children, helped her husband run their farm, got involved with 4-H leadership, taught Sunday School, volunteered, worked as a bank teller, and taught fourth graders about the importance of the Wisconsin agricultural industry for the Rock County Farm Bureau. But something was missing and she felt her talents and abilities were not utilized to their fullest. She took a Gallup strengths assessment, as part of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau’s Leadership Institute, and her strengths all pointed to teaching. She started at UW–Madison in January 2020 just before the pandemic. She has a 4.0 GPA and will graduate this year, finally realizing her dream of becoming a teacher.

Phadrian Glenn is a special education teacher resident at Cunningham Intermediate School. She uses differentiated instruction to facilitate learning in different classroom environments. She is working on attaining a master’s degree
in special education at UW–Madison. Her cumulative GPA is 3.8. She received a big star as an award for her outstanding special education services, and an item as a token of appreciation for her work with students in the general education classroom. Phadrian works diligently to teach students math, reading, and English concepts. While working as a tutor for Sylvan, she instructed students according to the design of the Sylvan program, and managed students, tasks, and time to create robust instructional sessions.

Over the 20 years he worked in the transportation industry Jason Glomp found himself interested in politics. It was while serving as president and business manager of a worker-owned taxi cooperative that he discovered his passion for grassroots organizing and defending workers’ rights. He previously studied film at UW-Milwaukee until an accident forced him to take a break from school. He always wanted to return to school, and Badger Ready gave him the opportunity to do just that. After completing the Badger Ready program requirements, he went on to finish a degree in only four full semesters with a GPA over 3.8. He graduated in May 2021, and plans to use his education to address issues of inequality and advocate on behalf of work cooperatives, labor unions, and nonprofits. After completing an internship in the office of Wisconsin State Rep. Samba Baldeh, Jason accepted a position as a legislative aide in the representative’s office.

Interested in computers from a young age, Jeff Gniadek took computer programming classes in high school. He graduated in 2004 and briefly enrolled in community college before joining the military where he was trained in radio electronic repair. In 2007 he enrolled at Illinois State University (ISU) but left in 2009 to deploy to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. When he returned to ISU, chronic stress started to negatively impact his motivation. He left school and worked as a network and systems administrator for four years before joining Badger Ready in 2000. He successfully completed program requirements and was admitted to UW–Madison as a transfer student for fall 2021.
After a 30-year absence from UW-Madison, Shue Gottschalk returned to complete a bachelor’s degree in communications arts. Inspired by her rural roots and Midwestern do-it-yourself ethic, she has spent decades exploring 45 States making a home in 10 of them. A lifelong lover of art and photography, she’s passionate about documenting the way humans express their uniqueness and connect with each other. Her thirst for culture and far-flung places have paved her exploration of 25 countries, culminating in a seven-month sabbatical circling the Mediterranean and living out of a backpack. Shue aspires to use visual communication and digital media to drive social justice and environmental change in an increasingly polarized world.

Nicole Gregorich is a first-generation student who returned to UW–Madison to complete a medical degree after spending four years working as an ophthalmic technician and clinical research coordinator. She was inspired to become a physician by her sister who has cerebral palsy. Nicole is in the Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health Program (TRIUMPH) for which she will complete her clinical training in Milwaukee. She is also working on a longitudinal community health project working with medically complex children at Penfield Children’s Center. Nicole is completing the graduate certificate in global health and is an active member of the Medical Students Association. In her free time she enjoys art projects, cooking, and spending time with her family and cats.

Robert Hall occupies a unique position in academia with a storied past. Just like his fellow students he has a unique background and wants to do well for others by earning his education. His life was marred as a young adult by nonviolent convictions which radically altered his life. When he changed his life he took to academia to pursue science and writing. Despite difficulties he now is planning on graduating with a double major in genetics and history. Additionally, he is developing a group for the formerly incarcerated to help pave the path toward college so that others can be afforded new opportunities in life much the same as Robert has been.

Jed Heckman grew up in central Wisconsin and moved to Madison to attend UW–Madison in 2000. Lacking certainty in what academic direction he wanted to pursue, he decided to leave school after three semesters. He worked in the landscaping industry and played music with many local bands in Madison over the intervening years. He has been blessed with four children, Elias (14) and Rory (10), and twins Ira and Isaac born the summer of 2020. With the encouragement of his partner Elizabeth, Jed decided to enroll again at UW–Madison for the spring 2021 semester.

Edward Herzberg enlisted in the United States Marine Corps after high school, serving four years and two deployments in the infantry before being honorably discharged in 2015. Returning to his home state of Wisconsin, he pursued a degree in journalism at Madison Area Technical College until deciding he wished to follow a different career path, and left school. After several years outside academia, Edward returned as a University Special student at UW–Madison through a program with the school’s Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project, eventually moving to the Badger Ready program, and finally as an undergraduate transfer student. An avid reader and history buff, he is majoring in history with plans to pursue a career as a historian.

After graduating from high school, Jeffrey Hickel attended UW-La Crosse but decided college wasn’t for him at the time. An athlete
in middle school, Jeffrey took up guitar while recovering from an ankle injury. That led to a successful music career that took him on tour all over the world. He enrolled in UW–Madison’s Summer Intensive Portuguese Institute which led him to learn about the Badger Ready program. He began completing the Badger Ready requirements in spring 2020 and went on to major in communication arts. He graduated with distinction in December 2021. He seeks to continue sharing his passion and love of music with the world while entering a career in communications. Jeffrey has a few words for inspiring musicians, “Never give up on your dreams!”

Kelly Johnson is a graduate student at UW–Madison in the part-time master of social work program. She is currently a research specialist at the university, but aims to become a social worker to assist youth who have experienced trauma. After experiencing a gap in education and overcoming mental health barriers, she looks forward to pursuing her dream of helping children from underrepresented populations who need support.

Coming to Badger Ready, and by extension UW–Madison, was a life-changing second chance for Tyler Johnston. At age 28, he came from a background of academic struggle in his earliest adult years. In his time at UW, he managed to thrive, achieving a 3.7 GPA after approximately 58 credits. This culminated in his December 2021 graduation with a bachelor’s degree in computer science. He is forever grateful to Badger Ready and Bucky’s Tuition Promise without which he may have never gotten the chance to rewrite his story.

Kristy Jorgensen is originally from Madison and attended classes at UW-River Falls before returning home to work at the height of the Great Recession. She married and started a family, but always wanted to return to school to finish a degree. After joining the Wisconsin Air National Guard in 2015, she completed an associate degree in liberal arts at Madison Area Technical College in 2018. She took a few classes at UW-Whitewater but it wasn’t a good fit. She found out about the Badger Ready program at UW–Madison which fit well with her busy life, and provided the flexibility needed to study while being deployed all over the world. She is working on a degree in personal finance while balancing two jobs, parenting, and significant military commitments with the goal of becoming a certified financial planner.

Michelle Kelley never dreamed she would attend college. She spent years traveling the world, interpreting her experiences through music, movement, photographs, and words. She now has the privilege of exploring entirely new ways to express herself as she earns a communication arts degree at UW–Madison. After long days in class and evenings at work, she has the pleasure of coming home to her plants and gardens, books and records, quirky dog, loving partner, and two young children in her cozy corner of Madison’s northside.

Kathy Kemnitz will graduate in May with a bachelor’s degree in social work, a few days after turning 52. School had always been challenging for her, and she remembers a chemistry lecture at Madison Area Technical College during which she realized she did not learn like the other students. She sought out testing for learning disabilities but it wasn’t available to her at the time. About the same time she discovered she was pregnant with her first son and left school. Eighteen years later, after a shift in employment left her at a crossroads, her oldest son encouraged her to go back to college. She started back at Madison College and then was accepted to
UW–Madison. She finished her first semester with a 3.0 GPA despite feeling like she was still struggling with how to learn. Finally receiving an ADHD diagnosis, she was able to get the support she needed to thrive in school. She looks forward to becoming a social worker and eventually pursuing a master of social work.

**Kristi Kimote** is a full-time social worker and mom, and a part-time master of social work (MSW) program student. She loves working in the school environment and being an advocate, especially for those students who may be struggling emotionally, behaviorally, and/or academically. She enjoys forming relationships with students and their families to ensure that they feel welcome and valued at school. Through the part-time MSW program, Kristi has gained practical knowledge such as how to research evidence-based practices as well as values such as honoring student and parent voices and experiences. She is excited to be entering her final year of school as balancing life can be especially challenging for nontraditional students.

**Nicole Knutson** first enrolled at UW–Madison in the fall of 2008, but her academic journey came to an abrupt halt due to the overwhelming presence of mental illnesses. Throughout the years after leaving college, she worked diligently to overcome the many obstacles she faced. She persevered and her success propelled her to return to finish the adjourned educational quest at last. She is now fervently pursuing her lifelong dream of obtaining a bachelor’s degree in personal finance. She hopes one day to provide education and guidance to others that will impact their financial futures and help them achieve their financial goals.

**Annie Lewis** is a first-generation student pursuing a bachelor’s degree in health promotion and health equity. She is a licensed aesthetician practicing in the Madison area and is passionate about holistic wellness. After graduating high school, Annie attended UW Oshkosh, but degree plans were put on hold when she was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Now Annie plans to incorporate her career as an aesthetician with her future work as a wellness practitioner. Given her personal experience, she hopes to connect with individuals living with chronic illness and help them live their healthiest, fullest lives. Annie lives on the east side of Madison with her partner and their two fur babies. After graduation she plans to continue working in Madison and is excited to begin her integrated practice.

**Alison Luedke** loves to learn, and she’s grateful that she has many opportunities to do so at UW–Madison. She has always been a little nontraditional, graduating high school a year early at the age of 16 and starting college for the first time when she was only 17. Sometimes things don’t always work out the way you plan them, but Alison doesn’t regret any of the life experiences she has gained that have led her down her current path. Alison is now a full-time Badger with high academic honors. She works part time in a biotechnology lab which has inspired her to pursue a career in science communications where she can help educate others on important, potentially life-saving, topics.

**Carly Major** is passionate to become an advocate and changemaker for the healthcare industry. Her personal history of chronic illness has fueled her desire to fight for social justice and equity, especially for women’s pain. She wishes to use her health promotion and health equity education to pursue the creation of a holistic healing center with a multidisciplinary and diverse team—a community of care providers dedicated to helping people improve their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbe-
Outstanding Adult Student Celebration and Reception

ing. Essentially she wants to build the sanctuary that she couldn’t find when she was at her greatest need. With support from her campus resource team, Carly has been able to explore her role as a disability advocate and has earned her spot on the School of Education’s Dean’s list with a 4.0 GPA. She will graduate this year and is excited to see what door will open next.

Christopher Malecki returned to his scholastic journey after a 13-year struggle with mental illness that was fueled by substance abuse. Returning to university has provided him with the tools and experiences to build a future that seemed so far from the realm of possibility when he first began his journey in 2016. After discovering a latent interest in mathematics and computer science, Christopher was able to parlay his passion for creative problem solving. He has been immensely grateful for the opportunity to help others in recovery navigate their transitions to community college. As he embarks on this new chapter at UW–Madison, Christopher is committed to balancing his responsibilities as a parent, and sharing his inspiring story of recovery with others.

Meg Mercy is a first-generation college student who spent nearly ten years as a low-income single mother to two daughters before returning to UW–Madison to finish her education in 2020. During the interim she became a domestic violence advocate, educator, author, public speaker, and filmmaker. Since returning to school during the pandemic, Megan has been taking courses, studying for the MCATs, and homeschooling. After completing a bachelor’s degree in social work, she aims to pursue a master of social work and then pursue a doctor of medicine degree. Megan plans to continue advocating for policy changes that protect the vulnerable while raising her girls to promote justice and compassion. All three are looking forward to traveling internationally together as soon as they can.

As a teenager, Joshua Miller sought help for his personal struggles through social services but these could not provide adequate help for him. Fast forward and the teenager is an adult. He gained some new titles father, husband, part-time student, and assistant store manager. The Badger Ready program was his goal through all of those long hours. He has found success in multiple facets of life and has the extreme passion to become the best version of himself. He will acquire a degree in rehabilitation psychology and hopes to one day be a pivotal role model for all young adults in recovery.

Ashley Mills has dreamed of being a social worker for many years yet her mental health challenges kept her from fulfilling this dream at a younger age. She is excited to return to the classroom at her dream school UW–Madison, and to be learning about all the wonderful ways to affect positive change in today’s world. She hopes to be an advocate for oncology patients when she graduates with a master of social work.

Jessi Mirick is a first-generation undergraduate student who returned to university after a decade-long hiatus. After years of mismanaged ADHD, she was finally able to put the pieces together and properly “adult.” Part of that journey has been learning how to manage her finances, and she hopes to use her experience to help others improve their financial well-being. Jessi finds herself continually disappointed that it’s not considered polite conversation to talk about money. Fortunately, she works as a financial specialist for UW Credit Union while pursuing a bachelor’s degree in personal finance. She thinks the beach is overrated, she always wins at Tetris, and she gives the best relationship advice (although no one ever listens).
Jessi is the proud parent of three beautiful cats, and is happily engaged to the love of her life.

**Joseph Nicgorski** is a dreamer and big picture visionary. After a brief college stint in his 20s, he chased a dream of playing heavy metal music in the southern United States. Fast forward 15 years, he currently works for Harley-Davidson Motor Company in the retail/events space and loves the freedom he is awarded to unleash creativity within this role. His natural curiosity about the world of business has led him down the path of branding and brand management. One of his greatest passions is sharing his story of taking an extended break from education and explaining the never-ending sense of fulfillment that choosing to go back to college has provided him.

**Rebecca Parmentier** wishes to thank the Adult Career and Special Student Services and the generous donors for making it possible to reach this monumental goal, earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology and theatre as well as a dance therapy certificate. With this huge accomplishment, Rebecca ventures in a new direction, filled with excitement for bringing her healing talents into the world in an effective way. Returning to school in midlife has been the most remarkable experience of transformation, and she is deeply appreciative of all the support that she has been given in fulfilling this dream.

Pursuing her lifetime academic goal, **Molli Pauliot** is currently conducting research in her 6th year of a PhD program in cultural anthropology. In 1998 Molli completed a bachelor’s degree in sociology at Viterbo College, and in 2002 completed a master of social work from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Molli returned to academia to complete her lifelong goal of earning a PhD. A recent cancer survivor and natural caregiver, family and community are her major priorities. Molli’s goal is to conduct research in her Ho-Chunk community in a culturally appropriate manner, and share their stories in way that will benefit future generations. Molli and her husband, Dean, currently care for two young relatives as foster grandparents.

**Mary Pulchinski** is a first-generation student working toward a doctorate degree in population health nursing. She has worked the entirety of her nursing career in, and is a fierce advocate for, public health. She has a vision for how public health can play a vital role in improving life for all people. She believes that everyone has the right to have a life that allows them to pursue health, and that health is influenced by a complex network of factors that we are only beginning to explore. She hopes to be a force for change in public health and is excited to see where her career in the field leads her.

Born and raised in southeastern Wisconsin, **Jenna Riedi** graduated from UW–Madison with a bachelor’s degree in history, religious studies, and classical studies; and from UW-Milwaukee with a master’s degree nonprofit management and leadership. Before joining Canyon Concert Ballet, she was the director of development & marketing for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Larimer County. Jenna is heavily engaged in the Fort Collins community as a volunteer and board member for Animal Friends Alliance, a member of the Larimer Chorale, a member of the Fort Collins Eyeopeners Kiwanis Club, a graduate of Leadership Fort Collins (class of 2015-2016), and a 2018 “40 Under Forty” honoree.

**Amanda Sauri** has always been grateful for education and the opportunities it can give someone. Less than a quarter of foster children graduate college, so as a foster child she always dreamed to go down the road not commonly
taken. Despite the challenges she has faced, she is ready to start school again after four years and succeed. She is eager to further her knowledge in business in order to hopefully become a project manager in the general contracting industry. While tackling school and being a full-time single mom, she is ready to work toward a successful future for her family.

It took Nathaniel Shaver five years in the US Army and jumping out of an airplane 25 times before he decided to change careers and merge his love of the culinary world with health and leadership. This calling led him to pursue a degree in dietetics back in his hometown of Madison. Nathaniel spent two years studying at Madison Area Technical College, where he was briefly president of the Student Veterans Club, before transferring to UW–Madison to finish his pursuit of becoming a registered dietitian with a certificate in global health. He is an active member in local VFW and Team Red, White and Blue (RWB) chapters hoping to promote healthy and sustainable eating habits in veteran populations.

Unlike more obvious physical forms of diversity, neurological diversity often goes under discussed. For Alex Smith, it’s the form of diversity he thinks about the most. “When I dropped out of Harvard in 2014, I didn’t know I had obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). I thought the academic part of me had somehow broke,” says Smith of Stoughton. After taking time off from school to work and get treatment, Smith returned to higher education through UW–Madison’s Badger Ready Program where he felt his neurodiversity was accepted. Starting slowly, he ended his time at UW coordinating undergraduate statistics researchers, working a student job with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System, and serving
on the executive team of the UW–Madison chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). While his major is data science, neurological diversity is still the subject he thinks about the most, and his future work will involve analyzing data in the mental health field.

**Amie Swanson** is a nontraditional student pursuing a undergraduate degree in psychology. The Badger Ready program allowed Amie to return to college at UW–Madison for the fall 2021 semester. Once Amie finishes her undergraduate degree she plans to work as an at-risk youth counselor, with a long-term goal of earning a master's degree in psychology and becoming a licensed mental health therapist. Experiencing her own childhood trauma she had many people in her life show her support, including professional therapists. Her previous career as a chef and food cart owner helped establish her love for the Madison community. Amie lives in Madison with her son and husband who are very supportive in her pursuit to change careers to help others.

**Diana Thomawong** is no stranger to the hard work and dedication required to attend school, work a full-time job, and raise two young children. She is a first-year graduate student at UW–Madison attending The Information School’s library information science program. Having experienced the hardships in impoverished communities, she hopes to use her education in data and information science to help close the digital divide. Diana obtained a bachelor's degree at UW-Milwaukee with a major in history and Jewish cultural studies. She is currently a two-decade veteran of the hospitality industry. Diana is a lover of film, trying new cuisines, traveling, and most importantly, being a mother to Jacob and Grace.

When her son was diagnosed with autism, **Danielle Tolzmann** discovered herself on a different path than she had expected. She found herself in a new community and created an organization to help other families. Getting involved as a volunteer, becoming a mentor, and serving on committees, she eventually became president of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin. It was in this role she realized “this work is too important to not get right” and her mother encouraged her to consider going to college. She dusted off her 1987 high school transcript and started college at age 48. It was not an easy transition as she was working full time and still serving in her leadership role. A candidate to graduate with distinction this May she has earned a cumulative GPA of 3.9. She intends to share new skills and leadership experiences in an organization serving those with diverse abilities.

**Melady Vue** is of Hmong descent and was born in Eau Claire. She is a third-year graduate student at UW–Madison attending the part-time social work program after obtaining a bachelor’s degree from UW-Eau Claire six years ago. She currently works full time at the UW-Eau Claire Upward Bound Program as a student services coordinator and is a single mother of two young children. After volunteering with the Western Dairyland Head Start Policy Council she is passionate about social justice, especially for families and children who live under the poverty line. She plans to graduate in 2023. Her goal is to use her education to become a clinical social worker in mental health.

While helping her grandmother with health issues, **Jessica Ward** realized she wanted to become a nurse. After researching her options, she obtained an associate degree in nursing while working full time in a rural hospital on their labor and delivery unit. With her associate degree in hand, she began working at the Wom-
out’s Health Clinic in her community where she still works as the nursing operational leader. A few years and two children later, Jessica realized it was time to pursue a bachelor’s degree in nursing. She found UW–Madison’s BSN@Home program and realized it would provide her with the flexibility she needed to still work as a nurse, be a mom, and remain active in her community. She will graduate this year and feels she now has an opportunity to make a bigger difference in people’s lives.

Jaime Wendt is an undergraduate student in the College of Letters and Science, studying religious studies and criminal justice. After graduating, she plans to work as a chaplain in a correctional facility. She’s excited about pursuing this degree because of the opportunities to gain practical field experience working with people who are or have previously been incarcerated. One of the things she likes most about UW–Madison is attending guest lectures, conferences, and experiences organized by faculty members and student organizations. While Jaime is attending UW–Madison, she’s working part-time for BMO Harris Bank and remains active in her faith community. Her favorite study spot on campus is on the third floor of Steenbock Library, and she thinks the best place to grab a coffee is at the Chazen Art Museum café.

School was difficult for Alexander Yelinek so he developed coping mechanisms to help him graduate from high school. After working and gaining some maturity for a couple of years, he realized he wanted to join the United States Marine Corps (USMC) where he qualified for the prestigious Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear specialist training program. Through this program and his time in the military, he discovered his love for chemistry. He started at UW–Madison with the Badger Ready program after his honorable discharge from the USMC and was admitted as a transfer student for summer 2021.

Britt-Marie Zeidler’s lifelong dream has been to obtain a PhD in education, but as a person with multiple disabilities it has been an uphill battle as she struggles with dyslexia, ADHD, and chronic, debilitating migraines. She is a fighter and founded an initiative for graduates with disabilities to create a community for people like her on campus. Britt-Marie is a passionate student advocate and when she finishes her PhD studies she hopes to mentor and work with older students with disabilities who feel that higher education is for the young and those not living with disabilities.

Zalissa Zongo Kafando is a mother of two girls and one boy, and a first-generation undergraduate student who returned to college after over 10 years away. She was born and raised in Africa, moved with her family to Wisconsin in 2018, attended Madison Area Technical College for two years, and then transferred to UW–Madison to pursue a bachelor’s degree in information systems at the Wisconsin School of Business. She has worked full time as a caregiver since 2018 while going to school and taking care of her family. She has been a homeschool teacher for her kids throughout the COVID–19 crisis. She has maintained strong academic skills with 3.9 GPA. She plans to work as a software or data engineer.
Acknowledgements

Adult Career and Special Student Services in the Division of Continuing Studies would like to thank the following donors for their generosity:

The **Alma Baron Second Chance for Women Scholarship** was established by Alma Baron in 2001 to support a female returning adult student over the age of 45, given her own personal experience of returning to college at age 51 to earn a doctorate in adult education. Following Alma’s death in 2006, friends and family continue to support the fund in her memory. We are especially grateful to her daughters, Dr. Jill Baron and Professor Ellen Jo Baron, for their generous contributions.

Support by the **American Association of University Women (AAUW)–Monona/Madison Branch** dates to 1993 with the establishment of the initial **Single Parent Scholarship Fund**. In addition, our **Returning Adult Student Award** program receives funds each year in remembrance of Annie D. Swenson and Lois Mathews Rosenberry. Swenson was the first president of the Madison branch in 1909. Mathews Rosenberry was dean of women and professor of history at UW–Madison from 1911 to 1918. Both were among the founding mothers of the national AAUW.

**Mary K. Rouse and Roger P. Bruesewitz Beyond Bars Scholarship** supports UW–Madison adult/nontraditional students, especially those with past involvement in the criminal justice system. **Roger P. Bruesewitz** spent more than a dozen years in prison and, while inside, began taking courses at UW–Madison through a study-release program. He earned a journalism degree and went on to become a copyeditor at the Law School. Roger developed a lifelong friendship with former Dean of Students **Mary Rouse** who was entrusted with Roger’s estate upon Roger’s death in 2019. Mary donated $25,000 of his estate to create this scholarship.

Alumni **Joe Corry** and **Barbara Weston Corry** established the **Joe Corry and Barbara Weston Corry Scholarship Fund** in 2000 after devoting a combined 53 years to the university as academic staff members. Barbara Weston Corry retired as a senior editor at the Center for Demography and Ecology and Joe Corry as an associate vice chancellor in the Office of Academic Affairs. Their scholarship supports a single-parent student.

**Crankstart** is a program supported by husband and wife, **Michael Moritz** and Harriet Heyman. The **Crankstart Reentry Scholarship** assists nontraditional students who, after experiencing a cumulative gap in their education of five or more years, are completing a first baccalaureate degree.

To support a returning adult graduate student, **Karen Doerfer Daily** established the **Stuart Daily Seeds of Learning Fund** in 2004 in honor of the memory of Stuart G. Daily, a teacher of much
to many. Daily taught in England and at UW–Madison and worked in the corporate world. Always an athlete, he died unexpectedly after leading his rugby team to victory. Daily’s most valuable asset was his knowledge, and he encouraged others to gain knowledge.

The Nancy W. Denney Memorial Scholarship was established by friends, family, and colleagues in memory of Nancy Denney, a devoted professor of psychology and a single parent who died of breast cancer in 1995. The goal was to continue Denney’s advocacy for students who faced joint responsibilities of parenting, work, and study. The scholarship exists due to a generous initial contribution by the Evjue Foundation and contributions by numerous private donors moved by her advocacy for student-parents.

The Sosa family started the Kindness Matters Scholarship to give returning adult students with financial need and strong academic history the opportunity to focus on achieving their target degrees. Beth and Brandon’s daughter Aanya chose the name Kindness Matters considering their family belief that, above all, love and kindness are most important.

The Bernice D. Kuney Scholarship was established in 1989 with a gift from Edith Martindale. It honors her mentor, Bernice Kuney. Kuney taught English for 40 years at UW-Extension, serving adults returning to college for degree work or professional development. Martindale, class of 1944, devoted her professional life to better understanding and responding to mental illness and mental disability, topics she explored in her work and writings.

The Bernard Osher Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life through support for higher education. The Osher Reentry Scholarship Endowment assists adults who wish to return to college to complete their undergraduate degrees after a significant break in their studies. UW–Madison is one of 88 universities nationwide selected to receive the endowment.

PLATO (Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization) is a learning-in-retirement program whose members organize and lead its courses. Historically, PLATO supported the degree-completion goals of single-parent undergraduates. Beginning in 2013, PLATO Scholarships became available to a broader group of returning adult and nontraditional students striving to complete UW–Madison degrees.

The University League has supported a Scholarship for a returning adult student since the fund was established in 1993. In 2004, it added a second scholarship to support students, the Cynthia McCreary Holbrook Youmans Endowed Scholarship. This award honors a former president with a distinguished history of community and campus service.

Sponsors
Division of Student Life, Office of the Dean of Students
McBurney Disability Resource Center
Division of Continuing Studies, Adult Career and Special Student Services private donors
Special thanks to
OUTSTANDING UNDERGRADUATE RETURNING ADULT STUDENT AWARDS COMMITTEE
Dr. Elton Crim
Mari Magler
DJ Mattison
Liz Senseman
Autumn Sanchez, chair

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE
Martina Diaz
Ace Hilliard
Beth Jaggers
Jing Xu
Anne Niendorf, chair

Contributions to our scholarships and awards are greatly appreciated. To make a donation please visit acsss.wisc.edu/give.