



THE rock

Slippery Rock University Magazine

Fall 2023

KAREN RILEY
SRU'S 18TH PRESIDENT

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THE ROCK

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FALL 2023

Volume 26, Number 2

THE rock IN THIS ISSUE



8 Life of Riley



12 FBI Undercover



18 PSI of Relief



20 Giant Leap for Women



28 Gift of Grace Anna



32 From the Rock to the World Cup

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ALL TOGETHER NOW

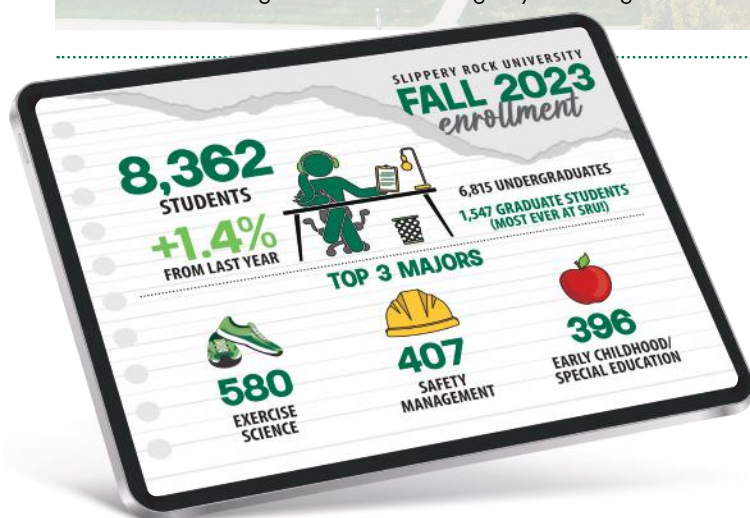
More than 1,500 first-year SRU students attended New Student Convocation, Aug. 18, at Morrow Field House. Students sat together with matching T-shirts according to their residence halls. This is the only time the Class of 2027 will assemble as a group until its commencement ceremony.





AMONG THE BEST

SRU earned its highest ranking in recent years on U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges guidebook, ranking 50th on the "Best Regional Universities North" list, up 35 spots from last year. SRU was also recognized among the "Best Value Schools," "Top Performers on Social Mobility" and "Best Colleges for Veterans" by U.S. News, as well as a top Master's University and a "Best Bang for the Buck" college by Washington Monthly.



ENROLLMENT IS UP

There were 8,362 students enrolled as of the 15th day of classes in the Fall 2023 semester, which is a 1.4% increase compared to the same day last year. Included in SRU's enrollment this year are a record 1,547 graduate students, surpassing SRU's previous high of 1,503 in Fall 2021, as well as 1,535 first-year students, the largest class size since 2019 and a 5.2% increase from last year.

TAKE SURVEY



DEAR READER, WE NEED YOUR HELP

As a reader of The ROCK magazine, you have preferences that are important to editorial decisions and the way SRU connects with you. Please help us improve The ROCK magazine by taking a five-question survey online at sru.edu/readersurvey.

DEAN DAFOE



Slippery Rock University appointed Nicole Dafoe dean of the College of Engineering and Science earlier this year. Dafoe, who has worked at SRU since 2012, has served as an interim dean since January 2022. Following a nationwide search and recommendation from a University search committee, Dafoe's appointment was approved by the administration. Dafoe was interim dean of the College of Health, Engineering and Science from January 2022 to June 2022 and

continued as interim dean of the CES upon the creation of the College of Health Professions in July 2022. A native of Port Huron, Michigan, Dafoe first joined the SRU faculty in 2012 as a biology professor and became department chair in 2017.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS



SRU recently signed articulation agreements with other institutions to help students complete their degrees and save time and money. SRU signed six new agreements with Butler County Community College that will provide 13 pathways for BC3 students to complete their bachelor's degrees at SRU. The programs include paths to SRU bachelor's degrees in engineering, biology, computing and cybersecurity. With the addition of these pathways, BC3 students will have 46 formal academic pathways to SRU. More than 200 students transfer



from BC3 to SRU each year, mostly upon completing their two-year associate degree at BC3.

SRU also signed agreements with three law schools that will allow bachelor's degree students in any major at SRU to complete their law degree in six years. In the last year, SRU established these 3+3 program juris doctor degree programs with Widener University Commonwealth Law School in Harrisburg, the University of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University.

rock FILES

Teresa "Terry" Thome, '82, Bachelor of Science, recreation

HOME: Elizabethtown.

PROFESSION: I retired as a deputy chief inspector of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in 2016. I currently work at our family-owned business, Thome Insurance Agency, that my grandfather started in 1938. I also served for 10 years in the Pennsylvania and California Air National Guards as a communications specialist.

HOBBIES: Outdoor activities, travel (I visited every continent), social ministry and organizing reunions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: I was the second female in the history of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to be promoted to deputy chief inspector, which is the second highest position in our nation's oldest federal law enforcement agency. I've served on several state and national advisory boards, and, as a field postal inspector, I received a Department of Justice national award for complex fraud investigations.

WHY I GIVE: My philosophy is that we are here to love and serve others. I helped organize a recreational therapy scholarship for my late Alpha Sigma Tau sorority sister Barbara Gaudio Taylor. In two years, it evolved into an endowed \$25,000 SRU scholarship thanks to the support of Barbara's family, friends and alumni. Even with her passing, her Rock spirit lives into perpetuity so others can benefit from financial aid through \$1,500 scholarships. SRU will, in turn, enhance other's lives like Barbara did with hers.



Alfonso "Butch" Angelucci, '92, Bachelor of Science, elementary education

HOME: Ellwood City.

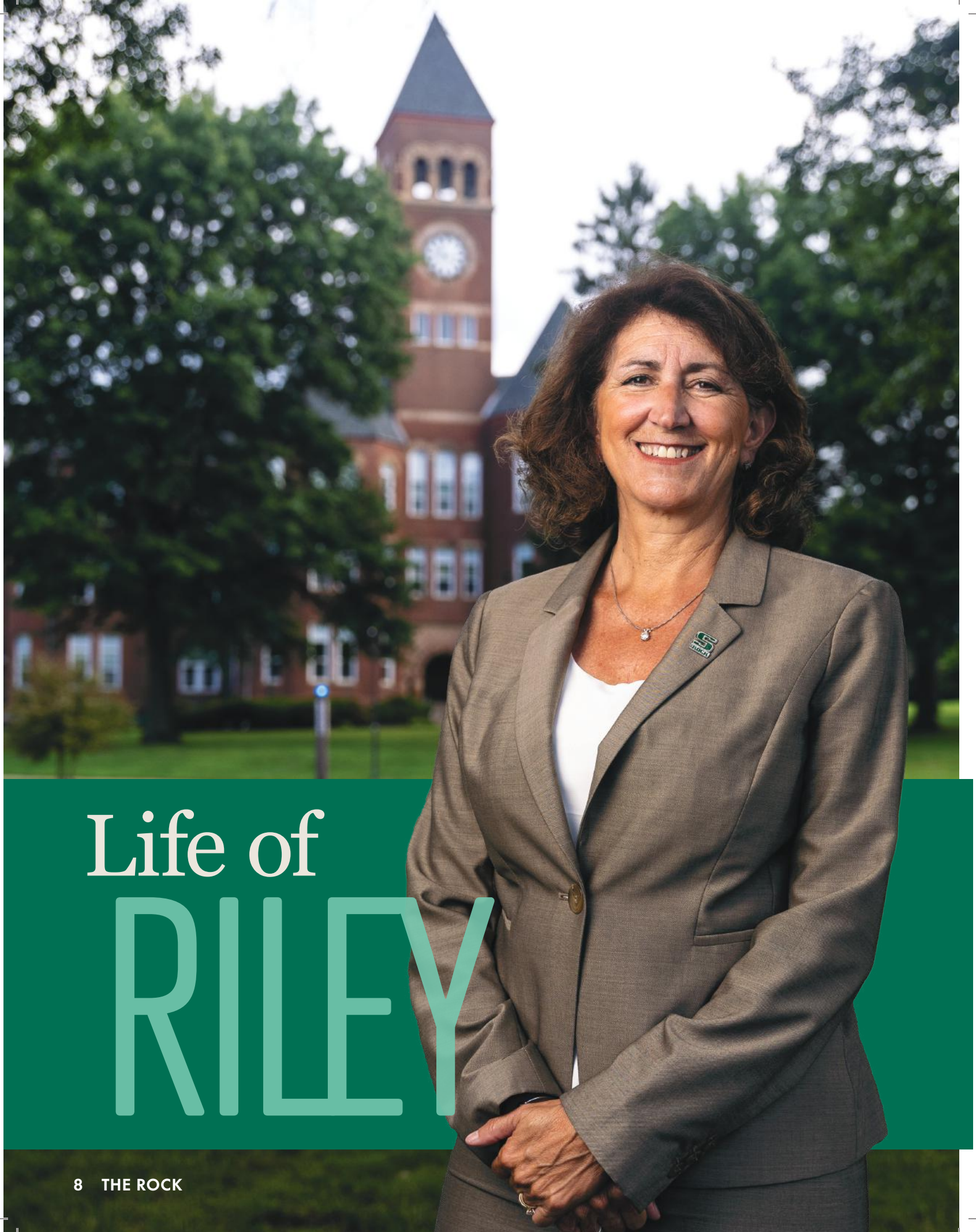
PROFESSION: I have been a professional educator for 30 years, serving as a teacher and a school administrator. I am entering my 10th year as the superintendent of the Slippery Rock Area School District.

HOBBIES: Playing in a 50-years-and-older baseball league (yes, I am that old!), reading and spending time with my wife, Holly, and family.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Earning my master's and doctoral degrees, being featured in the October 2005 edition of PTO Today, helping to establish an educational foundation and a weekend food program for families in need from the Slippery Rock Area School District community.

WHY I GIVE: I'm inspired by my brother, Paul Angelucci, '97, who personified what it means to put others' needs above your own. He was extremely proud to call himself an SRU graduate and he applied his degree to work as a loyal and dedicated employee of Bridges Health Partners. By donating to the Paul M. Angelucci '97 Scholarship, individuals are truly assisting undergrads in the SRU College of Health Professions who need some financial assistance to help them achieve their goal of being extraordinary caregivers and health care providers.





Life of
RILEY

Meet Slippery Rock University's new president

It's a common question about lifelong academics: Why would a successful educator or researcher decide to transition into administration? One of the more common reasons is to give back or make a difference on a broader level beyond the classroom. For those relatively few who assume the role of college president, they tend to be either builders or repairers.

Karen Riley is certainly a builder. After spending her entire life in Colorado, including two years as the provost at Regis University in Denver, Riley moved across the country in July to become the 18th president in the history of Slippery Rock University.

"I wasn't looking to move so quickly or even move out of state, but this opportunity is a great fit for me," Riley said. "I don't have to come here to fix something that needs a complete overhaul. There's a good, solid foundation upon which to build."

Building is a common thread throughout Riley's life. Growing up in Littleton, Colorado, she was the daughter and granddaughter of engineers and excelled at math. She seemed destined to follow their professions.

"I was interested in how things work, but really more about how people work," said Riley, who earned a bachelor's degree in psychology at Colorado State University. "I was interested in becoming a psychologist. But then one summer, I worked at a school for kids with special needs, and that changed my life. I fell in love with them, their families and the whole idea of teaching."

Consider that her first career building block. After earning a master's degree in early childhood special education from the University of Denver, a 24-year-old Riley was hired as a coordinator tasked with creating, from scratch, the special education preschool program in Adams County School District 12, where she spent the first 11 years of her career.

"That's when I developed a love for building programs, expanding them, and seeing how we could make programs more effective," said Riley, who went on to earn a doctoral degree in educational psychology from the University of Denver.

Through her doctoral research and work as a postdoc, Riley became an expert in neurodevelopmental disorders. She researched approaches to addressing societal issues and improving the lives of those affected by Fragile X syndrome and Down syndrome.

After working at The Children's Hospital of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Riley returned to the University of Denver in 2001 as a project coordinator. She rose through the faculty ranks as an assistant (2004-10) and associate (2010-17) professor of child, family and school psychology. She became chair of the Educational Research Policy and Practice Department in 2011, before becoming dean of the College of Education in 2013, serving in that post for the next eight years.

During that time, Riley continued to build. Under her watch at the University of Denver, scholarly productivity increased; the school raised more than \$27 million; the number of students, faculty and staff surged; and the university launched a Center for Professional Development to provide certificates and stackable credentials.

The transition to higher education administration was met with skepticism from others, even from some of her postdoc mentors who said she was wasting her time and talents by toiling in seemingly thoughtless busywork. There's even an old joke in higher education that professors lose 25 points from their IQ when they switch to administrative roles.

But Riley didn't see it that way.





"It's fun and exciting to me to be able to solve problems and build things, because that's what administrators do," Riley said. "How do you make things fit together? How do you make things better? How do you anticipate what's coming next? Those are all questions you help answer as an administrator. You need to get the best out of people and create a place where people want to work and thrive.

"And to be able to become an administrator in higher education, you're doing it in a place that changes people's lives. Maybe I am just a teacher at heart, but the most important reason administrators do what they do is to improve the human condition."

In 2021, Riley moved to another Denver school, becoming provost and chief academic officer at Regis University. During her two years in this role, she continued to build, developing and launching an academic plan focused on excellence in teaching, research and student thriving.

Everything was going well when a member of Riley's extended family emailed her a job posting for the presidency at SRU with a note that read, "I saw this and it sounds like you."

But it wasn't just the job description that caught her eye. It was the location too. Her husband, Steve, grew up in Dorseyville, just north of Pittsburgh. The couple first met in 1984 when they struck up a conversation about football. Karen agreed to have lunch with Steve to settle a wager after the Pittsburgh Steelers defeated the Denver Broncos in the NFL playoffs.

Nearly 40 years later, the idea of moving closer to Steve's family and his home state was an attractive option to both of them. Steve would

get to move home, and the more Riley learned about SRU, the more the job didn't just sound like her, it was perfect for her.

"When I started reading more about the institution and started meeting the people that work here during my first round of interviews, it felt different," Riley said. "I've been told that when you interview for a job, you'll have a feeling

"After my on-campus interview, I called Steve and said, 'This feels right.'"

if it's right and you'll know. I didn't believe that advice until I came to Slippery Rock. After my on-campus interview, I called Steve and said, 'This feels right. I felt like my answers were what they were looking for. And if that's true, then this is a great fit.'"

The timing is also right for both Riley and the University.

Steve is a former attorney who retired in 2020, and both of Riley's adult children, Paige and Colin, recently married their partners. Paige works in the public school system in West Palm Beach, Florida, and Colin works in private equity





finance in Cherry Creek, Colorado.

In July, Riley and her husband moved into the President's House at SRU with their two dogs, Gauge and Zeke. This continues the home's legacy of hosting canine companions as former president Bill Behre and his wife, Leah, also had two dogs who spent a lot of time on walks around campus.

Behre announced his retirement in February 2022, well before his contract expired in June 2023, allowing ample time for a national search and transition of leadership for the next president to start on July 1, 2023.

Part of the solid foundation left by Behre is a newly created College of Health Professions and four new engineering programs that graduated their first students in 2020, 2021 and 2023. SRU also did not raise tuition for the last four years, ensuring it remains one of the lowest-cost four-year colleges in Pennsylvania.

That foundation gives a builder like Riley a strong base as she oversees a new strategic plan that will guide the University into its next era.

"While other universities in western Pennsylvania have been facing serious challenges, Slippery Rock University has been fortunate to maintain its positive position," said Jeffrey Smith, SRU trustee and chair of the presidential search committee. "Under Dr. Riley's leadership,

I expect the University's trajectory to continue upward, making SRU a destination of choice for people in our region."

"SRU, like all colleges and universities, will need to continue to evolve in response to our rapidly changing society," Riley said. "We are uniquely positioned to be leaders for our region and beyond, whether that's by offering new programs to prepare students for the workforce, establishing new partnerships with industry and the community, or taking new approaches to fulfilling our mission of improving people's lives through education."

Riley is also eager to address challenges unique to SRU and its surrounding community. Despite working in an urban setting in Denver, she created the Center for Rural Schools Health and Education, which facilitated research to provide more equitable outcomes for people in rural schools and communities in Colorado.

"Understanding the needs of students that come from rural communities is really important to me," Riley said. "They continue to be underserved in many ways, so coming to a school the size of SRU is ideal. It's not too big or too small. With the people and resources we have here, we can have a significant, positive impact on underserved communities."



With a strong foundation in place, SRU's rural campus is the perfect place for a builder like Riley.

"I'm excited about what we can accomplish here at SRU and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our students," Riley said. "There will be challenges and puzzles to solve, but that's part of the building process and being a president. I didn't come here from Colorado to finish my career. I came here to start something new."



TOP SECRET

DEEP UNDERCOVER

From fighting in Vietnam to infiltrating the mob, John Ligato has led a life made for Hollywood. But it's his time at SRU and in Butler County he cherishes most.

John Ligato's life story could be made into a movie that would challenge a director to decide what to leave on the cutting room floor. And at least one movie director attempted. The 2006 movie "10th and Wolf" is based loosely on Ligato's life.

A decorated Vietnam War veteran, Ligato founded a group home for people with developmental disabilities before becoming an FBI agent who went undercover with the Italian Mafia and other organized crime groups. His life's work also includes being a pilot, radio talk show host, stand-up comedian and author of five books.

But scenes from Slippery Rock University must be part of his story. Ligato fondly recalls SRU as an idyllic campus setting and also the turning point in his life.

"When I first got to Slippery Rock, it was like a college campus I used to see in the movies," said Ligato, a South Philadelphia native who enrolled at SRU in 1965. "I've since been to tons of campuses, but it's still a movie to me. I get chills when I go there, even now. The feeling I get at Slippery Rock, it's tangible."

Yet Ligato, who earned bachelor's (1971) and master's (1974) degrees in education at SRU, would like to delete a few scenes from his time at SRU, which he does when recounting his story. He was expelled from the University for an incident he said he's too embarrassed to share and then enlisted in the U.S. Marines and fought in the Vietnam War.

"I was in the hospital bed, and I wrote this letter to the (SRU) president at the time, Albert Watrel," Ligato recalled. "I said, 'Dear Dr. Watrel, I lie in a bed in the Philippines, wounded in Vietnam, and I would like nothing more than to come back to Slippery Rock and continue my education.'"

Ligato's request was granted, and he re-enrolled in the summer of 1969. More than 50 years later, he was honored by SRU in 2021 as a recipient of its annual Distinguished Alumni Award. So how does someone go from expulsion to commendation? Here's a synopsis of that movie, according to Ligato.

From top, John Ligato as a basic rifleman before his deployment to Vietnam. He returned to Slippery Rock University where he graduated and met his future wife, Lori Olson, and now he's a retired FBI agent living in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

"I lie in a bed in the Philippines, wounded in Vietnam, and I would like nothing more than to come back to Slippery Rock and continue my education."

MISSION IN VIETNAM

Ligato's sudden departure from SRU in 1967 meant he no longer had a student deferment for military service. Knowing he would receive a draft notice, Ligato opted to actively seek enlistment. He chose the Marines over the Army or Navy after a recruiter told him he could land embassy duty in Rome rather than go to Vietnam. He signed his papers. But then he wound up, four and a half months later, as a basic rifleman in the jungles near Quang Tri, Vietnam.

In hindsight, Ligato said, it was one of the best things to happen to him. He was assigned to the Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. After four months fighting in the bush and witnessing tremendous casualties near the demilitarized zone at Con Thien and Quang Tri, Ligato said the military airlifted him and half his company to an Air Force base at Phu Bai for rest and recuperation.

Not six hours after arriving there, on the morning of Jan. 31, 1968, Ligato said they awoke to orders that the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) compound nine miles away in Hue City needed help. They boarded trucks and were told they'd be back by noon. What those 80 Marines didn't know was 10,000 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops were positioned around Hue City for an offensive to end the war during the Lunar New Year festival, a surprise campaign known as the Tet Offensive.

During the first days of the month-long battle for Hue City, Ligato said Alpha Company lost all its commanding

officers, and Ligato observed the heroic acts of Sgt. Alfredo Gonzalez and Gunnery Sgt. John Canley, both of whom earned the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration in the U.S. Armed Forces. Ligato said Alpha Company was stuck on the outskirts of the city with no reinforcements and its retreat to Phu Bai blocked by the NVA. Gonzalez and Canley lobbed grenades and light anti-tank weapons, known as LAW rockets, at machine guns before running across an open rice paddy firing their M16s. Their bravery saved the lives of many men in their company, including Ligato's.

"It was an amazing time of valor for Americans that is lost in history," Ligato said.

Ligato and other Alpha Company Marines later captured enemy strongholds, including the NVA headquarters located inside the St. Joan of Arc church and school complex in Hue City. While storming the headquarters, Ligato said he ripped a Viet Cong flag from the wall and stuffed it in his pocket. That flag, stained with dirt and Ligato's blood, later hung in his apartment in Slippery Rock before he donated it to a Marine Corps museum in 1991.



After being wounded several times with shrapnel, Ligato was transported from Hue City to the Philippines, where he set his sights on a return to SRU. He later received a Bronze Star for his valor during the Tet Offensive and he received three Purple Hearts.



"It was an amazing time of valor for Americans that is lost in history."

From top, Ligato (middle) at basic training in Camp Lejeune. After serving in the Vietnam War, he donated a Viet Cong flag to the Marine Corps that he captured while in combat. Ligato now lives in Jacksonville, North Carolina, near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



MISSION IN SLIPPERY ROCK

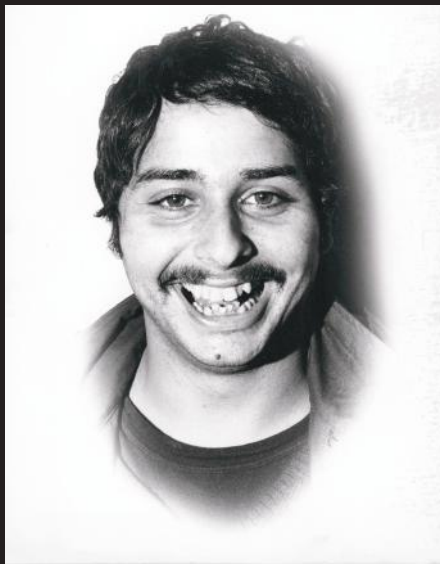
When Ligato returned to SRU for summer session in 1969, he did not have housing. The dormitories were already filled for the start of the fall semester. He instead pitched a tent at the nearby Rock Falls campground and showered in the locker rooms at Morrow Field House.

"I thought I was living large," Ligato said. "I had a mattress, a lantern and a tent I could stand up in. After Vietnam, this was the Hilton. But Slippery Rock had a winter, so I later found a room in a house to rent on Elm Street for \$50 a month."

The friendly environment at SRU was also something he appreciated more in his return to campus. He said it was unlike anything he encountered in South Philadelphia, let alone South Vietnam.

"In my neighborhood, if you went up to someone and looked them in the eye and said 'Hello,' you were spoiling for a fight," Ligato said. "I get up to Slippery Rock and everyone I see looks me in the eye, smiles and says 'Hello.' It took me a week to realize that they were sincere."

One of those "hellos" came from a fellow student named Lori Olson, the first of many hellos for a couple that has now been married for 53 years.



"Being expelled from Slippery Rock was the best thing that ever happened to me in so many ways," Ligato said. "Had I not been expelled, I wouldn't have appreciated The Rock as much as I did, I wouldn't have joined the Marine Corps, and I wouldn't have ever met my wife who was four years younger than me."

SRU was a turning point for professional reasons, as well.

"The education was great," Ligato said. "It was as good as any Ivy League school, but the difference was that we were the kids of teachers, cops, mill hunks and steelworkers. Our parents were hard workers, and we got that character trait from them. We couldn't afford to go to the Ivy League. But if we'd gone, we would've kicked butt. That's what always impressed me about Slippery Rock."

Like many of his fellow students at Slippery Rock, Ligato aspired to be a high school teacher. But he was "sidetracked," he said, while getting his master's degree in education psychology when he saw an unmet need for people with developmental disabilities.

He began working with at what is now The Arc of Butler County as a senior house parent in a group home program that took higher functioning people from state facilities and integrated them into the community. In 1973, The Arc opened the first community residences for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in western Pennsylvania. The residence offered 24/7 supervised housing for eight individuals, and today The Arc continues to provide this service through its Community Living Arrangement Program.

"We were at the forefront of starting group homes, which provided an opportunity for residents to live a normal life," said Ligato, who became the organization's director of community living arrangements. "There were people who had no business being in (state institutions) who were just blossoming when they got out. People ask me what the greatest reward I had in my career – the Marine Corps, the FBI or The Arc. It's not close; it's The Arc. I did that for 10 years, and I loved it."

After a while, though, with the federal government starting to fund group-home programs, Ligato saw his role reduced to doing paperwork. Desiring something greater, he opted to follow a new path.



From top, Ligato as a college student at Slippery Rock University, where he met his future wife, Lori. He lived in an apartment on Elm Street where Ligato displayed the Viet Cong flag that he later donated to the Marine Corps.



MISSION IN THE FBI

As a Marine and the son of a police officer, Ligato decided to pursue a career in law enforcement. So in 1982, he applied to become an FBI agent.

"They recruit the best and the brightest," Ligato said. "I had my doubts at first when I entered the academy because whenever we introduced ourselves, and I said 'John Ligato, Slippery Rock State College, lance corporal, Marine Corps,' there were some good humor and chuckles in the room. I'll never forget that, because there were all these Harvard- and Yale-educated attorneys and accountants or former colonels, majors and captains, and I thought, 'How am I going to compete with these guys?'"

His fears were unfounded: Ligato finished first in his class of 38 agents and was selected to give a speech at the graduation ceremony.

After a few months working as an FBI agent, Ligato dabbled in undercover work, first in Memphis, Tennessee, and then in New York City and Buffalo, before landing a four-year-long deep-cover assignment while based in Cleveland.

"When I was an agent, it was the pioneer days because they (would) rarely let people go undercover," Ligato said. "It was (like) the Wild West, but I felt more comfortable doing that because I grew up in South Philly around wise guys and I knew the culture and what makes them tick. I knew who was who and the chain of command. And I don't look like an agent and I don't talk like an agent; they are usually tall and blond-haired."

Ligato was sent to Las Vegas, where he met Ronald Marrazzo, an ex-felon with connections to the Gambino crime family. He hung around the bar that Marrazzo owned and started laundering money with him. He became Ligato's first "vouch."

"The easiest way to meet a bad guy is a vouch from another bad guy," Ligato explained. "We became 'friends' over the next year, and I started meeting other members of the mob in Vegas and did some cases on them. But this one case took off into eight cities, and they even sent me overseas and I worked with Scotland Yard because I had a vouch from the (mob)."

Marrazzo's vouch led to Ligato becoming the silent owner of a high-end gentlemen's club in Cleveland, where his undercover work led to nearly 100 arrests, half of which were cops and correctional officers who were charged with conspiracy to distribute narcotics and cocaine. Ligato said it broke his heart to see law enforcement corruption up close, given his professional and family background.

Ligato also worked with the likes of Joe Pistone, who operated undercover as Donnie Brasco targeting the Bonanno crime family, one of the "Five Families" of the New York City Mafia. Like Pistone, Ligato's experience going undercover was portrayed on the silver screen, although more loosely as compared to the 1997 film "Donnie Brasco" with Johnny Depp playing the titular role of Pistone's alter ego. The 2006 movie "10th & Wolf," starring James Marsden and Giovanni Ribisi, and featuring Dennis Hopper and Val Kilmer, was filmed in Pittsburgh. It was about a Marine from South Philadelphia who returned to his neighborhood after military duty and became an FBI informant to disrupt a Sicilian mob trying to take over the heroin trade. Ligato made a brief appearance in the film.

Real life undercover work was not all glamorous. Ligato, who went by the alias John Calabria, couldn't live near his family while on deep cover, and he couldn't be unreachable by a mob boss for more than a few hours without suspicions arising. Driving a few hours just to see his daughter's dance recital was a harrowing experience.



Ligato worked undercover for parts of eight years during his 20-year FBI career, and the record says he was good at it: His work led to 104 convictions. He also spent time as a pilot for the FBI.

"I was successful when I went undercover because I didn't have to act," Ligato said. "You can't put an undercover agent in an environment that they are not familiar with because they will get caught. You're living that 24/7. I loved it. When my last case ended, I didn't want to go back (to office work). Sometimes the office is more treacherous than being with the wise guys."

Still, it was dangerous.

"You didn't have your badge and gun, and if someone didn't like you, you couldn't call timeout and say, 'You can't hit me, I'm an agent,'" Ligato said.



MISSION IN RETIREMENT

Ligato had another passion. He wanted to be a writer. He fulfilled that even while still working for the FBI.

"I always said to myself, 'I could do better than some of these authors,'" Ligato said. "The first book I wrote I used a pseudonym because I was with the FBI. I submitted it to St. Martin's Press, and they published it immediately, and so I thought, 'This is easy!' But it wasn't."

After retiring from the FBI in 2003, Ligato continued writing. His fiction and non-fiction titles published by Post Hill Press include "The Near Enemy" and "Dirty Boys," both fictional accounts of an FBI agent's fight against the Mafia and terrorism, as well as "The Comey Gang: An Insider's Look at an FBI in Crisis," Ligato's critique of former FBI director James Comey and the Bureau's culture.

He also wrote about his time in Vietnam, especially the battle for Hue City, publishing an account of the three missing days of Marine Corps history and the heroic actions of Canley, titled "The

Gunny." He's working on another book about Canley, who died in 2022, that will be released later this year.

If all his experiences weren't enough, in "retirement" Ligato became an adjunct professor teaching counterterrorism and international security at Campbell University. Additionally, he hosted a radio talk show for Salem Communications in Cleveland, for which he interviewed the likes of boxing promoter Don King and journalist Chris Hansen, and he continues to host his own podcast.

Ligato added filmmaker to his portfolio, producing a documentary titled "Against the Odds: The Marines at Hue" and "The Last Muster," about a Marine division in World War II that reunited every year from 1957 to 2015 at Camp Lejeune near Jacksonville, North Carolina, where Ligato, 76, now lives with his wife.

He even dabbled in stand-up comedy. Ligato performed in a comedy show called The Patriot Tour, hosted by Hope for Warriors, that showcased comedians

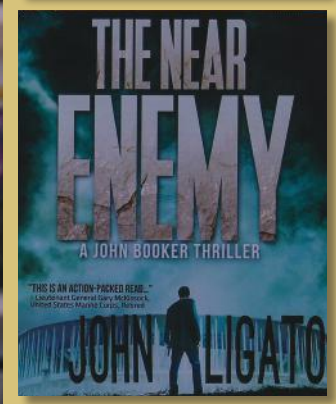
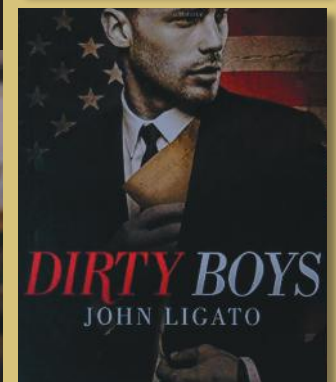
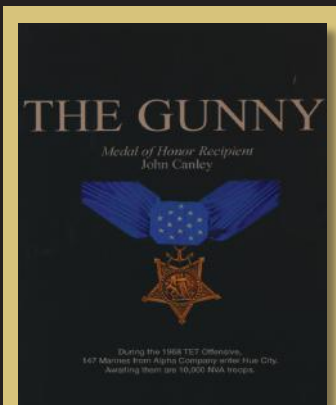
who were former military and first responders. That experience led to Ligato being invited to perform stand-up at Gotham Comedy Club in New York.

He jokes now about being expelled from college, but reflecting on his life and career, he recognizes how consequential his time at SRU was to his story.

"Now there's a sort of jauntiness about being expelled, but at the time I was petrified, and I thought I failed," Ligato said.

His advice for college students today? "Don't get expelled," Ligato said with a smirk before asserting the moral of his story. "Don't give up on your dream."

Left page, photos taken of John Ligato during his work as an undercover special agent in the FBI. Middle, Ligato was aboard a boat off the coast of Florida with Joe Pistone, aka Donnie Brasco (seated left), and mob associates Jimmy and Sammy Vecchio, negotiating for guns and drugs. Bottom from left to right, Ligato worked cases in eight cities, meeting mob associates at night clubs and restaurants, after receiving his first vouch from mob boss Ronnie Marrazzo (middle with Ligato), who he met in Las Vegas.





PSI of relief

SRU students benefit from alumni's support of business fraternity scholarship

A growing number of college students are borrowing money for tuition and other expenses rather than relying on their parents' savings, income or loans. Andrew Weimer, '23, and Emma Zeiler, '25, were among the 65% of Slippery Rock University students last year who took on their own college debt.

"My family didn't have anything saved up for college, so paying for tuition is pretty much all (on) myself or getting some sort of student loan," Weimer said. "To get any financial relief, it definitely means a lot for me."

"I'm a first-generation college student, and I come from a single-income family," said Zeiler, a junior communication major from South Park. "I have a great support system, even emotionally, but I'm like a lot of my friends who are (on) our own financially and doing the best that we can."

Weimer and Zeiler were the 2022-23 and 2023-24 recipients

Alpha Kappa Psi is a great organization for students who are especially interested in pursuing careers in business or related fields. It's rewarding for me to see the students grow and develop professionally by being engaged and involved with leadership positions.

*- Rhonda Clark,
Alpha Kappa Psi faculty adviser*

of the Alpha Kappa Psi Alumni Scholarship at SRU, an annual award of up to \$1,500 for students who are members of the professional co-ed business fraternity that bears its name. The

alumni part is where Jerry, '87, and Sandy Connolly, '87, come in.

The Connollys are well aware of the costs of higher education. Sandy is the vice president for business and chief financial officer at Campbell University in North Carolina, and Jerry is the executive director for finance administration in student affairs at Duke University. Together they founded a scholarship at their alma mater to support SRU students who are Alpha Kappa Psi members, just as they were in college.

"We understand some of the financial barriers for students to actually get into college," said Sandy Connolly, who is a member of the SRU Foundation, Inc., board of directors. "We just want to give back and provide support for those with financial needs and for those who

participate in Alpha Kappa Psi, which has been so meaningful for the both of us."

The Connollys established the scholarship in 2017, and, with the help of fellow SRU alumni, it is now fully endowed with a \$25,000 principal, meaning the interest earned on the investment can fund the scholarship.

In addition to being Alpha Kappa Psi members, recipients must have at least a 3.5 GPA, demonstrate leadership in community service and have financial need. The selection is made by the faculty adviser and executive board of Alpha Kappa Psi.

"Alpha Kappa Psi is a great organization for students who are especially interested in pursuing careers in business or related fields," said Rhonda Clark, the Alpha Kappa Psi adviser at SRU and associate professor of management and marketing. "It's rewarding for me to see the students grow and develop professionally by being engaged and involved with leadership positions. We appreciate the Alpha Kappa Psi alumni who contribute to the scholarship fund, and we are especially happy to meet these alumni at Homecoming each year."

The Iota Upsilon Chapter of Alpha Kappa Psi was founded at SRU in 1978. It is open to all students, not just business majors. There are now 25 members at SRU actively involved in the organization, which includes philanthropic, community service and social aspects. Members respond to immediate needs, like the earthquake relief in Turkey and Syria, and they pick up trash near Slippery Rock as part of the Adopt-a-Highway program. There are also opportunities to engage with fellow members and build an on-campus community through activities such as bowling.

"I benefitted from the friendships and camaraderie, not only just on SRU's campus, but the opportunity to go out in the world," said Weimer, who is also a vice president in the



"We just want to give back and provide support for those with financial needs and for those who participate in Alpha Kappa Psi, which has been so meaningful for the both of us."

- Sandy, '87, and Jerry Connolly, '87



chapter. "We took trips to Chicago, Miami and Atlantic City for professional development conferences, and we got to network and see what it's like to build your career."

Weimer is now pursuing a career in the professional sports business. He's interned with the Pittsburgh Penguins, worked in retail merchandising for the Pittsburgh Steelers and, just last summer, was a member of the Pittsburgh Pirates' "Bucco Brigade" doing game-day marketing and promotions at PNC Park.

"SRU gave me the opportunities to develop myself professionally," Weimer said. "I received a lot of guidance from faculty to figure out, not only the next thing to do, but also what I enjoy doing and how to pursue the right path in my career."

With support from the Alpha Kappa Psi Alumni Scholarship at SRU, the financial barrier along that path had been lowered.

To make a donation to the Alpha Kappa Psi Alumni Scholarship, visit srufoundation.org/give. Donations may also be sent via mail to Slippery Rock University Foundation, 104 Maltby Ave., Suite 100, Slippery Rock, PA, 16057, payable to SRU Foundation noting Alpha Kappa Psi Scholarship in the memo line.

Top left and above, SRU alumni from the Alpha Kappa Psi co-ed business fraternity gathered and met with current members at Homecoming in 2022.



GIANT LEAP FOR WOMEN

SRU alumna Angela Baker among the trailblazing female coaches in the NFL

IT takes more than the 11 men on the field to win a game in the National Football League. Off the field, there are often twice as many coaches contributing to each team's success. For decades, those roles were filled almost entirely by men. But not anymore.

Today, a growing number of female coaches are making an impact on the sidelines of NFL games. Eight full-time female coaches are now employed by NFL teams. Among them is Angela Baker, a 2021 Slippery Rock University graduate, who is entering her second year as an offensive quality control coach for the New York Giants.

"For a long time, (teams) excluded women, but now we're seeing people start to realize that everybody loves football and has the ability to coach, and right now there's a big focus on the women," Baker said. "It doesn't matter what you look like, if you played the game, or where you came from, whatever it might be, if you love the sport and have something to offer, there's an opportunity."

In 2022, Baker, along with Laura Young, the Giants' director of coaching operations, were named the first full-time female coaches in the team's nearly 100-year history. Baker was hired by the Giants prior to last season as the inaugural recipient of the team's Rosie Brown Minority Coaching Fellowship, which allocates a coaching position on the Giants staff for women or minorities.

The Buffalo Bills hired Kathryn Smith as the first full-time female coach in 2016, when she joined the club as a special teams quality control coach. Since then, the number of female coaches has steadily increased. Last year, there were 12 full-time women coaches in the league.

"The reason women are getting these jobs is because they can thrive, and now they're being given the opportunity to show that and they're excelling," Baker said. "People are seeing the path and getting opportunities, and I think it's going to keep rising from here."

The NFL's Bill Walsh Diversity Coach Fellowship program has created paths for people like Baker to become one of the 17-27 full-time coaches that each team has.

In the spring of 2020, the fellowship program provided opportunities to more than 170 minority and female coaches and team personnel. Baker was one of six aspiring coaches, including two women, who joined the Cleveland Browns that year. But because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Baker's participation in the Browns' offseason practices was limited to virtual meetings.

"That was a nice little dive into the NFL, but since it was virtual, it was more hands off," Baker said. "I still got to hear the verbiage they used, I got a little bit of experience with the way that they watch film, and, overall, how they do things without the pressure of me being in the building. That was the perfect introduction that I needed, because I was still trying to figure



AND SIMONE
7 GIANTS
11/24/22
★



out where I wanted to go and whether I wanted to coach or be in administration. My goal was just to stay involved in football somehow."

Like many coaches, Baker first became involved in football as a player. During her freshman year at SRU in 2010, Baker saw an advertisement for open tryouts for the Pittsburgh Passion, a professional, full-contact women's football team that plays in the Women's Football Alliance.

Baker played eight seasons with the Passion, becoming one of the league's best players as a wide receiver and quarterback. She helped lead the Passion to two league titles and even had the chance to play internationally, representing Team USA on the 2017 International Federation of American Football world championship team that won a gold medal. Teresa Conn, '86, an SRU graduate, is the Passion's co-owner and she and Lisa Horton, '04, are co-head coaches. Several other SRU alumni have also played for the Passion.

"The reason women are getting these jobs is because they can thrive, and now they're being given the opportunity to show that and they're excelling. People are seeing the path and getting opportunities, and I think it's going to keep rising from here."

- Angela Baker, '21

Baker enjoyed playing football so much that she took a three-year hiatus from her studies at SRU.

"It got to the point where I was focused so much on football and trying to learn the game that my attention wasn't in the classroom," said Baker, who came to SRU as a health and physical education major on a teacher education track. "I was able to come back and choose the physical activity and fitness management paths with a minor in coaching, and that actually worked out exactly how it needed to."

"As a student in our program, Angela was highly motivated, well prepared and worked very hard to reach her goal of becoming a football coach," said Joanne Leight, professor of physical and health education, who served as Baker's academic adviser. "It's quite extraordinary that she reached the highest

level of professional coaching in just two years. We are extremely proud of Angela's accomplishments and know she is just getting started in her professional journey. We can't wait to see all that she will achieve in the NFL."

After graduating from SRU in 2021, Baker began looking for coaching opportunities. She took a part-time job at the University of Redlands, a small college in California. There, Baker coached special teams and served as a defensive quality control coach.

"I only had those three weeks of virtual experience with Cleveland, so I was still learning quite a bit," Baker said. "We won the conference championship and made the NCAA (Division III) tournament. After the season, I was fortunate enough to get a call from coach Brian Daboll with the Giants. He said my name came across his desk for an opportunity after he got the job and he asked if I wanted to interview for a position."

Not many Division III coaches, let alone assistant coaches with one year of experience, are contacted by NFL teams, but Baker had connections from her time with the Browns, not to mention being one of the top WFA players.

"I was pretty stunned when I got the call, but I'm fortunate to have a good network of people that threw my name out there," said Baker, who interviewed via Zoom with Daboll, Young and quarterbacks coach Shea Tierney. "Twenty minutes after my interview, I'm on my way to one of my part-time jobs in California and I get a call from Coach Daboll and he said, 'Do you want to be a New York Giant?'"

Baker obviously said yes, but there was one accommodation she asked for. Baker wanted to represent her country at the 2022 IFAF world championship in Finland. She was trying out for Team USA and would need to miss the first two weeks of the Giants training camp.

"Coach Daboll and the general manager, Joe Schoen, said, 'We support you, we're really excited that you want to continue your endeavors in football and we'll figure it out during training camp and welcome you back,'" Baker said. "Then they said, 'Just don't come back without the gold medal.'"

Baker not only made the team, she caught three passes for 36 yards in Team USA's 42-14 win over Great Britain.

Baker quickly got up to speed upon

her return to the Giants. As a quality control coach, Baker analyzes game film, develops practice scripts, and helps prepare the scout teams. She also meets with a position group, assisting tight ends coach Andy Bischoff.

The Giants were among the hottest NFL teams for the first month of the 2022 season, winning six of the first seven games, before finishing with a 9-7-1 record and losing to the Philadelphia Eagles in the Divisional Round of the playoffs.

"My favorite part is that I'm getting to be around football and teach every day," Baker said. "I thought I wanted to be a teacher growing up. But to be around football, which is a sport that I love, and to have that mentorship or teaching experience with these players is unmatched."

Baker said people would be surprised by how receptive players are to women coaches and that relating to them wasn't a huge challenge. The Giants players even supported Baker from afar when she was in Finland, checking on the results during their training camp.

"The guys have shown a lot of respect and appreciation knowing that I've played," Baker said. "It's not the same level as the NFL, but I've been on the field. Our guys just want to be sponges. They want to learn from anyone who's willing to teach them. As coaches, we're all from different walks of life and

we have our own backgrounds, and everybody's treated well here. Everyone has just been completely supportive. They asked me the same questions that they would ask the head position coach, and that, to me, shows a lot. They treat me as part of the family."

The other women coaches in the NFL also share a bond. They communicate with one another and share their experiences. Baker considers women coaches such as Jennifer King (Commanders running backs coach), Lori Locust (Titans defensive quality control coach) and Callie Brownson (Browns assistant wide receivers coach) as pioneers.

"It's hard to think of myself in that way because I'm only here because other people have opened the door," Baker said.

Her SRU education has served as a foundation for her entire career.

"I wouldn't be where I am now if it weren't for Dr. Leight and my other professors who found a way to help me finish my degree," Baker said. "I love that SRU is a smaller school and everyone's really close, but still, that name, Slippery Rock, a lot of people know it. It's got a lot of respect behind it. And everyone has been nothing but supportive while I was there. They helped shape me as an individual and I really learned how to be a better teacher and mentor while I was there."



Angela Baker, a 2021 Slippery Rock University graduate, is a second-year offensive quality control coach for the New York Giants (Photo credit: New York Football Giants).

Far left, Baker (No. 82 with the ball) previously played for the Pittsburgh Passion, a professional, full-contact women's football team.



Universa

SRU Chamber Singers and Jazz Ensemble captivate audiences during European summer tour

Language



"This tour reminded our students that we might go to school at Slippery Rock, but what we do has global meaning. We got to experience a whole different culture and also share our culture, and that experience changes students' outlooks."

- Timothy Little Tran, Associate Professor of Music



Several students from Slippery Rock University didn't have to say "bonjour" or "ciao" during a recent trip to Europe. Instead, they greeted people with the universal language of music.

Forty-six members of SRU's Jazz Ensemble and Chamber Singers toured Europe, July 6-17, performing at various venues in France and Italy. SRU music faculty members Jason Kush and Timothy Little Tran also made the trip.

"College is a great time in our students' lives to broaden their horizons, experience as much as they can and become better citizens of the world," said Kush, professor of music and director of the Jazz Ensemble. "Traveling to new places and immersing themselves in other cultures is such a deep experience. For many of our students, they can only do that if someone provides that experience."

The experiences SRU provided ranged from staged and formal, including a performance organized by the U.S.

Consulate in Italy, to an impromptu performance at a tourist attraction that became one of the most memorable and breathtaking moments of the tour.

When in Rome, the Chamber Singers visited The Pantheon, a 2,000-year-old former Roman temple and one of the top tourist attractions in the Italian capital. As the students filed in, Little Tran told a security guard the group was a college choir and asked if they could sing.

Told they could sing just one song, they chose "My Flight for Heaven" by composer Blake Henson based on the poetry of 17th-century English Anglican cleric Robert Herrick. Little Tran said the song is about how music has the power to heal the body and the mind, which it appeared to have done for everyone that day at The Pantheon.

"That was the day we had just arrived in Europe, and we were all tired and hot and just wanted to take a nap, but something

special happened when we started singing,” said Leah Buczek, ’23, a music performance major and member of the Chamber Singers. “The place went silent, and all the other tourists started recording us with their phones. The place just stopped for about four and a half minutes. We just knew, ‘OK, this is what we came here for.’”

The Chamber Singers performed four other times, including at Masses at the Sant’Andrea della Valle Church in Rome and the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, Italy, as well as a concert at the Eglise Jean-Baptiste Le Voeu, in Nice, France.

In an event hosted by the U.S. Consulate and attended by government officials and invited guests, they shared a stage with the Jazz Ensemble at the Conservatorio Niccolò Paganini in Genoa, Italy.

“People were surprised we were a college group. They thought we were a professional choir,” said Little Tran, associate professor of music and director of the Chamber Singers. “They appreciated the fact that we brought a good mix of European classical, African American spirituals and Eastern music.”

The tour didn’t just impress the European audiences; it also left an impression on the SRU group too.

“This was our first big tour as a Music Department since the start of the pandemic, so this really revived us,” Little Tran said. “It reminded our students that we might go to school at Slippery Rock, but what we do has global meaning. We got to experience a whole different culture and also share our culture, and that experience changes students’ outlooks.”

“Being able to share your gifts with people who don’t speak the same language as you,” Buczek added, “it was just really special, and it showed me why I do what I do.”

The Jazz Ensemble also performed at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, and at the Place National Square in Nice as part of the Jazz à Juan music festival. Both required an extensive vetting process to earn entry onto the list of performers. The Umbria Jazz Festival is a two-week event with daylong performances by mostly professional groups in a “piazza,” an Italian public square.

Only a dozen school groups were selected to perform, and Kush said directing a band at the Umbria Jazz Festival had been one of his career goals. That’s saying a lot for Kush, a saxophonist who has performed all over the world with several groups, including the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and



as a backup and soloist for many famous recording artists, including Barry Manilow, Michael Bolton and Hugh Jackman. "Umbria was fantastic," Kush said. "There were hundreds of people out there clapping and dancing, and it was truly an international audience. People will come from all around Europe and other countries just for this festival. There was an energy about playing there, and you could look out into the audience and see everyone's eyes were on us. It was such an honor to get that much attention."

"The jazz culture was very present and welcoming," said Brett McCutcheon, a senior music education major and saxophonist in the SRU Jazz Ensemble. "We performed there in front of everybody eating dinner in

the public square, and then a large crowd was there in front of the stage. It was such a great time, and the atmosphere was unlike anything I've ever imagined."

In addition to performing, McCutcheon and other SRU students got to meet some famous jazz musicians, including Branford Marsalis. Marsalis is known beyond the jazz community for his time as the band leader on NBC's *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. Kush arranged for them to meet Marsalis, who was also performing at the Umbria Jazz Festival, at a restaurant in Perugia.

"That was really cool to meet Branford," McCutcheon said. "I got to ask him about the future of music education and he gave me some great insight about teaching the melodies of 1920s jazz to young students."

McCutcheon and his fellow Jazz Ensemble members came away from the experience with a new perspective.

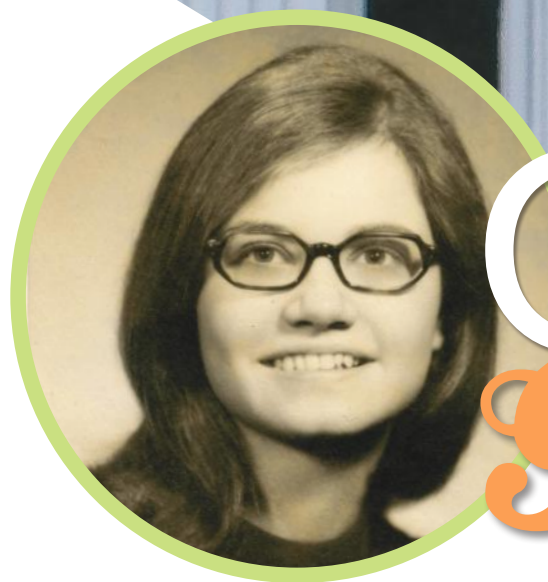
"I have a broadened mindset about the world but also the music community that we are a part of," McCutcheon said. "It's nice to step outside of my bubble of being a student and what I think jazz is and experience the world through the eyes of others."

Likewise, the experience struck a chord with Buczek.

"We were in a different country and a different culture, and people didn't know who we were, but everybody was drawn to the music," Buczek said. "Whether we were singing in The Pantheon or performing at a jazz festival, music has a way of drawing people in, and this tour reminded me that music is such a universal language and that we are some of the lucky ones who get to speak it."

Left, SRU Jazz Ensemble members with Branford Marsalis.





GIFT OF *Grace Anna*

SRU alumna's legacy of community service continued through health professions scholarship

She believed in fate and hard work. He was more of a skeptic who often joked that she dropped that pencil on purpose so he would pick it up. But on that fateful day in January 1970, when Grace Anna Howell, '71, was hard at work in what was then Maltby Library at Slippery Rock State College, Rick Boggs, '72, returned to Grace Anna her pencil that had fallen on the floor. The two struck up a conversation. The next day, when he called Grace Anna to ask her on a date, he said, "This is Rick," and she replied, "Rick who?"

So, it was fate. They were married less than two years later. But it was destiny when, 53 years later, while Rick was grieving Grace Anna's death, he returned to what is now Slippery Rock University, this time with a pen in hand, to create the Grace Anna Howell Boggs '71 Memorial Scholarship in his late wife's honor.

"I was having a bad day, but it became the best day since she died when I signed that check," said Boggs, who committed \$25,000 to start the scholarship. "She would have been elated to know that her name is on a scholarship. Slippery Rock was a bright spot in both of our lives. We nurtured our relationship here. Everything we were able to do started here. Slippery Rock gave us both a foundation for success."

Grace Anna graduated with a degree in library science, a year before Rick, a Vietnam War veteran who

came to SRU on the G.I. Bill to study political science. They were opposites: Rick was an introvert and Grace Anna was so active on campus she was late to meet Rick on the day they picked out her engagement ring at Taggart's Jewelry on Main Street.

"She was involved in virtually everything," said Rick, naming student government, her sorority, and several other organizations. "She was like that her entire life. She loved everything she did, and she lived 100 miles per hour. She was involved with just about anything you could do to help the community."

After graduating SRU, Grace Anna moved to Pottstown to become a school librarian, and Rick joined her when they got married and he became a probation officer in Montgomery County.

The couple moved back to their native western Pennsylvania 10 years later when Rick took a job in Mercer County. They lived on an 80-acre farm in Worth Township, near Stoneboro, where they raised their son, Jonathan Douglas.

Grace Anna couldn't find a teaching job, but she began working in radio advertising and eventually founded her own regional advertising agency, G.A. Boggs & Associates, in 1987. The agency served many local businesses and was so successful that Grace

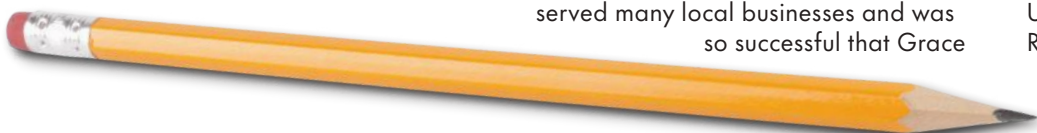
Anna was able to open another business in 1998, an old-fashioned candy and ice cream store, the Mercer Mercantile & Soda Shoppe, on the courthouse square in Mercer. Rick said the store "didn't make a dime in 24 years," but it was still a popular place, especially for children, and it brought the Boggs closer to the community, even more so with Grace Anna's involvement with the Mercer Rotary International Organization and as an organizer of the Mercer Victorian Weekend.

"Slippery Rock was a bright spot in both of our lives. We nurtured our relationship here. Everything we were able to do started here. Slippery Rock gave us both a foundation for success."

- Rick Boggs, '72

Rick, who returned to active duty in the Army before retiring from the military in 1996 with a combined 20 years of service, was also an integral part of the community. He worked as a chief clerk administrator for Mercer County Commissioners until 2002.

Once again, fate – and hard work – impacted the Boggs' lives in 1990, when Rick was considering a job leading the Army ROTC program at Edinboro University. At Grace Anna's convincing, Rick accepted the appointment. A few





months later, his former Army unit, the 475th Quartermaster Group from Farrell, was deployed to the Gulf War. An Iraqi Scud missile attack killed 14 soldiers from the unit in Saudi Arabia.

"I could say in all likelihood that my wife saved my life by talking me into taking that job," Rick said. "She believed God governed everything and there's a reason for everything."

The Boggs were also longtime members of the Hendersonville United Methodist Church, serving in various leadership roles.

Grace Anna continued operating both her businesses until her health declined in 2022, a year after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and developing dementia. She died Feb. 23, 2023, at Grove Manor, a nursing, rehabilitation and personal care facility in Grove City.

Rick recognized the importance of rural health care that his family relied on during Grace Anna's final days. Because SRU no longer offers a degree in library science, he set up the scholarship to support students pursuing careers in the University's newly established College of Health Professions. Qualifying students can apply for the scholarship, and the recipient selected by a committee organized through the CHP dean's office will receive up to \$2,000 annually.

"I believe it's going to be money well spent," Rick said. "Because it's health services, this will help the community. She would be happy about that. That's why I did it."

To make a donation to the Grace Anna Howell Boggs '71 Memorial Scholarship, visit srufoundation.org/give. Donations may also be sent via mail to Slippery Rock University Foundation, 104 Maltby Ave., Suite 100, Slippery Rock, PA, 16057, payable to SRU Foundation noting Boggs Memorial Scholarship in the memo line.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

To submit "Class Notes," email us at alumni@sru.edu or go to www.rockalumni.com.

We do not publish engagements or pregnancies, but we do publish marriages and births.

Please note that due to space restrictions, submissions may be edited. However, remember that we are proud of all our alumni and all they do. GO ROCK!



SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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1960s

Dick Hudson, '68, was recently awarded the Fosky Henderson Community Service Award from the Athens Athletic Hall of Fame. This award recognizes those who have made a special contribution to the community and youth sports activities in the Athens, Georgia, area.

1970s

Maria (DeMarino) Bachuchin, '76, and husband, **Michael Bachuchin, '76**, were recently honored as the 2023 Educators of the Year by the Duneland School Corporation's Education Foundation. This annual award is presented to a retired teacher(s) for career accomplishments in the classroom, coaching and for their continued contributions to the community. The Bachuchins have lived in Chesterton, Indiana, for nearly 47 years. ❶

Billy Butch, '78, was presented a citation from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives upon his retirement in September 2022. Butch's career as a physical therapist spanned 42 years. In 1990, he and his wife, Mary, founded Physical Rehabilitation Services, an independent physical therapy practice in Pittsburgh.

Dan Demeter, '72, and **Gene Trychta, '71**, former swimming teammates, met up in March for breakfast in Wildwood, Florida, seeing each other for the first time in 50 years. ❷

David Loy Frishkorn, '79, published his second book, "The Great Reimagination: In Pursuit of a More Perfect Union," as a follow-up to his first novel, "The Great Divorce," published in 2018. ❸

Lynda (Smith) Hoggan, '73, has published a book that takes place during her years at Slippery Rock — "Our Song:

a Memoir of Love and Race." Hoggan has also published pieces in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times and more. Hoggan is retired after 20 years teaching health and human sexuality at Mt. San Antonio College in Southern California. ❹

Stephen Martin, '76, retired from Penn National Insurance with 28 years of service in underwriting and statistical reporting. Martin and his family reside in Gettysburg, and he has five children and seven grandchildren.

Bruce Newton, '78, received the Edward Patrick Finnerty Lifetime Achievement Award at the 27th Annual International Association of Medical Science Educators Conference in June. This award is given to an IAMSE member who has demonstrated sustained involvement in and commitment to the IAMSE. ❺

Paul Sargia, '73, published his first novel "The Catch! The Catch!," which is available on both Amazon and Barnes & Noble websites. ❻

1980s

Al Calabrese, '85, shared a third generation photo with his father, **Reno Calabrese, '59**, and daughter and future graduate, **Mia Calabrese, '24**. ❶

Kelli (Billish) Fitter, '85, was inducted into the USA Water Polo Hall of Fame. Fitter was a women's water polo pioneer and a World Aquatics Championship bronze medalist. ❷

Tom Gustafson, '82, shared that he and classmates **Mary Ann (Daugherty) Senecal, '82**, **Tom Patrick, '81**, **Dave McGowan, '84**, and **A. Tim Senecal, '81**, visited Stonehenge in June 2023. ❸

Anupam Pahuja, '89, was appointed as executive vice president and general manager of Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa for Nium, a global payments infrastructure for the on-demand economy.

1990s

Greg Burdick, '93, had a world premiere of a play that he wrote, "Accommodation," at the Odyssey Theatre in West Los Angeles

in June. The play was in development for the past five years.

Brian Burick, '98, was appointed Lawrence County commissioner to fill a vacancy. Burick was chosen by a unanimous vote of the county's four Court of Common Pleas judges. Burick's term will expire in January. Burick previously served eight years as an elected county commissioner from 1996 to 2004.

Clifford Burdon, '99, was appointed Marquette County District Attorney by Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers. Burdon's duties are to file criminal complaints and prosecute all crimes alleged to have been committed in the County of Marquette. Additionally, Burdon is part of the Drug Treatment Court that helps rehabilitate defendants who have committed drug or alcohol related crimes. Burdon's appointment began May 2023 and he will have to run for election in the fall of 2024.

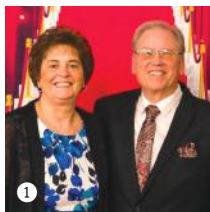
Eric McBride, '96, won two gold and one silver medal at the 2023 Pan-American Master's Cycling Championships held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. McBride represented USA in the 45-49 age group. More than 300 athletes competed in the events from 15 countries. ❹

Samantha Vaughan, '93, was named chief privacy officer at Verisk, a leading global data analytics and technology provider. Vaughn will lead the development and implementation of policies to protect the data entrusted to Verisk and will help ensure the integrity of Verisk's data practices, regulation and compliance.

Eunice Whitted, '93, recently joined the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association as the chief data protection and privacy officer.

2000s

Ryan Finn, '01, recently joined Golf Ontario as the association's chief sport officer. Finn's career in golf spans more than 25 years. Finn oversees, manages and develops critical functional areas, including membership focusing on facility relationships; junior performance and amateur competitions; grassroots and



In Memory

Florence Varian (Stewart), '43
Doris J. Hohri (Cooper), '48
Allan R. Holland, '49
Joanne Bruno (Mustio), '50
Pauline M. Katnich (Sablovic), '50
Beryl Sass (Allshouse), '50
Bruce Waizenhofer, '50
Laura H. Brandt (Haley), '52
Elizabeth K. Ecklund (Hepler), '52
Karl S. Walker, '52
Katherine E. Appleton (Emanuele), '53
Fred B. Roby, '53
Donald W. Strang, '53
Joan L. Zinkham (Kelley), '53
Nancy Ball (Skeriotis), '54
Kenneth W. Enscoe, '54
Jean A. Irvin (Davis), '54
Ellen J. McCloskey (Wikert), '54
John H. Komora, '55
Janeann Deleon (Barrett), '58
Kenneth Macek, '58
E. J. Angert (Headland), '60

Virginia K. Grindle, '60
Jean Higgins (Remaley), '60
Patrick R. Mooney Jr., '61
Carol Travers (Healy), '62
Anthony E. Daniels, '63
William E. Garove, '64
Patrick P. Phelan, '64
Joseph A. Campbell, '65
Gary P. Dye, '65
Terrence R. O'Neil, '66
Marlene R. McFeely, '67
Ronald W. DeCecco, '68
Jerry N. Ferilla, '68
Joseph E. McGarry, '68
Rebecca D. Bean (Whitford), '69
David L. Downes, '69
Taffy A. Welchley (Schotsinger), '69
Nancy D. Kennedy (Dyer), '70
Grace A. Boggs, (Howell), '71
Adrienne B. Majors, '72
Richard Perry, '73
Carolyn W. Stutz (Wymer), '73

Kathryn Callery (Corbett), '74
Bonnie L. Garraux (Wagner), '74
Jean L. Spears, '74
Dennis W. Stewart, '74
James E. Cieslak, '75
Margaret E. McCaughey, '75
Rita M. Wick, '75
Cinda L. Wallace, '76
Robert S. Wojtkowski, '76
Thomas R. Yaksick, '76
Mildred K. Barnes (Smith), '77
Ernest R. Chiappini, '77
Faith A. Cujas (Crytzer), '77
Marc A. Nagle, '78
Mary C. Gray, '81
Lisa A. Donley (Peluso), '83
Brian M. Fabish, '83
Joyce H. Martin, '83
Lu Anne Cress-Dailey (Cress), '84
John P. Nahomenuk, '84
Thomas M. Sabalcik, '84
Linda L. Beatty '85, Retired Manager

J. M. Wilkins, '87
Debbi Mastro (Nelson), '88
Carl B. Madison, '92
Marnie L. Scholl-Moore (Scholl), '92
Dean J. Cagni, '94
Cheryl J. Tregoning, '94
John E. Anderson, '95
Rebecca A. Arblaster (Arblaster), '95
Pamela A. Grimm (Cisler), '95
Linda L. Sims, '95
Michele R. Burton, '99
Diana M. Dascalu-Joffe (Dascalu), '00
Joseph D. Halus, '01
Abigail L. Skinner, '02
Kathleen D. Baum (Johnston), '03
Timothy L. Bearfield, '14
Samantha G. Pavone, '16
Allan Shook, Faculty
Dale E. Fleege, Retired Staff
Debra J. Moors, Retired Staff
Lynne M. Kandl, Retired Staff
Rita M. Vincent, Retired Staff

participation programs; and core member services, including handicapping and course rating.

Mark Kratz, '06, assumed the role of vice president, investor relations at L3Harris Technologies, headquartered in Melbourne, Florida. L3Harris Technologies is a \$17-billion-dollar trusted disruptor for the global aerospace and defense industry. Mark's wife, **Lisa (Lealy) Kratz, '05**, is a residential realtor in Florida. ¹¹

Stacey McKavish, '05, was recently promoted to recruiting and regional human resources director at Dewberry, a leading, market-facing firm that provides professional services to a wide variety of public and private-sector clients.

Ed Snyder, '08, was promoted to general manager at the Erie Events-Bayfront Convention Center. Snyder has been with the organization for nine years and is recognized for playing key roles at multiple Erie Events facilities. In two years, Snyder and his staff have grown the number of hosted events to more than 130 in 2022.

2010s

Jessica Funk, '18, received the Young Professional of the Year Award from The Clarion Area Chamber of Business and Industry. This award recognizes businesses and individuals who have made significant contributions to the community.

Jason Litzinger, '14, was included in Marquis Who's Who. Individuals profiled are selected on the basis of current reference value. Factors such as position, noteworthy accomplishments, visibility and prominence in a field are all considered during the selection process.

Samantha (Shirey) Rose, '18, was promoted to marketing project manager at AE Works, an award-winning building design and consulting firm that has received awards for growth, social impact and design. Rose is responsible for federal marketing proposals and submissions.

Weddings

Brandon Berns, '07, and Hannah Lipscomb were married March 11, 2023, in Pittsburgh. ¹²

Zachary Bevilacqua, '16, and **Sarah Bauer, '15**, were married Oct. 15, 2022, during SRU Homecoming weekend. ¹³

Matthew Buzanoski, '12, '14M, and **Kaitlynn Sinclair, '17**, were married May 25, 2023, in Pittsburgh. ¹⁴

Samantha Dawson, '07, and **Chris Shaffer, '13**, were married in St. Lucia June 10, 2022. ¹⁵

Alisen Hazeltine, '20, and Steven Downs were married Oct. 8, 2022. The couple resides in Scandia. ¹⁶

Andrew Kaska, '74, and Jody Geletko were married Dec. 27, 2022, in Washington. ¹⁷

Brandon Lis, '13, and Brittany Cavanaugh were married Dec. 10, 2022, in Conneaut Lake. The couple resides in Baltimore, Maryland. ¹⁸

Heather Richardson, '12, and **Ryan McCusker, '13**, were married July 22, 2023, at the Warwick Country Club in Warwick, Rhode Island. In attendance and pictured are also **Alexis Koviski, '12**, and **Jennifer Meighan, '13**. The couple resides in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. ¹⁹

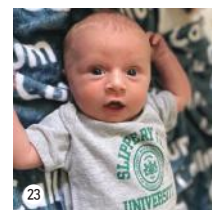
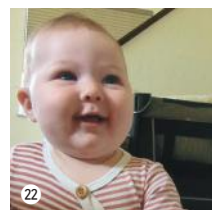
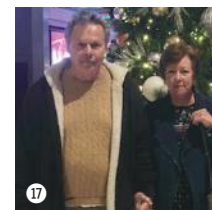
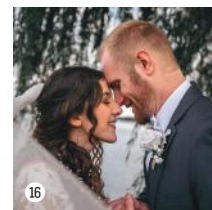
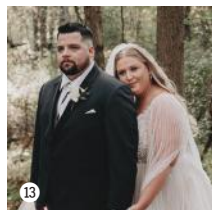
Births

Amelia (Wren) Germeyer, '15, and her husband, Adam, welcomed their first child, Graham Scott, Oct. 23, 2022. ²⁰

Madeline (Williams) Hoffman, '13, '17M, and her husband, Kolten, welcomed their daughter, Karsyn Grace, March 16, 2023. Karsyn joins big brother Peyton Michael. ²¹

Ross Marshall, '13, and **Elicia (Cutshall) Marshall, '14**, welcomed their second child, Edith James, April 1, 2023. Edith joins her brother, Wesley. ²²

Emily (Schneider) McCowin, '14, and her husband, **Nick McCowin, '12**, welcomed their third child, Callum, March 2, 2023. ²³



FROM THE ROCK TO THE WORLD CUP

When Sofia Harrison was a high school senior in 2017, she was presented with an opportunity she never could have imagined. It started with her Filipina aunt, who shared a link on Facebook to encourage her friends to vote for Harrison as the player of the year in Howard County, Maryland. What seemed like a simple gesture at the time led Harrison to realizing the dream of nearly every soccer player – to play in the World Cup.

Somehow the post reached the Philippines and the eyes of a liaison from the Philippine National Women's Football Team who later contacted Harrison to invite her for a tryout. Six years later, Harrison, a 2021 Slippery Rock University graduate, was playing for the Philippines on the world's largest stage for women's soccer.

A few months after her aunt's fateful Facebook post, Harrison arrived at SRU and became a defender for The Rock, starting all 18 games as a true freshman. After the season, she got a message on Instagram from someone representing the Philippine National Team.

"Honestly, I thought it was a scam at first, but I am glad I responded and asked for more information," Harrison said.

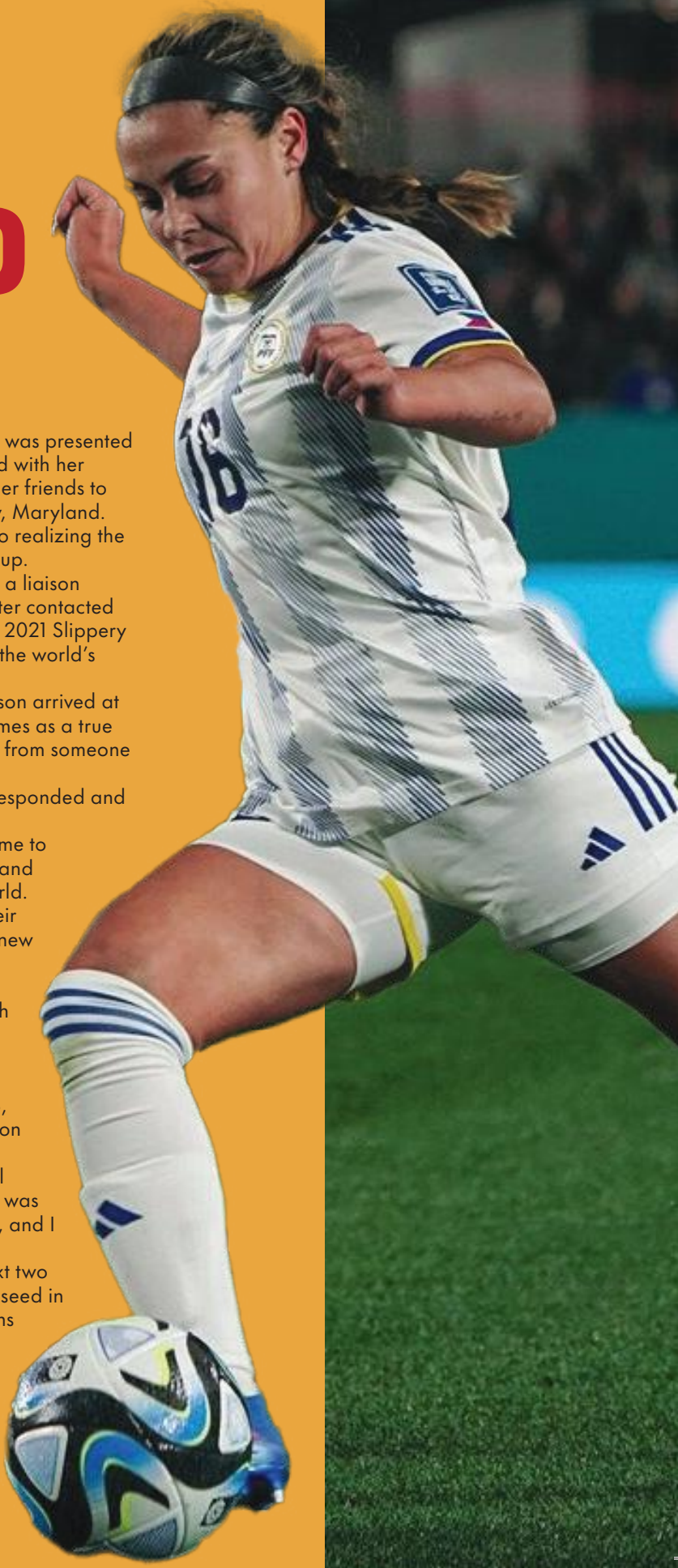
The Filipinas were long seen as an afterthought when it came to soccer, ranking well outside the top 75 in the world rankings and never appearing in any of the biggest tournaments in the world. But with rules that allow foreign-born players to represent their heritage countries, the Philippine Football Federation and a new management staff began to look to America to find Filipina-American women who could possibly help set the program on a new path. Even if that meant scouring Facebook through their family connections.

In November 2017, Harrison attended a tryout for the Philippine National Team in California. She made such a strong impression that she was invited to team camps in 2018, before earning a call-up to play in an Asia Football Federation tournament game against Vietnam.

"It was incredible to have the chance to play for a national team while I was still at Slippery Rock," Harrison said. "But it was short-lived. That was the only appearance I made in a game, and I did not receive another call-up the rest of my time at SRU."

Harrison returned to The Rock, starting every game the next two seasons, while leading SRU to the 2019 PSAC title and a top seed in the NCAA Division II playoffs. As a junior, she set career highs for goals (7), assists (2), points (16) and game-winning goals (3), all from her defensive position.

Despite having all her games canceled in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Harrison kept training and she benefited from having access to SRU's facilities and coaches.





"SRU was so important to my success and helping me get where I am today."

- Sofia Harrison, '17

That dedication paid off in 2021 when another representative from the Philippine National Team reached out to Harrison and asked if she was still interested in playing. Because of the pandemic, the team members were working out individually in different places around the world and submitting videos and results of those workouts to the staff through a Facebook group.

Later that year, Harrison tried out again for the team and earned a starting role for a tournament in Uzbekistan, starting two games as a center back, an unusual role for one of the shortest players on the roster. It was a testament to how important the staff viewed her future with the team. The Filipinas' performance in Uzbekistan qualified them for the Asian Federation Championships in 2022, and in that tournament they advanced far enough to qualify for the first World Cup appearance in the Philippines history.

After briefly playing for a club team in Germany, Harrison returned to the Philippines National Team, appearing in 34 games to prepare for the 2023 World Cup, hosted by Australia and New Zealand in August. She attended a month-long camp with the team right before the World Cup, still unsure if she would be selected for the final roster.

"The coaches waited until the last day before we flew to New Zealand to announce the roster,"

Harrison said. "They called us all in one at a time.

It was probably the most nervous I have ever been. I sat down and our coach asked me why I looked so nervous. I told him because this means so much to me. He said, 'It should mean a lot, because you're going to the World Cup.' I think it took a few seconds to set in and then I just started to cry. I had worked so hard for so many years and to be named to the final roster was such a huge



Left, Sofia Harrison, '17, played for the Philippines Women's National Team in the 2023 World Cup (photo courtesy of FIFA). Right from top, Harrison playing for SRU, Harrison celebrates with her family and poses for photos with her teammates.



accomplishment. All the hard work was worth it."

While in New Zealand, Harrison and the Filipinas played a closed-door, "secret" exhibition game against the No. 1 ranked team in the world, the two-time defending World Cup champion U.S. Women's National Team.

"I guess I can talk about it now," she said with a laugh. "We were strictly forbidden from saying anything to anyone about playing in that game. We played two 35-minute halves and they beat us 3-0, but that showed us that we could play with anyone. We treated it like any other game against any other team and that mentality was the exact way we wanted to approach the World Cup games."

"To be able to grow the number of supporters for soccer in the Philippines and to be able to inspire the young boys and girls to want to play the sport is maybe even more important than winning a game at the World Cup."

A few days later, Harrison was named as the starting left back for the Filipinas' opening game against Switzerland. Harrison played all 90 minutes in a 2-0 loss and was involved on both ends of the field, drawing a yellow card on defense, firing a risky cross into the area and nearly scoring a goal with a shot late in the second half.

"It was a surreal moment for me standing in the tunnel before that game," she said. "It was such a professional

and surreal environment. A lot of the team started to cry during the Philippine National Anthem because it was a realization of how far we had come and what we were about to achieve."

In their next game, the Filipinas played host country New Zealand on its home turf in front of nearly 33,000 people.

"That's definitely the craziest atmosphere I've ever been in and it was surreal to walk into the stadium and see that many people," Harrison said.

The Philippines won 1-0 after scoring in the first 30 minutes and holding on for the win, the first World Cup victory in the country's history.

"We just kept playing hard and waiting for that final whistle," Harrison said. "And when it happened, we were all crying and screaming and running around celebrating with our teammates and our families. If you had seen how hard I was crying after that game, you would have probably thought we lost."

The Filipinas would bow out of the World Cup with a loss to Norway in the final group stage game, putting a cap on what was deemed to be a successful debut. Just days after leaving New Zealand, the team returned to the Philippines and received an overwhelming welcome at the airport.

"We were escorted through a crowd of people that came out to welcome us back," Harrison said. "They threw a parade for us and we had a lot of media attention. It was incredible to see the amount of support we had for soccer in general but also for a women's sport. To be able to grow the number of supporters for soccer in the Philippines and to be able to inspire the young boys and girls to want to play the sport is maybe even more important than winning a game at the World Cup."

Upon returning to the U.S., Harrison resumed her training as she seeks a spot for her next professional club. She hopes

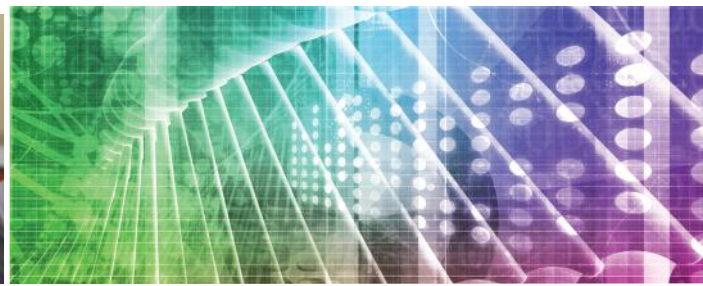
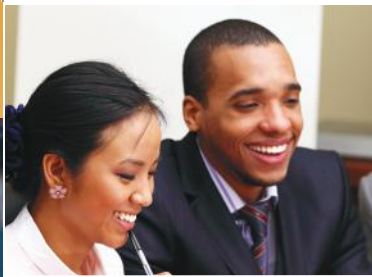
to continue playing for the Philippine National Team and possibly return to the World Cup in four years.

She also reflected on her journey and how she benefitted from her time at SRU. Out of 137 current or former NCAA women's soccer players who made World Cup rosters this year, Harrison was the only one to come from a Division II school.

"SRU was so important to my success and helping me get where I am today," Harrison said. "My degree in exercise science has helped me be a better athlete by helping me understand my body and what it needs to perform well and recover efficiently, and the soccer program and coaches have helped me tremendously. Being able to train with them last spring and the fact that the team let me be around and help develop my skills was really important for me. I'm incredibly proud to say I played at Slippery Rock and that experience helped lead me to the World Cup."



From left, Harrison hoists the Philippine flag after a win over New Zealand (photos courtesy of FIFA and the Associated Press).



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Alicia Stackhouse Kopp, '86, bachelor's in psychology

DAY JOB: I work freelance as a program instructor for Mighty Writers, providing writing and literacy support for elementary school age children. Throughout my life, I've had many rewarding jobs and experiences, as a bullying and prevention intervention specialist in the Philadelphia School District, a preschool teacher and an after-school mentor for the A Better Chance program. I also facilitated several Girls Lead programs, which help middle school girls with untapped leadership potential find their footing and thrive. I'm most proud of my association and work with Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research.

BACKGROUND: I grew up on the eastern side of the state and did not realize how far away Slippery Rock was from home, but being away and independent helped me grow. All my life I've wanted to help people, regardless of their situation, and the Psychology Department allowed me to follow that path. After graduation, I returned to my local community and was immediately hired as a counselor at the local victim services center. I went on to earn my master's degree in community counseling from Villanova. Kevin, my husband of 30-plus years, and I are now enjoying Latin/ballroom dancing lessons. We have two grown children, Alex and Spenser.

INFLUENCE OF SRU: Having worked in many different environments with groups that required distinct approaches, I realize and appreciate that SRU provided me the tools to accomplish my goals. I recall distinctly several classes and professors that were critical in helping to establish my passion for the field of counseling/therapy and in general giving back to the community and society. It's great to give back to an SRU student and let them know that there are alumni and friends who want them to be acknowledged and appreciated.

