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WINTER
2025

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Susan C. Aldridge, PhD, the seventh president of Thomas Jefferson University

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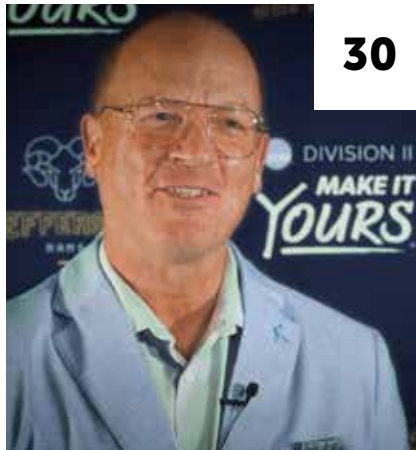
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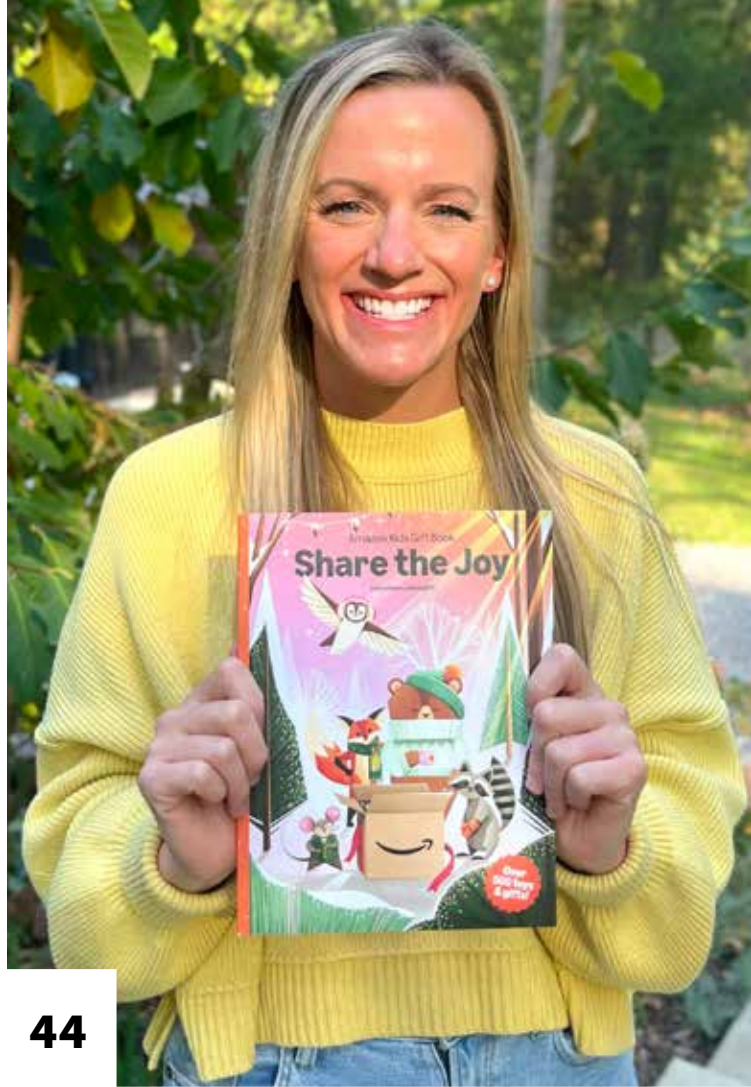
* List as of October 22, 2024 | Italics denotes University or PGA Alumni



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William Shakespeare wrote, “It is not in our stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.” As Jefferson’s bicentennial celebration concluded with an unforgettable Ball (page 3) and the sealing of our time capsule (page 8), our students, alumni, and leadership are seizing the opportunity to improve, evolve, and make things better for the world around them, grabbing and taking charge of the future—and our third century—with both hands.

Dr. Susan Aldridge’s historic inauguration is changing the future of education at Jefferson (page 14). “I’m committed to helping us reach—and exceed—our greatest expectations for the century ahead,” she says.

Brides can expect the unexpected through visionary fashion designer Madison Chamberlain ’17’s enchanting creations (page 18). Her

stunning, inspired designs ensure that bridal fashion today can be inclusive, sustainable, and magical for anyone who desires a little extra sparkle.

John S. Thackrah ’53 honors his family’s multi-generational Jefferson journey with the creation of the Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab. His generosity will benefit our students and their careers for generations to come (page 28).

The assurance of Jefferson’s bright future rests not only in our mission to improve lives, but also in the confidence and empowerment Jeffersonians have demonstrated and will continue to exemplify going forward.



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How should you mark an anniversary?

Is it about celebrating what got you to the milestone? Or looking ahead to what's to come?

Never an organization to rest on its laurels, a year ago, when Jefferson embarked on its bicentennial, we asked a different question: What more can we give back to our community?

The theme of our bicentennial was creating our third century. But in all the ways that matter, we were returning to our noble roots.

Jefferson was founded 200 years ago on the idea that there was a better way to train doctors and thus help heal society. A year later, the school opened an infirmary offering free care for the poor, making it the first clinic established in any college in the country. Likewise, Philadelphia Textile School was founded 140 years ago to invigorate textile education, thereby strengthening American business and innovation. Our mission was always about improving lives.

To start, in February we launched a service initiative, with faculty and staff pledging to contribute 200,000 hours of volunteer service in 2024. The effort would be a catalyst for expanding our already strong partnerships with the community.

Throughout the year, we anchored our bicentennial in events and programs that will extend our ability to teach, to heal, to discover.

Among the highlights I'm most proud of, we:

- Created the Bicentennial Fund to invest in student scholarships and other priorities;
- Unveiled the newly renovated Marion J. Siegman, PhD, FAPS Archives;
- Received a transformational gift to the School of Business from alumnus John S. Thackrah '53 to launch the Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab
- Opened the Honickman Center, a state-of-the-art outpatient care center in the heart of Center City Philadelphia;
- Announced the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center earned the highest designation from the National Cancer Institute;
- Combined with Lehigh Valley Health Network, becoming one of the top academic health systems in the U.S. and increasing access to care, clinical research, and health plan offerings in Eastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey;
- Launched the Bruce and Robbi Toll Heart and Vascular Institute integrating all cardiac and vascular services across Jefferson Health;
- Showcased stories about many esteemed members of our alumni community.

On December 4, Giving Tuesday, we announced we had surpassed 200,000 volunteer hours. We plan to continue that record of service into the future.

I am proud to lead this esteemed University at this pivotal moment in time. But mostly, I reflect on the amazing opportunity before us.

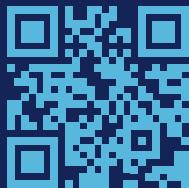
We are poised to propel, inspire, and empower the next generation of builders, designers, innovators, and healers. I look forward to sharing this journey with all of you.

We begin our third century ready for what's next. I sense the best is yet to come. Go Rams! 🦋



Susan C. Aldridge, PhD
President
Thomas Jefferson University

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JEFFERSON'S

Bicentennial Time Capsule



Imagine stepping into the year 2074: Cities hum with a symphony of innovation and imagination. Fusion-powered buildings stretch skyward, their design inspired by nature's fractals. Laboratories brim with breakthroughs in quantum computing and regenerative medicine.

Our Time Machine traditionally looks back, illuminating the moments that would define Jefferson. This time, we send a message in a bottle—or capsule—half a century forward.

On December 4, Jefferson leadership sealed a Bicentennial Time Capsule at the Marion J. Siegman, PhD, FAPS Archives on the Center City campus.

Alumni, students, faculty, and staff were asked to submit items for inclusion to represent today's Jefferson in 50 years. They will be preserved within a stainless steel and gasket material designed to protect virtually any material for centuries. Initially housed in an archives display, it will be opened in 2074 during Jefferson's semiquincentennial.



Here's a look at what was included:



- 2024 issues of Jefferson Innovator Magazine; Jefferson Research Magazine; and The Bulletin
- 2024 program books from the University's Convocation, Commencements; and Inauguration of Dr. Susan C. Aldridge





- Abington Dixon School of Nursing Cape (circa 1960s)
- An empty vial of coronavirus vaccine and 3D printed nasal testing swab used during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and a report outlining Jefferson's response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Apple iPhone 12 with bicentennial videos
- Article from the Chronicle of Higher Education describing the success of the merger of Thomas Jefferson University and Philadelphia University in 2019 and a 2024 article celebrating the University's bicentennial and Dr. Aldridge's vision
- Autobiography of Arlen Specter, the namesake of the Arlen Specter Center, a nonpartisan forum for transdisciplinary education, research, and scholarship promoting civic engagement
- Banner displayed on August 1, 2024, at Jefferson's closing event with Lehigh Valley Health Network when the merger was finalized
- Catalogue for Posters Against Ebola, a collection created in response to the 2013–14 Ebola epidemic
- "Cities Under Climate Threat," a fifth-year undergraduate architecture student project
- Historical books about Jefferson
- Iconography Committee video interview with Jefferson professor Dr. Marcella McCoy-Deh and Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings' fifth great-grandson, Rev. W. Douglas Banks
- Jefferson Medical College centennial yearbook from 1924 and Sidney Kimmel Medical College yearbook from 2024
- Jefferson Urology Centennial booklet that summarizes 100 years of Thomas Jefferson University's Urology Department, from 1904–2004
- "Jefferson 200" T-shirt, pin, and signed banner
- Jefferson-branded brain "stress ball," a popular giveaway at events during the Philadelphia Science Festival
- Letter from Sidney Kimmel, a longtime benefactor of Jefferson for whom the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and Sidney Kimmel Medical College are named
- Letter from the president of Washington and Jefferson College (Jefferson's mother institution)
- Letters from leadership of Jefferson Health, Thomas Jefferson University, Jefferson Health Plans, and the board of trustees
- McClellan Honor Society pin created by the Department of Surgery to recognize third-year medical students who demonstrate clinical and academic excellence during their surgical clerkship
- Pamphlet of "Jefferson Then & Now, a Historical Walking Tour of Center City Campus"
- Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science Centennial Analysis from 1984
- Philadelphia Inquirer from December 4, 2024
- Proclamations from elected officials
- Promotional items from Jefferson Health Plans, formerly known as Health Partners Plans
- Rally flag distributed at the Philadelphia Eagles vs. Cleveland Browns "Intercept Cancer" game in 2024
- Ribbon from the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Honickman Center on March 13, 2024, renderings of the facility, and replica textiles created by students, which are on display in the building
- "Swell Surf Foot," designed by two industrial design students, a low-cost, waterproof prosthetic increasing ankle mobility for adaptive surfers
- Seminal textbook in the field of population health written by Jefferson leaders who formed the nation's first College of Population Health
- Serenity Submerged jumpsuit by Vanessa Fath, Class of 2019, Fashion Design program (original prints created with textile design major Olivia Manning '19, inspired by photographs by industrial design major John Cecil '19). Awarded Best of Show at annual Jefferson Fashion Show
- Signed mini-basketball from retired Hall of Fame coach Herb Magee
- White Coat used by Jefferson Health physicians

Jefferson Grad Leveraging Life Experience to Fight Poverty

As the first Black CEO of the Albany Housing Authority, William Myles, PhD '19 supports thousands in public housing.



When working on his thesis on transitioning people out of public housing, William Myles, PhD '19 spoke with a perhaps surprising expert: his mother.

"I was born and raised in it," says the recent doctorate in strategic leadership graduate. "The conversation we had this time was very different. I've always seen her as my mom. Now, I see her as an interviewee."

Through his research, Myles hoped to better understand why people don't leave public housing and, importantly, to vanquish the stigma around them and their living situation.

"They usually stay there five, 10, 15 years—sometimes a lifetime," notes Myles, who lived in public housing in Meridian, Mississippi, for over two decades. "People think they're lazy and just living off the system. I wanted to get to the root of it."

In this candid conversation with his mom, he discovered the full extent of his family's financial situation growing up—details she previously kept secret. She only earned \$20 a week as a maid and never had access to capital and educational programming on home ownership.

"Her thing was, 'How could I make it from today to tomorrow,'" Myles recounts. "That's how she lived—and believe it or not—that's how most people live."

Now, as the first Black CEO of the Albany Housing Authority in Albany, Georgia, he



BY MIKE BEDERKA



▲ Alumnus Dr. William Myles receives a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to house individuals and households who are at risk of becoming homeless.

uses his life experience and education from the School of Business to help pull others out of poverty and onto a road of stability.

Myles, the first in his immediate family to attend college, says the Jefferson program allowed him to think creatively to solve problems, have enlightening conversations with fellow students and faculty, and dig deep into important issues and data.

"Going to grad school is something that I've always wanted to do, especially given my background," says the father of two. "I wanted to attain the highest level of academic achievement that I could. I saw it as a goal to make my family proud, and I can't say enough about the Jefferson faculty and those who went through the program."

After working in leadership positions at the housing authorities of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his hometown of Meridian, Myles became CEO of the Albany

Housing Authority in 2018. Approximately 2,600 people live in 1,100 public housing units in the southwestern Georgia city.

Passionate about making a difference for vulnerable people by influencing public policy and practice, he's proud of his accomplishments with the Albany Housing Authority so far.

Myles helped to close a \$30 million deal to rehab 279 units; started a scholarship fund for traditional and nontraditional college students; began a program to provide housing assistance to children aging out of foster care; received a Department of Labor grant for a preapprenticeship program that teaches kids trades like electrical, plumbing, and carpentry; and developed a youth leadership academy that provides mentorship, social engagement, and educational enhancement activities. For the future, he plans to build 500 new housing units over the next five years.

These successes wouldn't happen without frequent

conversations with the people he serves.

"I'm probably one of the few CEOs who gives out their personal cellphone number to residents," Myles says. "I'm approachable. You don't have to go through any channels. I try to be a beacon of hope and inspiration. If I did it from where I came from, I know you can do it too."

Being the first Black CEO in the Albany Housing Authority's 70-year history isn't lost on Myles either.

"It's huge. That's a lot of weight on my shoulders, but it's bigger than me, and there are a lot more people to come," he says. "It's up to me to not just do a good job but to do a great job, a different job. People are living based on the decisions I make, and I get to see everything from a different perspective as someone who lived there. I can impact policies that impact people in a real way. I'm excited about it." 📌



Fostering Inclusion and Belonging in Medicine

The Sidney Kimmel Medical College Class of 2028, 272 strong, is among the most diverse in the College's history. Notably, 17.2% of these students identify as underrepresented minorities, a percentage maintained from the previous year.

In an era where race-neutral admissions policies govern, Jefferson has proven that it is possible to sustain and even expand diversity. Beyond race and ethnicity, the newest medical class is diverse across socioeconomic status, geography, nationality, sexual orientation, and age.

Promoting diversity—and understanding it—is a priority for Said Ibrahim, MD, MPH, MBA, the Anthony F. and Gertrude M. DePalma Dean

of Sidney Kimmel Medical College. Ibrahim says that many communities, and the future generation in general, want a healthcare team that reflects the community they serve. "In order for us to address health equity, we have to diversify the people who provide care," he says.

The College's progress is particularly promising in the enrollment of Black students. Over the past five years, the numbers have nearly quadrupled, far exceeding national averages.

This growth is a testament to the college's holistic admissions approach, which is anchored by efforts to build meaningful connections with prospective students throughout the application process.

Two alumni, Alisa LoSasso, MD '98, vice dean for admissions, and Bernard Lopez, MD'86, senior associate dean for diversity and community engagement, lead the effort. Their teams deploy a range of initiatives, from meeting students at national conferences to fostering ongoing communication via email and invitations to connect. Applicants are introduced to faculty and coordinators and are encouraged to engage with current students at receptions and through one-on-one interactions. These efforts allow prospective students to envision themselves thriving within a supportive and inclusive environment.

While its diversity metrics often surpass national averages, College leadership remains focused on further progress.

"Meeting national standards is not enough," says Lopez. "We aim to exceed expectations and set new benchmarks for inclusion and belonging."

The work is far from over. Ibrahim says we need to reframe how we train physicians in order to meet the changing demands of society as well as the radically shifting healthcare climate.

Studies consistently show that diverse medical teams deliver better outcomes. Moreover, the Association of American Medical Colleges has stated that "a diverse and inclusive biomedical research workforce with individuals from historically excluded and underrepresented groups in biomedical research is critical to gathering the range of perspectives needed to identify and solve the complex scientific problems of today and tomorrow."

Beyond recruiting a diverse student body, the College is investing in mentoring programs, faculty development, and initiatives that promote belonging for all members of its community.

As the Class of 2028 begins its journey, it embodies the bold thinking that has defined Jefferson for two centuries. These students are not just future physicians, they are pioneers in a field that demands creativity, compassion, and a deep understanding of the communities they serve.



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NEWS



Thomas Jefferson University News allows us to share inspiring Jefferson stories. Learn what *“redefining possible”* really means as told by our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

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**NEW
LEADER**

for a

NEW CENTURY

Aldridge Outlines
Seven-Point Plan for
University's Future at
Inauguration

BY MIKE BEDERKA



On a historic day steeped in pageantry, pride, and promise, Jefferson CEO Joseph Cacchione, MD, formally installed Susan Aldridge, PhD, as the seventh president of Thomas Jefferson University.

The October 9 inauguration at Philadelphia's Kimmel Center featured Aldridge outlining her seven-point plan for the future, a stunning performance by soprano Beautiful Sheriff, and numerous greetings of the new president.

Attendees included 30 delegates from other colleges and universities, local business leaders, elected officials and Jefferson alumni, students, faculty, staff, leaders, and members of the board of trustees.

"With your support, I'm committed to helping us reach—and exceed—our greatest expectations for the century ahead," said Aldridge, who served as University interim president for a year and a member of the board of trustees from 2022 to 2023. "We will make Jefferson the first-choice University for future generations of prospective students at every stage."

Noting the significance of the inauguration during Jefferson's bicentennial, Cacchione said the University sought a leader with a steadfast commitment to academic excellence, an acute understanding of higher education's intricacies, and a deep appreciation of the school's history.

"We believe in Dr. Aldridge's ability to lead us into the next chapter," he said. "Today, we entrust her with the welfare of our University, knowing she will meet the future challenges with vision, creativity, and wisdom. I'm certain the success and momentum we have achieved over the last 200 years of this University will continue to flourish under her leadership."

In his remarks, chair-elect of the board of trustees Michael Sneed stressed the day's significance, noting that under Aldridge's leadership, Jefferson will have a profound impact on our communities and society in the years to come.

Nioka Wyatt, fashion merchandising and management program director, and Howard Weitz, MD '78, senior associate dean of Sidney Kimmel Medical College, represented the Jefferson faculty at the inauguration. Weitz praised Aldridge for a lifetime of innovation in education, and Wyatt called her a transformative leader whose influence inspires faculty in teaching and research.

Mark Greenberg, PhD, provost emeritus and distinguished professor at Drexel University, provided perspective from academia, saying, "In Dr. Susan Aldridge, Jefferson honors its history and reputation for excellence by selecting a leader with exceptional qualities of mind and heart. She's a person who listens and learns, acts decisively and fairly, and whose warmth and caring motivates others."

Alumnus and trustee Drew Morrisroe '96, MBA '99 affirmed that Aldridge's vision, values, and dedication will inspire Jefferson to new heights, fostering a culture that empowers students, supports faculty, and deepens the connection with the surrounding community.

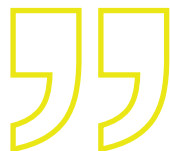
Other members of the Jefferson community saluted Aldridge, including students Adrian Buchter and Brittany Chavez; Tim Butler, associate dean of students on East Falls Campus; Kate FitzPatrick, DNP, RN, executive vice president and the Connelly Foundation Chief Nurse Executive Officer for Jefferson Health; and Matt Dane Baker, provost and chief academic officer. In addition, dozens of college and university presidents from across the country shared congratulatory messages.

Aldridge remained committed and humble amid everyone's praise. "Today is about showcasing the many accomplishments made by every member of our vast and diverse Jefferson community," she stressed. "You're the inspiration and the energy behind our success."



We believe in Dr. Aldridge's ability to lead us into the next chapter. Today, we entrust her with the welfare of our University, knowing she will meet the future challenges with vision, creativity, and wisdom. I'm certain the success and momentum we have achieved over the last 200 years of this University will continue to flourish under her leadership.

JOSEPH CACCHIONE, MD



For much of Aldridge's presidential address, she discussed her seven-point plan for Jefferson, one that aligns with the University's mission, vision, and values and provides students with an "exceptional" return on their tuition investment.

"Of course, it's one thing to identify our big-picture goal for the next 100 years, quite another to fulfill it," she said. "To ensure that we have all the right pieces in place, we will need an unwavering resolve and a collaborative spirit to focus our future on what I propose."

Aldridge's plan includes:

- Focusing on a high-touch, high-impact, real-world learning environment
- Continuing to build a robust portfolio of digital tools to augment Jefferson's signature Nexus Learning approach
- Strengthening Sidney Kimmel Medical College's reputation in teaching and research
- Fostering a culture that advances and sustains diversity and belonging
- Cultivating environmental stewardship, sustainability, and social responsibility
- Enhancing Jefferson's reputation as a preferred employer
- Maintaining a solid commitment to continued quality improvement, grounded in a fully transparent and data-driven self-assessment and decision-making process.

Aldridge closed her address by promising to be a thoughtful, well-informed, resourceful leader who rewards accomplishments and appreciates teamwork and new challenges. And as a tireless champion of Jefferson, she will never compromise the University's high standards.

"In just a few short months, the clock will begin ticking on Jefferson's next 100 years as a powerful institution at the forefront of higher education," she concluded. "I ask that you join me now in making this new era as remarkable as our first 200 years. Together, we will take risks and embrace the opportunities, learn from our mistakes, celebrate our victories, and harness the enormous talent on our campuses to lead ahead of the academic curve. Welcome to the third century of Thomas Jefferson University." 📖



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- ▶ **Polar Bears and Beluga Whales**
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- ▶ **Northern Adriatic: A Nautical Odyssey**
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BY IRISA GOLD

FASHION'S
Fairy Godmother

MADISON CHAMBERLAIN '17
FASHION DESIGN

While many brides dream of walking down the aisle in a traditional white dress, fashion designer Madison Chamberlain '17 has thrown open the window to let in the light from a dazzling rainbow of colors, fantastic array of fabrics and textures, and imaginative, inspired design, empowering nontraditional brides to dare to dream of a magical wedding featuring glorious, customized, one-of-a-kind gowns and veils.

A visit to her website, TikTok, or Instagram accounts features a peek into a fashion fairy tale resplendent with everything under the sun, from sequins to tulle, ruffles to metallics—flowers to hearts. Brides will see words like "joyful," veils with the names "Moonbeam" and "Darling," and find welcome and acceptance, no matter their size or design dreams.

Even as a child, Chamberlain, a 2017 graduate of Jefferson's (then Philadelphia University's) fashion design program, knew early on that she wanted to be in the fashion field. "I toured different schools in New York and Philadelphia," she says. "I loved that

Jefferson had a beautiful campus but still had such a great fashion program. At other fashion schools, I felt like I was getting one or the other. Here, you had both."

Chamberlain didn't always envision a business creating incredible bespoke bridal couture. "In college, I never did bridal, but I always created very over-the-top occasion wear," she shares. "I liked working with embellishment, was obsessed with sparkly things, and loved designing with lots of color. It's not so different from what I do now, it's just a different category."

To this day, she utilizes—and values—lessons she learned and challenges she conquered, while at Jefferson. "They really asked a lot of us, but in a good way," Chamberlain says. "They expected a lot with the workload, with managing your time, and with presenting something you worked on and pushed yourself through."

She is grateful that Jefferson set her up to succeed. "I think that level of expectation and balancing things made us feel like we wanted to achieve those things and do a good job," she says.



**I really
cared
about
sustainability,
and body and
size inclusivity.**



“There’s so much pressure in owning a business and working in fashion in general, and I use those skills every single day. Everything was project-based in school, and I treat almost everything I do the same way today.”

Chamberlain is proud to have won a chance to show her second senior collection at New York Fashion Week and has kept a lot of her early work. “That was a career highlight that I still think about,” she shares.

It’s not only in career matters where Jefferson changed her life. “The closest people to me are from school,” she says. “My roommate, who I still live with to this day, was my roommate in college. I’m getting married this year, and our officiant is one of my friends from Jefferson’s medical program. I look back on school very, very fondly, and I just loved it.”

Following graduation, Chamberlain joined Free People as a design assistant on the party

dresses team. “After two years I was burnt out and thought I was done with fashion in general,” she shares. “I got a tiny art studio in Fishtown, started to waitress again, taught kids art and sewing, and painted pet portraits.”

But after some time, she realized she missed the fashion world and wanted to do things her way. “I left because I felt like I was contributing to mass consumption,” Chamberlain says. “I really cared about sustainability, and body and size inclusivity. I tried to create a ready-to-wear brand but soon realized all the different challenges that come with that. Then, after a year, a friend introduced me to her friend who was a size 16 or 18 and was looking for a wild, custom wedding dress. It was my first one-on-one experience with a client, and I fell in love with the process.”

For Chamberlain, creating designs celebrating fun,

fashion, sustainability, and size inclusivity “ticked all the boxes” and set her on an exciting new journey. She shares, “Creating crazy clothes at a price point where I could get paid for my work; making things that fit people perfectly and brought brides joy for their important day; having them be so elated and bringing purpose to the world through my designs: these were my main goals.”

After creating this life-changing dress in September 2021, in January 2022, Chamberlain turned to social media for help in announcing her new venture, regularly posting her nontraditional custom veils, dresses, and capes on Instagram. Slowly, people began to take notice. But it wasn’t until a post on TikTok in August 2022 that her business launched into the stratosphere.

Still working other jobs, Chamberlain didn’t really have clients and was posting as much as she could, trying to gain



notice. “Someone found me that wanted a nontraditional veil,” she shares. Once Chamberlain posted a video modeling the stunning, sequined, rainbow-colored creation, the veil went viral, and she was able to quit her part-time job and devote all her time to her business. And the rest is fashion history.

In the two years since the business’s hard launch, it has expanded to include two additional team members, both Jefferson alums. Chamberlain serves clients from across the globe, with all fittings taking place in her studio in Philadelphia’s Fishtown neighborhood, and offers not only these one-on-one custom design experiences, but also a number of items available for purchase and made to order on her website.

“I do one collection each year,” she says. “Right now, I’m inspired by designs from the Victorian and Edwardian eras in combination with women of

today, from pop stars to media personalities. I’m also drawn to fantastical, whimsical things like fairies and angel wings and am incorporating them into my bridal designs.”

Chamberlain doesn’t take her role in designing dresses—and dreams—lightly. “So much of what I do is run a business,” she says. “And that comes with trials and tribulations, headaches, stress, fear, and all the things. But I feel most proud when we show things to the clients, and they cry and feel so moved. I start crying every time as well. It’s so emotional and cool to see things that you create evoke that emotion. At the end of the day, that is the goal as a designer, right? You want to make people feel things.”

But for her own wedding dress? The design is top secret! 🤫



THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY

Diploma School of Nursing

The Thomas Jefferson University Diploma School of Nursing began in 1891; its first class graduated with 13 students. The rigorous three-year curriculum focused on traditional vocational training for young women seeking to enter the profession. In 1973, the program admitted its first male student. The last diploma nurse class graduated in 1982, when the college transitioned to a baccalaureate program.

Today, there are approximately 1,000 alumni of the program throughout the country.

The Diploma Nurses' Alumni Association is a robust organization committed to remaining connected socially, caring for its members with financial assistance for medical needs, and supporting current and future nurses with scholarships to further their education.



BFFs in Nursing and Life

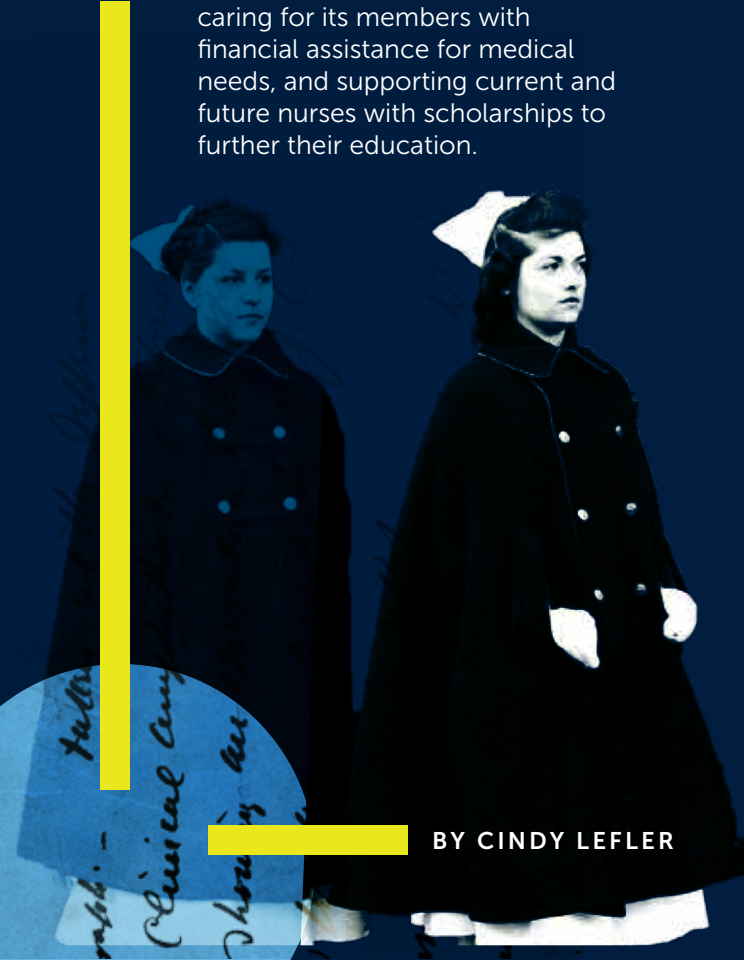
Patricia DeHart, RN, BSBA, CDE and Eileen Cooney-McDevitt, RN, Class of 1977

Patricia DeHart and Eileen Cooney-McDevitt are sitting side by side, chatting, laughing, and reminiscing, much the way they've done for the past 50 years.

The women consider themselves part of an elite group—graduates of the Jefferson Diploma School of Nursing. They were assigned as roommates in 1974 and have been best friends ever since.

For half a century, they've hung out together, double-dated with their husbands together, cheered on the Phillies together, shared stories about their careers and families together, and supported their beloved alma mater together.

"We chose Jefferson because the diploma program was one of the top programs in the country," says DeHart, who only recently retired from nursing and serves on



BY CINDY LEFLER

the board of the Diploma Nurses' Alumni Association.

DeHart followed a family tradition in entering the field of healthcare—her father and brother were both graduates of Jefferson.

“I’m very interested in seeing people get well and stay well,” she says, adding that nursing offers a multitude of options. “Nursing is a field where you can grow as your interests grow. You can start in med-surg and end up being an OB-GYN nurse. I worked in pharmaceutical for a while, and then I went back to being a diabetes educator.”

Cooney-McDevitt says she chose nursing to improve the lives of her patients and balance having a career with raising her family.

Throughout the past five decades, the two have noticed great changes in nursing education and practice.

Up until 1974, the students were not allowed to wear pants to class, and their uniforms were pale pink dresses with caps. The dorm for female nurses was the Martin building, which was supervised by a house mother the ladies refer to as “The Hammer.”

“There were no visitors allowed on your floor. If you had a date, the house mother would announce over the audio system ‘Miss Maro, you have a caller in the lobby,’” DeHart recalls.

“And you had to be in by midnight, otherwise you were locked out,” adds Cooney-McDevitt.

And there were no cellphones or landlines in the rooms.

“There was only one phone in the hall, and you had to wait in line to get a call,” says Cooney-

McDevitt. “We had common showers, common bathrooms, and so we really learned how to get along with people and how to find the best in others. It taught you patience and fostered a lot of closeness.”

But it wasn’t all strict rules and regulations. “Sunbathing was allowed on the rooftop of the Martin building,” says Cooney-McDevitt. That is, until some took “liberties” and sparked a ban on the practice.

“Topless sunbathing,” DeHart says, laughing.

Of all the changes the two women have witnessed over the years, the biggest is the technological advances in the field.

“Our technology was nonexistent,” says Cooney-McDevitt.

Today, nurses have mobile computer units on wheels that travel with them into patient rooms, carrying all the information they need. “We were documenting our meds in a Kardex (a medical patient information system that used forms preprinted on card stock),” she says. “We had ventilators that just basically pumped air and a balloon pump that became an ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, a life-support procedure that uses a machine to help a patient’s heart and lungs function).”

As nurses, they learned the new and ever-changing technology through continuing education courses.

Perhaps the biggest game-changer in patient care for both the patient and the nurse was the alternating air pressure mattress, DeHart says.

“Back in 1977, in order to prevent bed sores, we turned patients manually every two hours and stuffed pillows behind them. (The air mattress) helped the patients, and it took a lot of pressure off of the nurses who were really moving heavy patients back and forth every two hours.”

For all the changes they’ve seen, the mission always remains the same: to make a positive impact on the lives of others. DeHart points to the volunteer opportunities offered by the diploma nurse program.

“I traveled to Guatemala seven times. You go and you see people who have never seen a doctor, and you can see an immediate change in their life after one nebulizer treatment,” says DeHart, who is planning another volunteer mission in early 2025. “A nurse makes such a big impact, not only physically, but emotionally.”

Cooney-McDevitt agrees, adding, “I brought my nursing education into every aspect of my life. You really learn a lot from taking care of sick people and their families. You learn compassion.”

The women offer advice to those going into the field today.

DeHart recommends anyone considering a career in nursing to “get a job in the field immediately as a nurse’s aide, or in a nursing home, or any area where you can get a taste of nursing so that you’re really sure this is the field you want to be successful in.”

“Keep your heart in it,” adds Cooney-McDevitt. “Keep your love of people and patients in it. And never stop learning!”

An Ever-Changing Profession

Debbie Allen, RN, BSed,
CCRN, Class of 1976



For the Thomas Jefferson University Diploma Nurse program, 1973 was a year of firsts.

“It was the first class that was able to wear pants to class, the first to have a male student, the first to have a married student, and the first to have someone graduate who had a child,” says Debbie Allen.

Before 1973, the program consisted of young single women who lived in a dorm that was strictly guarded by house mothers. Allen muses that “a lot has changed” since then, including how nurses are trained.

“The first day at Jefferson, you were assigned a clinical, you were set up to go and do hands-on work in a particular department,” says Allen, who entered the program upon graduating high school at 16. “You were placed into situations and learned very quickly how to care for your patients.”

Today, says Allen, students don’t get the same type of hands-on experience. While they are placed in clinical settings with patient interactions right away, they are provided with virtual learning modules before performing care and procedures on patients.

And that’s a good thing, she says. “The technology allows nurses to train on virtual patients before actual patients, which saves a lot of mistakes from happening.”

Allen, who spent the majority of her career in critical care, retired from floor nursing in 2004. She then became a school nurse educator, moved on to the pharmaceutical industry as a trainer, and now works as a medical writer.

She says that is the beauty of nursing. “It’s a profession that once you get into it, you have so many opportunities; with a nursing education, you’re able to do anything you want to do.”

Allen knew at the age of seven that she wanted to be a nurse. And she knew that Jefferson’s program was the only one for her. “It was the only place that I applied to. I came for a visit and fell in love with Jefferson.”

“It was, and still is, very well respected, so to be accepted into the program made you feel so proud,” she says. “It also provided an opportunity where we as women could make a decent income.”

When Allen graduated, the salary for a nurse was \$4.25 an hour; after passing the boards for an RN, the salary was increased to \$4.50 an hour. The added advantage was being able to work while raising a family, an

important aspect for women at the time.


There are about 1,000 diploma nurses still around, and the alumni association works to make sure that they stay in touch with each other. The organization sends a bulletin out once a year and holds an annual luncheon that brings between 150 and 180 alumni—some of them in their 90s—to campus.

“In addition, everybody who is 80 and above receives flowers from the alumni association on their birthday,” she says. “A lot of people are alone or living in nursing homes at this point in their lives, and they’re so appreciative. We really do take care of our own.”

Taking care of their own includes financial assistance to ensure that they have the healthcare they need, access to hearing aids and other equipment to keep them safe in their homes, and a safety net for household bills if necessary. It also includes financial assistance for continuing education for graduates pursuing master’s degree or doctoral programs.

While nursing can be a demanding—and sometimes sad—profession, Allen says it’s quite rewarding.

“For example, when you see patients come in and you do not think they’re going to leave that unit, but you give them such good care that three months later they come back and bring you doughnuts saying, ‘Thank you so much for keeping me alive.’”

“There’s such a satisfaction you get from being a nurse, but you have to have the heart and stomach and stamina for it.” 

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REDEFINE POSSIBLE

 **Thomas Jefferson**
University



Industrial Designer Behind Adidas Basketball's Vision

BY MIKE BEDERKA

For industrial design alumnus Nathan VanHook '03, the seeds of collaborating with the likes of musicians Pharrell Williams, Travis Scott, and Hiroshi Fujiwara and designers Virgil Abloh and Salehe Bembury began at the University's Smith House. The clubhouse for industrial design students served as a den of creativity where he and his classmates would tinker, build, and share ideas.

VanHook lives in Los Angeles and leads Adidas Basketball as the vice president of design. He was the keynote speaker for Jefferson's School of Design and Engineering Graduate Forum, which was held on September 30, 2024.

VanHook started his career teaching eighth-grade art and design, and shortly after, moved to Body Glove as a wetsuit designer and then art director. Joining Nike in 2008, he created award-winning footwear designs, collaborated with brand and entertainment icons, led design teams to create industry-leading products for the Olympics and World Cup, and reset the company's outdoor brand, ACG. Following Nike, VanHook went to luxury outdoor brand Moncler in Milan to reestablish their footwear business before joining Adidas in 2023.

■ **What are some of your favorite memories from your time here?**

Besides hanging out in the Smith House, I loved playing on the baseball team, traveling, hanging out with friends on the weekends, and going to South Street to visit Pearl and get cheesesteaks.

■ **How did your Jefferson degree best prepare you for your career?**

My degree was well rounded and provided specialized skills in industrial design. The program focused on the process and how to be critical of your work. Competing against classmates helped build a work ethic that has followed me throughout my career. Plus, figuring out different ways around problems has fostered my entrepreneurial mindset.

■ **Describe what your job at Adidas Basketball entails.**

I set a creative vision to help drive the business and lead our team of incredibly talented designers to get there, problem-solving through the process. I focus on testing and sport and how to make the connection from on- to off-court.

■ **What have been some of the most rewarding projects you've worked on?**

Some projects earn a lot of press, while others may be a struggle to get through the system. However, every project is rewarding. You always learn something from it to apply to your next project.

■ **What advice can you offer Jefferson students?**

If you want a specific job, try to do the job before you get the job. Learn as much as you can about the field, reach out to those you admire, and copy their blueprint on how they got there, and hustle. If you don't have it in your portfolio or past school projects, do it in the extra time. Show that you uniquely approach your work and have the necessary skills for your future employer. 🍷



Red Dye in His Veins Jefferson in His Heart

John S. Thackrah '53



BY IRISA GOLD



Philadelphia Textile Institute alumnus John S. Thackrah '53 hails from a long line of Jeffersonians whose legacies have been interwoven through the fabric of the textile industry for generations.

"I grew up in a family of textile people," he says. "I'm very proud of the fact that my father, uncle, and grandfathers went to Philadelphia Textile School. Both grandfathers were part owners of their mills, and my father was the owner of the Vila Co., a Philadelphia distributor of dyes and chemicals."

Growing up, where Thackrah would go to college was a constant discussion among his family. "Eventually, they all agreed that I probably had red dye in my veins," he says. "So

after I got out of high school, I joined the Navy and then had an opportunity to go to Philadelphia Textile Institute."

Thackrah raves about his college experience. Two special professors profoundly influenced him. "Harry Birkby and Bob Kenyon were responsible for the 'dye' end of my education," he explains. "I greatly appreciated what they taught me that got me started in my career. I was also a member of Phi Psi Fraternity, where I met many of the friends that I had in school. Many of these friendships lasted for years after graduation. We had so many great memories, had a lot of fun, and worked hard. I met my bride-to-be, Doris, when we were at Germantown

High School. She was a great supporter throughout my journey. It was a true partnership."

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and dyeing, Thackrah and Doris married, and he embarked on an incredibly successful career with DuPont in the fields of textile dyes, colored pigments, and specialty chemicals. Starting as a textile dyes chemical representative and salesman, Thackrah rose through the ranks. His career took him all over the world, culminating in a position as sales and marketing director of the Specialty Chemicals DuPont Strategic Business Unit.

Thackrah was always active in the stock market, and after

retirement took his keen interest in investing to the next level. He and a friend started Quality Value Investment Club (QVIC), which grew to 35 members and ran for five years. With Thackrah at the helm, they more than doubled members' investments. He also started a wooden toy business called PEG-EM which was very successful. This experience taught him many valuable lessons about starting up, investing in, and operating a business.

Today, he shares his wisdom and personal portfolio management style with students as a guest lecturer once or twice each year for Jefferson professor Tim Mooney's "Personal Financial Planning" class. "I love their questions," he says. "I love how bright and interested they are, and I have enjoyed every one of them." He also supports student scholarships through the Thackrah Endowed Scholarship, which he established in 2021.

At the end of 2024, Jefferson announced Thackrah's transformational gift to the School of Business to launch the Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab.

The Thackrah Lab will enrich the School's curriculum and empower students through the availability of live market news, analytics, and research tools. Powered by 12 Bloomberg terminals and other systems utilized by leading business and financial companies for making investment decisions, the Thackrah Lab will not only offer students a state-of-the-art learning environment, but also the competitive advantages necessary to succeed in today's

data- and AI-driven business climate.

"I attribute a great deal of my success to my Philadelphia Textile Institute education," Thackrah says. "When I learned that Thomas Jefferson University wanted to add a capital market research laboratory, I knew I wanted to contribute and give Jefferson students a competitive edge in a highly competitive world. The Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab reflects me, as well as my grandparents, father, and uncles who attended this school, and expresses an appreciation for what it has done for my whole family."

Thackrah's family and its legacy is never far from his mind. "I married my high school sweetheart, and we were married for 67 years," he shares. "We had two children, four grandchildren, and I now have two great-grandchildren. I'm very proud that the Thackrah name—our family—is doing some good for others. I have the pleasure in my lifetime of seeing this money being used in a way that will be helpful to students in their careers for a long, long time." 🍷

The Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab reflects me, as well as my grandparents, father, and uncles who attended this school, and expresses an appreciation for what it has done for my whole family.



RAM



For the latest news and updates, subscribe to the Ram Roundup newsletter at [Jefferson.edu/Newsletter](https://jefferson.edu/Newsletter)

ROUNDUP

Corey Goff Steps Up to Lead Jefferson Athletics into a New Era

With experience under his belt, the newly minted assistant vice president for athletics at Jefferson, Corey Goff, knows what it takes to guide student-athletes every step of the way. He's bringing fresh energy and a clear vision to Jefferson, one focused on building well-rounded athletes who excel both on and off the field.

Having led athletics at Knox College and Muhlenberg College, Goff is familiar with the delicate balance between sports and personal development. His goals for Jefferson include increasing mental health resources, establishing a nutrition program, and enhancing strength and conditioning to support students in every aspect of their journey. "It's all about making sure our athletes are prepared to succeed in everything they do," he explains.

But Goff's story is not just about programs and goals; it's also about creating a community that supports and empowers. A former baseball player, he recalls the camaraderie and commitment that fueled his own athletic days. And yes, he has his superstitions — Goff chuckles as he admits to a "lucky" game-day ritual of wearing unwashed socks when on a winning streak. It's this same spirit of dedication he aims to inspire in Jefferson's athletes.

Goff's passion for sports runs deep, and his high-energy approach to athletics is perfectly captured by his pregame playlist favorite,



"Thunderstruck" by AC/DC. "It gets me pumped every time," he says with a grin. Just as the song brings a surge of energy, Goff draws inspiration from trailblazers like legendary coach Pat Summitt, whose impact transformed women's sports. "She set a standard of excellence that still inspires," he shares, showing his respect for those who redefine what's possible in athletics.

A fan of both the Dallas Cowboys and New York Mets, Goff has also embraced Philly sports, finding a local team to root for—the Philadelphia Water Dogs lacrosse team. Taking on his new role, Goff knows that building Jefferson Athletics will take community support. "Our student-athletes succeed because of the support they get from alumni, fans, and donors," he says. "Together, we're creating a foundation for Jefferson Athletics that champions every athlete's full potential."

With Goff at the helm—and "Thunderstruck" echoing in the background—Jefferson Athletics is ready to rise to new heights. 🏆



Your Impact By The Numbers!

\$122,320 Total Raised

17 Participating Jefferson Rams Teams

1,364 Total Gifts

383 Rambassadors

13 Matches & Challenges Unlocked

Gifts From Across

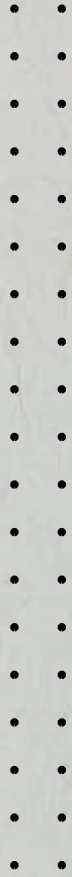
34 States

8 Countries

A Historic Year for the Jefferson Rams



2024 was a historic, banner year for Thomas Jefferson University's incredible athletics teams. The indomitable women's soccer team led the University's athletic accolades with their first-ever advancement to the Regional Finals. Both the women's and men's basketball teams won their CACC Championship titles this year, the first time since the 2008-09 season. Both earned NCAA Tournament berths, and the women's basketball team had their best season in program history. Other victories included the baseball team's making the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 34 years, men's tennis securing its third straight CACC title, and women's cross country earning its 14th CACC title.



BY IRISA GOLD

FROM THE WASHINGTON BALLET TO WIMBLEDON

The Journey of a Lifetime for Jefferson Physical Therapy Graduates

For 1994 Thomas Jefferson University master of science in physical therapy graduates Miriam Graham and Reshma Rathod, meeting on the first day of orientation was the beginning of a beautiful friendship and business partnership that spans three decades—and is still going strong.

“I think what connected us initially was that we were both from Maryland,” says Rathod. “We were cadaver partners and lived on the same hallway and floor of the Orlowitz building.”

“Another thing that was magical about it is that’s where we learned our working ethic of getting the information and sharing,” says Graham. “It was a very competitive process to get into physical therapy school, but then you learn to put your competitiveness aside and help each other. That’s what really solidified our friendship—we were in the lab getting work done,

but we supported each other in excelling.”

When asked to describe their Jefferson experience, both Rathod and Graham had the same answer. Rathod shares, “It gave us confidence. I felt supported when I was there. We had a good connection with the professors and were able to interact with different disciplines and students of all different subspecialties. It’s the networking and being able to build relationships.”

Graham agrees. “I learned so much about professional inquiry and research. It was the process of learning how to ask questions, take in the information, and make your own decision—the confidence to say, ‘That rings true; I think that’s right,’ or ‘No, that doesn’t ring true, I’m going to keep looking.’”

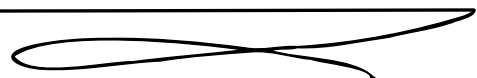
Following graduation, both joined the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, D.C., where they spent the next decade gaining invaluable experience.

Graham, a lifelong dancer, worked inpatient before transitioning to outpatient in a satellite clinic and leading the performing arts treatment program. Rathod worked inpatient, moving through different subspecialties, including stroke, traumatic brain injury, and orthopedics, before moving to outpatient.

“Over the years, we worked our way up the career ladder,” says Rathod. “Miriam and I were charged with teaching the network the manual therapy skills that we were working to develop professionally.”

One day, Graham beeped Rathod at the hospital with a life-changing idea. “She said, ‘I think we need to start a business,’” Rathod says. In 2004, they made the leap to start their own practice—and never looked back.

“The practice is called Restore Motion,” Graham says. “It’s evocative of what we do, and is also our initials, Reshma and Miriam. We knew that through



Over the years, we worked our way up the career ladder



▲ Restore Motion team



▲ Rathod and Serena Williams

the doors, men were calling us. We focused on pelvic health, the integration of the whole body, and how that relates to the person in their dynamic environment and what they want to do. We had good success.”

“We’re doing manual therapy, which uses manual skills to improve overall function of the body,” shares Rathod. “We’re looking at the biomechanics of that body and trying to reestablish that homeostasis or that normal biomechanics.”

“The other facet of Restore Motion’s women’s health focus concentrates on the female athlete,” continues Rathod, who works as one of the providers for the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA). “Since 2007, I have traveled internationally to five to six different tournaments each year as one of their physical therapists. Sometimes I’m the one doing their treatments right on the court. The great thing is that we’re able to learn from therapists from around the world and bring some of those concepts back to incorporate into our practice.”

This past summer, Rathod, who is also a member of the

the education we received and the experience we had, we could really provide a different type and quality of service if we did it in a private practice setting. That was the drive. It was grit. We started with a portable table and a biofeedback unit in the back of our car. We would drive to people’s homes and do therapy there until we had enough working capital to build out a

space. We were in the black in four months.”

Rathod had additional training in women’s health, and the pair developed an important market niche for their practice. “Initially, our market was not only orthopedics and osteopathic manipulation, it was looking at women’s health, specifically pelvic floor disorder,” says Graham. “Then, very soon after we opened

WTA's Hologic Women's Health Taskforce, which collects data on professional athletes to incorporate and develop treatment protocols, was on-site with the players at Wimbledon.

In addition, the practice works with the Washington School of Ballet, providing physical therapy and a wellness program for the students. "I attended as a young girl and through adolescence, so it's very rewarding to come back," says Graham. "We're charged with doing health promotion and injury prevention and provide workshops in technique. It goes back to learning your anatomy, your body, and how to best use it to decrease injury and improve performance."

The duo believes strongly in education and community service. "We teach, host courses in our clinic, and invite our colleagues and peers," says Rathod. "Our clinic is also an approved clinical affiliation site

for doctor of physical therapy students, who come and complete their curriculum. We also go out into the community for outreach programs, whether it's on pelvic floor, fall prevention, or ergonomic issues. It's just a matter of identifying the need of our community and being able to support it."

The Restore Motion team has also taught the medical staff of the WTA and the Washington, D.C., women's professional soccer team, the Washington Spirit.

"Our passion is to advocate, particularly for women," Graham continues. "Women have often been neglected in research because of hormonal fluctuation and childbearing issues. In 2024 Reshma and I both spoke separately for the NIH task force looking into funding for women's health."

This year, as Restore Motion celebrates its 20th anniversary, it boasts 10 employees and two

incredibly dedicated and passionate leaders. "I still enjoy and have passion for the profession," says Rathod. "It's very dynamic, and I'm evolving with it. It's been a wonderful path for me."

Graham is equally as committed. She shares, "I love what I do, and I see new possibilities every day. It is rewarding to be able to improve the quality of people's lives in so many different arenas. Everybody has the right to feel good and strong in their body and soul."

"I think we just always had this common vision," says Rathod. "Miriam thinks this way, I think that way, but we always end up at that common vision."

"It all got started in the cadaver lab," says Graham. "Jefferson really does hold a special place." 🇯🇪



▲ Reshma Rathod and Miriam Graham

J200

HOMECOMING 2024







Check out more photos of all the fun from **2024 Homecoming** by scanning the QR code above or visiting jefferson.edu/alumnievents.

Save the date for **2025 Homecoming** on **September 26 and 27**.

ALUMNI AWARDS

Young Alumni Achievement Award

Established in 2009 by Philadelphia University's First 5 Council, the award honors and recognizes the personal and professional achievements of a Jefferson—East Falls Campus or Philadelphia University graduate of the last 10 years.



Leigh Anne Krauser '14

Leigh Anne Krauser is an accomplished professional with over 13 years of expertise in the engineering and textile industry, specializing in laboratory management, technical textile testing, and research coordination. As the director of the Jeff Bruner Materials Characterization Laboratory at Thomas Jefferson University, she plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of textile innovation. She is also a professor within the School of Design and Engineering, where she leads the instruction of courses on textile materials and capstone projects, guiding students through hands-on learning experiences.

Leigh Anne earned her degree in mechanical engineering from Philadelphia University in 2014. Her career has

been marked by substantial contributions to product development, particularly within the automotive and aerospace sectors. Her work spans the full spectrum of innovation, from initial concept designs to the successful launch of market-ready products. She is also the holder of several patents for innovative textile products, reflecting her deep expertise in developing nonwoven, woven, braided, knitted, and coated materials.

Beyond her technical achievements, Leigh Anne is passionate about cultivating inclusive, supportive, and innovative work and educational environments that foster a culture of respect, open communication, and teamwork. Leigh Anne's dedication to guiding coworkers and teams alike has earned her recognition as a mentor and leader, known for creating spaces where individuals feel empowered to share ideas, take creative risks, and challenge themselves. She looks forward to continuing this through her work at Thomas Jefferson University.



Frank L. Giese Textile Award

The award was created in 1970 by Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science alumni in honor of Dr. Frank L. Giese, professor emeritus of textiles, in recognition of an individual's contributions to innovation in the design, technology, or marketing of textile products and outstanding and significant impact on the textile industry.



John L. Steen '59

John L. Steen is president of Steen Sales, Inc., a company representing various yarn-spinning and texture mills. He is on the board of directors of the Holland Christian Home, and is president of their foundation, and serves on several committees for this organization. The home provides care to seniors. Steen is on the board of directors for Atlantic Stewardship Bank in Bergen County, New Jersey, where he chairs the Nomination Committee and where he also serves on the Audit and Stockholder Relations Committee. ASB is a bank with a mission to donate, or tithe, 20% of its earning to the community. In 1958, Steen was instrumental in having the name of the University's basketball team changed from the Weavers to the Rams.

Graham J. Littlewood III '42 Time, Talent & Treasure Award

Established in 2001, the award celebrates the achievements and contributions of an outstanding graduate from a program on the Jefferson—East Falls Campus who has contributed time, talent, and treasure through a commitment to the mission of the University and to future generations of Jefferson students. A chemistry student at what was then the Philadelphia Textile Institute (PTI), Littlewood was an active member of the PTI Alumni Association for many years, serving as president in 1965-66.

Germantown, now called the East Falls campus. In 1949, the entire Philadelphia Textile Institute was the building that is now called Hayward Hall. He was an active member of the Phi-Psi fraternity. His father and an uncle graduated from Philadelphia Textile School at Broad and Pine streets in 1914 and 1922.

Thackrah married his high school sweetheart, Doris A. VanSciver, in 1953. They had two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. They were married for 67 years prior to Doris' passing four years ago.

Thackrah worked for DuPont for over 41 years in the textile dyes, colored pigments, and specialty chemicals businesses.

He started his DuPont career in 1953 as a textile dyes technical representative and salesman. He retired in 1994 as the business director of the Performance Products Business Division. He had many assignments during his career, which involved living in many different places and traveling all over the world.

Thackrah now lives in the Willow Valley Retirement Communities in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His hobbies include investing, golfing, bike riding, woodworking, and cheering for the Phillies and Eagles.

He is an active alumnus and still appreciates the education he received from PTI, 71 years ago. 🇺🇸



John S. Thackrah '53

John Thackrah was born in West Oak Lane, Philadelphia, on July 6, 1931. He graduated from Germantown High School in 1949 and spent eight years in the Naval Air Reserve stationed at Willow Grove Naval Air Station.

Thackrah graduated from the Philadelphia Textile Institute in 1953 with a BS degree in chemistry and dyeing. His class was the first to spend all four years at the new campus in





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ALUMNI DAY

Shannon Gallagher-Colombo, PhD '09

2024 JCLS Early Career Alumni Award Recipient

Shannon Gallagher-Colombo, PhD, is senior director, Early Differentiation & Pipeline, at Bristol Myers Squibb, overseeing medical strategy for early cancer resistance mechanisms across tumor types. Previously, she was director of targeted therapies on the U.S. medical thoracic cancers team, leading product launches, data strategy, and mentoring colleagues, including Jefferson alumni.

Before joining the pharmaceutical industry, Gallagher-Colombo held roles at the American Association for Cancer Research, contributing to strategic communications, fundraising, and grant development. She earned her PhD in molecular cell biology, studying cell motility in metastasis, followed by a postdoc at Penn on photodynamic cancer therapy research.

Xiang Gao, PhD '94

2024 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient

Gao established his lab at Nanjing University in 2000, focusing on physiological homeostasis and disease pathogenesis. His team pioneered research on the gasdermin protein family's role

in cell death, pyroptosis, and inflammatory diseases. A leader in genetic editing, Gao founded China's National Resource Center of Mutant Mice and generated the world's first CRISPR/Cas9 knockout dog. He trained over 100 students, with many now faculty at top universities like Harvard and Tsinghua. In 2017, he founded GemPharmatech Corporation, which developed 20,000+ KO mouse strains and went public in 2022 with a market value of \$1.3 billion.

Edward Winter, PhD

2024 Honorary Lifetime Membership Award Recipient

Edward Winter, PhD, earned his doctorate at SUNY Stony Brook and completed postdoctoral training at MIT. A professor in Jefferson's Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department since 1990, his research explores signal transduction pathways and transcriptional mechanisms regulating meiotic development using yeast as a model. Passionate about mentoring, Winter has advised over a dozen doctoral students and numerous master's and undergraduate researchers. He values the role Jefferson students play in advancing scientific discovery. Co-director of the PhD program in Biochemistry, Structural, and Molecular Biology, he acknowledges funding from NIH,

ACS, and NSF for supporting his research.



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Alumna Creates Holiday Magic with Whimsical Amazon Kids Gift Book

Holiday shoppers across the country were introduced to adorable forest friends Bear, Owl, Mouse, Fox, and Raccoon courtesy of Jefferson visual communication design alumna Laura Moyer '13, whose fun, fanciful illustrations graced the pages of this year's Amazon Kids Gift Book, "Share the Joy."

A freelance illustrator, Moyer worked as a graphic designer until the birth of her second child. "I stayed home to raise my children, taking freelance design work," she says. "I kept drawing, exploring, and putting my work out there on Instagram. Eventually, illustration clients came in, and it kept going from there."

Moyer credits Jefferson with providing her with the

foundational understanding to approach illustration from a design point of view. "My education and experience as a graphic designer helped mold my style, which blends my particularness, inspiration from midcentury illustrators, and whatever currently inspires me," she shares. "I'm for illustrations that feel simple from a layout perspective but are charming and detailed."

"I loved exploring the different emotions of each character and portraying them in an impactful yet simple way," Moyer says, noting that the Amazon Kids Gift Book was the largest, longest-term, and most public piece in her career thus far. "Amazon featured my illustrator bio at the end, making it extra special."

Moyer's children are big fans and helpful sounding boards. "They think I'm kind of cool, and my daughter says she wants to be an illustrator," she shares. "My son isn't as interested in illustration as a career path, but he provides great feedback. I often ask them if an illustration communicates what it should, especially from a child's point of view. Their feedback becomes a fun and important step in my creative process."

Current and prospective design students can benefit from Moyer's sage advice and experience. "Work hard; don't settle; be your harshest critic and biggest cheerleader," she advises. "Create things you're proud of." [👉](#)

1982

George Smith III, Marketing, recently retired as a Boeing 767-400 captain after 42 years in aviation, including eight years serving in the United States Air Force and 34 years at Delta Air Lines.

1994

Kimberly (Asbrand) DiSanti, Nursing, recently retired from a 25-year nursing career. Working in New Jersey and New York, she specialized in telemetry, the cardiovascular intensive care unit, and the emergency room. She has always valued the education and excellence in the profession of nursing that she received from the College of Allied Health Sciences. She and other students in the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences & Biotechnology started the group JeffCARES to be able to learn about and provide services to Center City Philadelphia's very diverse community. She shares that the nursing education at Jefferson was and is second to none.

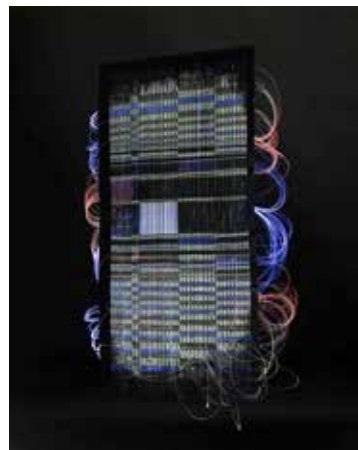
2006

Nidhi Saharan, Nursing, has been so proud to call herself a Jefferson alum. She completed her MSN and worked at the University of Pennsylvania. Currently, she is a professor of nursing. Her daughter graduated from Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), just completed her residency, and is now pursuing her fellowship in New York. Her son applied to SKMC. They are all so proud to be alumni.

2009

Rebecca Kanach, Fashion Design, started working in the theater after graduation and transitioned into costume design. She was a founding member of the company The Bearded Ladies Cabaret and a company member of Lightning Rod Special, whose work can be seen all over Philadelphia and multiple cities around the country when touring. Maybe you saw her work at Eastern State Penitentiary's Bastille Day or at this year's Fringe Festival in a show titled "Nose Job." In 2020, she finished her MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts in Design for Stage & Film and won multiple Philadelphia Barrymore Awards for her designs on stage. She was the costume professor at University of the Arts until its sudden closure this summer and continues to mourn the loss of another arts institution. She remains ever active, designs regionally, and competes in a drag nightlife fashion competition called Seam Queen at Franky Bradley's in Philadelphia.

2010



Boyoung Moon, Fashion Design, was honored with the Lexus Creative Masters Award, a contemporary craft competition hosted by Lexus Korea. She submitted a woven fabric sculpture using luminescent fabric, which she started when she was in a class taught by Marcia Weiss. She is developing luminescent fabrics by incorporating various sensors and programming. This work is fun and meaningful to her, and she has been invited to various exhibitions.

2014

Rhode-Annie Paulémont, Textile Design, studied and obtained her Master of Arts in fashion design at Kingston University in London after graduation. She spent the next few years in New York working in knitwear technical design. In 2022, she moved to Sydney, Australia after being offered a role at the luxury fashion brand Camilla. She's recently been offered the role of design development manager-knitwear at the global luxury fashion house Zimmermann, which she started in mid-October.



Nick Oliver '12

BY IRISA GOLD

For Master of Construction

Management graduate Nick Oliver '12, Jefferson was part of his life years before his studies began.

As a child, he spent a lot of time at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital with his mother, who worked there for two decades as a biomedical technician. “When she was on call and had to come in, she often brought me and my siblings along,” Oliver says. “We spent a lot of time either visiting or around the hospital with her.”

When it came to his career, though he took a more circuitous path, it ultimately led him back to Jefferson.

Oliver once dreamed of designing the automobiles of the future. He was an engineering studies major at Lafayette College with a minor in architecture studies. Then, in his senior year, he decided to pursue construction project management.

“The thing that drew me to the field was that I would be involved in the building of major structures,” Oliver says. “I was interested in design, and as an engineer, I’ve always been one that likes to take things apart, put them back together, and understand how things work and systems operate.”

Growing up around the corner from Jefferson’s East Falls Campus, Oliver was

familiar with the school and the area. “It’s a great school and a beautiful campus,” he says. “Attending Jefferson helped to catapult and position me to obtain work in my field.”

Oliver is proud of Jefferson’s growing reputation in the industry. “Several of my colleagues are also graduates of the same master’s program at Jefferson,” he shares. “I’m seeing more and more graduates come out of Jefferson with construction management degrees.”

Following graduation, Oliver completed an internship with associate professor John Barnes, who has since become a trusted mentor. “He’s a very reliable resource for me,” he says. “I’ve learned from him how to address and approach the many challenges that are almost inevitable in construction and construction management.”

In the 11 years since graduating and completing his internship, and Oliver, who started out his career as a rotating project engineer, is serving as a vice president at BFW Group, LLC in Philadelphia. In this role, he provides client relations and project management services, overseeing projects from concept through final delivery. “It’s very important that we keep good communications and relationships with our clients,” he says. “One of the things that I learned is that there’s no such thing as good news and bad news—there’s just news—and

the sooner you make that news available, the sooner everyone can either plan and prepare for it or react to it.”

Oliver’s Jefferson ties remain strong. His company was part of the owner representation team that helped to coordinate construction of the Honickman Center, Jefferson’s 19-story, 462,000-square-foot flagship medical building that opened in 2024.

Even today, Oliver says he bases his work on a simple lesson he learned at Jefferson—that the foundation of every project isn’t the brick, mortar, wood, and steel; it’s the human connection.

“I think it commonly gets overlooked, because at times, we can get caught up in the mechanics of things and forget the impact we have on what we do and who we work with,” he shares. “I’ve been fortunate to serve with teams that are very dedicated, not only to the project, but to each other. There is a sense of family, where we look out for not just the project’s best interests, but the best interest of everyone who works on and benefits from it.”

Oliver is proud of his ability to work through challenges and obstacles while remaining optimistic through the entire process. “There are many times when, depending on the nature of the project, we may run into obstacles or conditions that are daunting,” he says. “Nevertheless, we always figure it out. There’s a saying: ‘We may not know exactly how we’re going to get to the finish line, but we always figure out how to do that one way or another.’ And I’m very proud of that.”



2017

Devon Hamwright, Fashion Design, was a costume design intern for a play at the University of Pennsylvania featuring 100 different costumes with a full ensemble cast shortly after graduation. She has worked at Moore College of Art & Design in the precollege program with aspiring teen designers. During this time, she also released new music with a music publishing company and had one of her songs rank #57 on London radio. She recently returned from splitting her summer between Miami, Florida, and Brooklyn, New York, and is finally home, where she is focusing on new illustrations. She joined the Kollektiv fashion app as a founding member in 2024.

2018

Elizabeth (Hancin) Fenner, Fashion Design, had an interview (set up by career services) with American Trench, a small menswear brand located in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, shortly before graduating. She was brought on as the first full-time designer and was one of only four employees at the time. Six years later, the business has grown tremendously! There are now 14 employees, and the company opened its first brick-and-mortar store (also in Ardmore) last year. Last year was also big for her personally. She married the love of her life, they adopted a puppy who is the new love of their lives, and they bought their first home together.

2019

Lindsay Cogan, Fashion Design, got married in May 2024 at Love Park in Philadelphia. She also started a new job in New York City as the designer for RBX Men's Activewear and Crossover Culture.

2022

Rebecca Shustack, Fashion Design, is living in Manayunk and working at Boathouse Sports in North Philadelphia. She started out as a product developer, helping with production art files, templates, and new designs. Over the past two years, she's taken on additional roles as a production assistant, pattern maker, technical designer, photographer, and quality controller. She also works in the purchasing department to source new materials and quality check all materials that arrive in the factory. She's traveled to New York for material trade shows and attends the Head of the Charles Regatta in Boston every year with Boathouse, helping to set up and sell their products while engaging with customers. She's had an incredible time getting firsthand experience in garment manufacturing and learning about what it takes to run an apparel manufacturing company. If any students are ever interested in visiting an apparel manufacturer, feel free to reach out!

Kourtney Snigar, Athletic Training

, started her career in traditional athletic training in a local high school in Syracuse, New York. She is now working in the industrial setting with a utility company.

2024

Gabriella Gider, Nursing, is currently a nurse resident at Bryn Mawr Hospital's Emergency Department.

Jazmine Riley, Nursing, is currently a NeuroICU nurse at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, New York.

I started a
new career!

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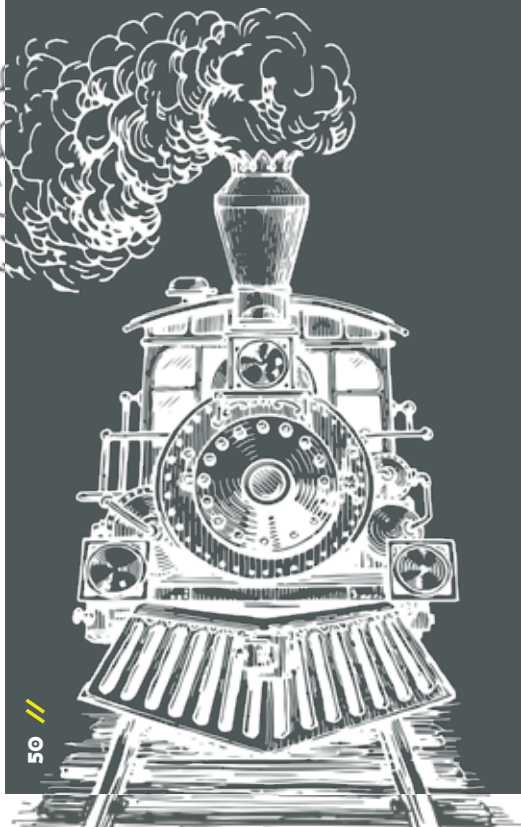
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the love train

Sandy Scher Schwab '77 ♥ Tadd Schwab '75



This year's Homecoming festivities will hold a special meaning for married alumni Sandy and Tadd Schwab as they celebrate Tadd's 50th reunion with classmates from the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, the place where they first met and started their lives together.

While some couples may point to a "meet cute" moment, for Sandy and Tadd, each has a different recollection of where and when they first met. "I remember meeting him at a Hillel meeting," Sandy says.

"She was dating my friend, and I remember meeting her in

shares. "With flowers," Sandy adds.

Tadd continues, "He was a little surprised to see me walk off the train with her. We're still all good friends. I don't know if he realizes that's what happened or not, but it was a funny story."

Following their dinner, the couple began dating, but Sandy had a boyfriend back home. It took an ultimatum to make it official. "Eventually, he said, 'Him or me, make up your mind,'" she says. Sandy and Tadd dated for a year. Tadd graduated in June of 1975, and the two were engaged that October. After a 15-month engagement, Sandy graduated

involved in alumni boards, alumni committees, and more," Tadd says. The couple established the Schwab Family Scholarship alongside Tadd's brother in 2001. "We have the ability to donate, and wanted to find a way to help people who don't have those means to attend school."

In addition to giving of their time mentoring fashion students and leading an alumni trip to Italy, Tadd and Sandy generously donated to the Kanbar Center, the Textile and Fashion Future Center, and athletic and other various programs, most recently giving to help to reinvigorate Jefferson's partnership with



**I guess we found love in a lot of ways ...
We fell in love there, and we found love of the school.**

a dorm room with friends, just hanging out," Tadd recalls.

While their actual initial meeting may be left to the ages, the couple knew each other a full semester before they started to date. It was a fateful train trip that changed their lives forever. In New York during Christmas break to work for his family's children's clothing business, before heading back to school, Tadd reached out to Sandy.

"We were friends, so I knew she was in Long Island and called her to ask what train she was taking and suggest we ride back together," he shares. The next day, he made his first move. "I called her back and said, 'How about when we get back, we go to dinner?' And she said, 'Sure.'"

There was a potential romantic hiccup. "A friend of ours decided he wanted to meet Sandy at the train and snuck down to the track to wait for her," Tadd

six months early in December 1976, and the pair tied the knot on Sandy's birthday in January 1977.

After moving to New Jersey following the wedding, the couple settled into their careers. Tadd took his place in his family's business, where he served as vice president of sales and then moved on to a critical role in quality and compliance. When the company was sold, he served as a consultant until he made the decision to retire. Sandy worked as a technical designer for five years until motherhood came calling. "I decided when I had kids that I wanted to stay home," she shares. Later in life, she studied to be an interior designer.


Sandy and Tadd continue to be involved with the University to this day. Tadd serves on the Academic Committee of the board of trustees, among other commitments. "We've been

Shenkar College in Israel.

In recognition of their passion for their alma mater, in 2010, the couple received the Graham J. Littlewood III '42 Time, Talent & Treasure Award, which honors outstanding graduates who have demonstrated their commitment to the mission of the University and to future generations of students.

Today, the couple share a son and daughter and dote on their four grandchildren. "We brought our children up in New Jersey, and when our children all left the nest, we moved to Florida," Sandy shares. "It's wonderful. We love it here."

"I guess we found love in a lot of ways," Tadd says. "We fell in love there, and we found love of the school."

The Class of 1975's 50th reunion will be held at Homecoming on September 26 and 27, 2025 (**Save the date!**). 



In Memory of

HAROLD RONSON

1926 – 2024

Proud alumnus and philanthropist Harold Ronson '51, 98, of Longboat Key, Florida, passed away on July 15, 2024. He was predeceased by his beloved wife of 57 years, Kay, and is survived by his daughters, Norma and Joanne; grandchildren, Lauren and Jonathan, and great-grandchild, Jackson.

Born in 1926 in Brooklyn, New York, he credited his parents with instilling in him the importance of giving back. While his family struggled financially, his mother gave 25 cents each week to support a charitable organization close to her heart.

After enlisting in the U.S. Navy during World War II at the age of only 17, Ronson served in the amphibious forces at Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Philippines from 1944 to 1946.

Following his service, he performed odd jobs until an uncle advised him to attend Philadelphia Textile Institute and learn the textile trade. He attended through the GI Bill, graduating with a degree in chemistry and dyeing in 1951.

After graduation, Ronson worked at W. Lowenthal as a plant chemist, advancing to the role of vice president. In 1962, he and a group of stockholders bought W. Lowenthal, and he was appointed president, a role he held until the 1970s, when he became sole owner. In December 1986, he sold the company to Hanes, retiring after more than 35 years.

Ronson remained dedicated to his alma mater as it evolved into Philadelphia University and then Jefferson. He served two separate terms as a trustee and was named trustee emeritus in 2008. His leadership and philanthropy helped build the

University's Paul J. Gutman Library, as well as the student residence Ronson Hall. He also established the Kay and Harold R. Ronson '51 Scholarship Fund, which is awarded to deserving students in any curriculum.

Ronson's most recent contributions included a \$2 million donation to name the Kay and Harold Ronson Health and Applied Science Center, as well as the Ronson Simulation Lab. Additionally, he supported the Kanbar Student Center, Tuttleman Center, Billy Harris Scholarship, Gallagher Scholarship, School of Design and Engineering, and the PhilaU Fund.

At the October 2020 virtual dedication of the Ronson Health and Applied Science Center, he received the Graham J. Littlewood III '42 Time, Talent and Treasure Award. [👉](#)



Sigrid Weltge

Professor Sigrid Weltge passed away on November 15, at the age of 89.

Weltge began teaching at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science in 1976, where she became a tenured professor in the Textile Department. Specializing in Intro to Art History and the History of Textile and Costume Design, Weltge retired as a professor emerita in 2001 after earning the President's Award for Teaching Excellence in 1982 and the Lindback Award in Teaching Excellence in 1996.

Weltge was an accomplished fiber artist, educator, author, wife, and mother. Her legacy and impact on textile education and community is immeasurable.

1951
Jeanette Plasterer
Harold Ronson

1954
Robert Allen, MD
Patricia Steinhagen

1955
Robert Kline, MD

1956
David Holman, MD

1957
Mary Gallagher
Gerald Labriola, MD

1958
Stanley Levin
Robert Shillingford, MD

1960
Samuel Downing, MD

1962
John Forchetti, MD

1966
Paul Aerow

1967
Richard Keohane, MD

1968
William Molinari Jr.

1969
Mark Kramaroff
Elvira Paoletti

1970
Ronald Gainsford
Harvey Lefton, MD
Audrey McCash

1971
Thomas Mebane III

1972
Robert Rinaldi, MD

1973
Hale Peffall Jr.

1974
John Cattie, MD

1975
Juanita Wooten

1976
Dennis Bonner, MD

1979
Anthony Coletta, MD, MBA

1984
Pamela Pike

1994
Mohammad Moghal

1996
Richard Konieczka

2004
Nicholas Skiadas, MD

2007
George Mark, MD
Michael Pucci, MD

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JEFFERSON INNOVATOR Magazine

TRIVIA

Give our open-book quiz a shot!
HINT: All of the answers are in this issue!

- 1.** **At Dr. Aldridge’s presidential address at her inauguration, she discussed her plan for leading Jefferson into the future. How many points does the plan encompass?**
 - A. 5 points
 - B. 3 points
 - C. 7 points
 - D. 9 points

- 2.** **What year did the Thomas Jefferson University Diploma School of Nursing begin?**
 - A. 1964
 - B. 1834
 - C. 1949
 - D. 1891

- 3.** **What was Jefferson’s new Assistant Vice President for Athletics Corey Goff’s “lucky” game-day ritual when on a winning streak?**
 - A. He brought 10 shiny pennies to each game in his pocket.
 - B. He wore unwashed socks.
 - C. He walked backward into his office twice on game day.
 - D. The whole team sang “Yankee Doodle” in the locker room before each game.

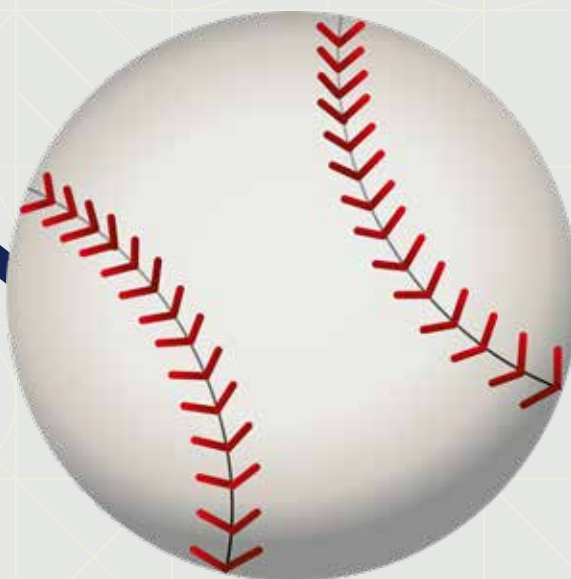


Submit your answers at Jefferson.edu/InnovatorTrivia or scan the QR code with your smartphone camera by March 1, 2025. A perfect score will enter you in a drawing to win a Jefferson T-shirt.



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2025 HOMECOMING

September 26 and 27

We're seeking volunteers to help plan the 25th and 50th reunion class celebrations at this year's Homecoming. Interested in making this milestone memorable? Contact us at alumni@jefferson.edu to learn more!

