

Saint Stephen's

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Saint Stephen's Magazine

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When the 2024-25 school year opens in August, Saint Stephen's Athletics will officially have a new logo brand for its falcon! Developed by the SSES marketing team, our fierce falcon icon was one of three final designs that were shown to various constituent groups – and ultimately chosen in an informal vote of our student-athletes. The new mascot will be rolled out over time to replace the design that has been in place for more than a decade. The logo will be installed at midfield of the Moore Athletic Complex turf and center court at Hoagland Arena this summer. To purchase gear featuring the new falcon, scan the QR code below or visit our online store at saintstephens.org and use the links to "Athletics" and "Falcon gear."





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From the Head of School's desk . . .

It's hard to believe that my first year at Saint Stephen's has already come to a close. What a wonderful inaugural year it was!

We made significant progress in virtually every area of the school: enrollment remains strong; the Parents Association Gala, the Giving Challenge, and our inaugural Rock the MAC concert were rousing successes, and our graduates are matriculating to some of the nation's finest colleges and universities.

But while those achievements are laudable, our focus this year was on something much less tangible: creating and sustaining a "Culture of Kindness" at Saint Stephen's. This involved several things: the introduction of the comprehensive wellness program (The Social Institute) in grades 4-12, the deepening of our longstanding Falcon Friends tradition, and an ongoing commitment to making citizenship and kindness the hallmark of all that we do.

At this year's baccalaureate service, I reflected on this goal and charged our graduates, their families, and the entire SSES community to continue to create a culture of kindness that positively impacts our world, no matter where we are.

Following is my baccalaureate address in its entirety. I hope you enjoy it, and I wish you a wonderful summer and a happy and healthy remainder of 2024.

Warmly,

Peter A. Kraft



The Lord said, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp to put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand where it gives light for everyone in the house. And you, like the lamp, must shed light among mankind, so that they may see the good you do and give glory to your Father in heaven." - Matthew 5:14-16

Our opening reading from Matthew is one of the most important in all of scripture. Matthew describes the famous "Sermon on the Mount," in which Jesus calls on his followers to be a beacon for the world – especially in their love, compassion and kindness to others.

Matthew 14-16 is also the origin of perhaps the most famous sermon in American history: Puritan leader Jonathan Winthrop's "City on a Hill," which he delivered in England in 1630, prior to boarding the Arabella and setting out for the New World.

Formally known as a "Model of Christian Charity," Winthrop's sermon was similar in spirit to Matthew's: calling on Puritans to create a model society distinguished by its moral principles and its covenant with God. For those historians among us, it is interesting to note that Winthrop's sermon remained largely obscure until the 1800s, when it was republished by the Massachusetts Historical Society. Later, during the Cold War, the sermon was reinterpreted as a call for the U.S. and democratic capitalism to serve as a bulwark against Soviet and Chinese communism that American leaders rightly feared might overtake Western Europe and Asia.

This year, I have spoken continually – some even might say, "preached" – about creating and sustaining a culture of kindness at Saint Stephen's. This call starts with being good to ourselves: acknowledging our frailties and imperfections and granting ourselves grace when we inevitably come up short.

This kindness then extends to others. It calls on us, just as Matthew and Winthrop did, to create a community in which we treat each other well, where we provide each other the psychological safety required to be our best selves, and where we work together to ensure that future generations of Falcons have even greater opportunities than we did.

I want to thank the Class of 2024, both individually and collectively, for being good to themselves and our school. At Saint Stephen's, our Promise is clear: EVERY STUDENT WILL BE KNOWN AND EVERY STUDENT WILL BE VALUED.

The Class of 2024 has worked hard to embody this Promise. And while they have not always been perfect – nor, of course, have any of us – they leave Saint Stephen's a better place than they found it. For that I thank them. But let us remind ourselves that creating and sustaining a culture of kindness is an endeavor forever in progress. It requires hard work — a continuous focus on the individual and collective responsibilities that bind us together.

Put differently, it requires commitment. But, fortunately, this is both a challenge and an opportunity. As Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "Commitment is what transforms promise into reality."

I challenge all of us to make good on our commitment, and to do so well beyond the gates of Saint Stephen's. As we move forward, let us expand our Promise to every community in which we live and serve. Let us commit, as did Lincoln, to that sacred American and Episcopal value – one inculcated in the Declaration itself – that affirms the "dignity and worth of all individuals."

In doing so, we will make good on the promise of Matthew, Winthrop and, ultimately, Jesus Christ himself.

SAINT STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

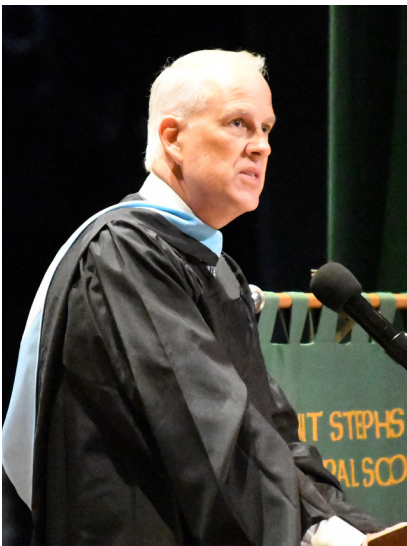


CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2024

YAZAN AL BATAINEH
EVELYN BAUGHER
GRANT BETTLE
CALEB BOSEK
EVAN BROWN
ISABELLA CASADEVALLS
SIENNA CASSELLA
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ALEXANDER LONG
KATELYNN LUKE
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ASHLING MARSHALL
TOMAS MARTINS
SAMANTHA MASCERA
MADISON MCAVOY
ALEXANDER MCLEMORE
KAI MCMAHAN
KEIRA MILBURN
MAKAYLA MILES
CASSIDY MILLER
SANJAY MOTWANI
RICARDO PERAZZOLO

EMILY PERKINS
JAYDEN RIBEIRO DE SÁ
NOAH ROSSER
ISABELLA SANCHEZ
WILLIAM SCHINDLER
JACOB SEUBERT
JACKSON SISLER
MILAAN SMITH
IVAN TULUPOV
LAYLA TURNER
PATRICK VAN EYCK
TRACY VEGA-MCGRADY
JULIA VILLAVECES
CADE WALTERS
SARABETH WESTER
KENSINGTON WHEELER
REESE WILLIAMS
NICHOLAS YATROS





Class of 2024 college acceptances/**will attend**:

Alabama	DePaul	Indiana	UNC - Pembroke	Southeastern
Alabama-Birmingham	Duquesne	Jacksonville	UNC - Wilmington	Southern Methodist
Allegheny	Eckerd	James Madison	North Florida	SW Florida Tech
Appalachian State	Edinburgh	John Cabot	Northwestern Ohio	Stanford
Arizona State	Elon	Kansas	Nova Southeastern	SCF
Auburn	Emory-Oxford	Kentucky	Oakland	Stetson
Belmont	Evansville	King's College London	Ohio Northern	Stony Brook
Berry	Florida	Lenoir-Rhyne	Oklahoma	University of Tampa
Boston University	Florida Atlantic	Louisiana State	Palm Beach Atlantic	Tennessee
Brenau	Florida Gulf Coast	Loyola-Chicago	Penn State	Texas A&M
Bryant	Florida International	Luther	Pittsburgh	Texas Christian
Carnegie Mellon	Florida Tech	Mary Washington	Queens-Charlotte	Tufts
Central Florida	Florida Southern	Maryland	Rhode Island	Utah
University of Chicago	Florida State	Mercer	Rhodes	Virginia
Citadel	Furman	Mercyhurst	Rider	Virginia Tech
Clemson	Gannon	Miami	Rochester	West Florida
Coastal Carolina	George Mason	Michigan	Rollins	West Virginia
College of Charleston	Georgetown	Michigan State	Rutgers	Western Carolina
Colorado	Georgia	Mississippi	Saint Andrews	Wheaton
UConn	Hawaii-Manoa	Mississippi State	Saint Michael's	Wisconsin Lutheran
Dartmouth	High Point	Missouri	Samford	Wright State
Davis & Elkins	Hofstra	Nazareth	Santa Clara	
Dean	Illinois Wesleyan	North Carolina	South Florida	

COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETES – Class of 2024 graduates playing collegiate sports:



Sienna Cassella
Rutgers - Lacrosse



Jacob Clulow
Mercyhurst - Football



Sophia Diaz
Southeastern - Soccer



Alex Long
Texas A&M - Golf



Ashling Marshall
Bryant - Lacrosse



Ivan Tulupov
Univ. of Chicago - Football



Cade Walters
Davis & Elkins - Baseball



Nicholas Yatros
Emory - Basketball

On Campus

FEBRUARY

■ Six students from the Upper School Band and one student from the 6th Grade Band participated in the district level Solo & Ensemble Music Performance Assessment. Our musicians earned six Superior and two Excellent ratings! Katelynn Luke (grade 12): Superior level 5 trumpet solo, Superior level 3 clarinet solo; Chloe Zhang (11): Excellent level 6 French horn solo; Jackie Rappold (11): Superior level 6 clarinet solo; Emma Rigney (11): Excellent level 4 flute solo; Riccardo Baretta (10): Superior level 4 alto saxophone solo; Emily Dowd (9): Superior level 4 flute solo; Jeff Hong (6): Superior level 1 French horn solo. Jackie and Katelynn qualified for the State MPA in Winter Garden.

■ Saint Stephen's exchange students visited their counterparts from our sister school (Eisbjerguhus Internationale Efterskole) in Denmark. The Danish students were our guests in November 2023, and our Falcons made the return trip during winter break.



■ The Toshiba America Foundation (TAF) awarded Saint Stephen's a grant of \$4,999 for the littleBits Invention Wall project. The grant, part of TAF's commitment to enhancing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, empowers students to explore

hands-on learning in biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, math, and environmental sciences.

■ Sophomore Pearson Walters and freshman Ruoming Mao both scored in the top 5-percent of all test takers on the American Mathematics Competition (AMC) exam, despite testing up to AMC 12 when they were eligible for AMC 10. The scores qualified Pearson and Ruoming for the American invitational Mathematics Exam. Also, our geometry team of Ruoming, Lisa Lin, Lily Buser and Alexis Mariano took first place among 20 schools at the regional math competition at Middleton High in Tampa.



■ Forty SSES students from the Middle and Upper Schools competed at the Region 7 Latin Forum at Plant High in Tampa. Falcons Dylan Dam and Andrew Wenzel were double first-place winners. Other top finishers included Ava Chapman, Emily Dowd, Theo Frano, Katelynn Luke, Olivia MacPhail, Samantha Mascera, and Emma Rigney in the Upper School, and Ian Yesufu, Michael Jones and Shelby White in the Middle School. SSES also had six teams reach the finals in the four divisions of Certamen, led by a win in the Advanced division.

MARCH

■ The awesome Upper and Middle School cast offered an entire week of performances of the classic musical "Bye Bye Birdie" as part of the annual Fine and Performing Arts Week. We're counting down the months until we're able to showcase our talented students in the new STEAM Center.



■ More than 250 students from all over the state gathered to demonstrate their Chinese speaking, reading, and listening skills, as well as engage in fun cultural activities at the Florida Statewide Chinese Competition (FSCC) in Orlando. Saint Stephen's students took home first place in each category (listening, speaking, reading) for the seventh-grade level, and consistently scored in the top 10-30% in each category for each subsequent grade level.



■ We welcomed students from Colegio Nacional de Monserrat – our sister school in Argentina – who arrived on campus after some flight delays. They spent more than a week on campus and lived with SSES families during their stay. Our host Falcons then traveled to Argentina just a few weeks later, during spring break, to return the visit.



■ The Van Aken family donated a variety of plants that are butterfly favorites and helped plant them in the first grade garden.

■ Head of School Peter Kraft presented a check for \$1,540 to Christ Church Priest-in-Charge Richard Visconti in support of the church's food pantry. The gift was part of the proceeds from the inaugural Rock the MAC concert on March 2 at the Moore Athletic Complex – which raised more than \$20,000 for SSES Athletics.



■ Upper School art students Annabelle Pullen and Betsy Neal worked with the local Rotary Club to design the sign and plan the butterfly garden at the new Lewis Park accessible playground. The park held its grand opening in March.



April



■ Saint Stephen's welcomed Miguel Rodriguez Agudo, the mayor of Barcarrota, Spain (Bradenton's sister city). He toured campus and visited with sixth grade Spanish students. SSES has worked with the elementary school in Barcarrota for the past eight years, and Upper School students participated in a first exchange trip to Barcarrota in October 2023.

■ Senior Reese Williams won the Golden Herald Award for journalism. Reese has been the associate editor of the school news site (the Gauntlet) for three years. Golden Herald Awards honor outstanding Manatee County high school seniors for service to their schools and community in 16 different areas of focus.

■ The 24-Hour Giving Challenge, hosted by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, brought in more than \$45,000 in gifts – and with the matches provided through the Patterson Foundation, the total raised for Saint Stephen's reached \$65,770.



■ The entire campus community celebrated, studied, and then viewed a partial solar eclipse on the afternoon of April 8. It was a fun way to wrap up our first day back on campus following Spring Break.

■ Senior lacrosse student-athlete Isabella Sanchez was selected to the Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team. Isabella received a \$1,700 scholarship for college expenses.

MAY

■ For the second straight year, the SSES student news site – The Gauntlet – was honored by School Newspapers Online as a Distinguished Site. The Gauntlet earned digital badges for site excellence, page design, writing, multimedia, coverage and audience engagement. Saint Stephen's is one of only 45 schools nationwide to earn the honor.

PROJECT 18

It may sound like some sort of summer sci-fi blockbuster film or perhaps a clandestine government project. But the mysterious moniker actually represents something much more practical.

“Students in the Class of 2023 proposed Project 18 through a document they created in their AP Language and Composition class,” Dean of Student Life and Wellness Anna Conn said. “Then they got to see it happen and actually live it out during their senior year.”



The initial proposal called for Saint Stephen's to implement an elective life skills course as part of the curriculum so that the school's top-notch academic preparation for college was supplemented by helping students, “understand basic concepts of adult life” and “feel more confident, independent and secure when they leave home.”

The Upper School leadership took that idea and ran with it, and for the past two years, all seniors have been exposed to this new and growing program. Project 18 (a reference to the age of the participants) has already included internal and external guest speakers addressing healthy exercise and eating habits, the importance of good sleep, leadership training and conflict resolution, first aid and more.

Then there have been the hands-on experiences. While our female students learned the basic techniques of Krav Maga, a self-defense training developed for the Israeli Defense Forces, their male counterparts took to the kitchen for some beginner cooking lessons. Students have also learned how to tie a necktie, give a proper handshake, use a drill, fold a fitted sheet and a variety of other common life skills that sometimes escape attention until daily life comes calling.

“The kids sold this idea to us and it's been really worthwhile, fun and successful so far,” Conn said. “The thing that stands out to me is how the kids are so open to learning. They're buying into it and have appreciated it. There's a lot of sincere gratitude. They may not think to thank you after a science class, but we get plenty of ‘thank yous’ throughout the year with these programs.”

The future direction of Project 18 will continue to be driven by a collaboration between students and administrators, which means the programs offered are likely to change annually, based on the demand for certain topics identified through survey. Personal finance, budgeting, public speaking, mental health awareness, resume building, basic car care, taxes and much more are part of an exhaustive list that's developing. Conn also hopes that the growth and maturity of Project 18 over time will lead to a commitment of additional funding.

“We've really just touched on a small piece of what's possible as we move forward,” Conn said.



THE CAMPAIGN AT SAINT STEPHEN'S

DEVELOPMENT UPDATES



The Janet S. Pullen S.T.E.A.M. Center

The Janet S. Pullen S.T.E.A.M. Center is taking shape! The concrete work is finished and the steel work now begins. Construction is on schedule for completion in July 2025. Fundraising continues to progress as we drive toward \$1.5-million left to reach our ultimate funding goal. Please consider helping us cross the finish line.



A special hard hat tour for former Head of School Dr. Jan Pullen

For more information and naming opportunities, contact Elizabeth Krupnick, Director of Development at EKrupnick@saintstephens.org or visit saintstephens.org.

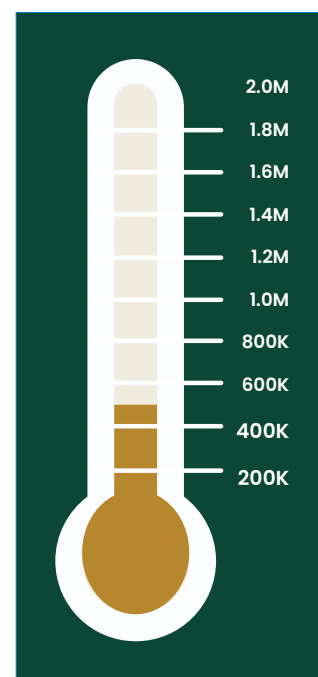
SUPPORT THE SSES ENDOWMENT

The Saint Stephen's Endowment Fund was started in 1995 and has grown significantly to nearly \$8-million thanks to the charitable gifts of many forward-thinking donors. The principal of the endowment fund is never touched, allowing all gifts to grow in perpetuity. Only earnings from endowment fund investments are used, based on a strict set of guidelines and overseen by a committee of trustees. The purpose of the endowment is to generate steady annual income for the school that can be used today, next year and even 100 years from now. A strong endowment ensures that the current excellence at Saint Stephen's is preserved for future generations.

Over the years, earnings from the endowment fund have been used for financial aid for qualified and deserving students, facilities maintenance and repairs, and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. Since 2007, the endowment has provided more than \$750,000 in financial aid to 230 students.

We welcome your support of the Saint Stephen's Endowment. Contributions can be made as outright gifts or planned gifts. All donations are tax deductible. Please visit our website for further information or contact Rose Carlson, Director of Endowment, at RCarlson@saintstephens.org

The final push to raise \$1.5M



A(lumni) I(ntelligence)

It's no surprise to find members of the Saint Stephen's alumni community on the cutting-edge of new technology, with many taking a deep dive into the realm of artificial intelligence (AI). Here's a look at three graduates who are embracing AI technology in their work. All acknowledge AI's capacity to change our lives dramatically and are confident in predicting that the technology is here to stay, evolving, and constantly expanding. Artificial Intelligence has touched our lives for far longer than most realize, but our alumni are busy harnessing its power to improve our capacity to communicate ideas quickly and efficiently.

Vanessa Yan '17

Vanessa came to SSES in the seventh grade with her older sister Michelle '16 when the family moved to the U.S. from Hong Kong. Both women were scholar-athletes throughout their high school years. Some of Vanessa's fondest memories include winning golf tournaments with her sister and teammates, and captaining the varsity team. Michelle was a multi-year captain, as well. Vanessa is an American Junior Golf Association tournament champion and helped lead the Falcons to five consecutive regional titles.

She was named a U.S. Presidential Scholar at SSES, the country's highest academic honor for high school students. Only one female and one male are selected annually from each state. Vanessa was also a National Merit Scholar, an award earned by just 0.8% of eligible students nationwide.

At Yale University, Vanessa became the first student in the college's history to earn a B.S./M.A. in Statistics and a B.S. in Computer Science in four years. Her research on graph neural networks was published at two of the world's premier conferences as her interest in AI grew by leaps and bounds.



SSES Teachers Fuel Passions

Vanessa says that Jamie Moore's teaching methods in English 10 Honors taught her how to write and think critically, which she believes are perhaps the most important skills a company founder can possess. She learned synthesis skills in Patrick Whelan's AP World History class that have proven invaluable to the strategic aspects of running her business. Vanessa credits Lori Springstead's AP Statistics class for nurturing her love for the field and guiding her toward her AI research and industry work at Meta, Apple and various AI startups.

Today, Vanessa is the CEO and Founder at *Ise AI*, with her sister by her side as co-founder. Michelle is pursuing her MBA at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and continues to make a name for herself by leading the way in innovative projects.

AI Realized

Ise AI (pronounced "ee-say") creates instant photo shoots for retail brands. The technology converts plain product photos into editorial-grade shoots within minutes, often saving clients up to three times in related costs. The company's team of AI researchers use proprietary Generative AI models. Fast-growing apparel brands and retailers use *Ise AI* to capture social micro-moments on-demand, and personalize content for diverse demographics at scale.

Vanessa and Michelle believe that AI will be the driving force of the pending "Third Industrial Revolution." While the women don't believe AI will replace humans in the workforce, they do feel strongly that they may well be replaced by other humans who utilize AI well. "Therefore, it becomes imperative for us to future-proof our work by learning how to maximize our potential and productivity using ever-expanding AI tools." Vanessa notes that we live in an attention-driven economy and that virtually all businesses and individuals will require a large amount of high-quality content to build their brands, an expensive and time-consuming task without the help of AI.

Alison (Fraraccio) Newsome '07

Ali spent her high school years at Saint Stephen's, where she was active in student government, varsity athletics and was the homecoming queen. Ali loved her time as a Falcon. In reminiscing about a teacher or class that impacted her life and who she is today, she thought back to Pat Murphy's U.S. History class which inspired her to study political science in college. Ali traveled with Ms. Murphy and classmates to the Harvard Model Congress in Boston. Her participation in the largest congressional simulation in the world provided valuable experience in solving complex issues, engaging in debate, handling press conferences and learning how to react in

crises. All these skills have come into play in her higher-education pursuits and professional career. Ali is an alumna of the University of South Florida and earned her MBA at the University of Virginia.

Ali began her career in politics by working in the public sector in Washington D.C. before pivoting to management consulting. Today, Ali specializes in Global AI and Data Strategy as a Vice President of Global Alliance Partnerships at Deloitte. She leads the firm's Google GenAI Alliance partnership, driving the go-to-market strategy regarding how Deloitte and Google partner in the market and use AI to help clients solve their most challenging problems. Ali also works with technology startups like Anthropic, AI21 Labs, Databricks, and Dataiku, advising them on all aspects of their market positioning and how to scale with a large global consulting firm like Deloitte, in addition to expanding with cloud computing companies such as AWS, Google Cloud and Microsoft. In addition to working with cutting-edge technology, Ali is spearheading a broader partnership with AI at Wharton, collaborating on the research Deloitte and the school are doing on topics including the Future of Work and Trustworthy AI.



"It's been exciting to have a front-row seat during the AI boom and collaborate with incredible tech startups and hyperscalers in our partner ecosystem," Ali said. Her work in AI has taken her to various cities, including Tokyo and London, where she shares U.S. best practices related to AI use from a banking and capital markets industry perspective. She noted that the Asia-Pacific market is traditionally slower in adopting AI technology in business due to its conservative institutions, yet with the recent momentum of GenAI, that pace is increasing.

Industry Observations

Ali shared that AI has been around throughout her career, but was previously known by different buzzwords in the industry, such as "big data" or "deep learning." However, GenAI is now more commonly known outside of the industry thanks to OpenAI's ChatGPT. With AI rapidly evolving and changing almost daily, Ali remains a lifelong learner to stay on top of new developments. She says that nearly every industry has experienced the benefits of implementing AI into business practices, whether through enterprise-wide digital transformation or more minor use cases like automating a back-end process to increase efficiency. "The key is to drive value for clients through the use of AI while recognizing the importance of retaining the human element in the process," she said.

Jesse Carah '06

Jesse came to SSES as a high school freshman. While he loved basketball, he claims to have competed with another student for the title, "worst player on the varsity basketball team." He dabbled in comedic commentary by producing content for a bi-weekly show designed for Upper School students called "Straight from the Beak." Jesse developed strong personal bonds with some faculty members whom he believes made a difference in his life, including economics teacher Bernie Yanelli and calculus teacher extraordinaire Elisa Bolotin. He also thoroughly enjoyed physics lessons taught by his father, Steve Carah, and said all these class experiences fostered his interest and abilities in analytical thinking and problem-solving.



Jesse graduated from UCF with degrees in economics and mathematics. He began working toward a political science Ph.D. but decided early on that academic life was not for him. His next jobs found him working at various start-ups where he handled everything from customer support, sales, software implementation and project management to open-source development. Jesse landed at Google when the company he worked for was acquired. His first role there was in Professional Services, where he helped large customers deploy Google Cloud's data platform.

Today, Jesse is a Global Incubation Lead for Cloud AI at Google. He manages pilot projects with customers to test and refine new enterprise AI products that have not yet been launched. Jesse's work helps the company validate the market for these products, influences the product roadmap and prepares Google teams and partners for broader delivery.

AI Insights

Jesse believes that generative AI is a powerful but imperfect tool capable of automating time-intensive tasks such as knowledge gathering, document review and data analysis. "I've seen firsthand how AI can eliminate busywork and allow employees to focus on more strategic and creative aspects of their jobs," he said. "As the technology progresses, it will have an increasingly profound (if not potentially destabilizing) impact on work and life." Jesse is hopeful that AI will be a major growth driver for the country, but he also worries that it could weaken our social connections and further isolate us from one another.

Alumni Event Recap '23-'24



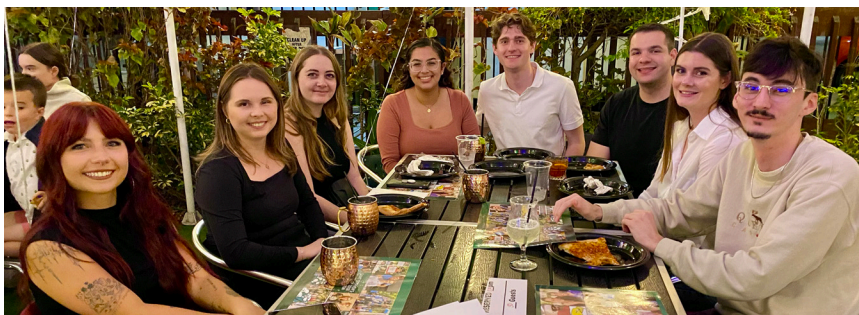
For Falcon soccer alumni, Dec. 26 is a highly anticipated homecoming, with former guys and gals who played for SSES returning to hit the turf and kick the ball around again. The 2023 game was terrific, with a great group returning and showing they've "still got it!" Alumni players included **Nick Schulman '05 and brother Spencer Schulman '20, Brett Messieh '12, Sam Lynch '13, 2014 alumni Matthew Jones, Jeremy Jackman and Jorge Zavala, Sam Tobio '16, Jerry Alex Monosiet '17, Max Damm '19**, along with his engaged classmates **Ashleigh Rodhouse and Noah LaBelle, Jaclyn Schlossberg and R.G. Sherrill from 2020, Jack Holmes '22 and 2023 classmates Anthony Monetti, Nolan Winterhalter, Sophia Creneti and Kate Baran.**



SSES alumni kicked off the holidays in style at our annual Motorworks Holiday Gathering. The classes of 2013 and 2018 returned in great numbers to celebrate their 10th and 5th reunions, respectively, and were joined by alumni from various years back to see old friends and former teachers.

Commemorating five years since graduation were **2018 classmates Eliska Patackova, Emma Wilbur, Sarah Glaser, Meredith Pratt, Eran Fruehauf, LeNae Jones, Victoria Arias, Emily Tobias, Nicole Breiter, Chance Cook and Robert Smith.**

Wondering where 10 years have gone were **2013 classmates Anita Safronenka, Charlie Boothby, Harris Dunlap, Brian Elliott and Brice Tilton. Casey Cothron '10 and Jennifer Boothby '10** caught up after many years, and having Jenny's dad, former SSES Athletic Director and class of '83 **alumnus Carlos Boothby** with us made the evening all the more special. **Alex Siegal '17** was spotted chatting enthusiastically with his former economics teacher, Mr. Bernie Yanelli. An extra special guest, **former Head of School Dr. Jan Pullen**, rolled in to greet "her people." Her visit meant the world to all and rounded out a very special Falcon gathering.





The annual January Alumni Panel was an embarrassment of riches, with 11 alumni back to talk with Upper School students about their college experiences. Common themes emerged, as the panel urged students to get involved in many activities, stray out of their comfort zone, instigate relationships with peers and professors, and “stay true to yourself.” Back from the class of **2020 were Cam Vining (UCF), Dylan Davis (Illinois) and Alex Sket (Denison)**. Classmates **Peter Balos '21 (Ursinus)** and **Noelle Bencie '21 (Michigan)** provided fresh perspectives on the differences between attending a small college versus a huge university. **Jake Conner '22 (Florida)** is managing his studies well thanks to SSES's rigor. Other panelists included **2023 alumni attending FSU, Paige Liebel and Lauren Schindler**. Also representing '23, **Leo Li** talked about life at Colgate, **Jonathan Lipman** discussed life at Skidmore and **Julia Craig** had nothing but great things to say about her University of Miami experience.

SSES held its first “International Week” on Jan. 15-19. The goal was to enhance the school's global education initiative by tapping into the many diverse cultures and experiences of the extended Falcon community members. An alumni panel featured **JB Tucker '00** and former **2004 classmates Lauren McGovern** and current faculty member **Kaleen Nora**. The trio spoke about their years living outside of the U.S., and strongly encouraged students to consider living or studying abroad. Lauren lived in Spain and Chile, Kaleen called Turkey and Korea home for a time, and JB resided in Switzerland for two years and Panama for a short stint.



Our annual Mini-Career Day on March 27 was a fast and furious, fun and informative day with three alumni back to speak with Upper Schoolers about their fields and educational journeys. Our featured alumni were physical therapist **Dr. Joseph Schneider '15, PT, D.P.T.**, who works at Fyzical Therapy & Balance Centers in Bradenton; Sarasota equine veterinarian **Dr. Whitney VanWinkle '01**; and **Will Pearce '89**, a Senior Solution Architect with a Washington, D.C. firm known as a technology leader in science, engineering, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and IT modernization.



Meredith Pratt '18 returned to campus in March and spoke to the Honors Marine Science 3 class. Currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Marine Biology at UCF, Meredith discussed navigating college, internships, job opportunities, and life. **Chance Cook '18**, currently enrolled at Stetson Law School, joined Meredith to talk with the seniors as they readied to leave the nest. Meredith and Chance will soon join the roster of married alumni after announcing their engagement this spring.



The annual Senior Luncheon was held on April 23 in the Intermediate School Commons. The seniors enjoyed a delicious Italian meal in one of their final gatherings as a class. Our “almost alumni” received a useful SSES laundry bag to take to college, compliments of the Alumni Office. In keeping with tradition, an alumni speaker addresses the senior class with anecdotes and offers advice on approaching different aspects of college life. **Tyler Burnham '15** was this year's speaker. He was wonderfully engaging, and Saint Stephen's is thrilled to welcome him back in the fall as an assistant football coach.



Our annual Legacy Breakfast on April 17 brought together current alumni parents and their student children for delicious breakfast fare in the Palm Courtyard. We celebrate these families for embracing tradition and choosing SSES due to their strong belief in the value of a Falcon education after having appreciated its benefits in their lives. Also invited were alumni faculty and coaches whose return to campus keeps the bar exceptionally high in academics and sports. Our current legacy families include the **Hamlins** (Grace '05, Curtis '02, Margaret '33 & Catherine '37), **Paul Carlson '07** (Cooper '36 & Callie '38), **Amanda Buskirk Morris '92** (Matthew '26 & Ansley '22), **Beth Bowie Horn '98 and Steve Horn '95** (Jack '25 & Charlie '29), **Stephanie Boothby Juengling '06** (Everett '37), **Gris Bettie '90** (Grant '24 & Quinn '21), **Tyler Pullen '98** (Annabelle '25 & Piper '28), **Brian Turner '93** (Layla '24 & Caroline '26), **Molly Fogarty Buser '98** (Lily '27, Eva '29, Julia '32 & Sebastian '33), **JB Tucker '00** (John '32 & Wesley '33), **Ashley Richards Simmons '01** (Aiden '35), **Christie Eastman Craighead '04** (Madison '38), **Dalton Cross '07** (Kira '35 and Remy Burkhart '30) and Henry Vereb '28, son of **Bartholomew Vereb '88**. **Alex Conyers** attended Saint Stephen's for a time, and his daughters, Caylynn '28 and Isla '33, are also among our young Falcons.

Q&A with Cole Hudson

Following a decade of success that included six state, 29 regional, and 62 district championships, Athletic Director Lenny Paoletti moved into retirement at the end of the school year, setting the stage for a new era of Falcons athletics under Cole Hudson.

A Florida native, Hudson was an accomplished multi-sport prep student-athlete, earning him the Bradenton Herald's Athlete of the Year Award in 2008. He went on to play college baseball and football, earning bachelor's and master's degrees before becoming an athletic administrator at Bradenton Christian School. We sat with Hudson for this Q&A session to learn more about the new leader of the Saint Stephen's Athletic Department.

Q: You were a decorated high school student-athlete and went on to compete at the collegiate level. Tell us a little about your path.

Growing up, I was immediately attracted to baseball and basketball. Most of my youth was spent on the diamond and court. I played both in high school at Bradenton Christian. I also developed a tremendous amount of passion and respect for football, and began playing for the first time in the spring of my sophomore year of high school. Over time, I realized how competitive I became as a person due to athletics. It was my outlet and, like so many kids, sports were my life.

In college, I had the opportunity to play baseball at Manatee Community College for legendary coach Tim Hill Sr., then went on to play football at the University of South Florida under head coach Skip Holtz. Both were tremendous experiences. I played and competed against quite a few guys who are still playing professionally. It was an instrumental part of my life and I'm forever grateful for the memories and life lessons I learned along the way.

Q: We also see that both of your parents played college basketball, so it seems sports are in your DNA. Was it a given that athletics would be part of your career path?

I can undoubtedly say that I am extremely blessed. I could not have asked for better parents. My mother was a high school state champion in track and field and is also in the Tabor College Hall of Fame for basketball. My father was one of those athletes who was talented and ultra-competitive no matter what sport he was participating in. He ultimately finished his basketball playing career at Kansas Wesleyan.

My parents were essential during my playing career. They sacrificed substantial amounts of time and money to give me an opportunity to participate in organized sports. I spent many late nights on our basketball court and in our lighted batting cage that my father built. They never pressured me into playing specific sports, or to specialize in just one. They were extremely supportive and often reminded me of the valuable lessons learned through organized sports. I was taught at a young age to respect my teammates, coaches, and the game, no matter the circumstance. These life lessons and experiences growing up created a passion for middle and high school athletics. You really must love this level of competition if you aspire to be an athletic director. So yes, I would say it is part of my DNA.

Q: What was it that attracted you to the administrative side of athletics?

I truly believed that I would be a classroom instructor and baseball coach my entire life. I really enjoyed my time as a varsity baseball coach, and valued my time as a weightlifting coach and physical education instructor. The constant classroom activity and on-field instruction were important to me during my previous years spent in education.



Once I began to branch out in my educational career by accepting different administrative duties, I realized how much I enjoyed the administrative side of athletics. Leading by example and working with all sports as an athletic director is very fulfilling. I thoroughly enjoy the great times as an AD, as well as the tough challenges programs may endure while attempting to achieve success. Witnessing coaches and student-athletes grow while achieving goals is extremely rewarding. I enjoy the pressure that comes with hiring coaches, building programs, driving culture, and making tough decisions for our programs when they're needed.

Q: Was there anyone who specifically impacted your decision to pursue a career in athletics; anyone you consider a role model or mentor?

I often think about how many great coaches and staff members I've had the opportunity to collaborate with, as well as the coaches who poured into me during my playing days. Some of the names that quickly come to my mind are people like my father, who unselfishly gave up so much time teaching me how to play the game the right way. He spent hours each night with me on our basketball court, and tirelessly worked with me in our batting cage.

There were Drew Mitchell and Alan Gerber, who were the first administrators that showed me what life as an AD looked like behind the scenes, and how to successfully make the right and tough decisions for an athletic department. David Magley, my high school basketball coach, always made everyone around him feel valued no matter their talent level or ability. He was my guy – a coach who would do anything for his players as he mentored and cared for us deeply.

But I've realized over the years that it's important to be yourself as an AD – don't try to be someone you're not and genuinely care for and show others how valuable they are to your department. I've always tried to take bits and pieces from those who were so good to me during my playing and coaching experiences. Listening more than speaking will take you a long way in life.

Q: You were a multi-sport athlete. Are you an advocate for that approach?

Yes, I'm a huge advocate for multi-sport athletes. We've recently seen our youth specializing at an alarming rate. I'm a believer that participating in multiple sports assists in avoiding overuse injuries, burnout, and also allows our student-athletes to experience different styles of coaching.

Recent studies show that playing multiple sports through youth and high school has extreme benefits compared to those who choose to specialize. We've seen plenty of statistics that support successful multiple-sport participation. Thirty of the 32 first-round NFL Draft picks in 2017 participated in multiple sports during high school.

Only around seven-percent of high school student-athletes earn the right to play at the collegiate level. For me, that means we want to see our middle and high schoolers competing and having fun with their peers through a wide variety of sports offerings.

Q: What attracted you to this opportunity at Saint Stephen's?

The journey to join this terrific school community was close to a five-month process. It began by instantly recognizing the tremendous leadership that Peter Kraft brings to Saint Stephen's. We had many conversations throughout the process about potentially working together to elevate not only athletics, but also the school, without lowering the bar of our high academic standards.

Peter's vision for athletics was clear and intentional during our early discussions. We quickly aligned as I realized something exciting and special could be coming to Saint Stephen's athletics. The staff was first-class and extremely welcoming throughout the process. We also viewed the opportunity as a new challenge in life for our family. The right place was needed for our family to make a change, and everything added up for us throughout the decision process. Bradenton Christian will always hold a special place in my heart. There are a lot of great people and kids over there that really impacted me in a great way. I will be forever grateful for those relationships. However, it's time for a new chapter. Our hope is to be at Saint Stephen's for a long time.

HODGES TAKES NEW ROLE

Associate Athletic Director Heather Hodges, who came to SSES in 2008 as the Falcons' athletic trainer, has been charged with leading several initiatives for 2024-25, including developing a comprehensive Middle School athletic program that teaches not only sports skills, but leadership and character development. She'll also look for ways to introduce and incorporate Lower School families and students, building consistent and lasting programs that lead through to the varsity level. Coach Hodges will serve as a primary liaison for the athletic department with the physical education staff, sports medicine and performance staff, and the parent volunteers of the Falcon Athletic Support Team (formerly the Falcon Athletic Boosters).



continued on next page

LACROSSE RETURNS TO FINAL FOUR

While the ultimate prize is still elusive, the standard has been set.

Over the past two seasons, Saint Stephen's girls lacrosse has posted a combined record of 35-3, with a pair of district and regional titles on its way to back-to-back state Final Four appearances. Making this year's success (18-2) even more remarkable is the fact that the Falcons did so despite the graduation of 12 seniors following the 2023 season and a coaching change. Those accomplishments speak to the consistency of the program, which has collected six district championships in 11 seasons of existence. After launching in 2013, it took the Falcons just four years to bring home their first trophy and only 10 years to reach their first Final Four.

While lacrosse's exploits were not totally unpredictable, the surprise team of the spring season had to be softball. The program disbanded for a time following the COVID-19 pandemic and has slowly been making a climb back to varsity status. That's why the Falcons' 11-6 record in 2024 was so unexpected.



With a roster that featured 16 middle schoolers, one sophomore and one junior, SSES won seven straight games to finish the season before falling to Bradenton Christian in the district tournament semi-finals. The Falcons are clearly poised for bigger and better things for years to come.

Boys tennis captured its fifth straight district crown and boys weightlifting won its first ever title in both the Olympic and the Traditional lift categories. The Falcons went on to finish as regional runners-up and sent three lifters to the state meet, with Corbin Franklin and Jake Clulow both placing sixth in the Olympic category in their respective weight classes.

Track and field athletes Evan Brown (javelin) and Olivia Fessler (triple jump) brought home district championship medals and both ultimately qualified for the state meet, with Brown finishing fourth overall in Florida's Class 1A. The boys also sent their 4x400 and 4x800 relay teams to Jacksonville for the state finals.

Q&A with Cole Hudson - continued

Q: How do you get students fired up about getting involved and putting on a uniform to compete for the Falcons?

I'll soon be asking our student-athletes, "Who wants to ELEVATE to another level? Who wants to be part of something really special?" I plan to use the word "elevate" frequently in the coming months as we rise together and push each other to a championship level.

Trust me, there are some great things currently going on at Saint Stephen's in the athletic department. Continuing to operate in strong areas that Coach Paoletti put into place is extremely important. We're going to come alongside the stronger programs in the department to strive for even more success, and we'll also get to work quickly in areas or within programs that may need immediate help.

Putting on a Falcons uniform is something we plan to take pride in every day. We want to be viewed as a powerhouse athletic program, and we're going to get to that level by driving culture, giving relentless effort, and doing it the right way.

Q: What should SSES student-athletes expect under your leadership and what are your top priorities in the first year?

I can guarantee our student-athletes and parents that we're going to have coaches who pour into our programs and who show that they genuinely care while aspiring to elevate together to reach goals that maybe once felt unobtainable. We already have some tremendous coaches in place and have also recently filled a few open positions with championship-caliber coaches.

We want to dominate our opponents and win championships while carrying out respect for the game, fans, and the opponents we play. We plan to do this while continuing to pursue academic excellence in the classroom.

There are three areas that we'll address early in each program. We're going to work to increase roster numbers from the middle school to the high school level. As coaches and leaders, we want to see substantial team and individual development/growth from the beginning to the end of the season. And we must get active in the community, which includes alumni involvement, service projects, as well as creating fan excitement on campus.

Alumni Class Notes

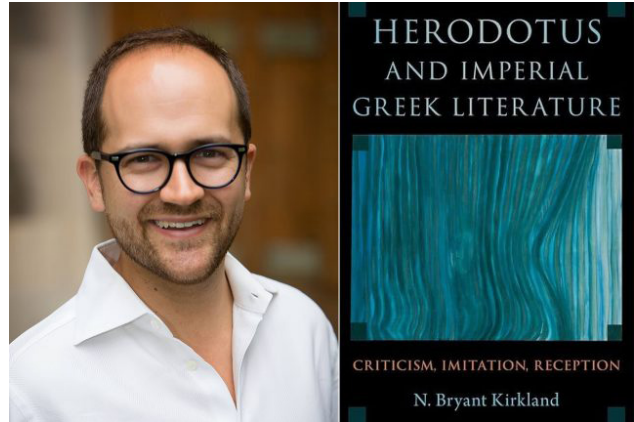
1980s



Karen Whitson Kinzie '84

has been a violinist with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra since 1993. Before the CSO, Karen played in the Florida Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic and the Grant Park Symphony in Chicago. Originally from Chicago, she graduated from Indiana University. Karen runs the Kinzie Violin Studio in Southeast Denver, where she lives with her husband and four sons.

2000s



Bryant Kirkland '03 received the Charles J. Goodwin Award of Merit, annually honoring outstanding contributions to classical scholarship. His first book, "Herodotus and Imperial Greek Literature," was recognized among the books of the year in 2023 by the Society for Classical Studies. A member of the UCLA faculty since 2017, Bryant teaches the general education course "Discovering the Greeks," along with upper-division Greek language and literature classes and a course on Black classicism.

1990s

Tracie Troxler '92 founded the non-profit Sunshine Community Compost in 2017, where she works daily to educate Sarasota residents and members of surrounding communities about food waste, and how everyone can improve their local environment through conscious consumption. Tracie returned to the area after years of working in California and participating in composting programs in San Francisco. Her company operates nine food scrap drop-off stations, five of which are open to the public at city parks, including Arlington Park, Gillespie Park, North Water Tower Park, Whitaker Park and The Bay.



Kevin Hareza '05 is the Head of Product and International Expansion at Amazon Prime Video in Seattle. He leads the international product, program and business organization for Prime video channels and transactional video on demand (TVOD). Kevin holds a B.S. in Business & Commerce from Wake Forest and an M.B.A. from Northwestern. An avid health and wellness fan, Kevin is a certified personal trainer.

Cari Wurzbacher Watkins '07 was named to the WINit Top 50 Women in Travel list by the Global Business Travel Association as a rising female leader. The recognition celebrates women who lead, inspire and motivate in the global business travel industry. Cari is the key account manager for the military and government at United Airlines.

2010s



Married alumni and **2011 classmates Dr. Zina Versfeld McSweeney and Dr. Morgan McSweeney, Ph.D.**, welcomed their first child, daughter Lily Carolina, in December 2023. Zina earned her D.O. degree from the Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine in North Carolina. She is a second-year fellow at Boston Children's Hospital in the endocrinology division. Morgan has a B.S. in Biomedical Sciences from UCF and completed his Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences at UNC-Chapel Hill. He is a medical communications consultant and consults on best practices for global health entities, including the World Health Organization and the White House.



The family and friends of **Kurt Smolker '11** gathered for a beautiful memorial service and celebration of his life on Feb. 17. A bench has been dedicated to Kurt's memory - a fitting tribute to a life well-lived, and thoughtfully placed outside the gymnasium where he spent some of his happiest days. Please come and sit awhile should you visit the campus . . . you just might hear the roar of the crowd applauding Kurt's play in the shady breezes and catch a glimmer of his bright smile in the Florida sunshine.

Victoria Stadlin '12 graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with a B.F.A. in sculpture. She began her career working on a Carnival cruise ship, assisting with onboard art auctions. Today, Victoria is a project manager at a New York construction firm, handling high-end residential renovations, primarily in Manhattan.



Colin Yates '13 earned an M.B.A. from the University of Texas, Dallas in December 2023. He holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Clemson. Colin has been employed by Raytheon Missiles & Defense for more than six years, where he has designed, implemented and managed flight test architectures and build operations for research and development projects.

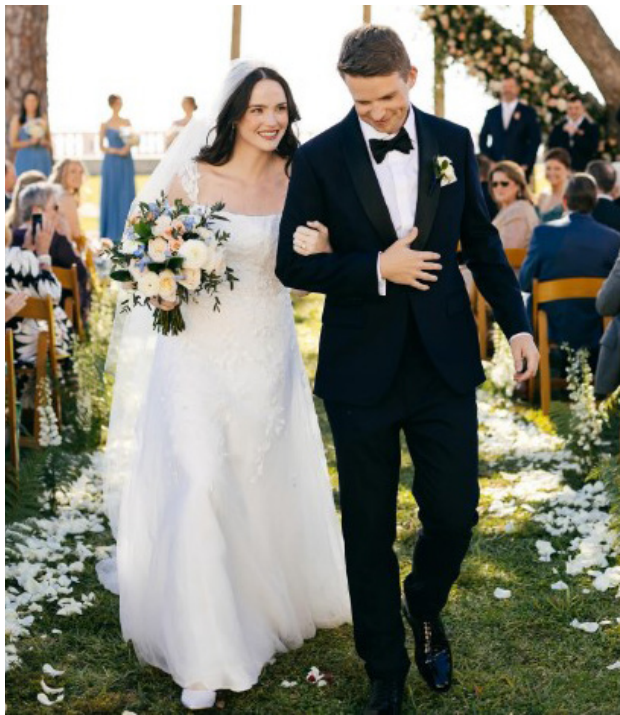
Devon Tallman '13 was promoted in March to Product Support Manager at Google Fi, after working for Google in different capacities since 2019. Devon lives in Boulder, Colo. and is an alumna of the University of Denver where she majored in marketing, communications and psychology.

Victor "JR" Houston '13 is celebrating eight years as a Strategy and Systems Engineer. He is a race engineer for NASCAR where he handles at-the-shop, comprehensive vehicle set-up and travels to races where he has earned a reputation for excellence in high-stress, performance-based environments. JR holds a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



Bryce Liebel '15 married John Orcutt in December 2023 on the beach at Hotel Zamora in Saint Petersburg. Paige Liebel '23 was Bryce's maid of honor. Morgan Healey '15 was a bridesmaid and Todd Liebel '14, brother of the bride, officiated at the wedding. Bryce and John live in Tampa where Bryce is a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Children's Urology Group.





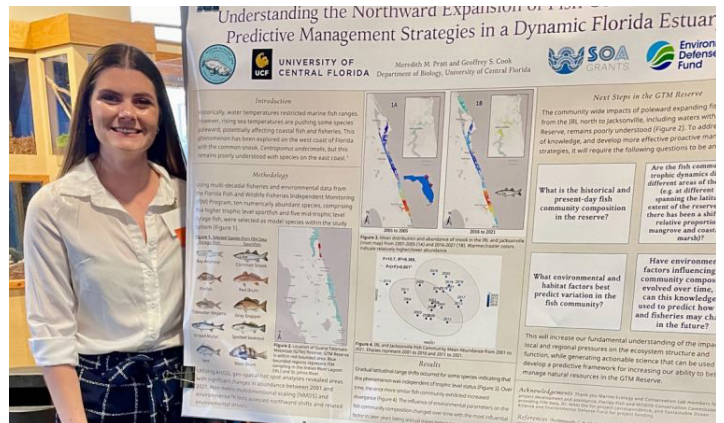
Paige Lindsay '15 married Thomas Kirby in a beautiful outdoor ceremony on the campus of New College in Sarasota in April 2024. Paige's sister Jane Lindsay '15 served as her maid of honor. The couple met as students at Wake Forest University, where Paige received a B.A. in Psychology and minored in Health & Human Services. Paige is a professional technical recruiter and the couple plans to live in the Charlotte, N.C. area where Thomas is an internal medicine resident.

Joshua "Josh" Willard '16 completed his Master of International Affairs at The George Washington University in 2022 and now works at the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Affairs Officer.



Kristyn Weaver '17 remains in Boston after earning her master's degree in Experience Design at Northeastern in May 2023. She works for a technology company, focusing on product documentation as a Content Architect. Kristyn received a B.S. in Information Technology from Furman University in '21. Following her graduation from Northeastern, **Lindsay Weaver '18** moved to Tallahassee to begin her studies at the Florida State University School of Physician Assistant Practice.

She has two more semesters of her didactic year ahead before starting clinicals in January 2025. Lindsay hopes to move back to Boston following her graduation.



Meredith Pratt '18 presented at the February 2024 Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve State of the Reserve Symposium. Meredith is an Integrative and Conservation Biology Ph.D. student and a Leadership for Climate Resilient Fisheries Fellow at UCF. She received her B.S. in Marine Biology at Nova Southeastern.

Matthew Willard '18 graduated from Emory University in 2022 and received his Master of Biomedical Sciences degree in May. He will begin D.O. School at the Philadelphia College of Medicine in the fall.



Sarah "Ayla" Johnston '19 is a recruiter at Blue Wave Resource Partners, a boutique staffing firm in Orlando that specializes in engineering and technology recruitment. The company works with various entities including Disney, Universal and SpaceX. Ayla was recognized in April for hitting a company milestone known as "hitting the 10K in spread," an acknowledgement of her hard work and success in securing a large number of placements and creating revenue for the firm. Ayla is a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Arkansas where she studied management and human resources.

2020s

Former Falcon 2020 classmates **Anika Kennedy and Alexander "Alex" Sket** were reunited in March on the Denison College campus where Alex is a senior. Anika, a senior at Oberlin College and a member of the women's swimming and diving team all four of her college years, was at Denison to compete in the North Coast Athletic Conference championships.



Maria Erquiga '20 graduated summa cum laude from the honors program at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. in May with a B.A. in Mechanical Engineering. She was awarded the Department of Mechanical Engineering's ASME Award and the School of Engineering's Benjamin T. Rome Award for Outstanding Leadership and Academic Performance. She was also recognized as a University Scholar and received the President's Award, the highest honor bestowed on a graduating senior at CUA. Maria was initiated into Phi Beta Kappa and received Phi Beta Kappa's James M. Campbell Award; she is the only engineering student in CUA's history who's been eligible to join. Maria was the president of Tau Beta Pi (the Engineering Honor Society), and was a leader in the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers. She will begin her next chapter at Texas A&M's School of Engineering Medicine, where she hopes to earn both her M.D. and a master's in engineering over the next four years.

Siddie Pennewill '20 worked with Gulfstream Aerospace to create a mixed-reality flight deck for her senior capstone project at the University of Georgia. The project aims to move Gulfstream's cockpit prototyping process to the digital sphere using virtual reality. Siddie and her team created a flight simulation with a cockpit display system that collects and displays data. The project was awarded first



place in the Computerized System or Software Design Category at the University of Georgia College of Engineering Capstone Design Showcase in April. Siddie graduated in May with a B.S. in Computer Systems Engineering and a math minor. She is a member of Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society.



Matthew Kinkead '20 earned a B.B.A. in Finance with honors from Carnegie-Mellon University in May, graduating as a U.S. Naval Officer. He is headed to Pensacola Naval Air Station where he will attend flight school.

Emma Craig '21 and her partner clinched the first place prize of \$2,000 at the Horizon AI Hackathon. She showcased REMMA, the team's innovative AI-powered physical therapy solution, at the Rothberg Catalyzer AI Summit of the Americas in February. Emma is wrapping up her junior year at the University of Miami, where she is a biomedical engineering major.



Parker Beale '23 capped his freshman year at the University of North Carolina, fueling his passion for public and global health by earning the "Best Delegate Award" for his efforts representing Argentina at the 10th annual session of the American Mock World Health Organization. Parker's committee worked on a resolution centered on the conference theme: "Rectifying Historical and Contemporary Prejudices and Oppressions Undermining Global Health." Parker's initiative emphasized the lack of healthcare within indigenous and rural communities throughout the AMRO region and provided various solutions and his committee's resolution passed during the first plenary session, receiving all four stamps of approval and the largest amount of funding out of all five regions.



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