

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

SPRING 2021

Georgia

Community Dawggs

Alumni-led nonprofits are changing the face of the Classic City



IMAGINE WHERE WE'LL BE *tomorrow.*

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SUPPORT OUR STATE'S SMALL BUSINESSES

*Small Business Development
Center Fund (p. 16)*



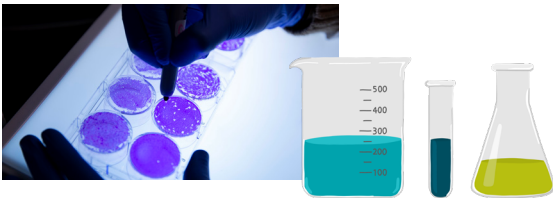
POWER INNOVATIONS IN GEORGIA'S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

*CAES Rural
Initiatives Fund (p. 20)*



JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST INFECTIOUS DISEASES

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PREPARE TOMORROW'S CHANGE-MAKERS

*Institute for Nonprofit
Organizations Fund (p. 28)*



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UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA



Georgia

The disease detectives in the Center for the Ecology of Infectious Diseases search for clues to battle COVID-19 and other deadly foes. p. 24.

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
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Mary Frances Early was the first African American to graduate from the University of Georgia. She, along with Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, came to UGA in 1961. The University is commemorating the 60th anniversary of this historic date throughout the spring semester. p. 38

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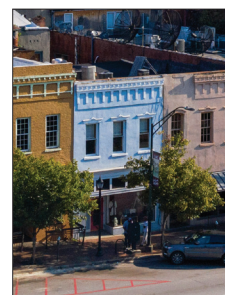


PHOTO BY ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER

A drone above North Campus captures the face of the Classic City. Broad Street may separate downtown from the University of Georgia campus, but the city of Athens and UGA have been interdependent for generations—facing each other across those traffic lanes the entire time.

Sunny Days Ahead

THIS SOLAR ARRAY ON SOUTH MILLEDGE AVENUE next to the UGA Club Sports Complex marks a fruitful partnership between the university and Georgia Power. Not only has the facility provided opportunities for solar power research led by the College of Engineering, the panels have also helped reduce energy costs on campus and in areas around the state.





ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER

Georgia

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"I am grateful for UGA's outstanding faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends, and I am confident that our university will emerge from the pandemic in a position of great strength because of you."

Onward with Common Purpose

Tackling the significant challenges before us

In my nearly 35 years at UGA, we have never confronted circumstances as broadly complex and demanding as those of the past year. But this difficult chapter in the story of our university has revealed the very best of who we are—our perseverance, our resilience, and our determination to lift up individuals and communities, even in the midst of a global pandemic. The response from the Bulldog Nation has been immediate, courageous, and widespread.

Our faculty, staff, and students are demonstrating remarkable ingenuity and flexibility as they adapt to a new learning environment. Our scientists and scholars across disciplines are tackling COVID-19 and its consequences. Our Small Business Development Center is helping businesses and nonprofits secure funding to stabilize their operations, while other outreach units are helping community members meet additional needs brought on by the pandemic. And our donors are generously providing emergency funds to students facing sudden financial strain.

Despite the challenges of the past year, the University of Georgia has achieved success across many measures. The four-year completion rate of our students is higher than ever, and UGA students have earned several prestigious awards, including our 25th Rhodes Scholarship. UGA is now ranked 15th on *U.S. News and World Report's* list of the best public universities in the nation, marking our fifth consecutive year in the top 20. We have launched multiple initiatives to do even more to put our values of diversity and inclusion into action, both now and in the long term. We also have launched a comprehensive professional development program for staff and concluded the most successful capital campaign in UGA's history with more than 175,000 donors contributing \$1.45 billion.

On the research and innovation front, our R&D expenditures have reached new heights, and UGA is now ranked second in the nation for bringing research-based products to market. Construction is progressing on the Interdisciplinary STEM Research Complex, and the Innovation District has continued to expand with the creation of the Innovation Hub at the corner of Spring and South streets. In addition, UGA has been recognized as an "Innovation and Prosperity University" and a "Community Engaged Institution" for our contributions to economic and community development.

Regardless of what 2021 brings, our mission and values will guide us onward and unite us in common purpose. I am grateful for UGA's outstanding faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends, and I am confident that our university will emerge from the pandemic in a position of great strength because of you.

Jere W. Morehead
President

IMPACT GEORGIA

From providing COVID relief to supporting small business to developing innovative technology, the University of Georgia's commitment to the state is stronger than ever.



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

See how we're making a
difference in your community at

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Georgia

UGA TO Z

*News, accomplishments,
and accolades from the
UGA community*



HIVE SWEET HIVE

UGA Builds New Homes for the Bees

► The University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine has joined the fight to save bees by building a set of hives on campus.

The new program will give residents and senior veterinary students clinical training experience in caring for these important insects.

In the past, it was up to the hobbyist or commercial beekeeper to maintain their bees' health.

But as the risk of antimicrobial resistance increases worldwide, veterinarians have been asked to step in for diagnosis and treatment.

Many veterinarians don't learn how to care for bees, and beekeepers have limited relationships with veterinarians. Jeorg Mayer, associate professor of zoological medicine, leads the program. Its goal is to ensure that the next generation of UGA veterinarians

can support these crucial pollinators.

A Vet Bee Club has also been formed for vet students interested in learning more about bees and the role veterinarians can play in their care. Students in the club will have the opportunity to sit for the UGA Master Beekeeper certification exam and will be able to attend meetings with and view the colonies of local beekeepers' associations.

DOROTHY KOZLOWSKI

DEGREE VALUE

Each College Grad Adds \$2M to Georgia's GDP

► The lifetime earnings of each new four-year college graduate will increase Georgia's gross domestic product by almost \$2 million, according to a new study from UGA's Selig Center for Economic Growth.

The research estimated an average work-life of 40 years per individual, calculating the additional economic benefit of earning a college degree on top of a high school diploma to be \$1,992,065 over that span.

About 61% of the economic value goes directly to the college graduate, while 39% accrues to the graduate's employer, their community, and the state. The 2018 survey, which is the latest data available, shows 33.4% of adults in Georgia have a bachelor's degree, compared with 34% of adults nationally.

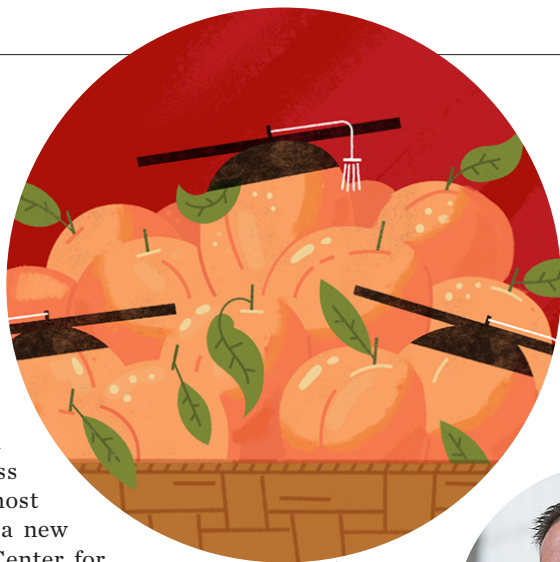
A NEW KIND OF LEADER

Chick-fil-A Pledges \$10M to Student Leadership Program

► Chick-fil-A Inc. has pledged \$10 million to expand and enhance UGA's Institute for Leadership Advancement (ILA). Chick-fil-A's pledge is the largest commitment dedicated to academic support in the history of the Terry College of Business, which houses the institute.

The gift will allow ILA's Leadership Fellows program to welcome a new cohort of undergraduates each fall and spring semester, expand course offerings in the institute, and launch a new professional development symposium.

"Thanks to Chick-fil-A, this next chapter for ILA will solidify UGA's position as a respected incubator for young, motivated leaders and mark ILA as a nationally recognized model for leadership education," says Benjamin C. Ayers, dean of the Terry College.



SPECIAL

LEADERSHIP ADDITIONS

Brooks Named New UGA AD

► Josh Brooks is UGA's new J. Reid Parker Director of Athletics following the retirement of Greg McGarity, who held the post for 10 years.

Brooks **MS '14** joined the UGA staff in December 2016 as executive associate director of athletics. He was promoted to deputy athletic director in 2018 and then senior deputy athletic director in 2020. He was named interim director following McGarity's Dec. 31 retirement; the position became permanent on Jan. 6. This is Brooks' first AD job.

McGarity **ABI '76** was a letterman on the 1973 Bulldog tennis team and began his career in athletics administration at UGA in 1977. He rose through the ranks to become assistant athletic director for facilities and event management in 1988. He later moved on to several senior leadership roles in athletics outside of UGA before returning in 2010 as athletic director.

During his tenure as athletic director, UGA sports teams won seven national championships and many more conference titles. McGarity also led facility expansion and renovation projects, and athletics fundraising reached unprecedented heights.

McGarity paid special attention to elevating academic support for student-athletes. Since he arrived, UGA student-athletes have received 22 NCAA Post Graduate Scholarships and 36 CoSIDA Academic All-American Awards (including 16 first team awards).



CHAMBERLIN SMITH



DALE ZANINE

After a short stint on an interim basis, Josh Brooks (top) was named J. Reid Parker Director of Athletics on Jan. 6. Brooks replaces Greg McGarity (bottom), who retired in 2020 after 10 years in the post. Under McGarity's leadership, Bulldogs sports teams won seven national titles and produced 36 Academic All-Americans.



ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER

TOP DAWGS

President's Medal Honors Transformative Faculty Members

▼ The University of Georgia bestowed the President's Medal, one of its highest honors, on William "Bill" P. Flatt, D.W. Brooks Distinguished Professor Emeritus (pictured below left), and the late Ivery Clifton (below right), a faculty member and administrator, in a virtual awards ceremony Jan. 25.

The honor recognizes extraordinary contributions of individuals who are not current UGA employees and who have supported students and academic programs, advanced research, and inspired community leaders to enhance the quality of life of citizens in Georgia.

Flatt served UGA for 51 years, including as dean and coordinator of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, D.W. Brooks Distinguished Professor, and professor emeritus in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences.

He has been a beloved and inspiring guest lecturer for many classes over the years, sharing his passion for health and nutrition with generations of students.

Clifton, who died in January 2020, was a professor of agricultural economics and one of the first prominent Black administrative leaders at UGA. During his 27-year tenure, he served as associate vice president for academic affairs, helping develop the university's environmental literacy requirement. He also served as an interim dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

One of his most lasting contributions was the college's Young Scholars Summer High School Research Internship Program, which encourages underrepresented minority high school students to apply to college and gain experience in agricultural research.



ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER



STEPHANIE SCHUPPSKA

AMAZING STUDENTS

Buchanan Earns Rhodes Scholarship

◀ Phaidra Buchanan (left), an Honors student and Foundation Fellow from Tyrone, has been named a 2021 Rhodes Scholar.

Buchanan is the 25th UGA student to earn the Rhodes Scholarship, the oldest and most celebrated international fellowship in the world. She and the other scholars for 2021 will begin their various courses of study at the University of Oxford in October.

"Phaidra has amassed an impressive record of academic achievement, engagement, and leadership already as a UGA student," says President Jere W. Morehead JD '80. "We look forward to the positive impact she will continue to make on the world as she pursues her education and career path."

Buchanan is majoring in social studies education in the Mary Frances Early College of Education and minoring in German. As an undergraduate pre-service teacher, she investigated structural inequities in the American educational system and their historical roots, and how teachers, teacher educators, and educational theorists have sought to combat them.

Ellington is UGA's Sixth Schwarzman Scholar

▲ Zakiyya Ellington (above), a senior from Allen, Texas, was one of 154 students selected internationally for the Schwarzman Scholarship, a graduate fellowship designed to prepare the next generation of leaders with an understanding of China's role in global trends.

An Honors student, Foundation Fellow, and Stamps Scholar at UGA, Ellington is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Arabic with a minor in Spanish in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, in addition to a bachelor's degree in accounting and a master's degree in business analytics in the Terry College of Business.

As a Schwarzman Scholar, Ellington's concentration will be in economics and business. She plans to examine China's approach to recent economic development and its impact on the socioeconomic status of underserved groups.



RICK O'QUINN



ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER



DOT PAUL

UNWELCOME INHABITANTS

Invasive Fish Discovered in Georgia Creek

▼ An eel-like fish popular in home aquariums—but not native to North America—has been found for the first time in a Georgia waterway.

The discovery of the weather loach, which can breathe air outside of water and can grow up to a foot long, is a first for Georgia. The fish is native to east Asia and, in the last decade, has been reported in 10 states, including neighboring Alabama.

In total, 15 weather loaches were found in a creek near the border of Clarke and Oconee counties. University of Georgia scientists were surveying the waterway for aquatic life and pulled up the nonnative fish as part of the process to collect, identify, and release the species found in the area.

Unfortunately, the fish may pose a threat to native fish. Weather loaches are omnivores, which means they compete with native fish for the same food sources—and they may also eat the eggs of native fish. The main question now, according to Georgia DNR biologist Brett Albanese, is how many are out in the wild and how far they have traveled. Albanese says DNR will be working with UGA to determine the extent of the issue.



SPECIAL

SAFE HAVEN

Relocating Turtles Proves Effective for Conservation

► A new study shows how one of Georgia's barrier islands provides a safe haven for gopher tortoises and gives researchers at the University of Georgia evidence to prove species relocation is an effective conservation tool.

The gopher tortoise, Georgia's state reptile, is one of the most threatened vertebrates, largely due to habitat loss.

Conducted on St. Catherine's Island, the eight-year study represents the first long-term data captured on immature tortoises in a translocated or relocated population. The results revealed a survival rate of close to 40% for hatchlings, 70% for juveniles, and 80% for subadults.

UGA researchers used mark-recapture data to assess the sustainability of the population by recapturing and monitoring offspring born to mothers who were relocated to the island.



SPECIAL



DOROTHY KOZLOWSKI

A TANGLED WEB

Invasive Joro Spiders are 'Here to Stay'

▲ Chances are, if you live in northeast Georgia you've come across an East Asian Joro spider.

The invasive Joro spiders, native to China, Japan, and Korea, were first spotted in Georgia in 2013. Since then, they have firmly established themselves in the area. Confirmed sightings stretch from Athens to Blairsville and as far away as Greenville, South Carolina.

At almost 3 inches across when their legs are fully extended, Joros are hard to miss. While they're roughly the same size as native banana and yellow garden spiders, the yellow and blue-black stripes on their backs and bright red markings on their undersides are distinct.

So far, Joros appear to coexist with the area's

other spiders, with webs close to, or attached to, one another. And Joro spiders also capture and feed on at least one insect that other spiders don't: adult brown marmorated stink bugs, another invasive species that can infest houses and damage crops.

Despite their size, Byron Freeman, director of the Georgia Museum of Natural History, says that Joro spiders don't pose a threat to people. Their venom is used only to subdue prey.

"Should you try to get rid of them?" Freeman says. "You can, but at this point, they're here to stay."

MAGICAL REALISM

Museum Expands on Historic MoMA Exhibition

► In 1943, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, organized a groundbreaking exhibition of “magic realist” art, cementing that term in art history. Nearly 80 years later, the Georgia Museum of Art will present the exhibition “Extra Ordinary: Magic, Mystery and Imagination in American Realism,” which takes MoMA’s show as a point of departure. Curator Jeffrey Richmond-Moll not only includes works from MoMA’s show but expands the canon of magic realist artists to include women, artists of color, and artists from across the United States. Their works not only show that the extraordinary is possible but also conjure the strangeness and wonder of everyday life. The exhibition is on view Feb. 27 through June 13 and is accompanied by a hardcover catalogue published by the museum.



LEAPIN' LIZARDS!

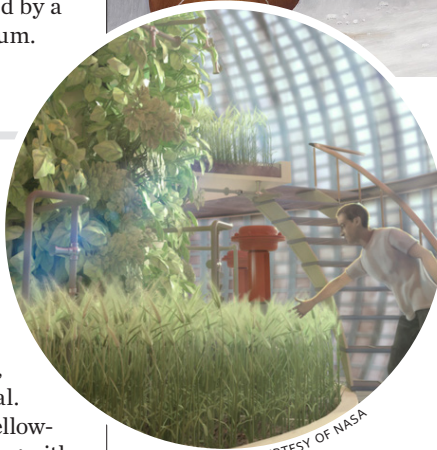
New Species Discovered in Mexican Forest

▼ As soon as Adam Clause saw the photo, he knew he was looking at something special.

In it stood a lizard with a subtle stripe of yellow-orange spots down its sides, dark brown mixing with tan along its back, and smooth, spotted scales across its head. Clause, who was finishing his University of Georgia doctoral dissertation on this group of Mexican and Central American lizards, had never seen one like this before.

That photo led Clause **PhD '18** on a multiyear journey to describe this new species of tree-dwelling lizard.

“These lizards are so mysterious, it is a thrill to spot just one individual, much less an entirely new species,” Clause says. The lizard’s formal name, *Abronia morenica*, pays homage to the unusual brown coloring on the adult males (*moreno*, in Spanish, often means brown skinned) as well as the nearby town that supported the scientists in the discovery, Sierra Morena.



COURTESY OF NASA

An artist rendering of what a greenhouse on Mars may look like was created by NASA.

MARS FARMS

Geologists Dig into Martian Soil Fertility

◀ Humankind’s next giant leap may be onto Mars. But before those missions can begin, scientists need to make scores of breakthrough advances, including learning how to grow crops on the red planet. Practically speaking, astronauts cannot haul an endless supply of topsoil through space. So University of Georgia geologists are figuring out how best to use the materials already on the planet’s surface.

To do this, they simulated the mineral makeup of Martian soil and found the textures of artificial simulants to be crusty and dried, which may make them more difficult to use for farming.

These challenges add up to a very difficult—though not impossible—task. Looking to agricultural science, the group adapted solutions used on Earth, such as rinsing the soil and adding specific microbes, called inoculants, to help plants grow.



SIDNEY WOODRUFF

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/ **ALUMNI**

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SUPPORTING FACULTY

who improve our tomorrow



A gift from the Pulliam family created an endowed chair position in honor of Pulliam family patriarch H.M. (Morris) Pulliam BSA '31. The Pulliam family has deep roots at UGA. They are (left to right): Anna Kate BS '18, BSEd '18; Amy MEd '19; Michael BS '61; Elaine; and Grace. Grace Pulliam is a current UGA student double-majoring in genetics and music with plans to graduate in 2022.



Michael Strand, a professor of entomology at UGA, and is the inaugural H.M Pulliam Chair

Henley Morris Pulliam BSA '31 became an agriculture teacher during the Great Depression to provide a better way of life for young people in rural areas. The legacy he built in Newton County extended long past his death in 1976. In 2018, his family solidified his legacy at the University of Georgia to help future generations.

Pulliam's son and daughter-in-law, Dr. Michael BS '61 and Elaine Pulliam, donated \$1 million to the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences to endow a faculty chair position. The couple knew that by establishing the position today, it would fuel research in perpetuity, improving countless lives along the way.

"My father was a dedicated schoolteacher who gave everything he had to his family and to others," Michael says. "I recall what my mother once told me: The only thing we can carry with us when we leave this world is what we have given to others."

In 2019, Michael Strand, a professor of entomology at UGA, was named the inaugural H.M Pulliam Chair. Strand has dedicated his career to studying the

interactions among insects, parasites, and microorganisms, especially those insects that affect agricultural production and that transmit human diseases such as malaria.

Strand's research provides insight into parasitoid wasps that harm agricultural plants and the hormonal mechanisms that allow mosquitos to produce eggs, potentially identifying points at which reproduction can be disrupted and mosquito populations better controlled.

"The more we know about insects, the better we can appreciate their contribution to the planet. Many serve as pollinators, help decompose organic matter, or are important links in the food chain of other animals, which is hugely beneficial," Strand says. "But some species also transmit diseases that kill thousands of people or cause damage to commodities that cost billions of dollars annually. In my lab, we hope to make significant contributions in understanding insects to improve the lives of humans and sustain a healthy environment."

Private gifts—like the Pulliams' endowment—provide support for equipment and supplies to advance the research

and scholarship taking place in Strand's lab. They also help fund the graduate assistants who execute research projects and constitute the next generation of great problem-solvers. Strand has mentored doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows who have gone on to careers in government, industry, and academia. Today, his lab includes five postdoctoral fellows, three graduate candidates, and two technical support staff.

To many, mosquitos and wasps are bothersome. To scientists like Strand, the biodiversity found in the insect world holds secrets that could improve lives. And the Pulliams' generosity, in honor of their family patriarch, is empowering scientists like Michael Strand to conduct research today that will improve our tomorrow.

Endowed positions are fueling research across campus and throughout the state. Private support has helped fund these researchers' endeavors into everything from geology to law.



KAREN NORRIS, GEORGIA RESEARCH ALLIANCE EMINENT SCHOLAR IN IMMUNOLOGY AND TRANSLATIONAL BIOMEDICINE, is exploring how our bodies respond to viruses such as SARS-CoV-2.



ROBERTO PERDISCI, PATTY AND D.R. GRIMES DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IN COMPUTER SCIENCE, is combining systems research with machine learning and large-scale data mining techniques to secure networked systems and defend networks from malware.



JOSE F. CORDERO, GORDHAN L. AND VIRGINIA B. "JINX" PATEL DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IN PUBLIC HEALTH, is examining how exposure to environmental contaminants contributes to the high rate of preterm birth in Puerto Rico.



SALLY E. WALKER, SHELEBARGER PROFESSOR IN GEOLOGY, is researching fossil forensics—how organisms become fossilized—and is specifically focused on understanding how biological, physical, and chemical factors affect the preservation of marine organisms in modern and fossil deposits.



ELENA KARAHANNA, C. HERMAN AND MARY VIRGINIA TERRY DISTINGUISHED CHAIR, is focusing on the impact of digital tools on work processes, the application of information systems in health care, and the use of bots and chatbots in e-commerce sites and social media.



VICKI MICHAELIS, JOHN HULAND CARMICAL CHAIR IN SPORTS JOURNALISM & SOCIETY, is ensuring that the next generation of sports media professionals maintains high journalistic standards and learns how to negotiate the ever-changing media landscape.



ELIZABETH BURCH, FULLER E. CALLAWAY CHAIR OF LAW, is seeking reform for the mass tort system that is failing many plaintiffs.



HENRY YOUNG, KROGER ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMMUNITY PHARMACY, is connecting health care practitioners with patients to help them understand the benefits and risks that come with medication use—especially in rural, underserved, and minority communities in Georgia.

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SMALL BUSINESS LIFELINE

As businesses face uncertainty during the pandemic, UGA's Small Business Center has been here to help.

BY AARON HALE MA'16

Josie Moss may have been a latecomer to owning her own business, but she turned out to be a natural.

Over the years, the former high school teacher and principal began to appreciate the importance of early childhood education.

"If I got some of these babies earlier, I know they wouldn't come to me with all of the issues and things that they struggle with," she used to say about her students.

After extensive homework, Moss bought Harmony Learning Academy in Lithia Springs from a previous owner. The school serves children from infancy to age 12.

In 18 months as an entrepreneur, Moss figured out a lot. She created a business plan and a three-year budget. She found the just-right student-to-teacher ratios

for the best student experience that turned a profit.

To do this, she asked a lot of questions, many of them to Todd Anduze, her consultant at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Carrollton.

The SBDC, run statewide by the University of Georgia, helps small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs through a wide range of educational services, including no-cost consulting.

But then the pandemic came to Georgia. And everything changed for Moss and small business owners across the state.

During the ongoing crisis—especially in the early months—the SBDC has been a lifeline to thousands of small businesses like Moss's and has provided information and resources to keep them afloat.

The Small Business Development Center has 18 offices from Rome to Valdosta to serve the needs of Georgia's business community.

Josie Moss, owner of Harmony Learning Academy in Lithia Springs, has faced challenges during the pandemic with help from the Small Business Development Center and her consultant, Todd Anduze.



EVERYTHING HALTS

The pandemic's effects on businesses were unlike those of other economic crises.

"In a matter of a few weeks, we went from an open economy to states ordering businesses closed," says Allan Adams **AB '82**, the statewide director of the SBDC, a unit of UGA Public Service and Outreach. "For many small firms, their revenue dropped to zero."

Even for businesses that could stay open, it didn't mean customers would come in. The situation was unsustainable.

"Most small firms don't have deep financial reserves and financing options," says Adams. "They are dependent on a steady cash flow. Most small firms are 30, 60, 90 days from going broke, even in good times."

From the outset, Harmony Learning Academy had to close for two weeks, but that turned into an indefinite closure. The future of Moss's school grew uncertain.

On the other side of the I-285 perimeter in Norcross, Matt McKee **BBA '07** watched his company's sales tank by as much as 90%. McKee is CEO of the Cutting Board Company, which manufactures cutting boards for homes and restaurants.

"It definitely got scary," he says. "You just kind of sit there watching your daily numbers and wondering what's going to happen with the business."

Fortunately, Harmony Learning and the Cutting Board Company had some money in reserve. But how long could these companies stay afloat without a change in strategy?



DOT PAUL



HELP COMES

With businesses across the U.S. facing similar challenges, the federal government worked quickly to pass a coronavirus relief package—including loans for small businesses aimed at keeping people employed.

But news about how businesses could access the aid was fuzzy at first and confusing to many.

And that's where the SBDC stepped up.

During normal times, the core of the SBDC's work is through its consultants in the center's 18 area offices across Georgia. Some of these offices are partnerships between UGA and other institutions. For example, in Carrollton, where Anduze works, the office is a partnership between UGA and the University of West Georgia.

Consultants' expertise can range from financing and accounting to marketing and exports. But this spring, they all narrowed in on helping small businesses survive.

"Everyone had to focus on short-term financial management," Adams says. "We had to turn our whole workforce on a dime, and they were doing it from home."

And it turned into a round-the-clock affair. "Our phones just blew up at the local offices," Adams says.

In the meantime, Moss was scrambling to keep parents updated about the school, while at the same time learning about new regulations and guidelines, all while figuring out how to keep her business from going under.

To get new information, she stayed in touch with Anduze.

No one knew precisely how the federal loans would work or how quickly businesses could get the much-needed cash.

And while many businesses were desperate for help, back at the Cutting Board, the executive team didn't panic.

Owner Dave Brautigam had a longstanding relationship with Peter Williams, a consultant in the Macon office of the SBDC. During the first weeks of the crisis, the two frequently talked, particularly about the availability of a federal loan called the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that could help businesses keep their staff employed.

Brautigam was hearing from other business owners who were having trouble getting information.



DOT PAUL

“Everyone was calling their bankers. We called the SBDC,” said Brautigan. “It was hard to tell which news was fact or fiction, but Pete would respond with a level of honesty that put my mind at ease.”

Like Brautigan, Moss felt like her SBDC consultant was right with her every step of the way, especially while considering relief loans.

“We were figuring it out with each other. It was just like unwrapping the gift on Christmas day together,” she says.

Whenever Moss got a document about a loan that she didn’t quite understand, she would forward it to Anduze with a single word message, “Explain.” And Anduze would be back in touch soon with answers.

Between March and August, consultants from the SBDC helped more than 3,300 small businesses in Georgia secure \$88 million in federal grants and loans.

During that period, consultants heard from thousands more who sought informa-

tion but not direct assistance in applying for funding. Many tuned in to SBDC-hosted webinars about federal funding or spoke by phone with an SBDC consultant.



SHIELDING THE BUSINESS

During tough times, many businesses find ways to adapt.

When the Cutting Board’s Brautigan learned about a need for face shields for frontline workers, a light bulb clicked on in his mind.

His company’s manufacturing facility had the lasers that could cut shields and other personal protective equipment.

They’d just need to retool the equipment and secure the raw materials.

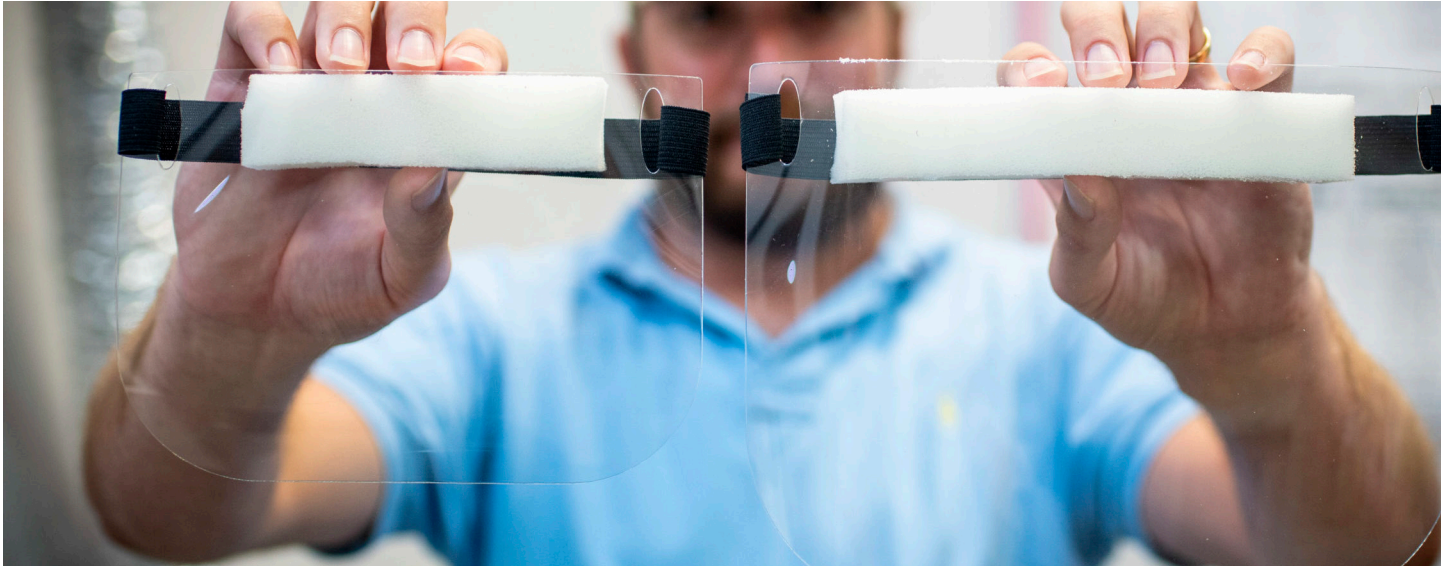
So, while many businesses were hunkering down and conserving cash, the Cutting Board Company doubled down and bought \$20,000 worth of acrylic. They tinkered with their machines and got to work on the face shields.

It paid off.

Initially, their goal was to donate what they could to the community and keep their workers busy until business picked up. And they did that, but soon other firms were interested in purchasing the face shields and clear plastic barriers. So, the company was generating revenue even while cutting boards weren’t selling.

“It went from being scary to being actually a lot of fun,” McKee says. “I mean, we were up here late at night or on weekends building face shields, and all our workers bought in. It was a pretty unique time.”

In a matter of weeks, the Cutting Board Company staff and its CEO Matt McKee (left and below) shifted production from high-end restaurant cutting boards to face masks and other pandemic-related safety equipment.



DOT PAUL

● ● ● PROLONGED CRISIS

Moss finally reopened in June after being closed for 10 weeks. But some parents pulled their kids out. Enrollment dropped from 65 students pre-pandemic to just 14.

Through the fall, enrollment came back up to 35 students. The school is surviving, but the budget is tight.

Moss remains in contact with Anduze. She says this year would have been much more stressful and difficult without the SBDC.

“It’s priceless,” says Moss. “Not just in the monetary sense but every other way too. It would be extremely difficult to keep my head above water without the services of Todd and all that he provides.”

For his part, Anduze says Moss is a smart, “action-oriented” business owner who is doing everything to keep her business going.

On a video chat for this story, Anduze referred to Moss as a friend, and Moss says it’s clear that he wants her business to succeed. “On the days when you’re doubting yourself, it means so much just to have someone you can email and call or send a quick text and say, ‘I need help.’” **GM**

At the end of 2020 and the beginning of this year, the SBDC again focused on informing small business about funding available through the new Economic Aid Act passed in December. Gov. Brian Kemp BSA '87 and the SBDC launched a website and a series of webinars to provide information to Georgia small business owners.



Support the Small Business Development Center and learn more about their outreach opportunities. GEORGIASBDC.ORG

GROWING PAINS

A man in a light blue shirt and khaki shorts is walking on a dirt path through a pecan orchard. The trees are mostly bare, indicating they were damaged or removed. In the foreground, there is a large, uprooted tree stump with its roots exposed. The ground is a mix of dirt and green grass.

Eric Cohen walks through his family's pecan orchard at Pecan Ridge Plantation outside of Bainbridge. The Cohens cleaned up downed pecan trees and planted new ones after the destruction of Hurricane Michael in 2018.

ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER



Pecans lie on the ground beneath 20-year-old pecan trees that were easily uprooted when Hurricane Michael blew through Decatur County, Georgia, in 2018.

First it was Hurricane Michael, then a pandemic. But Georgia's agriculture industry is weathering the storms—with the help of UGA support.

BY PAIGE PARVIN

It's been a rough three years for Georgia pecan farmers, whose cash crop has been battered by a hurricane, a fungal tree disease, and a global pandemic—all in relatively rapid succession.

But many have tapped into the strength of connection with the University of Georgia. That's what rescued Rob Cohen BSA '96 and Eric Cohen BSA '00 when their Pecan Ridge Plantation in Bainbridge began to drown after Hurricane Michael destroyed 800 acres in late 2018.

"I'm on the Alumni Association board, and members of the Association immediately reached out to help us promote the business," says Eric Cohen. "They also hooked me up with FEMA work to deal with all the vegetative landfill—trees, wood chips, all the debris. They basically saved our farm."

The brothers have replanted some lost trees and hope to eventually return to business as usual. Meanwhile, they have scaled up related business endeavors with deep ties to the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) and UGA Cooperative Extension programs, including new fumigation techniques and crop consulting for cotton, peanuts, and soybeans.

Eric Cohen's son is a freshman at UGA. "I've always told him, never underestimate the power of connections," Cohen says.

That could be the tagline for UGA's range of efforts supporting Georgia agriculture—a resource network that reaches virtually every county and crop in the state. Although smaller producers like the Cohens have been hit harder by the events of the past two years, they've also had more flexibility to innovate on the fly, and many have turned to CAES and UGA Extension for guidance.

ANDREW DAVIS TUCKER

Nick Place, right, became dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences on Jan. 1.

Below, Georgia Grown, a resource of the Georgia Department of Agriculture, distributes fresh food in Gwinnett County.

NEW DEAN, FRESH IDEAS

According to Nick Place, the new CAES dean, that's exactly the support role UGA should be playing for the state's agriculture industry. Place described his vision for a Georgia where virtually every producer knows they can call on the university's leadership and expertise—whether they're facing a serious problem or just need to know the best fertilizer for a particular plant.

"Growing up on a small dairy farm, I have the perspective of being a small producer, and I still have connections to those producers," says Place, who began his role at UGA on Jan. 1. "But we need to be able to connect and work with all producers—large, small, and those in between. There is a place for everyone and a need for all types of producers."

Place cited opportunities for small producers to connect directly with consumers through Community Supported Agricul-

ture and direct marketing, such as the Agricultural Products Connection program, a collaboration between UGA Extension and the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown program.

"There are tremendous opportunities for CAES to take advantage of programs like that—working with producers to understand the various economic aspects of that industry, offering business planning through Extension, and examining production practices to make sure they are effective and sustainable," Place says. "It is our role to work with small and large producers to make sure they are using best



management practices in an effort to improve the agriculture industry overall."

To fulfill that commitment, UGA Extension and CAES have developed a rich collection of resources and programs, with a robust online root system that branches out to hundreds of farms and growers statewide. Central topics include the cultivation of a farming pipeline through local Georgia 4-H clubs, the environment and natural resources, the business of agriculture, food and health, literally everything crop-related, and the increasing interest in home gardening for food as well as visual appeal.



SPECIAL

Agriculture is the state's largest economic sector with an output of

\$76
BILLION

“The COVID-19 situation has shed light on issues and opportunities that we face as an industry. As a result, people are more cognizant of our local and national food system and where their food comes from.”

—NICK PLACE, DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

82%

of Georgia farmers indicated a loss of revenue attributed to COVID-19

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

When the global COVID-19 pandemic started to get serious last March, CAES and Extension leaders, like so many others, had some tough choices to make.

One of the most important was opting to not shirk site visits for services such as soil and water testing. Under revised COVID guidelines, including masking and limiting travel to only one agent per vehicle, Extension has made more than 30,000 site visits in the past year to assess and offer expert guidance for Georgia producers.

“We treat it as a vital and essential duty to deliver advice and guidance on the farm,” says Associate Dean of Extension Mark McCann. “So we pivoted in order to deliver the same things we had been.”

On the flip side, education efforts were shifted to the virtual space—a move that has been unexpectedly successful.

“The public needs information, and rural areas have surprised us with the high numbers of participation,” McCann says. “We have touched new audiences who had not driven for in-person training, and agents who didn’t have time to travel, but now they can listen from their desks. Some borders have been erased.”

Another new audience is Georgia residents who are increasingly interested in growing their own food, preserving, and simply beautifying yards they now look at all the time. Downloads of Extension’s online publications and resources have jumped 27% percent since last March, McCann says.

“Home garden and preservation took the lead,” he says. “That’s not so much about economic impact, but about making people’s lives better.”

In the fall, the Georgia Foundation for Agriculture, Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Department of Agriculture and UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development joined forces to mount a year-end survey measuring the effects of the pandemic on Georgia’s agricultural industry.

The early findings were bleak: 82% of Georgia farmers indicated a loss of revenue attributed to COVID-19, and they were more concerned with the financial impact of the pandemic than they were about getting sick—or the accompanying emotional strain of potential revenue loss and illness. Live-stock producers were the hardest hit. More than 75% of respondents said COVID relief programs would not be sufficient.

With challenges come new opportunities, and that’s where Place is focusing.

A prime example: The farm-to-table movement was mostly associated with trendy restaurants that catered to diners willing and able to pay the upcharge for local food, grown and raised by smaller producers who lack the advantage of scale. But that perception is shifting, thanks to a combination of supply chain disruptions and lifestyle changes that have led consumers to be more thoughtful about their food. And UGA Extension is building new pathways that connect producers and consumers more directly than ever before.

“The COVID-19 situation has shed light on issues and opportunities that we face as an industry,” Place says. “As a result, people are more cognizant of our local and national food system and where their food comes from. This presents the opportunity to be more intentional about making people understand how we get food from farms to the market.”

As part of that public education effort, UGA Extension, in collaboration with Georgia Grown and other industry partners, is using its network of county Extension offices to put producers in touch with consumers who want fresh, Georgia-grown fruits, vegetables, and other foods. Although COVID-19 has created supply-chain obstacles that threatened to put smaller growers and producers out of business, the Agricultural Products Connection offers them a lifeline—not just to restaurants but directly to dinner tables around the state.

“The first step is facilitating connections between consumers and growers. There are many people who are looking for fresh produce and cannot find it, and we have producers who have produce and cannot sell it,” says Laura Perry Johnson **BSA '87, MS '89, PhD '93**, associate dean for Extension at CAES. “Together, we can make this into something that will not only help agriculture in Georgia but the people who need access to fresh food as well.”

“One of the bright spots is direct sales from small producers,” McCann adds. “They’ve had a great year.” **GM**

Supporting Georgia agriculture, that’s our commitment. Make a gift at CAES.UGA.EDU/ALUMNI/GIVING

Disease Detectives



How studying ecology could prevent another pandemic

BY LEIGH BEESON MA '17

When you hear the word ecology, you probably don't immediately associate the study of organisms and how they relate to their surroundings with infectious diseases.

But John Drake thinks maybe you should.

Drake, a Distinguished Research Professor of Ecology at the University of Georgia, heads the Center for the Ecology of Infectious Diseases (CEID), a research hub based in the Odum School of Ecology that brings together more than 80 scientists, undergraduate and graduate researchers, and collaborators from across the country with one ultimate, long-term goal: to understand how hosts and parasites interact with each other in the wild. Predicting disease outbreaks is an important application of this effort.

With groups dedicated to working on the world's most pressing disease outbreaks and perfecting technologies to map where outbreaks start and forecast where they will spread, the center's researchers are getting close.



ANDREW DAVIS-TUCKER

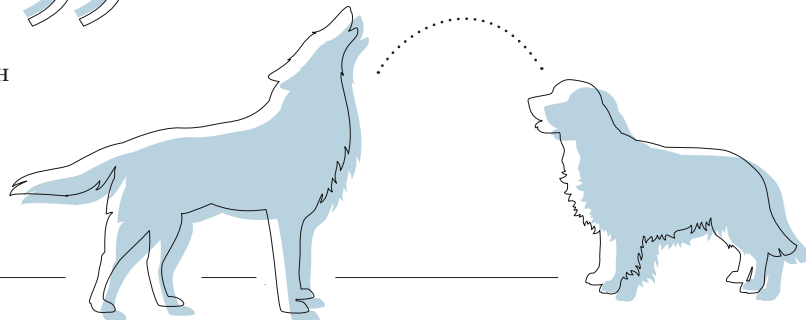
John Drake, right, is a Distinguished Research Professor of Ecology and head of the Center for the Ecology of Infectious Diseases, a research hub in UGA's Odum School of Ecology.

“

We want to be able to get a handle on outbreaks more quickly, like the coronavirus outbreak that we're going through right now. We want to see those things coming more clearly.

”

—PATRICK STEPHENS, ASSOCIATE RESEARCH SCIENTIST, ODUM SCHOOL OF ECOLOGY



Dangerous Interactions

There's no denying that humans affect both the environments they live in and the animals with which they share those environments. The field of ecology focuses on those interactions and the ripple effects they cause.

Disease ecology looks at those interactions through the lens of disease-causing agents—how viruses, bacteria, or other parasites can “spillover” from one species to another due to increased proximity, and how animal diseases can jump into people or vice versa. In fact, as early as 2008, Odum Dean John Gittleman and his research group coauthored a paper showing that since 1940 more than 62% of emerging infectious diseases in humans had their roots in animals.

But it's not just people who are experiencing consequences of that increased interaction between humans and wild animals.

“One example I think about a lot is rabies

and others diseases in wild canids (dog-like animals found across the world),” says Patrick Stephens, an associate research scientist in the Odum School of Ecology. “There are some cases, particularly in Africa, where one of the main reasons species are threatened with extinction is that they keep getting infected with diseases like rabies and canine distemper virus from domestic dogs.”

Those interactions between domestic and wild dogs are causing severe declines in some areas and wiping out entire populations elsewhere.

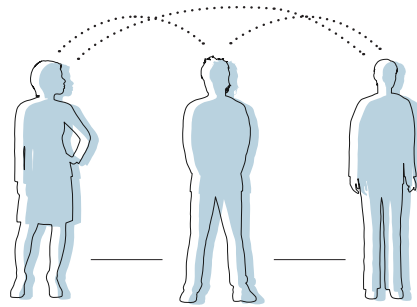
“This problem of diseases jumping from one organism to another—jumping from wild animals to domestic animals, wild animals to humans, humans to wild animals—it's fascinating to study as an ecologist,” says Stephens, “but it's also a really serious issue with some important real-world consequences.”

Stephens chairs the center's Spillover Working Group, which focuses on how diseases go from one species into another. Formed as part of a Presidential Interdisciplinary Seed Grant program to promote cross-campus collaboration on real-world challenges, the spillover group uses big data to assess past disease outbreaks, looking at where diseases came from, how they spread, and the circumstances that exacerbated those outbreaks. The group also uses that knowledge to build risk maps for different diseases, showing where and under what conditions future outbreaks are likely to occur.

But the researchers' eyes are really on the future.

“We want to be able to get a handle on outbreaks more quickly, like the coronavirus outbreak that we're going through right now. We want to see those things coming more clearly.”

Responding to the Pandemic



A global pandemic may have shocked the world but not infectious disease experts.

“There was nothing about COVID that was a surprise,” Drake says. “We had been anticipating for decades that there would be a pandemic of a respiratory infection. All those key features— spillover from animals, person-to-person transmission, an acute respiratory illness that’s highly infectious and has a high fatality rate—we’ve been thinking about this for years. It was just a question of when.”

The only real surprise was that instead of flu, the virus spreading across the globe was a coronavirus.

In January 2020, Drake pulled together a Coronavirus Working Group shortly after the CDC activated its Emergency Operations Center, a glaring warning sign that the agency foresaw a national crisis. The roughly 30-person group includes experts in everything from computational statistics to data visualization.

Before the virus even hit the state of Georgia, the group had launched a comprehensive COVID-19 Portal, tracking cases and fatalities across the country and the rest of the world and modeling what the situation could look like in the coming weeks. The researchers compiled data from media reports and government announcements in the early days of the pandemic, developing models and monitoring how the disease was spreading through China. But by March, the situation had escalated.

“At that point, we pivoted and started trying to do everything that we could to provide actionable information in real time,” Drake says. The portal provides resources for researchers, policymakers, and anyone else interested in seeing how the spread of the disease was playing out and what could potentially make a difference in reducing case numbers.

Paige Miller PhD '20, who recently finished her Ph.D. in Drake’s lab, began looking into how the disease was spreading, analyzing emerging hotspots of COVID-19 like outbreaks on cruise ships and in nursing homes. “Understanding how COVID is spreading in these very specific settings is important for understanding what interventions would be most effective in stopping it,” says Miller. And the approaches that worked in places like meat-packing plants—things like distancing where possible and requiring masks—could give insight into what would work elsewhere.”

Once states began reopening, the team changed course again to focus on more long-term questions that colleagues at the CDC deemed essential, and that’s the approach the center takes today as the pandemic continues to rage.



“

Understanding how COVID is spreading in these very specific settings is important for understanding what interventions would be most effective in stopping it.

”

—PAIGE MILLER PhD '20, MEMBER OF THE CEID AND RECENT DOCTORAL GRADUATE

The Next Generation of Disease Experts

The coronavirus wasn't the first and definitely won't be the last disease to hop from an animal host into a person.

In fact, three out of every five known infectious diseases have their origins in animals, according to the CDC.

Over the past couple of decades, infectious diseases have been on the rise.


Rising global temperatures have enabled the animals that carry some of these diseases to find new territories to call home. And the loss of forests and other natural habitats have forcibly driven animals from their traditional homes and into closer contact with people.

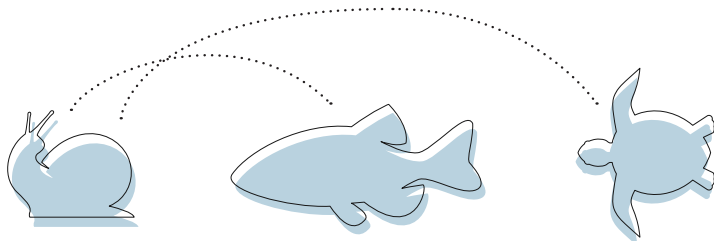
Postdoctoral researcher Emlyn Resetarits sees the ramifications of climate change firsthand.

She works with aquatic snails, studying the parasites that live within them and can make them sterile. As one of nature's cleaners, snails keep water clear and healthy by eating algae and biofilms. But snails infected with this parasite are voracious, potentially outcompeting healthy snails. With only infected snails in an area, the population can stagnate and die.

Without snails, algae and other microorganisms can proliferate, setting off a chain reaction in the ecosystem. Water quality declines, which impacts vegetation in the freshwater habitats Resetarits studies. The snails also serve as a food source for fish, turtles, and crayfish, so their absence can impact the population sizes of their predators.

Understanding how the parasites infect the host snails and reproduce also has implications for similar human parasites, like the one that causes schistosomiasis, which kills several hundred thousand people in developing countries every year.

"Globalization is causing us to have more spillover events, and we're going to have more infectious diseases because we're interacting with more wildlife," Resetarits says. "The environment is changing, but I think the center is doing a great job training the next infectious disease experts that we are going to need as more diseases pop up." 



The 3 Missions of the Center for the Ecology of Infectious Diseases

1. Creating a culture of science - The center hosts regular seminars and workshops, in addition to a biannual research symposia and member retreats, to get researchers together to talk about what they do and how they could collaborate.

2. Facilitating research - The CEID supports the research projects and grant proposals of its faculty and coordinated collaborative research projects across the center. The CEID-driven projects fall into four main areas:

a. Coronavirus research, which spans disciplines in an effort to provide data-driven information about the rapidly changing pandemic.

b. Spillover research, which focuses on diseases that jump from animals to humans and vice versa.

c. Disease mapping, which concentrates on tutorials and education on how to use mapping technology to chart a disease.

d. Disease forecasting, which builds on technologies and techniques to make predictions about future outbreaks or the spread of disease.

3. Training a capable workforce - The center has its own doctoral program, a postdoctoral fellowship, and a First Year Odyssey program, all focused on educating future researchers.

Learn more about CEID's work to battle COVID-19 at COVID19.UGA.EDU
Support CEID's life-saving work at CEID.UGA.EDU/SUPPORT

Community DAWGS

The Classic City is home to more than 500 registered nonprofits. Many have been founded by or are led by UGA alumni, and their efforts have brought a variety of positive changes to Athens.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER FREY BFA '94

Laura Whitaker's job is all about joy. There's joy she finds in the children and young adults that Extra Special People works with and spreading that joy to their families and the community.

Since she was 19 years old, Whitaker **BSEd '07, MEd '10** has been executive director of the Watkinsville nonprofit, which provides summer camps and other programming for individuals with disabilities and their families. What started as a summer job as a camp counselor in 2003 turned into something more when ESP's founder and director Martha Wyllie passed away from pancreatic cancer that fall.

"Sometimes you choose your job and sometimes it chooses you," she says.

Under Whitaker's leadership, the nonprofit has grown from one employee to 18 full- and part-time staff, from a gym and a donated trailer to a 14,000 square foot building, from serving 60 individuals in summer camp to 600. ESP grew from holding just summer camp and one Saturday of programming a month to serving 175 students in their daily after-school programs. And through it all, ESP has worked to help individuals and families develop their abili-

ties and not focus on their disabilities.

"We as adults can be disenchanting with difference. We can feel awkward engaging with people with disabilities," she says. "We feel nervous talking to someone with Down syndrome and might miss the opportunity to see the joy with which they see the world.

"People with disabilities have unmatched abilities—a joy that is transformative."

And to spread that joy in the community, Whitaker co-founded Java Joy, in 2016. Now franchised across the nation, Java Joy is a fleet of mobile coffee carts operated by people with disabilities called joyristas. Businesses and organizations pay for the coffee carts to visit, and the joyristas serve coffee with a side of transformative joy. And beyond the hugs and smiles, it also puts disabled young adults to work.

Whitaker has grown with ESP over the years. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in special education at UGA, got married, and had three children.

And while it took time to fully embrace the role as leader—for six years she referred to herself as camp director instead of executive director—she's become a fearless champion for the organization.

When the pandemic hit, ESP didn't close down; it expanded its mission. ESP called each of its 600 families, listening and providing new forms of emergency care to meet its families' biggest needs. This resulted in 10,600 meal deliveries, 5 lunch parades, and 75 hours of virtual programs.

"We wanted to be sure our campers were not missing out on the magic of summer camp and the relief camp provides for families after these months of staying home," Whitaker says. So ESP did safety trainings for its 100 camp staffers, had everyone wear face masks and face shields for double protection, took temperatures daily upon arrival, and spread campers (less than 30 per group) across six sites.

Through it all, Whitaker credits her accomplishments to humility and grit.

"As a 19-year-old leader, I needed help. I had to be humble and I had to have grit," she says. "Sixteen years later and those traits still guide my leadership today. Without them, ESP would not be where it is."

—Sara Freeland ABJ '05

Transformative Joy

LAURA WHITAKER BSEd '07, MEd '10

Extra Special People/Java Joy



The Game of Life

LEMUEL 'LIFE' LAROCHE
BSW '02, MSW '03
Chess and Community

Lemuel “Life” LaRoche learned how to play chess from the men he calls “the elders.” They spent their days in New York City’s parks challenging passersby to games. Not even curious kids were immune to the intrigue. LaRoche won a few—lost a lot more—but the memories and the lessons he took away from those games guide him to this day.

Most importantly, he is dedicated to passing on those lessons to the next generation of kids.

That’s the goal of Chess and Community, the non-profit he founded in 2012. Chess and Community grew from outreach projects he began while an undergraduate then a graduate student in the School of Social Work. Few activities are more symbolic of life’s journey than chess, and LaRoche leans into that symbolism hard.

“First you understand how the pieces on the board move, then you move those pieces off the board and put your life on it,” says LaRoche BSW '02, MSW '03. His nickname comes from his work as a poet and spoken word artist.

“Where are your castles? Your community,” he continues. “Where are your bishops? Your churches and spiritual foundation. Where are the knights? The police and that community security. And the pawns, your friends. The chessboard gives you a different worldview.”

LaRoche is quick to add that chess is merely an entry point for the youth he serves. The focus is on “community.” About 45 kids (mostly African American boys) take part in programming and volunteer activities, but through its workshops and other offerings, Chess and Community engages nearly 300 kids in Athens each year. Those who graduate from the program stay involved, too, by leading book clubs or running after-school programs. LaRoche has also awarded college scholarships of up to \$1,000 to 38 Chess and Community graduates.

The pandemic hit Chess and Community hard in 2020. In-person events and fundraisers were canceled in the early days, but socially distant activity has slowly returned. Chess and Community’s move online did attract some new players, though, including participants from as far away as New Jersey.

Social distancing has reframed the importance of family interactions. Parents are always encouraged to take part with the children. “We impact communities by impacting families,” LaRoche says.

—Eric Rangus MA '94







Keeping Children Reading

LESLIE HALE MPA '13 *Books for Keeps*

Leslie Hale had a complicated relationship with books when she was a kid. “I tore through some books, and some books that classmates were reading, I couldn’t finish,” she says. “It made me think I wasn’t a very good reader.”

But that experience gave her a unique understanding of why some kids fall out of reading or never get in the habit to begin with—something that Hale is working to change with Books for Keeps.

Hale MPA '13 is executive director of the Athens-based nonprofit, which is a grassroots effort to get books into the hands of children who might not otherwise have books at home. The organization especially works to stop “summer slide,” the loss of reading skills during summer break that can lead to lagging classroom performance later on. Founded by fellow alumna Melaney Smith BBA '89 in 2009, Books for Keeps has given more than half a million books to children from low-income families in grades Pre-K through 12.

Hale started as the nonprofit’s first full-time employee and executive director shortly after graduating from UGA’s Master of Public Administration program in 2013. She’s since taken the nonprofit from serving five schools to serving 20 schools, including all 14 public elementary schools in Athens.

“When we talk about how to address poverty, how to build a better society, it comes back to education,” Hale says. “It means allowing children to have equal access and equal opportunities to explore and develop an appreciation where their education can get them, a curiosity about the world. Reading builds all of those things—particularly reading for pleasure.”

The COVID-19 pandemic required some adjustment, but Books for Keeps’ operation didn’t really slow down. Instead of the organization visiting each of the schools, volunteers delivered more than 53,000 books directly to students’ homes after students ordered their book choices online. Another 15,000 books were delivered via FedEx to children from outlying counties.

Hale, a former journalist, felt drawn to nonprofit work after learning the importance of volunteering from her mother, who spent many Saturdays cooking lunch at a local homeless shelter, sometimes bringing Hale with her to volunteer.

“That was the direction the universe was pushing me in,” she says.

She realized she needed a different set of skills than covering government and education and enrolled in the School of Public and International Affairs’ MPA program, which is strong in public policy, nonprofit, and government work.

In her master’s program, she learned about the day-to-day aspects of running a nonprofit: how to budget and finance, how to go through an annual audit, how to apply for grants, how to utilize a board of directors as resources, and more.

Now an unabashed lover of reading, Hale today watches her own daughter, a first grader that she was pregnant with at her first Books for Keeps Book Sale, learn to read and embrace the joy of books. Little Evelyn Hale even got to test out the new online ordering system in Spring 2020 to make sure it was user-friendly for a kindergartner and to order her own 12 books to keep.

— Sara Freeland ABJ '05



When the Music Stopped

BOB SLEPPY BS '05, MBA '10
Nuçi's Space

Athens' once vibrant music scene has been muted. And for now, the town just isn't the same. Especially for the musicians themselves.

The pandemic's impact on the music community last spring was swift. One Athens-based band was onstage in the middle of a set when its musicians learned the rest of the tour was canceled. In a matter of days, people in the industry lost their livelihoods and their outlet for social connection and self-expression.

"It wasn't just people losing their jobs. Our entire industry stopped," says Bob Sleppy BS '05, MBA '10, executive director of Nuçi's Space, a nonprofit aimed to prevent suicide, raise awareness about depression, and provide support for the Athens music community.

Like other Athens' nonprofits, Nuçi's Space has stepped up to fill a void.

Nuçi's Space was founded in 2000 by Linda Phillips after her son, Nuçi, an Athens musician and UGA student, took his life. She envisioned a haven for musicians who battled depression and similar illnesses. So Phillips, who died in January from pancreatic cancer, founded an organization to help them find treatment.

Sleppy, who also chased the musician's dream, became the nonprofit's founding executive director.

He's also now an elder statesman of the Athens nonprofit community and helps teach future nonprofit leaders as an adjunct professor in the School of Social Work's Institute for Nonprofit Organizations (See page 37).

In better times, Nuçi's Space, located in a blue-painted brick building just down the hill from Downtown Athens, offers an array of services, including mental health counseling, affordable practice space, and a place to create a supportive community. Like other organizations that rely on face-to-face interactions, Nuçi's Space has had to adapt.

At the beginning of the shutdown as everyone was sheltering in place, Sleppy began making calls to ensure that clients could still access mental health services at a time when many were critically needed. He quickly learned that many in the community were running out of money with the loss of music and side gigs. (This was before federal relief checks were sent out.)

So, Sleppy started raising money for people in the industry who had lost a steady paycheck. Nuçi's Space was able to raise and

distribute \$130,000 just to help people get by.

The nonprofit's staff also organized Zoom calls to keep people connected. Slowly, Nuçi's Space has tried to return to something like normal. They offer limited opportunities for practice space at their facility. Counseling sessions are mostly virtual but also outside when the weather is nice enough.

Still, the pandemic has taken its toll.

Some clients who have battled addiction slipped into old habits during the early period of forced isolation. One client with a history of depression and suicidal thoughts took their own life.

"For a lot of people, having those support systems in place is everything," Sleppy says. "When they get stripped from you, it's hard to adapt."

"But," Sleppy adds, "the local community has really stepped up, and the creative community is determined to endure."

"There's not a better community of people than artists and musicians," he says. "We're pretty tough. And we'll get through it. We're adapting, and that's what we do well."

—Aaron Hale MA '16

The Comfort of Home

MATT STEVENS
AB '03, MPA '14

*Creature Comforts/
Get Comfortable*



What can a for-profit microbrewery contribute to the well-being of its hometown?

Quite a lot as it turns out.

Creature Comforts was founded in Athens in 2014, and it quickly became one of the most popular and respected microbreweries in the state. One year later, the company launched its Get Comfortable campaign, which raises money for select nonprofit organizations around Athens-Clarke County. The campaign was so successful that in 2018 Creature Comforts created Get Artistic, which supports the Classic City's creative scene.

Matt Stevens **AB '03, MPA '14** leads them both, and the Athens native is dedicated to both his job and the city.

"This program starts with the observation that discomfort emerges whenever a need goes unmet. It could be hunger, housing, addiction, medical access. Whatever is most pressing that is ultimately what we want our focus to be," says Stevens, who joined the company in 2017 as director of community and culture. In December 2019, he was promoted to vice president of strategic impact and now leads a staff of three.

"Get Comfortable is about helping our neighbors survive," he continues. "Get

Artistic is more about helping our community thrive. We think that those two pieces—surviving and thriving—are two halves of a whole, which together fosters a healthier community."

It's also very much on brand. An electric sign reading "Get Comfortable" shines brightly in the brewpub's tasting room facing Hancock Street. "In the pub, you encounter the crossroads of humanity, and it's a perfect place to find and engage your community," Stevens says.

And Stevens knows a lot about this particular community. In addition to his two degrees, both of his parents graduated from UGA (and both his father and grandfather played football for the Bulldogs). Stevens worked for six years as associate director of UGA's study abroad program in Costa Rica. He completed his master's in public administration (with a concentration in nonprofit management) during that time.

In 2015, Stevens took a job as stewardship director for a local church. That introduced him to the intricacies of the community and set him up for an even larger role when he moved on to Creature Comforts.

"There's just something about being headquartered in a college town," Stevens says. "People move here by the tens of thousands in arguably the most pivotal season of their lives. They are determining who they are, the story they want to tell, and the legacy they want to leave. As their new neighbors, we hope to demonstrate that companies can serve as a force for good."

Stevens inherited the Get Comfortable program and in 2019 led it to new heights. Get Comfortable raised more than \$380,000 for its nine agency partners. (One of them was Chess and Community, see page 30.) An ambitious expansion of Get Comfortable to DeKalb County in 2020 had to be scaled back because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but, the program still shattered its previous record raising more than \$530,000 for its partners this past year.

"It's a remarkable story because it represents generosity amidst extreme hardship, which in my opinion is when generosity counts the most," Stevens says. "It's not the story we would have chosen, but it's a great story nonetheless."

—Eric Rangus **MA '94**

Making a House a Home

HEATHER BENHAM
MHP '03, JD '03

Athens Land Trust



When she became a summer intern for Athens Land Trust in 2002, Heather Benham MHP '03, JD '03 never imagined that she would become the executive director that would lead the organization through a global pandemic.

Athens Land Trust works to provide affordable housing and sustainable land use in the community. Through the pandemic, the organization has helped hundreds of people in Athens with funds to pay rent, utility bills, and trips to the grocery store.

During her internship, Benham fell in love with the organization and the community it served and never looked back. After joining the staff, Benham worked her way

up the organization, first as project manager, then housing director. In 2013, she was named executive director.

Athens Land Trust provides more than just affordable houses. Educational programs like housing counseling, home-buyer education, and youth development programs help community members meet clients' needs on a daily basis.

"We do very intentional work in neighborhoods. Residents tell you what their needs are, and it's not always what you're already doing," Benham says.

But like everyone else, the land trust has had to adapt to the global pandemic to find new ways to support the community. The

organization's West Broad Farmer's Market, a weekly market that supports small businesses, was one of the areas immediately affected by the pandemic.

Large gatherings were out of the question, so Benham and the land trust had to figure out a way to support their vendors and maintain safety.

"We trained our vendors on how to post their products online," Benham says. "Everything from teaching them how to take photos of their products to how to make sales."

Soon the businesses went online and had their products available for contactless pickup.



Nonprofits in the Classroom

These six featured alumni show that there are many paths to entering a career in nonprofits. One that's growing in popularity is nonprofit management education. It's an area where the University of Georgia is at the forefront.

The School of Social Work offers a master's degree in nonprofit management and leadership, which is administered by the school's Institute for Nonprofit Organizations. The School of Social Work also offers a certificate in nonprofit management and leadership that is open to all UGA graduate students. The INO manages that as well. In 2018, an online component was added to the certificate program.

Nearly 250 alumni have earned their masters' in nonprofit management since the program began and the certificate program has been expanding quickly. When Tony Mallon (above) started, there were about 25 certificate students a year. Currently, more than 100. Coursework covers various forms of management (organizational, financial, volunteers), social entrepreneurship, grant writing, and other details of the nonprofit experience.

"We don't want to lose the grassroots person with their passion and innovation, but over the last 20 years, the nonprofit world has been professionalizing and there is a skillset that's starting to become clearly defined," says Mallon, director of the institute since 2016.

The professionalization of the nonprofit world over the last two decades—along with the curriculum changes responding to it—is something Kristina Jaskyte has experienced up close. The associate professor joined the Social Work faculty in 2002 and has taught nonprofit management and researched the subject ever since.

"We now have standards and different criteria that we expect nonprofit managers to have," she says. "Now that more and more people have gone through the program, word is spreading about how this kind of education is good to have." —Eric Rangus MA '94



DOROTHY KOZLOWSKI

The organization adjusted other programs too, moving all the youth programs outdoors and adding social distance. Staff are also ready to meet community members on their porches to make copies of documents they needed.

Benham says the pandemic has increased the amount of social services and funding support that the organization is providing, and the reaction from the community shows how much it's needed.

"It's overwhelming to know the struggles of what people are going through," Benham says. "The pandemic has impacted jobs and people that you might not think about, so it's great to be able to help people that really need it." **GM**

—Rachel Floyd AB '19, MA '20

The Institute for Nonprofit Organizations prepares the next generation of community leaders and change-makers. Learn more at SSW.UGA.EDU/ABOUT/INSTITUTE-FOR-NONPROFIT-ORGANIZATIONS

60 YEARS

ANNIVERSARY OF DESEGREGATION

On Jan. 9, 1961, Charlayne Hunter **ABJ '63** and Hamilton Holmes **BS '63** made history when they became the first Black students to attend the University of Georgia. Sixty years later, Jan. 9, 2021, marked the campus kickoff of a months-long commemoration of that historic date.

At 11 a.m., Hamilton Holmes Jr. **BBA '90** was one of seven students and alumni to ring Chapel Bell to kick off the 60th Anniversary of Desegregation. A variety of events, exhibitions, and other programs are scheduled throughout the spring semester to commemorate this milestone.

A new website, DESEGREGATION.UGA.EDU, pays tribute to Hunter-Gault, Holmes, and Mary Frances Early **MEd '62**, **EdS '67**, UGA's first Black graduate, and also provides detailed information about the anniversary's events. It contains a comprehensive timeline of progress related to UGA's continued growth as a diverse campus and also introduces readers to some of the individuals who worked publicly and behind the scenes to open the campus to Hunter-Gault, Holmes, and Early.

WRITTEN BY ERIC RANGUS **MA '94**



Learn more at DESEGREGATION.UGA.EDU

Hamilton Holmes Jr. ringing the Chapel bell to kick off the 60th Anniversary of Desegregation.



DOROTHY KOZLOWSKI



Left, a jacket and other memorabilia belonging to Hamilton Holmes displayed in the Main Library.

Participants in the Chapel Bell ringing ceremony that kicked off the 60th Anniversary of Desegregation include (from left to right): From left to right: Black Alumni Leadership Council (BALC) President Jeffrey Brown; BALC Secretary Shontel Cargill; alumnus and former NFL player Horace King; Alumni Association Board Vice President Yvette Daniels; UGA President Jere W. Morehead; alumnus and Athens-area attorney Ken Diou, Hamilton Holmes Jr.; Student Alumni Council President Autumn Pressley; Alumni Association Board President Brian Dill; and former BALC President Ericka Davis.



DOROTHY KOZLOWSKI

Bulldog Bulletin

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE UGA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Message from the Executive Director

I am proud of the Bulldog family for your continued commitment to navigating the pandemic, to caring for others, and to supporting your alma mater and its students. Speaking of students, welcome to the Class of 2020. The challenges you overcame as you transitioned into alumni life mark your place in UGA history. This year, we are recognizing another important moment in the university's history: its desegregation. The legacy left by former students with names like Holmes, Hunter-Gault, and Early blazed the path for others, including our first Black president of the Alumni Association, Hilton Young **BSEd '79**. Their courage opened doors for thousands of Black students to pursue a college education at UGA. If you are interested in helping to open more doors for students, I encourage you to join The 1961 Club by making a gift to the Black Alumni Scholarship Fund GIVE.UGA.EDU/1961CLUB. I hope this issue of *Georgia Magazine* brings the Bulldog spirit to you wherever you are. No matter whether you can jog to the Arch or are a plane trip away, we are UGA alumni and We Never Bark Alone!

—Meredith Gurley Johnson **BSFCS '00, MEd '16**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UGA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

LeaseQuery Tops Bulldog 100 for Second Year

For the second consecutive year, LeaseQuery has landed at No. 1 on the Bulldog 100 list of fastest-growing businesses owned or operated by UGA alumni. Founder and CEO George Azih **BBA '03** and chief revenue officer Chris Ramsey **BS '05** were roommates at UGA before joining forces to lead the successful company, whose CPA-approved and cloud-based software helps accountants and financial professionals eliminate errors. See the final, ranked Bulldog 100 list in the ad on page 12 or online at ALUMNI.UGA.EDU/B100.

Giving Week is Next Month

Calling all Dawgs! UGA's third annual Georgia Giving Week begins April 17, and you can answer the call by donating to any area of campus that is important to you. The issues we face today loom large, but when Bulldogs come together, we can build a better tomorrow. That's the power of the Bulldog family. CALLINGALLDAWGS.UGA.EDU

A BULLDOG BARK TO ...



Women of UGA took its annual holiday fundraiser, Cookies & Cocoa with Hairy Dawg, virtual this year. Bulldog fans of all ages gathered online to enjoy an a capella performance by UGA Noteworthy, cookie decorating, and appearances by Hairy Dawg and Miss UGA. Super Bowl champion, author, and literacy advocate Malcolm Mitchell **AB '15** read from his latest book, *My Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World*. Proceeds from the event provided nearly \$1,000 to the Women of UGA Scholarship Fund. Emme Eilers (left), daughter of Kim Wuenker Eilers **BSEd '95, MEd '97**, joined in the fun from her kitchen table.



Mamie Shepherd **ABJ '13**, (top left) program manager for Seacrest Studios at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, moderated a Between the Pages virtual book club discussion with Chuck Bryant **AB '95** (bottom left). Bryant and Josh Clark **M '99** are the duo behind the award-winning podcast, *Stuff You Should Know*, and their first book, *Stuff You Should Know: An Incomplete Compendium of Mostly Interesting Things*, was released in November and quickly became a *New York Times* bestseller. During the event, Bryant shared memories from campus as well as a behind-the-scenes look at the new book.

CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

CHAPTER NAME: Orlando
CHAPTER PRESIDENT: Amanda Morris **BSEd '19**
NUMBER OF ALUMNI IN THE AREA: 2,257



The pandemic won't keep a Dawg down—especially the Bulldogs of the Orlando Alumni Chapter. This year, they hosted a virtual 5K and several online trivia events. The chapter hosts a regular book club, sends a monthly e-newsletter to local alumni, and manages a robust social media presence to keep Bulldogs connected to the chapter and each other.

Find your chapter: ALUMNI.UGA.EDU/CHAPTERS

SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected with us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. [#AlwaysADawg](#) // [ALUMNI.UGA.EDU/SOCIAL](#)

DON'T MISS OUT

MARCH 19

TEDxUGA 2021: Next Level

Join TEDxUGA as UGA's leading thinkers and doers take the stage to embrace bold questions, innovative scholarship, and untold stories as the keys to rising beyond what we think is possible. The event will take place virtually this year. Learn more and register at [TEDxUGA.com](#)

MARCH 24

Between the Pages

This bimonthly virtual book club features works by alumni authors. This month, Charlayne Hunter-Gault ABJ '63 will join readers online to discuss her latest book, *In My Place*, which gives her account of her role in the civil rights movement and how her childhood prepared her for it. There's no cost to participate but registration is required. [alumni.uga.edu/btp](#)

Career Development Webinars

Join the UGA Career Center for a series of free webinars to help you build—and grow—the career of your dreams. Registration required. [career.uga.edu/calendar/alumni_events](#)

- 3/23 – Networking: LinkedIn and Beyond
- 4/20 – Interviewing with Powerful Stories
- 5/25 – Salary Negotiation 101
- 6/22 – Mid-Life Career Exploration

40 Under 40 + Bulldog 100 Nomination Deadlines

Nominate a fellow grad for one of UGA's highest recognitions. 40 Under 40 honors successful Bulldogs under 40 while Bulldog 100 celebrates growing businesses owned or operated by UGA alumni.

- 2021 40 Under 40 Deadline: April 16
Details at [alumni.uga.edu/40u40](#)
- 2022 Bulldog 100 Deadline: July 31
Details at [alumni.uga.edu/b100](#)

For more events, visit [alumni.uga.edu/calendar](#).

CONTACT US:

Moved? Changed your name? Added a new Bulldog to the family? Let us know! [alumni.uga.edu/update](#) or (800) 606-8786.



George Daniels IV AB '12 was missing Homecoming in Athens last year but was excited that the UGA Black Alumni Leadership Council hosted its annual homecoming tailgate virtually. He showed off the official T-shirt from the event on Instagram.

@geosamdan



The UGA School of Law also offered a virtual homecoming experience for its alumni, displayed here by proud alumna Stacey Chavis MSL '19, who serves on the UGA Black Alumni Leadership Council.



@StaceyChavis



Orlando Alumni Chapter President Amanda Morris BSEd '19 and Co-director of Events Daniel Gannon BBA '15 were able to safely visit campus and attend a home football game last season despite reduced capacity in Sanford Stadium.

@theamandalor



Since many alumni were unable to attend home football games last season, the UGA Athletic Association sold fan photo cutouts that were placed in Sanford Stadium. Yvette Dupree BBA '03, MAT '07, PhD '12 (left) proudly posted a snapshot of hers on Twitter.



@YvetteDupree



CLASSNOTES

Compiled by Rachel Floyd AB '19, MA' 20, Ireland Hayes, and Hannah Barron

1970-1974

Pete Iodice BBA '73 is chairman at Artemis Acquisition Corporation.

1975-1979

Jones Hooks BBA '75 received the Honorary Life Member Award from the Georgia Economic Developers Association.

Fred La Spina AB '75 is a professor of religion at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va.

Gordon Green ABJ '78 is the corporate marketing video lead at NetApp.

Mike Hale BS '79, MEd '81, PhD '88 retired from his position as director of technology for Oconee County Schools.

David Sweat BBA '79 retired from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

1980-1984

Pam Miller BBA '80 is vice president of customer care and operations at the Antigua Group in Peoria, Ariz.

Beth Mosely BSW '80 is a probate judge of Effingham County, Ill.

David Plunkett ABJ '80 is author

of *Chessboard*, an action and adventure novel based in Afghanistan.

Lance DeLoach BSEd '81

retired from his position as instructional aide at Southern Crescent Technical College in February 2018.

Josh Borden BSHE '83, MS '85 is manager for the state purchasing division of the Department of Administrative Services in Marietta.

Mark Mahoney BBA '83 is CEO and co-founder of Jackrabbit Technologies in Huntersville, N.C.

David McKenna BLA '83 is founder of Claremore Properties in Monticello.

Marjorie McKenna BSEd '83 retired from her teaching position in the Butts County School District.

Bert Sams BBA '83 is vice president of technology services at Haggai International in Peachtree Corners.

Linda Stevenson ABJ '83, MA '87 is senior director of medical communications and strategic operations at Sage Therapeutics in Cambridge, Mass.

Karen Wray BBA '84 is design

specialist and sales advisor at Mountain Log Homes in Steamboat Springs, Colo.

1985-1989

Jo Anne Hill ABJ '85 is the executive director of diversity and inclusion at Piedmont Healthcare.

Renee Lodge BS '85 is the electronic health records program manager for the DeKalb County Board of Health.

Janet Ross BSHE '85 is owner and president of Coastal R&R in the Golden Isles in Brunswick.

Myra Howard ABJ '86, MA '87 is a State Farm agency owner and chair of the Virginia Fair Housing Board.

Mary Roach BSEd '86, MEd '93 released *Jump, Trust, FLY: A Guide for the Next 365 Days*, a daily motivational book, in September.

Alexander Ream AB '88 published *Canterbury 2020*, a novel that explores ideas of apocalypse with tragedy and comedy.

Laura Belmonte AB '89 is dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and a professor of history at Virginia

Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg. She is also vice president of the Society of American Foreign Relations.

Melissa Moorer AB '89 is a realtor at Carolina One Real Estate in Edisto Beach, S.C.

Jim Puckett BBA '89 is mayor of Fitzgerald and owner of Puckett's Place Hometown Diner.

1990-1994

Angel Sandlin BSHE '90 is owner of The Bread of Angels in Roswell and its spinoff, Southern Baklava, where she specializes in decorated cookies, cakes, and a southern version of baklava.

Amanda Roper ABJ '93, MA '95 is the community relationship director at North Point Community Church in Alpharetta.

Blair Clarke ABJ '94 is founder and owner of Voltz Clarke Gallery in New York City.

Brian Cooksey BBA '94 was named president of the board of directors for Georgia FIRST Robotics.

John Lange MBA '02, JD '94 is of counsel at Hall Booth Smith in Atlanta.

APPLAUSE FOR ALUMNI

Uniquely Social

Ann Drinkard ABJ '16



SPECIAL

IN JANUARY 2020, ANN DRINKARD ABJ '16 began her new position as a social media specialist at ESPN in Bristol, Connecticut. When Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna were killed in a helicopter crash on Jan. 26, she thought that would be the most surreal, tragic content she would post all year.

Then, two months later, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the U.S. and the world. In the months that followed, hundreds of sporting events were canceled one after another; the industry screeched to a halt. Drinkard was there along the way, needing to quickly respond to the rapid turn of events. But if anything, she

has learned to be flexible.

Drinkard arrived at UGA with an eye toward sports broadcasting, but her interests shifted toward social media after interning at Turner Sports. Following graduation, Drinkard began her first job at the Southeastern Conference as a digital media assistant and later became the assistant director of communications in social media.

Social media in sports was fairly new when Drinkard chose it as a career. "It was kind of scary because there was no clear path to what a career in social looked like because it was still forming," she says.

After managing the SEC's social accounts on her own for just over three years, she started looking elsewhere.

"I just wanted to branch out and be on a team," she says. "I wanted to work with more people and be able to cover more than just the SEC."

She spent just two months in the ESPN offices before the pandemic sent her to work from home. The new challenge became covering sports without live events. Drinkard and her team took the opportunity to get creative.

"We were able to brainstorm content that was evergreen, content that would work if we posted that day or two weeks from that point," she says. "I think everybody in sports kind of had to reinvent the wheel in a way to continue to engage the fans online."

Though it looks very different now, the return of sports is something Drinkard feels brings people joy in a time where it might be hard to find.

"Having sports again gives people hope. Even though it doesn't feel the same because there's no one in the stands and the environment is different than it was before, just having sports back in our lives is something I think shows that we're at least making progress back to normal."

WRITTEN BY RACHEL FLOYD AB '19, MA '20



PASSION POWERS OUR COMMITMENT

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706.542.3221

Laura Mitchell BFA '94 is the arts education specialist for Buncombe County Schools in Asheville, N.C.

1995-1999

Matt Haymons AB '95 is the CIO at Cricket Wireless in Atlanta.

Jason Hobbs AB '95 and **Dena Hobbs BS '94** released *When Anxiety Strikes: Help and Hope for Managing Your Storm*.

Misti Martin BBA '95 was named the 2020 recipient of the Rip Wiley Award for Professional Excellence by the Georgia Economic Devel-

opers Association.

Sam Brannen JD '96 is managing attorney at Brannen Legal in Atlanta.

Deanna Snyder AB '97 is owner of Elixer Clothing in Davison, Michigan, and author of the children's book, *Lee the Pea*.

Artis Stevens AB '97 is president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

Eric Cook AB '98 is founder and owner of ProVideo & Sound in Austin, Texas.

Sayge Medlin BSFCS '98, MSW '03 is an assistant director and public service associ-

ate at the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at UGA.

Bev Uipi BSFCS '98 is councilwoman for Millcreek City, Utah.

Zeke Bridges AB '99 is vice dean of the Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law at Campbell University in Raleigh, N.C.

Chad Paulin BFA '99 is senior managing director at Ankura Consulting Group in Atlanta.

Kelly Paynter BBA '99, EdS '04 is an associate professor in the School of Education at Jacksonville State University in Alabama.

2000-2004

Jill Creech BBA '00 is vice president and commercial banker at Ameris Bank in Albany.

Daniel Stephens AB '01 is executive director of the Rotary Club of Birmingham, Ala.

Chevazz Brown AB '02 was named to the 2020 Super Lawyers list. He is an attorney at Jackson Walker in Houston, Texas.

Adam Sokoloff ABJ '02 is director of sales at Bioworld Merchandising.

Tori Press BS '03 authored *I Am Definitely, Probably Enough (I Think)* in November.

Teddy Gillen BBA '04 is a principal at Edgewood Healthcare Advisors in Atlanta.

John O'Neal AB '04 is senior assistant county attorney for the Clayton County Board of Commissioners.

2005-2009

Kyle Bailey AB '05 is a member of the Maine House of Representatives.

Hayley Hall AB '05 is an associate at Davis, Matthews & Quigley Law Firm in Atlanta.

Darren Tobin AB '05, JD '08 is a partner and trial attorney at Tobin Injury Law in Atlanta.

Amelia Dortch ABJ '06, MPA '12 was named to the CURE Childhood Cancer Young Professional Leadership Council.

Danielle Pearl AB '06 is the evidence and learning lead

APPLAUSE FOR ALUMNI

Bridging Academics and Athletics

Torie Johnson EdD '17



SPECIAL

TORIE JOHNSON WAS GOING TO BE A sportscaster. In fact, she wanted to anchor SportsCenter on ESPN.

She was on her way—becoming the first black editor of her school's student newspaper; earning a degree in journalism from Baylor University; and interning in the field, including one position with the Houston Astros.

Then the Southeastern Conference came calling.

"I'm from Texas, and the SEC was fine and all, but coming to the SEC was not my dream come true," says Johnson EdD '17. The job that took her there? A position in compliance that she agonized over.

But she knew it was a foot in the door, a "tremendous opportunity" she just couldn't pass up.

So she packed everything up and moved

600 miles from all her friends and family to Birmingham, Alabama, where the SEC is headquartered. And she's been there ever since.

Johnson steadily worked her way up the ladder at the SEC, starting with that initial compliance job, then running the National Letter of Intent Program (before it moved to the NCAA), followed by years of facilitating championship events as a sport administrator. She also earned a master's degree from the University of Alabama, Birmingham.

But then the SEC asked her to do something she never contemplated. The conference was adding an academic effort into the league office, and the leaders asked her to head it.

She accepted and decided to pursue a degree at an SEC institution that would

help her understand the ins and outs of the world of higher education, something she was not at all familiar with at that point.

That desire led her to UGA's Doctor of Education program in the Institute of Higher Education. And the program's international component was particularly appealing since the SEC's new academic initiative had a goal of enhancing study abroad opportunities for students.

Going to the Netherlands and China to learn more about their comparative education systems would be invaluable.

"I had never been on a study abroad as an undergraduate or graduate student," she says. "So, for me, here was an opportunity to personally do the thing we are trying to support our students doing. Now when I visit with our senior international officers, I can speak from firsthand experience. I understand how that works now."

The overall mission for her division is to highlight teaching, research, and service accomplishments of SEC students, faculty, and staff. Johnson and her team facilitate programs like the SEC Faculty Achievement Awards, a professional development program aimed at preparing future leaders in higher education, and a faculty travel program, among others.

As associate commissioner of academic relations for the conference, Johnson focuses on bridging academics and athletics, something that wasn't really considered all that important a couple decades ago. But in conferences like the SEC, where sports are a huge part of university culture, Johnson says the connection is vital because, ultimately, student-athletes are at their universities to receive a quality education while also pursuing their athletic goals.

"I think there's been some recognition over the last decade that the two entities can't exist separately and be all that they can be, be as successful as they can be, at this level," Johnson says. "There needs to be that close partnership. And that happens at Georgia, that happens at all of our SEC institutions."

WRITTEN BY LEIGH BEESON MA '17



for the partnership hub at the United States Agency for International Development. **Jordan Tippett BBA '06** received the Innovation of the Year award from the UGA SBDC for his contributions to the creation of Digicon, a digital marketing conference in Savannah. He is a director of client experience at Abilitie in St. Simons.

Mary Berry BSFCS '07 is senior manager at Salesforce in Marietta. **Ashley Danyew AB '07** is a musician and educator in Rochester, N.Y. She is founder of the *Field Notes on Music Teaching and Learning* podcast, and with her husband Steve, launched The Musicpreneur Model, an online course for portfolio musicians.

Kate Walton BSEd '07 is a wedding, senior portrait, and brand photographer in Rome. **Dana Bourke BBA '09** is head of customer experience at Fresh Harvest in Atlanta. **Leah O'Grady BS '09, BSFCS '09** is the associate director of CRM communications and an adjunct faculty member in the University College at Denver University in Colorado.

Rachel Phipps BBA '09, MIT '11 was named to the CURE Childhood Cancer Young Professional Leadership Council. **Elizabeth White ABJ '09, BBA '09** was named to the 2020 Top Wealth Advisor Moms list by SHOOK Research. She is a certified financial planner and a wealth management adviser and senior vice president at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management.

2010-2014
Alyssa Andersen BSA '10 is manager of account management at Travel Incorporated in Rasta, Norway. **David Chomyn BBA '10** is a director at Clarizen Solutions in Melbourne, Australia. **Nicole Epps BSFCS '10** is executive managing director at World Childhood Foundation USA. **Claire Wyrembelski AB '10** married **Timothy Lam BSEd '96** in November.

Brett Epstein AB '11 was named to the Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch list. He is an attorney at Jackson Walker in Fort Worth, Texas. **Anita Randolph BSA '11, BS '11** is the director of community engagement and education for the Masonic Institute of the Developing Brain at the University of Minnesota. **Nikita Richardson BS '11** is a senior staff editor for food

APPLAUSE FOR ALUMNI

A Real Estate of Mind

James Whitley BLA '02

WHILE HIS COLLEGE CLASSMATES prepared for final exams and interviews, 20-year-old UGA junior James Whitley was studying to earn his real estate license.

“To be honest, I needed to find a way to pay bills,” he says today, nearly 20 years later.

What began as a side gig selling investment properties to make ends meet turned into a full-fledged career for Whitley. Today, the co-founder and chief operating officer of Landmark Properties—a college housing firm that leases to more than 45,000 students nationwide—hopes to bring a sense of security to other entrepreneurs and small business owners in Georgia.

In early 2019, Whitley **BLA '02** was appointed co-chair of the Georgians First Commission, an initiative of Gov. Brian Kemp **BSA '87** to support small businesses and attract them to the state.

“It was certainly an honor to be appointed to the commission,” Whitley says. “It was a great opportunity to do outreach into our various communities throughout the state and engage with business owners.”

The 20-person team traveled across Georgia to gather feedback from small business owners about their experiences and the regulatory challenges they faced. That feedback was then presented as recommendations to the Governor’s Office and is currently under review.

While many businesses work through the effects of the pandemic, Whitley hopes that any recommendations implemented will help Georgia’s small business landscape recover and thrive.

Closer to home, Whitley is also helping provide relief for Athens families affected by the pandemic.

A long-standing board member of the Boys and Girls Club of Athens, Whitley helped raise money for the nonprofit to offer spaces in their local facility for local school children completing online learning while in-person schools remained closed.

“It’s something I’m personally very



SPECIAL

committed to, and that’s kind of permeated throughout the company,” he says.

The Boys and Girls Club, Athens Mentor Program, Extra Special People, and Athens-Clarke County Police Foundation are just a few organizations Whitley and his Landmark team support.

For Whitley, the drive to give back also extends to his alma mater, where he remains heavily involved, from serving on the Student Affairs Advisory Board to supporting the Greek Life Leadership Fund. He and his wife, Jessica, also established an endowed scholarship within the Student Veterans Resource Center in 2015. Whitley’s generosity has helped dozens of UGA students over the course of several years.

In addition to supporting student success through giving, Whitley also regularly recruits interns and employees from across the university, including Emily Barber **AB '14, MEd '19**, who now serves as Landmark’s associate vice president of learning and engagement. Today, the company owns and operates housing developments in 29 states, employing 1,000 individuals, 200 of whom work at Landmark’s headquarters in Athens.

“I’m very much a people person,” Whitley says. “Seeing that type of career development and watching people grow up with our business is a pretty dynamic part of the company, and it’s one of the aspects of our business I value the most.”

WRITTEN BY HAYLEY MAJOR

The Name's 'Bond'

Linda Hurtado ABJ '89



JESSICA LEIGH PHOTOGRAPHY

AFTER 25 YEARS OF REPORTING AND anchoring the local news, Linda Hurtado is one of the Tampa Bay area's most recognizable faces. So, when she decided to write her first novel, Hurtado came up with a new identity. From a storytelling standpoint, she didn't want there to be any confusion.

"When Linda Hurtado tells a story, it's true. It's factual, and it's about real people," Hurtado ABJ '89 says. "When Linda Bond tells a story, it's fiction. It's not true, even though you might think it is."

Bond was her mother's maiden name. And with regard to romantic thrillers, Hurtado's genre of choice, "Bond" works pretty well. Hurtado also takes great care to separate her two careers. She keeps separate social media accounts (although there is occasional sharing), and she signs

her books using her pen name. Effective branding aside, Hurtado soon learned that first-time authors have to prove themselves. With regard to her day job, that hasn't been the case for a long time.

Over her career, Hurtado has won 13 Emmys and lent her talents to events ranging from benefits to support the American Cancer Society to anchoring local news coverage of the Super Bowl.

She was one of the original hires at Tampa Bay's ABC affiliate when it started a news division, and for the last five years Hurtado has anchored the daytime news for the market's FOX affiliate. Hurtado could have worked anywhere she wanted. But she decided to stay in her adopted home of west-central Florida.

"In this business, you need to make a decision," says the native of Greenville,

South Carolina. Hurtado came to UGA for school because of academic opportunities offered by the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, as well as the artistic opportunities as a majorette with the Redcoat Band.

"Either you go big, like New York or L.A., or you find a city you like and you stay," Hurtado continues. "You build equity there. You get to know the people, and you build a platform, and you build a life. You put roots in the ground, and that's what I decided to do in Tampa."

For her entire life, Hurtado has loved to write. Broadcast writing came easy, but she wanted to learn the craft of fiction writing. In 2005, she joined a writing group focused on romantic fiction. Hurtado spent many a night at the computer typing away. Ten years of nights, in fact. That's when her first novel, *Alive at 5*, hit bookstores. That was just the start.

While it's true that Hurtado's books are fiction, that doesn't mean they can't pull a bit from her professional experiences. All of Hurtado's heroines are intrepid television reporters. Her second book, *Cuba Undercover*, recalls a 1998 reporting trip to that country, where she happened to meet her husband. And Hurtado's latest book, 2020's *Flatline*, relates to her 10 years as a medical reporter.

"I like to think of the books as going to a James Bond movie," she says of blending elements of romance and thrills. "There will be a sexy love interest. There will be a mystery, and there will be car chases and gunshots, and someone will fall in love."

Flatline, which was released in May, has been Hurtado's most successful book to date. It reached the Top 10 in the medical romance genre for Amazon. Perhaps most importantly, it solidified her credibility as an author. Instead of writing a manuscript and then trying to sell it, as Hurtado did with her first three books, she'll receive an advance for her fourth, which will be more of a straight-up thriller. She's already sketching out the plot.

WRITTEN BY ERIC RANGUS MA '94

MY GEORGIA COMMITMENT

SUPPORTING FUTURE BULLDOG ENGINEERS

Jack Bush BSME '20 committed to establishing an engineering scholarship during his senior year to help promising minority students meet financial challenges.



PETER FREY

NOTED ENGINEER GORDON Lindsay Glegg wrote, “A scientist can discover a new star, but he cannot make one. He would have to ask an engineer to do it for him.”

Jack Bush III is a proud Bulldog engineer—and he’s found a way to make new stars.

During his senior year in UGA’s College of Engineering, Bush met with UGA advisors who could help him establish a need-based scholarship to help minority students overcome financial challenges as they pursue an engineering degree.

“I really just wanted to help people who didn’t have the economic means to reach their goals,” he says. “And I wanted to start as early as I could.”

Bush, who served as the student

commencement speaker for the Class of 2020, is now an avionics subsystems engineer at Lockheed-Martin in Marietta. Leveraging Lockheed’s matching gifts program, he’s begun to endow the scholarship for perpetuity.

“I want my scholarship to provide opportunities for underrepresented UGA engineering students far into the future,” he says. “This is about tomorrow.”

This year, as UGA commemorates its 60th anniversary of desegregation, Bush seeks to carry forward the strong ethical principles instilled in him while on campus.

“In my engineering courses, we not only had to solve business problems but also figure out how to do what’s right,” Bush says. “So along with my degree, I got a strong ethical background.”

Bush’s professionalism and principles, so clearly displayed in the scholarship he established, have opened a new opportunity—UGA’s Engineering Alumni Board tapped him to be just the second alumnus ever selected for the board immediately upon graduation.

The position offers a new vantage point for helping make new engineering stars.

“It’s an amazing honor to be on the alumni board. As a board member, I can really continue to push the boundaries for what UGA and the College of Engineering can be and what we can achieve,” he says.

“We’ll look for creative ways to create equity and help every student, regardless of background or circumstance, to get through college and excel in the fields and programs they dream of pursuing.”

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MLS

and cooking at *The New York Times*.

Kathryn Crabtree BBA '12, MACC '13 is a realtor at Sotheby's International Realty. She and her mother, **Kim Boyd BBA '82**, were named the No. 1 team in volume in 2019 by the Atlanta Realtors Association.

Trey Dean AB '13 is the global director for environmental health and safety at Vantage Data Centers in Charlottesville, Va.

Brittany Harvey BSEd '13 is a teacher for Cumberland County Schools in North Carolina.

Fabrice Julien AB '13 is a faculty member in the department of health and wellness at the University of North Carolina Asheville.

Steffan Pedersen BBA '13 is a product manager for Meemo, a financial startup.

Mamie Shepherd ABJ '13 was named in the Nashville's Most Fascinating People feature in

Nashville Lifestyles magazine.

Tanya Sichynsky ABJ '14 is a senior staff editor for food and cooking at *The New York Times*.

2015-2020

Morgan Davison BBA '15 is growth marketing manager at CM Group in Nashville, Tenn.

Sam Hempel BS '15, AB '16, MA '16 is a research economist for the U.S. Treasury's Office of Financial Research. He married Claire Burtch in June in Rockford, Ohio.

Annelise Wornat AB '16, MPA '18 married **Preston Britten BBA '17** in May.

Margot Warren AB '17 is an advertising account manager at Adlucent in Austin, Texas.

Lissi Chism BSA '18, MAEE '19 is lead instructor of environmental horticulture at Coastal Pines Technical College in Waycross. She married **Alex Chism BSA '16** in June.

Shelby Hughes BSEd '18 is a special education teacher at Crisp County High School. She is also the head coach of sideline and competition cheerleading.

Charles Orgbon BSES '18 released his album *A Survivor's Reward*.

Clark Sukaratana BBA '18, MA '20 is the database and financial services administrator at Shorecrest Preparatory School in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Jeffrey Bruce BBA '19 is a realtor at Cute-Leike in Lawrenceville.

Maddie Helmick AB '20 is a recruiting associate at Barbaricum in Washington, D.C.

Sam Jones MA '20 is a feature writer for *Major League Soccer* magazine.

Morgan Lewis BS '20 is pursuing a doctoral degree in geology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Erin McCall BBA '20 is a leadership development program analyst at Truist Financial in Charlotte, N.C.

Elizabeth Ortega BBA '20 is a risk control associate at CNA Financial Corporation.

Grayson Schulte BSEd '20 is a physical education teacher at Jane Macon Middle School in Brunswick. He is also the boys soccer coach and an assistant football coach.

GRAD NOTES

AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Alex Maxwell MS '17 is consumer sensory insights manager at Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis.

ARTS & SCIENCES

Margaret Reams MA '84, PhD '90 received the Joseph D. Martinez Professorship of Environmental Sciences at Louisiana State University. She is a professor at the College of Coast and Environment and co-principal investigator of the LSU Superfund Research Center.

Anousha Mesbah MS '12 is a software engineering manager at Microsoft in Kirkland, Wash.

Setting the Market

Keith Kelly BSA '80



PETER FREY

ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, KEITH KELLY BSA '80 looked up one of his former professors in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, where he'd earned a degree in agricultural economics. He connected with his now-retired mentor Jere Thorne MS '66, and they met in Athens for a cup of coffee.

"I don't have an agenda," Kelly told Thorne. "I just wanted to say thank you. What you taught me, I've been able to use my entire career."

Thorne became slightly emotional and replied that very few people ever came back to say thank you and that he greatly appreciated Kelly's effort. But taking that extra step, putting in that extra effort, and giving back to those who have given to you is a defining character trait for Kelly.

Kelly is the founder, president, and CEO of Kelly Products, which employs more than 200 people and is based in Covington, about an hour from Athens.

He launched Kelly Products in 1993 based on his expertise and innovation in two dis-

parate areas: innovation of plant protection products and the development of software products to streamline business functions for businesses regulated by the 50 state departments of agriculture.

Those software products are now used by more than 30 state governments, but they barely scratch the surface of the company's scope. Kelly Products now encompasses a diverse group of 17 agricultural companies, and while many are B2B or in partnership with states, several are consumer-oriented.

For instance, Farmview Market (seen above) opened in 2015 a few miles south of Madison. It's a combined butcher shop, farmer's market, and gourmet food store. Among the many locally sourced products on its shelves are ice cream, cheese, and other dairy products from Rock House Creamery, which Kelly established in Morgan County in 2016. The creamery harkens back to his family's history as Georgia dairy farmers.

"There is consumer demand for locally produced products," Kelly says. "One thing I hear at my store over and over again is 'who

produced this?' People want to know where their food comes from."

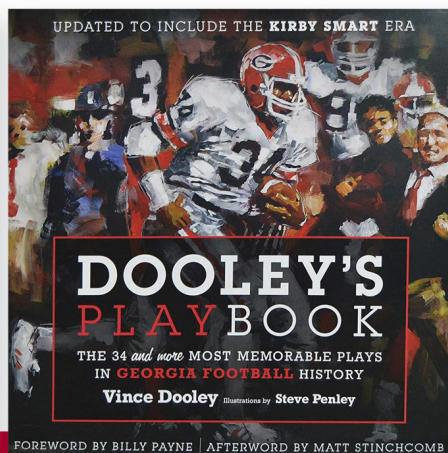
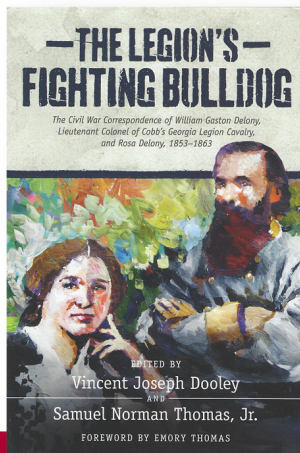
The market is just another way for Kelly to give back. With regard to UGA, his meeting with Thorne was just one way he has kept his ties strong.

In 2019, he was elected to the UGA Foundation Board of Trustees. In 2020, Kelly, his wife, Pam BSHE '80; and fellow alumnus Robert Varnadoe BSA '83 endowed two Rural Scholars Scholarship Funds and created two non-endowed Rural Scholars Scholarship Funds. Those gifts will provide renewable yearly scholarships for a cohort of four to six students from rural Georgia communities every fall.

"I have a passion to see these rural communities not go away," Kelly says. "There are kids from rural communities who might be geniuses, but they don't have the opportunity to even get to the starting block. So let's give them a chance, give them a great education, and maybe they will return to their community and start a business."

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BUSINESS

Kevin Goodwin MBA '79 retired from his position as senior data analyst after 39 years at DuPont Capital Management.

Stuart Bean MBA '81 retired from his position as senior location executive for the Tampa Bay, Fla. region at IBM.

Nicole Jeritslev MA '97 is lead business analyst at Deutsche Bank AG Frankfurt, Germany.

Wes Griffin MBA '01 is vice president and business support consultant for commercial bank business process management at Wells Fargo bank in Charlotte, N.C.

Mark Martin MBA '07 is founder of Build UP, a workforce development high school network that provides low-income youth with career-ready skills.

Adrienne Cantrell MACC '09 serves on the board of directors for the nonprofit Atlanta Angels.

Eric Landblom MBA '20 is cofounder of JL Endeavors in Cumming.

EDUCATION

Muhammet Arican MEd '10, PhD '15 is an assistant professor in mathematics at Kirsehir Ahi Evran University in Kirsehir, Turkey.

JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Sandra Haynes MA '77 is the founder of Association Management Alternatives and is a professor in the advertising department at The Art Institute of Atlanta.

APPLAUSE FOR ALUMNI

No Place Like Home

Dr. Courtney Grant BS '07



SPECIAL

DR. COURTNEY GRANT HAS SEEN A lot of the world in just a short time. But all of that traveling—for school, work, and volunteering—made one thing very clear. There is no place like home.

“Georgia is home,” says Grant **BS '07**, a native of Evans. In 2020, after becoming the first Black woman to graduate from the acclaimed vascular surgery fellowship at the Baylor College of Medicine, Grant returned to her home state in September to practice with offices in Hall and Gwinnett counties.

“When it comes to practicing medicine, there is something to be said about

connecting with your patients and your colleagues,” she says. “Having a common bond and feeling at home makes it all the more fulfilling.”

Grant and her older sister Porsha **ABJ '02**, also a UGA alumna, are first generation graduates. Grant double-majored in biology and psychology and was in the Honors Program. As a student, she helped build and grow the Minority Premedical Student Association, eventually becoming its president.

After graduating, Grant taught biology for Teach for America in Houston, before earning her medical degree at the

University of North Carolina. She also participated in medical mission trips to countries such as Venezuela and Tanzania before beginning her fellowship in Baylor’s vascular surgery program, one of the nation’s finest.

Grant hopes to inspire others, especially women and women of color, to pursue a career in medicine. “We need more bright, passionate women in the field, especially in surgery and surgical subspecialties,” Grant says. “Once you make up in your mind what it is that you want to do, go for it.”

WRITTEN BY IRELAND HAYES

When the Green Flag Drops

Chip Wile AB '02



MEAGAN SCHARMAHORN

ON FEB. 14, THE DAYTONA 500 TOOK place in a world vastly different than the one that was run one year ago.

The logistics and safety precautions in place at the Daytona International Speedway—temperature checks and social distancing of fans, mask requirements, compartmentalizing of drivers and teams, frequent cleaning of public areas—are familiar to us now. But in the early days of the pandemic, small groups of people had to figure out a way forward.

One of those people was Chip Wile AB '02.

As president of the Daytona International Speedway, one of the most iconic sports venues not just in the U.S. but the world, Wile sat at the planning table from the beginning.

“Just understanding the property is the first step,” says Wile, who learned even

more about it during the shutdown. For instance, he mowed the Speedway’s vast infield since the staff offices were closed. “We had to figure out how to segment groups of fans. Even the campers.”

Wile himself put down more than 6,000 social distancing markers in the ramp-up to partial reopening last summer. The effort paid off, and on July 4, Daytona hosted 5,000 fans for the IMSA Weather Tech 240. The NASCAR Cup returned in August along with 20,000 fans, and the 2021 Daytona 500 marks another step forward.

Since then, Wile’s expertise has been in demand. He has briefed Florida’s governor multiple times. He spoke with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, who’d asked about how best to allow fans into the stadiums safely. It’s an interesting role to play for the humble native of Atlanta.

Wile was always a sports fan growing up but not necessarily of motorsports. That changed his junior year at UGA when he acquired an internship with a sports marketing firm that was specific to NASCAR. He quickly fell in love with the sport and the passionate fans and teams who made up the community. Immediately after graduating from UGA with a communications degree in 2002, Wile launched into a multifaceted career in racing team promotion and management. The idea of managing a racetrack didn’t come about until 2013.

Darlington Raceway in South Carolina opened in 1950 as NASCAR’s first paved superspeedway. So it holds a special place in the hearts of drivers and fans alike. Wile admits to a little bit of trepidation when NASCAR picked him at the age of 34 to run the track, but any concern evaporated when he started the job.

“The people in Darlington became my family,” he says. “I think the one thing I had to overcome was being a young guy in a really big role and having to prove yourself. You earn respect by never asking someone to do something you’re not willing to do yourself.”

After three years in Darlington, Wile moved from the track he calls NASCAR’s Fenway Park to the speedway widely regarded as its Sistine Chapel. At Darlington, he managed a staff of 15. At Daytona, the employees number more than 100. In a normal year, the speedway hosts more than 300 events ranging from proms, weddings, and high school graduations to the 24 Hours of Daytona.

Those events were understandably scaled back in 2020, but, like all of us, Wile is optimistic about the future.

“The past year has been a really tough year for us as a country,” Wile says. “And for us to be able to provide any sort of light or entertainment for folks, get them out of their house safely, and let them enjoy something they haven’t seen in a long time is really special.”

WRITTEN BY ERIC RANGUS MA '94

Rhondda Thomas MA '88 released *Call My Name, Clemson* in November.

Allen Allnoch MMC '96 is owner of AHA! Photography in Jacksonville, Fla.

SOCIAL WORK

Suzanne Burton MSW '91 is an ER social worker at Redmond Regional Medical Center in Rome.

Jenise Mitchell MSW '08 is a clinical social worker Atlanta.

Jasmine Iverson MSW '09, EdS '11 is a school counselor for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools in Charlotte, N.C., and is pursuing LCSW clinical licensure.

PUBLIC & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Anne Williamson PhD '07 is director of the School of Public Affairs at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

VETERINARY

Susan Fubini DVM '80 was named president-elect for the American College of Veteri-

nary Surgeons Board of Elections.

Chandler Bruening DVM '18 is associate medical director and associate veterinarian at Palmetto Animal Hospital in Florence, S.C.

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Class Notes is the first section we work on, so keep these deadlines in mind: for the Spring (March) issue, submit by December 1; for Summer (June), submit by March 1; for Fall (September), submit by June 1; for Winter (December), submit by September 1.

Email:
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Or send a letter to:
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UGA Alumni Association
Please submit online at
alumni.uga.edu/classnote

Mark Risse

Director, Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant
Georgia Power Professor of Water Policy

“As Georgia’s land- and sea-grant institution, UGA is committed to using its vast resources to help communities address critical issues in order to grow and prosper. As head of a unit of UGA Public Service and Outreach, I have the opportunity to work with counties and municipalities from the mountains to the coast, which is the aspect of my job that I enjoy the most. Through Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant, we connect UGA faculty members and students with communities looking for solutions to coastal challenges, ensuring that the most up -to-date research and education gets to local and state policy makers. That’s what UGA Public Service and Outreach is all about.”

A University of Georgia alumnus, Mark Risse **BSAE '87, MS '89** has worked with UGA since the early 1990s. His expertise is broad, ranging from managing environmental impacts of food production systems to helping communities with water resource management and conservation. And he’s passionate about using his connections to bridge the gap between university research and government agencies to bring practical solutions to statewide challenges.

PETER FREY

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T.J.

T.J. Callaway (BBA '07)
UGA Alumni Association Board Member
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Amazon

AmeriCorps

AT&T

Bank of America

Capgemini

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Chick-fil-A

CVS

Deloitte

EY

Fiserv

General Motors

Georgia-Pacific

KPMG

NCR Corporation

OneTrust

Oracle

PricewaterhouseCoopers

Protiviti

State Farm

The Home Depot

The Walt Disney Company

University of Georgia

UPS

U.S. Army

Data from the UGA Career Outcomes Survey was used to identify UGA's top 25 employers who hired the most UGA graduates (public school systems not included) for the Class of 2020. If your company is interested in opportunities to connect with UGA students and graduates, visit hireUGA.com.



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