

The Bell



DIGITAL DESTINATION

Advancing technology to keep Tomcats together

WELCOME *Class of 2024!*



The Class of 2024 arrived in Greenville on Aug. 16 and hit the ground running. Students arrived on Sunday, met with their first-year advisors, had an orientation session and began classes the next day. Part of the move-in day activities included students meeting with their first-year seminar class instructor on the Quad. The combination of a high first-to-second-year retention and another strong first-year class—2020 was the third consecutive year with an increase in the average GPA of the incoming class—are high points for the 2020-2021 academic year.





Thiel College

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Thiel College is a liberal arts, sciences and professional studies college affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As we navigate this unprecedented year at Thiel, our motto is “Make it to May!” As captured in this edition of *The Bell*, “Make it to May” is more than a social media campaign. It is our rallying cry to support and care for each other as we live and learn on campus. It is our mantra as we take the needed precautions—physical distancing and masking—to keep everyone safe and healthy.



As always, the Thiel community has come together! Faculty spent the summer creating a new and innovative curriculum that could be delivered in-person, online or in a hybrid fashion. Academic Affairs adopted a new calendar to complete the semester at Thanksgiving. Facilities reconfigured classrooms and office spaces to meet CDC guidelines and continues working diligently to sanitize spaces across campus. Student Life and the Campus Wellness Center added new health support services. Staff from departments across campus stepped up to work daily screening stations, and athletics organized an engaging developmental fall season with competitions rescheduled for the spring. Students returned in August, grateful to be back on campus. Adjusting to the “new normal” on campus, they stepped up, encouraging and supporting each other.

The circumstances this fall also led to new ways to connect with alumni. We hosted the first digital Homecoming in the College’s history, with 500 alumni from 20 states and overseas participating. In this edition, **John Hauser '71** reflects on the evolving traditions of Homecoming. His thoughts about Homecoming remind us that Thiel is both rooted in tradition and open to new opportunities.

And so, yes, we will “Make it to May,” supporting and learning from each other, staying true to Thiel’s core values while expanding our horizons. We look forward to gathering in the spring to celebrate the achievements of our students, the campus community and Thiel’s faithful alumni network.

Be well,

Susan Traverso
Susan Traverso, Ph.D.
 President of Thiel College

The Bell

... FALL/WINTER 2020 ...

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On the Cover

Online meetings have become a staple of the way we communicate and connect in the 21st century. With that in mind, the divisions of Academic Affairs, Admissions and Advancement all made investments to upgrade their digital capabilities. Online platforms made it possible for alumni from many different decades and from across the country and around the world to get together during the College’s first digital Homecoming.

Health & Wellness Updates

Updates to the College’s response to the coronavirus and the campus health and safety plans are linked at the top of our homepage (thiel.edu).

Visit Thiel Connect at connect.thiel.edu to find more resources!

3 out of 4

Alumni report using the Thiel College network.



Thiel alumni network includes

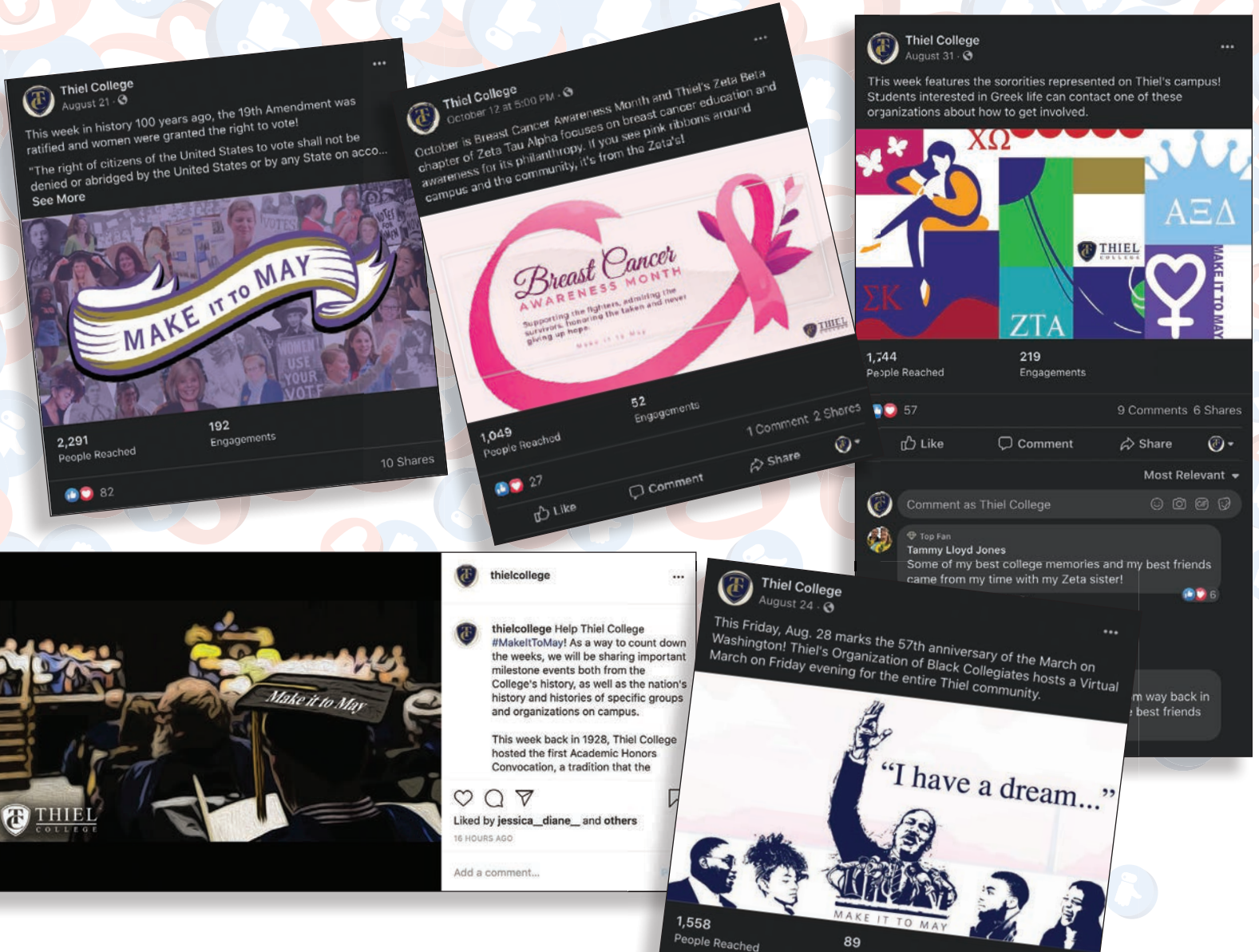
15,000+

members from around the globe






For more information, contact Director of Alumni Relations **David Hummel '83** at alumni@thiel.edu.

#MakeittoMay

#MakeittoMay is a social media campaign to help count down the weeks to the end of the academic year. Thiel College is continuing to share important milestone events from the College's history, as well as the nation's history and histories of specific groups and organizations on campus on its social media channels. Check these posts!



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Letters to the editor

Thiel College welcomes feedback regarding *The Bell*. Letters must contain a contact number (not for publication, but to allow for verification of the sender). Letters can be mailed to **Thiel College, Office of Communications and Marketing, 75 College Ave., Greenville, PA 16125**; or emailed to **pr@thiel.edu**. Letters accepted for publication may be edited for length and clarity.

— faculty & staff news —



Emeritus Professor of Business David Miller recognized by former President George W. Bush

Emeritus Professor of Business **David Miller '61, H'20** and his wife, **Ruth H'20**, received a personal letter from former President **George W. Bush** in recognition of Miller's 57 years of teaching at Thiel College. The letter congratulated Miller for his years of "dedicated service" and wished him "a rewarding and enjoyable retirement."

Miller began teaching in 1963 and taught and advised more students than any other professor in Thiel College's 155-year history. He was recently named the 2020 Thiel College Professor of the Year and served as inspiration for the David Miller '61 Endowed Chair of Accounting. He retired after the Spring 2020 semester.

Alumna named women's soccer assistant coach

Emma Polinski '20, who holds a degree in business administration and a minor in environmental science, has joined the women's soccer coaching staff as the program's assistant coach. A native of Brunswick, Ohio, Polinski recorded 26 points during her career with the Tomcats, the eighth-most in program history, and served two years as captain.

Centenary Exhibit of the 19th Amendment from National Archives displayed in library

Rightfully Hers, a pop-up exhibition from the National Archives commemorating the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, was brought to campus by Associate Professor of History and Director of the Dietrich Honors Institute **Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D.** and Reference Librarian for Information Services **Tressa Snyder, M.L.S.**

The exhibit explored the history of the 19th Amendment, women's voting rights before and after its ratification, and its impact today.

Cianci rejoins community as the Director of Campus Health and Wellness Services

The College welcomed back **Christine Cianci '96** at the start of the 2020-2021 academic year as the new Director of Campus Health and Wellness Services.



Previously, Cianci was employed as the Director of Health Services on campus from 2014-2018. A native of Massillon, Ohio, Cianci graduated with a Bachelor of Science in nursing before continuing her education to earn master's degrees in exercise science and nursing. A new Health Center on the ground floor of the Howard Miller Student Center opened in fall 2020. The expanded facility includes examination rooms, a waiting area and offices.

Samson named director of bands and choir

The new director of bands and choir at Thiel College is Greenville-native **Nicholas Samson** who oversees music groups on campus and teaches in the Department of Music and Theatre.



Samson has directed instrumental and vocal ensembles professionally in both the public and private sectors. As an active freelance musician, he performs regularly with his steel drum band, PanTropix, as well as various other musical ensembles.

Six professors promoted to tenure status

Associate Professor of Religion and Department Chair **George Branch-Trevathan, Ph.D.**; Associate Professor of Education and Department co-chair **Nancy Castor M.Ed.**; Associate Professor of Psychology **Shannon Deets, Ph.D.**; Associate Professor of Business Administration and Accounting **John Gomolchak, J.D.**; Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice **Jared Hanneman, Ph.D.**; and Associate Professor of History and Director of the Dietrich Honors Institute **Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D.** were all granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor for the 2020-2021 academic year at Thiel College.

— student news —



Kappa Sigma walk honors 9/11 first responders

On Friday, Sept. 11, members of the Kappa Sigma fraternity and two volunteer firefighters from a nearby department took part in a symbolic walk at the Town of Greenville's Plimpton Graul Amphitheater in Riverside Park to commemorate the first responders who perished in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Participants walked 13.5 laps around the amphitheater to symbolize the 4,452 steps emergency personnel traveled to rescue those in the towers of the World Trade Center.

About two dozen individuals, including high school volunteer firefighters **Cadan Stuble** and **Tyler Allison** along with sophomore **Walter Holtegreffe '23**, who is also a volunteer fireman, participated in the event that Kappa Sigma chapter president **Charlie Lichtenwalter '21** believes may become an annual event.

Gladysz, Woytek represent Thiel College as PAC Scholar-Athletes of the Year

Graduates **Gage Gladysz '20** and **Leah Woytek '20** were celebrated as the Presidents' Athletic Conference Scholar-Athletes of the Year recently.

Gladysz graduated with a double major in neuroscience and psychology and was a distinguished member of the wrestling team. He is a member of the inaugural speech-language pathology graduate class.

Woytek, a conservation biology major, was a record-breaking member of the Thiel softball team.

Junior English major drafting new administrative code for Greenville during internship

Under the supervision of local government officials, **Molly Shepler '22**, drafted new administrative code during her summer internship for the Town of Greenville.



Shepler drafted chapters of administrative code involving topics ranging from personnel systems to town committee expectations and ethical codes.

"By assisting with drafting the administrative code, Molly helped put together the 'road map' that will be used to guide the inner workings of the municipality for years to come," Town of Greenville Manager **Jasson Urey** said.

A native of Punxsutawney, Pa., Shepler is a junior majoring in English writing and literature.

Event links campus to Virtual March on Washington

Members of the Organization of Black Collegiates, the Student Government Association, and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion hosted a socially-distanced event in the William A. Passavant Memorial Center on August 28 to commemorate the March on Washington of 1963 and to educate students of its importance.

Students **Tyrique Coston '20**, **Chimamaka Palmer '21**, and staff members **Anthony E. Jones**, **Mike McKinney '02**, **Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D.**, Pastor **Brian Riddle '07**, and President **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.** spoke at the event.

Stacy Reecks '21 and **Hannah Uschock '22** helped organize the event, intending it to be educational for individuals unfamiliar with the original March on Washington.

Six seniors lauded as fall Students of the Month

Alexa Banic '21, **Kohei Hayashi '21**, **Jessica Peters '21**, **Makenna Sanders '21**, **Macy Siefert '21** and **Julia Wagner '21** were each named a Student of the Month for the fall 2020 semester. Seniors are chosen as a Student of the Month based on academic performance and leadership.

See more news in the Thiel College Newsroom!

www.thiel.edu/newsroom

Technology upgrades increase campus wide flexibility

New digital frontiers are being explored in several of the College’s divisions. Admissions, Academic Affairs and Advancement each either got new online software or increased resources to leverage existing technology to better serve the campus.

The Division of College Advancement unveiled Thiel Connect in the weeks leading up to Homecoming.

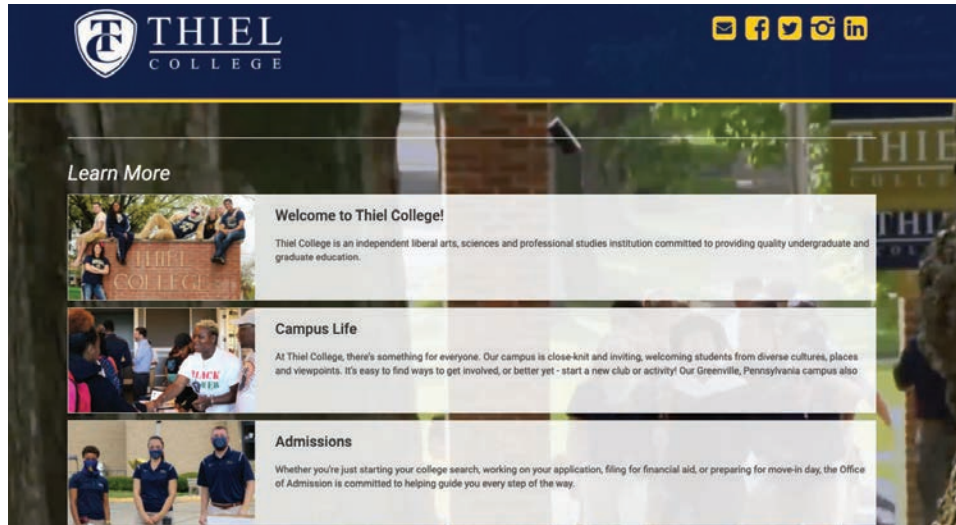
“We’re thrilled to provide this game-changing resource to the Thiel College community. We are inviting anyone with a connection to the College to be a part of the new Thiel Connect platform,” Vice President of College Advancement **Roberta Leonard** said. “This exciting opportunity connects our community in simple, convenient and new ways. Alumni can look up friends based on geography or interest.

“Being connected to the right network is invaluable when it comes to getting ahead professionally. This platform allows our students to be connected to the vast resources of our valuable alumni network.”

Members of Thiel Connect can:

- connect with alumni and students
- stay informed about campus
- RSVP for events
- find or become a mentor
- meet nearby Thiel alumni
- network with professional peers

The Thiel College Office of Admission is using a new online platform to connect and communicate with prospective students. Admission counselors have been hosting events using PlatformQ Education throughout the fall semester to engage students by providing admission, financial, and campus life information.



Admissions counselors have been using PlatformQ to meet with prospective students online.

The first event held by the Admissions office using PlatformQ Education was an application workshop that had 49 participating students. Subsequent events have averaged 40-80 high school students, according to admissions counselor **Caitlin DeSantis**.

“It’s enhancing our student engagement strategy through pre-recorded and live videos and events, email campaigns, live chats (including “office hours” for counselors), and providing analytics to help us keep improving,” DeSantis said. “For our prospective students, it allows flexibility when learning about Thiel because they can watch our videos on their own time if they’re not available during the event.”

Academic Affairs and Information Technology added instructional support technologist **Michelle Lentz**. Her addition improves how faculty members use the existing Academic Affairs program, Moodle. An Instructional Design Team was formed that included Lentz and Associate Professor of

Political Science and Department Chair **Marie Courtemanche, Ph.D.**; Assistant Professor of Sociology **Jared Hanneman, Ph.D.**; Assistant Professor of Neuroscience and Department Chair **Neil Lax, Ph.D.**; Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Dietrich Honors Institute **Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D.**; and Reference Librarian for Information Services **Tressa Snyder, M.L.S.** Those efforts will unlock many of Moodle’s tools and better leverage the platform’s strengths, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the College **Elizabeth Frombgen, Ph.D.** said. Moodle is a course management software system designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a personalized learning environment.

“Faculty worked hard over the summer to be able to deliver classes in-person, online or in a hybrid fashion,” Frombgen said. “The best way to maximize that capacity with the least amount of disruption was to continue with the technology platform we had and to expand our Zoom capabilities.”

Business graduates team up to create scholarship in Witosky's honor

Professor of Business Administration and Accounting **Gary Witosky '79** is being honored by classmates from the Class of 1979 through an endowed scholarship in his name for a junior or senior accounting student.



Witosky worked in the corporate realm until his retirement. Witosky returned to teach classes at Thiel and then also served as Chief Financial Officer of the College under the 18th President **Robert Olson, Ph.D. '60 H'09**.

"Gary's drive to help the next generation and his strong passion for industry are what has made him vital to the Thiel College community," Vice President for College Advancement **Roberta Leonard** said.

Funds to help the endowment are still being accepted.

For more information or to donate, email Leonard at rleonard@thiel.edu or call 724-589-2024.

"Gary is the kind of guy that flies under the radar but serves such an essential role in student's lives. He is so highly thought of by students and in the Thiel College community in general," said member of the Board of Trustees **Mike Zawoysky '79**. **Joseph Scarpitti '80** shared his respect as well for Gary's dedication and commitment to Thiel students.

U.S. News & World Report listings feature Thiel College

Thiel College was again ranked as the top school in northwestern Pennsylvania overall and recognized for the social mobility of its graduates among the Regional Colleges in the North in the 36th edition of *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges listings, released recently.

Furthermore, in the north region, Thiel College is among the Top 5 regional colleges and the Top 5 performers on social mobility among regionally-ranked colleges in Pennsylvania.

Thiel College was designated as a top social mobility college because its graduates are better prepared to improve their path ahead after getting a degree. The social mobility list measures the graduation outcomes of students who receive federal grants.

 **Thiel Connect**

New online networking platform helps you succeed before, during and after college through connections and community.

Join our community
connect.thiel.edu

Home for



Whether it was online meetings, social media posts or meetups through upgraded internet platforms, alumni from around the world connected

More than 500 people attended Thiel College's Homecoming 2020 through live Zoom events and by tuning in for pre-recorded events during the week-long celebration of community from Oct. 5-11.

Alumni from 20 states, the Virgin Islands, France, China and Korea participated in events. Special online conversations with Thiel College's 20th president **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.**, Emeritus Professor of Business **David Miller '61, H'20** and football coach **Mike Winslow '04** were held. **Liz Prada '04** (photo to the right) won the Roaring Twenties-themed costume party. From early morning to late evening, alumni from around the world gathered online to reminisce. **Renee Bair '99**, president of the Thiel College Alumni Association, kicked things off by sharing a video Homecoming invitation on Facebook.



The alumni office announced the new Thiel Connect online platform and displayed an online collection of videos from previous Homecomings.

"We were excited to share Homecoming 2020 with alumni, students, faculty, staff and the entire Thiel community. Thank you to those who joined us for our digital events," Director of Alumni Relations **David Hummel '83** said. "While this was a Homecoming like no other, we hope to see you back on campus again in 2021."

Take a look back at Homecoming 2020

Anyone who missed some of the virtual gatherings can still watch and listen to the events around campus.

Find classmates in the Flickr gallery, watch recorded events and listen to a special Homecoming 2020 playlist. The choir reunion was also a special event and members connected to sing the alma mater.

YouTube playlist

<http://bit.ly/tchoco2020videos>

Thiel Choir singing of 'Hail Alma Mater'

<http://bit.ly/tchoco2020almamater>

WXTC Spotify playlist

<http://bit.ly/tchoco2020playlist>

Flickr Photo Gallery

<http://bit.ly/TChoco2020photos>

Plan for 2021: Homecoming is October 1-3

Homecoming



College celebrates Homecoming court tradition



Madison Acor '22, Zach Lyons '22, Keara Henry '23, Isaac Evans '23, Milan Marseille '24, Tess Cadman '24, Jon Burkley '21 and Jess Peters '21 were selected as the Homecoming 2020 court.

Jess Peters '21 was voted as Homecoming 2020 queen, and **Jon Burkley '21** was selected as king. Peters is a business administration major with a sports management concentration from Emsworth, Pa. Burkley is a secondary education and English major from Waterford, Pa. Peters and Burkley became engaged to each other just before Homecoming.

Madison Acor '22 and **Zach Lyons '22** were princess and prince. Acor is a business administration major from Houston, Pa. Lyons is an exercise science major from Franklin, Pa.

Keara Henry '23 and **Isaac Evans '23** were duchess and duke. Henry is a neuroscience major from Clarion, Pa. Evans is a biology major from Charleroi, Pa.

Tess Cadman '24 and **Milan Marseille '24** were lady and lord. Cadman is a secondary education and English major from Greenville, Pa. Marseille is a binary engineering major from Pikesville, Md.

Read more about Homecoming traditions on Page 24

Getting down to business



Professor of Communication **Kyle Woody, Ed.D.** lectures during a new Master of Business Administration class.

First class of M.B.A. graduates set to finish this summer

By Hannah Uschock '22

The first cohort of students started working their way through the new Master of Business Administration program in July, and according to **Alex Hudson G'21**, the community-feel of the program that appealed to her when she was investigating M.B.A. programs has only grown.

It was a combination of the community, the close proximity to her home and the flexibility of the program offerings that led Hudson, a 2019 University of Mount Union graduate, to join the 10

alumni students to compose the first M.B.A. cohort at the College.

"The thing that really appealed to me was the community feel of the campus," Hudson said. "I am the only one in the cohort who did not go here for undergrad, and they were all very welcoming. It felt like I was already familiar with them and the campus as a whole."

Thiel's M.B.A. is a one-year post-graduate program, but a five-year program for Thiel undergraduates is also available. Once students complete

their bachelor's degree, there is a seamless transition to the M.B.A. For non-business majors, an MBA IQ exam must be completed.

Three months into the program, **David Blaney '20, G'21** said he has gotten a sense for its value.

"Thiel's one-year M.B.A. program started in July, and since then I've already gained so much knowledge and experience. We have a good blend of professional students and fifth-years," Blaney said. "We've all become closer as the program continues. I chose

Thiel College for my M.B.A. because I had faith in Dr. Kos and the rest of the professors that they could make it a worthwhile experience.”

Anthony Kos, Ph.D., chair of the Arthur McGonigal Department of Business Administration and Accounting, is leading the M.B.A. program. The program includes apprenticeships and internship opportunities for business students who do not have full-time jobs and who are predicted to continue the strong track record of outcomes established by the College’s undergraduate programs.

Kos was hired during the Fall 2019 semester due to his expertise and 32 years of experience while working at Youngstown State University. While there, he was the Special Assistant to the Dean, twice held the position of M.B.A. Director, and earned the rank of Professor in the Management Department. Kos has also taught internationally in the M.B.A. program at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil.

“President **(Susan) Traverso** and Dean **(Elizabeth) Frombgen** were very serious about an M.B.A. program. They understood strategy, knew what and how they wanted things and had plans to carry it through,” said Kos.

Kos said Thiel’s program serves different students and meets them where they are.

David Stryffeler '09, G'21 is the director of strategy and operations for State Alarm Systems in Youngstown, Ohio. He said he knew he wanted to get an M.B.A., but was unsure when and where he would do it until an opportune phone call from the alumni relations office where the College’s new M.B.A. program came up during the conversation. It was then that Stryffeler decided the time was right to get his M.B.A.

“It is a whole different experience. The structure of coming on campus is something you get used to and then the time management, devoting enough time to excel (at coursework) and also having my career and family. Less sleep than I am used to and a lot of time away from home, that part is tough but will be worth the sacrifice in the long run.”

Stryffeler said the community feel is reflected in the classroom.

“We learn as much from each other as we do the professors and the material,” he said.

Morgan (Steiner) Bodnar '16, G'21 is Thiel College’s Assistant Director of Admission. She has been able to work and go to school full-time, all while planning a wedding.

After four years out of the classroom, Bodnar transitioned back to lectures without a hitch. It has taken a little juggling to coordinate her rigorous homework into her schedule.

“My life has become a whole new level of balancing,” she said. “Thiel has been so helpful though by not only being flexible through work, but also preparing me for the business world.”

Bodnar said she is excited to be a member of Thiel’s first M.B.A. class and is looking forward to watching the program grow.

“This is going to be a program that is going to thrive and continue to build,” said Bodnar.

The M.B.A. is the College’s second master’s degree program, although it may be counted as both the second and third programs because of its business management and leadership track options. The Leadership program was designed for non-business majors who want to pursue an M.B.A. as well.

Speech-Language students learning in clinic that offers free public screenings

The College’s first official graduate program, the Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology, is on course for its first graduates this summer, too. The program has another historic first for the College. The Thiel College Center for Speech-Language Services, located in the Glen Johnson Center, began accepting appointments for free speech, language, cognition, voice, and hearing screenings and evaluations in July.

The Center provides treatment services to children and adults with communication disorders.

“The free screenings provide a great opportunity for our students and our community members,” graduate program director **Mary Beth Mason, Ph.D.** said.

The program has 13 graduate students. All the students are evaluating and treating clients at the Center for Speech-Language Services and also have a part-time external placement at Capable Kids in Hermitage.

“My experience in the clinic this semester has been nothing short of amazing! I am so grateful to go to a school that provides me with an excellent education as well as the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with children and adults in the community,” **Nicole Plassio G'21** said.



HAUNTED CAMPUS

Unexplained phenomena at and around
Thiel College attract national attention

By Dick Davis

For **Kathy Jo (Divens) Bissell '01**, her years at Thiel were educational and fun. It was pretty much college life as usual for Kathy Jo with her major in sociology, minor in theatre, and a certification in elementary education.

College life as usual, except for a 1998 Thiel Players presentation in Roth Hall that saw an actor shout an expletive while running from the stage. Evidently, a 'cursed' costume for the King Herod character in "Jesus Christ Superstar" struck again.

*Every performer who had
worn this costume had
run from the stage...*

"Apparently every performer who had worn this costume had run from the stage in the middle of the performance shouting an expletive," says Bissell, who was also in the play.

"But our cast wasn't told this until after the actor's performance."

"I guess the costume was actually 'cursed' because the King Herod actor this time did the same thing! In the middle of his song, he shouted 'Oh sh*t' and ran from the stage."

She says the director of Thiel Players at the time, Emeritus Professor of Performing Arts **William A. Robinson, Ph.D.**, decided not to use that costume anymore.

That and similar stories of supposed hauntings, ghost stories and unexplained events led to Thiel's inclusion on a recent list of "Haunted Colleges" from CollegeXpress.com.

"Thiel made the cut because of its haunted campus history plus the amount of Halloween events and activities offered to students, from Zombie Prom to Halloween on Main Street," says **Claire Carter**, editor at College Xpress.

"The goal of CollegeXpress is to help students find the right school for them, and we offer our own unique lists and rankings to make the college search more fun. Our Haunted College list is a great example of this. It was created based on campus ghost stories from school websites, books, and user suggestions."

And it seems there is no shortage of stories from a campus that dates back to the late 19th century. Some go back into Thiel's history, while others are as fresh as Halloween 2019.

An invisible force opened and closed the automatic doors to the Langenheim

Library on Halloween night 2019, recalls **Allen Morrill**, public service librarian.

"About 9:30 that night the automatic glass doors opened inward," Morrill says, "but there was no one visible to trigger the opening. My library worker and I thought that was odd."

"Then, near closing time at 11, the automatic doors in the lobby going outside opened with no visible trigger. It was as if something came to the library then left after a while. We have never seen those doors open by themselves before or since."

A 2014 article from the *Greenville Record-Argus* reinforces the notion of supernatural activities at Thiel.

"According to reports throughout the college's history, Roth Memorial Hall is home to most of the paranormal sightings," reads the article. "Roth was once the school's theater, and students, staff and faculty have claimed to have seen figures standing in the building's third-story windows and hearing voices, a piano playing and large objects moving across the floor as if people were setting up for a play."

The *Record-Argus* article continues: "Perhaps one of the most discussed legends about Roth Hall is that of a woman who jumped from the third-floor window while carrying her newborn child. It's a story passed around campus for decades, but no real evidence supporting this has been found."

Harter Hall indeed hosted several haunting experiences, according to the 2012 web blog TaylorTouchdown, written by a former student.

The blog reads: "Although it seems odd to have a dorm building be haunted, students living in the building have reported a few incidents that leads (sic) this to be true. **Haley Hayden '13**,

reported that the ghost had visited her room, Harter 203, once before.

"She had gone to sleep with her computer screen open, but not on. A few hours later, around 3 a.m., she awoke to find her computer screen on and brightly shining."

Another incident, according to the blog, is of "ghost encounters in Harter 216, with **Jessica Slupe '15** and **Anna Hart '15**. In one incident, Anna had left for class and had left the light on while Jessica was taking a nap. Feeling something bouncing on her roommate's bed, Jessica opened her eyes to discover the light off and no one on the bed.

"Anna experienced the same thing just a couple weeks later with a bouncing feeling on her roommate's top bunk and no one in it. Anna had also gone to the bathroom one day and caught a glimpse of someone through the crack in the door of the bathroom stall. Upon looking under the stall to see if there was someone there, there were no feet to be found. Anna has thus dubbed the stall, the 'demon' stall."

The fact that Shenango Valley Cemetery with its 11,000 graves is next door to the Thiel campus adds to the lore.

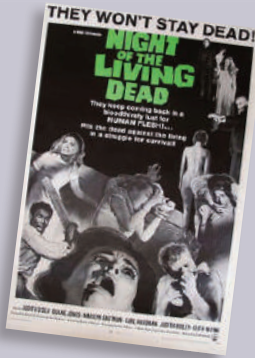
Thiel grad **Eric Altman '92** cryptozoologist/Bigfoot researcher, and **Daniel Hageman**, director of the Butler, Pa. Organization for Research of the Unexplained (BORU), work with sightings of alleged UFOs, Bigfoot/Sasquatch-like large creatures, and other unexplained phenomena around campus, the greater Greenville area and western Pennsylvania.

Altman says he's just an average guy who pursues some rather interesting hobbies. For almost 40 years he's been a fan and follower of the paranormal. He has been called a cryptozoologist, Bigfoot researcher, field investigator,

Thiel College connections to the paranormal

From cryptozoologist **Eric Altman '92**, mentioned on the previous page, to **Marie Molnar-Cronin '82**, who advertises her services as exorcist Sister Marie Brigante-Cronin on LinkedIn, Thiel College has some interesting intersections with the paranormal. Here are some of their stories...

George C. Romero, '94 attended Thiel College in 1994 studying English literature. He is a film and television producer and owns and operates Romero Pictures along with wife, Rebecca Brewer.



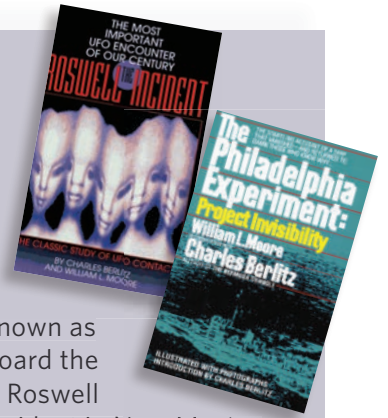
His late father, **George A. Romero**, directed the legendary 1968 movie "Night of the Living Dead." The classic, which was filmed in southwest Pennsylvania, led to an "Of the Dead" series of zombie movies.

Thanks to his father's contribution to the world of independent films, George C. continues to look at the vast playground of indie horror, according to his LinkedIn.com profile. That profile reads: George C. while at Thiel "majored in English, minored in Philosophy, and hopped trains."

William L. Moore '65 is an author and former UFO researcher prominent from the late 1970s to the late 80s. He co-authored two books with Charles Berlitz,

"The Roswell Incident" and "The Philadelphia Experiment: Project Invisibility."

The Philadelphia book in 1979 was about an alleged naval military experiment popularly known as the Philadelphia Experiment aboard the USS Eldridge in 1943. The 1980 Roswell book alleged the Roswell UFO incident in New Mexico involved the crash of an extraterrestrial spaceship.



After graduating from Thiel, Moore taught language and humanities at various high schools. He became Arizona state section director of the Mutual UFO Network and left teaching to pursue a career as a freelance writer.

Haydn Thomas '72 is an historian, a storyteller, a teacher, a doting father and grandfather, a world traveler, and above all else, a Western Pennsylvania original, according to the Haunted Pittsburgh website. *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* dubbed Thomas "The King"—the undisputed dean of Pittsburgh tour guides.



Thomas calls his Haunted Pittsburgh tours the "History and Mystery Tour" because so much of Pittsburgh history is in his ghost stories.

paranormal enthusiast, radio host and producer, and a conference and event organizer.

"I have never seen a Bigfoot," says Altman, "but I've heard many strange unidentifiable sounds and have seen tree breaks and damage done after someone had a sighting that was not due to weather or dry rot.

"Each story is unique in its own way and, if true, they are quite fascinating. I've talked with hundreds of witnesses who have shared their experiences. The ones I feel are true sightings and not a misidentified animal or a fabrication are very compelling."

In 2015, Altman's role as an investigator took him to state Route 62 near Mercer for a possible sighting of a 7-foot-tall tan, deer-colored creature. Altman says it was a cold, rainy night, and a man driving up Skyline Drive, which is about

20 minutes from campus, saw a large figure walking on the left side of the road. It had narrow hips and wide shoulders about three-and-a-half to four-feet wide with an estimated weight of 600 pounds.

This report along with other reports of similar sightings from the past 40 years are in Altman's files with the Pennsylvania Bigfoot Society. Locations of unexplained sightings include Route 358 going from Greenville to Ohio, and Sandy Lake, and Transfer.

With extensive investigative experience and working with veteran, published writers in higher education and attending conferences and workshops, Hageman is a true believer.

"I certainly believe there are things out there that can't be fully explained," he says. "And you're not going to convince me otherwise."

COMING UP ACES



Members of the women's tennis team and coach **Gabrielle Eaborn** gather during the 2019 season. The team set the record for wins in a season that year with six victories.

Women's tennis enjoys breakthrough 2019 season; PAC Coach of the Year Eaborn has Tomcats on the prowl

By Ed Topoleski '02

Head women's tennis coach **Gabrielle Eaborn** knew her team had potential in 2019 before anyone else.

"I knew in the preseason when we were practicing," she said. "I could see them doing better because I was able to be more specific in my instruction."

Led by seniors **Shyann Foreman '20**, **Angela Campbell '20** and **Amelia Mutinelli '21**, junior **Allyson Stanley '21** and six first-year students, the Tomcats went on to have

a breakthrough season in 2019, collecting six wins, the most in a single season in program history.

"I was really proud," said Stanley, who went 10-4 on the season primarily playing fourth singles and teamed with Foreman for six doubles wins. "Teams were always like 'oh, it's Thiel.' But the PAC coaches actually recognized us, and they were a little nervous to play us."

Eaborn became the first-ever coach in program history to be named the Presidents' Athletic Conference Coach of the Year.

“It wouldn’t have happened if my team wasn’t successful,” Eaborn said. “It was exciting.”

“She puts her whole heart into it,” Stanley said of Eaborn.

And Stanley would know. As a freshman in 2017, she suffered an 8-3 PAC doubles loss to Eaborn, who was then a senior at Westminster College.

“I was like so terrified of her,” Stanley said. “She knows tennis better than everyone.”

A native of Coraopolis, Pa., Eaborn won more than 100 matches at Westminster. She was the team captain and was part of two team conference crowns. She paired with teammate Sydney Sterner to win the PAC No. 1 doubles title in 2016 and won the title at third singles in 2014.

Multiple Tomcats earned All-PAC Honorable Mention accolades under Eaborn last season. Foreman, Stanley and first-year **Natalie Zgurich '23** and **Reagan Hayne '23** were recognized for their singles play. Campbell and Zgurich, along with Hayne and **Taylor Ranegar '23** also received recognition for their doubles play. Zgurich won six singles matches on the year, primarily playing at No. 2. She teamed

with Campbell for four wins at No. 1 doubles and was honored as the PAC Rookie of the Week on Sept. 30.

“Natalie was that freshman that made you want to play better,” said Stanley, who will serve as co-captain this season along with Zgurich. “She’s really good and made everyone else want to work harder.”

Hayne and Ranegar combined for 11 singles wins and paired for six doubles wins last season.

Though the 2020-21 season has been put on hold until the spring because of the coronavirus pandemic, Eaborn has four first-year students on the 2020-21 roster, and she believes the group is talented and capable of making immediate contributions to the team.

Eaborn also has high expectations for her players in the classroom, and they have not disappointed. In July, Thiel was named an All-Academic Team by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association . In addition, Stanley and Zgurich were selected as ITA Scholar-Athletes. Programs must have a team grade-point average of 3.2 or above to earn ITA All-Academic Team recognition while Scholar-Athletes must have at least a 3.5 grade-point average for the current academic year.

Go online to stay updated on all Tomcat athletics!

www.thielathletics.com

Christopher Lepley '14

Residence: Sneads Ferry, N.C.

Hobbies: Volunteer firefighter with Sneads Ferry Fire and Rescue and CrossFit

Involvement at Thiel: Three-year player and one year as student/coach for men’s soccer; four-year volleyball player and one year as student/coach for men’s volleyball, a four-year member of Delta Sigma Phi, two years as Student Government Association treasurer, business administration, criminal justice and sociology triple major with a minor in coaching

Reason for Giving Back: The Thiel experience is unlike any other. First and foremost, the academics are top tier with an amazing Academic Affairs department that works tirelessly for the students. Secondly, the athletic department allowed me an opportunity to continue my sports careers at the next level. The coaches were always professional and not only cared about the season but also ensured the student-athlete was developing holistically. Finally, Delta Sigma Phi, my fraternity, showed me the true definition of brotherhood.



The Thiel Fund File

A short profile of the people who donate to The Thiel Fund, the College’s largest source of unrestricted funds.

— 1940s —

Helen Annabelle Nestor '46 lives in Venice, Fla. and enjoys teaching Bible class to individuals. Ann lives by herself and will be 98 in February.

— 1960s —

Karen (Glatzert) Rainey '60 and her spouse, Glen Goodhead, shared that they downsized in the middle of the pandemic—not an easy task. They are still looking for the toaster. They reside in Delaware, Ohio.

Luigi Tiberio, Ph.D. '65 wants to thank everyone for the birthday wishes that were sent his way and returns the good wishes from Italy. “You have no idea how happy your wishes made me. Be it known to everyone that Luigi spent, at Thiel, his best college years ever. I shall never forget the opportunities Thiel offered me while studying there, and I will never forget the American people who made me feel at home. I shall always remember President Bly, all my professors and the people in the administration offices who were always very helpful and understanding,” he said in a message to the College.

Gary Fincke '67 shared that his essay, “After the Three-Moon Era,” has been selected to appear in *The Best American Essays 2020*. His story, “The Corridors of Longing,” has been chosen to appear in *The Best Small Fictions 2020*. His ninth collection of stories, “The Sorrows,” was published early this year, and a new collection of poems, “The Mussolini Diaries,” will be published by the end of the year.

William J. Mitchell '69 and his wife, Sylvia, live in Smithville, Tenn. where William, though retired, works as a substance abuse counselor.



Paul Miller '69, who was presented with a Service to Thiel award during Homecoming 2016, supported the Thiel Players and the theater this year. Miller has written three books about Thiel College.

— 1970s —



Kenneth B. Eves '71 retired after his 45-year career with Morgan Stanley investment banking company. He resides in Raleigh, N.C.

Carol Legas '72 is working from home as a human resources professional, and she is also an accomplished musician. Among



her highlights were, along with her high school friend, being the rare female tuba player. A novelty that continued when she arrived at Thiel College. At Thiel, she met **Ivan Romanenko**, her musical mentor. She played in several musical ensembles in college and was invited to perform with the Greenville Symphony Orchestra. She lives in Plano, Texas with her husband, Shawn, and adult son, Brendan, who recently graduated from the University of Texas and works at Dell as a software engineer.

Edward A. Batten '75 and his wife, **Nancy (Moffatt) Batten '76**, live in Emerald Isle, N.C. where Edward is loving his retirement.

Celia A. (Phillips) Garland '77 is proud to announce that her daughter has begun studies with Luther Seminary of St. Paul, Minn. to become a Lutheran pastor. She is serving as a Vicar at a local church while pursuing her studies to be ready for ordination in 2022.

— 1980s —

Walter J. Johnson '85 is the administrator at the University of Rochester Medical Center. He resides in Rochester, N.Y.



Rod Wilt '86 was named the executive director of the Penn Northwest Development Corporation in September. Wilt is the treasurer for the College’s Board of Trustees. The nonprofit Penn Northwest Development Corporation is Mercer County’s lead economic development agency.

Brian Artzberger, D.O. '89 is employed at PeakMed as a physician. He resides in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Timothy P. Black '89 is the Vice President of LandPro Equipment, the largest Northeast U.S. John Deere Dealer Group. He and his wife, Michelle, live in Falconer, N.Y.

— 1990s —

Eric J. Zgodzinski, D.P.H. '91 obtained a Doctor of Public Health degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago in May. He works as a health commissioner for the Toledo Lucas County Health Department. He, his wife, **Susan '93**, and two children, live in Port Clinton, Ohio.



Doug Sexton '91 is president of V20 Recruiting. He lives with his wife, Tiffany, and children in Dublin, Ohio.

Shane Snyder, Ph.D. '94 is a professor of civil and environmental engineering and the executive director of the Nanyang Environment and Water Research Institute at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He was recently named inaugural editor-in-chief of the journal ACS ES&T Water. He was a chemistry major at Thiel before earning his Ph.D. from Michigan State University for environmental toxicology.

Michael Robbins '96 and his wife, Christina, visited Thiel College on June 27 with their son, **John '24**. John is a member of the lacrosse team. The Robbins family resides in Alaska.



Gretchen L. Smith '99 works as an associate consultant for Quality Assurance at Eli Lilly and Company in Greenwood, Ind.

— 2000s —

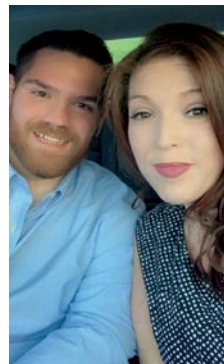
Joseph R. Dunn Jr. '00 was promoted last year to senior industry consultant, US Public Sector, for the SAS Institute. His wife, **Melissa (Mausling) Dunn '00**, is a Pre-K teacher at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church and an active parent volunteer with the Liberty Elementary PTA. They reside with their two children in Powell, Ohio.

Cynthia L. (Zuschlag) Maynard-Solis, Ed.D. '00 earned her Doctorate of Education in curriculum and instruction in 2019 and is the multi-tiered system of support coordinator at the Santa Fe Public Schools.

James J. Chester '03 resides in Shelby, N.C.

Jay N. Dahl '03 and his wife, **Amy (Toth) Dahl '03** reside in Akron, Ohio.

Shauna L. Gonzales '04 got engaged to Shane Wolf on June 2, 2020. The wedding is planned for June 11, 2022, in Butler, Pa. She works as a patient advocate at the Department of Veteran Affairs and resides in Pittsburgh.



Justin Page '05 and **Julie Ann (Greer) Page '05** reside in Chicago, Ill.

Cassandra (Calahan) Farkas '05 is employed as a housing solutions supervisor at Crawford County Mental Health Awareness Program,

Inc. She and her husband, Jason, live in Meadville, Pa. with their children.



Katie (Walker) Haladyna '06 is employed as a superintendent for Nyman Construction. She and her husband, **Josh Haladyna '05**, reside in Kirtland, Ohio with their three young children. Pictured on the left is Katie's father, **Mark Walker '77**, when he was five years old wearing a Thiel sweatshirt. Pictured on the right is Katie as a 19-month-old child also wearing a Thiel shirt. Katie played on the Thiel softball team and was a member of Sigma Kappa. She shared that her father, who passed away in 2014, was a member of Delta Sigma Phi, and her aunt, **Gayle (Walker) Tomasko '81**, was a member of Sigma Kappa. Her cousin, **Vernon Walker '64**, also graduated from Thiel College.

Walter Rosado, Ph.D. '07 was recognized with a plaque from the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police for "heroism and distinction in extremely hazardous circumstances while assisting the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police by rendering medical aid to officers and victims of the Tree of Life Synagogue Mass Shooting on October 27, 2018."

Syrell J. Rodriguez Carreras, M.D. '08 lives in Manchester, Pa. She works as surgical chief resident at Wellspan York Hospital in York, Pa. where she plans to graduate this summer and start this fall as a Surgery Critical Care Fellow at Carilion Clinic in Roanoke, Va.

James L. Fawcett IV '08 and his wife, **Christy L. (Allen) Fawcett '08**, reside in Mars, Pa.

Marissa J. Musico '09 lives in Pittsburgh where she is a realtor with Howard Hanna Real Estate Services.

— 2010s —

Andy Stine '11 was promoted to sports editor of *The Daily News* in Huntingdon, Pa. He will also continue with his role as sports editor for *The Daily Herald* in Tyrone, Pa. He was a media communication major and was involved in student government, TC Television and football.

Evan B. Walker '11 is employed at the Village of Burr Ridge as a manager. He lives with his wife, Kimberley, and their children in Downers Grove, Ill.

Nicholas D. Rossmiller '13 and his wife, Alexandra, live in Murfreesboro, Tenn. with their two children. Nicholas is employed by Imperial Supplies Inc. as a key account manager.

Steven Morgan, Ph.D. '15 finished his Ph.D. in political science and social data analytics at Pennsylvania State University. He is employed as a research scientist at Facebook. He and his wife, Christine, reside in San Mateo, Calif.

Nathan J. Nitzczynski '15 is an academic counselor at Mercyhurst University, and he serves on executive boards. He is the Professional Development chair for the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Employers and the treasurer for the Erie Dance Consortium. He serves on a Regional Advisory Board for the United States All-Star Federation.

Ryan A. Parks '15 is living in Baltimore, Md.

Rebecca J. (Campbell) Dougherty '16 is employed by National Heritage Academy as an intervention specialist. She and her husband, **Kyle Dougherty '15**, reside in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Jonathan M. Fennick '16 works as a police officer with the University of Colorado Police Department. He resides in Lakewood, Colo.

Tyler S. Hendzel '16 works as the area coordinator at Muskingum University in New Concord, Ohio.

Amanda M. Zimmerman '17 is employed as lead teacher at KIIP DC. She resides in College Park, Md.

Carissa L. Jones '18 resides in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Haley M. Tokich '18 is a realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, The Preferred Realty in Cranberry Township, Pa. She resides in Coraopolis, Pa.

— marriages —



Ashley (Dolan) Farley '14 and **Douglas Farley '14** married on July 13, 2019, in New Wilmington, Pa. Ashley is a speech-language pathologist for Conneaut School District and Doug is an adult parole and probation officer for Crawford County. While at Thiel, she played softball, and he played baseball. They reside in Linesville, Pa.

Those in attendance at the wedding included: **Leah (Mantick) Mayhugh '14**, **Justin Mayhugh '14**, **Matt Butler '13**, **Brett Smith '14**, **Kris Tursky '13**, **Eric Steininger '13**, **Bill Bendgen '13**, **Michael Guarascio '14**, **Chelsea Maukonen '14**, **Jackie (Belsito) Tibbitt '11**, **Rob Tibbitt '13**, **Sara (Farley) Spadafora '09**, **Matthew Morian '13**, **Eric King '13** (best man), **Ali (House) McDonald '14**, **Ray McDonald '13**, **Molly Jo Everett '14**, and **Bonita (Hovis) Farley '86**. Bonita Farley is the groom's grandmother.

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at alumni@thiel.edu

– births –

To **Amy (Mathis) Weyant '05** and her husband, Steve Weyant, a son, Emersyn, on May 9. Emersyn joins the family residing in White Oak, Pa.

To **Anna Reinsel, Ph.D. '06** and her husband a son, Tobias James Reinsel, on June 24.



To **Andrew W. Bolton '07** and his wife, Viviane, a son, Erick Andrade Bolton, on March 31. The family lives in Bedford, Mass.



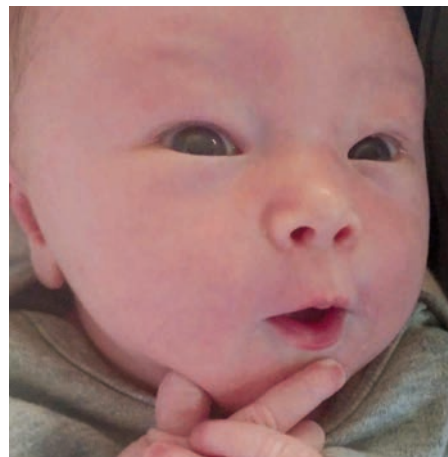
To **Angela A. (Shade) Holden '09** and her husband, Jarrod Holden, a daughter, Alice Ella Mae, on March 26. Alice joins her brother, Jude. Angela is employed by Clear Abstract Settlement as a legal assistant. The family resides in Beaver, Pa.



To **Matt Christian '11** and his wife, Meaghan, a son, Hudson, on March 12, joining his older brother, Lincoln.



To **David Saur '11** and his wife, Lydia Bracey Saur, a son, Bryson, on Aug. 11. The family resides in Pittsburgh, Pa.



To **Wyatt Clements '14** and his wife, **Erica (Riola) Clements '12**, a daughter, Annabelle Rayne, on July 28. The family resides in Denham Springs, La.



To **Allison (Hall) Steel '11** and her husband, **Joshua Steel '10**, a son, Cameron Donald, on May 12.



To **Donnay (Schultheis) Hunter '16** and her husband, Glenn, a daughter, Aria, on January 27. Donnay married Glenn Hunter on December 27, 2019. The family resides in Solon, Ohio.



To **Cassie M. (Graham) Thomas '15** and her husband, **Ryan Thomas '15**, a son, Evan Daniel, on May 3. Cassie is a visiting lab instructor of biological science at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. The family resides in Ligonier, Pa.

– gatherings –



The brothers of Delta Sigma Phi gathered for the **Fifth Annual Guyton Thigpen Memorial Golf Outing** on Saturday, June 27.



Sorority sisters from Alpha Gamma Delta, **Tammi (Dingfelder) Lohrmann '87** and **Leslie Miklosovic '87** recently toured the campus. Tammi is a service coordinator for UPMC Community Health Choices. She and her husband, Ralf, have a 25-year-old son, Nick. Leslie teaches fourth-grade in Chesapeake, Va. She has two children, Brittany, 26, and Jared, 22.



Carolyn (Hagel) Wickerham '52, **Dottie (Fleegle) Davies '51**, **Janie (Baker) Thigpen '51** were roommates at Thiel. The photo was taken in December in celebration of Carolyn's 90th birthday. Also pictured are the roommates' daughters (L-R) **Amy (Wickerham) Montgomery '83**, **Beth Wickerham '76**, Davies' daughter, Dana Powell and **Becky (Thigpen) Christian '76**.

The Bottle Club reunites at Hickory Grille



The Bottle Club met for lunch March 4, 2020 at the Hickory Grille. Members in attendance were front row: **Ralph Wagner '60**; second row (L-R) **Sam Alexander '58**, **Laverne "Spike" Kline '56**, **Alex Vuchak '55**, **John Piai '57**, **Dick Mamajek '58**; third row: **Frank Stratiff '61**, **Russell "Ben" Mosier '56**, **Bob Stone '59**, and **Bob Olson, Ph.D. '60, H'09**.



John '71 and **Nancy (Gibson) Hauser '75** donated a granite bench in front of Greenville Hall this summer.

– in memoriam –

A REMEMBRANCE OF ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE WHO HAVE RECENTLY PASSED

Donald C. Anderson '62
 Irma L. (Clare) Baird '65
 J. Henry Barton, D.A.
 Edsel Lee Beighley
 E. Edward Bish
 Terri Bowser '81
 Beverly R. (Reznor) Brown '47
 Donald S. Carpenter '51
 Mary J. (Stuart) Culbertson '53
 John F. Farrimond '63
 Alice M. 'Meghan' (Kremm)
 Fossaceca '02
 Shirley Fry
 John M. Furno '79
 Joseph A. George
 Christina Gray
 Elva Jean (Eshenaur) Haag '57
 Barbara W. (Wilson) Hahn '64
 Richard L. Hayes
 Lynn M. (Davis) Herlinger '56

Grace Herter
 Ann Hofius
 Thomas A. Hower '62
 Karen L. Jones
 Donna L. (Henry) Kawinski '01
 William A. Kerpka Jr. '83
 Dennis D. Kraft '68
 Raymond D. Lambert '82
 Phillip D. Leise
 Ramona (Moorhead) Manning '49
 Hugh N. McCright '53
 Joel McDowell
 Shirley (O'Neal) McElhaney '54
 Janice A. McQuiston
 David L. Miller
 Michael Milliner '84
 Jeffrey B. Moreland
 Carol Neifert
 John J. Nestor '74
 Roy R. Neyman '67
 Joan Preston

John T. Quinlan '76
 Mary Ellen Read '70
 Gary Rhodes
 Betty (Sullivan) Rogerson '45
 Donald Rossetti '62
 Lynann Rudert '61
 Rev. Richard Karl Schultz '63
 Deann Shaffer '85
 Harriet (Patrias) Shallo '62
 William L. Shannon
 Judith (Ilvonen) Shannon '58
 William S. Shaw '62
 Donald Smith
 David W. Stuyvesant
 Vaughn E. Taylor '61
 Marylou Trimble
 Joseph P. Urbania '88
 Rev. Dr. Paul Werger '54
 Harley P. Weyand Jr.
 Stanley Workman



James Henry Barton, 79, of Greenville, Pa., died at his home on Sept. 21 following a courageous battle with cancer. Barton spent 32 years as chair of the Department of Environmental Science program at Thiel College, retiring as a full professor in 2011. He loved higher education and Thiel College because of its strong emphasis on teaching.

Joseph George, 83, of Hermitage, Pa. passed away August 31. The husband of Trustee emeritus **Ruthanne Beighley, Esq. '73**, George was a member of the Board of Trustees from 2004-2013. He was awarded the Louis and Barbara Thiel Distinguished Service Award in 1998 and was the Haller Entrepreneur of the year in 2011.

Richard L. Hayes, 95, a longtime Greenville, Pa. resident passed away on June 25, 2020. In 1958, Hayes became the first full-time professor of art at Thiel College and served as Chairman of the Art Department as well as Curator of the Thiel College Permanent Art Collection. He retired in 1990 as a full Professor and Curator Emeritus and remained active as the Curator of the Thiel Permanent Art Collection during retirement.

Looking back through the years, Homecoming has always been evolving

By John Hauser '71

Homecoming 2020 was one for the history books. Government regulations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited public gatherings so Thiel, as most colleges did, held a virtual Homecoming.

All of us remember how Homecomings were when we were students and a high percentage of us have returned to campus at least once as alumni for this annual celebration of our alma mater and the chance to reconnect with those with whom we share so many memories of what, regardless of our ages, we now refer to as “the good old days.”

Homecoming has taken on many forms since the first Homecoming was held on November 25-26, 1915, Thanksgiving Weekend. According to Roy Johnson’s History of Thiel College 1866-1974, p. 75-76:

“After Thiel had beaten Hiram on the gridiron, 28-13, there was a banquet at Ridgeway Hall attended by 200. **T. B Roth**, coach ‘**Tink**’ **Rowley**, athletic manager **Tod Rissell**, and **Roy Beaver 1913** spoke. There was entertainment by the college orchestra and the men’s glee club. A gold watch was presented to captain **Edward Kishler** of the football team.”

Homecomings were administered by the College staff until 1925, when the alumni association took over and events were added to make it a three-day affair, including dorm decorating contests and Friday night skits by the Greeks, both of which resulted in prizes awarded by judges from campus and the community. A tug-of-war over the Shenango River started the festivities on Saturday between the freshman and sophomore classes. The venue was later changed to a pond in Riverside Park until the competition was discontinued in 1960. The Tug-of-War preceded the football game, which was followed by an annual alumni dinner. On Sunday, all alumni and students went to church.

The 1930s added two new Thiel traditions. The first was a parade through Greenville in 1931 which began as a group of



bunting-decorated cars and evolved into the elaborate floats by fraternities, sororities and campus groups in the 1950s and 60s. The second was the crowning of a Homecoming Queen elected by the student body. **Jeanne Schilk '38** was the first woman to be crowned “Miss Homecoming” at halftime of the 1937 Homecoming football game. In 1977, men were added to the royal court and the first Homecoming King, **Dennis “Buzzy” Scott '78**, was crowned.

By the 1950s, activities included a Friday night bonfire, pep rally and dance with receptions for fraternity and sorority alumni following the football game. The first “themed” Homecoming was in 1950 with “T.N.T. Tomcats Nip Titans” as the winning slogan from the ones submitted by students in a campus-wide contest. Thiel “nipped” the Westminster Titans, 20-7. Today, the theme is coordinated through the alumni office, which schedules many of the weekend activities with the staff in the student life division.

Alumni and students initially attended the regularly-scheduled service at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Greenville. From 1960-1971, services were held on campus in the Roth Auditorium until the Burgess Chapel in the William Passavant Center was dedicated in 1972. Now, a “Service of Remembrance” is held at the David Johnson Memorial Chapel on campus where the names of those alumni and friends who have died in the past year are remembered.

The challenges brought on by the pandemic brought new and different ways that alumni could celebrate their alma mater and reconnect. Alumni director **David Hummel '83** and the advancement staff and alumni board rose to the occasion and offered a variety of activities virtually that are described elsewhere in this publication. As President **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.** said in a meeting the following week, “We didn’t know what to expect with a virtual Homecoming but found that, by thinking creatively, David Hummel and the advancement staff were able to offer new options for connecting alumni with the College. While we much prefer having alumni come back to campus, we look forward to incorporating some of what we learned this past weekend for future Homecomings.”

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For more information or to host an online alumni gathering, contact
Director of Alumni Relations David Hummel '83 at alumni@thiel.edu.

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