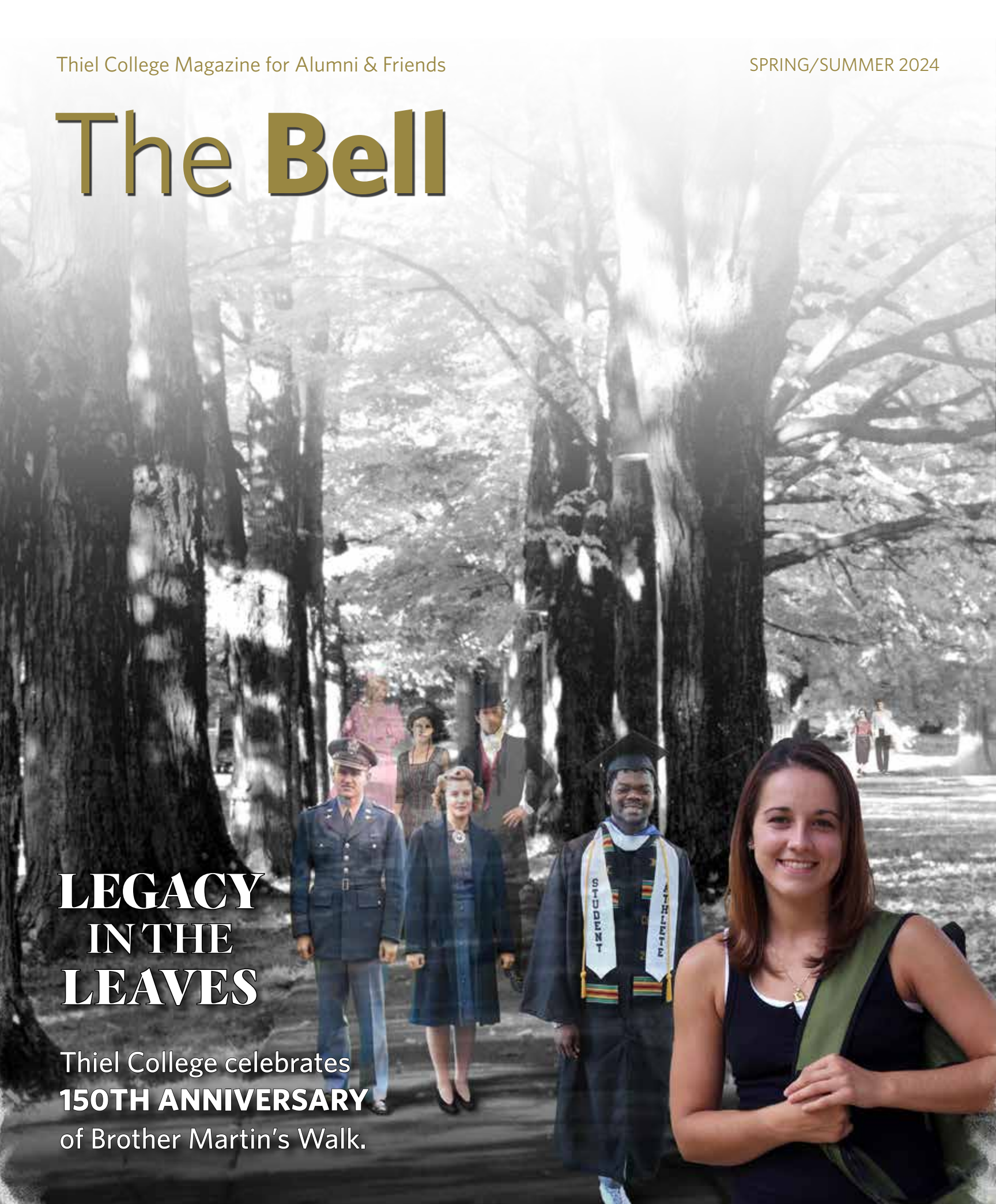


The Bell

LEGACY IN THE LEAVES

Thiel College celebrates
150TH ANNIVERSARY
of Brother Martin's Walk.



Timeless Moments

The Class of 1971's gift of more than \$110,000 is the largest class reunion gift in the history of the College. The gift ensures The Class of 1971 Quadrangle will continue its role as a central part of the student experience at Thiel. Members of the Class of 1971 recall a wide variety of activities on the 2-plus acres of grass on the northeast side of campus including their Commencement Exercises. The Class of 1971's leadership is reflected in the many activities that have taken place there including the dedication of a tree along another timeless campus landmark, Brother Martin's Walk. As part of this summer's 75th birthday party for alumni from the Class of 1971, members of the class will be on campus to dedicate the Quad.





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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,

Twice each year, I look forward to *The Bell* as a unique opportunity to connect with the members of the Thiel family. Our shared journey at Thiel College, marked by cherished traditions and innovations, continues to evolve.



This issue celebrates the poignant traditions that connect us to the past and the changes that make Thiel a dynamic and growing community. Both Commencement and the tree-lined Brother Martin's Walk are celebrating their 150th anniversary, while the David Miller Lecture Series is in only its second year and the Academic Center is in the first phase

of a multi-million dollar renovation that will enhance and strengthen student learning.

Our proud history of endowed chairs is a testament to our forward-thinking donors. We celebrated the five members of the campus community who have been named to these positions at this year's Academic Honors Convocation.

This year's Miller Lecture brought Assistant Surgeon General and Rear Admiral **Richard Childs, M.D.** to campus where he shared an enthralling view into the logistics and harrowing day-to-day challenges faced during the Ebola outbreak in Africa in 2014. He provided leadership lessons and emphasized the value of public service.

On May 10, we celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony of the Daniel and Dorothy Spence Academic Center with Trustees, campus leadership, staff, faculty, students, alumni, area elected officials and regional media to recognize those who made this exciting project possible and to share how the investment in this largest academic building on campus will enhance and expand student learning.

We are also excited about the upcoming 75th birthday party for the Class of 1971, an occasion that will also honor the Class of 1971 Quad, a space that reflects our dedication to creating an environment that nurtures learning and community spirit. This celebration is a perfect example of how Thiel blends tradition with modern enhancements to enrich our campus life.

While we are looking forward to a great summer, it is not too early to think about Homecoming on Sept. 27-29. In what has now become an annual tradition that we anticipate each year, the announcement of the Homecoming theme and logo, no spoilers here, is on the back page.

Go Tomcats!

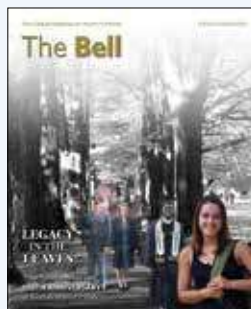
Susan Traverso
 Susan Traverso, Ph.D.

The Bell

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On the Cover










Brother Martin's Walk celebrates its 150th anniversary on Nov. 10, 2024. On page 17, you'll find the inspiration for the cover with the oldest known photo of Brother Martin's Walk. That photo dates back to the turn of the 20th century. On the cover is **Kristen (Skelley) Richards '09**, who was part of a photo shoot on the walk 15 years ago. Also, pictured is **AJ Green '24**, members of the military who were on campus in the 1940s, unidentifiable people in period costumes and a couple on the far right holding hands in the 1950s.

1874: WHAT A YEAR!

1874 was significant in Greenville with the graduation of Thiel College's first class and the planting of the trees along Brother Martin's Walk.

Here are some other significant events in U.S. and international history from the year.

<p>Pa. Oil Boom The oil boom started in 1859 and led to the founding-donation for Thiel College. In 1874, Pa. led the nation with nearly 11 million barrels of oil.</p> 	<p>Purdue University (Indiana) admits its first student.</p> 	<p>Impressionism is popularized as an art movement, with a reference to Claude Monet's work Impression, Sunrise.</p> 	<p>Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis receive a U.S. patent for blue jeans with copper rivets.</p> 
<p>Jesse James gang pulls first of two train robberies of the year in Missouri in January. The James gang robs a second train in Kansas in December.</p> 	<p>Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the U.S., is born (d. 1964) on August 31.</p> 	<p>John D. Rockefeller Jr., American entrepreneur, is born (d. 1960) on January 29.</p> 	



A poem as lovely as a tree

Alumnus **Ken Satterfield '53** was inspired by the state-champion sassafras tree profiled on the pages of the Fall/Winter edition of *The Bell*. His daughter, **Sharon Palguta**, shared his ode to the tree and Thiel College with the editorial team of *The Bell*.

Joyce Kilmer in 1915 said, "I think that I shall never see; A poem lovely as a tree," but Thiel will cut him some slack since he couldn't have imagined the scenario where 71 years after graduating, an alumnus is still moved by his connection to his alma mater.



Social media didn't exist 150 years ago when Brother Martin's Walk was planted, but we can imagine what it might have looked like through the years as the Thiel Community reflected upon the Walk.



"A Spirit on the Breeze"

Monroe Munson 1900

"Comes a spirit on the breeze
Stirring Brother Martin's trees
Turning all our hearts to thee,
Thiel!"



Rev. H.K. Gebhart
1880

"T.B. Roth was chief digger with any number of assistants. I do not know how this happened, but I have an idea that it followed a resolve on the part of the chief digger to be relieved from any part of real labor."



Frederic Irvin, 12th President of Thiel College

"Brother Martin's Walk is the Thiel landmark which seems to have the most meaning to our alumni."

T.B. Roth 1874, Fourth President of Thiel College

"As the trees bud and bloom and mature and cast their foliage of a thousand hues back upon the bosom of Mother Earth, may all be kept in remembrance of the changing scenes of life."

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.

The Tree. And Me.

—Ken Satterfield '53

There is a sassafras tree growing at the intersection of Amelia Earhart Drive and College Avenue. Oh, yes, they are streets on a gorgeous college campus.

In 1939, the tree was a lively 12 feet tall. That tree and I are almost the same age. We were Roosevelt's kids. We ate at the soup kitchens of the 1930s, went through the way of the 1940s, and gave into the Korean Conflict of the 1950s.

Today, the tree is 96 feet tall. For 150 years, trees have been planted along Brother Martin's Walk on campus. Yes, the trees and I have grown up in one world but are living in another. The smart phone can explore any of the more than 50 species of tree on the campus. Augmented reality gives you the experience, but it's better to take the walk.

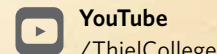
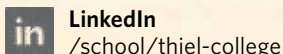
In Old English, the word for tree was 'treow.' 'Treow' meant promise or trust. Fearmongering of robots, AI (artificial intelligence), cyber war and climate change are the promise. The sassafras tree is the trust; the philosophy that teaches HOW TO THINK rather than WHAT TO THINK. It gave me the ROOTS to reach 92. (And I do like sassafras tea.)

A TOAST TO YOU. MAKE IT HAPPEN.

I'll be watching somewhere???



Follow us on social media



Andrews scholarship helps accounting student to the finish line



Mary Jo Andrews '63 (left), Austin Siko '24 and Julie Andrews met during November's annual scholarship recognition event.

The Dr. David '63 and Mrs. Mary Jo Andrews '63 Scholarship was established in honor of David and Mary Jo's life of service to Thiel College. **Dr. David Andrews '63 H'13** passed away in 2014, during his life he served as president of the Alumni Association Board of Directors and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Thiel College Board of Trustees. His wife, **Mary Jo (Enlow) '63**, is a committed alumna and 1963 graduate.

This scholarship stands as a testament to the legacy of David, a respected leader and cherished member of the Thiel community who, until his passing, served as the president of the Alumni

Association Board of Directors and as a pivotal member of the Executive Committee of the Thiel College Board of Trustees. His wife, Mary Jo, continues to embody the spirit of Thiel.

The scholarship supports accounting students who not only show academic promise but also demonstrate financial need, ensuring that the dreams of dedicated students like senior **Austin Siko '24** are realized. Siko, a native of Latrobe, Pa., exemplifies the type of student the Andrews envisioned supporting: a hardworking and committed individual who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in accounting and a minor in English.

Siko's journey at Thiel has been marked by leadership and service, including his roles as the student-manager for the men's volleyball team, president of Thiel College's chapter of Kappa Sigma fraternity, and district editor for Pennsylvania Circle K, among other honors. He was also chosen as the student speaker for the Academic Honors Convocation this spring.

"The scholarship I received has been very helpful not only financially, but for my mental stability in college. This scholarship has allowed me to focus on my academics and relived a portion of my finances, which can become overwhelming in college," Siko said. "I loved meeting and talking with Mary Andrews and commend her on continuing to be a guide for students such as myself. In addition, I love and respect her commitment to continuing her husband's legacy even after his passing."

"The generosity of our donors is critical in empowering our students. Scholarships like the one established by the Andrews not only honor their legacy but actively foster the next generation of leaders and professionals. It's a powerful reminder of how giving back shapes future possibilities," **Roberta Leonard**, Vice President for College Advancement, said.

This story not only celebrates the profound impact of alumni generosity but also underscores the values that define Thiel College—community, support, and the relentless pursuit of excellence, Leonard said.

Unmatched: Support for one-day fundraising event keeps climbing

Match Day was celebrated on a new day this year, but it continued the same positive momentum it has had throughout its history.

Match Day 2024 was the largest in the College's history when both donors and amount given are considered. Nearly every Match Day since the first one in 2014 has seen either an increase in donors or funds raised. The event is typically held in February, but this year it was celebrated on March 7.

670 donors contributed \$280,172 to Match Day. It is successive years with more than 600 donors. In 2023, the 636 donor total was the first time the event topped 600. This year's total nearly matched the fundraising record of \$283,000, which was set in 2022.

This year's theme was the Tomcat Games and included a pre-event torch relay that concluded with Tommy Tomcat entering the Rissell-Schreyer Dome to applause and a tunnel formed by students and faculty and staff members. The opening ceremony was held in the Dome as were a slate of fun games for students. Participants could also walk laps in the Dome and then sign the Match Day banner.

Fundraiser challenges seeking matching donations from the members of fraternities and sororities and clubs and organizations added a dose of competition and rivalry to the event. Those affinity groups compete each year to be the top donating organization, with Phi Theta Phi winning the Greek

There's more online.

Watch the student torch relay.
ishortn.ink/TCtorchrn

Get a full recap at thiel.edu/matchday



Challenge for the top fraternity and Zeta Tau Alpha sorority with the most donors this year. 346 people with Greek connections contributed to Match Day.

Surpassing all 15 of the match challenges added \$83,000 to the total donations made that day.

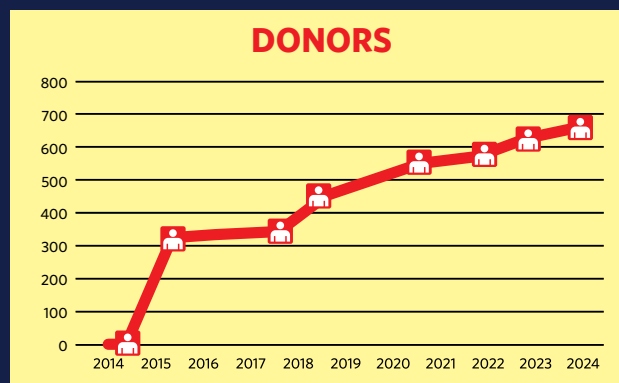
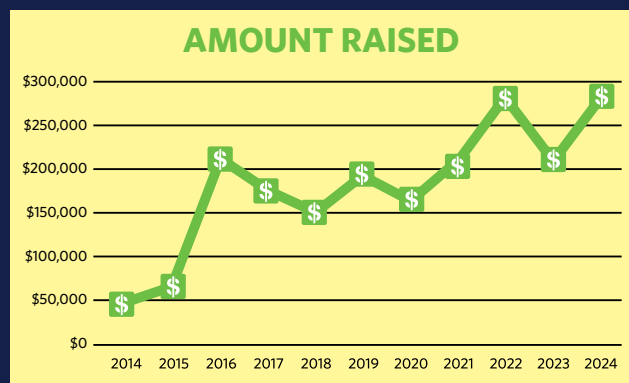
"With an unprecedented level of contributions, we're empowered to continue supporting the College," **David Mogle**, director of the Thiel Fund, said. "This incredible generosity fuels tangible change in the lives of countless students we serve. This commitment propels us forward."

Since its inception in 2014, the giving event has raised more than \$1.9 million for the College.

"That more than half our donors had connections to Greek organizations and another third of donors had ties to athletic teams and other co-curricular activities reminds us all that the growth and opportunities for leadership students find at Thiel College happen in more places than just the classroom," said **Roberta Leonard**, Vice President for College Advancement.

Trending in the right direction

The amount raised and donors have had some variability from year to year, but overall the trend lines have been climbing for the one-day fundraising event.





Students and alumni worked together in early April to sort and label the geology kits that will be distributed to area elementary schools.



Students contributed to the more than 200 hours that have been dedicated to sorting and labeling the geology specimens on campus.

Thiel rocks!

Alumni hope sample kits lead to a new generation of Tomcats

While geology stopped being a major at Thiel in the late 1990s, the College has maintained a collection of rocks and minerals for use as part of the Environmental Science and program and geology courses that are taught. As part of the effort to reorganize and renovate the Daniel and Dorothy Spence Academic Center, the College came up with a plan to give the materials accumulated over the decades a new home.

Geology alumni **Pat Findle '79**, **Dave Allison '79** and **Dick Valesky '80** in cooperation with **Gary Witosky '79**, Professor of Environmental Science **Anna Reinsel, Ph.D. '06**, Professor of Education **Kara Shreckenghost** and Vice President for College Advancement **Roberta Leonard** came up with a plan. They created geology kits with samples and a curriculum that could be given to area elementary schools to help children learn about geology.

"Our geology buddies joke about it. We look at rocks like puppies. You want them all to have a home," Findle said. "You want to find the rocks a home. We want to make sure we get some real value out of them."

The faculty and staff were not the only ones who worked on the project. Dozens of students volunteered to sort and label the samples to be included in the kits. Findle estimated that as many as 200 hours had been invested in the project as of late April.

"Third or fourth graders are the perfect age range," Findle said. "The kits will have 24 different samples... rocks, minerals and fossils and all labeled. That is a labor-intensive and massive effort, that we could not do if not for the volunteers."

This project embodies the ethos of Thiel College's strategic commitment to community outreach and educational service. By fostering such initiatives, Thiel not only reinforces its role as

a vital community member but also ensures that the legacy of its geology program will continue to inspire and educate future generations, long after the program itself has concluded its direct contributions.

"It's great to think that we could inspire with that material," he said. "The kits will be Thiel branded. We won't know the ultimate impact but our hope is it leads to recruits down the road."

Not all of the samples will be distributed and organizers are hoping that as a way to re-engage the geology alumni that there could be an open house where the Thiel community could claim some of the specimens or perhaps the samples could be put in the time capsule to be discovered by future geologists.

"They might be a treasure for someone to find them," Findle said. "If we can't find them a home and then we will release them back into the wild."

Daniel and Dorothy Spence celebrated during groundbreaking



Daniel Spence stood at the podium in front of the Daniel and Dorothy Spence Academic Center on May 10, a little more than 70 years after members of his family dedicated Harter Hall.

The College was celebrating the groundbreaking of the Daniel and Dorothy Spence Academic Center. The groundbreaking marks the beginning of a transformative multi-million-dollar renovation project for its largest academic building.

Spence said the motivation for the \$4 million gift was from his wife, Dorothy Spence, who passed away in 2021. Her directive was to donate the money to help others.

"I'm only half of this, the other half of this gift comes from Dorothy," Spence said.

The renovation will enhance multiple entryways, the main lobby and the lower level, which will include a new office suite and a significant investment for the Department of Nursing.

Future enhancements will modernize labs, classrooms and the entrance to the Langenheim Memorial Library.

Spence's family connections also include his grandfather **Nathan Harter**. Harter was acting dean of Thiel College

from 1916-18, treasurer from 1918-1921, professor of mathematics for more than 40 years, and coach of the football, baseball and tennis teams at different points during his career. The second-floor atrium of the Haer Family Science and Arts Connector is named the Harter Atrium.



Above: A rendering of the modified Daniel and Dorothy Spence Academic Center entrance. Below: President **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.** is joined by guests for the groundbreaking on May 10.

Mentor of the Year event celebrates, alumni, professionals and educators

The third annual Mentor of the Year event recognized the extraordinary contributions of alumni, educators, and professionals in a ceremony held in the Howard Miller Student Center's Sawhill Georgian Room on April 26.

The event spotlighted 33 individual teachers from 21 school districts across western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, all nominated by Thiel College students. These nominations were based on the profound impact these educators had on their students during their high school years. More than 3,000 votes were cast in the education mentors contest, reflecting the community's engagement and support. Overall, six education professionals and six professionals from the arts; business; media, science, technology, engineering; math; and education were recognized.

2024 Mentor of the Year Professional honorees:

- James Pedas Communication Professional: **Lindsey Watson**, News Anchor, WKBN
- Simon Chiu Science Professional: **Mark Marmo '93**, CEO, Deep Well Services
- Leah Dever Women in STEM Professional: **Susan Calderbank, D.M.D.**,

Director of Patient Care, Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine School of Dentistry

- Gary Witosky Business Professional: **Dotun Akinwale Jr. '13**, Assistant General Manager, Charlotte Hornets
- Thiel College Education Professional: **Corey Russell '07**, Principal, Euclid High School
- Thiel College Leadership in the Arts: **Dr. Louis Zona H'18**, Executive Director, Butler Institute of American Art

2024 Education Mentors of the Year:

- Sarah Taylor-Rogers Women in STEM: **Miranda Callihan**, Karns City High School
- Patrick Hecking Science Educator: **Jeffry Sposito**, Sharpville High School
- Sandy Parker Business Educator: **Scott Weaver**, Reynolds High School
- Jim Cunningham '77 Media Mentor: **Matthew Gehly**, Greenville High School
- Thiel College Education Professional: **Debra Bushey**, Derry Area High School
- Thiel College Performing Arts Mentor: **James Dutko**, Jamestown High School

There's more online.

See photos from the event:
[ishortn.in/24cMentorPhotos](https://shortn.in/24cMentorPhotos)





Childs shares stories of life-saving research work and fighting Ebola outbreak at Miller Lecture Series

Rear Admiral **Richard Childs, M.D.**, the Assistant United States Surgeon General and Scientific Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at the National Institutes of Health spoke at the second annual David Miller Lecture Series in April.

He discussed the life-saving cancer research he conducted along with his experiences leading the U.S. response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014.

The lecture, part of a series endowed by a generous gift from **Dr. Jagdish N. Sheth H'07** and his wife, **Madhu Sheth**, stands as a pillar for academic discourse at Thiel College. This prestigious event is open to the public, free of charge, continuing the College's tradition of bringing scholarly discussions to the community.



Community meets award-winning author

Award-winning author **Sharon G. Flake**, whose first book "The Skin I'm In" is internationally recognized and has 1.5 million copies in print on six continents, spoke to the community in January.

Flake, is widely celebrated for her contributions to literature, spoke to students about her journey and creative process. She answered questions from the audience following her presentation and met with students individually before leaving campus.



Producer of "The Wire" speaks as part of Pedas family visit

George Pelecanos, author, producer, and screenwriter, spoke to the Thiel College community Tuesday as part of the visit from Thiel College alumnus and benefactor **James Pedas '50 H'89**.

Renowned for his work on the critically acclaimed TV series "The Wire," Pelecanos has also made significant contributions as a writer and producer for other film and television projects.

At this special engagement, Pelecanos discussed his multifaceted career, focusing on his experiences as both a writer and producer. The Q&A session was facilitated by Thiel College Assistant Professor of Communication and Department Chair **Matthew Humphrey**. Following his discussion with Humphrey, Pelecanos answered questions from the community and met with students.



Thiel recognized for gold status as Military Friendly institution

Thiel College earned a 2024-2025 Military Friendly® School Gold Award. The recognition means the College scored within 10 percent of the 10th-ranked private liberal arts institution not offering a doctorate in tabulated scores.

Seniors present research at Pennsylvania Capitol

Thiel College students **Anthony Baileys '24** and **Paige Long '24**



presented their undergraduate research during the Undergraduate Research at the Capitol-PA Poster Conference in Harrisburg, Pa. on March 19.

The Undergraduate Research at the Capitol-Pennsylvania Poster Conference is an educational event that allows undergraduate students enrolled in Pennsylvania's colleges and universities to showcase their research talents to the Commonwealth's key decision-makers.

Baileys, of Dayton, Pa., is a biology

major and a 2020 graduate of Redbank Valley H.S. Baileys plans to attend Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, which is the veterinary school of Virginia Tech and the University of Maryland.

Long, of Huntingdon, Pa., is a psychology and neuroscience double major and a 2020 graduate of Huntingdon Area High School. She plans to attend Tufts University (Mass.) to pursue a master's degree in child study and human development.



Student wins IBS broadcast award

Junior **Jason Jewett '25** won an Intercollegiate Broadcasting System award recently during IBS's 83rd annual conference in New York City at the Sheraton Times. Jewett, a media and journalism major from Kinsman, Ohio, won for Best Underwriting Spot.

"It is a huge honor to be nominated for your great work, just to be

recognized as a nominee is awesome," Jewett said.

All together Thiel College earned five nominations. Jewett was nominated for Best Documentary, Best Station ID, Best Underwriting Spot. Jewett and **Kinsey Lowers '24** were nominated together for Best Show Promo.

Christina Newman '25 and **Jacob Reeher '26** were nominated for Best Radio Drama.

Psychology Professor wins conference award for Netflix-based teaching strategy

Associate Professor of Psychology **Kristel M. Gallagher, Ph.D.** won the Doug Bernstein Award for her presentation of her Netflix-based curriculum judged as the most humorous, creative, or as making the strongest contribution to the teaching of introductory psychology at the 46th Annual National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology in Bonita

Springs, Fla. from Jan. 3-6. Gallagher's presentation, "If You Can't Beat 'em, Join 'em - From Netflix and Chill to Netflix and Skill," described the creation, implementation, and assessment of the "Netflix and Skill" assignments.



Third cohort of PAs receive white coats

Thirty-six students in Thiel College's third cohort of Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies received their white coats as part of the program's White Coat Ceremony on April 6 in Bly Hall of the Academic Center on campus.

The following students received their white coats during the ceremony:

- **James Abicunas M.S.'25**, of Ringtown, Pa.
- **Sophia Antonopoulos M.S.'25**, of Towson, Md.
- **Miranda Behe M.S.'25**, of Franklin, Pa.
- **Harmony Black M.S.'25**, of Wellsville, Ohio
- **Jada Clendenin M.S.'25**, of New Philadelphia, Ohio
- **Brent Clutter M.S.'25**, of Washington, Pa.
- **Marissa Cupp M.S.'25**, of Saint Clairsville, Ohio
- **Kara Davis M.S.'25**, of Beaver, Pa.
- **Autumn Duncan M.S.'25**, of Youngstown, Ohio
- **Feven Khsay M.S.'25**, of Silver Spring, Md.
- **Kalissa Krapp M.S.'25**, of Milmay, N.J.
- **Ja Ding Pan Lahpai M.S.'25**, of Springfield, Va.
- **Fiona Lam M.S.'25**, of New York, N.Y.
- **Madeline Lauther M.S.'25**, of Sharpsville, Pa.
- **Caroline Lawrence M.S.'25**, of Galena, Ohio
- **Maria Lawhorne M.S.'25**, of Pittsburgh, Pa.
- **Anthony Lefoer M.S.'25**, of Poland, Ohio
- **Mackenzie Maasen M.S.'25**, of Scottsdale, Ari.
- **Zachary Malicky M.S.'25**, of Northern Cambria, Pa.
- **Kayla Martinez M.S.'25**, of Aurora, Ill.
- **Bryan Merino M.S.'25**, of Jacksonville, Fla.
- **Aliya Mitchell M.S.'25**, of Jacksonville, Fla.
- **Brady Moore M.S.'25**, of Tabernacle, N.J.
- **Mariah Mosier M.S.'25**, of Slippery Rock, Pa.
- **Katelyn Norris M.S.'25**, of Canandaigua, N.Y.
- **Brooke Phelps M.S.'25**, of Conneaut Lake, Pa.
- **Jack Prothero M.S.'25**, of Mars, Pa.
- **Johnathan Rabon M.S.'25**, of Hershey, Pa.
- **Samuel Sargent M.S.'25**, of Richmond, Ind.
- **Tony Silva Fernandez M.S.'25**, of Hialeah, Fla.
- **Jonathan Stemm M.S.'25**, of Cheswick, Pa.
- **Danielle Sterling M.S.'25**, of Sharon, Pa.
- **Jake Weber M.S.'25**, of Weber, Ohio
- **AnnaLynn Wharry M.S.'25**, of New Castle, Pa.
- **Stanley Woo M.S.'25**, of Staten Island, N.Y.
- **Marissa Wuilliez M.S.'25**, of Farmington, N.Y.



See photos from the ceremony at ishortn.ink/24TCPAWhitecoatPhoto
Watch the ceremony at ishortn.ink/TCPAWhitecoatVideo



Commons area of Greenville Hall named in honor of Mary Theresa Hall

Chalk dust on fingers,
A kind smile, a guiding hand.
Grace Under Pressure.

—David Deist '09

*Tribute under the portrait
of Mary Theresa Hall in the
Greenville Commons*



Rod E. Wilt '86; Professor of English and James Pedas Endowed Chair of Communication **Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D.**; **David Deist '09**, **Barbara Deist** and **Dale Deist** stand with the portrait that will join the portrait of Thiel College's 18th President **Robert Olson, Ph.D. '60 H'09** hanging in Hall Commons of Greenville Hall.

At the start of the spring semester Professor of English **Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D.** was recognized as the James Pedas '50 H '89 Chair of Communication at Thiel College's Academic Honors Convocation, and she finished the semester with the piece of historic Greenville Hall named in her honor.

On Sunday, May 12, Hall was joined by students, members of the Board of Trustees, alumni, faculty colleagues, Thiel staff members and her brother, **Patrick**, as the first floor of Greenville Hall was christened as Hall Commons. In conjunction with the naming honors, a portrait of Hall was hung in the hallway.

"It is such an honor and privilege to accept this gift on behalf of the wonderful Deist family, whom I met shortly after coming to Thiel and whose son, David, I had the honor of teaching in English classes," Hall said. "This gift recognizes their generosity and means so much to me since its motivation comes from parents and a former student, both of whom are the foundation of learning. I thank Dale, Barbara, David and his wife, Theresa, and promise that the students and faculty who will continue to grace this building will be inspired by the humanities that are housed

here: religion, philosophy, language, history, English, and the Dietrich Honors Institute."

The gift to name the commons area of Greenville Hall, which was built in 1872 by the citizens of Greenville and is the oldest building on campus, in her honor was made by the Deist family, including former Board of Trustees member



Students, alumni and faculty members were on hand to celebrate the naming of the commons area in Greenville Hall for Professor of English **Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D.**

Dale Deist, and his wife, **Barbara**, their son, **David**, a 2009 graduate of Thiel, and his wife, **Theresa**. The first floor of the building will be called Hall Commons.

“When our family was considering how best to honor Dr. Hall, we looked at several places on campus to put her portrait. In the end, we decided it was appropriate to put it in Greenville Hall where all her students would have passed through many times during their studies at Thiel,” Barbara Deist said.

Hall began teaching at Thiel in 1999. She served as Associate Academic Dean for the College from 2016 to 2018. In 2022, Hall was named the Dietrich Honors Institute Student Advisory Board the inaugural DHI Professor of the Year Award. Students in the DHI also dedicated the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics room in the Langenheim Memorial Library in her honor in 2022.

Hall has also served the College as the faculty chair. Her work has been published in academic journals and presented at academic conferences. She was also named the Thiel College Professor of the Year for the 2021-2022 academic year, which is a distinguished award given to professors who exemplify service and hard work both in and out of the classroom. Hall received her bachelor’s degree in English and secondary certification in English and French from Seton Hill University; a master’s in literature from Carnegie Mellon University; and a Ph.D. from Duquesne University.

Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D.; Steven Kandray; Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D., Melissa Oakes '03 and Craig Thurber were recognized as endowed chairs during the Academic Honors Convocation in February.

Endowed chairs recognized during Honors Convocation



Four faculty members and a coach were recognized as endowed chairs at the Academic Honors Convocation in February.

Professor of English **Mary Theresa Hall, Ph.D.** formally recognized as the James Pedas '50 H '89 Chair of Communication.

Trustee emeritus **Dr. James Pedas '50 H'89** provided the lead gift for the endowed chair. He is a trustee emeritus and served on the Board of Trustees from 1985-2000.

Assistant Professor of Business Administration and Accounting **Steven Kandray** was recognized as the Norman P. Mortensen H'81 Chair of Economics. **Dr. Peter Mortensen H'81** is the retired Chairman of FNB Corporation and a Thiel College Trustee Emeritus. He served on the Board of Trustees from 1987-1998.

Associate Professor of History and Director of the College’s honors institute **Sheila Nowinski, Ph.D.** was awarded the Kenneth '31 and Marianna Brown '32 Dietrich Honors Institute.

Philanthropist, businessman, scholar and proud northwest Pennsylvania native **William S. Dietrich II**, bequeathed a \$25 million fund to Thiel College upon his passing in 2011. Dietrich’s gift is the largest made to the College in its history. His gift founded the Kenneth and Marianna Brown Dietrich Honors Institute in honor of William’s parents.

Professor of Business Administration and Chair of the Arthur McGonigal Department of Business Administration and Accounting **Melissa Oakes '03** was recognized as the David M. Miller Chair of Accounting.

The chair is named for **David M. Miller '61 H'20**, a mentor of Oakes. He was a 1961 graduate of Thiel College and taught at Thiel from 1963 to 2020.

Craig Thurber was recognized as the Rod E. Wilt '86 Head Coach for Thiel College Wrestling.

Thurber, who is also an Adjunct Professor of Health and Physical Education, recently completed his 21st season as Thiel’s wrestling coach.

Thiel Athletic Hall of Fame member **Rod E. Wilt '86** and his wife, **Jill (Gardner) Wilt '85**, made the donation to endow the head wrestling coach position at the College in 2015, and Thurber is the only coach to hold the position. It is the largest donation to any single athletic program in Thiel history, and the first endowed coaching position in the history of the Presidents’ Athletic Conference.

Ellsworth tells graduates about finding and being a 'Dr. Bob'

Thiel College awarded degrees to 176 students during its 150th Commencement Exercises on May 12 in a front of a full William A. Passavant Memorial Center.

As part of the event, **Laura Ellsworth H'24** was the speaker and honorary degree recipient for her work with the Eradicate Hate Summit. She co-founded the summit with Thiel College alumnus and former University of Pittsburgh Chancellor **Mark Nordenberg, J.D. '70 H'97**. Senior **Connor Lovic '24** was the senior orator. He started by admitting that Thiel College wasn't his top choice but was convinced by the tag team of his grandparents, Greenville residents, and late Professor **David Miller '61 H'20**. Lovic urged his peers to find their purpose.

Ellsworth told the Thiel Community the story of her father, **Dr. Bob Ellsworth**, who helped inspire the model for the Ronald McDonald House, whose mission is "to support and provide family housing and resources while their sick child receives treatment." Later in life, Ellsworth met someone who was inspired by the person her father, Dr. Bob, mentored.



Laura Ellsworth H'24 wove together elements of her life that included Frank Sinatra, the Ronald McDonald House, Rod Stewart and the British Monarchy, during her address to students, but emphasized the importance of human relationships.

"So my charge to you graduates, for whom are you a Dr. Bob? It's not too early to start," Ellsworth said. "And I will tell you right now, you don't need a title or authority to be that person.

All you need to do is be that person. Be a Dr. Bob and the reason that I am so blessed to be here today is because one of my Dr. Bob's is a Thiel graduate—Mark Nordenberg.



Class of 2024

By the Numbers

By Major

Elementary Education/ Special Education8%
Communication Sciences & Disorders7%
Exercise Science6%
Biology5%
Finance5%
Management5%
Health Systems5%
Neuroscience5%

By Department

Business	20%
Biology	12%
Math	10%
Neuroscience	9%
Education	8%
Communication Sciences & Disorders	7%
Environmental Science	7%
Psychology	6%

Legacies

Families celebrate their Thiel College connections



Carol Birdy '24 and her father, **Dean Birdy '80**.



John Robbins '24 and his father, **Michael Robbins '96**, and mother, **Sara Evans Cope '98**.



Leah Orbell Gill '94 and her son, **Francis (Frank) Gill Jr. '24**.



Kimberly Flickinger '05 and her daughter, **Taylor Pearce '24**.

“And so the reason it was so important, that I’m so grateful to all of you for inviting me ... is because this is my opportunity to publicly thank my Dr. Bob, for what he has meant to my life, what he has meant to western Pennsylvania, and to show you he was formed by his experience at Thiel.”

After getting nearly all the family, friends, faculty and staff members in attendance to their feet after asking a series of questions about supporting the graduates, she said, “I would like to return the favor what you did for me.”

She asked the students to stand and turn around to face the auditorium full of people standing.

“It is my great privilege to introduce you to some of your Dr. Bob’s will you please join me in standing and thanking your Dr. Bob’s publicly today?”

She finished her address to the students by saying.

When you take your first steps out

into the world as a Thiel graduate be a Dr. Bob. “The world desperately needs you. (It) needs the kind of people that Thiel builds... people of conscience and candor and courage and honor and decency. And people who get things done.”

There's more online.

Watch the 150th Commencement Exercises: iishortn.in/TCCommencementVideo24

See photos from the day: ishortn.in/TCCommencementPhotos24





A different mystery for Amelia Earhart H'32

Citing what was common practice in the 1930s, dedicating trees for people, **Kent Taylor**, a National Resources Program Specialist at the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources who is married to President **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.**, wonders if there is a correlation between the state champion sassafras tree that is near the intersection of Amelia Earhart Drive and College Avenue. The tree appears to have been planted around the time when Earhart was on campus to receive her honorary degree.

"I'm sure there were many celebrations. Was there a tree planted in her honor? This was something that was done often in the 1930s. We know it happened up in Chautauqua, New York when she arrived there on one of her visits," Taylor said. "It must have been quite a day when she arrived on campus. And so it's a curiosity of mine, did we honor her in some way because using trees was common. And here we have a tree, our state champion tree, that actually was planted about the same time that she arrived and so there's always the chance I suppose that she did have a tree named or a tree planted in her honor. And I would like to think that that she did and she had a nice story to tell about her visit."



Students dwarfed by some of the trees on Brother Martin's Walk in the early 2000s.

Roots of Reverence



The Legacy of Brother Martin's Walk

Amid the seasonal tapestry of Thiel College's verdant campus lies a pathway steeped in tradition and shaded by history—Brother Martin's Walk. This arboreal avenue, first taking root in the post-Civil War era, has borne witness to 150 years of Thiel's unfolding story, one that intertwines the College's growth with the nation's own evolving landscape.

In the autumnal glow of 1874, Thiel's inaugural tree-planting ceremony

marked Martin Luther's birthday and laid the foundation for what would become a hallowed college landmark. Students and staff, trading shovels for shovels, transformed the Ridgeway farm's soil into a living, leafy memorial that has flourished into a thriving corridor of about 100 trees. Eventually, 392 trees would be planted around the campus.

From the maples that first heralded Thiel's dedication to growth, Brother



The oldest known photo of Brother Martin's Walk dating back to the 1900s.

Martin's Walk emerged as a testament to the institution's commitment to education and community.

Kent Taylor is a National Resources Program Specialist at the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and is married to President **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.**, who became the 20th president in 2016. Taylor is working on the plans to make the campus an arboretum, helped the College earn its distinction as a Tree Campus and is collaborating to document the inventory of



Another state champion contender on campus

The state champion sassafras tree along Amelia Earhart Drive is not only tree on campus to reach statewide distinction.

A shingle oak tree along Route 18 near the William A. Passavant Memorial Center is both a rarity and a tree with state championship contender status. It is 85 feet tall and 10 feet in circumference.

"It's the second largest in western Pennsylvania and the fifth largest in the state of Pennsylvania," said **Kent Taylor**, a National Resources Program Specialist at the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources who is married to President **Susan Traverso, Ph.D.** "So, we're going to watch this tree over the years. Keep it keep it healthy, keep it going. And perhaps one day in the future, not too long from now, it will be the state champion."

The shingle oak does better in more southern locations, so a tree of this size, this far north is uncommon, Taylor said. The only other one found in western Pa. that rivals it is 88 feet tall and found in the southwest corner of the state in Beaver County.

In 1916, the tree was dedicated to Thiel College's seventh President H.W. Elson.



A path that has been followed by thousands of students, faculty, staff and friends of the College, students walk over a leaf-covered Brother Martin's Walk in the 1960s.



The total solar eclipse as seen from Brother Martin's Walk behind Greenville Hall on April 8, 2024. It will be the 22nd century before the Brother Martin's Walk sees another total solar eclipse.



Photo by Ray Stubblebine '68

trees on campus and complete the presidential tree dedication.

Echoing the College's journey, the Walk has been lovingly tended through the years, with each generation nurturing and expanding its canopy. Today, this walkway stands not only as a reminder of Thiel's resilience and adaptability but also as a symbol of love and commitment for those couples who walk the length of Brother Martin's Walk and share a kiss at the end will be engaged to be married.

Brother Martin's Walk traditions include the annual tree dedication from a graduating class during Commencement weekend and the student processions along it. Students march the length of Brother Martin's Walk only twice. Once during Opening Convocation when new students

“The trees are a dedication to so many people who are working and have worked hard in the past to keep them in good condition, to replace the old ones, and enhance the campus for us over the years.”

Kent Taylor

are officially welcomed to the Thiel Community and then again four years later during Commencement.

The importance of the Brother Martin's Walk was recognized by Frederic Irvin, Thiel College's 12th President when he said in 1959 that, "Brother Martin's Walk is the Thiel landmark which seems to have the most meaning to our alumni."

In 1927, **Charles Franklin 1927** penned a senior thesis on the Walk's trees—a scholarly embrace of Thiel's verdant sentinels. Further affirmation came in 1939 with the detailed arboreal map that endeavored to protect each tree's legacy done by **Charles Ripper '39**. In 1959, the Board of Trustees approved a landscape architect-drawn plan to plant hundreds of new trees and shrubs in various



Greenville Hall (left) and Roth Hall (right) can be seen in the background of this photo from the 1920s.

parts of campus. In 1974, on the 100th anniversary of Brother Martin's Walk, 13 trees were planted on the campus, one for each of the 13 presidents who had served the College during those 100 years. Since 1996, graduating classes have dedicated a tree along Brother Martin's walk to replace trees lost over the years. In 2021, a group of alumni and friends purchased 18 trees so that Brother Martin's Walk would continue to be the canopy walkway of campus.

"The trees are a dedication to so many people who are working and have worked hard in the past to keep them in good condition, to replace the old ones, and enhance the campus for us over the years," Taylor said.

Thiel has now been recognized as a tree campus by the Arbor Day Foundation, one of only 24 campuses

in Pennsylvania with that distinction. It was first awarded in 2018 and has been renewed every year since. With more than 50 varieties of trees, Thiel College is also seeking the designation as an arboretum.

"Folks like our facilities department and our biology department and faculty and staff throughout the organization have worked very hard to keep our trees healthy to keep our eye on the ball in terms of getting this move towards official designation as a tree arboretum. It's not unique thing. So, we have lots to help us to kind of help guide us in how to do that," Taylor said.

An inventory of the trees began in 2019 with Department of Biology students and Professor of Biology **Fatimata Pale, Ph.D.** The students identified the trees, marked the

locations and added notes about the tree's condition and the environment.

"This was a great exercise for students to do and it helped us get a start on the arboretum project," Taylor said.

Students of Professor of Environmental Science and Chemistry **Anna Reinsel, Ph.D. '06** helped Taylor document the state-champion sassafras tree on campus.

"We're very proud of our trees," Taylor said.

Work is underway to dedicate trees for the seven Presidents who have served since the first 13 presidents were honored with a tree. This work will be completed in time for the 150th anniversary of Brother Martin's Walk this November.

Akinwale named Assistant GM for Charlotte Hornets



Dotun Akinwale Jr. '13 was appointed the Assistant General Manager of the Charlotte Hornets in March. Akinwale was appointed by Executive Vice President of Basketball Operations Jeff Peterson major sports media outlets reported.

The Charlotte Hornets confirmed Akinwale's hiring in March.

The hiring is the latest step in a journey that has had three stops with NBA franchises.

Akinwale's career spans more than 11 years in the league. Before joining the Hornets, he held the position of Vice President of Player Personnel with the Atlanta Hawks, where his leadership and eye for talent were part of shaping the team's roster and scouting operations.

During his tenure with the Hawks, Akinwale climbed the ranks from Manager of Scouting to Director of Scouting and eventually to Senior Director of Player Personnel.

"My experience at Thiel College was instrumental in my path," Akinwale said.

His basketball journey began long before his executive days. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in business

administration in 2013 and started his professional journey with an internship that led to a role as a basketball operations coordinator with the Orlando Magic, setting the stage for his future successes in the NBA.

Akinwale said the relationships with, "all of my teammates, coach (Tim) Loomis, the Thiel community in general" were an important part of his experience as an undergraduate.

He said in 2013 when he earned an internship with the Orlando Magic, "It was always a dream of mine to work in the front office for an NBA team. I feel extremely lucky; it's really hard to get into the NBA."

Akinwale knew he wanted to work in sport in some capacity by the end of his sophomore year, he said. He then spent the next two summers working for Sports Management Group World-wide, Inc. (SMGW). Located in Fairfax, Va., SMGW represents professional athletes throughout the country.

"I thought I wanted to be an agent," Akinwale said in 2013, explaining his summer employment with SMGW. "After my junior year, I decided I wanted to work in the NBA in the front office, and I started to map it out."

Help Thiel College reach the goal line!

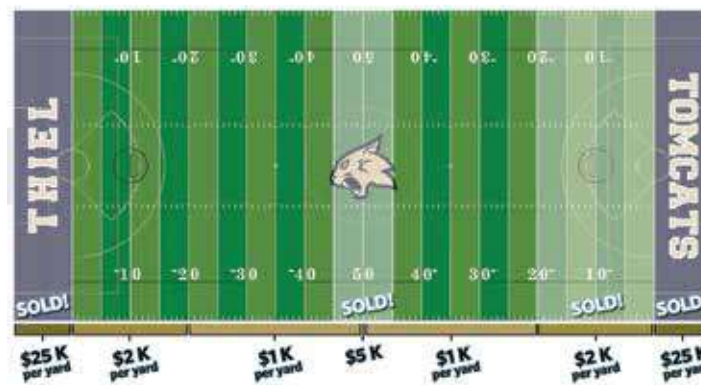
Members of the Thiel Community have a unique opportunity to become a part of Thiel College history by contributing to the Turf Challenge. Alumni Stadium at Stoeber Field is home to seven sports team and this project is crucial for maintaining the quality and safety of our athletic facilities.

For this special fundraising campaign supporters can sponsor a yard line on the field.

- Between the 20-yard lines: Each yard line costs \$1,000.
- Inside the 20-yard lines: Each yard line costs \$2,000.

Anyone passionate about supporting the turf replacement project can spread their contribution over four years while still receiving the full benefits of sponsorship. Members of Greek organizations and other groups within the Thiel Community can share the cost of a yard line or area of the field, making it easier to contribute and be part of this historic project.

TOMCAT TURF CHALLENGE



Large sections of the field have already been sponsored and 18 individual yard lines have been purchased.

For more information, contact Vice President for College Advancement **Roberta Leonard** at rleonard@thiel.edu or 724-589-2024.

— 1950s —

William E. Phillips Sr. '54 is the owner of Niles International. He and his wife, Nancy, reside in Ft. Myers, Fla.

Myrtie (Lewis) Manes '57 volunteered to reach out to her classmates last fall. She reconnected with **John and Barbara (Obenauf) Auten '57, Charlene (Sullivan) Baird '57, Nancy (Prosser) Ball '57, Wanda (McGaughhey) Benning '57, Patricia (Spadafore) Ewald '57, Dr. Shirley Gilmore '57, Eleanor (Gilmore) Kenny '57, and Barbara (McKinney) Stoyer '57.**

Joanne R. Hershberger '57 is retired and living in Greensburg, Pa. She enjoys going to the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts and Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts in Pittsburgh. She worked for U.S. Steel for 35 years.

Helen (McCullough) Hopkinson '57 resides in Irwin, Pa. She golfs in two leagues and plays bridge twice a month. In addition, she performs with the county chorus, church choir and bell choir. She has served on her church council for three years.

— 1960s —

In the Class of 1962 photo printed in the Fall/Winter 2023 edition of *The Bell*, the name of **Sally (Griffith) Ocker '62** was omitted and her husband name's, **Richard Ocker '62**, was misspelled.

R. Clinton (Clint) Bowman '63 lives in South Windsor, Conn. He is the head coach of the girls' cross country team at South Windsor, Conn. High School. This is his 58th year of coaching, going back to when he started the Thiel cross country team in 1960. He

regrets missing the Class of 1963 60th reunion, but he had to coach.

Judith M. (Morgan) Jeffrey '65 and her husband, Peter, live in Pittsburgh.

Karen R. (Runniger) Barney '67 resides in Reno, Nev.

Harriet (Porter) Vender '67 and **Phillip Vender '67** live in McLean, Va. closer to their son and his family in Pittsburgh and their daughter and her family in New York City. Harriet is a retired middle school science teacher, and Phillip is a retired ELCA pastor.

— 1970s —

Caroline Mendis '70 is celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry. Mendis is the longest-serving female pastor within the Southwest Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She was ordained

Linda (Schueltz) Kemick

Residence: Bradford, Pa.

Professional Experience: Kemick attended Thiel in 1973-74 and completed her degree at Pennsylvania State University. She worked as a banker, holding many different responsibilities, including commercial lending, branch manager, loan officer and customer service representative duties.

Favorite memory of Thiel: One of her fond recollections from her time at Thiel is sitting outside with a friend on a beautiful day and her dad randomly visiting on that day. She said it was nice to see him. She also remembers relatives coming to visit because Thiel meant so much to them.

Reason For Giving Back: Many of her relatives attended Thiel, her family is Lutheran and Thiel is a Lutheran School.



The Thiel Fund File

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

CLASS NOTES

on June 9, 1974. Pastor Mendis served in the Upstate New York Synod before joining the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod in 1989, serving at Christ Lutheran Church in Millvale, just outside Pittsburgh until she retired in 2014. She and her husband, George, who passed away in 2016, both served Christ Lutheran Church.

Kenneth B. Eves '71 and his spouse, Katherine, reside in Raleigh, N.C.

Ruth E. (Rogos) Reefer '72 lives in Brockport, Pa.



Paul Springer '72 is retired and lives in Philipsburg, Pa.

Dennis Syska '72 resides in Irwin, Pa.

Chris (Marshall) Van Dusen '74 was awarded "Madison Citizen of the Year" by the Kiwanis Club. The award is based on contributions and service to the town of Madison, Ohio.

Lora (Thunell) Lekos '75 shares a picture of three generations. Her daughter Kristina Warchol,



DPT recently gave birth to identical twin girls. Pictured are Lora, her daughter and

her three granddaughters. Lora and her husband, Peter Lekos, D.M.D., retired from New Jersey to Loxahatchee, Fla. and are award-winning wildlife photographers and volunteers with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Melinda (Barlett) Edwards '76 aka Melinda B. Fox has moved from Fairfax, Va. to The Villages, Fla.

— 1980s —

David E. Hanson '80 retired from his job as Senior Buyer - O.R. from Roper St. Francis Healthcare at the end 2023. He and his wife of 33 years, Kathleen, are looking forward to leisure time in beautiful Mt. Pleasant, S.C. and nearby Charleston, S.C. They hope to do some traveling, visiting family and friends and working together on home improvement and gardening projects.

Karrie (Huffman) McGuirk '80 is a teacher with the Charlotte County Public Schools in Florida. She and her husband, Robert McGuirk, reside in Englewood, Fla.



Gayle P. Brown '83 recently retired and lives in Alexandria, Ky.

Amy L. (Myers) Noble '83 is an instructional support teacher/reading specialist at Commodore Perry Elementary School. She is also the band front advisor for the Greenville High School Marching Band and the GHS Winter Guard. She is the Assistant Pastor at Eagle's Nest of Old Salem Church. Amy and her husband, Rob, enjoy their free time with the grandchildren, Dariann, Ty, Lydia, and Jacob. She and Rob reside in Greenville, Pa.

Tammie (Crede) Weigl '84 is the Director of Information for the County of Santa Cruz. She resides in Scotts Valley, Calif.

Dr. Kelly L. Colwell '85 is the Program Director of Health Professions at Youngstown State University. He resides in Boardman, Ohio.



Catharine (Stanley) Steiner '88 lives in Beaver Falls, Pa.

— 1990s —

Michelle (Johnson) Flower '98 and her husband live in Conneaut, Ohio.

MaryAnn Southworth '98 resides in Greenville, Pa.

Annie (Ensminger) O'Brien '99 is the Chief Programs Officer at Animal Friends in Pittsburgh, Pa. and was recently credentialed as a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator. In this past year, she accepted a faculty position through the University of Florida's School of Shelter Medicine, where she earned her master's degree in 2018. She developed and teaches the Principles of Management in Animal Shelters course. She and her husband live in Pittsburgh.

Thomas (T.J.) Shaffer '99 is the Chief Human Resources Officer for Spray Products in Medina, Ohio. He and his wife, Micheleen, live in Medina, Ohio. They have three children.

— 2000s —

Dr. Cynthia (Zuschlag) Solis '00 has accepted a position as Director of Exceptional Student Services for Santa Fe Public Schools.

Sonja Heard '03 was appointed to Sharon (Pa.) City Council to serve out the 2-year term of a departing council member. Heard is an 18-year resident of Sharon and a Cleveland native. She is director of care coordination for Primary Health Network and works as a server at Quaker Steak & Lube. Heard graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration, an associate degree in managing information systems from Thiel College and an MBA from Youngstown State University. The City of Sharon said it believes she is the first Black woman to serve on city council.

Caitlin L. (McKenna) Ulf '04 is a high school Spanish teacher at Peters Township High School. She lives in McMurray, Pa.

Syrell Rodriguez Carreras '08 was promoted to medical director of the Surgical Trauma ICU. She has practiced at Charleston Area Medical Center as a Trauma, Acute Care and Surgical Critical Care Surgeon since 2021. She lives in South Charleston, W. Va.

Brittany M. Chill '08 resides in Dayton, Ohio.

Jessica L. (Somerville) Phillips '08



was promoted to Partner at McGill, Power, Bell and Associates, LLP. She has been an integral part of their team since joining in October 2016. With more than 16 years of dedicated service in public accounting, Phillips' expertise covers tax services, attest services, and financial consultation

across diverse industries, including manufacturing, construction, wholesale distribution, retail, and non-profit sectors. Throughout her tenure, Phillips has consistently showcased leadership and proficiency, specializing in income tax preparation and planning for individuals, partnerships, and corporations. In addition to her duties at MPB, Phillips is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the PA Institute of Certified Public Accountants. She serves as Treasurer of the Greenville Rotary Club. She is also a member of the UPMC Foundation Board and Greenville Alliance Church. She and her husband, **Robert Phillips '08**, reside in Greenville with their daughters.

Sara Lundy '09, of Oakdale, Conn., has been promoted to Risk and Compliance Manager and Vice President at Chelsea Groton Bank. Since joining Chelsea Groton in 2016, Lundy has been board-appointed as the CRA Officer, Privacy Officer, Identity Theft Prevention Coordinator, and the Bank's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. She is a 2024 CBA New Leader in Banking and a 2023 George W. Strouse Award recipient. Lundy is a graduate of the Connecticut School of Finance and Management, completed the New England Leadership program, and has earned a Certified Regulatory Compliance Manager status. Lundy has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Thiel College and an MBA from New England College of Business and Finance. She also serves on the Board of the Bank Compliance Association of Connecticut and is the chair of the Montville Planning and Zoning Commission.

Thomas Cermak '12



is a Pennsylvania Sea Grant Coastal Outreach Specialist and was recently honored with the 2023 Great Lakes Sea Grant Individual Mid-Career Achievement Award. The Mid-Year award recognizes individual Sea Grant professionals (more than seven years of service) who have shown noteworthy enthusiasm, performance, accomplishments and impact during their Sea Grant careers. Specifically, the award criteria areas include excellence of performance, personal interaction, initiative and creativity, outstanding achievement, and impact. Cermak began working for Pennsylvania Sea Grant in 2012 as a Coastal Outreach Specialist working in the Lake Erie watershed. His passion for these topics has led to improvements in local water quality, the health of aquatic ecosystems, and enhanced accessibility for all to access and enjoy the region's resources. "Tom exemplifies the Sea Grant adage of 'connecting science with people,' and is a trusted expert and partner by everyone he works with," said Sara Stahlman, Extension Leader for Pennsylvania Sea Grant. Cermak is also a skilled and successful grant writer, securing more than \$3.5 million since 2018 to support Pennsylvania Sea Grant and partner efforts. "Receiving this level of recognition by the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network is an honor for me personally," said Cermak. "It is also a great opportunity to share the work Pennsylvania Sea Grant is doing in the region, and have those efforts

recognized by colleagues and peers.” He also serves as the local coordinator for the Fish and Boat Commission – Erie Access Improvement Program, working with landowners to negotiate and secure perpetual public fishing access easements along the Lake Erie tributaries and shoreline. He obtained his master’s degree in community and economic development from Penn State University.



Katie (Bretz) Moffett '12 works at the Youngstown Ohio nonprofit Golden String. They help adults with disabilities and are

opening an all-inclusive campground in Coitsville, Ohio.

Dotun Akinwale '13 was hired by the National Basketball Association’s Charlotte Hornets in late March to join executive vice president of basketball operations Jeff Peterson. Akinwale was previously the Vice President of Player Personnel for the Atlanta Hawks before accepting this current role. Akinwale is going on his 12th year in the league. Akinwale has served as Manager of Scouting, Director of Scouting, and Senior Director of Personnel. Akinwale is originally from Germantown, Md.

Haley M. Hayden '13 is the Assistant Director of Student Involvement and First-Year Experience at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. In December 2023, she graduated with her doctorate in higher education management from the University of Pittsburgh. Hayden successfully defended her dissertation focused on fostering social and co-curricular

engagement with the commuter student population. She resides in Greensburg, Pa.

Nathan J. Nitzczynski '15 was appointed to the role of Executive Director of New Vision Dance Company in the Columbus, Ohio area in December 2023.



Established in 2006, New Vision Dance Company is a contemporary jazz ensemble for adult-age dancers. Nitzczynski currently resides in Columbus, Ohio and serves as an academic advisor at Otterbein University.

Benjamin L. Moore '16 is a forestry specialist with FirstEnergy. He and his spouse, Sarah, live in Smithfield, Pa.

Joshua Ross '16 graduated with the 35th Class of the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s Ross Leffler School of Conservation. He graduated alongside 12 other officers to the ranks on February 3. Ross now will work as a state game warden. Ross is originally from Sigel, Pa.

Jessica L. (Dailey) Kaufman '17 is a learning support teacher for Crawford Central School District.



She received her master’s degree in special education from Slippery Rock University in July 2023. She and her husband, Adam, have two children and live in Grove City, Pa.

Kirsten L. Kluck '17 began a new position with First Energy in November 2023. She and her husband, Benjamin Phillips, and stepson, Joseph, live in Erie, Pa.

Sara A. Matczak '17 resides in North Palm Beach, Fla.

Samantha (Keys) Rickert '17 M.S.'21 received the Franklin B. Walter Outstanding Educator Award. She was nominated for the award on May 31, 2023, by Pymatuning Valley School District’s Director of Pupil Services. The award is given to an educator for their extraordinary contributions to their district and the educational impact on student’s communication outcomes. The award is a significant accomplishment for a new speech-language pathology clinician.

Trevor K. Cope '18 is an eCommerce Analyst for BrightPet Nutrition Group in Lisbon, Ohio. He resides in Tampa, Fla.

— 2020s —

Matthew A. O’Connor '20 lives in Greenville, Pa.

Jessica D. (Peters) Burkley '21 is an admissions counselor at Allegheny College. She and her husband, Jonathan G. Burkley '21, reside in Meadville, Pa.

Katarina L. Lewis M.S.'23 is a physician assistant at UPMC. She resides in Youngstown, Ohio.

Brenden G. Tully M.S.'23 is an Interventional Radiology Physician Associate at the Cleveland Clinic. He resides in Kent, Ohio.

– marriages –



Annie (Ensminger) O'Brien '99 married Eric O'Brien on Dec. 8, 2023.



Chelsea (Spahr) Duffy '13 and Daniel Duffy were married on Nov. 4, 2023. Thiel graduates **Kristin Wansor-Jones '13, Tom Pulice '14, Russell Madden '14, and Holt Hoffmeier '14** were part of the bridal party. Chelsea and Dan met at Thiel. They reside in Greenville, Pa.



Kristen (Gmutza) Morgan '14 married James Morgan on Oct. 28, 2023. Alumnus **Damian Buccilli '14** was in attendance. The couple resides in Brownsville, Pa.



Amber M. Allen '00 married Mauricio De Lacerda Neto on Dec. 24, 2023, at Eagle's Nest at Old Salem Church in Greenville, Pa. Mauricio is from Brazil. Allen is the Director of Polysomnographic Technology at Collin College. On Jan. 1, 2024, Allen started a two-year term as president of the Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists. The Board is the globally recognized credentialing body for sleep technologists. The couple resides in Little Elm, Texas.



Kirsten L. Kluck '17 married Benjamin Phillips on Nov. 11, 2023, which was also his 30th birthday. They were engaged on May 19, 2023, which was their second dating anniversary.



Nick Travaglianti '11 and **Joel Bussard '09** were married on Sept. 17, 2022, in Brecksville, Ohio. The wedding was attended by several Thiel alumni including **Kara (Bussard) Russo '16, Nico Russo '16, Jenny (Keller) Reed '11, John Reed '11, Katie (Sourbeer) Barch '11, Ben Barch '11, Alyssa (Chine) Gainey '13, Daniel Gainey '13, Nicole Johnston '16, and Sean Oros '15.**



Madeline (Sollers) Feciuch '20 and **Tyler Feciuch '19** were married on Aug. 18, 2023. They had many Thiel alumni in their wedding and if they weren't part of the ceremony they were in attendance. They both played soccer at Thiel and a lot of their wedding party did also. The guys were a part of Sig Ep and Jess and Maddie were sweethearts. Thiel College alumni that were a part of the wedding party were **Jessica Kelley '19, Casey York (attended 2016-2018), Christian Conrad '19 (Best Man), Cole Duskey '19, Eric Mitchell '19, Tyler Novak '20, Zachary Oliver '21.**

– births –



To **Brittany L. (Dell) Hamilton '12** and her husband, **Corey J. Hamilton '14**, a daughter, Payton Harper, on May 18, 2023.

To **Katie (Bretz) Moffett '12** and her husband, a daughter, Peyton Eloise, on Feb. 9, 2023. Peyton is welcomed by big sister, Rylee.

2024 Alumni Award Winners
Alumni Awards Luncheon
Saturday, Sept. 28

The 2024 Annual Alumni Award winners have been announced. Homecoming weekend is Sept. 27-29.

Distinguished Alumnus

- **Brian Stamm '87**

Service to Thiel

- **Leah (Glessner) Dever '74**

Young Alumnus

- **Ryan Hart, Ph.D. '15**

Professor of Business Administration and Accounting
Gary Witosky '79 will be awarded an honorary degree during the awards luncheon.

For more information, contact Alumni Relations at alumni@thiel.edu or 724-589-2027.

– gatherings –



Jennifer (Monasky) Sait '07 and **Saad Sait '04** came back to campus and met with **Liz Young '96** and Director of Admission **Sonya Lapikas**.



Cindy (Bynum) Underwood '88 came back to campus to speak to the women's basketball team. She spoke about her Thiel journey and her career following graduation. She led the girls in several drills during practice. Bynum worked for the IRS in internal audit for many years and now is a business owner at C and J Financial Foundations. She is co-owner with **James Carter '95**. Bynum was inducted into the Thiel Hall of Fame in 2000.



From left to right son-in-law **Michael Lawrence**, **Dave Sartori '84**, **Christine (Westin) '85** and daughter, **Anna Sartori-Lawrence**, traveled from Pittsburgh to witness the eclipse. Their original intent was to come to campus, but they opted to attend EclipseFest at the Greenville soccer fields. Photo courtesy of Holly Patterson/Record-Argus.



Maureen Swogger '86 submitted a picture from homecoming.



*Members of Delta Sigma Phi held a meet-up at the home of Diane and **Bill Matthews '74**. Pictured first row (left to right) are Diane Matthews, **Debbie (Petrovic) Wotus '76**, Becky Mayton, **Robert C. Olson, Ph.D. '60 H'09**, Debbie Pompeii; second row **John Wotus '74**, **Becky (Koch) Goodrick '75**, **Carmen Pompeii '75**, **Joe Damore '74**; and third row **Chuck Goodrich '74**, Julie Demore, **Tom Mayton '74**.*

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Natalie Zgurich '23

Residence: Greenville, Pa.

Professional Experience: Zgurich works at UPMC Horizon and UPMC Jameson as the administrative resident for the executive office. She earned this role through connections made at Thiel with the help of Penn-Northwest Development Corporation.

Time at Thiel: While at Thiel, she was very involved with Zeta Tau Alpha sorority, including a term as president. She was a three-year captain of the women's tennis team; worked for Thiel Team and as a resident leader. She was also involved with Chi Eta Sigma business honorary, Sigma Tau Delta English honorary, and the Panhellenic Council.

Reason for Giving Back: Because Thiel gave me the resources to enter the workforce with leadership and professional skills. The opportunities (at Thiel) are endless, and the people are so supportive.



The Thiel Fund File

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

— in memoriam —

The Rev. Frederick C. Heitzenroder '70

The Reverend Frederick C. Heitzenroder '70, of Oldsmar, Fla., passed away on January 9, surrounded by his loving wife, **Wendy (Gustavson) '70**, and son, Matthew.

Heitzenroder received a B.A. from Thiel College and his Master of Divinity from Philadelphia Theological Seminary degree in 1974. He served as a Pastor from 1974 until 2011. When he retired from Salem Lutheran Church of Delmont, Pa. in 2011, the celebration was so large the event had to be moved from the church to a nearby fire hall to accommodate the crowd.

Heitzenroder was devoted to Thiel. He met Wendy there and married her in 1970. In 2021, the College honored Heitzenroder when it named the President's residence the "Heitzenroder House" in memory of Fred's late father, Frederick A. Heitzenroder.

A service was held for Heitzenroder on April 27, 2024, at his former parish, Salem Lutheran Church in Delmont, Pa.

LaVonne (Corley) Johnson H'16

Memorial services were held in January in Pittsburgh and Marco Island, Fla. for Thiel College donor and patron of the arts **LaVonne (Corley) Johnson H'16**.

Johnson passed away in November 2023 at 91 after a brief hospitalization.

Johnson and her husband, **Glen H'88**, established the renowned Con Spirito Chamber Music Concert Series. The music series honors their late daughter, **Lori (Johnson) Wallace**. Wallace's husband, **Miles J. Wallace**, serves as a Trustee on the Thiel College Board of Trustees.

Glen, who was chairman emeritus of the Thiel College Board of Trustees, and LaVonne were honored in 2012 with the William A. Passavant Distinguished Service Award.

Con Spirito concerts are performed in the David Johnson Memorial Chapel, dedicated in 2006 and named in honor of the Johnsons' late son. LaVonne was awarded an honorary doctorate during the College's Commencement Exercises in 2016.

Frank M. Stratiff, Ph.D. '61

Frank M. Stratiff, Ph.D. '61, passed away on December 16, 2023, at age 86.

He was an educator and football coach at several area high schools and was an Adjunct Professor and served as the Head of the Education Department at Thiel College. As a student at Thiel, he was a captain of the football team and was inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame in 1999. He was a four-year starter on offense and defense, named to several prestigious all-star teams and selected to the Associated Press All-State Collegiate Football Team in 1960. Stratiff was also selected as a member of the All-Time Thiel Football Team in 1961.

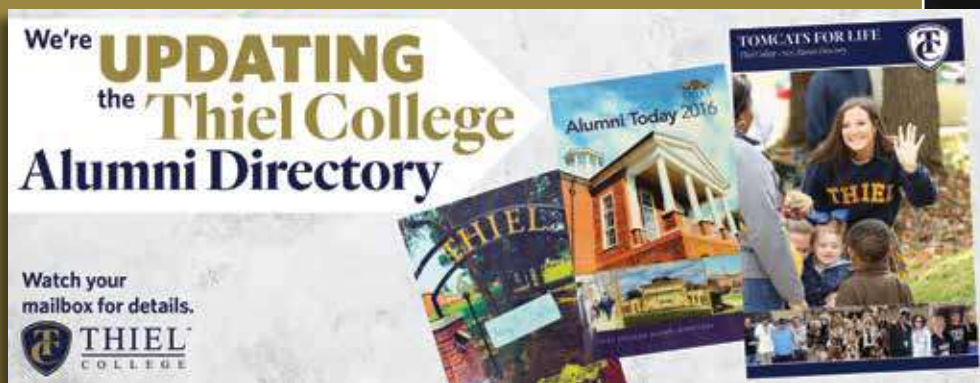
Stratiff also worked for many years at *The (Greenville) Record-Argus* newspaper, where wrote the columns "Timeless Tributes" and "Frankly Speaking." As part of the "Timeless Tributes," column he profiled many of the Thiel alumni, faculty and staff who were active in the area.

The work to update the alumni listings for the Tomcats for Life, The 2025 Thiel College Alumni Directory, has begun.

How can you help?

Thiel College is partnering with Publishing Concepts to conduct a comprehensive data verification project to ensure that Thiel's Alumni Relations and Advancement offices have the most current information.

You can update your information by calling PCI at **1-877-303-0103**.



– in memoriam –

Mark R. Vennis

Mark R. Vennis, 74, passed away on April 13 at Cleveland Clinic Marymount, surrounded by family.

Vennis was a member of the Thiel community for 30 years and was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame in 2015. Vennis coached wrestling for 19 years. He coached 15 National Collegiate Athletic Association All-Americans, 19 National Wrestling Coaches Association Scholar All-Americans and 45 NCAA national qualifiers. In addition to coaching

wrestling, Vennis also had stints as a head coach and assistant coach of several other Thiel teams. He led the Tomcats to nine PAC titles. Vennis was nominated three times for the NCAA Division III National Coach of the Year award and won Presidents' Athletic Conference Coach of the Year honors 11 times. He also saw three of his teams win NCAA regional championships. Vennis compiled a 148-56-2 dual meet record. His teams won 21 tournament championships over the years and finished as runners-up 17 times.

After retiring from coaching following the 2000-01 season, Vennis taught physical education courses and was a key contributor to the launching of a coaching minor at Thiel College.

In 2004, Vennis was selected as a member of the NWCA Division III Hall of Fame.

Cremation will take place and his ashes will be spread in a special place in July. A remembrance of his life will be held at Thiel College at 11 a.m. September 29, 2024.

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

Eric Allen
 Ellen M. (Ohman) Barnes '62
 Phillip Barnes
 Merle Bowser '68
 Irene Brocklehurst
 Robert B. Brown '65
 Florence Bruckman
 Daniel A. Cecchini '69
 Christopher L. Coder '75
 Paul D. Dart '45
 Marie DeWolf
 Joanne M. Diana
 Corilee (Wright) Farrimond
 William B. Fisher '58
 James Albert Gibson '02
 Danridge D. Giltz '65
 Donna Griffith
 Shirley Hagerty
 Henry H. Heil
 Rev. Frederick C. Heitzenroder '70
 Lt. Col. Guy Frederick Hellwege,
 USAF (Ret.) '51
 Susan Louise (Remler) Hirsch '71
 Keith Hittle
 Gerald B. Hodge
 Patsy L. Hoffman

Richard T. Hood '49
 LaVonne C. Johnson H'16
 Charles B. Koonis '69
 David Fredric Lassalle '63
 Carmie Ann (Perrotta) Lewis '51
 Douglas J. Lewis '73
 Melanie T. Linn '99
 Donald Lintelman '58
 Martha K. (Shephard) Lockamy '60
 David A. Luce '81
 E. James Lucht, Esq. '65
 Ronald L. Malson '71
 Nancy Marts
 Lynn E. (Miller) McClimans '79
 Loretta A. (Roppel) McCoy '49
 Russell L. McCullough Jr. '58
 Thomas R. McDowell Jr. '53
 Russell Benfield Mosier '56
 Karen C. (Carlsen) Mueller '66
 Kenneth S. Nein '75
 Betha A. (Margo) Ott '93
 Connie Peake
 Karen N. (Nelson) Peters '59
 Jay S. Pierce
 Priscilla Randolph-Haug '72
 Gordon Ramsey

Anna Louise (Bair) Rannels '41
 Roberta (Fordyce) Ratcliff '57
 Howard Redfoot '60
 Lillian (Pfaff) Redfoot '59
 Donald Redmond
 Mark J. Reefer '72
 Harold Reichard
 Harry M. Reiner '60
 Frank C. Rote '50
 Carol S. (Rowland) Rowland
 Carol E. (Meyer) Schroeck '61
 Sandra Ann Schultz
 Ronald K. Stanbro '79
 Sally (Younkin) Stauffer '63
 Frank Stratiff '61
 Eddie G. Summerlin
 Wayne Swift
 Aaron Nicolas Terdle '08
 Toni F. (Markowitz) Vance '68
 Mark R. Vennis
 Frances (Callahan) Wackenhut
 Donel Wade Wheeler '27
 Pamela White '70
 John D. Wintersteen '67
 Judy Young
 Ted Young





Community's teamwork at Dome reminiscent of historic tree planting

By Dominick DiRienzo M.A.'22

Each autumn and spring, students, faculty, and alumni gather, much like they did in 1874 when the community closed ranks to plant the now towering trees along Brother Martin's Walk. Every November the Rissell-Schreyer Dome rises against the canvas of the gray fall sky—a modern testament to the unchanging spirit of our community. And each March, before the trees can bud and tulips can push through the still-thawing earth it comes down.

Back when the community gathered and planted each sapling with care, they laid down roots deeper than the trees that now line the walk. It was a statement of hope and unity, a promise for tomorrow that each generation of Thiel community members has inherited and cherished.

Today, that promise breathes through the fabric of the Rissell-Schreyer Dome. Every November, after the final echoes of fall sports fade, we come together to raise this massive structure. And in March, as spring nudges the winter aside, we reverse the process. This vinyl-coated polyester monument stands not just as a flexible sports facility but as a pillar of our collective efforts, just as those trees stand sentinel to our past.

The dome spans 388 feet in length, a sanctuary of space for winter athletes and community members seeking refuge from the chill. Inside, a mild 0.35 psi pressure—less than a hundredth of what a car tire holds—breathes life into the structure. It's a gentle reminder that it is not pressure, but the lightest touch of communal spirit that upholds our greatest achievements. There is no measure of the number of faculty and staff who come down to the Dome to help out, but we do know that 406 athletes spent a combined 600-plus hours helping. I don't want to belabor that point, but that 600-plus hours in a day is the equivalent of a crew of 75 laborers putting in an 8-hour day. That does not consider the prep work that was done in the days leading up to the Dome coming down.

The dome's presence is a symbol of adaptability and resilience. Named in honor of **Dr. William A. Schreyer H'90** and **Charles D. "Tod" Rissell 1900**, the "Father of

Thiel Athletics," it is a beacon of inspiration. As the air fans hum, circulating warmth and life, we are reminded of the power of unity—how a group of individuals can support something far greater than themselves.

Beyond sports, the dome has become a hub of activity, echoing with the footsteps of community members who walk, play, and come together in the sanctuary it provides. It stands as a versatile heart of our campus, beating strong through the coldest months, giving rhythm to our College life.



As the years roll by, the traditions of Thiel College, from the planting of Brother Martin's Walk to the annual raising of the dome, weave a story of enduring community. It is not just campus athletes that benefit from the Dome. Campus Earth Day events and fundraisers have been held there; this year the Student Government Association hosted a Dome-A-Thon that raised more than \$1,500 for the Mercer County agency to aid domestic violence victims, AWARE Inc. The Dome also hosted the opening ceremony and events for the College's record-setting one-day giving campaign, Match Day. That the campus and community comes together to use and take care of the Dome means more than mere rituals; they are chapters of a narrative that bonds us, from past scholars to future leaders.

The Thiel story is one of unity, a tale where each individual is a vital thread in the College's tapestry. With every autumn's preparation and every spring's careful storage, we recommit to this legacy—ensuring that the spirit of togetherness continues to be the cornerstone upon which Thiel College builds its future.

DiRienzo is the Director of Communications and Marketing. He graduated in 2022 with a master's degree in communication and leadership from Thiel College.

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For more information on how to help,
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