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Special Edition



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Magazine

Bronco Entrepreneurs

How they
pivoted
and
profited

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In this special edition, alumni entrepreneurs reveal how they started their businesses and made key pivots to keep their entrepreneurial aspirations alive and thriving. For some, their most meaningful pivot was leaving a job and mustering the courage to launch an enterprise of their own making.

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Bronco pride

Meet Courtney Sumpter and her first therapy horse, Tank, a Bronco by association. A proud alumna with two WMU degrees, Sumpter founded Northern Michigan Equine Therapy in Boyne City in 2011. But the occupational therapist first realized she could combine her vocation with her love of horses while studying at WMU. "Kalamazoo is where it all began," she says. Read about her remarkable work on page 14.



Dear Friends,

Entrepreneurs are individuals who have great ideas or see unmet needs, and they put in the hard work to advance their visions and successfully solve problems with products or services.



Those same creative genes are found throughout our discovery-driven campus. While our research and creation occur in many fields and take many forms, some Broncos elect to focus their discovery activities on creating new businesses and organizations that have an immediate economic impact.

This edition of the *W Magazine* celebrates the entrepreneurs among us, as well as the entrepreneurial spirit that springs from every corner of campus.

As a researcher who has long studied economic growth, I know that flourishing entrepreneurship is highly correlated with how well an economy does.

Growing economies have lots of creation. Dynamic economies are not those that cling to doing the same old thing. That is not the key to success. That is not the key to growth. The key to growth is being able to manage change—or pivot—and to bring forth new ideas.

Some of our students dream of launching businesses or devising the next inventive products or services. Western Michigan University offers these enterprising individuals the skills and competencies they need to carry out their great ideas.

They are prepared to be problem solvers. They are equipped to be the driving forces for change in the world. And, as you will read in the remarkable stories of alumni and student entrepreneurs on the pages that follow, Broncos learn their lessons well.

Best wishes,

Edward Montgomery, Ph.D.
President



Public safety department named No. 3 in nation for safety initiatives

The WMU Department of Public Safety was recognized as the No. 3 such department in the nation for its campus safety initiatives. Deputy



Dedow

Chief Carol Dedow was on hand to receive the award during the National Campus Safety Summit in Las Vegas in February.

WMU's police department was one of three university forces recognized at the meeting. Kennesaw State University placed first, Old Dominion

University came in second, and WMU placed third in the Department of the Year Awards. The three honorees were selected from among public safety departments at 4,706 eligible U.S. colleges and universities. The three schools lead a "top 25" list of public safety departments developed by Safe Campus, a national organization that coordinates the awards.

Linda Shaw, director of Safe Campus, noted that WMU police do an outstanding job working with area law enforcement and communicating with the University community. Specific initiatives leading to the award included newly created Facebook and Twitter pages to disseminate vital information concerning off-campus incidents to students, parents and the campus community. Additionally, the department contracted with a threat assessment company to monitor numerous social media sites for harmful or threatening information concerning the campus, students or the University community. Department responses to mental health issues and a focus on community outreach in student neighborhoods also were noted in the award citation. ■

Medical school granted full accreditation

In the final step of a journey that began seven years ago, the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine has been granted full accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.

LCME, the national accrediting body for educational programs leading to the M.D. degree, granted the school full accreditation for a five-year period during its Feb. 13 meeting. Five years is the maximum possible for a new school receiving its initial full accreditation.



Dr. Hal B. Jenson, the school's founding dean, shared the news with the med school's Board of Directors, faculty, residents, staff and students, and expressed his appreciation for the work of numerous stakeholders that made the important milestone for the school possible.

"The granting of full accreditation by the LCME is a key step in our journey as an institution and represents a ringing confirmation that the M.D. degree program at WMed is sound and meets nationally accepted standards of educational quality," Jenson said.

"Together, we make WMed an outstanding place to learn, teach, care for patients, work and innovate."

The medical school is a collaboration of WMU and Kalamazoo's two teaching hospitals, Borgess Health and Bronson Healthcare. The first class of students started in August 2014. But preparation for LCME accreditation began in 2011, even as the medical school was still in the planning stages. In 2012, the LCME granted preliminary accreditation to WMed, which allowed for the continuation of development efforts as well as student recruitment and the acceptance of applications for the school's Class of 2018 and future classes.

More recently, the medical school was granted provisional accreditation from the LCME in June 2016. The process for full accreditation included the submission in July 2017 of more than 2,800 pages of required documentation to the LCME. In October, the medical school hosted a comprehensive, three-day survey visit.

Accreditation by the LCME determines whether a school's medical education program meets established standards. Most state licensing boards require that U.S. medical schools granting the M.D. degree be accredited by the LCME as a condition of licensure of the school's graduates. U.S. medical schools also must have LCME accreditation to ensure that their students can take the United States Medical Licensing Examination.

On Saturday, May 12, the medical school will host a community open house from 1 to 3 p.m. at the W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus to honor of the Class of 2018. The next day, Sunday, May 13, the Class of 2018 will graduate from WMed during a ceremony at Miller Auditorium.

For more information, visit med.wmich.edu or contact Laura Eller at (269) 337-4513 or laura.eller@med.wmich.edu. ■

Bronco aviator volunteered at the Winter Olympics

Aviation flight science sophomore Chris Jea-Chung Ko had a view of the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea many coveted—arena side and behind the scenes. Ko assisted the U.S. men's ice hockey team as a volunteer. Fluent in English and Korean, he worked as a translator, but also assisted the players and coaches with whatever they needed.

"It was just a tremendous honor to even work at the Olympics, let alone for the men's hockey team," says Ko, who landed the gig through a connection he had with a former coach of the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Griffins, his hometown hockey team.



Ko proudly displayed his W flag at the Winter Olympics in South Korea.

"Every single moment was memorable, but the highlight had to be when the U.S. women's team beat Canada and won gold," he says. "The day before the gold game, the men's team lost (to the Czech Republic). Unfortunately, it wasn't a good day for us. I remember being in the locker room, and ... the atmosphere was not good.

"But the next day, watching the women's team win gold and being at the medal ceremony and watching the flag rise, it was amazing. It healed up the wounds from the day before."

Ko made a few Bronco connections while in the Olympic Park. Alumnus Scott Aldrich served as equipment manager for the Olympic men's hockey team. Ko also briefly met Sarah Murray, coach of the Korean women's hockey team and daughter of WMU hockey coach Andy Murray. ■

Funded and forming: new initiatives to transform student life

A campuswide call for ideas to transform the way WMU serves students has led to two initiatives designed to build a stronger sense of belonging and community among all students, beginning this fall.

President Edward Montgomery unveiled two endeavors that he is funding through a Transformational Initiatives Fund he set up last fall—Success at WMU and Esports at WMU.

Success at WMU is a large-scale campus commitment to build on the University's past success with peer mentoring. The initiative ensures that all new undergraduate students have access to a learning community led by a peer leader assisted by faculty and staff.

The learning communities are intended to help welcome and orient new students, but also aid them in building skills essential for success in college. Funded by Montgomery with \$818,500 and matched with an equal amount from the leadership in Academic Affairs along with two other WMU areas, the effort will use the University's successful track record in supporting such groups as student athletes, former foster care youth, honors students, first-generation college students and Kalamazoo Promise students.

Success at WMU will dramatically expand the capacity of such groups, going from 1,650 currently served to 5,500 by this fall. It will offer every incoming undergraduate the benefits of a strong yearlong connection within the University. The effort will apply the lessons already learned in a comprehensive way so that the outcomes for all new undergraduates might mirror the higher retention and graduation rates experienced by students already served by WMU learning communities.



The other funded initiative, Esports at WMU, is a pilot effort that will extend the community-building effort to students' recreational hours, with WMU becoming one of a relatively small number of colleges and universities nationwide to formally sponsor video gaming. The University will create an esports arena, equipped with a minimum of 22 stations that can be used for competitions and skill development.



With 100 million monthly participants in games like “League of Legends” and a global audience expected to grow to 580 million by 2020, this investment in a state-of-the-art esports facility represents an opportunity to enhance the out-of-class experience for students from around the world and potentially lead to the development of academic programming designed to meet the career demands of what is projected to become a \$1.5 billion industry by 2020.

The University will convert its Little Theatre on East Campus to a gaming facility that will open this fall and be made available in the future to community groups. Montgomery provided \$250,000 for

“In each initiative, we will be very intentional about creating communities that speak directly to student interests and needs.”

—Montgomery

esports. The amount will be matched.

“In each initiative, we will be very intentional about creating communities that speak directly to student interests and needs,” says

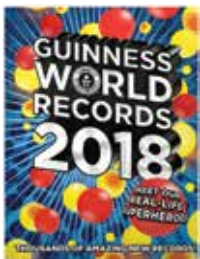
Montgomery. “One is a large, comprehensive approach to meeting the complex academic, civic, social, personal development, health and emotional needs of students by providing each with a small community that will become their touchstone. The second, a smaller effort, will focus on one of our students' most popular recreational activities to build a competitive technology community that can have relevance academically, professionally and socially.”

For more about the initiatives, visit wmich.edu/president/transformational-initiative-fund. ■



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Married couples put WMU and themselves in the Guinness World Records book by renewing their vows en masse Oct. 8, 2016, on East Campus. The 2018 edition of the world-famous record book features the University on Page 161 for the largest marriage vow renewal ceremony. The event was organized by the Office of Development and Alumni Relations.



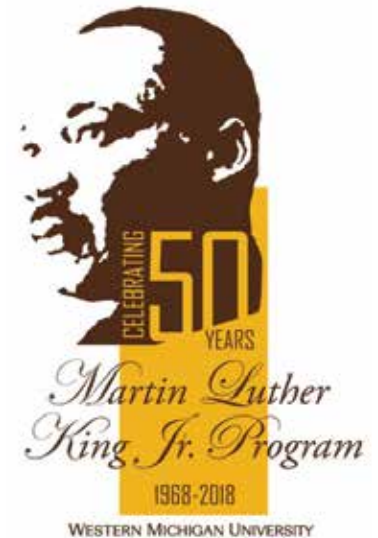
WMU celebrates the MLK academy's 50th anniversary

The Martin Luther King Jr. Student Scholars Academy, one of WMU's longest-running academic support programs, is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The academy launched in 1968 as an offshoot of work done by a group of young black students—the Black Action Movement. It is the forerunner of similar programs now offered at many other U.S. colleges and universities. A \$194,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation and donations from friends of the University helped get the program off the ground.

Today, the Martin Luther King Jr. Student Scholars Academy has the capacity to serve 200 participants in any given year. It provides academic, social, and professional development support and services to participants from their first year at WMU through graduation. Participants also receive an MLK G.O.L.D. Scholarship, annually valued at \$8,000.

On homecoming day, Saturday, Oct. 6, a banquet will serve as the culminating celebration of the academy's anniversary. To learn more, visit wmich.edu/mlkacademy. ■



Bronco Entrepreneurs

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Entrepreneurship is an adventure with a long list of challenges business owners gustily embrace by launching and trying to sustain an enterprise.

The need to take calculated risks, financial and otherwise, may be at the top of that list. But making the requisite pivot or, more likely, ongoing pivots is not far below.

As the market changes, when an essential employee departs, when a principal investor has a caveat or a potentially lucrative idea requires a change in the business model, mustering the wherewithal to reposition can be crucial to surviving and thriving.

In this Bronco entrepreneurs edition, several successful alumni business owners reveal how they started out and made key maneuvers to keep their entrepreneurial aspirations on course.

“The world of an entrepreneur and startup business is full of pivots,” says Adam McFarlin, a 2008 graduate who founded Kalamazoo Candle Company four years ago in WMU’s hometown and now sells his products in 200-plus stores in more than a dozen U.S. states.

“You’re constantly learning better ways to do things, learning from your customers, expanding production or learning new production techniques, and really learning what it is you want in your business. Even hiring people turns into a pivot when you find out someone has an underlying talent you aren’t utilizing.”

The prevalence of individuals willing to take the risks and make the pivots to build a business is a critical feature of our economy, and startup activity is a standard gauge of economic vibrancy.



Follow WMU @westernmichu on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to read about other successful Bronco entrepreneurs during a special social media series this summer.





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“You’re constantly learning better ways to do things, learning from your customers, expanding production or learning new production techniques, and really learning what it is you want in your business. Even hiring people turns into a pivot when you find out someone has an underlying talent you aren’t utilizing.”

—McFarlin

Kalamazoo Candle Company CEO and WMU alumnus Adam McFarlin launched his business just four years ago and now sells products in 200-plus stores in more than a dozen states.

“Young companies create an average of three million new jobs a year and have been responsible for almost all net new job creation in the United States in the last 40 years,” Bobby Franklin, president and CEO of the National Venture Capital Association, noted in the Kauffman Foundation’s latest index of growth entrepreneurship report.

As with many entrepreneurs, Brandon Zavala’s first and biggest pivot was leaving a steady job to pursue his startup. When he did, it was kind of scary. For occasional encouragement, he would draw on an experience he had while earning his master’s degree in business administration at WMU.

In 2012, he and other students spent two weeks in Santiago, Chile, on a faculty-led study abroad trip. They observed large companies, but it was the resolve of the people behind the mom-and-pop-size businesses in Santiago that stayed on Zavala’s mind.

“That was really the moment that changed me, honestly,” he says. “They really didn’t have anything, and they started businesses. I saw that and said, ‘It is possible.’”

In 2015, Zavala’s possibility became a reality when he started Apollo Peak pet beverages with products that “went viral” in certain circles. The company posted \$500,000 in sales its first year.

“That’s not to say, it’s not a struggle,” the young CEO says. “It’s a struggle to do what you love, but it’s fun, and it’s exciting.

Last year, for the first time, sales of Apollo Peak cat wines dipped.

“But you figure it out, and that’s the best thing. It pushes you to work harder. We added new products and were able to appeal to new stores to bring that figure back up.” ■

No stopping her

Karen Behnke didn't have plans to launch another business when she began forming the idea for Juice Beauty, an organic skin care and beauty product line that is today approaching \$100 million in annual retail sales.

But the idea jelled and there was no stopping her—a theme in her business pursuits.

Behnke had already started two healthy lifestyle companies, one that developed a following in the San Francisco Bay area in the months after she moved from Michigan to California in 1980, and one that eventually took off nationally.

That latter business, initially called Execu-Fit and subsequently named PacifiCare Wellness Systems, was among the first workplace wellness companies in the country when she established it in 1983, funding the enterprise with money she earned as a part-time nurse and by taking on credit card debt.

“A lot of startups die because they don't have any capital to begin with or enough to maintain the business. I never believed that,” Behnke says.

“One of the most important things an entrepreneur needs to have is resourcefulness. When an obstacle comes their way, they don't let it stop them.

“Way back when I had no money, when I was trying to get a line of credit in the '80s, they wouldn't loan to women, or they'd say, 'Bring in your husband.' I ended up opening 17 credit cards all in the same day. That was how I started my first line of credit.”

She started the wellness company just four years after graduating from WMU, where she had studied health and nutritional sciences and minored in business. She also had earned a diploma from the Bronson School of Nursing in Kalamazoo.

“It turned out to be an amazing background, given I started an aerobics company and then corporate wellness. It was invaluable,” says Behnke, a 1991 WMU Distinguished Alumni Award recipient.

“From day one, I had all the entrepreneurial desire and what happened was I combined my passion (health and wellness) with my business drive.”

Behnke led PacifiCare Wellness for nine years. During that time, it grew to operate in the western U.S. and to serve more than 100 corporations. In 1991, she sold it to the HMO PacifiCare (now UnitedHealthcare), which brought it on as a new division. She, too, joined PacifiCare as one of its top executives and remained with the insurance company for several years. She then moved on to lead the healthy lifestyle investment strategy for a private equity firm that was the majority shareholder for fitness center chain 24 Hour Fitness. And she served on a few boards.

“Life was pretty cushy,” she says.

So, plenty busy professionally and personally, Behnke didn't need to start something new when she experienced another bout of what some might call entrepreneurial inspiration and what she describes more colorfully as “a moment of passion-fueled insanity—every time.”

While pregnant, Behnke began thinking about the skin creams and beauty products she used and wondered how their ingredients might affect her unborn child once absorbed into her skin.

She began reading labels.

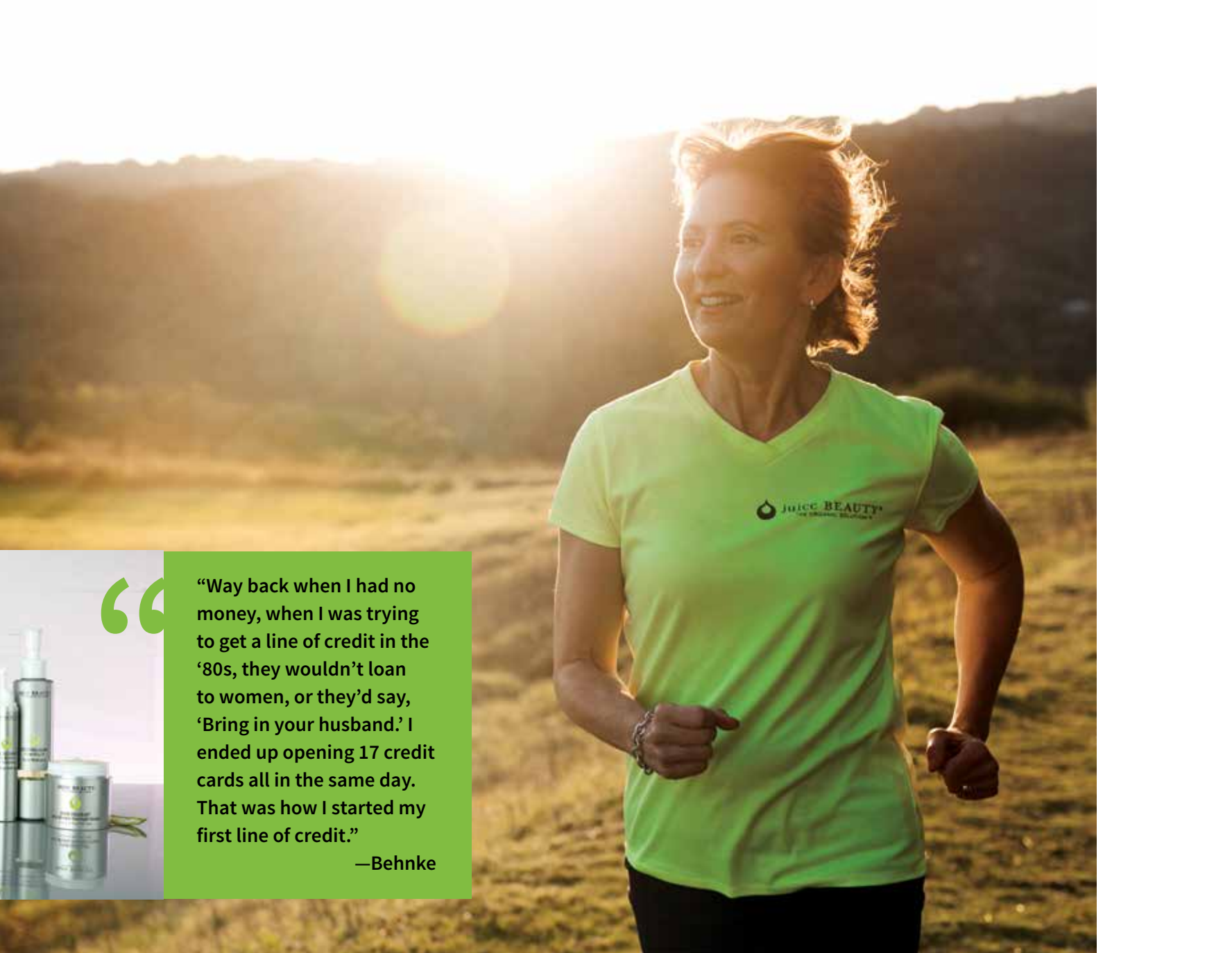
“And I realized the truth about how beauty products are formulated and all the toxic ingredients—endocrine disruptors, formaldehyde, lead. It goes on and on and on,” she says.



“When I looked at the chemicals and started talking to chemists, my reaction was: ‘Are you kidding me?’”

At a loss after seeking products with ingredients she felt comfortable using, Behnke decided she needed to step up and offer to the marketplace skin care products made with organic ingredients.

Though engaged in other projects and raising her children, she decided to start something. “My husband reacted with, ‘Are you crazy? I said, ‘I have got to do this.’ Now, he loves the company.”



“

“Way back when I had no money, when I was trying to get a line of credit in the ‘80s, they wouldn’t loan to women, or they’d say, ‘Bring in your husband.’ I ended up opening 17 credit cards all in the same day. That was how I started my first line of credit.”

—Behnke



Juice Beauty uses certified organic ingredients for its moisturizers, cleansers and other skin care products. The formulations have a botanical organic juice base. And the company’s makeup collection—launched three years ago with actress and style maven Gwyneth Paltrow—is made with organic ingredients and plant pigments rather than synthetic dyes.

Behnke started the company 13 years ago as its sole employee. Today, Juice Beauty employs about 150 people, and the products are sold in some 2,000 stores in North America.

As a successful entrepreneur, Behnke is often asked for advice, including: How do you know when you’re ready to pursue your business idea? If you’re asking yourself that, she says, you’re not ready.

“If you have the feeling: ‘Get out of my way. I’m going to start this business.’ Then you’re ready. That’s what the feeling has got to be,” she says. “If you’re not passionate about it, it’s not going to happen.” ■

A pivotal move: Three years ago, Karen Behnke temporarily stepped away from her company’s day-to-day operations to recover from a serious mountain biking accident. At the time, she had one key executive, but the circumstances led her to recruit a top management team with deep beauty industry experience.

The profitable result: “Our top sales and marketing executives really professionalized our field team and our marketing and sales strategy, which helped fuel our 35 percent annual growth,” she says.

Student startups and what's trending

Spanish major Desi Taylor wants to spur your inner explorer. Book a trip with her Cluventure Travel, from one day to 10, stateside or overseas. The catch is, your destination is a mystery and a series of clues is your guide.

For one trip that led to Aruba and points therein, travelers' first hint merely revealed they were bound for somewhere south of Plymouth Rock.

"Our mission statement is to get people to re-install a childlike sense of wonder," says Taylor, who has sent 69 people on adventures. "We want to get people off their phones and looking around their environment."

In March, Taylor's fledgling business won the \$2,000 grand prize in WMU's annual K.C. O'Shaughnessy Business Pitch Competition and Showcase, which honors student innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. She also is a member of Starting Gate, a student business accelerator.

Cluventure illustrates one of the trends Dr. Laurel Ofstein, assistant professor of management, has observed in students' entrepreneurial activities.

As a professor teaching entrepreneurship and business management classes, she is constantly exposed to the ideas the next generation of business developers is dreaming up or in the process of pursuing.

"Students taking entrepreneurship courses today are often more interested in starting service-based businesses over product-based businesses. Offering a meaningful customer experience is central to many of these business ideas," Ofstein says.

"Students taking entrepreneurship courses today are often more interested in starting service-based businesses over product-based businesses."

—Ofstein

"They want to find ways to help others within their communities to lead better lives by providing them with information and advice tailored to a specific customer need, a better customer experience, or by enabling communal use of existing products, often with the outcome of reducing environmental impact."

Reducing environmental impact and fashion are what Avery Green has in mind with his planned clothing line, House of Pariah.

"I love creating clothing, and I love designing. But we have a big issue within the fashion design industry and that is with apparel and textile waste," says the e-business marketing and fashion design major and Starting Gate member.

Green wants to give consumers sustainable clothing options, with materials sourced from textile companies offering recycled and biodegradable fabrics and elastics.

His first products will be undergarments. And his target customers are millennials, who he believes are more inclined than other generations to pay a premium for "green" apparel that may be costlier to produce than garments not made using sustainable practices.

Another trend Ofstein has observed among student entrepreneurs is the lean startup. Using this concept, entrepreneurs devise a minimum viable product or service—the bare minimum to create value for the target customer—and then bring it to market for customers to interact with and suggest improvements.

"This enables entrepreneurs to get to market much more quickly and with less funding," she explains. "The entrepreneurs can then iterate the product based on the customer feedback and sometimes even completely change direction, or pivot, to serve a market segment that has adopted the product to fill an unexpected need."

And starting lean can be particularly necessary for students who may be light on startup capital. ■



Taylor



Green

WMU advances emerging enterprisers

Through the colleges of art, business, engineering and in other units across campus, the University offers many academic and co-curricular programs designed to educate and support students who plan to start or who already own a business.

“We have a corps of individuals who are committed to developing entrepreneurs,” says Dr. Robert Landeros, chair of the department of management in the Haworth College of Business and director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

In 2014, WMU went so far as to create a major in entrepreneurship, offered through the business college, as well as a Universitywide minor.

Among the skills students learn about and develop in these programs of study are how to create products or services that meet a need, how to determine what customers want and how to secure financing to start and sustain a business, product or service, Landeros says.

Through the entrepreneurship center, WMU coalesces business experts, community members and faculty to help students devise and commercialize new technology. The Starting Gate student business accelerator is one of its programs. The 2017-18 cohort was mentored by veteran entrepreneurs, toured startup incubators in Chicago, met venture capitalists and received other valuable assistance.

At program completion, two Starting Gate students are chosen to receive funding generously provided by two WMU alumni. The \$10,000 Brian Patrick Thomas Entrepreneurial Spirit Award is the top prize. And new this year is a \$5,000 award sponsored by Wendell Christoff.

Other resources to boost entrepreneurship include an annual business pitch contest and the Entrepreneurship Forum speaker series. Learn more about these and related offerings at wmich.edu/entrepreneurship. ■

Advice for rising Bronco entrepreneurs: ‘Get after it’

Ryan Blanck’s foray into business ownership followed what he calls his “best failure.” Blanck is founder of Deviate, a leadership firm specializing in performance coaching, and he also is the newest Haworth College of Business Outstanding Young Alumni Award recipient.



Blanck

Eight years ago, Blanck had all but secured a job with a firm that pursued him after observing his success elsewhere. But the final interview did not go well. Instead of seeking work with another company, Blanck decided to start his own firm.

Since its inception, Tennessee-based Deviate has helped save rock bands from dissolving, advised a successful presidential campaign overseas, and coached executives, pro athletes

and entertainers. Blanck has personally counseled leaders within such organizations as Google, Nike, Penn State University and the World Bank.

“Seeing how my life has unfolded, I wish I would have gotten started earlier,” says the graduate of WMU’s highly ranked sales and business marketing program.

For up-and-coming Bronco entrepreneurs, his advice: “If you’ve been thinking about (starting a business), and it’s been consuming your life, you need to get in the game. Most people think they need to have everything organized—all the t’s crossed and i’s dotted. But the truth is, you don’t. Just get after it. Get in motion and always be in the space of fine-tuning.” ■



For one of its customers, Singh Automation created a programmable “arm” that feeds toothbrushes into another machine.

THE bot builders

Not all college students know what they want in a career. But Gurdeep Singh and Jas Kaur both envisioned being business owners even before they met at WMU, and their education helped them prepare for that goal.

Flipping through a scrapbook in the couple’s office at Singh Automation in Portage, Michigan, it’s clear Singh had an early talent for robotics. Articles about his accomplishments and projects include ones from as early as the sixth grade. Also in the room is a laminated photo of him as a student standing with former WMU President Elson Floyd and the six-and-a-half-foot-tall, 150-pound Robo Bronco that Singh completed as an engineering project his sophomore year.

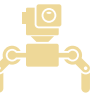
It’s a path that led him from his native India to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates to earn an associate degree, ultimately studying abroad in the United States at WMU and earning a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering. Despite landing jobs with well-established companies, including Tech Manufacturing and Stryker Corp., Singh maintained the drive to own his own business and secured a master’s degree in business management from WMU to help achieve that goal.

Kaur shared the entrepreneurial bug, earning a bachelor’s degree in computer information systems from WMU and minoring in business and economics. Also a native of India, her family immigrated to St. Joseph, Michigan, when she was a senior in high school. She came to WMU after earning an associate degree from Lake Michigan College.

Singh and Kaur met at an international dance hosted by WMU. After the couple married in 2003, they planned to start a family. Singh’s job security was a priority, as Kaur left her job with PNC Bank to stay at home with their two daughters, Simar Kaur, 10, and Sana Kaur, 8.

“When we met, we always had this idea in our mind that we wanted to own our own business. All of the credit goes to our professors at WMU and (Spring Arbor University). Through our experiences with them, they were always positive and encouraging; always saying if you have a dream, it’s possible.”

—Kaur



From Robo Bronco to the robotics business

But they both held onto their entrepreneurial dreams, with Kaur earning a master's degree in business management from Spring Arbor University in 2011, with an eye on learning how to run the financial books in a business.

"When we met, we always had this idea in our mind that we wanted to own our own business. All of the credit goes to our professors at WMU and SAU. Through our experiences with them, they were always positive and encouraging; always saying if you have a dream, it's possible," Kaur recalls.

"It was always something that was in the back of my mind; I wish I could find an idea and do something on our own," Singh adds.

Four years ago, alumni Jas Kaur and Gurdeep Singh realized their dream to start a business. It's been growing ever since.



Singh Automation was born in 2014, providing specialty automated solutions for companies across the state, country and world. These targeted machines include a programmable "arm" that quickly and efficiently feeds various-sized toothbrushes into another machine to package them for sale, as well as a fryer that cooks crispy nacho chips for a local restaurant without the concern of boiling hot oil splattering and burning food service workers.

To help keep up with demand, the company has grown to include two computer-aided designers, an additional engineer, two sales and marketing staff members, an office manager and student interns. Singh also has a deep contract pool to draw from when certain projects require additional or specialty engineers.

"It's the 80-20 rule," Singh explains of the work. "When you break it down, 80 percent is the mechanical components, and 20 percent is the unique way they interface with each other. But it's that 20 percent that's the toughest," he says.

Singh and Kaur hope their entrepreneurial spirit will extend to their children, who are welcome anytime at the family warehouse to tinker with spare parts and brainstorm their own creations. Often, the parents will make it a game by having both their daughters and their friends pitch product ideas and business models to them, much like an episode of the reality television show "Shark Tank." ■

A pivotal move: Singh Automation has grown quickly since its 2014 inception. Within its first seven months, the company had to move into larger space, and it has made three additions to the facility since then.

The profitable result: Increased capacity in their business allows the company to take on increasingly sophisticated projects and clients.

Alumni Profile



Occupational therapist Courtney Sumpter and her client Zander Tewksbury are having fun. But Sumpter also is working with him on hand-eye coordination, balance and lateral core stability. When Zander first sat atop a therapy horse, he did not have the core strength to sit upright. “He has made huge gains in his sitting balance,” Sumpter says.



Equine-assisted and entrepreneurial

Her horses help heal

Two years ago, 6-year-old Zander Tewksbury could not take a single unassisted step.

Because of a rare condition called Pitt Hopkins syndrome, doctors said Zander would likely never walk. Limited success after years of physical therapy seemed to confirm that prognosis, and the family's insurer refused to continue paying for treatments.

Then he met a WMU alumna and her therapy horse Adele.

Within months of riding Adele, strengthening muscles that helped his balance and motor control, Zander took his first series of toddling, independent steps on his fifth birthday.

"I was crying. I couldn't believe he had actually done it," says his mother, Krystal Middaugh. "They said he never would."

Emotional scenes like that are not uncommon at Northern Michigan Equine Therapy, says Courtney Sumpter, a WMU-trained occupational therapist and founder of NMET, a hippotherapy-based rehabilitation center in Boyne City, Michigan. Hippotherapy is a treatment using horseback riding to improve balance, muscle coordination and motor control.

"We've had many tears of joy, especially with that child. Now, he's walking my whole barn aisleway."

This summer, the goal is for Zander to use his developing skill to walk his mom to the alter at her wedding.

'Where it all began'

In 2011, coincidentally the year Zander was born, Sumpter established NMET to help people overcome physical and even emotional problems impeding their daily living activities. Her work is especially impactful when there's a breakthrough after stalled progress.

"I get a lot of referrals from different therapists who have been working with clients for years. A lot of people refer patients to me to get them to that next level."

That's been her mission statement, she says, "to reach more individuals who were hitting plateaus."

Using a horse as her therapeutic tool has often been the difference-maker in her work, something Sumpter first learned she could do while earning her bachelor's and master's

"We've had many tears of joy, especially with that child. Now, he's walking my whole barn aisleway."

—Sumpter

degrees in WMU's occupational therapy program, which is ranked among the top 50 OT programs in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*.

"Kalamazoo is where it all began," she says.

'Everything fell into place.'

When she started at WMU in 2002, Sumpter didn't know what degree to pursue. Engineering was a thought; she excelled at figuring out and fixing things. She seriously considered nursing, as she also enjoyed working one-on-one with people. Then she learned about occupational therapy, and it seemed to perfectly fit her personality and talents.

"Fixing the human body is how I look at it," she says. "Engineering the human body back to independence is what I love to do."

Sumpter recalls that learning to become an OT at WMU "was an extremely enjoyable experience. All my professors knew my name. It was just a great program and a wonderful experience, a lot of hands on. That was important to me. I'm not one to sit around."

Her college years also offered a chance to get back to horseback riding, something she enjoyed growing up in suburban Detroit. She began volunteering and then working at the Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center near Kalamazoo and soon realized she could integrate her love for horses with her new vocation.

"It was a very farfetched dream, that I could possibly combine the two. And once I got into the occupational therapy program, I realized it would be a perfect match for me.

"Everything fell into place."

Equine-assisted therapy

Schooling completed in 2007, she returned to the Detroit area and worked part time in an outpatient treatment center and part time at Stable Possibilities, an equine-assisted therapy business owned by fellow alumna and occupational therapist, Susan Vergilio.

Working in both settings, Sumpter noticed equine-assisted therapy helped her patients meet their goals more quickly than when she used a therapy ball or other traditional equipment. This was especially true with patients who had neurological impairments, including brain or spinal cord injuries.



Occupational therapist Courtney Sumpter gently coaxed her 6-year-old client Zander Tewksbury to practice walking. He wasn't happy to be off his therapy horse, however. His mother, Krystal Middaugh, is pictured at left.

It's not miraculous. In some ways, it's mechanical. Over time, horseback riding strengthens muscles that support balance, coordination and posture. Sumpter says that sitting astride a horse naturally engages the brain and stimulates muscles all over the body.

"Nobody wants to fall off a horse. That's automatically retraining the brain how to sit and balance, and when the horse is moving, you get the movement. So, you're retraining the brain about balancing," she says.

"When the horse is moving, the brain used to a sedentary lifestyle is introduced to new sensations of movement, creating neurological pathways of rhythmic movement," says Sumpter, who is certified in hippotherapy by the American Hippotherapy Association.

When Zander first sat on Adele, for instance, he didn't have the core strength to hold himself upright and his hips weren't accustomed to the rhythmic, forward motion one experiences walking.

"With weekly sessions, the brain and muscles learn the new movements, allowing me to continuously build on learned skills," she explains.

Learning to become at OT at WMU "was an extremely enjoyable experience. ... It was just a great program."

—Sumpter





Sumpter has facilitated a special bond between her client Zander and Adele, one of her therapy horses.

About two years into treatment, her 6-year-old client has the strength and balance to sit upright independently at length—this alone has made a big difference in his quality of life. And after Zander is off the horse's back and Sumpter begins working with him on the ground, he's able to move his hips and legs forward in a rhythm and motion similar to what he experienced on the horse.

With the help of Sumpter, Adele and other staff at the center, he has continued to progress.

"They've been amazing. They are such big advocates for him," his mother says. "And they don't give up."

Entrepreneurially inclined

Sumpter never considered herself to be entrepreneurial, but she is driven in general and passionate about hippotherapy. After moving to northeastern Michigan to take a job in a hospital and to fulfill her desire to live in a more rural region, she established NMET as a sideline. But it was unplanned. A physician at the hospital learned about her background with equine-assisted therapy and asked her to work with his son, who is on the autism spectrum. NMET grew from there.

"I learned a lot and got a lot of experience working in hospitals and outpatient facilities. All of that gave me the boost to go out on my own, because I felt I had my own knowledge to share," she says.

The center became her full-time enterprise in 2015. She started NMET as a business and later changed it to a nonprofit so she could do fundraisers and seek grants for families like Zander's, who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford ongoing treatment.

The occupational therapist specializes in treating people who've had a brain or spinal cord injury, but also many other kinds of impairments.

The operation keeps her busy. Last year, Sumpter took clients through 800 sessions. That includes participants in programs established to teach people how to interact with and care for horses—programs for people who have disabilities, for at-risk youth, and for veterans and first responders.

She started these other programs knowing that learning to ride and care for a horse is not only a skill builder, but can be confidence boosting and calming, something she has witnessed with clients who suffer from anxiety, depression and similar challenges. Clients often bond with her horses.

"I always say, 'Horses don't judge.' They don't care what your background is. They don't care what your disability or ability is. None of that comes into a session," she says. "They are there to be a constant and a support to everyone who comes out."

The same can be said of Sumpter. ■



Musician,
fundraiser,
candlestick
maker—
and **‘the why’**

behind his
passions





Kalamazoo Candle Company CEO Adam McFarlin has come a long way in his candle-making enterprise. He started by hand pouring candles in a rented bedroom. McFarlin now has a staff, a large production space and sells his soy wax candles in 200-plus stores in more than a dozen states.

Bent over for hours hand pouring candles after work each night, Adam McFarlin thought he was creating scented candles to sell and raise funds for a financial stake in a workout facility.

When he started that one-man candle-making operation in a rented bedroom, the nonprofit administrator was indeed handcrafting his way toward business ownership, just not the business he envisioned.

“It wasn’t until three months later that I realized: This is a thing. I can do this. So, I scrapped the gym.”

A little more than four years after that realization, McFarlin’s business, Kalamazoo Candle Company, produces and sells soy wax candles online and in some 200 stores in more than a dozen states.

How he went from music student to nonprofit fundraiser to candle company founder was the subject of a talk he gave earlier this year as part of the Haworth College of Business Entrepreneurship Forum speaker series.

He didn’t share a tale about uncovering a previously hidden passion for candles.

“It’s not that story, guys. Sorry,” he quipped to an audience of students and others.

McFarlin said his story is about finding “the why” behind his passions, the elemental principles that drive him. And he encouraged students to do the same.

The Kalamazoo-based entrepreneur discovered he’s driven by a need to problem solve, continually improve and manage a process—attributes that have helped grow his business.

McFarlin’s why: a drive to solve problems and to continually improve and manage a process

As a musician earning a master’s degree in tuba performance at WMU, he would spend hours in the practice room perfecting his art.

“With music, I didn’t really approach it as an artistic platform, which is weird for somebody who has two music degrees. I just approached it as a problem to be solved. I looked at a piece of music. I wanted to convey something, and I practiced to make that happen.”

It was the same story working in the nonprofit realm after graduating from WMU in 2008 with a master’s degree in music performance and training in arts administration.

“I studied data. I studied trends, and I made fundraising work for me.”

When it came to the candle business, he told students about his endeavors refining that work: How it initially took six hours and six minutes to make just 94 candles. How his candle creation methods evolved through fine-tuning, better techniques and increasingly superior equipment as he ramped up the operation to meet demand. And how his shoe-leather entrepreneurship put his candles before more and more distributors and customers.

Ultimately, his labors resulted in products that lots of people enjoy and buy. And every day as a business owner, he’s solving problems and perfecting processes.

“If you figure out why you like something, you can pretty much do anything,” he said. “That was an important lesson that I had to learn.” ■

From #corporatedropout to #selfsustainingCEO



Jereshia Hawk dubbed the day she left her corporate job “Hawk Independence Day.”

Jereshia Hawk’s pivots might make any other 27-year-old’s head spin.

But she’s staring straight ahead into her computer’s camera for Facebook Live tutorials, a staple of her online training program, or into the eyes of her clients—primarily women, with a focus on women of color—during one-on-one and group coaching sessions.

Hawk says she was moving relatively fast up the corporate ladder at Consumers Energy when what started as Millennial-esque venting online led her to earning a six-figure salary and submitting her resignation.

“I never thought I was going to quit my job. Maybe in my 15-year career plan, but not three-and-a-half years in,” says the Detroit native, who just completed her first full year of being in business for herself full time.

Hawk’s first career pivot was in deciding which career path to take. Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, but raised in suburban Detroit, she was studying architecture at Iowa State University when her aunt—who, along with her grandmother, had raised her—suddenly passed away. She needed to be closer to home to support her cousin, especially.

Kalamazoo was close enough, as was WMU’s civil engineering program.

“I never thought I was smart enough to be an engineer. But for an architect, it takes a lot longer to make significant income,” Hawk says. And as a woman and African American, two segments of society underrepresented in engineering, she figured she could find a good position with upward mobility in a company looking to turn lagging statistics around with the latest talent.

First, she needed to complete her degree. She earned a paycheck doing some modeling and acting, but needed financial aid, which ran out her final year. What to do? Pivot. She began selling women’s clothing online, which more than covered her tuition. Despite that success, she determined it wasn’t the direction she wanted to go.

At an event on campus her senior year, Hawk met a Consumers Energy representative, who convinced her to apply for an internship, even though she was more interested in government and project management company jobs.

“I came for the pizza, but I’ll hear them out,” she remembers thinking. “I never considered working at a utility.” But an internship turned into a full-time job offer even before she graduated. She found satisfaction in work that touched millions of people’s lives, managing pipeline projects that connected people in rural areas to natural gas and power supplies.

She praises Consumers Energy and points to the special attention, training and advancement opportunities that she as an African-American woman was intentionally given. But she also was frustrated by the nationwide status quo. “I realized that’s just the norm in America, a lack of representation of women of color in higher executive roles.”

The entrepreneurial side of her brain began plotting with the engineering side, asking and answering questions: “What does it take to get to the C-Suite, and what are the barriers that

women of color especially face?” and “How can I start helping women that are just like me and might not have mentors that I had access to?”

She posed that line of inquiry in a video on Facebook. “I just made an offer: Anyone else in this boat?” Small groups of people signed up for two video tutorials, but no one showed to the third one. She figured her message wasn’t the problem, but her approach needed fine-tuning. She hired two coaches in succession, each time tweaking, improving, redirecting—pivoting—her services and her prices. All the while, she was at Consumers Energy full time and studying for her MBA.

By early 2017, Hawk was consistently earning four figures a month, until April, when she earned or booked her first five-figure month. She told herself that she’d leave Consumers if she topped \$10,000 for the next two months. She did it again in May, and in June she booked \$60,000 in sales.

“I put in my resignation on July 3,” she says of her biggest pivot to date, becoming a proud “corporate dropout.” She named it “Hawk Independence Day.”

Her company was initially called the Goal Getter Group but, in a pivot that capitalized on her fast growing “personal brand,” is now simply jereshiahawk.com. She teaches clients financial and marketing smarts, forward-looking business practices such as metrics-based decision making and planning for long-term sales cycles, and marketing tools

made available to any service sector in today’s internet age, especially via social media.

Her online courses, bespoke consulting and networking opportunities sell for less than \$100 to a package that costs clients \$15,000. More than 500 people have purchased something from her since she began.

Currently, there are eight clients she sees weekly, 10 who are enrolled in a bi-weekly program, and around 50 people in some online session of hers. Her clients come from the service industry—

accountants, consultants, designers, lawyers, marketers—and those looking to, like Hawk, turn a “side hustle” into a new career.

“It teaches how to pivot,” she says, “and how to do it in a way to maintain mental sanity.” ■

The entrepreneurial side of her brain began plotting with the engineering side, asking and answering questions:

“What does it take to get to the C-Suite? How can I start helping women that are just like me?”

—Hawk



Hawk established her own consultancy, coaching clients, primarily women, in financial and marketing smarts and forward-looking business practices.



Reading the cannabis leaves— and other instincts to boost business

With the legal cannabis industry lighting up in big ways in parts of the United States, CEO Andrew Bruex seized on a flourishing new market for his company AgTonik, a manufacturer of mineral formulations used to increase plant fertility.

“Our cannabis-related sales could dwarf our overall sales,” says Bruex, who four years ago co-founded this business-to-business enterprise selling fulvic acid-bound minerals to companies that use the nutrient boosters in fertilizers applied to golf courses, on farmland, in landscaping and for other agribusiness applications.

The instinct to promote his products for cannabis growing—a sector on the rise in the U.S. thanks to some degree of decriminalization in several states—is the same instinct that led him to launch three businesses in 30 years.

Bruex knew early in life, possibly due to working in his parents’ print shop throughout his youth, that he wanted to be in business.

“I didn’t think too much about what I was going to do. I just knew I was going to be a business person,” says the Kalamazoo resident. “I knew that I would not be a good employee for others because I knew I would want to run the place.”

Beginnings

Through decades in business, Bruex has tried to discern new and developing markets. That was true when he founded his first business, a company serving the industrial automation sector in the 1980s. But he had his start in a role most of us fill—as an employee.

During and after studying business management at WMU in the 1970s, the 1976 graduate worked at Checker Motors Corp. in a few capacities, lastly helping the Kalamazoo-based taxicab manufacturer implement the still relatively new guidelines mandated by the Occupational Safety and

Health Act of 1970. And, in a later job for a company involved in industrial automation, he was in sales.

Toward the late 1980s, ready to make good on his aspiration to run things, Bruex combined the skills and knowledge he had gained in sales and in workplace safety to form Industrial Logic Controls.

The company helped manufacturers understand and implement automation in ways that were intended to improve their processes, products and factory-floor safety.

“Industrial Logic was about factory automation, intelligent solutions for effective automation.

“I learned what the emerging technologies (in automation) were at the time and introduced those to industry and hit them with a one-two punch: safety and quality,” he says.

Next steps

Bruex operated that business from 1987 to 2011, and then sold it to a larger firm. After 24 years, “the fire in the belly was not there for me to grow it. I took the opportunity to follow what did interest me, which was my personal health and well-being.”

It didn’t take long for his personal interest in supplements and minerals to become his business interest. He partnered with Ralf Ostertag, a Kalamazoo alternative health advocate who sold supplements and who needed someone to manage his business, Universal Formulas.

“He just wasn’t a business guy; it didn’t interest him. So, I bought the business from him. We ran that business for years until I realized it wasn’t a good business model because you’re competing with the GNCs of the world.



“Moving from selling supplements for individual use to supplying mineral formulations to businesses was a ‘huge pivot,’ but a necessary one.

—Bruex

“Ralf and I decided: Let’s shut down the supplement business and focus on the mineral business. Just the minerals. And that’s where we are today. It was a huge pivot,” he says.

Today, he runs Mineral Logic and AgTonik. Both Kalamazoo companies sell fulvic acid-based minerals. Fulvic acid acts as an agent that helps minerals penetrate cell membranes in the human body or in a plant.

“It’s a nutrient-delivery system that can be added to anybody’s recipe and it will enhance the bio-availability of the nutrient or formula,” Bruex explains.

Mineral Logic deals in human health, manufacturing its unique blends of minerals for companies that produce vitamins, other supplements and beverages. AgTonik specializes in plant nutrition. Though it’s an outgrowth of Mineral Logic, this smaller enterprise could become the paramount profit center if Bruex and his colleagues can boost sales within the cannabis industry.

“Understanding how our minerals help plants grow, it is an obvious cash crop, meaning it has a lot of profit margin and our product increases yield,” he says.

Bruex likes to characterize the cannabis industry as a modern-day gold rush. “And we’re selling the pick axes and shovels.” ■

A pivotal move: Moving from selling supplements for individual use to supplying mineral formulations to businesses was a “huge pivot,” but a necessary one, CEO Andrew Bruex says. “To have your own line of supplements was profitable for a while, but it got to be more competitive, and I could see the handwriting on the wall.”

The profitable result: The change resulted in new, growing business ventures. “You have to embrace change,” he says. “The opportunities are with the change.”

Made to **MOVE**



Jeff Suffolk and his wife, Jill, are both Broncos.

He helped get the now-ubiquitous Color Run off the ground.

Jeff Suffolk is a man who's into movement, and perhaps one of the main drivers behind today's thriving experiential outdoor activity market.

Still, he's humble about it.

"It found me more than I found it," he says of his professional journey.

Suffolk moved to Tempe, Arizona, after earning a business degree from WMU in 2002. In Tempe, he began collaborating with a manager for the city's parks and recreation department. He launched Red Rock Company, his first business, that same year. His new friend and associate eventually began hosting half Ironman competitions.

Red Rock focused on running, biking and triathlon events until 2008, when Suffolk sold the business. He had much bigger plans and launched Human Movement Management Inc.—HMM—in 2010.

The consumer climate was changing in the late 2000s, Suffolk says, and there was a gap in the active entertainment industry for non-competitive, untimed-type events. Wide-eyed and full of ideas, he got to work, sometimes spending up to 18 hours a day developing plans and strategizing their implementation.

With no sponsors, he sold tickets to events that were designed to be less about winning or losing and more about bringing people together to deepen friendships and develop new connections. Sure, there was a competitive edge to them; it was just dulled with after-event beers and an oftentimes eccentric, fun-loving and rowdy atmosphere.



“Our ethos, or acid test, for designing events was, ‘If it gets a person to change their profile picture on Facebook, we want to do it,’” he says. “We were looking to make peoples’ weekends amazing.”

He helped get the now-ubiquitous Color Run off the ground. Other offerings include the Dirty Girl Mud Run, Ugly Sweater run, 5K Dance Party and Zombie run.

More competitive events include triathlons, marathons and the Under Armour Fight Camp, in which 50 amateur runners were invited to participate in a three-day race in the Colorado Rockies, braving extreme temperatures and conditions. It also was an example of HMM’s “high-touch” marketing wing, in this case for a shoe Under Armour was looking to get noticed. The runners were dropped off at 10,000 feet in a helicopter with the clothing manufacturer’s name emblazoned on it.

“There is a primal instinct to be exhilarated. You’re still an animal,” Suffolk says. “Sometimes we need to bleed a bit to know we’re alive.”

He adds of the initial success of HMM, “It was easier than I thought. Things seemed to happen overnight.”

Within a few months of HMM’s launch, his team—a handful of designers, marketers and others—grew to a workforce of 100. HMM was firing on all cylinders and profits were soaring. The sky, it seemed, was the limit.

It didn’t take long for HMM to be recognized by an array of business publications. *Outside* magazine lauded it as one of the “Top 20 Places in the United States to Work.” *Inc.* magazine named it one of the “500 fastest growing companies” and *Denver Business Journal* said it was “Colorado’s Fastest Growing Private Company.”

“It was a rocket ship of growth, and when you’re on a rocket ship, you hold on, don’t steer and put whatever fuel you have into it,” he says. “I was interviewing myself almost every day, asking, ‘Am I leading the company in the right way?’ There is no playbook for growing that quickly overnight. You just go with your gut instinct.”

Of course, a meteoric rise doesn’t last forever. In 2013, Louisville, Colorado-based HMM was No. 19 on *Outside*’s list. In 2014, it wasn’t on the list at all.

Suffolk needed a change

“As I got my arms around it, I needed to pivot away from ideas that just didn’t work anymore,” he says.

He had to let go of an executive he hired to help professionalize HMM. He became more intentional about protecting the HMM brand and focused more on quality over quantity—at its height, HMM was holding 300 events a year. Suffolk wanted to do maybe a dozen.

“We were creating non-proprietary experiences,” he says. “Basically, we were getting ripped off. It was too easy to take our ideas and replicate them. We wanted proprietary experiences on proprietary real estate.”

That’s where POWDR came in. The adventure lifestyle company—owner of nine mountain resorts in several western states and the northeast, Woodward camps and programs, Outside Television, and river rafting outfitter Sun Country Tours—acquired HMM in 2014. It was another pivot of sorts for Suffolk, who now has POWDR’s real estate assets to host his events at, in addition to extending HMM’s high-touch marketing and design work.

“WMU attracts a different breed of student. I attribute a lot of my success to the community at WMU. My finance and marketing professors were fantastic, really engaging business professionals.”

—Suffolk

“It’s been the most perfect marriage of necessity and design,” he says. “In business, you need to know when it’s time to let go and move in another direction.”

His time at WMU still serves him, he says.

“WMU attracts a different breed of student,” he says. “I attribute a lot of my success to the community at WMU. My finance and marketing professors were fantastic, really engaging business professionals.”

“Some of the students I graduated with I still stay in touch with. I think that’s kind of remarkable, but it says something about the close-knit community that happens in Haworth (College of Business). I learned as much from them as I did from my professors.” ■

Imbibing success

A cancer diagnosis and subsequent clean eating regimen led alumna to create a hit line of sparkling wines for the health-conscious consumer.



The latest big move for Leah Caplanis of SOCIAL Sparkling Wine is bottling her product, a low-calorie organic saké wine that has been sold in cans since it entered the marketplace in 2014.

“We needed to grow,” says the 2005 graduate who holds a bachelor’s degree in marketing from WMU. “You’re always growing, or you’re dying. We had to invest and scrape by to build out a whole new line.”

Big moves have been the norm for her steadily growing business, which she says yielded just over \$1 million in retail sales in 2017 and is on track for \$2.5 million in sales in 2018.

About this time last year, cans were sold in three flavors in 24 U.S. states. Today, the product has spread to 45 states and is currently available in four flavors. A new variation, Strawberry Rose, debuts this summer.

And the Chicago-based company got a big boost recently when CNBC’s “Billion Dollar Buyer” recruited Caplanis to appear on the show.

“One of their producers found SOCIAL in a store, and it changed our life,” Caplanis says. “It’s just opened up so many doors.”

On the program, Tilman Fertitta—a billionaire entrepreneur who owns the Landry’s restaurant empire and recently acquired the Houston Rockets NBA team—invests in and counsels small businesses.

It was Fertitta’s recommendation that Caplanis bottle SOCIAL to extend her brand’s platform. This summer, customers will be able to buy SOCIAL’s three most-popular flavors in a traditional wine bottle.

For his part, Fertitta agreed to begin offering SOCIAL in more than 100 restaurants, Caplanis says. And after her segment on his show aired in January, major retailers began reaching out.

“It’s been crazy. Luckily, we were at a very large producer,” she says.

In March, she showed off the bottled version of the sparkling saké wine at WMU’s Food Marketing Conference, an annual event that draws hundreds of industry leaders from across the country.

When Caplanis was a marketing student, she attended the conference to network with industry executives, which turned out to be fruitful; it led to her first job out of college.

“Through that (conference), I met with Nestlé and was accepted into its very exclusive national sales development program,” she says.

And she would stay with Nestlé until 2013 when she made the leap into developing her own product and brand.

SOCIAL’s origin story

For all of SOCIAL’s soaring success, it evolved from a low period in Caplanis’ life. At age 26, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and chose alternative medicine and methods to treat it. As part of a treatment plan, she followed a highly restrictive diet, which included drinking nutrient-dense juices daily, eating raw vegan foods and abstaining from alcohol.

“I chose to heal holistically,” she says. “I went on this journey of learning so much about the body and different philosophies on how to make the body well and balanced.”

The regimen was restorative and she felt better than ever. But she also was “really sick” of her restrictive lifestyle, including eschewing alcohol for more than two years. As part of returning to social life, she wanted to partake in social beverages again, but did not find any that were health-conscious. Like many entrepreneurs and inventors before her, Caplanis then decided to create the product she wanted after failing to find it on store shelves.

She partnered with a co-founder of IZZE sparkling juice to create an alcoholic beverage that is low-calorie—88 calories per can—organic, gluten-free, sulfite-free and contains just 1 gram of sugar per serving.

The alcohol in SOCIAL is saké wine made from fermented organic brown rice. And SOCIAL’s flavors are derived from natural ingredients.

When you drink her Hibiscus Cucumber sparkling wine, “you’re drinking organic flower juice,” Caplanis says.

“I think people will be eating flowers a lot in the future. I’m seeing a lot of that when I travel.”

The young CEO is always seeking new innovations to enhance her business.

“Moving into this bottle thing is definitely a pivot,” she says. “It’s a whole new category to present to retailers and to grow.” ■



When Caplanis was a student, she attended WMU’s annual Food Marketing Conference to network with industry executives. That led to her first job out of college.



“Through that (conference), I met with Nestlé and was accepted into its very exclusive national sales development program.”

—Caplanis

As a student, Leah Caplanis attended WMU’s annual Food Marketing Conference to network with industry leaders from across the country. Today, she is one of those industry leaders. The SOCIAL Sparkling Wine CEO showed off the soon-to-be-released bottled version of her product at the conference in March.

Consumer Good

Can consumer spending help save the world? Alumnus Cullen Schwarz thinks so.

Cullen Schwarz left a high-profile job as a press secretary in Washington D.C. a few years ago to pursue a business idea he conceived while studying philosophy at WMU in the early 2000s.

He had wondered for years: How can I help harness the power of consumer spending as a force for social good?

The answer crystallized in 2015 when he and his business partner, Scott Jacobsen, successfully launched DoneGood, an e-commerce startup designed to connect shoppers with businesses that produce consumer goods “responsibly,” such as paying workers a living wage and maintaining environmentally friendly business practices.

DoneGood intends to serve customers who want to buy a quality tote bag, throw rug, T-shirt or some other product, but also want to ensure those items aren’t made in a sweatshop or that, in their production, hurt the earth.

“We are spending trillions every year buying stuff and even if a fraction went to eliminating poverty, fighting climate change or otherwise making the world better, that has a big impact,” Schwarz says.

“The world’s most powerful tool for change is the dollars we all spend. That’s the core belief behind DoneGood.”

For conscientious consumers

The socially conscious business has captured the attention of similarly conscientious consumers and stoked the bottom lines of other socially conscious companies—diverting to these mission-driven enterprises more than \$250,000 in sales that might have otherwise gone to big box stores, according to Schwarz.

One of the hundreds of brands DoneGood has partnered with is the Starfish Project, which helps women escape sex trafficking in Asia by engaging them in jewelry making while also providing the women with skills training for other industries.

Another brand DoneGood promotes, Under the Canopy, produces fair trade, organic and non-toxic bedding and bath products.

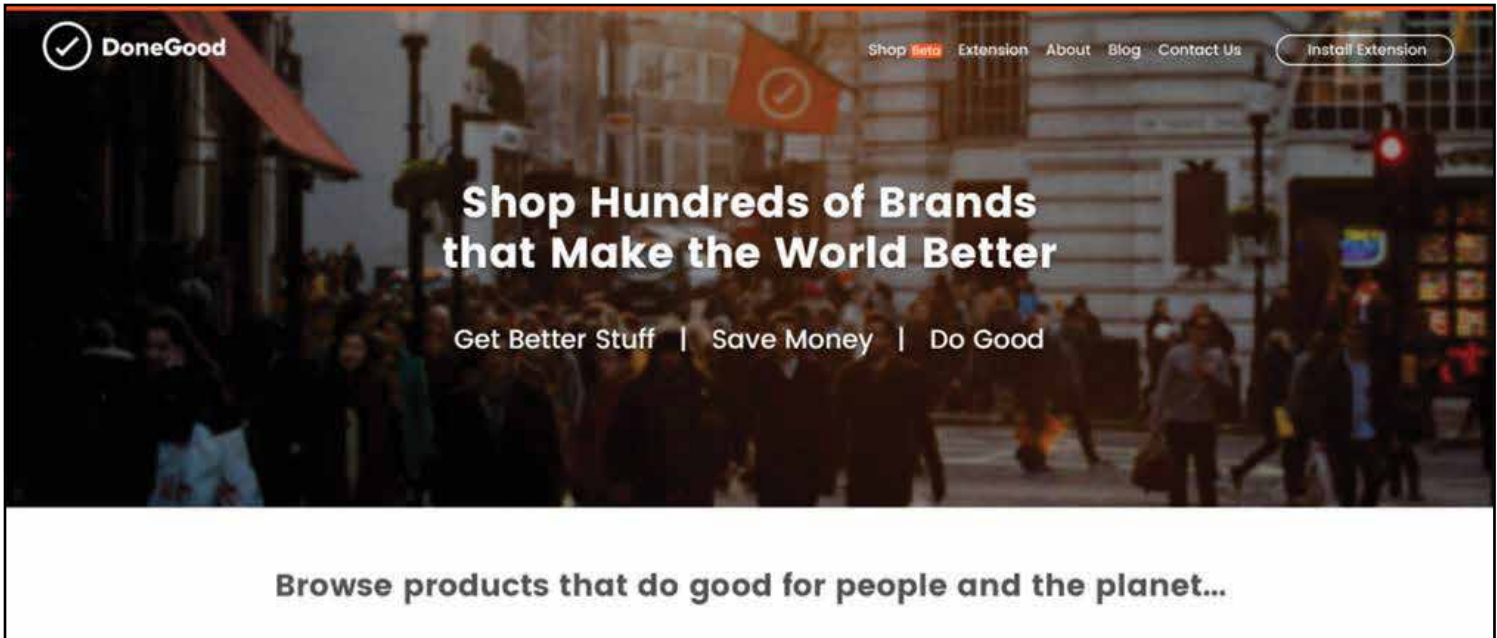
In addition to attracting customers and partnering with more and more mission-driven brands, Schwarz and Jacobsen’s venture also has been getting a fair bit of press, with coverage in the likes of CNBC, *The Boston Globe*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *Forbes* and *The Washington Post*.

“We know we’re on to something,” he says.

“More and more, consumers, especially millennials, want to know how products are made and want to know something about the companies they are doing business with and the people behind those companies.”



Cullen Schwarz, left, and the DoneGood team



Before DoneGood

A millennial himself, Schwarz was active on WMU's campus and nationally with United Students Against Sweatshops.

"That was when I first began to think about the power of consumer spending to create social change," he says.

But after graduating from WMU, the Elk Rapids, Michigan, native began working on political campaigns and in government.

He's been a communications director for then-U.S. Rep. (now U.S. Sen.) Gary Peters, for the gubernatorial campaign of former Lansing, Michigan, mayor Virg Bernero, as well as for U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow. In 2015, Schwarz completed his tenure in government as the press secretary and spokesman for the U.S. Department Agriculture.

In his posts in D.C., he felt he was working toward the good he aspired to as a Lee Honors College student majoring in philosophy and comparative religion back in his youth. But he also found that making progress from Capitol Hill was less than speedy.

"Throughout that time, I always had this thought that I, at some point, wanted to return to this idea that consumer spending was the world's most powerful tool for change, and I wanted to help accelerate that movement," Schwarz says.

From politics to e-commerce

In 2007, he met the man who would become DoneGood's co-founder. Jacobsen, another beltway denizen, had worked on political campaigns also, and he was a communications director for the Children's Defense Fund.

Initially, they just talked about how troubling it was to dedicate their lives to working for social change, but sometimes buy everyday products that undermined those efforts.

"I didn't want my money to support people running sweatshops. And Scott was working at the CDF. He didn't want his money to support child labor.

"The problem was that it can be really hard to find companies that you know you can feel good about supporting. That's where we started talking about ways we could make that quicker and easier."

The two began laying the foundation for what would become DoneGood almost four years ago. They worked on it nights and weekends, while Jacobsen pursued his master's degree at Harvard University and Schwarz continued to work in D.C.

By 2015, the pair was ready to bring DoneGood to consumers.

Today, through its smartphone app, website and browser extension, the company

connects consumers to businesses based all over the country and world. Buying their products through DoneGood gives customers a discount on merchandise purchased and DoneGood a commission on sales.

"When we decide to give money to companies empowering workers and using exceptional eco-friendly business practices, we help those kinds of companies to succeed and prove that a business can be successful and be a force for good in the world at the same time," says Schwarz, who is not only his company's CEO, but its official Chief of Good Thoughts. ■

A pivotal move: DoneGood has always focused on connecting consumers to mission-driven companies, but it initially centered on brick and mortar businesses in Boston. That was limiting in a lot of ways, CEO Cullen Schwarz and his team learned. So, they pivoted to e-commerce.

The profitable result: "We decided to change the focus to online shopping, allowing us to work with brands across the country," Schwarz says. Without geographical limits, he says DoneGood can promote the cream of the crop companies when it comes to worker pay and green practices.

Your cat's vintner



“Cat owners like to treat their pets while at home with them. They like to socialize with them while having a drink. Myself and friends were talking about it, that it would be a really good idea if you actually made a wine for cats. I just basically took it upon myself to research and generate sample products.”

—Zavala

By tapping into a few of America's favorite preoccupations—pet companionship and alcohol consumption—Brandon Zavala created a company that speedily broke \$500,000 in sales its first year and later found its way onto ABC's "Shark Tank."

Zavala's Apollo Peak pet beverage company sells snack drinks marketed as wines for cats and dogs.

Among varieties for sale, there's the catnip-infused Pinot Meow for the discerning cat in your life. And for the hound that has everything, except for a chamomile-spiked beverage to relax with after a long day of people pleasing, Chardognay.

Apollo Peak now sells dog beers, too. A playful pet owner might want to pick out a "pawty pack" of Twisted Tail Ale, Black Print Pawsner, Extra Special Biter and Oatmeal Snout.

Perhaps needful to establish, none of these beverages contain actual alcohol. They are herbal drinks sold online and in more than 300 stores across the country. But Zavala hit a consumer nerve with them, judging by his young company's meteoric rise.

The business idea has its genesis in the idle musings of friends and in its namesake, a cat named Apollo. To this day, Apollo, who shares a home with Zavala, remains the CFO—chief feline officer, according to the company's website.

Becoming America's pet wine purveyor

"I've always been a cat person, and I've always enjoyed wine," says Zavala, a two-time WMU graduate, with a bachelor's degree in aviation administration and a master's degree in business administration.

"Cat owners like to treat their pets while at home with them. They like to socialize with them while having a drink.

"Myself and friends were talking about it, that it would be a really good idea if you actually made a wine for cats. I just basically took it upon myself to research and generate sample products," he says.

At the time, he was working as a territory sales manager for Hill's Pet Nutrition, a well-known pet food company. So, he had some experience in the industry.

Based in Denver, Zavala launched Apollo Peak in 2015 by concocting his first products, cat wines Pinot Meow and Moscato, in his kitchen. He brought them door to door to pet stores. And he started to generate some buzz through news outlets and on social media.

"Reaching out to writers, editors, magazines and newspapers, and getting publicity through media, that's what grew (the business) organically," he says.

Quicker than the WMU alumnus dreamed, orders were mounting into the thousands, and he had to find larger and larger spaces for production. Apollo Peak is now manufactured in a 2,800-square-foot facility in Golden, Colorado.

"During the early days, things grew out of proportion. It felt like it happened overnight. People found out about it, and sales on the website just spiked," he says.

"Shark Tank" came calling in 2016. Two of its superstar entrepreneur-investors, Daymond John and Kevin O'Leary, got into an on-air bidding war to secure a percentage stake in Apollo Peak while investing in it, as well.

On the show, O'Leary landed the deal. The pact, however, fell apart soon thereafter, and Zavala thus didn't expect his segment to air. But it appeared on national television screens in the spring of 2017.

"We didn't get the deal, but the exposure helped to blow up our sales a bit last year," he says, adding that he's content with growing the business with the staff he's assembled (which includes a few other Broncos) and not being accountable to outside investors just yet.

Still, by selling novelty products, a young company could easily be a paw print in the sand—here one moment, gone the next.

But Zavala says he's positioning Apollo Peak for staying power by strengthening what it already does well and getting into other types of innovative merchandise for pets.

"I want to continue the trend in finding new products for cats. I really feel there's still not enough stuff out there for them. It's fun to treat your cats, and others are realizing that, as well." ■



A pivotal move: When he moved Apollo Peak into its current building, CEO Brandon Zavala realized the company did not need to utilize all of the facility's square footage. The building has manufacturing and office areas. Envisioning an additional revenue source, he converted the offices into a small business incubator to allow other entrepreneurs with new ideas to grow their businesses cheaply.

The profitable result: He is helping others' entrepreneurial projects while offsetting some of the overhead costs involved in operating Apollo Peak.

Send submissions to: teresa.ventimiglia@wmich.edu. Include your name (first, middle, last, maiden), degree(s), year(s) graduated and a daytime phone number by which we can reach you. We will publish photos as space permits.

Daniel Malamud, MA '62, has received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis Who's Who.

William J. Parsons, BA '67, MA '71, was re-elected as treasurer to the Allegan (Michigan) Area Educational Services Agency Board of Education.

Stephen T. Davis, BA '69, has been appointed to the board of trustees for Bay de Noc Community College in Escanaba, Michigan.

Melinda Anderson, BS '74, is the program director for New Beginnings Literacy Program, part of the Flint (Michigan) Genesee Literacy Network.

Gary M. Hruska, BBA '77, has joined the law firm of Holzfaster, Cecil, McKnight & Mues in Dayton, Ohio. His practice is focused on trial and litigation work.

Patty Davidson, BS '80, MA '89, is the 2017 recipient of the John E. Oster Award, which honors teaching excellence in Sturgis (Michigan) Public Schools.

Steven Kreider, BBA '80, is a personal banker for Lake Michigan Credit Union in its Portage, Michigan, office.

Frank Dituri, BS '81, is the manager of the department of public works for Traverse City, Michigan.

Scott Steele, BBA '81, is the vice president and chief marketing officer for Church Mutual Insurance Co., based in Merrill, Wisconsin.

Scott Arnold, BBA '82, is chief financial officer for Verogen Inc., which serves public safety organizations through the use of next-generation DNA sequencing solutions. The company is headquartered in San Diego.

Richard J. Carlson, MSW '83, has retired from Goodwill Industries of West Michigan in Muskegon, where he served for 40 years as a rehabilitation counselor, vice president and, for the past 25 years, as president and chief executive officer.

Mary Marshall, BS '83, MBA '98, is vice president and wealth management officer for Southern Michigan Bank and Trust, based in Coldwater.

Keith G. Vandebussche, BS '84, is a project executive for IMEG Corp., a global engineering firm, in its Wixom, Michigan, office.

Thomas J. Handziak, BBA '86, is the head football coach for St. Thomas More High School in Milwaukee.

Mary B. Cohen, MA '87, is the vice president for communications for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Christina L. Corl, BS '91, has been named a 2018 Super Lawyer by *Ohio Super Lawyers magazine*.

Ronald L. Winowiecki, MBA '92, is chief financial officer for Perrigo Co., a manufacturer of pharmaceuticals headquartered in Allegan, Michigan.

Lori Hopkins, BS '93, BSM '96, is a physician assistant for Digestive Health Associates of Northern Michigan in Traverse City, Michigan.

Mickey Ciokajlo, BA '94, is a director on the Michigan Press Association Board of Directors.

Marcus D. Hamilton, BBA '96, is the chief operating officer for Flexsteel Industries, headquartered in Dubuque, Iowa.

Steve Kiefer, MBA '96, is the president and chief operating officer for Manitex International, Inc., a manufacturer of engineered lifting solutions headquartered in Bridgeview, Illinois.

Heidi Pendergraff, BS '96, MA '04, was named a Teacher of the Year by Novi (Michigan) Community School District. She teaches child

development, as well as life and leadership classes at Novi High School.

Noel Ranka, BSE '97, is the chief sales and marketing officer for PurePower Technologies, an engineering and remanufacturer of diesel fuel injectors headquartered in Columbia, South Carolina.

Karen Fordham, BS '98, MBA '02, is the chief executive officer for St. Joseph Hospital, based in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Sandra Lealofi, BS '99, is the new chief executive officer of Lakeside for Children, a residential treatment center and school in Kalamazoo.

Matthew Siegrist, BFA '01, has been promoted to associate/studio leader-environmental graphics for JPRA Architects in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

John Girdwood, BA '02, manages the Michigan Initiative for Maternal and Infant Oral Health through the University of Detroit Mercy. The project places registered dental hygienists in OB-GYN clinics to reach patients in underserved areas.

Zechariah Hoyt, MA '02, is the director of early childhood development for the YMCA in Niles, Michigan.

Tim Bourgeois, MPA '03, has retired after almost 15 years as police chief of Kalamazoo Township. He also served 34 years with the city of Parchment, the last 20 of those years as fire chief. Bourgeois will continue in law enforcement as executive director of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards.

Ryan Findlay, BA '04, is the new chief executive officer of the American Soybean Association, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri.

Charlie Millerwise, BA '04, is the director of development and hospitality for the Green Bay Packers football team in Wisconsin.

Aaron Mitchell, BA '04, is the new city manager of Otsego, Michigan.

Dan Murphy, BA '04, has been elected to the State

College (Pennsylvania) Borough Council. He is the director of student orientation and transition programs for Penn State University.

Matthew Henry Lechel, BS '05, MPA '08, is the director of ONEplace, a capacity building center for nonprofits in Kalamazoo County. ONEplace is part of the Kalamazoo Public Library.

Sarah Lee, BA '05, MA '08, is the new director of marketing communications for the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Laura Walsh, BA '05, has been selected to join the Saginaw Valley State University Gerstacker Fellowship Program. She is an assistant director of special education for elementary for Rochester (Michigan) Community Schools.

Neal Cronkite, BS '06, has received the Milken Educator Award. He is a fifth-grade science and math teacher at Washington Woods Middle School in Holt, Michigan.

Jessica Enget, BS '06, is the library director for Lincoln Township Public Library in Stevensville, Michigan.

John Gaynier, BA '06, has been promoted to executive vice president and partner for Roger & Gray Insurance, headquartered in Massachusetts.

Jack R. Baker, MA '06, has been nominated for a Reader's Choice Award by *Inside Higher Ed* for a book he co-authored titled "Wendell Berry and Higher Education: Cultivating Virtues of Place." He is an associate professor of English for Spring Arbor (Michigan) University.

Julie Bayardo, MSW '07, has been promoted to deputy director for services for Community Mental Health for Central Michigan in Mt. Pleasant.

Joshua Burel, BM '08, MM '11, is an assistant professor of music at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Susan Shaw, MA '09, has been awarded a Silver Circle award by

the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. She is a news anchor for WOOD-TV 8 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Nick Mitchell, BS '11, is a co-owner of AIM Chiropractic in Perham, Minnesota.

Ted Yoakum, BA '13, is the new managing editor of the *Tryon* (North Carolina) *Daily Bulletin*.

Chadwick Carpenter, BS '14, recently graduated from the Michigan State Police Academy. He is stationed at the Metro South post in Taylor.

Shari Deevers, MA '14, is the director of Kellogg Community College's Grahl Center, the college's regional site in Coldwater, Michigan.

Bryan Ergang, MPA '14, is the new chief of police for the Kalamazoo Township Police Department.

Joshua R. Gettig, BBA '14, recently opened Van Buren Coffee Company in Paw Paw, Michigan. He also is a John Maxwell coach, helping other small businesses grow.

Carter Nimitz, BBA '15, is a mortgage advisor for United Federal Credit Union at its St. Joseph, Michigan, branch.

Cayden Sparks, BBA '15, is the new executive director for the Coldwater (Michigan) Area Chamber of Commerce.

Tim Travis, PhD '15, is the new superintendent of Saugatuck (Michigan) Public Schools.

Gianna Capadona, BS '17, is one of the names listeners of the NPR news quiz show "Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me!" have been hearing each week when host Peter Sagal calls out the end-of-program credits. Capadona, a graduate of the School of Music's multimedia arts technology program, is a production and operations intern for the show. Listeners who call in and ace news quizzes on the program are awarded with a voicemail message recorded by any of the show's personalities. As part of her job, Capadona helps record, edit and produce all of those messages.



Bronco hockey alum made his NHL debut at 36

Former Bronco goalie Scott Foster, BBA '06, MSA '07, has a legendary story to tell about the night he became a pro hockey player for 14 minutes in the Chicago Blackhawks' 6-2 win over the Winnipeg Jets. The 36-year-old accountant made his NHL debut March 29. He was brought in as the Blackhawks' emergency goalie for the final minutes of the game, and he saved all seven shots he faced. The Oak Park, Illinois, resident replaced backup goalie Collin Delia, who had started in place of an injured Anton Forsberg. That night wasn't the first time Foster served as emergency goalie, but it was the first time he suited up. He played at WMU from 2002-06.

William H. Roe, BA '38, Jan. 20, 2018, Sun City Center, FL

Dominic J. Farina, BA '39, Dec. 31, 2017, New Buffalo, MI

Jeannette G. Randall, BS '42, Jan. 3, 2018, Tekonsha, MI

Lois J. (Teroller) Tallis, BS '42, Feb. 14, 2018, Dowagiac, MI

Willo N. (Jones) Cooper, BS '44, Jan. 2, 2018, Marshall, MI

Alice (Bogen) Brown, TC '45, Dec. 22, 2017, Thousand Oaks, CA

Ruby A. Young, BA '45, Nov. 30, 2017, Kalamazoo

Joanne K. (Morton) Sisson, BS '47, Nov. 29, 2017, Kalamazoo

Jo A. (Austin) Corsiglia, BA '48, Feb. 24, 2018, Fenton, MI

Joan M. (Shepherd) Davis, BA '49, Jan. 6, 2018, Elbridge Township, MI

Richard J. Dunn, BS '49, Dec. 7, 2017, Venice, FL

Rushford Hotchkiss, TC '49, Jan. 9, 2018, Kalamazoo

Gordon E. Hunsberger, BS '49, Jan. 1, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Marian E. (Walker) Moyser, BS '49, MA '61, Dec. 19, 2017, Niles, MI

Rhinehold G. Pastryk, BA '49, Jan. 6, 2018, Naples, FL

Dale E. Artz, BS '50, Dec. 12, 2017, Fairlawn, OH

Edward H. Grau, BS '50, MA '60, Oct. 15, 2017, Portage, MI

Nancy C. (Christman) Martin, BS '50, Jan. 30, 2018, Kalamazoo

Vern L. Norris, BS '50, Feb. 12, 2018, Lansing, MI

Larry Rolfe, BM '50, MA '55, Feb. 3, 2018, Vicksburg, MI

John Schwetz, BS '50, MA '58, Jan. 19, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Evelyn M. (Guenther) Spink, BS '50, Dec. 10, 2017, Mason, MI

Janet J. (Barnhart) Stimson, BBA '50, Dec. 14, 2017, Kalamazoo

Paul A. Watson, BA '50, Dec. 9, 2017, Royal Oak, MI

Arthur G. Bonfiglio, BS '51, Dec. 2, 2017, Battle Creek, MI

Thomas R. Moriarty, BA '52, Dec. 30, 2017, Cadillac, MI

Charlotte A. (Smith) Murray, BM '52, Nov. 25, 2017, Seattle, WA

Dean G. Van Velsen, BM '52, Dec. 24, 2017, Ada, MI

Gordon J. Duisterhof, BBA '53, Dec. 16, 2017, Kalamazoo

Donna E. (Frauhiger) Keough, BS '53, Jan. 7, 2018, Warsaw, IN

Joan Rood, BS '53, Dec. 8, 2017, Kalamazoo

Rose A. Bullock, BS '54, Dec. 8, 2017, Somerset, KY

James M. Mandrell, BS '54, MA '59, Dec. 17, 2017, Kalamazoo

Doris (Carr) Sampson, BS '54, MA '58, Jan. 15, 2018, Chicago

Marion J. Stokes, TC '54, BS '58, MA '61, Feb. 20, 2018, Grand Haven, MI

Donald W. Wank, BBA '54, Feb. 6, 2018, South Haven, MI

Arthur H. West, BS '54, Jan. 25, 2017, Cape Coral, FL

Edwin J. Wooley, BBA '54, Jan. 20, 2018, Normal, IL

Merlyn (Mott) Duisterhof, BS '55, Dec. 10, 2017, Grand Rapids, MI

Robert E. Evans, BA '55, Jan. 21, 2018, Middleville, MI

Kenneth C. Williams, BA '55, Jan. 30, 2018, Salem, MA

Jay H. Brown, BA '56, Jan. 6, 2018, Kalamazoo

John H. Frazer, BBA '56, April 23, 2017, Jupiter, FL

Clarence E. Wentz, BS '56, Nov. 27, 2017, Lubbock, TX

Beatrice M. (Ross) Deter, BA '57, Jan. 30, 2018, Newaygo, MI

William H. Somers, BS '57, Dec. 24, 2017, Hickory Corners, MI

Otis H. Jarvie, BS '58, Jan. 4, 2018, Ludington, MI

Michael E. McCartin, BA '58, Jan. 11, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Earl E. McKee, BS '58, Feb. 17, 2018, Benton Harbor, MI

Richard A. Morton, BBA '58, Jan. 28, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Donald C. Nepper, BS '58, Dec. 19, 2017, Wisconsin Rapids, WI

Kenneth L. Swets, BA '58, Feb. 12, 2018, San Angelo, TX

Ted A. Todd, BA '58, Nov. 28, 2017, Saline, MI

Virginia E. (Rusch) Weller, MA '58, Dec. 29, 2017, Portage, MI

Thomas S. Barber, BS '59, MA '69, Feb. 18, 2018, Portage, MI

Elizabeth (Fenn) Hiscock, BS '59, MS '72, Nov. 25, 2017, Pentwater, MI

Jerry C. Morrison, BBA '59, Dec. 10, 2017, Hampden Township, PA

Dewey V. Smith, BS '59, Jan. 21, 2018, Harrison, MI

Ruth E. Veldt, BS '59, Jan. 16, 2018, Kalamazoo

Nancy L. (Mall) Byrd, BS '60, Jan. 15, 2018, Crown Point, IN

James W. Gaither, BBA '60, Nov. 14, 2017, Battle Creek, MI

Craig Morris, BS '60, Feb. 11, 2018, Lake Orion, MI

Helen L. (Meier) Wagner, BA '60, Oct. 18, 2017, Knoxville, IL

Mary J. (Barnhart) Dowty, BS '61, MA '67, Dec. 29, 2017, Schoolcraft, MI

James R. Kahler, BS '61, TC '62, MA '72, Dec. 30, 2017, Kalamazoo

Kathryn A. Kimmet, BS '61, Jan. 3, 2018, Marysville, MI

Jane F. (Beeson) Lingo, BS '61, Feb. 20, 2018, Lakeland, FL

Irese (Liliensteins) Lueck, BS '61, Jan. 2, 2018, Arlington Heights, IL

Agnes (Ondra) Mangler, BS '61, Dec. 3, 2017, Charlotte, MI

William D. Morgan, BBA '61, Dec. 1, 2017, Riverside, NJ

Richard A. Radecki, MA '61, Feb. 3, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Lyle O. Rutgers, BBA '61, Jan. 11, 2018, Mattawan, MI

Susie D. (Juday) Stuck, BS '61, Jan. 23, 2018, Sturgis, MI

Ann M. (Vaughn) Carpenter, BS '62, Feb. 3, 2018, Galesburg, MI

John D. Cooper, BS '62, TC '63, MA '67, Feb. 14, 2018, Sister Lakes, MI

William A. Griffiths, BBA '62, MBA '68, Dec. 13, 2017, Niles, MI

Darrell S. Konopka, BBA '62, Jan. 22, 2018, Jackson, MI

Marcia L. (Lape) Sizer, BS '62, Dec. 27, 2017, Richland, MI

Joan G. (Hawkins) Carrara, BS '63, Jan. 28, 2018, Boston

Jean A. Farrer, BS '63, Dec. 10, 2017, Grand Haven, MI

Carol J. (Brumo) Lamoreaux, BS '63, Jan. 14, 2018, Castro Valley, CA

James G. Reynolds, BS '63, Dec. 13, 2017, Traverse City, MI

Claudia A. (Rocker) Schweikert, BS '63, Jan. 19, 2018, Satellite Beach, FL

Wayne R. Siegel, BBA '63, Dec. 10, 2017, Fort Worth, TX

Sherwood B. Winslow, BBA '63, Jan. 2, 2018, Escondido, CA

Frances K. (Nordstrom) Becker, BA '64, Feb. 3, 2017, Lapeer, MI

Sally D. (Durren) Freudenburg, BS '64, MA '67, Feb. 10, 2018, St. Joseph, MI

Lyndon W. Harden, BS '64, Jan. 9, 2018, Concord, MI

Dona G. Henricks, MA '64, Feb. 22, 2018, LaGrange, IN

Sandra K. (Buller) Jensen, BS '64, MA '70, Dec. 16, 2017, Battle Creek, MI

Della M. (Anthony) Mitchell, MA '64, Jan. 22, 2018, Naples, FL

Kenneth G. Hanel, MBA '65, Feb. 12, 2018, Kalamazoo

Ruth (Arendsen) Van Kampen, BA '65, MA '70, Dec. 31, 2017, Holland, MI

Jay R. Atherton, MBA '66, Jan. 28, 2018, El Cajon, CA

Alan J. Band, BBA '66, MBA '68, Dec. 6, 2017, Scottsdale, AZ

Helen M. Crawford, BA '66, Feb. 10, 2018, Niles, MI

Robert D. Dittmar, BS '66, MBA '68, Dec. 11, 2017, Largo, FL

John L. Fink, BS '66, Feb. 8, 2018, Vicksburg, MI

Donald L. Gibboney, BS '66, Jan. 13, 2018, Aiken, SC

Suzanne K. (Yeomans) Guinn, BA '66, Jan. 8, 2018, Fairbanks, AK

William K. Hachmann, BA '66, MA '69, Feb. 18, 2018, Norton Shores, MI

Dennis C. Heinonen, BBA '66, MBA '67, Nov. 29, 2017, Scottsdale, AZ

Kenneth D. Koster, BS '66, Feb. 5, 2018, Byron Center, MI

Janet E. (Maki) Makel, BA '66, Dec. 10, 2017, Dryden, MI

John O. Simpson, BBA '66, Dec. 19, 2017, Kalamazoo

Annette P. Ashby, BA '67, TC '70, MLS '81, Feb. 16, 2018, Three Rivers, MI

Thomas L. Fiester, BS '67, MA '69, Feb. 25, 2018, Boulder, CO

David A. Gray, BA '67, MA '81, Jan. 12, 2018, Sister Lakes, MI

Howard K. Hamm, BA '67, Feb. 2, 2018, New York

Frederick W. Henry, MBA '67, Jan. 21, 2018, Wilmington, DE

Patrick J. Maher, BA '67, MA '69, Jan. 14, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Janis Maldups, BS '67, Nov. 30, 2017, Kalamazoo

Charles R. Murray, BA '67, Jan. 21, 2018, St. Joseph, MI

Robert L. Rankin, BS '67, Feb. 4, 2018, Portage, MI

Judy A. (Higgins) Reinoehl, BS '67, Dec. 18, 2017, Sturgis, MI

Judi Rochester, BS '67, Feb. 21, 2017, Wheeling, IL

Mary E. (Quirk) Sullivan, BS '67, MA '89, Feb. 6, 2018, Galesburg, MI

Patricia A. (Richter) Whittaker, MA '67, Dec. 1, 2017, Kalamazoo

Willard Burkhardt, BBA '68, Jan. 16, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI

Anthony J. Grella, MA '68, MA '81, Dec. 7, 2017, Montrose, MI

Virginia A. Kneubel, MLS '68, Jan. 30, 2018, Brattleboro, VT

Lucile M. (Borgert) Robinson, BS '68, Feb. 12, 2018, Mendon, MI

David E. Cleveland, BBA '69, Dec. 3, 2017, Oscoda, MI

Marilyn A. (Anderson) Gosling, MLS '69, Jan. 22, 2018, White Pigeon, MI

Janet L. (Schneider) Pahssen, BA '69, Dec. 12, 2017, Grayling, MI

Bruce A. Roberts, BS '69, Feb. 16, 2018, Asheville, NC

Roger F. Seymour, MBA '69, Jan. 8, 2018, Battle Creek, MI

Ann M. (Kanzelberger) Snyder, BA '69, Dec. 26, 2017, Tyler, TX

Faculty

Shirley Bach, professor emerita of philosophy, Feb. 13, 2018, Kalamazoo

Dennis R. Corbin, senior associate athletic director for medical services, March 7, 2018, Kalamazoo

Russell L. Gabier, assistant vice president for development and alumni relations and founding president of the WMU Foundation, Feb. 18, 2018, Kalamazoo

Laurel A. Grotzinger, professor emerita of University Libraries, Dec. 15, 2018, Kalamazoo

John T. Miller, assistant professor emeritus of health, physical education and recreation and a former assistant football coach, Feb. 7, 2018, Battle Creek

Richard F. Raklovits, associate professor emeritus of health, physical education and recreation, Nov. 21, 2018, Kalamazoo



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This playfully titled candle referencing an old song about Kalamazoo and a freckled-faced gal is a product of alumnus Adam McFarlin's Kalamazoo Candle Company. And McFarlin is a role model for aspiring Bronco entrepreneurs. He recently spoke to students about starting his company in WMU's hometown and today selling candles across the nation. Inside this edition, learn more about McFarlin and about how WMU advances entrepreneurs.