

the magazine of Southern Adventist University

fall 2023

# columns



## Museum Docents Bring the Bible to Life

Student docents learn about biblical history and share insights with guests at the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum | page 12



Photo: Judah Brass

### Student Missions

Returned student missionaries such as **Mauricio Jaldin**, junior theology major, shared music and testimonies during the Student Missions Vespers. Mauricio served as a student ambassador at Hong Kong Adventist College last year. Currently, 60 Southern students are serving as missionaries in 22 countries around the world.

# contents



Photo: Mila Bales



Photo: Joseph Hyde



Photo: Elias Zabela



## features

### 12 | Museum Docents Bring the Bible to Life

Southern is the only Adventist university in America that employs current students as docents in an archaeological museum, creating unique opportunities for a variety of majors on campus.

### 16 | A Growing Campus

As enrollment continues to grow, Southern's campus has grown and changed, as well.

### 18 | How Have You Seen God?

We asked and campus answered: How have you seen God show up in your life this year?

### 20 | Homecoming 2023

### 24 | Friendships Amongst the Fjords

Even after graduation, alumni and friends of Southern can still share experiences together through events such as the annual Alumni Association Tour.

## departments

- 4 | Photo Essay
- 6 | Headlines
- 10 | Professor Inspiration
- 26 | Beyond the Columns
- 30 | Alumni Profile

Cover caption: John Hargy, junior biophysics major and archaeology minor, works as a docent in Southern's Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum. Photo by Judah Brass.

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Send correspondence to  
columns@southern.edu

Send address changes to  
Alumni Relations  
Southern Adventist University  
Post Office Box 370  
Collegedale, TN 37315-0370  
or email alumni@southern.edu

Phone 1.800.SOUTHERN  
Fax 423.236.1000  
Email marketing@southern.edu  
Website southern.edu

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## Spiritual Opportunities at Southern

Inviting each student into a relationship with Jesus lies at the foundation of Southern Adventist University's mission. Spiritual opportunities abound on campus, and students are experiencing the rewarding effects of living for God.

**1:** Abdiel Vargas Pena, freshman nursing major, and his friends worship through music during the first vespers service of the school year.

**2:** Ileen Walker, sophomore liberal arts education major, shares a song during vespers.

**3:** Yeju Gee, sophomore theology major, participates in the LifeGroups orientation at the beginning of the semester. LifeGroups are a way for students to find belonging in a spiritual small group.

**4:** Professor David Hartman, '82, DMin, baptizes Marlene Ramos, freshman nursing major, in Harrison Bay. Ramos is one of 16 students who responded to a call for baptism or rebaptism in Hartman's Christian Beliefs class last school year.

**5:** Landon Asscherick, junior business administration major, prays during the School of Business Induction.

**6:** With hugs and smiles all around, Erin Rouse, sophomore public relations major, serves as a student missionary in Zimbabwe during the 2022-2023 school year.

**7:** Lexie Grosjean, junior psychology major, prayerfully reflects during the LifeGroups orientation. This year 80 student-led small groups are meeting for one hour each week.

**8:** Students lift their voices in worship at the LifeGroups Vespers service. From left: Kiran Finley, junior biology major; Judah Brass, senior English major; and Allyson Boyce, junior outdoor leadership major.

**9:** Collin Emde, sophomore finance major, serves as a student missionary in Bolivia during the 2022-2023 school year.

**10:** From left: Moses Kim, sophomore film production major; Isaac Hanson, senior biology major; and Joshua Narvaez, sophomore history major, study the Bible together during the LifeGroups orientation.



## Freshman Class Breaks Enrollment Record

Newcomers abound at Southern Adventist University this school year with a freshman class of 758 students—the university’s highest freshman enrollment ever.

“We are so excited to welcome the largest freshman class in our history,” said President Ken Shaw, EdD. “Our enrollment team has done a remarkable job sharing the good news about Southern. I also believe that as young people visited our campus over the past year, they sensed the genuine friendliness of our community and experienced our mission being lived out in their interactions with staff, faculty, and students.”

Fall 2011 set the last freshman enrollment record at 652, meaning this semester is the first time a freshman class at Southern has not only reached but also exceeded 700 students. At 2,827, the institution’s current undergraduate class is one of its largest ever, second only to 2,896 in 2012.

“I praise the Lord for blessing our team to be able to share Southern’s story across the country and the world,” said Jason

Merryman, vice president for Enrollment Management. “It is an honor to contribute to the university’s mission of equipping students to embrace biblical truth and embody academic and professional excellence. I’m thankful every day that God allows us to do this work.”

The university’s annual Southern Serves Day, previously known as Freshman Service Day, immediately engages new students in a variety of projects in the local community, and this fall’s event saw more participants than ever before. Cheryl Craven, Christian Service director, was deeply impressed by students’ dedication to serve from dawn to dusk.

“Some individuals persevered past 4 p.m., helping out at the Samaritan Center and cranking out bunk beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace,” she said. “They completed 74 beds for local children ages 3-17 who would otherwise be sleeping on couches, blankets, or even floors.”

“I’m thrilled about high enrollment, because it means more students now



**Alex Gil, freshman nursing major, (left) is greeted by Dain Ochoa, junior physical therapist assistant major, during the freshman welcome party.**

have an opportunity to grow in their relationship with the Lord and discover how their individual talents can ultimately serve Him,” Merryman said. “I believe there is no better place on earth to accomplish these things.”

- by Amanda Blake

## New, Searchable Endowment Website Launched

Over the years, many alumni and friends of Southern Adventist University have chosen to invest in Christian education through scholarships and endowments. One such couple began an endowment with \$5,000 at Southern in 1989. Thirty-four years later, with additional gifts and interest, that endowment is currently valued at nearly \$100,000 and provides close to \$4,000 in scholarships to students each year.

“Endowments provide a continuity of giving and offer underlying stability to an organization,” said Ellen Hostetler, vice president for Advancement. “As

our endowment grows, so does the potential to need less government funding. And because of compounding interest, an endowed gift has the potential over-time to generate income far beyond the initial investment, outlive the donor, and continue to make an impact on student lives.”

With the launch of Southern’s new searchable endowment website, it’s now even easier to contribute or start an endowment of your own at [southern.edu/endowments](http://southern.edu/endowments).

Southern has more than 250 endowed scholarships, created by people who are

passionate about Southern, and each is tailored to help students in specific areas, such as international students, theology students, students who demonstrate leadership, or students who work while going to school.

As a result of these endowments, Southern gives more than \$2 million in scholarships to students each year.

For more details on how to establish an endowment, contact Advancement at 423.236.2829 or [advancement@southern.edu](mailto:advancement@southern.edu).

- Staff Writer

## Southern Breaks Ground for Ruth McKee School of Business

Community members joined Southern Adventist University’s Board of Trustees along with students, employees, alumni, and donors to break ground for the new Ruth McKee School of Business facility on September 29 in Collegedale, Tennessee.

Located just off University Drive in front of Mabel Wood Hall, the site is the first thing visitors see when arriving on Southern’s property.

“This location sets the tone for the professional, quality education that all enrolled students receive,” said Ellen Hostetler, vice president for Advancement. “With 50,000 square feet, the new building will provide nearly five times the current space for this academic area and is set to be completed by 2025.”

“Lives are going to be changed,” said board member Jim Davidson, executive secretary of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, who welcomed the audience and opened the service with prayer. “That ripple effect will go on and on for eternity.”

Flanked by a backhoe, forklift, bulldozer, and excavator, Davidson joined Southern’s President Ken Shaw, ’80, EdD, and Stephanie Sheehan, ’05, PhD, dean of the School of Business, in lifting up golden shovels of dirt to mark the beginning of construction.

“For students, this ceremony is the symbol of opportunities that lie ahead,” said Roman Johnson, senior management major. “Space to gain knowledge, cultivate creativity, and prepare ourselves for the competitive business world.”

With a 10% increase in enrollment over the past five years, the School of Business—the second-largest academic discipline on campus—welcomed its largest class of 133 new students this



**Jim Davidson (left), Ken Shaw, and Stephanie Sheehan, joined by Southern’s Board of Trustees, dig into the dirt during the groundbreaking ceremony on September 29.**

fall. Currently, more than 450 business and applied technology majors are enrolled within 16 graduate and undergraduate degree programs.

“The new name for the School of Business honors the co-founder of McKee Foods, best known for Little Debbie snacks, who embodied integrity, wisdom, acumen, and beneficence—the same qualities we strive to instill in each of our graduates,” Sheehan said. “We are equipping the next generation of top-tier business leaders and fostering an environment for Christian business principles to be experienced and practiced.”

Brittany (McKee) East, ’12 and ’13, explained how her great-grandmother was “ahead of the times” as a well-rounded female entrepreneur with a powerful voice and a legacy that lives on

through the family and the company, as well as the university.

The four-story structure will house a spacious auditorium, an innovation lab, and an investment lab with computers for analyzing real-time financial market data—all to enhance cross-departmental innovation, entrepreneurship opportunities, and networking between the community and students.

More than 80% of the campaign goal of \$20 million, which also includes a program endowment, has been raised through donations and commitments. Ground preparation is underway, with construction soon to follow. See [southern.edu/gobusiness](http://southern.edu/gobusiness) for ongoing developments.

- by Alexis Dewey

## Annual Gala Showcases Student Talent in Acrobatics, Animation, and Symphony

Southern Adventist University hosted its second gala event, A Taste of Southern, which was held September 28 at The Chattanooga Hotel in downtown Chattanooga. Nearly 350 local business and organization professionals in attendance experienced a glimpse of what students and employees enjoy every day on campus.

The event raised nearly \$130,000, with proceeds adding to the university's endowed scholarship for first-generation college students that was started at last year's inaugural gala. Rebecca Hogan, '05 and '06, of Russ Blakely & Associates shared her experience as a first-generation student and invited the audience to support others like her. Some of the 380 current students at Southern whose parents do not have four-year degrees will benefit from the new funds next school year.

Guests watched a live, outdoor routine from the university's Gym-Masters acrobatic team and also saw animation unfold in action as presented by the School of Visual Art and Design. President Ken Shaw reported that Southern "offers the only animation program of its kind in the area."

Elected officials in attendance included Tennessee Senator Bo



Guest Tenor David Phelps, joined by the Southern's Symphony Orchestra, performs during A Taste of Southern.

Watson, who gave the invocation prior to dinner. In addition to performances by Southern's Symphony Orchestra and renowned guest tenor David Phelps, the evening featured a silent auction with donated items ranging from a pottery experience to a foursome at Council Fire Golf Course and a baseball bat signed by record-breaking star Ronald Acuña Jr. of the Atlanta Braves.

"Our goal for the annual event is two-fold," said Ellen Hostetler, vice president for Advancement. "First, to welcome our community into the Southern

experience; and second, to raise scholarship dollars for a unique group of students on our campus."

Sponsors for this year's event included the Irvin and Eeva Bainum Foundation, Morning Pointe Senior Living, San Sebastián Development, SouthEast Bank, Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, and other community partners.

Visit [southern.edu/taste](https://southern.edu/taste) to view more photos of the event.

- by Tina Frist Smith

## Southern Hosts Religious Liberty Conference

Hosted on Southern's campus, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty ministry for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists held a religious liberty conference October 20-21 in Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists.

Titled "Reconstructing Religious Liberty in a Time of Religious and Secular Extremes," the conference explored ways to talk about religious freedom within a culturally and politically polarized America.

"Today religious and secular extremes threaten our fundamental freedoms, albeit in very different ways," the event website stated ([nadadventist.org/religiousliberty2023](https://nadadventist.org/religiousliberty2023)).

"As students of Bible prophecy, Seventh-day Adventists have long advocated for both strong free exercise protections, and a robust separation of church and state."

Lisa Clark Diller, '96, PhD, professor in the History and Political Studies Department at Southern Adventist University, shared: "We were so excited to have something of this quality on our campus. It's gratifying for our students to see their tithes and offering dollars at work and to understand the high caliber of professionalism within their church. They got to meet advocates for religious freedom, especially in the workplace, and find mentors who are also members

of their church. We were thrilled to be able to point our students to the social science research that the guest speakers were providing and for them to be proud that their university was bringing in scholars of this quality."

The weekend featured several notable speakers, including Samuel Perry, PhD, author of *The Flag and the Cross*; Shirley Hoogstra, JD, president for the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities; Ivor Myers, pastor of Living Manna and president of Power of the Lamb Ministries; and Tobias Cremer, PhD, junior research fellow at the University of Oxford.

- Staff Writer

## Accreditation Reaffirmed Without Recommendations

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) offered no recommendations for improvement during its On-Site Reaffirmation visit to Southern Adventist University at the end of last year. As the governing body that accredits degree-granting higher education institutions in the region, SACSCOC reaffirms accreditations every 10 years.

"Southern did not receive any recommendations. This means the university demonstrated full compliance with all standards, policies, and procedures outlined in SACSCOC's Principles of

Accreditation," said Dionne Felix, PhD, associate vice president for Academic Administration and SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison. "This is the cleanest result Southern has received in its reaffirmation process in recent history."

Reaffirmation was a two-year proceeding and began with the university submitting its Compliance Certification and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), "Living in Balance: Healthy Minds." The five-year, university-wide QEP program was implemented in Fall 2022 to address mental health on campus and improve student well-being.

After an Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the university's compliance reports, a visiting team conducted a focused evaluation on campus and evaluated the QEP. The group's assessments then passed through SACSCOC's Executive Council and Board of Trustees.

"Our university has worked diligently and consistently to comply with all requirements, and I am thrilled at the positive outcome," Felix said. "The entire campus should receive credit for a job well done."

- by Amanda Blake

## » by the numbers

100%

of pre-law graduates have been accepted into their chosen law schools within the last 10 years.

120

active writing courses sharpen students' critical thinking and writing skills.

73,020

pounds of paper was recycled by Southern through Shred-It last fiscal year.

49

students opted into the Southern Scholars program this semester.

3,000+

students are currently earning degrees from Southern, ranging from associate to doctoral.

12

Bloomberg Financial Terminals will be housed in the new Ruth McKee School of Business facility, preparing students to enter the workforce ready to hit the ground running.

# The Value of Perspective

By Alexis Dewey, junior mass communication major

When Michel Sun Lee, PhD, was in middle school, she was in the car with her grandparents and three younger brothers when the car stalled on the railroad tracks. Then the gate arms came down and the lights started flashing.

“We saw a train coming toward us from a few hundred yards away. It hit our car and dragged us down the track.” Thankfully, no one was killed, though several of them sustained significant injuries. Surviving that experience is when Lee knew God had a plan for her life.

“Sometimes when I’m discouraged, I look back to that moment and I think, ‘God saved my life then, so He must have something, other blessings, in store if He saw fit for me to continue this life,’” Lee said.

## Called to Teach

In her collegiate years, Lee began studying at Stanford University as a pre-medical student, then switched to history and political studies.

“I had a spiritual change in my life, and I started to re-examine where God was calling me. I felt that history is where He wanted me to be,” Lee said. “This is it. This is my calling.”

She graduated from Stanford with a bachelor’s degree in East Asian studies and history, as well as a master’s in history. Lee then earned a doctoral degree in religious studies, specializing in religion in the Americas, at the University of Texas at Austin. She has now been at Southern Adventist University for three years as an assistant professor in the History and Political Studies Department. She enjoys helping students see their role in history and how they can make a difference, along with empowering them to feel like part of a community who can find themselves in history.

Naomi Daniels, ’23, one of Lee’s former students, has known her for two years. Daniels said the unique thing about Lee is the attention she gives to her students’ thoughts and ideas.



“She is someone who doesn’t let her students get away with simply giving a general answer or statement, but she will have them flesh out their idea until it is clear to them, her, and the whole class.”

## The Importance of Diversity

Lee went to a public high school where practicing Christians were not very common. Growing up as a racial and religious minority, Lee learned the importance of diversity and open communication. She values cultivating friendships outside of work and being grounded in relationships with people who bring different perspectives to light—people who are not like her.

“We need to recognize, as Christians, that we live in a diverse world where many people disagree with us,” Lee said. “We need to be able to speak into that space in ways that don’t use a bunch of jargon, in ways that we can have mutual conversations with people who believe differently than us,” Lee said.

“She really believes that what she teaches matters, and it matters in the current world,” said Lisa Diller, PhD, professor of history at Southern and a colleague of Lee. “She is very gentle about her deep concern for the human being she is studying and the human beings who are receiving the information. She never forgets that these are real people.”

Caitlin Cordero, a senior chemistry-biochemistry major and one of Lee’s students, said she sees Lee as a “role model and friend.” Lee is the director of the Southern Scholars Honors Program, and Cordero worked with her as president of the program for the 2022-2023 academic school year, as well as vice president in the school year prior. “We are both young, Asian-American women who aspire toward intellectual curiosity, so in her, I see qualities that I would like to gain as I mature.”

Cordero expressed that she wishes to develop Lee’s confident leadership, her impeccable taste in food and clothes, and her driving skills. “Most importantly, her intellectual curiosity and devotion toward God” is what Cordero hopes to emulate. ■



## Meet the Firms

The Meet the Firms and Graduate Schools event provides students such as **Chidi Onyeije**, junior accounting major, a chance to grow their network and make plans for the future. At the October event, Southern welcomed 140 representatives from 63 different companies and Southern graduate programs, which was a 50% participation increase from October 2022.



Karis McConnell, sophomore archaeology major, explains the history behind one of the museum exhibits.

# MUSEUM DOCENTS BRING THE BIBLE TO LIFE

By Alexis Dewey, Chehalis Eno, and Tina Frist Smith  
Photos by Mila Bales

Southern is the only Adventist university in America that employs current students as docents in an archaeological museum, creating unique opportunities for a variety of majors on campus. Learning more about evidence for biblical history and sharing insights with guests broadens both the academic paths and faith journeys of these undergraduates.

For Charis Denton, loom weights are one of the most fascinating finds in the current exhibit housed within the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum on Southern's campus. A senior archaeology and museum studies double-major, she has served as a museum docent for four years and has a strong appreciation for artifacts that are symbols of everyday life from Bible times.

"In preparation for weaving, a row of equally weighted stones would be tied to bundles of wool strands to keep consistent tension that prevented threads from becoming tangled and out of order," Denton explains to visitors who frequent the museum, primarily on weekends. "Once the cloth was finished, the hanging weights were cut off to leave a decorative fringe."

With future plans to study artifact conservation and restoration at the graduate level, Denton values the background she is gaining by working in the museum. When not giving tours, her docent responsibilities include welcoming and directing visitors, answering questions, and keeping artifacts safe.

The current exhibition, *Peace and War: The Assyrian Conquest of Lachish*, opened in January of this year. Partnering with the University of Jerusalem, more than 200 students and faculty sponsored by Southern's Institute of Archaeology were among the team members who visited Israel between 2013 and 2017 to excavate the site of ancient Lachish, the most important city of the day after Jerusalem. Along with more than 80 objects unearthed, historical truths found in Scripture about the Assyrian siege during King Hezekiah's reign and the miraculous deliverance of Judah were also confirmed. In cooperation with the Israel Antiquities Authority, the exhibit's objects on loan will remain at Southern's museum through May 2025. Eventually, all artifacts will be returned to their country of origin.



Charis Denton

## Connecting with the Bible

Holly Singletary, a senior archaeology major who is minoring in art, has guided guests through the museum for the past 16 months.

"I've gotten to meet people whom I wouldn't have normally—plus I've gained a unique perspective working in an actual museum," Singletary says. "I also feel more connected with biblical history and can relate Bible stories to what I've learned about in my archaeology classes."



Holly Singletary



Josh Hargy

his collegiate years. “Being a docent for past and current exhibitions has helped me hone my public speaking and interpersonal skills,” Hargy notes. “It has also given me an in-depth understanding of the subject matter, benefitting me academically and fueling learning. That’s something I’ll carry with me even after I leave campus.”

## Called by God

“I felt a calling from God,” says **Houston Beckworth**, a sophomore double-major in archaeology and biblical studies, when describing his path to the university’s campus and his areas of study. “After I became fascinated with biblical research and Old Testament history in high school, God started working in coincidental ways.”



Houston Beckworth

She participated in setting up the newest exhibit and was able to begin learning, even before the opening, about one of the most important periods in Near East history. Additionally, Singletary has traveled abroad with groups from Southern and visited many of the places described in the Bible, further cementing her belief in the authenticity of Scripture.

## A Unique Experience

When he arrived at Southern, junior biophysics major **John Hargy** was looking for an out-of-the-ordinary experience, ideally something unique to the university. He found archaeology, adding a minor to his pre-med academic curriculum and joining the museum’s docent staff as a freshman. To him, engaging with a broader community is the best part of his job.

“We are often some of the first people on campus that members of the community and travelers interact with, so we represent the university and its values,” Hargy says. “It’s an important responsibility at a Christian college and one that I’ve really come to relish.”

Learning more about different exhibits and passing that knowledge on to others has broadened and enriched

While Beckworth was figuring out what the Holy Spirit was telling him, Professor Michael G. Hasel, PhD, who serves as director of Southern’s Institute of Archaeology as well as curator of the museum, visited Beckworth’s home church and gave a pre-evangelistic series while also sharing archaeological evidence. This experience eventually led Beckworth to Southern and a position as a docent.

Beckworth appreciates how the museum can give students a taste of something outside of traditional studies in a classroom. He loves to answer visitors’ questions and especially enjoys talking about the seal impressions.

“They represent key people in the Bible, and the fact that we have seals from specific kings, prophets, financiers, and nobles provides us with validity to their existence!” he says.

## Gaining Experience and Sharing Significance

“Many of these students will be involved in museum work in some form or another as archaeologists during their careers,” says Hasel, who also takes the lead on many tours. “Serving as a docent here on campus gives them valuable experience that will help them understand how to explain complex concepts to visitors of all ages and how the final result of archaeological research is disseminated to a public audience.”

Museum coordinator and tour guide Angela Edwards, ’18, shares that “most guests really enjoy the students; they see the younger generation connecting biblical truths with history and find this very encouraging. Visitors also are impressed with docents’ knowledge and passion for the Bible and this field.”

Archaeological evidence plays a key role in the spiritual beliefs of each of the four docents. Denton appreciates how artifacts show everyday life in Bible times. Singletary references the Dead Sea Scrolls, a set of ancient Jewish manuscripts discovered between 1946 and 1956 in the Qumran Caves on the northern shore, to show how prophetic interpretation was truly predictive and indeed happened. For Hargy, seeing the biblical record on display helps grow his faith in the truth of God’s Word. Beckworth explains how this work has given him “a better picture of the Bible and the current Israel of today.”

“These young scholars offer unique insights into biblical archaeology, and those who have been on excavation digs can tell others what archaeology is really like,” Edwards says. “Most people think of Indiana Jones, and as much as we all love the theatrical character, archaeology is much more than that. It’s science and method, it’s understanding the history and cultures of people who lived in the past, and it’s a lot of hard work, long days, and pickaxes, with fun and discoveries along the way.”

The museum is free and open to the public, during set hours that vary on holidays and during school closings. Visit [southern.edu/archaeology](http://southern.edu/archaeology) for more information. ■

# Seals Leave an Impression

Used widely in Judah, stamp seals were integral to daily life for many people, including merchants, nobles, and rulers. Sized to be worn or held by the owner, they were commonly used for approving transactions, endorsing documents, and even serving as a passport. Letters would often be sealed with an owner’s seal, authenticating the document. The seal would then be broken off by the recipient and sometimes kept as proof of receipt.

Seals that mention people from the Bible are particularly significant, because they offer proof that these were real people who lived. The Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum exhibit *Peace and War: The Assyrian Conquest of Lachish* includes a seal that reads “Ushna, the servant of Ahaz,” referring to Ahaz the King of Judah and father of Hezekiah. The museum also contains seal impressions of Hezekiah and Isaiah, which were found in Jerusalem in 2015. The two seals were unearthed about nine feet away from each other, in the same strata, lending validity to the Bible, since Isaiah was the prophet of Hezekiah’s time.



Eliakim, palace overseer

Hezekiah

Isaiah, the prophet



# A GROWING CAMPUS



Founded in 1892, Southern Adventist University strives to offer an exceptional, wholistic learning experience for students. During the past 15 years, Southern's campus has grown and changed.

And yet, the exceptional experience Southern offers has remained the same—an experience grounded in Christ, focused on academic excellence, and filled with Spirit-led service.



**1 Hickman Science Center** is home to a number of Southern's science programs, including the Biology and Allied Health, Chemistry, and Mathematics departments, the physics program, and the School of Computing. In 2012, the Origins Exhibit opened on the second floor as a permanent museum-quality exhibit showing a creationist worldview.



**3 Hulsey Wellness Center** is a state-of-the-art wellness facility designed to help students, employees, and the community on their wellness journey. Completed in 2009, it includes two pools, a fitness center, a climbing wall, and more.



**5 Summerour Hall** underwent extensive renovations from 2011 to 2014, adding 7,000 square feet to the facility. It houses the School of Education, Psychology, and Counseling.



**7 AdventHealth Hall** was completed in 2011 and houses the School of Nursing, including simulation labs, high-tech skills and assessment labs, and the 68-computer-station Learning Resource Center.



**2 Bietz Center for Student Life** was completed in 2021 and provides a place for students to socialize, study, and access services available on campus.



**4 McKee Library** is being renovated to create more usable space, including enlarging the entrance to include a second-story study area for students and more spaces for both collaborative and quiet study.



**6 Lynn Wood Hall** is the oldest building on campus, built in 1924, and it is currently being remodeled to house the engineering program, part of the newly renamed School of Physics and Engineering.



**8** With construction starting soon, the **Ruth McKee School of Business** is slated to be a 50,000-square-foot building. The School of Business is currently located in Brock Hall, until the new facility opens.

# show up in your life this year?

**Joey Tolbert, '02 and '07**  
facilities manager for Student Development

God doesn't just show up. God has proven time and time again that He is already and always with me. There are too many instances to count the proof, but having peace of mind through whatever life hurls at me is a huge example.

**Tim Trott, PhD**  
professor for the Biology Department

I am continually amazed to watch God work miracles in the lives of my students. The devil throws many obstacles into their lives, but God is always working and present. It's such a blessing to be a part of that.

**Adrienne Royo, PhD**  
chair for the Modern Languages Department

God supplied an Italian tutor. There are currently two students pursuing an international studies major with an emphasis in Italian. The question was who would be the tutor for these students. First, we tried to engage the individual who had been the Italian tutor in the past. However, she was unavailable. The job was posted on the student job board; however, there still was a sense that something else needed to be done. Upon engaging in fervent prayer, the Holy Spirit impressed me to follow a trail that led from a faculty member to his wife to an acquaintance from her French Sabbath School two years prior, who was fluent in Italian. We contacted her, and God provided an Italian tutor in an unbelievably miraculous way!

**Shelby Clark**  
sophomore theology major

I have always been one who struggles academically. I've never been an "A student," no matter how hard I tried. I just couldn't grasp my assignments. With that as my background, I was afraid to come back to school, especially when Jesus called me to come to Southern to study theology! I told Him, "If you'll take care of my academics, then I'll know You have called me to become your pastor." I kid you not, I have outstanding grades in all of my classes! Everything has come easily, and I praise God for showing His glory to me in this way!

**Cynthia Wright**  
director for the Adult Degree Completion Program

God has shown up by answering my prayer about growing the Adult Degree Completion (ADC) program at Southern ([southern.edu/adc](http://southern.edu/adc)). I'm passionate about assisting adult learners who want to return to college to finish their undergraduate degree by taking online classes at Southern. There are many times that God answers my prayers when I am communicating with individuals in public places, and I get to share how amazing God's love is for His children. This opens up a pathway for me to witness to others and share not only about God, but about the adult degree program offered at Southern. God is concerned about everything that perplexes our minds!

**Amelia Zimmerman**  
senior communication major

This year God has shown me that when I trust Him, He makes everything turn out better than I could have imagined. There have been many things that have surprised me and not gone the way I had hoped. God has taught me to look to Him in these times. He has been giving me a sense of peace and joy I didn't know I could experience.

**Alexis Dewey**  
junior mass communication major

God has shown me that He wants me at Southern by paving a way financially. I didn't think I'd be able to stay here while paying for my own school bill. Last year, I didn't have enough to pay for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, but when the time came to pay, I had somehow saved enough. Now God has blessed me with good jobs, more family support, and scholarships.

**Chehalis Eno**  
sophomore English major

This summer, I worked at Glacier View Ranch in Colorado. I've always felt closest to God in nature, and spending a summer in the mountains seemed like a great way to grow closer to Him. I was incredibly blessed to also get to work with a great staff and a director who consistently taught me new things about God. Without that experience, I would still be struggling in my relationship with God, and I would lack the clarity I now possess.

**Wanda Barber**  
office manager for the English Department and History and Political Studies Department

He showed up this summer by showing me His love and grace through the sad situation of death, the kindness of people, and His words. I heard His voice in music, in the wind, and in that still, small voice. I faced tragedy this summer with the loss of my mother. I truly learned the importance of leaning on others and His word. I learned to stop, listen, and trust God.

**Sam Tooley**  
junior computer science major

This year I have seen God at work in my life in multiple areas, but one that stood out was my job at camp. I came in with little experience in lighting, which was a huge part of the play we were putting on, but after much prayer and research, I was able to make the set feel exactly the way the director had planned.

**Valeria Izaguirre**  
senior public relations major

I saw God this year when I found my internship; when I moved to a new state and God protected me and allowed me to find and make new friends; when I got a new job opportunity at Southern; and when I was able to go home for the last couple of weeks of summer and get my visa renewed.

**Moses Lane**  
freshman marketing major

He is healing me more and more every day. He's helping me find family here.

**Danielle Taylor**  
junior graphic design major

I've seen God work in my life by helping me finish my assignments on time.

# HOMECOMING COMING WEEKEND

EMPOWERED FOR A PURPOSE  
October 26-29, 2023

**S**outhern Adventist University welcomed more than 850 guests to Homecoming Weekend on October 26-29. Approximately 50 events were held, including a wide variety of activities across Southern's campus such as hikes on the Sabbath Trail, the Erhard Patio Cookout and Dedication, several new workshops, and honor class reunions.

"It was wonderful to welcome our alumni back to campus for Homecoming Weekend!" said Cheryl Torres, '05, director for Alumni Relations. "I enjoyed meeting and reconnecting with so many alumni. It was a joy to see the smiles and hear the laughter as attendees relived fond memories and made fresh ones throughout the weekend."

Homecoming is also a time for people to reconnect with classmates. Caryn Payne, '73, member of the 50-year honor class, said, "It was great to see so many from our nursing class present, 16 of us. We are all staying active with all manner of different activities, from long biking trips, to hundreds of miles of hiking overseas, to teaching, to caring for foster kids, you name it, we're busy!"

True to the theme "Empowered for a Purpose," Southern alumni are active, involved in their communities, and sharing God's love with the world. ■

**"SOUTHERN HAS BEEN SO GOOD TO US. WE LOOK BACK WITH JOY FOR THE FRIENDS WE ALL MADE DURING THIS SPECIAL TIME IN OUR LIVES!"**

— Caryn Payne, '73



Photo: Judah Brass



Photo: Judah Brass



Photo: Mila Bates



Photo: Elias Zabala



Photo: Elias Zabala



Photo: Joseph Hyde



Photo: Preston Waters



Photo: Judah Brass

## PICTURE CAPTIONS

1. The School of Business Awards Luncheon provided the opportunity to enjoy a meal, network, and reconnect with professors.
2. The Antique/Classic Car Show on Sunday morning drew many automobile enthusiasts. More than 30 cars were entered into the show.
3. Tyler dos Santos, '13, played foosball during the Young Alumni Game Night in the Bietz Center for Student Life.
4. Ben Wygal (left) was honored as an Honorary Alumnus for his years of dedicated service as Gordon Bietz, president from 1997-2016, presented him with the plaque.
5. Those who participated in the Alumni Golf Tournament provided tuition assistance to Southern students through the Dave Cress Memorial Scholarship.
6. Suzanne Brown, '06, office manager for the School of Education, Psychology, and Counseling, stopped by the Alumni Employee Reception. More than 50% of Southern employees are also alumni.
7. Jennifer (Francisco), '04, and Richard Christman, '04, enjoyed the Alumni Reception on Saturday night.
8. Linda Brown, '73, (left) and Sharon Rogers, '77, shared a meal together at the Ladies' Luncheon.



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**"WE HAD AN ACTION-  
PACKED WEEKEND."**

— Cheryl Torres, '05, director for Alumni Relations



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**PICTURE CAPTIONS**

- 1. Naomi Dufraire (left), current graduate student, and Barbara Valmont, '03 and '12, attended the Ladies' Luncheon on Friday.
- 2. David Steen, '68, and Ben Ringer, '63, talked at Picnic in the Park on Friday. Meeting with classmates and friends is one of the highlights of Homecoming Weekend.
- 3. David, '79, and Joyce Thomas, '83, visited with President Ken Shaw, '80, during the Alumni Lunch on Sabbath.
- 4. Rolland Crawford, '73, member of the Alumni Council, showed off his Southern Adventist University socks at Picnic in the Park.
- 5. At the Young Alumni Game Night, groups gathered throughout the Bietz Center for Student Life to play a variety of games.

- 6. The 50-Year Honor Class poses for a group photo. Fifty-five members of the class attended Homecoming Weekend.
- 7. Gennevieve Brown-Kibble conducted the School of Music Choirs during the worship services on Sabbath morning.

**To view more photos from Homecoming, visit [southern.edu/columns](https://southern.edu/columns).**

**Homecoming Weekend Featured Speaker:**

**DWIGHT NELSON, '73**

By Cheryl Torres, '05, director of Alumni Relations

**D**wight Nelson, '73, grew up in a missionary family and was one of a very few to come to Southern from his high school class at Far Eastern Academy in Singapore. He didn't know much about the school, but it was located within a day's drive of his two sets of grandparents, and he had a cousin at Southern, Gerald Retzer, '71. Since he wouldn't be able to visit his parents in Japan often, if at all, having family nearby was the most important factor in his decision.

For him, the biggest value that the university provided was relationships—friends, professors, supervisors, and, most importantly, his wife, Karen, '74. The couple first connected when Dwight was participating in a seminar band at a Seventh-day Adventist Church near Monteagle, Tennessee. One of the other theology majors, Bob Bretsch, '73, invited Karen to sing one Sabbath. Dwight was slated to play the piano for her, and it was while practicing on Friday evening that they started getting to know each other.

The couple broke up during Dwight's senior year, and he graduated and accepted a call to pastor in Roseburg, Oregon. However, he sent Karen a letter, and the courtship was rekindled. After getting married, the couple went to Andrews University in Michigan, where Dwight completed his master's degree, and then returned to Oregon to pastor until 1983. At the age of 30, he accepted a call to Pioneer Memorial Church on Andrews' campus and spent the next 40 years there.

Dwight felt called to pastoral ministry while he was still in high school, and any time he considered another option, God drew him back to that calling. Now, 50 years later, he's thankful for that decision, as are many of those in his congregations over the years. Looking back, one of the experiences that stands out most is Net '98 (also known as the NeXt Millennium Seminar held October-November 1998), the only global live satellite evangelistic event ever undertaken by any denomination.

Reflecting on his journey, Dwight recognizes the pivotal role that Southern played in his life. He hired several pastors from Southern throughout his career, and he appreciates the strong bonds of faith and friendship forged during his time at the university. The influences of faculty members such as Doug Bennett, '51; Frank Holbrook; Robert Francis; and Smuts van Rooyen, '64, have left their imprint on him to this day. ■



# FRIENDSHIPS AMONGST THE FJORDS

FLIGHT  
75-970

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR  
STATEMENTS OF LIABILITY

By Becky Brooks, '03, editorial manager

An atmosphere of growing friendships and supportive connections is part of what makes Southern Adventist University a special place. Even after graduation, alumni and friends of Southern can still share experiences together through events such as the Alumni Association Tour each year.

This past July, a tour group of 33 people, led by Bill Wohlers, PhD, vice president emeritus for Student Development, visited Scandinavia. The group explored Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, taking in the scenic fjords, visiting cities full of culture and history, and strengthening friendships, both new and old.

Jess Stotz was drawn to the tour because of her Scandinavian heritage. "Growing up hearing tidbits of Swedish and Norwegian from my grandparents has fostered a fascination with the Nordic countries since childhood," Stotz said. "When I learned Southern Adventist University was coordinating a tour of Scandinavia, I knew it was a great chance to get an overview of regional highlights, with the bonus of a 'captive' historian to give insights throughout the journey."

Kim Bobenhausen (attended), director for Planned Giving, also participated in the tour, noting the opportunities for connection it provided. She shared that an alum currently residing in Norway, Barbara Doherty, '82, met up with the tour group in Oslo for supper, reconnecting with Bill and Rita Wohlers (attended) and others Doherty remembered from her years at Southern.

In fact, Bobenhausen and Stotz both described some of the most memorable and meaningful parts of the experience as not only exploring new places, but also meeting and talking with people.

"What a wonderful way to meet others with similar interests and the common thread of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, though still with a diverse background of experiences and pastimes," Stotz said. "I met physicians and nurses, educators and business people, retirees and second-career professionals."

A favorite aspect of the experience was the mealtime conversations. "I learned so much about my travel companions chatting over supper," Bobenhausen said. "There was always a lot of laughter heard around the dining room."



From left: Jess Stotz (left) and Kim Bobenhausen enjoyed the tour of Scandinavia.

Stotz said, "Finding a new set of friends to share a meal with each day was a lovely pastime. This group was a delightful mix of varied ages, vocations, and motivations, but melded together by a common desire to travel and explore new cultures. I never felt there were cliques or exclusive groups in our midst; it was easy to move through the group and hold meaningful conversations with everyone. I felt accepted and encouraged by every participant on the tour—this was the highlight of the journey!"

"There is nothing quite like international travel to create binding ties," Bobenhausen shared. "All of the new, once-in-a-lifetime experiences and the laughter provide the perfect medley of togetherness!"

"Travel is wonderful, and new sights are inspiring," Stotz said, "but when it comes down to the basics, palaces are only elaborate buildings and crown jewels are pretty rocks; relationships are the things that instill joy in life." ■

Alumni Association Tour | May 6-17, 2024

## TULIPS, D-DAY, & THE RHINE



Join fellow alumni and friends of Southern for a tour of beautiful sites and remarkable history in Holland, Belgium, France, and Germany.

### TOUR INCLUDES:

- Round-trip airfare from Atlanta to Amsterdam, Frankfurt to Atlanta
- Two meals per day
- Nightly hotel lodging
- Entrance fees to sites
- Comfortable European coach transport
- Experienced tour leader, Bill Wohlers, PhD

**PRICE:** \$4,995 (Dependent on current exchange rate)

**LEARN MORE** at [southern.edu/alumni-tour](https://southern.edu/alumni-tour) or by contacting Alumni Relations at 423.236.2827 or [alumni@southern.edu](mailto:alumni@southern.edu).

## Alumni Notes

**'50s** **David Hall**, '57, was the first Southern Missionary College accounting graduate to pass the CPA exam back in 1958. He's been working full-time as a CPA for 66 years now in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He still enjoys his work and taking care of his clients. His plan for retiring without inconveniencing any of them is to simply outlive them all!

**'70s** **1 Robert Fuller**, '74, and his wife, Sue, moved back to the Chattanooga, Tennessee, area in April 2023 to be closer to their two adult children and four grandchildren. They enjoy being close to family, as well as to Southern. The couple celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in August.

**'80s** **2 Shirlee (Kline) Godsey**, '82, retired after completing 40 years of teaching in Adventist education. She still enjoys substituting, which gives her the student interaction she loves. Retirement life is wonderful.

**Hilma Griffin-Watson**, '82, became assistant vice president for Enrollment Services and Retention at Oakwood University in 2022. Her primary role is to help the director and staff in the Center for Student Success ensure support for students is accessible.

**Burnham**, '83, and **Jan Rand** (attended) celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August. Burnham retired after 40 years in Adventist ministry in 2022, and Jan retired from nursing in 2019.

**Deborah (Pfeifle) Watkins**, '88, is the founder and CEO of Care Bridge International. She was the winner of the 2018 Business Insurance Innovation Award.

**'00s** **Chad Stuart**, '02, earned his Doctor of Ministry in May 2023 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His area of study was church revitalization. He and his wife, **Christina (Holm)**, '03, live in the Silver Spring, Maryland, area, where he serves as senior pastor at Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**'10s** **3 Laura (Clark) Sherwin**, '10, is serving as a medical missionary in Malawi, along with her husband, **Brent**; their 3-year-old son, **Jake**; and their 1-year-old daughter, **Jenna**. Brent serves as program director for the Pan African Academy of Christian Surgeons program at Malamulo. Laura is a general dentist, and she recently opened a dental clinic to improve access to quality care for the underserved rural population in their area.

**David Howell** (attended) retired in 2019 after a 37-year career in federal civilian services for the United States Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.



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We'd love to hear from you, and so would your classmates! Send updates about additions to your family, accomplishments, marriage, professional recognitions, or other news you'd like to share to:

[alumni@southern.edu](mailto:alumni@southern.edu)  
Alumni Relations • P.O. Box 370  
Collegedale, TN 37315-0370  
[southern.edu/alumni/updates](http://southern.edu/alumni/updates)

## Weddings and Family Additions

**1** **Joshua and Kimberly (Solis) Anderson**, '14, were married on March 6, 2022. The couple lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

**2** **John**, '21, and **Sarah (Cole) Boone**, '23, were married on May 29, 2023. The couple lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where John works in the Alumni Relations department and Sarah is completing a master's degree at Southern.

**3** **Jeremy and Alissa (Wright) Ela**, '17, welcomed their son, **Jackson James**, on September 22, 2022. The family lives in Vermont.

**4** **Matthew and Jana (Marlow) Greer**, '97 and '04, welcomed their son, **Levi**, on May 11, 2022. They live in Dunlap, Tennessee.

**5** **Benjamin**, '16, and **Autumn (Zapara) Leader**, '16, welcomed two sons to their family. **Atticus** was born on December 5, 2019, and **Ansel** was born on June 13, 2021. They live in Cleburne, Texas.

**6** **Parker**, '21, and **Cosette (Uta) Litchfield**, '20, were married on July 10, 2022. The couple lives outside Wichita, Kansas.

**7** **Jesse** (attended) and **Savannah (Herrod) Maize**, '17, welcomed Dalton to their family on December 7, 2021. They live in Ooltewah, Tennessee.

**8** **Kelsey (Elliot) Nash**, '15, married **Justin Nash** on June 11, 2023, in Sparta, Tennessee. The couple plans to continue their adventuring together and see where God leads them on this new journey. Kelsey also earned her Doctor of Optometry from the UAB School of Optometry in 2019.

**9** **Donald**, '13, and **Angela (Jones) Sparks** have welcomed two children into their family. **Penny** was born on March 1, 2021, and **Cole** was born on October 12, 2022. They live outside Detroit, Michigan.



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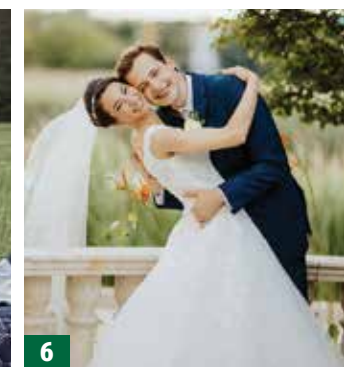
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# Remembrance

**1 James “Jim” Ashlock**, '54, passed away on July 25, 2023. Jim served as director for Alumni Relations for more than six years. He was known for his servant's heart, kind and friendly nature, hilarious stories, beautiful woodworking, and his dedication to Southern, among other things. He will be greatly missed. He's survived by his wife, Ruth (attended) and many loved ones.

**2 Denise (Lorren) Cutshall**, '82, passed away on April 14, 2023, at the age of 61. She was born at the Monument Valley Mission Hospital on the Navajo Reservation on November 6, 1961. After earning an Associate of Science in Home Economics, she spent a year as an assistant dean of women at Highland View Academy. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy from Loma Linda University in 1986 and was working at NHC HomeCare in Chattanooga at the time of her death. She is remembered by friends and family for her passion for helping others, her talents in ventriloquism and percussion, and her creative cakemaking skills.

**Mary Elam**, '51, associate vice president emerita of Academic Administration, passed away on May 20, 2023 at 95 years old. She served Southern from 1965 to 1993, initially as assistant director of Admissions and Records. She became the director of Records in 1980, and by the time she retired in 1993, she was associate vice president for Academic Administration. Under Mary's leadership, the first electronic record-keeping system was adopted, and those who worked with her in the Records office recall that she was patient and caring. In 1993, she established the Mary Elizabeth Elam Scholarship Endowment Fund to benefit students who are working to pay for their tuition, and because of this investment, her legacy continues to impact students today.

**3 John William “J.W.” Henson, III**, '54, passed away on March 13, 2023, in St. Joseph, Michigan. Born November 30, 1930, near Collegedale, Tennessee, John was the only child of John William Henson II and Lucy Eula Henson. In 1951, he married Audrey Gackenheimer (attended). Together they raised three children and were married for nearly 72 years. John taught science and mathematics at Sunnysdale Academy in Missouri and was a printer at Starkey Printing Company in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Preston Company in Cleveland, Tennessee. He served as president of Starkey Printing Company until his retirement in 1992. In 2011, he and Audrey moved to Michigan.



**4 Edward “Ed” Lamb**, former dean of the School of Social Work, passed away on July 25, 2023. He was born in Los Angeles, California, to Percy West and Eva Mildred Chapel. Ed was a United States Army veteran. He was well-loved as a caring, kind, and compassionate teacher and mentor throughout his more than 30-year tenure at Southern.

**5 Robert “Bob/Bobby” Lorren** (attended) passed away at the age of 87 on December 11, 2022, in Ooltewah, Tennessee. He was a member of the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists. He married Clymera (Anderson) Lorren, '58, deceased, in June of 1958 and graduated from Loma Linda School of Dentistry in 1961. He began his dentistry career in public service with the Navajo Reservation. He later taught at the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry in Augusta, Georgia, and then practiced dentistry in Powell's Crossroad, Tennessee, until his retirement. He was proud to serve as Southern's Alumni Association president from 1985-1987.

**Harold Moulton**, '73, passed away on April 17, 2023. He was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 1, 1943, and died in Wartburg, Tennessee. He is survived by his wife, Susan, his sister, his brother, and his nephew.

**6 Dennis Pettibone**, PhD, professor emeritus of history, passed away on September 14, 2023. Dennis was a much-beloved professor in the History Department at Southern from 1988 to 2014. His love of Adventist education was on display in his first book, *Century of Challenge*, in which he provided a history of Southern's first 100 years. He served a term as chair of the History Department and spent more than a decade as chair of the General Education Committee.

**Ron Qualley** (attended) passed away August 14, 2023. Ron served as a dean of men at Southern Adventist University from 1980-1993. He was also a sponsor for the Southernaires quartet during his time at Southern.

# Upcoming Events

For additional events and more details, visit [southern.edu/southernevents](https://southern.edu/southernevents). Many of Southern's events are livestreamed; visit [southern.edu/streaming](https://southern.edu/streaming) to watch them live online or to see previously recorded events.

<b>JAN 20</b>	<b>Evensong: American Spiritual Ensemble</b> Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists Saturday, 7:30 p.m.	<b>MAR 3</b>	<b>Southern Symphony Orchestra Concert</b> Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists Sunday, 7:30 p.m.
<b>JAN 28</b>	<b>Guest Recital: Nathan Laube, organ</b> Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists Sunday, 7:30 p.m.	<b>APR 3-4</b>	<b>Giving Day</b>
<b>FEB 3</b>	<b>Ignite – Special Guest: Riley Clemmons</b> Iles P.E. Center   Saturday, 8 p.m.	<b>APR 4-5</b>	<b>Illuminate Conference</b> Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists
<b>FEB 4</b>	<b>Symphony Orchestra Concerto Concert</b> Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists Sunday, 4 p.m.	<b>APR 6</b>	<b>Gym-Masters Home Show</b> Iles P.E. Center   Saturday, 9 p.m. & Sunday, 2:30 p.m.
<b>FEB 17</b>	<b>School of Music Pops Concert</b> Wind Symphony, Jazz Ensemble, and Steel Band Iles P.E. Center   Saturday, 8 p.m.	<b>APR 7</b>	<b>School of Music Choirs Spring Concert</b> Ackerman Auditorium in Mabel Wood Hall Sunday, 7:30 p.m.
<b>FEB 29</b>	<b>Schutte Family Lecture: Kim Gorgens, PhD</b> “Caring for Injured Brains” Iles P.E. Center   Thursday, 11 a.m.	<b>JUN 9-12</b>	<b>Academic Summer Camps</b>

# Special Tribute

After graduation, **Janelle Alder**, '21, moved to the Philippines to serve as a missionary nurse. She worked first in a remote mountain clinic, where she invested fully in becoming part of the local community, learning the language, working in the fields, making meals, and worshiping with the residents. She then transitioned to volunteering as a flight nurse with Philippine Adventist Medical Aviation Services, helping transport people who need medical help and providing medical services to students at PAMAS and Adventist Frontier Missions schools.

Janelle was passionate about her work and the people she was helping. She was planning to marry another missionary, and the couple would continue serving God wherever He led. On March 1, 2023, the helicopter she was on disappeared over the ocean as it was returning from an island with a patient who needed medical help. Janelle's legacy, and that of the pilot, Daniel Liu, is one of uncompromising service to the Lord.

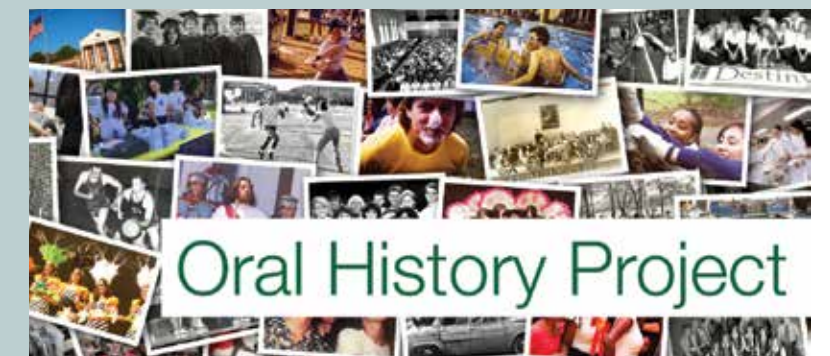
Janelle previously shared, “Commitment is being willing to give your life. Anything else is just compromise.”



# Oral History Project

Southern has partnered with Publishing Concepts, Inc., to gather stories from alumni, attendees, and former faculty and staff to preserve our collective memories for future generations. Besides recording these stories as audio files, the company will print a coffee table book that can be easily displayed and shared with friends. We encourage everyone who has had meaningful experiences at Southern to reach out and be included in the project. Learn more at [southern.edu/OralHistoryProject](https://southern.edu/OralHistoryProject).

Please note that while you will have the opportunity to purchase the book and other Southern items, a purchase is NOT required or expected for the inclusion of your story.



# Love in Action

By Amanda Blake, senior journalism major

Victor Czerkasij, '83 and '00, locked eyes with the taxi driver in the rearview mirror. The man had yet to crack a smile.

"I know what you're doing here," the driver said, "and I know who your friends are. But tell me why you came."

Czerkasij responded in the same way he'd explained his presence to other individuals in the war-torn nation of Ukraine: "Because I love you." The driver shook his head and grinned.

## Reaching Ukraine

In March, Czerkasij, an alum and adjunct professor at Southern Adventist University who works as a doctor of nursing practice, accompanied seven other medical practitioners on a 10-day mission trip to Ukraine sponsored by LEAP Global Missions, the Christian Medical Association, and Razom, a United States-based Ukrainian support charity. In one week, the group performed dozens of surgeries and medical procedures and provided consultations free of charge.

"It was no vacation. I probably worked harder than any week of my life," Czerkasij said, "yet I came back so energized. There I was, putting in 14-hour days as a 62-year-old, but I can say that despite the exhaustion, I went through a meaningful, life-changing experience that I wouldn't trade for anything."

Czerkasij's parents were born in Ukraine, and he considers the country his homeland. He speaks fluent Ukrainian, which allowed him to translate during complicated surgeries and speak with Andriy Sadovyi, the mayor of the city of L'viv, as an ambassador for Cleveland, Tennessee. According to Czerkasij, close to 4% of Cleveland's population is Ukrainian, and Mayor Kevin Brookes wishes to partner with L'viv as a sister city.

Throughout their trip, the American doctors realized that everyone knew who they were, mainly due to the unprecedented media attention the team received. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky even provided Potocki Palace to host an awards banquet for the group, and Ministry of Health Director Viktor Liashko attended.

## Serving in Love

Before Czerkasij left for Ukraine, one of his young American patients had a birthday party, and, instead of asking for presents, she requested that her guests bring funds for her doctor's trip. Czerkasij used the money to buy out the gift shop in a children's hospital in L'viv and went from room to room with his gifts. When Czerkasij introduced himself to the children, their mothers often began crying in disbelief.



**Top:** Rudi Myhovych (left), president of the Christian Medical Association in Ukraine, and Victor Czerkasij (center) speak with Andrii Sadovyi (right), mayor of L'viv.

**Below:** Czerkasij encourages a young girl whose lip was repaired by the medical team after it was damaged by a rocket fragment.

"They just didn't understand how somebody could care enough to visit their country," Czerkasij said. "Their reaction will stay with me forever."

Czerkasij was impressed by the people's civic pride and sacrificial spirit. He took \$1,500 in cash to give away and returned with \$1,200.

"Almost no one would take money," he said. "They kept saying: 'We have everything we need. We've got a roof over our heads; we have food; our clothes are fine.' I learned that we can't look at blessings from God in terms of American values. There are larger things at work here, and when you're in a situation like what these people face, you have to rely on God. It's a sweeter relationship."

The missionary group experienced three rocket/missile attack sirens during their time in the city of L'viv, but Czerkasij wasn't afraid. He knew his life was in the hands of God and could think of no better way to die than serving people in need.

"Our group included volunteers from different religious denominations, but we could all agree on one thing," Czerkasij said. "Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and we have a mission to share His commission with the world. We put flesh on the words of Jesus, and we really made a difference." ■



## Summer Graduation

**Paityn Foszcz**, '23, receives her diploma at the summer commencement service on August 17. A summer graduation was reintroduced this year with 21 undergraduates, 28 master's graduates, and two doctoral graduates. On behalf of the Alumni Association, congratulations to our newest alumni, the Class of 2023!



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Values-based estate  
planning advice to help you  
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