

## Creating the Future Together

A Conversation with PSU's  
15th President Donald Birx

### Building a First-Year Class

This fall PSU welcomed its largest  
incoming class yet. p. 4

### The Best Job Perk Ever

Interview with former US poet  
laureate and writer Donald Hall p. 6

# Where the Heart is



Kaleb Hart '11 photo.

LIKE MOST TEENAGERS, ELLEN MACDONALD '16 WASN'T PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING IN HER FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS. When she was looking at colleges, she purposely avoided his alma mater Plymouth State. "My dad dragged me here anyway," she recalls. "And I ended up loving it!"

Steve MacDonald '79 has fond memories of living in Hall Residence Hall, hosting Winter Carnival events that united students across campus, and being recognized with the Harold E. Hyde Award for his work with Student Senate. "To me, Plymouth State was the greatest place in the world," he says. That's what he wanted for his daughter.

The friendly campus, caring faculty members, and excellent education Steve always talked about when Ellen was growing up are exactly what have made her years at Plymouth State so special. "I was very shy when I came here, and I didn't know what I wanted to do for a career," she recalls. "Not only did I meet my best friend in my residence hall and connect with great people in the business department, but I also discovered my interest in professional sales."

As a proud alumnus, Steve has donated to the Fund for Plymouth State in support of the people and programs that make the University the special place that it is. Now as a proud parent, he has made his most recent gift in honor of Ellen, who will graduate next spring. "It's nice that we're both part of something bigger," he says.

## PSU DONOR HONOR ROLL

Find Steve's name, along with the names of all of our generous donors in 2014-15 at [go.plymouth.edu/honor-roll](http://go.plymouth.edu/honor-roll).

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On the cover: PSU President Donald Bix.  
Kaleb Hart '11 photo.

Kaleb Hart '11 photo.



"The campus is beautiful, the quality of the faculty, staff, and students is high, and the desire to be the best you can be is pervasive. I want everyone to know how truly special Plymouth State is."—*President Donald Bix (see story on page 12)*

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**O**N BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, I join the entire Plymouth State community in welcoming Dr. Donald Birx as the 15th president of PSU.



Mark Corliss photo.

**"These are exciting times at Plymouth State University, and the board of trustees is pleased to have President Donald Birx leading the mandate for change."**

After a nationwide search, it was quickly apparent to everyone that Don was the best person for the job, an opinion that led to the unanimous affirmation vote of the board of trustees.

Don has a background that is balanced in both private and public roles. Prior to beginning his academic career at New Mexico State University at Las Cruces, he worked at Systems Research Laboratories as a vice president in charge of technology and new ventures. His private industry experience will be especially valuable given the changing world of higher education. University presidents are expected to think more like CEOs and have a strong understanding of both the financial and operational aspects of running institutions in highly competitive environments. They must maximize the students' academic experience while delivering it at the most affordable price possible. Don has the experience, expertise, and drive to assure PSU's long-term success.

A creative thinker who works collaboratively with faculty and staff, Don has already laid out a new educational approach (read more about it on page 12). As PSU looks to the future, the campus will be focused on providing educational opportunities in interdisciplinary clusters. This innovative approach, while continuing to build on PSU's heritage of engaged scholarship and interdisciplinary learning, will allow students to take part in "open laboratories," interfacing with faculty, alumni, external industry, and non-profit partners to create a robust learning environment. Don shared this direction with the USNH Board of Trustees, and his idea was met with great support and enthusiasm. Students, the region, and the state will benefit from creative solutions and scholarship that will result from this cluster-based model.

Don strongly embraces aligning PSU's strategic strengths with the region and the state, which will allow the University to play an even greater role in promoting economic vibrancy in the Lakes Region and North Country. The board of trustees supports his vision that takes the traditional town-gown relationship to a new level by becoming a more focused economic partner with community and business leaders.

These are exciting times at Plymouth State University, and the board of trustees is pleased to have President Donald Birx leading the mandate for change. We have great confidence in the collective abilities on campus to deliver a new model that reflects the university of the twenty-first century—one that is focused on providing students with a first-class educational experience and being an economic engine that benefits the region and state's economy.

We wish Don a long and successful tenure and look forward to great work from PSU!

**Pamela Diamantis**  
**Chair, Board of Trustees**  
**University System of New Hampshire**

# And Justice for All

## PSU launches Master's Degree in Criminal Justice Administration

**ALISHA MEDEIROS '15 WANTS TO HELP TROUBLED YOUTH** make better choices and live fulfilling lives. This desire, influenced by a family tragedy, led her to pursue a career in criminal justice.

Medeiros was just 12 years old when her sister, who was estranged from her family, died of a drug overdose. "I always wonder what would have happened if we could have talked to her," she says. "I think she felt alone."

The desire to help others who are struggling led Medeiros to Plymouth State, where she earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. She is now among the first class of students to enroll in a new Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice Administration. The program is designed to provide criminal justice professionals with the skills they need to become effective leaders and administrators in police departments, correctional institutions, court systems, and other facilities.

"There is a need for highly trained professionals in our communities and an advanced degree will help them become the leaders they need to be," says Professor of Criminal Justice Stephanie Halter '02.

Derry, NH, police officer Patrick Dawson '09 agrees. He is pursuing the master's degree in criminal justice administration to make himself more marketable as an administrator.

Police departments may not require advanced degrees of those seeking to become sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and chiefs, but Dawson says many departments, including his own, offer incentives to those who earn them. And several of those professionals in leadership positions in Derry, Dawson notes, hold advanced degrees.

Taking classes while working full-time can be a challenge, therefore the program is designed to accommodate the needs of busy working professionals. Courses are offered online and face-to-face in Plymouth and Concord. There is also an accelerated one-year program option, which Medeiros is pursuing while working as an advocate and caregiver to young women with disabilities at a rehabilitation center. After earning her master's degree, she hopes to work at a juvenile detention center and eventually in a restorative justice program.

In her current position, Medeiros is learning about herself, how she manages her emotions, and how she deals with challenges, all skills that will be important to her future work in the field. She marvels at each small improvement the women she works with make. "It's such an amazing feeling helping them learn skills that they will use for the rest of their lives."

■ Amy Barnes '15G

*Bruce Lyndes contributed to this report.*



Alisha Medeiros '15 is part of the first cohort of students in PSU's new master's degree in criminal justice administration program. Kaleb Hart '11 photo.

**"There is a need for highly trained professionals in our communities and an advanced degree will help them become the leaders they need to be."—Professor Stephanie Halter '02**





## Class of 2019 by the numbers



FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

**1,402**

**3.01**   
AVERAGE GPA

# Building a First-Year Class

**PSU set a new record with its largest incoming class to date. Here's how.**

■ James Hundrieser '90G, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs

A CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND A DECREASE in the number of 18- to 21- year-olds in the overall population have left colleges and universities across the country struggling with declining under-graduate enrollments in recent years.

When we examined our fall 2014 undergraduate student enrollment, which at 800 students was among our smallest incoming classes, we saw that while there was an increase in inquiries and enrollment from students in New York and New Jersey, other geographic markets remained flat. With the decline in

our target demographic—college students—there was also increased competition among universities throughout New Hampshire and the region. This compelled us to reconsider our marketing and recruitment strategies, and our admissions process.

As the vice president for enrollment management and student affairs, my role is to help PSU navigate through these challenges. In the last year, colleagues from across campus—Admissions, Information Technology Services, University Advancement, Marketing Communications and Creative

Services, Student Affairs, Athletics, and Academic Affairs—have come together to help position PSU for recruitment success.

As a result of our efforts, we recently welcomed our largest incoming class in the 144-year history. The Class of 2019 is more than 1,400 students strong; about half of them come from New Hampshire, with the rest hailing from 25 other states and 15 countries. We welcomed 235 transfer students, the most we've had in four years, thanks to dual admissions agreements with community colleges.

The Class of 2019 already has a variety of impressive and unique accomplishments to its credit: these students are servicemen and women, certified seaplane pilots, videographers, world travelers, budding meteorologists, and more. And with an average GPA of 3.01, this class is the most academically prepared incoming class yet.

**"Students who visit campus are three times more likely to enroll."**





**15** COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



**26**  
STATES REPRESENTED

### Change is good

PSU's overwhelming success with enrollment for the 2015–16 academic year was the result of focused multi-year investments in admissions, marketing, academic and co-curricular programs, and new and repurposed facilities. We raised PSU's visibility in New England and beyond, increased our connections with prospective students through targeted and personalized communication, and—because students who visit our campus are nearly three times more likely to enroll—we offered more campus visits than ever before, and improved the overall visit experience.

We also removed potential barriers in our admissions process. Recognizing that standardized test scores hold little value in determining an applicant's academic preparation, PSU was an early adopter of a test-optional admissions policy, a growing movement

among colleges and universities nationwide. Applicants are free to choose whether to submit their SAT or ACT scores along with the required admissions materials, which include high school transcripts, an admissions essay, and an academic recommendation. We continue to consider a student's extracurricular activities, as well. Together, these items present a comprehensive picture of our prospective students.

The Undergraduate Admissions team and Information Technology Services created more efficient ways to apply to PSU, in addition to the Common Application. The Panther Application (for first-year students) and our new transfer application streamline the application process and do not require an application fee.

### Retaining our students

We are ever mindful of the need to not only recruit students, but also to retain and graduate the

students we have. To that end, PSU created a new position, the dean of the first-year experience, which provides leadership in assessing and enhancing first-year students' intellectual growth, social development, and sense of shared community engagement and responsibility. The inaugural dean of the first-year experience is Associate Professor of Criminal Justice Mark Fischler. With this renewed focus on the critical first year of college, we will help ensure that our students' first year is as successful and fulfilling as it can be, and that they will remain proud Panthers throughout their education here, and beyond.

### Looking ahead

Galvanized by our enrollment for the Class of 2019, we've set an enrollment goal of 1,550 for the Class of 2020; included in that figure are goals for 230 transfer students and 50 international

students. We believe these goals, while ambitious, are within our reach: this past summer we had a record number of campus visits and inquiries, and we're already receiving applications for next fall.

### How you can help

To ensure our success, we need your help. Our alumni, donors, and friends make the best ambassadors for PSU. If you know of a great student whom you think would thrive in a rigorous and collaborative academic environment in a close-knit campus community surrounded by the natural beauty of the lakes and mountains, show your Panther Pride by encouraging the student to check us out at [plymouth.edu/experience](http://plymouth.edu/experience).







# The Best Job Perk Ever

An Interview with Donald Hall ■ Diane Jeffrey '97, Director of the Silver Center for the Arts

When I tell people that I am director of PSU's Silver Center for the Arts, they often say "That sounds like fun!" Not only do I confirm their suspicions, I often tell them about the fascinating people I work with and get to know. At the top of that list is Donald Hall.

A New Hampshire poet and author, Hall has had honors bestowed upon him by two US presidents: In 2006, George W. Bush appointed Hall the 14th US Poet Laureate, and in 2010, President Barack Obama awarded him a National Medal of the Arts. It may not be as prestigious, but I have an honor for him as well: "Best Job Perk Ever."

Within a few weeks of becoming director of the Silver Center in 1996, I invited Don to read his poetry. Frankly, I wasn't that familiar with his work, but there had been a lot of local and national press about the death of his wife, the poet Jane Kenyon, just the year before. I started to read both Jane and Don's poetry and quickly became

a fan of both. While I loved Don's poetry, his essays on living at Eagle Pond Farm were like a guide to living in New Hampshire for me, a native Southerner, so I read everything by him that I could get my hands on.

Around the time of his first reading at Silver, he was beginning to write the collection called *Without*, a book of poems dedicated to Jane Kenyon that earned him the L. L. Winship/PEN New England Award in 1999. His reading at Silver was one of his first after her death and was quite somber, as I recall. And it was absolutely brilliant. Don had always been known as a powerful performer of his own poetry (which is not always the case with poets) but unbeknownst to

me, he was considered one of the best. So on a sweltering summer night in the middle of August, with almost no advertising, the Smith Recital Hall was packed. After a few more readings over the next couple of years, we formalized our relationship and the Eagle Pond Authors' Series was born. Eagle Pond Farm in Wilmot, New Hampshire, is the ancestral home where Don's grandmother and mother were born, where he spent summers as a child, and where he and Jane Kenyon moved in 1975.

For the past 18 years, the Eagle Pond Authors' Series has celebrated great writing by some of the nation's outstanding authors. The series has featured three US poets laureate:

Maundy Mitchell  
photo.



# Eagle Pond

Above: Eagle Pond Farm in Wilmot, NH, Hall's ancestral home where he spent summers as a child, and later lived with wife, poet Jane Kenyon.

D. Bruemmer '98 photo.

Opposite: Hall and Diane Jeffrey at the Silver Center where Hall introduced poet Frank Bidart, who kicked off this year's Eagle Pond Authors' Series.

Kaleb Hart '11 photo.



Donald Hall, Charles Simic, and Maxine Kumin; six Pulitzer Prize winners: Sharon Olds, Charles Simic, Galway Kinnell, Franz Wright, Jorie Graham, and Richard Ford; and five poets who have won the National Book Award: Robert Bly, Galway Kinnell, Ruth Stone, Mark Doty, and Jean Valentine. Many are lifelong friends of Don's, some are acquaintances from the poetry circuit over the years, and some are relatively new poets who can be a bit starstruck. I love watching their faces as Don introduces them to the audience and talks about their work. His introduction is likely one of the highlights of their professional lives.

Don was born in 1928 in New Haven, Connecticut, and started writing poetry at a very young age. When he was just 16, he was accepted to the prestigious Bread Loaf Writers Conference in Vermont where he met celebrated poet and former Plymouth Normal School faculty member Robert Frost.

"I remember meeting him [Frost] several times on the softball field or after his reading—but there was one long visit. We sat on the balcony outside the main inn, sitting down for a moment, when two women approached us and we talked. It was a mother and her daughter... . We probably talked for two hours, And now a crazy coincidence: the mother was Dorothy Kunhardt, who wrote *Pat the Bunny*. She was Linda Kunhardt's grandmother! Linda was not even born yet."

*[Editor's note: Linda Kunhardt is Hall's companion and a poet herself].*

Don is a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy, Harvard, and Oxford University, where he graduated in 1953 and became the first poetry editor of *The Paris Review*. While there, he interviewed many famous poets including T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Just three years later, at the young age of 28, he was already well known enough to be appointed to a national

committee by President Eisenhower.

"President Eisenhower started a Person-to-Person Program, supposedly to connect Russians of any particular business to their American equivalent. When the bunch came together, I quickly figured out that I was 'The Young Poet.' At the end of the evening meeting, having come up with some silly proposals, the chairman of the committee decided that we would meet the next day ... and he suggested that the committee to make the final suggestions should be William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, and Donald Hall. Yes, I was inhibited, but certainly, I was flattered as well."

For his poetry, Don received the Marshall/Nation Award in 1987 for his book *The Happy Man*, both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in 1989 for *The One Day*, the Robert



Frost Medal in 1990, and Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize for Lifetime Achievement in 1994.

Don says that the ability to write poetry has abandoned him in recent years, so he focuses on prose these days. Last year he published *Essays After Eighty*, which climbed to number 18 on the New York Times Best Sellers list and met with glowing reviews. He just put the finishing touches on his latest collection, *The Selected Poems of Donald Hall*, to be published in December.

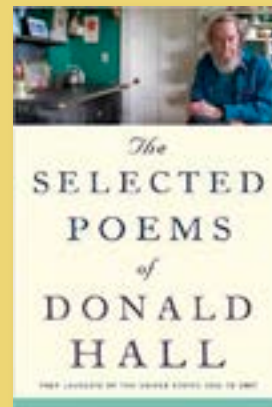
"It was scary to look forward to choosing the small *Selected Poems*. It is probably one-fifth of the poems included in *White Apples and the Taste of Stone* (a large, definitive collection published in 2006). The old volume went out of print, and in the meantime, I had become ashamed of including so much. I picked out my favorites—some are my favorites because other people have liked them so much—and it was easier than I thought it would be. I have had no second thoughts."

It's always interesting, I think, to hear an author share who he or she enjoys reading, and what projects he or she

has in the works. Don Hall doesn't disappoint.

"I always read Thomas Hardy. I do not keep up well with what is newly published. I like [poets] Chris Wiman, Henri Cole, and Spencer Reece. I'm working on more prose, this time examples of the 'flash-essay'—short pieces. I love writing prose, and continue to hope that it is good enough."

In 2008, upon the occasion of his 80th birthday, we had a small party for Don after his reading of a newly released book, *Unpacking the Boxes: A Memoir of a Life in Poetry*. At the end of the evening while he was still signing books, I looked through the items he received that night: a framed proclamation from the governor making September 20, 2008 "Donald Hall Day" in New Hampshire, a quart of Kentucky bourbon, a couple of books of poetry, an apple pie, and a small, brightly colored gift bag that contained the ashes of a man Don had never met. The man's wife was a big fan of Don's and she brought them as a present. Those are the birthday presents of one fascinating man.



"However wrenching [Hall's poems] may be from line to line, they tell a story that is essentially reassuring: art and love are compatible, genius is companionable, and people stand by one another in the end." —*New York Times Book Review*

"*The Selected Poems of Donald Hall* is the definitive collection, showcasing poems rich with humor and eros and a kind of simplicity that succeeds in engaging the reader in the first few lines." —*Billy Collins*



The Eagle Pond Authors' Series is a tribute to Donald Hall, who is the heart and soul of Eagle Pond, and who has been instrumental in bringing nationally and internationally revered poets to campus. The readings are free and open to the public. For more information visit [plymouth.edu/silver-center](http://plymouth.edu/silver-center).

# THAT SHE MAY SERVE: MISS UNIVERSITY 2015

"We're seen as public figures: Speaking to anyone and everyone is part of the job. I've definitely come out of my shell because of this program. I feel comfortable talking to anyone now."



ELIZABETH MORRISSETTE '18 STOOD ON THE STAGE AT HER FIRST MISS NEW HAMPSHIRE PAGEANT, TRYING TO KEEP HER KNEES FROM KNOCKING. "I was definitely nervous—I'd only had a week to prepare and I wasn't really sure what to expect—but at the same time I felt confident," she says.

If you had asked this vivacious graphic design major a year ago if she could imagine participating in a pageant, being judged on a showcase of talent, personal interview, lifestyle and fitness, and evening wear, Morrisette would have said "No way." As a lifelong dancer—she minors in dance at PSU—she's used to performing. But a pageant?

Still, when her dance teacher in her hometown of Manchester, NH, encouraged her to explore the opportunity as a way to earn scholarship money and develop new skills, Morrisette reconsidered. In May she was crowned Miss University 2015, representing all of the University System of New Hampshire institutions.

"A lot of the women had been involved in pageants for a long time, so it was intimidating," she says. But she found that people were supportive, and although she considered herself shy, she made many friends. Also, Morrisette says, "We're seen as public figures: Speaking to anyone and everyone is part of the job. I've definitely come out of my shell because of this program. I feel comfortable talking to anyone now."

Morrisette's identical twin sister Erica encouraged her throughout the short but intense pageant process, and was there to celebrate when she was named Miss University 2015. This fall, the sisters started their sophomore year at PSU. "We've always done everything so similarly—we're roommates, we're graphic design majors, and we dance—this is the only thing I have that's mine alone," Morrisette says.

In addition to her studies and dance this year, Morrisette will represent the Miss New Hampshire Program's emphasis on service: participating in blood drives, fashion shows for the elderly, PSU bingo nights, and fundraisers for a girls mentoring program. "It's been a great opportunity to get more involved in the community and in the state," she says. After all, beyond the sparkle of the pageant, the beauty of the Miss University Scholarship Program is in its alignment with Plymouth State University's motto, *Ut prosim* (That I may serve).

■ Emilie Coulter



Far left: Morrisette (right) at the Miss Auburn/Granite State 2015 pageant with Miss Apple Harvest's Outstanding Teen, Natalie Jenkins.

Left: On Move-in Day 2015 at PSU with her family including twin sister Erica on left.

Kaleb Hart '11 photo.



Coach for a Day Mark Fischler on the field. Kim Bownes '08G photo.



# Coach for a Day

## New program gives professors an all-access pass to Panther football

Dean of the First-Year Experience Mark Fischler is a professor, mentor, and friend to countless students. But this past September, he was also a coach for the Panther football team.

As the first professor to participate in the new Coach for a Day program, Fischler spent time with the team leading up to its home opener against Castleton University (VT) and was on the sidelines for the big game. From early mornings in the weight room and long, grueling practices, to the inspirational and occasionally rowdy team meetings, he witnessed the dedication PSU student-athletes have to their sport. "I've had many student-athletes in class—to see what they are doing outside of their academic experience was eye-opening," says Fischler, who gave pep talks to the team and feedback to the coaches.

Head football coach Paul Castonia developed the program to give faculty a better understanding of what it means to be a student-athlete at PSU. "As a NCAA Division III university," he says, "PSU expects student-athletes to give 100 percent in their studies and in their sport, and they do. This program gives faculty the chance to see this firsthand."

As an avid football fan, Fischler says his Coach for a Day experience was thrilling, especially on game day. "The energy was intense and contagious," he says.

As an educator, he says the experience was invaluable. "It was an honor for me to spend time with the team, interact with them, cheer them on from the sidelines, and gain an appreciation for how our players and coaches work together to represent PSU."

■ S. Lauren Lavigne '94, '96G, Assistant Director of Athletics for Enrollment Management and Advancement

"As a NCAA Division III university, PSU expects student-athletes to give 100 percent in their studies and in their sport, and they do. This program gives faculty the chance to see this firsthand."

—Paul Castonia, PSU head football coach

**Check out the latest in Panther football news! Visit [go.plymouth.edu/football](http://go.plymouth.edu/football).**



# Creating the Future Together

## A Conversation with PSU's 15th President Donald Birx

■ Lori L. Ferguson

WALKING INTO THE THIRD-FLOOR OFFICE SUITE OF PLYMOUTH STATE UNIVERSITY'S NEWLY APPOINTED PRESIDENT, THE IMPRESSION IS IMMEDIATE: THIS IS A PLACE OF CREATIVITY AND VISION. Beautiful artwork by Plymouth State students occupies places of pride on virtually every surface—paintings and photographs adorn the walls and three-dimensional ceramic pieces rest on pedestals scattered about the space. There's a relaxed rhythm here, underpinned by a quiet energy and a willingness to explore new connections. As it turns out, the setting is a remarkably apt reflection of the new man in the corner office: Dr. Donald Birx.

Birx is a soft-spoken individual with an easy smile and a barely contained excitement for the task at hand. He holds a PhD in electrical engineering and an MBA in finance and has spent as much time in private industry as he has in academia. "I try not to let my industry experience get in the way," he says with a wry chuckle. In reality, Birx observes, he has found his lengthy experience in both sectors to be a tremendous asset. "There's a real need for universities to intersect with their surrounding communities and the industries and non-profits therein," he asserts, "and having depth of experience in both business



Above: President Birx greets first-year student Alexandria Fortier (right) and her mother at Move-in Day 2015. Bruce Lyndes photo.

Opposite: Kaleb Hart '11 photo.

and academia helps me to see both sides of the equation." In today's fast-moving, highly interactive global economy, there's a huge need to make sure students are equipped with the interdisciplinary tools and experiences to thrive, Birx says, and this is precisely the goal that he has set for himself as Plymouth State's 15th president.





"Individuals between the ages of 20 and 27 are at their most creative and energetic, what better way to direct that energy than into educational initiatives and experiences that will set the students up for success?"



"I'm excited about what can be accomplished when we bring education and business together in innovative ways," Birx observes. "The synergy is incredibly powerful and the opportunities created are transformative—for ourselves, our students, and our community."

Birx was drawn to Plymouth State, he says, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the region's natural beauty. "Having lived all over the country, you get a sense of what you like, and my family and I immediately fell in love with both the location and setting of this place." Birx, his wife, and four adult children enjoy such outdoor activities as skiing, swimming, kayaking, and hiking, as well as an occasional trip to the city. "The geography here is beautiful," he notes, "and the remoteness is just right—we're close to the city, but not right in it."

Birx was equally taken with the University. "The campus is beautiful, the quality of the faculty, staff, and students is high, and the desire to be the best you can be is pervasive," he says. "I want everyone to know how truly special Plymouth State is."

Moved by the depth of talent and openness to new ideas he encountered, Birx realized that Plymouth State's desire to chart a new course into the future was a wonderful fit with his own vision for creating the dynamic learning environment that's needed to prepare students for success in the twenty-first-century. He began his tenure as president on July 31, and has already started on an ambitious path to success.

### Strengths across disciplines

Birx believes that the secret to making Plymouth State a model of the modern, twenty-first-century residential university revolves around two seminal concepts: clusters and the open lab. "I started experimenting with the concept of clusters in 1996," he explains, "and after 20 years of working in these intersecting areas, I've seen how powerful the concept can be and I know that Plymouth State is a place where the idea can be fully realized." There are many institutions across the country that have implemented the cluster concept as a part of their programs, but they are still heavily discipline-based overall, Birx notes. Few places have created a holistic relationship between disciplines, the university, and the community in which it resides based on the cluster and open lab model. This is the model that Birx envisions for Plymouth State.

The idea behind clusters is fairly straightforward, Birx explains. You pull together unique strengths across disciplines from the community, the university, and regional businesses and non-profits that complement core competencies within the university and sectors of opportunity globally. This creates a locus of education and activity that matches the challenges and needs of the



"I'm excited about what can be accomplished when we bring education and business together in innovative ways," Birx observes. John McKeith photo.

twenty-first-century economy that graduating students will enter. Birx says it will allow PSU to be incredibly creative and to establish more programs that are leaders nationally and internationally. It also gives students broad areas of interrelated studies as well as discipline-based majors from which to choose. Over the course of the next nine months, Birx plans to work closely with Plymouth State faculty and staff to define a series of five to seven clusters that build upon the University's unique strengths, together with those of the communities within a two-hour drive of Plymouth.

Art and technology, he says, offer a perfect example of a potential new cluster. "The region within a two-hour driving radius of Plymouth—from the North Country to greater Boston—is widely recognized as a very strong arts region, and the arts are a core competency here at Plymouth State as well. Technology is an equally powerful player in the region—Boston is a technology hub and competency in this sector is critical for our students." Therefore, Birx says, an arts and technology cluster is among those being considered. The arts are a key STEM field, though they are seldom thought of in this manner. The two disciplines absolutely complement one another. For example, the combination is critical in new product design, advanced manufacturing, entertainment, information presentation, analytics, modeling and simulation, and developing training scenarios—and the combination offers platforms for individuals from education, industry, and the community to work and learn together in highly creative and meaningful ways.

"Processes become interlinked, feedback loops develop, ideas and concepts begin to intersect in a self-reinforcing manner, and big changes happen! The once disparate slices of general education and the world around us become themed coursework within a clustered framework."





“My background is in complex systems and artificial intelligence,” Birx continues, “so I’ve witnessed firsthand the ways in which many different pieces can come together, creating an epiphany of discovery and energy where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Processes become interlinked, feedback loops develop, ideas and concepts begin to intersect in a self-reinforcing manner, and big changes happen! The once disparate slices of general education and the world around us become themed coursework within a clustered framework.”

The benefits of combining seemingly divergent strands of study through a cluster are further enforced through open labs—environments in which classroom learning is combined with hands-on exploration and real-world challenges through interactions across disciplines and among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the community. Birx witnessed the potential for learning and development represented by open labs during his tenure at the University of Houston, where he co-founded the Center for Industrial Partnerships, as well as at Pennsylvania State University’s Behrend College, where he co-founded the Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Center. “These centers were founded to provide pathways for members of the community to come in to open laboratory environments to work alongside students and faculty to create capstone projects, develop new product ideas, or solve challenges in their businesses. It quickly becomes not only an integrated way of learning but also one that is self-perpetuating and entrepreneurial. Businesses and other community organizations realize the value of educating students in this way and begin investing in departmental programs, work-study initiatives, design centers, and scholarships. Students recognize the benefits as well, gathering valuable knowledge through their coursework and then applying that knowledge and cultivating critical-thinking skills in real-world situations.” As a result, Birx says, students graduate with a potent combination of education and practical experience that allows them to integrate knowledge across disciplines and work successfully in a team environment to create things and get things done. “It is a more comprehensive experience than typical internships and traditional student engagement opportunities.”

Birx says that he has also seen this experiential learning model bear fruit in hard dollars and cents. “When I arrived at the University of Houston in 2006, the university was collecting approximately \$300,000 a year in licensing fees from collaborative endeavors between the school and private industry,” Birx notes. “When I checked a year ago with my colleagues at UH, that number had climbed to approximately \$16 million per year, due in large part to the visionary leadership at UH and the

number of collaborative relationships between the university and the community that were fostered at the Center for Industrial Partnerships as well as in open laboratories based on clusters.”

Individuals between the ages of 20 and 27 are at their most creative and energetic, Birx asserts; what better way to direct that energy than into educational initiatives and experiences that will set the students up for success? “If you look back in our history to the founding of the first land grant universities under the Morrill Act of 1862, you quickly realize the transformative power of bringing universities, government, and business together to tackle problems and move the economy forward—the intersection of knowledge and practice is incredibly powerful.” The public universities of the late nineteenth century were founded, Birx notes, to educate farmers, research the best methods for sustainable productivity growth in agriculture, and train those coming out of a rural environment to be leaders in the nascent industrial economy. The universities became the open laboratories where industry and education met and where the barriers between research and practice, industry and academia, and learning and doing were lowered. And the results were staggering. Within the century, the United States emerged as the world leader in agriculture and manufacturing. “We not only fed ourselves and our growing population, we fed the world,” Birx says. “We not only made things, we were the place to come for the latest in creative ideas.” Indeed, he says, it’s estimated that 85 percent of our economic growth came about as a result of our ability to create and make things through technology and creative thinking across disciplines. Even today when other countries talk about our future leadership in the global economy, it always revolves around our creativity.

In the intervening years, the US has lost a bit of this edge, Birx observes, but he is confident that through a return to a revitalized, twenty-first-century interpretation of the open laboratories concept for universities, we can regain it. “When we all work together, the results are transformative—we’ve seen it happen in our country before, and we can see it happen again. My goal as president of Plymouth State University is to demonstrate how partnerships that capitalize on the synergy between learning and doing can make a profound difference in our world.”

Once the ball is rolling, Birx continues, the benefits quickly follow. The community becomes more involved with the university, the university prospers, local and state governments recognize in a more substantive way the relevance of higher education, and students receive an education that feeds their interests and allows them to make a positive impact in their communities.

“My goal as president of Plymouth State University is to demonstrate how partnerships that capitalize on the synergy between learning and doing can make a profound difference in our world.”

## Working together

Alumni play a pivotal role in this process, Birx notes. They're already living and working in the community and can help to spread word of the University's mission as well as facilitate relationships between the school and their particular organizations. "Alumni are in the community as business owners, legislators, volunteers, donors, and employees, and they have firsthand experience with the University's strengths and abilities, so they're ideal ambassadors."

Donors are another important constituency, Birx says, and their involvement in remaking Plymouth State into the university of the twenty-first century is equally critical. "Donors want to be part of creating something," Birx says, "and when they see where their dollars can have an impact and make a difference, they're energized. When donors see the way in which clusters enable students to obtain a strong foundation in the liberal arts together with critical-thinking skills and real-world experience, they're moved to engage. Basing our educational model on the concept of clusters and open labs allows us all to dream again about what we want to be and do, and it's incredibly compelling and liberating."

Plymouth State's motto is *Ut prosim* (That I may serve), Birx notes, and it's one that he loves. "I think it really goes to the essence of what a leader should be about, and my mission is to give that motto focus. I want to challenge our faculty, staff, students, and alumni to think hard about the broad picture: 'How might we best serve in this coming century?' 'Who are we serving?' I want Plymouth State to continue to serve our community in a way that's creative, meaningful, and transformative."

"I truly believe that you can create the best thing in the world, but if you haven't done it in a way that enhances people's lives and brings them together, what value is it?" Birx concludes. "I care about people and what they can become, and I believe that we can achieve greater things collectively than we can individually. Working together, I know that we can position Plymouth State University as a role model for other institutions of like size. We can provide an example of how residential universities can partner with their communities to provide experiences that are transformative—for ourselves, our students, and the communities in which we live."

*Lori L. Ferguson is a freelance writer based in southern New Hampshire. She enjoys writing on lifestyle and health and wellness topics, as well as all things artistic.*  
[writerloriferguson.com](http://writerloriferguson.com)



"Basing our educational model on the concept of clusters and open labs allows us all to dream again about what we want to be and do, and it's incredibly compelling and liberating."



Top: This year's Evening of Connections was President Birx's first opportunity to speak with donors and student scholarship recipients and their families.

Above: President Birx with John '85 and Carrie Morgridge, the president and vice president, respectively, of the Morgridge Family Foundation. Through the foundation, the Morgridges have supported several successful initiatives at PSU, including the Student Support Foundation, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Kaleb Hart '11 photos.



# Hope for Hypertension

**Jennifer DuPont '08 is investigating what triggers high blood pressure as we age**



SIXTY-SEVEN MILLION AMERICANS HAVE IT. Nearly a thousand people die from it each day. And in just one year, it can cost the nation more than \$40 million.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, takes a tremendous toll on our country, both in lives and in dollars. And as the population ages, these sobering statistics are expected to increase.

But what if that trend could be reversed?

This question is at the heart of Jennifer Dupont's research. A postdoctoral research fellow in the Molecular Cardiology Research Institute (MCRI) at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts, Dupont is on a quest to discover the molecular factors in aging that contribute to hypertension. "Life is about helping people," she says. "I happen to be interested in science, and I want to use that to help people."

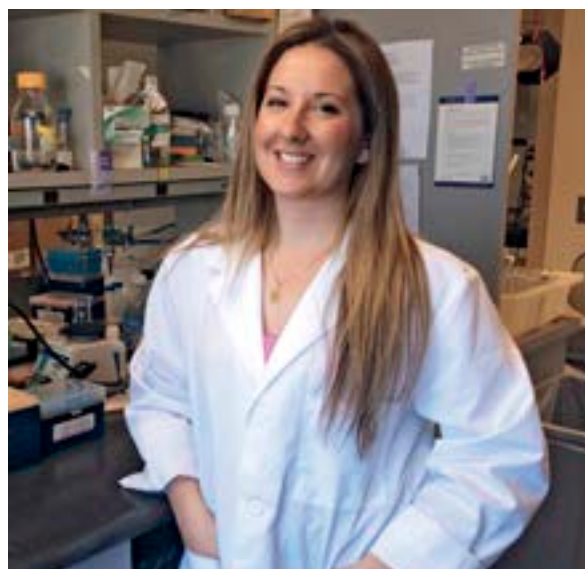
**"I happen to be interested in science, and I want to use that to help people."**

High blood pressure is the most common cardiovascular disease risk factor, and its prevalence greatly increases with age, affecting roughly 60 percent of people over the age of 60 and 80 percent of the population over the age of 80. "This is a huge public health issue because current therapies do not adequately control blood pressure in half of patients over the age of 50," says DuPont, who has been part of MCRI's international team of investigators, physician-scientists, trainees, and researchers since June 2013. "Our

goal is to better understand how to control blood pressure as we age and identify innovative therapeutic drug combinations that will help reduce the morbidity and mortality rates related to aging-associated hypertension."

DuPont earned her bachelor's degree in exercise science and physiology from PSU in 2008. An excellent student and talented researcher, she received full scholarships at the University of Delaware, where she earned both her master's and doctoral degrees in applied physiology. When she began her search for a postdoctoral research fellowship, she focused on Boston, which is home to some of the country's top research hospitals and close to her family. Her fellowship at MCRI has given her the opportunity to expand her scientific skill set. "All of the research I did in graduate school was clinical-based, working directly with patients, so I had very little molecular biology experience," she says. "This fellowship challenged me to step into a laboratory where I had to learn almost everything from scratch. It has been an extremely rewarding journey."

Rewarding indeed: already her work has garnered awards and recognition both nationally and internationally. Last January, she was honored with an American Heart Association Postdoctoral Fellowship, a highly competitive grant that helps to fund her research. In April, she was one of only 10 junior researchers worldwide to earn the American Physiological Society's (APS) Cardiovascular Section Research Recognition Award. She also earned the APS's Caroline tum Suden Professional Opportunity



Award, which recognizes promising postdoctoral and medical residents.

DuPont is already thinking ahead to her work post-fellowship. "In the next year, I will be applying for several competitive awards that will aid in my transition from a fellow to an independent investigator," she says. "Ultimately, my goals are to have my own laboratory where I can continue to study cardiovascular disease and also teach and mentor students. I've been fortunate to have had great teaching and mentorship throughout my journey as a scientist, and I believe that passing that on to future scientists, clinicians, therapists, and others is an extremely important aspect of my career and the path I have chosen."

■ Barbra Alan

Jennifer DuPont '08 in the lab at the Molecular Cardiology Research Institute at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, MA.

Photo courtesy of Jennifer DuPont.



# THE GREEN | PLYMOUTH STATE ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES



## 2015 Alumni Recognition Award Recipients

A retired air force colonel, a former community college president and a public servant were among those honored with Alumni Recognition Awards during Plymouth State University's Homecoming & Family Celebration and Alumni Reunion Weekend. "Every year, the PSU Alumni Association Board of Directors has the difficult yet rewarding task of narrowing down an impressive list of candidates for these awards," says Director of Alumni Relations Rodney Ekstrom '09G. "The 2015 class of Alumni Recognition Award recipients represents the best of our alumni in their contributions to their communities, professions and alma mater."

This year's awardees are (pictured from left to right) Alex Herbst '15 (Graduating Senior Award of Excellence); Craig Souza '87 (Distinguished Alumni Service Award); Larry Coffin '64 (*Ut Prosim* Award); Professor of Meteorology Eric Hoffman (Faculty/Staff Award of Excellence); Kathy Eneguess '74 (Alumni Achievement Award); and Matthew Krause '08G (Outstanding Alumni Award). Not pictured is Brad Simpkins '08G (Recent Alumni Award of Excellence). For more about these outstanding alumni, visit [go.plymouth.edu/2015ARA](http://go.plymouth.edu/2015ARA).

# STAY CONNECTED!



Your classmates want to know what you've been up to. Send us your personal and professional accomplishments so we can share your news with the alumni community. Submit your update today. [plymouth.edu/alumni/class-notes](http://plymouth.edu/alumni/class-notes)

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## The Power of Philanthropy

Pictured from left to right: Carrie Morgridge, author of *Every Gift Matters: How Your Passion Can Change The World* and wife of Plymouth State alumnus John Morgridge '85, were joined by alumni guests Rick Brenner '94, president of the New Hampshire Fisher Cats; corporate philanthropist Linda Gray '78, a senior advisor for the NH Charitable Foundation; and Nick Vilas '75, a NH-based philanthropist and healthcare entrepreneur, to discuss charitable giving and the importance of giving even small amounts to those in need.

Kaleb Hart '11 photo.



## CLASS NOTES

### 1950s

**Joan Savage '56** (right) received Plymouth State University's Silas H. Pearl Medal for Lifetime Service. A longtime advocate for the University and an active volunteer for the Plymouth State University Alumni Association, Savage was honored in a surprise ceremony June 30. "I've always wanted to give back; I love this campus, and I always have," said Savage. "From the first day I walked in here, I knew I belonged."

**Sheila G. Allard-Arold '59**, a retired elementary school teacher, now works for the Town of Hampstead, NH, registering voters and preparing the check-list.

### 1960s

★ **Class of 1961: Celebrate your 55th reunion June 24–26, 2016**

**Claire P. (Pirozzi) Monier '62** is assistant governor for Rotary District 7870. In July she cruised the Baltic Sea with a stop in Iceland to study volcanoes.

**Richard O. Chandler '63** has been "snowbirding" between NH and Leesburg, FL, and wants to say thank you to his 1963 classmates who have donated to the PTC Class of 1963 Panther Scholarship. "We now have more than \$4,000 on our way to \$25,000, at which time the \$500 annual scholarship will take care of itself."

### 1970s

**John McDuffee Garnsey '73**, retired president for global mountain development with Vail Resorts, received an honorary doctorate of business for his contributions in business and to winter sports and community service during PSU's 2015 Commencement.

**Howard K. Phillips '74** retired in May after 41 years of teaching physical education and coaching in the Miami-Dade public schools. He was honored in 2000 and 2005 by *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*. He and his wife, Sandra, will celebrate their silver wedding anniversary in April, 2016. They are the proud



Joan Savage '56, left, received the Silas H. Pearl Medal from PSU President Sara Jayne Steen.

Bruce Lyndes photo.

parents of Kaitlin and Brian, who are both in college.

**Susan (Monica) Mollohan '75** became actively involved with the Michael J. Fox Foundation after leaving her position as dean of students at Alvirne High School in Hudson, NH. This year marked her seventh year participating in the New England Parkinson's ride in Old Orchard Beach, ME, cycling 50 miles as a member of Team Fox.

**Janet (Hook) Vittum '75** retired in 2014 after teaching elementary and special education in Abington, VA; Narrows, VA; and Norris, TN.

**Larry A. Kontos '77** hosted the 38th gathering of Plymouth State musicians, friends, and family at his home in Campton, NH, in August.

**Paul Hogan '79** celebrated the 2nd year of offering his Specialty Basketball Camp in Concord, NH.

**Karen Raymond '79** is interim principal of Henniker Community School, NH.

### 1980s

**Melanie Phelps '81** was recently hired as finance and human resources director at Mending Hearts in Nashville, TN, a residential treatment community serving women who are dealing with substance abuse and homelessness.

**Jeffrey Levinson '83**, an attorney, rejoined the Hartford Financial Services

## PSU Welcomes New Annual Giving Director

In August, Amy Woods was selected to lead Plymouth State's annual giving efforts, taking up the reins from former director Sam Wisel '12 who has joined the University's major gifts team.

Woods comes to Plymouth State from Holderness School, an independent boarding and day school in New Hampshire, where she served as the director of parent programs. During her 13 years at Holderness School, Woods focused on building leadership and parent giving opportunities through the school's annual giving program.

"I've already heard from many alumni that they value their Plymouth State education and want to help future generations of students experience all that PSU has to offer," says Woods. "Annual giving is critical to PSU—the University is a better place because of committed alumni who make a point of giving back and getting involved."

Woods is a graduate of Gettysburg College, where she received a degree in psychology and was a member of the women's varsity lacrosse team.

(See the giving envelope in this magazine for an infographic about last year's fundraising results).

Kaleb Hart '11 photo.



Group, Inc., where he serves as the home office consultant in the major case unit—liability. Levinson continues to play rugby, and remains active in PSU's Boston Business Forum alumni group, and is a founding member and a mentor in PSU's Alumni Mentoring Program.

**James Adams '84** is senior vice president/senior regional business advisor at Enterprise Bank in Leominster, MA.

**Robin A. Peringer '84** is an art educator at Nashua High School South. Her son, **Benjamin Levesque**, graduated from PSU in 2014. Peringer says, "I could not be happier. Still the best education ever!"

**Richard A. Coutermarsh '85** (right) is the newly elected 46th Commander General of the Military Order of Foreign Wars of the United States.



Richard A. Coutermarsh '85 receives the Military Order of Foreign Wars' official colors from the outgoing commander general at the change of command ceremony, May 2, 2015.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Dorothy L. (Berry) Carter '39**, August 1, 2015, Bristol, CT  
**Davina (Croall) Dana '41**, May 2, 2014, Etna, NH  
**Winnifred D. Bassett '44**, April 29, 2015, Boscawen, NH  
**Laura (Pike) DeGoosh '44**, August 28, 2015, Merrimack, NH  
**Joyce (Breck) Young '44**, July 9, 2015, Lebanon, NH  
**Ruth (Dolby) Young '44**, July 7, 2015, Rumney, NH  
**Dorothy (Goode) Kaffel '52**, April 22, 2015, Manchester, NH  
**George A. Corrette II '58**, May 10, 2015, Bristol, NH  
**Paul J. Breckell '64**, April 2, 2015, Burlington, MA  
**Lewis "Art" Parissi '66**, September 25, 2015, Deland, Florida  
**Gail E. (Heffernan) White '66**, May 12, 2015, Exeter, NH  
**Thalia F. (Vesely) Christiansen '69**, April 6, 2015, Plymouth, NH  
**Walter P. Sullivan '69, '74G**, May 3, 2015, Plymouth, NH  
**James T. Day '70**, April 19, 2015, Cape Coral, FL  
**Kevin J. Barlow '71G**, August 23, 2015, Lebanon, NH  
**Leola M. (Blackwood) Lightowler '73G**, June 8, 2015, Walnut Creek, CA  
**John A. Lister '76**, August 13, 2015, Elk Grove Village, IL  
**John J. Bilodeau '77**, September 9, 2015, Amesbury, MA  
**Peter V. Smith '77**, June 29, 2015, Wells, ME  
**Michelle C. (Lesueur) Dirksen '78**, May 3, 2015, East Sandwich, MA  
**Jan (Wernersbach) Smith '78**, April 3, 2015, New Hampton, NH  
**Richard Vensel '91G**, April 4, 2015, Carlisle, PA  
**Amy S. Dutton '92**, May 22, 2015, Concord, NH  
**Terry E. G. Joyce '95**, May 12, 2015, Thornton, NH  
**Jonathan J. Curry '96**, June 6, 2015, Burlington, VT  
**Terry L. Henry '96G**, August 14, 2015, Keene, NH  
**Brian A. Linthwaite '97G**, April 29, 2015, Conway, NH  
**Larry A. Niskala '97**, September 7, 2015, Nashua, NH  
**Timothy L. Conroy '00**, June 1, 2015, Hanover, NH  
**Vladimir Vascak '04G**, September 2, 2015, Campton, NH  
**Elizabeth Shortle '10G**, July 6, 2015, Milton Mills, NH

### Faculty, Staff, and Friends

**Ravida K. Preston**, April 10, 2015, Bethesda, MD  
**Sylvia R. Horgan**, April 23, 2015, Thornton, NH  
**Sarah Gorman (Lindwall) Dalzell**, April 25, 2015, Boston, MA  
**Margaret E. (Kelliher) Richards**, April 29, 2015, Pawcatuck, CT  
**Gregory Grappone**, May 1, 2015, Seattle, WA  
**Bruce Heald**, May 2, 2015, Laconia, NH  
**John P. Chandler**, May 18, 2015, Meredith, NH  
**David A. Beronä**, May 25, 2015, Yellow Springs, OH  
**George T. Gilmore Jr.**, June 7, 2015, Baltimore, MD  
**Bruce R. Poulton**, June 19, 2015, Raleigh, NC  
**William J. Farrell**, July 8, 2015, Manchester, NH  
**Michele Pruyn**, July 17, 2015, Plymouth, NH  
**Constance Durand**, July 19, 2015, Franklin, NH  
**Phyllis Bennett**, July 21, 2015, Durham, NH  
**Vernon L. Ingraham**, August 12, 2015, Wareham, MA  
**James Aguiar**, August 13, 2015, Campton, NH

Visit [plymouth.edu/magazine/alumni-green](http://plymouth.edu/magazine/alumni-green) for a complete listing.

**Jeffery Hubbard '85** is New England regional president of First Niagara Financial Group, Inc., New Haven, CT.

**Laura M. Sandillo '86** (right) is international programming/production manager for the Golf Channel. She co-created the original program, *Altered Course: Montego Bay*, which premiered in June.

**Daniel M. Rosenfield '88** is varsity basketball coach for the Fulton School, a private college preparatory school in Heath, TX.

**Elizabeth B. Smith '89** completed an online degree program in hotel restaurant management. She volunteers for the University of Virginia health system in the hospital supply division.

## 1990s

**Megan J. Foley '90** is an instructor at East Los Angeles College. She is completing her DMA in Music Education from Boston University. Her research is in identity negotiation among women band directors at the university level. (See *Exchanging Vows* for more news.)

**Scott M. Lemek '91** is Hyundai Capital America regional manager for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. He and his wife of 12 years recently moved back to their family home in Covington, LA. He has been cancer free for seven years.

**Paul M. Jenkins '92** is area clinic manager for Hanger Orthopedic Group in NH. As a prosthetist, he designs artificial limbs for patients, including veterans, who have suffered limb loss. In 2014 he was one of only nine people in the US to achieve fellowship in the American Academy of Orthotics and Prosthetics. Fourteen years ago he and **James Frazier '92**, started Ride for Hope, Ride for Life, a multi-day bicycling fundraising event for childhood cancer at Children's Hospital in Boston. To date, they have raised more than \$84,000.

**Rick Brenner '94** is the NH Fisher Cats president and CEO. He delivered PSU's 2015 Commencement address and received the Granite State Award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to New Hampshire.

Laura M. Sandillo '86



**Jeff S. Bourgeois '95** is enrolled in the leadership studies PhD program at the University of San Diego, CA. His area of specialization is in higher education, and his research focuses on leadership development in students who participate in transnational experiences.

**Matthew M. Friedman '95** is the football coach at Skowhegan Area High School in Skowhegan, ME.

**Rebecca M. Sanborn '95** was promoted to TD Bank store manager at the New Boston location.

**Kimberly A. (Douglas) French '96G** is director of guidance at Blue Mountain Union School in Wells River, VT.

**Steve Maguire '97** teaches the only ornithology course offered at a public high school in the United States, at Scituate High School, MA.

**Kelly J. Pinney-Michaud '97** is assistant director of administrative financial services at Colby College in Waterville, ME.

**Stewart K. Shapley '97** (*opposite page*) self-published a novel called *The Bliss Malaises*.

**Frederick Campagna '99** is a senior meteorologist with WTNH TV in New Haven, CT. He was the first Southern New England meteorologist to earn the Certified Broadcast Meteorologist distinction from the American Meteorological Society.

**Kelly A. Collins '99** (*opposite page*) is principal of Kearsarge Regional Elementary School in New London, NH.

## 2000s

**Heather Plater '00** is athletic director for Minuteman High School in Lexington, MA.



Stewart K. Shapley '97



Kelly A. Collins '99



Noah Blocker-Glynn '08

Left: Ashley Thompson '02 and husband Warrick Dowsett, owners of Wozz! Kitchen Creations, Creative & Innovative Specialty Foods

**Shannon Schlumberger '01** is receptionist and administrative assistant at Sauereisen Inc., a construction manufacturer in Pittsburgh, PA.

**Robert Goldstein '02** is CEO and co-founder of Single Digits, Inc. in Bedford, NH. He was a finalist for the 2015 NH High Tech Council Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

**Kristina Saalfrank '02** is vice president of risk management at Northeast Credit Union. In her previous role, she was a bank examiner with the State of NH Banking Department.

**Ashley M. Thompson '02** (*above center*), along with her husband, a professional chef, started a specialty foods company called Wozz! Kitchen Creations, in 2010. Wozz! has been nominated for five sofi (specialty outstanding food innovation) Awards and referred to by *Oprah* magazine as the "Oscars of Specialty Food." Their products have been featured in *Women's Health* Magazine, *Gourmet Retailer*, WMUR, the *Boston Globe*, and *Advertising Age*, among other nationally recognized publications.

**Dan Craig '03** is head coach of the Sioux Falls (SD) Skyforce, a Miami Heat affiliate.

**Jeff Furlone '03G**, PSU's dean of students, was recognized by two agencies for developing and implementing initiatives with a local crisis services

agency, Voices Against Violence (Voices). From Voices, Furlone received the Beverly Seavey Award, which is given each year to an outstanding community member who has "gone above and beyond" to help end domestic violence. Furlone also received the Victims' Rights Day Award from the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

**Rachel Gasowski '03** is Durham, NH's parks and recreation director.

**Amanda L. Bacon '04** is director of marketing for Palmer Gas Ermer Oil, one of the largest energy companies in the state of NH.

**Timothy G. Carrigan '04** programmed the first annual Capitol Hill (DC) Maker Faire in June. His agency, Institute of Museum and Library Services, partnered with the Congressional Maker Caucus, Make Media, and Nation of Makers on this event, which kicked off President Obama's first annual National Week of Making.

**Michael Mansson '04** is construction manager for Ziff Properties, Inc., in Mount Pleasant, SC.

**Douglas W. Martin '04** is a senior associate at Colliers International Commercial Real Estate in Manchester, NH.

**Erica J. Rodrigues '04** is senior visual designer at Intuit in Cambridge, MA.

**Anthony Sperazzo '04, '10G, '15CAGS** is principal of Gilford High School in NH. (*See Exchanging Vows for more news.*)

**Nicole Titmas '06G** is athletic trainer for the US Women's Rugby Team, which won silver at the Pan American Games and qualified for the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

★ Read more about Nicole Titmas in the next issue.

**Jeremy Foskitt, '07** is human resource administrator at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando, FL. Jeremy has worked at UCF since 2009 in housing and residence life as an area coordinator of a 1,000-bed first-year residential community. He is earning his second master's degree in business administration at UCF.

**Ivy Page '07** read from her collections of poetry during a writers' night at the Effingham Public Library, NH.

**Rob Powers '07** is a Goethe Institut Transatlantic Outreach Fellow, studying modern Germany to create lesson plans and train American teachers on lesson resources.

**Noah Blocker-Glynn '08** (*above right*) is director of the Hartt School Community Division (CT), the non-credit performing arts education program of the University of Hartford's conservatory. The program hosts

## CLASS NOTES

more than 2,800 students of all ages and 200 faculty members.

**Laurel M. Briere '08** is a wealth management associate at MillRiver Wealth Management in Laconia, NH.

**Ryan J. Dobens '08** completed his law degree at Northeastern University School of Law in May 2015. He is part of the mergers and acquisitions tax group at PricewaterhouseCoopers' Washington National Tax Services in Washington, DC.

**Jaime Guido '08** is a sales account executive at Hearst Television's ABC affiliate, WCVB Boston.

**Zachary L. Friedline '09** is head preparator at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles, CA. (*See New Arrivals for more news.*)

**Carol A. Phillips '09** is owner of Health Design, where she serves as health coach, author, speaker, and consultant. Phillips' book, *52 Simple Ways to Health*, was a finalist in the 2015 International Book Awards.

**Ian Smith '09G** is principal of Lebanon High School, NH.

## 2010s

**Jane E. Skantze '10** is program coordinator for the International Institute of New England in NH, which assists immigrants, refugees, and other vulnerable populations living in New England.

**John P. East '11** is manager of innovation at Staples, Inc. He leads all efforts related to the small-business subscription program he created, which accounts for just over \$150 million in sales in its second year.

**Erin Minihan '11** is an officer in the Hooksett (NH) Police Department.

**Andrew J. Pinard '11** presented *Discovering Magic \*AT NIGHT\** as part of the 2015 Late Night Summer Series at the Player's Ring in Portsmouth, NH.

**Mitchell Shortell '11** is a project controls specialist at Zubatkin Owner Representation, a real estate development and construction consulting firm in New York City.





# Homecoming & Family Celebration and Reunion Weekend 2015

Dearborn Golf Classic. Alumni Recognition Awards. A Panther Athletics sweep. The return of tailgating. Check out photos from this year's Homecoming & Family Celebration and Alumni Reunion Weekend and save the date for 2016! We look forward to seeing you on September 23-25, 2016.



Classes ending in '1 and '6: Your 2016 Plymouth State reunion needs U!

Get involved!  
[go.plymouth.edu/alumni-volunteer](http://go.plymouth.edu/alumni-volunteer)







Left: Tustin (in black hijab) with Afghan women on a demonstration farm in Mehtar Lam, Laghman Province, the capital of Afghanistan.

Far left: Carolee "Jessie" Tustin graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science in Social Work in 2015.

Kaleb Hart '11 photo.

## From Soldier to Veteran: A Passion for Service

**F**ROM THE AGE OF 17, when she signed up for the Army National Guard's basic training, Jessie Tustin '15 has lived the Guard's motto: "Always Ready. Always There." Today, retired after nearly two decades of military service, Tustin continues to serve.

### Fighting poppies with saffron

Poppies may be Afghanistan's top cash crop, but Sergeant First Class Carolee "Jessie" Tustin was determined to help Afghan farmers find an alternative to the illegal production of opium.

During a 2009–10 tour of duty in Afghanistan, Tustin worked

with local and federal organizations to develop programs that provided women with the skills to process saffron and grow mushrooms: valuable crops that could replace opium with an equivalent value in the marketplace.

"Our goal was to establish a rapport while respecting the culture," Tustin says. Afghans themselves would ultimately need to administer the programs, so faculty were recruited from Kabul University to teach the workers how to grow and process the crops. "It was Afghans training Afghans," she says. "We were just overseeing and

making sure it was happening. That was pretty cool."

Still, political, religious, environmental, and economic concerns made her task onerous. Opium production, usually overseen by the Taliban, supports farmers' livelihoods and the national economy, so the eradication or replacement of poppy plants is controversial. "I had a lot of people telling me that I wasn't going to be able to do what I did," says Tustin. "But I ended up having some amazing results and finding a niche for myself in coordinating and collaborating with people. I didn't recognize that what I was doing in Afghanistan was social work until somebody pointed it out to me later," she says with a laugh. "I loved it."

### Serving, post-service

During her 19 years of service in the Guard, Tustin found creative ways to use her skills to make life better for the communities in which she worked. After an autoimmune disease caused by environmental exposure forced her to take medical retirement in 2013, she was ready to embark on a new adventure. Social work seemed a natural next step.

Over the years, Tustin has watched military friends in the

LGBTQ community struggle to have their post-service needs met. Thanks to the legacy of the long-standing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, accurate statistics are hard to come by about the number and needs of LGBT service members who have accessed Veterans Affairs for support and health care after their military service. But, as Tustin says, "There's a need, a gap there right now. My goal is to work individually with veterans to help them adjust to civilian life, especially those in the LGBTQ community. I also want to work on a macro level to bring together a support network for veterans who have been treated differently in the service because of their sexual orientation or the fact that they're transgender."

### Always ready. Always there.

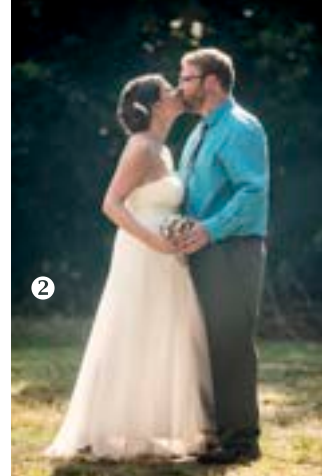
In her mission to help underserved populations be treated with dignity and respect, Tustin's commitment to the code of the National Guard endures. "I may not be in the military anymore, but I will always be a soldier," she says. "You want to believe there's some sort of trickle-down effect to all the big social changes happening today, but you really have to attack it from both ends. It's slow. But eventually it will happen."

■ Emilie Coulter

## CLASS NOTES



Above: Erin Norris '12, far right, and wash team members at Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, Inc., clean a bald eagle contaminated by dried dirt and pond residue.



**Amberlee M. Barbagallo '12** is executive assistant to NH Governor Maggie Hassan.

**Erin P. Croce '12** is senior group ticket sales account manager for the Orlando Solar Bears, a professional ice hockey team in Orlando, FL.

**Sarah Hausman '12** will present at the National Council of Teachers of English annual convention in Minneapolis, MN, in November 2015. She is a teacher at the John Fuller School in North Conway, NH.

**Erin N. Norris '12** (*above*) is oil programs coordinator at Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, Inc., in Newark, DE.

**Britt N. Treichel '12** is a teacher of English and art at Cocheco Arts and Technology Academy in Dover, NH.

**David Falkenham '13G** is Paul Smith's College's forest manager. He is working on a new holistic forest management program for the college.

**Olivia Q. Rounds '13** is a sales associate with the creative, marketing, and advertising firm PSE Agency, whose main client is the Providence Bruins. Rounds provides opportunities for families and sponsors to support the AHL affiliate of the Boston Bruins in a family-friendly atmosphere.

**Kelsey Donnelly '14** received the 2015 Distinguished Operating Staff Award from PSU for exemplifying the spirit and values of the institution.

**Jeremy Normington-Slay '14G** is president of Mercy Medical Center in Oshkosh, WI.

**Megan O'Gara '14** has returned to PSU as a resident director. She leads a group of community advisors and serves as a resource to first-year students in Geneva Smith Residence Hall.

**Kathleen Patenaude '14G** is chair and director of the Department of Nursing at PSU.

**Michael Freitag '15** works with the industrial services group at NAI Hiffman, a commercial real estate firm in Chicago, IL.

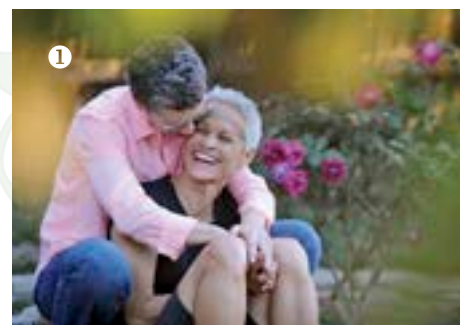
**Chad Johansen '15** owns a smart-phone repair business, NH iPhone Repair. In addition to a storefront in Bedford, NH, Johansen rents a space in the Enterprise Center at Plymouth.

**Sean McGlynn '15** is the university relations New England representative at CIS Abroad, a company specializing in study abroad opportunities for college students.

**Kimberly McLaughlin '15** works for Leone, McDonnell & Roberts Professional Association, a public accounting firm in Dover, NH.

**Nicholas O'Hagan '15** works in the sales department at Lennox Industries in Wilmington, MA.

**Amanda Ray '15** lives in Arizona and is working as an inside sales representative for DHL. ♦



1 Megan Foley '90, left, and Kaelyn Silva

5 Kalie Jowders '10, Nick Jowders '09, Gretchen Fritch '10, Katie Sunderland '10, Sarah Bryant '09, Greg Harper '09, Kerry D'Ambrose '10, Samantha Naas '09, Chris Welch '09, John Pogorzelski '09, Mike Hart '08, Brett Sanborn '08, John DeMarco '09, Jeff Dockx '88

## EXCHANGING VOWS

**Shirley J. Burns '75** and **Carolyn Jordan**, August 22, 2015

**Michael Moffett '78, '89G** and **Beth Boardman**, May 15, 2015

**Megan J. Foley '90** and **Kaelyn Silva**, July, 24, 2014 1

**Darrell Oczechowski '08** and **Emily Yelle**, August 8, 2015

**Crystal A. (Lavoie) Bonin '04** and **Matthew B. Bonin '05**, July 11, 2013 2

**Anthony Sperazzo '04, '10G, '15CAGS** and **Alicia Germani**, April 18, 2015 3

**Monica (Wiley) Brigham '10, '13G** and **Justin Brigham '09, '13G**, June 6, 2015 4

**Kalie E. (Judd) Jowders '10** and **Nicholas Jowders '09**, July 10, 2015 5

**Kevin Frost '12** and **Elizabeth (Bauer) Frost '12**, August 1, 2015

**Mark R. Ragonese '12** and **Aimee E. Hamel**, September 6, 2014

## NEW ARRIVALS

**Jessica (Cyr) DeNuzzio '06** and **Alan DeNuzzio**: son, Grant, April 28, 2015

**Zachary L. Friedline '09** and **Amber Friedline**: son, Luke, December 12, 2014



# To Last a Lifetime

For Nancy Blakney Gravina '82, it began with a campus tour and Frisbee on the Mary Lyon lawn. "In my college search I had been told, 'You'll know it when you see it.' That moment in front of Mary Lyon cemented Plymouth State for me and ultimately made me who I am today."

For Tom Gravina '81, it was in the lobby of Belknap Hall. "I remember it as if it was yesterday. Nancy and I were introduced by a mutual friend and we've been together ever since."

What lasts a lifetime? Lessons learned from teammates. Strong friendships. Memories of tubing the Pemi. The feeling that comes from making a difference in the lives of others.

The Gravinas recently made a pledge to support PSU's new ALLWell North academic and athletic complex. The couple notes, "We hope our gift will inspire other alumni to give back and that more students will choose PSU for the experience of a lifetime."

★ To learn how you can support academic and athletic programming in ALLWell North, contact John Scheinman at [jscheinman@plymouth.edu](mailto:jscheinman@plymouth.edu) or (603) 535-2805.



Stacy Lyle photo.



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## GREEK ALUMNI REUNION 2016

**June 24-26, 2016**

Rally your brothers and sisters, break out your letters, and get ready to connect with Plymouth State Greeks from across the generations! More than 300 Greeks returned home to Plymouth State for the 2014 reunion. Psi Beta Gamma won the coveted Panther trophy for most registered members. Who will win this year?

Don't miss out on this chance to reconnect with the friends who made your Plymouth State experience so memorable.

**Want to get involved? Let us know at [go.plymouth.edu/alumni-volunteer](http://go.plymouth.edu/alumni-volunteer).**



**No matter the letter, Greeks stick together!**