

SPRING 2025

MOREOVER

Thomas More University





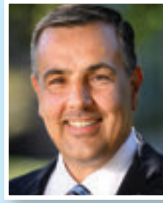
SUNRISE ON CAMPUS

A gorgeous view from the Executive Classroom in the Academic Center as the sun peaks over the horizon to start a new day.



THOMAS MORE
UNIVERSITY

Make It **More.**



As I turn through the pages of this edition of *Moreover*, I reflect on the remarkable journey of growth and transformation that continues to define the second century of Thomas More University. This issue is brimming with stories that exemplify the spirit of Thomas More – our commitment to academic excellence, the infusion of our Catholic identity and mission into all aspects of what we do, and our steadfast dedication to providing an education that makes an impact for a lifetime.

When we launched our Strategic Plan—*Lighting the Way*, we boldly envisioned a future for Thomas More as the premier Catholic Liberal Arts University of the region. We are now making progress on that vision as we deepen our connections within the Diocese of Covington, throughout the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati area, and the wider region. Our recent affiliation with Covington Latin School represents a significant milestone, allowing Thomas More to enhance academic opportunities, strengthen Catholic educational values, and secure a thriving future for generations of students. The newly-established Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education also enhances these efforts through exceptional programming and meaningful engagement opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the wider community to explore.

As a Catholic Liberal Arts University, we place great importance on how we prepare students for the world beyond our campus. We are proud to share how our students are excelling across diverse disciplines – from the creative arts to business and economics, to biology and STEM fields, and service and ministry. Their successes demonstrate not only their passion and dedication, but also the power of a Thomas More education in shaping the compassionate leaders and problem-solvers of tomorrow. We also recognize that the needs of students are constantly evolving, and so we reaffirm our commitment to being a student-ready campus – adapting our teaching methods, resources, and support systems to meet the requirements of students today.

We have immense pride in our alumni, who carry an impact far beyond our campus in Northern Kentucky. Their contributions enrich the communities in which they live and serve, and they continue to be our most powerful ambassadors and champions of success. It is always inspiring to witness the many ways our graduates carry forward what they have learned at Thomas More to make a tangible difference in the world.

As we celebrate the stories of progress and promise throughout this publication, I extend my gratitude to you – our alumni, families, supporters, and friends. Your unwavering support and involvement empower us to further our mission of educating students in the Catholic intellectual tradition, cultivate a love of lifelong learning, and foster the skills needed to be morally engaged citizens of the world.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey. Together, we look forward to the future with faith, confidence, and a shared commitment to the transformative power of Catholic higher education.

God bless, and go Saints!

Joseph L. Chillo, LP.D.
President



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Editor: Judy Crist

Designer: Judy Crist

Contributing Writers: Judy Crist, Kristen Gallagher,
Kendra Yurt '24

Guest Writers: Tom Brady, Angelo Centeno,
Kim Haverkos, Ph.D., Juan Pablo Vilagrana Francisco,
Judy Harris '69, Kyle Isaack, Ysabel Ostigin,
John D. Rudnick Jr., Ed.D., Isabella Schultz

Photography: Bruce Crippen, Judy Crist,
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SEND COMMENTS, STORY IDEAS, OR LETTERS TO:

Moreover - Thomas More University

333 Thomas More Parkway

Crestview Hills, KY 41017-3495

Phone: 859.344.3309

Email: moreover@thomasmore.edu

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Bishop John Iffert and President Joe Chillo on the Covington Latin School (CLS) campus. The Diocese and University entered into an affiliation making CLS part of Thomas More. Story on **page 7**.



@ThomasMoreKY



Our place in the world

Becoming the premier Catholic university in the region

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR | PHOTOS PROVIDED

Set forth by the Strategic Plan—Lighting the Way, Thomas More now works to achieve a bold vision to become the premier Catholic liberal arts university in the region. The University continues to achieve progress in three key areas that guide this vision: student success, academic excellence and innovation, and responsible stewardship.

Delivering on the promise to provide a high-quality, Catholic liberal arts education within a vibrant, intellectual community, the University established the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education (the Center) in the 2023-24 academic year. The Center adds new dimensions to the University's partnerships and engagement within Northern Kentucky while enhancing its

presence and outreach on a regional level.

Above: President Joe Chillo talks with students outside the Academic Center.

Inaugural director of the Center, Hannah Keegan, set the tone for what needs to be accomplished through distinctive programming and leadership in Catholic higher education. On campus, the Center strengthens the University's capacity to engage people of all faiths to deepen their relationship with God and pursue a journey of discovery for one's own God-given talents. Providing an the umbrella for both Campus Ministry and Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty, the Center creates an additional layer of support for the efforts of these two

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MOREOVER [Spring 2025]



Inaugural year: The Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR | PHOTO PROVIDED

As part of the University's plan to be the premier Catholic liberal arts university in the region, the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education (the Center) was established and in early 2024, Hannah Keegan expanded her role as assistant professor of theology at Thomas More to become the inaugural director. With a mission of cultivating an authentic Catholic culture at the University, the Center serves as a catalyst for transformative faith experiences, intentional mission integration and creative Catholic educational programs on campus and in the wider community. In this Q&A Keegan speaks about first year successes and plans for year two.

What were your top priorities since being named director?

My first priority was to understand better who the people are who make up this great community; to understand the history of the University, which is rich and long in 100 years. Also, to understand who the people are that are making big contributions in all areas. The goal of the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education is to integrate Catholic identity into all aspects of campus. To do that, I have to understand and better know all aspects of campus. The role of the Center is to valorize and bring to life more the things that are already good, true, and beautiful around the University, and to integrate all of the things that are already fruitful and bearing fruit and giving life to our community, to integrate them into our mission more and more to be a Catholic institution in the Diocese of Covington and for the wider region.

What do you want current and future students to know?

I want them to know that I want their involvement and contributions because it's at the service of the University, and the University exists to serve the students, their questions, their passions, their skepticisms. Their contributions are essential for the Center to be useful for them and in order to serve them, I need to know them more. I'm really interested in having the Center be a place of academic rigor where we think through deep questions about life and faith, but also it has more than an academic component. It has a community component, or in that regards the community of Thomas More and the wider community. I think there are different tiers that the Center is operating in, the local reality of the faculty, staff and students, the wider reality of the diocese, and the culture at large. Regarding students, I'm super interested in what they're

interested in. I want to know what they're passionate about and the more things I discover that they're passionate about, the more I can show how their passion is relevant to the passion of the Church, which is for their destiny, for their ultimate horizon and happiness.

What are some events that you have planned for 2025?

The ideas we have for the 2025 year are to do more interdisciplinary initiatives. I really have a heart for bringing together departments – to have events on campus with students from different areas of study to come together for a common conversation. Some examples from 2024 are the Massimo Robbeto event on the James Webb Space Telescope that happened in the spring. This event brought together the physics department and also the theology department, but then other students as well. We had the papal astronomer come and that was a beautiful event bringing together the science and humanities a little bit more. We had a Flannery O'Connor film screening that drew together two different pieces of the humanities. For 2025, we hope to do more of this and focus on a broader conception of sustainability that has in mind what Pope Francis calls integral ecology, the whole person, and our personal involvement with all of creation. We'd like to have some events on different social topics like immigration.

The Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty, which is a facet of the Center, has a whole series of Pope Saint John Paul II events for spring 2025, and one event that we plan to do for the Center is on ecumenism, the dialogue between the different denominations of Christianity in the Catholic Church and what does it mean that we all recognize in our brothers and sisters in Christ? What is the unity among all of the faithful Catholics and Protestants? Pope Saint John Paul II wrote a great encyclical on ecumenism. We would like to contribute to that conversation as well.

The goals of the Center, for the Thomas More community, for me, are to bring people into conversation from different pockets and different questions, to have everyone have a seat at the table to make a contribution.

[MOREOVER](#)

To read more or watch this interview and find out more about Keegan, visit tmuky.us/keegan.

Above: From left Campus Minister Josh Ostertag, Director for the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education Hannah Keegan, Director for Campus Ministry Andrew Cole, and Senior Vice President for Mission and University Advancement Kevin Reynolds, Ed.D.

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vibrant campus programs to provide dialogue surrounding faith and opportunities for students to deepen their relationship with God.

In an effort to strengthen diocesan bonds and provide seamless pathways to a Catholic liberal arts higher education to high schools in the region, the University adopted two new approaches. In fall 2024, Thomas More announced a direct admission partnership with Notre Dame Academy, which allows qualified graduates to bypass the traditional admissions process. In March 2025, the University went a step further and entered into an affiliation with Covington Latin School, making this institution for gifted learners a part of the Thomas More community.

Reinforcing a commitment to student success, the University is intentional as it adapts to the needs of modern students with a renewed focus on being a student-ready campus. From enhancements to the first-year experience, to investing in resources that promote student wellbeing, Thomas More strives to offer a holistic experience where all aspects of the person – mind, body, and spirit – thrive.

The University has long been characterized by rigorous, values-based academic programs and co-curricular activities. As Thomas More propels itself into its second century through innovation and agility, undergraduate and graduate programs have expanded for current and future students to explore. Additionally, amid the emerging prominence of artificial intelligence (AI), the University regularly seeks discourse on the use of AI from faculty, staff, and students as it examines implications

OUR PLACE CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Right: Professor Larry Byerly works one-on-one with a student in the finance lab.

The current student-to-faculty ratio is 15-to-1.



Building a civilization of love - opening a dialogue across campus

As a celebration of the 20-year anniversary of the death of Pope St. John Paul II, the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education hosted a slate of programs for students, alumni, and the community during the spring 2025 semester that reflected on the Pope's life, teachings, and momentous impact on the life of the Church. The 26-year pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II makes him a figure that looms large in the minds and hearts of millennial and older Catholics. However, many of Thomas More's students were yet to be born when he died in 2005. "Pope St. John Paul II's story is incredible and inspiring. This is an exciting moment to share that story with the next generation that may not be as familiar with him," says Caitlyn Dwyer, assistant professor of theology.

Under the umbrella of the Center, the Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty hosted two programs, "Pope St. John Paul II and Religious

Liberty" and "John Paul the Great: Seven Things Every Catholic Should Know." The first program featured renowned Catholic intellectual George Weigel who is the author of a two-part biography on Pope St. John Paul II, "Witness to Hope" (1999), and its sequel, "The End and the Beginning" (2010). The second event featured Paul Kengor, Ph.D., executive director for the Institute for Faith and Freedom at Grove City College in Pennsylvania. Kengor's event explored why Pope St. John Paul II has become widely regarded as "the Great." Links to video of both events is available at thomasmore.edu/religiousliberty.

An event on ecumenism was also held featuring Bishop John Iffert in a dialogue with Nathan Smith, director of ecumenism at Glenmary Home Missioners, and Joshua Lenon, pastor at a non-denominational church in Cincinnati. "We have a large number of non-Catholic Christians on campus," says Hannah

Keegan, director of the Center. "I thought it would be beautiful to have an event that explored John Paul II's document on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint* (That They May Be One). The goal is to foster dialogue and unity among Christians on campus. Christ can be known to others by our unity, and the more we live that unity, the more we glorify God."

Several events also reflected on Pope St. John Paul II's impact on the arts, including a lunchtime discussion led by Theatre Director Phillip Webster, and a night of pizza and singing for students. "I have always been struck by Fyodor Dostoevsky's quote that 'Beauty will save the world.' John Paul II had a great sensitivity to beauty and the understanding that beauty attracts the human heart and draws people to the Truth. Not everyone is going to read an encyclical, but beauty can be an invitation to a deeper understanding," Keegan says.

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"The cornerstone of the civilization of love is recognition of the value of the human person and, concretely, of all human beings."

Pope St. John Paul II



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within the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, as well as the ethical ramifications posed on a global scale.

Through responsible stewardship, Thomas More invests in facilities and resources, including the significant addition of the state-of-the-art, 34,000 square-foot Academic Center at the heart of campus which opened in summer 2024. Home to the Robert W. Plaster College of Business, the Zembrodt Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education, the Academic Center has quickly become a flagship facility on campus, enhancing both the academic experience and the capacity for students, faculty, alumni, and the wider community to gather for discussion, debate, and reflection.

Saints Athletics also achieves upward momentum, as the University nears completion of its third year of provisional status within NCAA Division II. Paralleling investments in renovations and enhancements of athletic facilities, the transition to Division II underscores the University's commitment to excellence both on and off the field of competition and the weight of Saints Athletics on the reputation and prestige of the University.

Through its students and alumni, the impact of a Thomas More education is evident. Thomas More doesn't just award degrees, it graduates lifelong learners who have an awareness of the ethical dimension of their work and wish to contribute meaningfully to the world. They are leaders who strive to achieve not only personal success, but success for the benefit of others and the good of society. They take all that Thomas More has to offer and Make it More.

MOREOVER

Left: Students heading to class walk under the Mary, Seat of Wisdom bell tower.

Effective in 2025, NDA graduates enter Thomas More via Direct Admit

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR | PHOTO PROVIDED

Beginning with the class of 2025, Notre Dame Academy (NDA) graduates have the option to bypass the regular admissions process and are directly admitted to Thomas More University. Leadership from Thomas More and NDA met on Sept. 12, 2024, Founders Day for the University, to sign the historic agreement, the first partnership of its kind for an all-girls Catholic high school in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

On Founders Day, the Thomas More community recognizes the institution's beginnings in 1921, when it was founded to train Catholic school teachers and provide a college education for young women. Then known as Villa Madonna College, Thomas More was designated a co-educational institution in 1945.

Thomas More University and the Sisters of Notre Dame hold close ties for over a century, with the Sisters of Notre Dame, joined by the Congregation of Divine Providence and the Benedictine Sisters, being educational partners and co-trustees of the University since 1929. NDA is a community of lifelong learners sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame and the only single-gender Catholic high school for young women in Northern Kentucky and in the Diocese of Covington. "This partnership strengthens the bonds between our two historic institutions, while honoring our shared legacy and the values of a Catholic, faith-based education. This announcement expands the work of Thomas More University to reduce barriers and increase access to Catholic higher education," says President Joe Chillo.

In addition to direct admission, Thomas More will be the preferred dual credit institution for NDA. Through this program, students at the Academy can enroll in college courses at a reduced rate and get a head start on their college degree. Courses taken through dual credit can be applied to a degree at the University or transferred to another institution. Thomas More's School of Education will also provide professional development opportunities each year for faculty and staff of NDA.

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Front row: Thomas More University President Joseph L. Chillo, L.P.D. (left) and Notre Dame Academy Interim President and Chief Communications Officer Jane Kleier.

The Thomas More community welcomes Covington Latin School

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR
PHOTO PROVIDED

On March 10, 2025, the announcement of an affiliation with Covington Latin School (CLS) was shared with the community following a unanimous vote of the board of trustees giving final approval for the school to become a part of the university. “This is a transformative step forward for Catholic education in Northern Kentucky,” says President Joe Chillo. “The affiliation unites the academic rigor and Catholic classical education Covington Latin School is known for with the resources of the University to enrich the mission and academic programs of Covington Latin and secure a thriving future for generations of students.”

The announcement follows a comprehensive, year-long assessment to define the benefits and processes of affiliation. The assessment was conducted by a team that includes members of the diocesan Curia and university leadership. Through townhall-style forums, surveys of alumni, parents, teachers and staff, and one-on-one meetings with stakeholders, the team utilized feedback from the CLS community to create a strategic vision for the school as part of the university. “True to its mission as a classical Catholic school for gifted learners, for over 100 years Covington Latin School has formed students to engage with the world thoughtfully and critically, fostering a sense of responsibility to contribute positively to society and the Church,” says Bishop John Iffert. “I am truly grateful to the Thomas More University Board of Trustees for its support of the affiliation and to Dr. Chillo and his team for continuing the Covington Latin School legacy of teaching ‘Goodness, Discipline and Knowledge.’ I am confident that Covington Latin School’s affiliation with Thomas More University will enhance its rigorous academic standards by providing access to advanced resources, faculty expertise, and a broader academic community, while maintaining a deep commitment to the values of the Catholic faith.”

While plans for curriculum are still being fully formed, under the affiliation CLS students will be able to access Thomas More University courses as part of defined pathway programs and dual credit. This integrated approach allows CLS students to begin their college journey early and explore their academic interests. “Knowing the success of university-affiliated schools in the United States, it is exciting for Thomas More to be the first instance of a private, nonprofit university in the Commonwealth to undertake this model,” Chillo says. “It is yet another demonstration of the innovative mindset that is shaping the future of Thomas More University as the regional leader in Catholic higher education.”

Both institutions share close ties and histories. In its early decades as Villa Madonna College, Thomas More was located in close proximity to CLS in Covington, Kentucky, and remains deeply rooted in the Diocese of Covington as one of just 12



Above: President Joe Chillo and Bishop John Iffert wrap up a tour of Covington Latin School in the Chapel.



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diocesan universities in the United States. Thomas More and CLS share a notable network of alumni known for their values-

driven leadership and excellence in their respective fields. Donald Saelinger, M.D., serves as chair of the University Advancement & Outreach Committee of the Thomas More Board of Trustees. Reflecting on this affiliation, he notes, “As an alumnus of both Covington Latin School and Thomas More University, I am excited about the academic and co-curricular opportunities this affiliation poses for Catholic education and for gifted learning in the region. Both institutions were formative in my education and had a tremendous impact on my life and career. This partnership ensures that legacy lives on under one umbrella.”

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A list of responses to frequently asked questions for Covington Latin families is available by visiting, tmuky.us/CLS-FAQ. More information will be released as it becomes available.

Campus Ministry advances the Bishop Foy's Scholars – growing in faith and service

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR

The Bishop Roger J. Foy's Ministry and Service Scholarship is a competitive scholarship program for Catholic students who desire to further their involvement in ministry and service to the community. Scholarship recipients serve as ambassadors for Campus Ministry, attend monthly formation or professional development meetings, and complete at least 20 service hours each semester.

The Bishop Roger J. Foy's Ministry and Service Scholarship program has expanded as the Campus Ministry team has grown with the addition of Josh Ostertag '20 in the role of campus minister. Ostertag helped recruit about 40 Bishop Foy's scholars each of the past two years, growing the current number of scholars to over 100.

"The purpose and vision of the scholarship, was to have a group of the students who are the 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world' on campus, in a sense," Ostertag says. "They are spreading the faith, just by their witness – by their implicit or explicit preaching to their peers. The students go to places that Andrew (Cole) and I are not, that staff and faculty are not, whether that's in the classrooms, sports teams, dorms, or clubs."

In the 2024-25 academic year, a group of Bishop Foy's scholars spearheaded the first off-campus spiritual retreat for students since the COVID19 pandemic. "We had around 10 or 12 students who attended a three-day, two-night retreat. We also had a couple participants from Northern Kentucky University, through their Newman Center, so it was cool to build those connections as well," Ostertag says. The Bishop Foy's scholars have also been connecting with local parishes to work with middle school and high school

religious youth groups. Parish activities that they've become involved with include small group meetings for these youth groups and volunteering for youth retreats.

While the Bishop Foy's Scholars are leaders within Campus Ministry's outreach to internal and external communities, Ostertag emphasizes that Campus Ministry isn't just for the

Catholic students. With a significant population of students who are non-Catholic Christians, many activities are inclusive for students from any faith background. One activity that's grown involvement among these students is a praise and worship music group, which has led the planning for an event each month throughout the 2024-25 academic year. "We have about 10 students who sing, play piano,

play guitar, and various other instruments. There's also a logistical planning team. I think it's been really effective because contemporary Christian music is something that's very accessible to students, specifically Christian students who are outside of the Catholic Tradition," says Ostertag. "A lot of times, I'll get people asking – 'I'm not Catholic, can I come to that?' and so, I'm trying to find some other ways to share that message [that Campus Ministry is for all students]. I think part of what we can do is collaborating with other groups on campus, to help integrate ourselves into the community."

The creation of the Center for Faith, Mission, & Catholic Education has added another dimension to the Bishop Foy's Scholars and Campus Ministry, by offering substantive programming and formation opportunities. Programs the Center sponsors, offer not only relevant content for Bishop Foy's Scholars, but are opportunities for them to engage in hospitality with the wider community and fulfill their service hour requirement.

With the addition of the Center, and the recent growth in the Bishop Foy's Ministry and Service program, Ostertag says he can feel the upward momentum for Campus Ministry on campus: "With the Center starting its programming, it feels like there's a more robust team – a group of people here who are all committed to similar or related things. It does create a good environment."

"What we can do is collaborate with other groups on campus, to help integrate ourselves into the community."

Josh Ostertag, campus minister



Sophomore nursing majors engage with Benedictine Sisters

Sophomore nursing majors spent time with the Benedictine Sisters at St. Walburg Monastery as they started their first clinicals in spring 2025. Students visited the monastery for an observation day as part of their instruction on care for older adults. In addition to helping the Sisters with their breakfasts and morning routines, students were responsible for planning an activity for the group.

One activity quickly rose to the top as a favorite among the Sisters. With some simple props – a 'paddle' created by gluing a popsicle stick to a paper plate and a balloon – the Sisters worked on their range of motion and mobility as they were challenged to keep the balloon from hitting the ground. "I was laughing so hard," says nursing student Litsi Jimenez, who helped lead one of the rounds of the game. "We all had a really great time."

"I went in the middle of the semester, and the Sisters were all asking – 'Who is here today?' They were really eager to get to know us," reflects Harper Kinman. Assistant Professor Ashley Gier, DNP, RN, CMSRN, says she was connected with the opportunity to bring the students to the monastery through alumna Renee Oehler '22, who worked there as a student at Thomas More. "When we went to tour [the monastery], we learned a lot about history and the beginning of Thomas More University," Gier says. "It was really a neat experience for the students and myself to learn our history while also getting to know the Sisters."

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Headlines in campus news



Raisin' Hellbenders on the River conservation concert

Reserve your ticket at tmuky.us/bfsconcert.



Thomas More remains a WSJ/ College Pulse best college

To read the story, visit tmuky.us/25wsjpulse.



Dyslexia Institute introduces Orton-Gillingham training

To learn more, visit tmuky.us/training.



Communication majors compete in Fall Tom Talks

To read the story, visit tmuky.us/24talks.



Congratulations to students who achieved Dean's List status

To view the list, visit tmuky.us/deanslist.



From campus to community: year four of Saints Serve

To read the story, visit tmuky.us/3Bsumaa.



SAINTS SPOTLIGHT

Jonathan Miller '24

SUBMITTED BY
KENDRA YURT '24,
GRADUATE ASSISTANT COMMUNICATIONS

In the summer of 2024, Jonathan Miller traveled to Kenya for an internship exploring the field of genomics in connection to the crop, sorghum. In this Saints Spotlight, Jonathan talks about his experience as a biology major studying the field of ecology, and how he enriched himself by experiencing a new culture while expanding his passion for learning.

Why did you choose Thomas More and what is your major?

JM: I grew up locally, and was looking to go to college locally. I was looking for somewhere with a good biology program, because that's my field of study. I looked at the field station Thomas More has and all the resources we have access to, and decided to go here.

Tell us about your internship in the summer of 2024. How did you find out about it and what were some of your duties?

JM: I did an agricultural research internship in Kenya in Africa. I found out about it through a website that the National Science Foundation runs that lists off a whole bunch of research experiences. I applied for it, and I heard back 10 days before I had to fly out. That resulted in a lot of scrambling to get a passport. While I was there (Kenya), I did all sorts of things. My primary job was doing genetic research on a crop named sorghum, which is really big in that part of the world because it's very tolerant to droughts. I was doing research on that to possibly improve it and make it more capable of growing in higher altitudes.

You mentioned genomics. How is that different from ecology?

JM: Genomics is the study of an organisms genome. What I was doing in particular, was using statistical software to look for specific parts of the genome that code for cold tolerance to essentially make the plant more capable of growing in colder regions. That's different from ecology, because ecology is the study of ecosystems, just completely different fields in their entirety.

What were your top three takeaways?

JM: If you get the chance, travel. It was really amazing to go and interact with people there, to see the kind of things that they do. The people were great. Second would be, if you get an opportunity, take it, even if it doesn't look like what you really want to do. My focus is ecology, the study of ecosystems, so genomics is not really my field at all, but I got the opportunity, so I just took it. And a third takeaway is that people from different places are different in a lot of ways, but are the same in a lot of ways. I really love the people in Kenya. They're super generous, super friendly, and they were familiar in that way, but also the way they talk, the way they think, they don't have sarcasm near to the extent that we do here – they're much less cynical people.

What advice do you have for new and current students?

JM: What I said before about takeaways: if you ever get an opportunity, even if it looks bad and there is something about it you don't like, for example this internship was on such short notice and it wasn't really in the field that I was going for, take it. Anything that you do you can use in some way. This was an unbelievable experience that really grew me as a person in a lot of ways, even if it wasn't, at face value, what I wanted to do.

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To listen/read the complete interview, visit tmuky.us/jonathan.

Group photo of first year students entering Thomas More University in fall 2024.



Creating a student-ready campus

Enhancing the first-year experience encourages students to find their place at Thomas More and in the world

SUBMITTED BY KIM HAVERKOS, PH.D., ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT SUCCESS | PHOTOS PROVIDED



Haverkos

Thomas More has always invested in providing support to first-year students. Orientation Days and the First Year Seminar course have been central in that work. Research and best practices in higher education have identified the first-year experience to be crucial in the success of students. George Kuh (2008) recognizes it as a high impact practice – one that improves student retention and success when implemented with fidelity.

Over the course of the past several years, work with Retention Performance Management through the Gardner Institute presented the first-year experience (FYE) as a place for sustainable change for Thomas More. President Joe Chillo invested in this work with several initiatives. Kayla Steltenkamp, Ph.D., was hired as director and Whitney Brown was moved to assistant director for FYE. In addition to the investment in personnel, the idea of the first-year experience was re-envisioned. Students now have a year-long experience that includes registration days, a two-day orientation, a common reader, a course on first-year expectations, an explicit connection to how the work relates to calling and purpose, and activities throughout the year that engage first-year students and connect them with the community.

Providing the resources students need to succeed

The Saints Essentials program lets students focus on their education. Introduced in Fall 2023, students have all of their essential needs covered as part of tuition. Instead of navigating a long list of fees or trying to fill in the gaps in college amenities, students have the resources they need to focus on their academic success and personal wellbeing. Amenities include an All Access Dining Plan, access to Five Seasons Family Sports Club which includes group fitness classes, TANK public bus transportation year-round, an annual parking permit, fee-free intramural sports programming, unlimited access to wellness services, unlimited printing, and admission to all home athletic events, plus scholarships are available for textbooks and course materials.

This past year's multi-day orientation was attended by half of the incoming students. Students explored a common reader, "The Arrival" by Shaun Tan, sharing experiences around entering college that aligned to the story within the text. Informational sessions covered a wide-range of topics, from financial literacy programming with Republic Bank to exploration of Thomas More's mission and how students could live out that mission during their first year. A student Mass, pep rally, and ice cream social added to the multi-day event. The activities that connected students led directly into Welcome Week at the start of classes, where students could experience additional activities with the rest of the student-body.

The First Year course was also examined and revised to pull in additional connections to purpose – a goal of the University's work with calling and vocation made possible through a grant from the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education. In addition to being introduced to expectations of higher education, students built community through study groups, engagement activities, and connections with individual faculty. Several groups of students in specific majors participated in learning communities – all general education and some specific major classes were taken together. Another high impact practice, this helped students build communities of support across their current curriculum.

Steltenkamp and Brown continued this work into spring semester 2025 with activities specific to first-year students. Early survey results, persistence rates, and GPAs suggest that this work is increasing student sense of belonging and success. Informed by the collected data, the program continues to be tweaked for maximum effectiveness. We look forward to next year's First Year Experience!

MOREOVER



SAINTS SPOTLIGHT

Angelo Centeno

SUBMITTED BY
KENDRA YURT '24,
GRADUATE ASSISTANT COMMUNICATIONS
AND KRISTEN GALLAGHER,
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS/COMMUNICATIONS

Angelo Centeno, a first-year student at Thomas More, reflects on his experience in Kenya after following his calling to join the Xavierian Brothers. In this Saints Spotlight, Angelo shares his journey to finding his vocation and his advice to other young people discerning a call to service.

Please share the path that led you to Thomas More.

AC: I'm a theology and educational studies major, and I discovered, in the midst of my high school days, that I was being called to something more. I had a theology teacher who changed the course of my life, and I wanted to study theology and learn more about the Catholic faith so that I can, in turn, be what my teacher was for me to my future students. I was like, "What is a private Catholic school that's fairly close to home that works for me?" I visited Thomas More, and after meeting Josh Ostertag, the campus minister, I just fell in love. I think the main thing that drew me to Thomas More was the Chapel, [which] is at the center of the campus. If that is not symbolic, then I don't know what is, because it is the faith that is at the center of who we are, and that, for me, was a done deal.

As a student at St. Xavier High School, you discovered a desire for your vocation. What inspired you towards this mission?

AC: During my time at St. X, I discovered a calling to join the Xavierian Brothers after doing a number of different service opportunities. The one that stuck out the most was a project called "Sleep in Heavenly Peace," which is an organization that builds beds for low-income families who do not have beds. ... I remember the first time I went into a family's house, and I built a bed – it was a mom and three kids, and we built and put the sheets on the beds, and the kids came into the room and their eyes lit up. It was something so simple that was such a huge thing for them.

I think that was the moment that I fell in love with service to God and to God's people. I [thought to myself] – "Why do we do what we do? Why do we do service?" I started to look at the teachings of the Xavierian Brothers who founded St. Xavier High School in Louisville back in 1864 and it was very attractive. The charism of the Xavierian Brothers and the mission made so much sense for my life. As students in Xavierian Brother sponsored schools, we have the mission that says, "Give the gift you have received as a gift," and that within itself just makes sense, because God gives us so many gifts, and as disciples of Christ, we should, in turn, go out and give those gifts to the peoples of the world.

You traveled to Kenya over the summer. What were you doing there and what did you learn from the experience?

AC: Immediately after graduation, I got on a flight to go to Nairobi, Kenya [I stayed in both Nairobi and Bungoma]. A Xavierian Brother from Africa came to Louisville, and I sat down with him, [explaining] that I was falling in love with the congregation and with service, and knowing that the congregation now is based in Africa, [I told him] I wanted to go to Africa. For someone who has never been to Africa or out of the country, that was a huge deal. I

remember hugging my mom in the airport, and [thinking], "What am I getting myself into?" After, I arrived in Nairobi, I was greeted by a Xavierian Brother by the name of Brother Dominic. He took me back to the community. The Xavierian Brothers live in different communities spread out across Kenya, Congo, and South Sudan. I entered the house with what we call "postulants," which is the second stage of religious formation for the brothers. I was in deep prayer amongst them. When you're in formation, you take different classes to learn more about the history of the congregation, the mission of the congregation, and why we do what we do.

When I moved to Bungoma, I was teaching an English course to secondary students at our school, which is also named St. Xavier High School. I taught an English class in what's called "CBC," learning based on what the students like, rather than a set curriculum. My students loved American rap music, but half of them did not understand it, so I developed a class based on American rap, teaching English based off the music. We would listen to the music and whatever words the students did not understand, I had them write out on paper, then we would go through a dictionary, find the word, and I would have them write an essay based on those words. That was probably the best three weeks of my life teaching American rap music, because I personally do not listen to rap music, but it opened me up to liking this [style of music], because I was teaching them.

Having gone through this, what message would you share? What would you want other young people to know, if they feel a call to religious life?

AC: I would say, stay open minded. Open yourself up to the possibilities that God has in store for you, because there is so much out there, and you just have to find what is for you. Before I had a call to join a religious order, I was living for what other people liked. My first initial thought was to go to college and study political science on a pre-law track. When I told people that, their faces lit up, [and] they were like, "Oh, you are going to be great. You are going to be phenomenal." I [thought] that is actually not what I want, but because it is likable by other people, that is what I will do. Then I realized, do not be so closed minded, open yourself up [and] do what you really like. [I asked myself], "What do you really like?" and the answer to that was service to others. It was hard to adjust to, but that was the point – nothing in life is easy. I think the founder of the Xavierian Brothers says that very well that "Nothing special is achieved without much effort, labor, and zeal." I live by that day in and day out. Nothing is going [to] come easy, but you have to work hard for it, because in the end, something special will be achieved.

Another thing I would say is get outside of your comfort zone, because if you are always in your comfort zone, you are probably never going to learn anything. The majority of my trip in Africa was very uncomfortable, [however], I learned so much from it, and if I was comfortable the entire time, I would have learned nothing. The language barrier, the different food, the different culture, it was all very hard to adjust to, but I learned so much about my faith, [and] the people around me, which is incredible and being outside of your comfort zone does that. I encourage young people in general, who are discerning a call to religious life or a vocation of any sort [to] get outside of your comfort zone and open your heart up to the possibilities that God has for you.

MOREOVER

To listen/read the complete interview, visit tmuky.us/angelo.



Visual communications class makes mark on campus

SUBMITTED BY YSABEL OSTIGIN, THOMAS MORE STUDENT | PHOTOS PROVIDED

A new mural, designed and produced by Associate Professor Betty Bone's ART 360 Visual Communications Class in fall 2024, is spreading positivity within the Thomas More University campus community. Its message, painted on the east side of the Academic Building facing the Five Seasons Family Sports Club, is a reminder that life's small victories deserve to be celebrated. Student designers and mural production leaders were Cheyenne Crane, Katie Frazee, Ysabel Ostigin, and Nancy Sutkamp. Ysabel shares the following reflection on the experience – and its enduring message for the community.

When I first signed up to take Betty Bone's Visual Communications class, I didn't expect that I would end up being a part of a mural that would last for years to come. Originally, the course was designed to be focused on graphic design, with all of our projects done on the computer, however, when Professor Betty Bone told us about the opportunity to create a mural, we had a decision to make: stick with the usual assignments on the computer or take on a large challenge. The choice was obvious: a mural is a rare opportunity, and we all were excited to take on a process that would leave a lasting impact on campus.

The mural process started before we would even know if we would get the approval to paint or not. However, to get started, we needed a theme. A theme that would reflect Thomas More University's mission while also standing the test of time. After weeks of searching, we all agreed on the phrase, "Celebrate every win, no matter how small." As artists, we all know how important mental health is, something that often gets overlooked. To me, this quote

is a reminder that accomplishments do not have to be over the top to be considered important. Even getting out of bed in the morning can be considered a win. You don't have to win a Nobel Peace Prize or become president to feel like you have accomplished something.

Once we had decided on the message, the real work began. First, we had to measure the wall, which turned out to be harder than expected. Every time we measured, we all got different numbers. It was almost comical; there's a reason that we are art majors and not math majors. Once we had the correct measurements, Betty created a template in Adobe Illustrator so each of us could design our own concepts. This part was exhausting. We had probably made more than 10 iterations each, revising constantly after every round of feedback. It was a long, detailed process, but eventually, we reached a final design – a combination of all our ideas.

The next hardship was getting approval from the campus Environment & Aesthetics Committee. We waited and waited, but when the response came, they were excited about the idea. With this

green light, it was time to bring our design to life. First, we started with priming the wall, and with a lot of help from fellow art majors, professors, family, friends, etc., the design was able to be translated from the computer to the wall. With the design projected onto the wall, we encountered a lot of challenges. The weather was getting colder, and with the time change, we had to wait until it was dark enough to see the projection clearly. Additionally, our class met from 5-7:45 p.m., so we often had to wait until 6:30 p.m. to start tracing. On top of that, we planned additional painting days on Fridays and Saturdays, making sure that everyone could contribute and we could get it done in time. We even incorporated the mural into Saints Serve, though painting in freezing temperatures wasn't exactly ideal.

Despite the challenges, the entire process was a team effort. Everyone was willing to step up, and I'm so proud of what we created together. This semester started off rough for me – losing my dog, Lilly, made it incredibly difficult – but working on this mural gave me something positive to end the semester with. It turned what could have been a terrible few months into something fulfilling and meaningful.

Despite the experience of creating the mural itself, this project will have a lasting impact in so many ways. It's something we can add to our portfolios, a real-world example of creative direction and teamwork. Betty even pointed out that leading a project like this shows strong leadership skills, something valuable for any career. Furthermore, the mural itself will be here for years to come. Even though it's on the backside of the building, I hope people who walk by it feel a sense of joy from the bright colors and the message. Hard work went into this, and I hope it stands the test of time as a reminder to celebrate every win, no matter how small.

MOREOVER

For a timeline photo gallery, visit tmuky.us/mural.

*Left: Katie Frazee, Nancy Sutkamp, Cheyenne Crane, Ysabel Ostigin, and Professor Betty Bone stand in front the finished mural.
Below: Working on laying in the colors of the mural.*



SAINTS SPOTLIGHT

Ezequiel Villarreal

SUBMITTED BY

KENDRA YURT '24,

GRADUATE ASSISTANT COMMUNICATIONS

Economics major Ezequiel Villarreal is co-captain for the Thomas More team that competed in the Econ Games in spring 2025. Saints Spotlight caught up with Ezequiel to discuss the Econ Games.

What was your path to attending Thomas More?

EV: My path to attending Thomas More was because of soccer. I was a student in a West Virginia school, and I transferred here because of soccer.

Have you always been passionate about economics?

EV: Well, yeah, I come from a country where economics is a big deal – politics and economics. At my previous school, I wasn't an econ major because it wasn't offered, but when I saw all the courses offered here and I saw economics, I knew that I was going to change to economics right away. When I got here, my first day, I met Professor Malcolm Robinson, and he helped me [with] which classes I had to enroll. It was pretty cool.

Explain what the Econ Games are and the goal of the competition.

EV: The Econ Games is a competition where a company releases a data set, a really big and complex data set, usually it's dirty, so students have to clean it. It consists of a group of students, between four and eight, from different schools all around the country, having 24 hours to get that data, analyze it, clean it, and present it to judges that are from the company that released the data. The data releasers give you a prompt. You have to follow that prompt. For instance, last year, it was about housing problems in Kentucky and was from Kentucky REALTORS®. We had to analyze the problems with the housing in Kentucky and give them a solution. It consists of four groups of different schools, and the winner of each group goes to a final presentation. It's a really, really interesting challenge.

What was the experience like as a member of the first team to participate in the Econ Games in 2024?

EV: It was tough because we competed against schools that [had] already participated in previous years. It was our first time and I think it was the first time Thomas More was doing something similar in the economics perspective. We were facing the unknown because we didn't know what we were going to have to do. Everything we learned was based on other people's experiences. The team leader was Nick Hubbard, also an econ major. He formed a team of me, Nick, Sondre Taklo, and Matthew Weil.

It was really challenging. We learned a lot, not only dealing with the data but also dealing under pressure. It was at the University of Kentucky, I think we slept like only two hours because you really don't have time. The data set is so big, and the problem is so difficult that you're nervous, but it's a really nice experience.

How did this year's team come together?

EV: I prepared a team similar to last year. The team is made up of four: me and Caleb (Adams), we are econ majors. Then Jacob (Ginder) and Santiago (Regueira Aspitate), they are both CIS majors. We have two econ and two CIS because it's not only an econ competition, there is a lot of data analytics and organization and sometimes coding, depending on how big the data set is. You need a balance between econ terms and people skilled with data organization and analyzing.

MOREOVER

To listen/read the complete interview, visit tmuky.us/ezequiel.

Fools, fantasy, and florals

A collaboration that brought an enchanting ‘Midsummer Night’ to life in the Thomas More Theatre



SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR | PHOTO PROVIDED

In fall 2024, Thomas More University’s Theatre Department presented a new production of William Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” In an original take on Shakespeare’s classic tale of love, mischief, and magic, the staging was elevated to a new level by its intricately decorated set. Created through a collaboration with local printmaker and artist Stephanie Berrie, the 3D, floral-printed set transformed the Thomas More Theatre into a living work of art, immersing the show’s audiences in the imaginative world of Shakespeare’s beloved comedy.

The unique set came together through the concerted efforts of Berrie, Director of Thomas More Theatre Phillip Webster, and Kirk Mayhew, assistant professor of 3D arts and technical theatre at Thomas More. The origin of the partnership traces back to fall 2023, during Thomas More’s production of “Twelfth Night” – Webster’s first show at the University. He noticed Berrie installing an exhibit as a visiting artist in the Eva G. Farris Gallery, located directly across the hall from the theater. “I saw her there every night for two or three nights,” Webster recalls. “And then once it was all up – it literally just looked like ‘Midsummer’ to me, I guess I was in Shakespeare mode. I took a bunch of pictures of all her work, and then I reached out.”

Berrie, primarily a printmaker, had never designed an installation for a theater, but was intrigued by the offer. “I’m really inspired by nature and my surroundings, and by things that are unseen or things that are overlooked... Things that are beautiful, but when you look closer at them, you see that they’re maybe not as beautiful as they look from afar,” she explains.

For Webster, that creative vision perfectly captured the essence of “Midsummer,” and the mischief that ensues throughout the plot of the play. “‘Midsummer’ obviously has lots of magical fun

elements to it. It’s definitely a comedy, and there’s a lightness to it, but ‘Midsummer’ also has a kind of darkness. Everyone basically goes out into the forest and are, in some way, shape or form, attacked by magical creatures who are sort of the embodiment of these wild, natural forces,” Webster explains. “A lot of what I liked about Stephanie’s [work]... there were these beautiful flowers that had these multi-colored leaves, but at the center of them were teeth that were coming for you. They were enticing and beautiful, but slightly dangerous. And I think that describes much of the play of ‘Midsummer’,” he says.

The set design evolved over the next year through close partnerships between Berrie, Webster, and Mayhew, as they transformed the Thomas More Theatre into a lush, mystical forest. For the structure of the set, Webster and Mayhew had originally planned to build something entirely new, but instead decided on repurposing elements from the previous sets of two shows. “‘Midsummer’ has a lot of people who fall asleep on stage and then are supposed to wake back up on stage,” Webster explains. “You kind of have to leave them places. The other visual reason [for the setup] was we thought that might be better and easier for Stephanie’s designs to live on than what we were going with in our plan A.”

Berrie says when it came to installing her work, her goal was to create an environment that would be as immersive as possible for the audience. Focusing on this perspective, she incorporated details like vines on the theatre’s railings, hanging orbs, and floral pieces extending into the seating. “It’s always a challenge, trying to figure out how to do that with installations. In gallery settings, you’ll find that people will walk around an installation instead of walking into it... They find a path around it because people are too scared to go



Above: Theater Director Phillip Webster (right) discusses the nuances of performance against the backdrop of the whimsical set.

into the artwork. I definitely think that putting the floaty, plushy things in the audience, I kind of just forced the audience to be in it," she explains.

The use of Thomas More's thrust stage, which is surrounded by the audience on multiple sides, allowed the production to maximize this immersive potential. In contrast with a traditional proscenium stage, where "everything is kind of stuck inside of a TV window," Mayhew explains, the setup in the Thomas More Theatre provides an advantage when it comes to being innovative in theatre. "I don't know if you could pull this off this way in a proscenium style theatre. We really have this unique opportunity for the art and the story to be kind of all wrapped around the audience," Mayhew asserts. "I don't think we would have done this in a traditional theatre space. It just wouldn't have been as interesting."

Through a captivating set and the talents of Thomas More's student actors, the audience of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" did not just observe the play but were enveloped into its scenes. They were invited to step into a world both familiar and strange, a place where flowers might have teeth, and where love, in all its chaotic forms, unfolds in the enchanting forest. [MOREOVER](#)

To keep up with the latest news from Thomas More Theatre, visit thomasmore.edu/theater and follow the Department of Creative Media on social media, @thomasmore.docm. Explore more of Stephanie Berrie's work on Instagram @berriestephanie and @wild_berries_press and at stephanieraeberrie.com.



Boehm



McNutt



Murphy

Faculty emeriti and president emeritus

Congratulations to former Thomas More Professors Lawrence Boehm, Ph.D., and James McNutt, Ph.D., on joining the ranks of Faculty Emeritus. The granting of this honorary title to both educators was announced following the December Board of Trustees meeting. Boehm, professor of psychology, served as a member of the faculty for 35 years and was instrumental in advancing the department of psychology and service to the University. He maintained a close connection with the Psi Chi Honors program and oversaw decades of undergraduate research and student projects.

McNutt, professor of history, served as a member of the faculty for almost 30 years teaching many courses in history and theology during his tenure. His scholarship and teaching experience led to an invitation to participate in a seminar at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. This recognition for both Boehm and McNutt is certainly well deserved. Both of these faculty members have had a lasting impact upon many students and the University.

It was also announced that Msgr. John F. Murphy, who was the longest serving president in the University's history (1951-71), would be granted the title President Emeritus posthumously. During his 20-year tenure, Msgr. Murphy led several significant initiatives: the college's efforts to be successfully accredited by SACSCOC; the expansion of the number of academic programs and size of the faculty and staff; the development and construction of the Crestview Hills campus – including U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson's visit and dedication in 1968; and the design and construction of the Science Center. Msgr. Murphy is the first president granted the title of President Emeritus.

[MOREOVER](#)

Paving a pathway to equitable student success

Thomas More Board Chair Judith A. Marlowe '69, Ph.D., and President Joe Chillo collaborated on an article which appeared in Trusteeship Magazine in the summer of 2024. Trusteeship is the publication of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

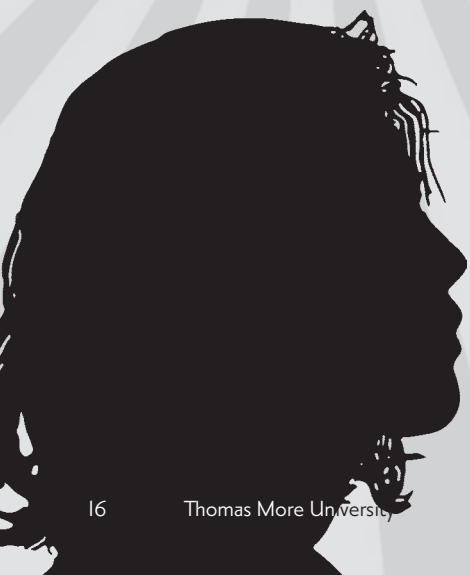
The relationship between the president and chair of the board of trustees is crucial to effective governance and Thomas More has created a foundation which enables student to succeed equitably in a big way. This article describes the steps and growth that attribute to how the University is able to thrive and grow in the current climate.

To read a reprint of the article, visit tmuky.us/pathway.

Balancing moral innovation with tradition: Is artificial intelligence “friend or foe” of Catholic education?

SUBMITTED BY JUAN PABLO
VILLAGRANA FRANCISCO, BA, AND
JOHN D. RUDNICK, JR., Ed.D.

“Faith and reason
are like two wings
on which the human
spirit rises to the
contemplation of truth”
Pope St. John Paul II



Faith without reason turns into superstition, and reason without faith becomes heartless. Pope St. John Paul II’s 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio* rings truer today as Catholic institutions face the increasing presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in education. In a world where relativism threatens objective truth, integrating AI into Catholic higher education requires careful discernment, balancing innovation with the deep-rooted traditions of faith and reason. As AI reshapes the future, Catholic colleges and universities must ask: Do we embrace or reject this technological wave?

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition suggests that AI should supplement human wisdom, not replace it. Used thoughtfully, AI has the potential to enhance the educational mission of Catholic institutions. However, if misused, it could undermine critical thinking, moral discernment, and intellectual growth – the very foundation of Catholic education.

The current K-12 generation, often referred to as digital natives, will soon enter higher education, bringing a familiarity with AI-driven technologies. Catholic institutions must prepare to meet their needs while guiding them to use these technologies responsibly and ethically. This generation has been exposed to AI in ways only now becoming apparent, making it imperative for Catholic colleges to adapt while setting an example for ethical AI integration. The students of tomorrow need a framework that not only embraces technological advancements but also safeguards against moral and intellectual pitfalls.

AI offers undeniable advantages in education. It provides immediate access to vast information, enabling more dynamic learning experiences. Whether generating ideas, refining arguments, or suggesting alternative problem-solving methods, AI’s ability to customize and adapt information is revolutionary. However, its risks are equally significant. AI often lacks reliable citations, context, and the sequencing needed to understand complex subjects fully. It can also introduce biases through “hallucinations” – misleading or incorrect information generated without proper sourcing.

Pope Francis weighs in and offers insights and an exhortation with the following: “The irresponsible use of artificial intelligence leads to injustices.” Catholic institutions have a unique responsibility to engage with AI through the lens of “algorithethics” – the ethics of algorithms and AI systems. The question is not whether to use AI, but how to use it responsibly. Should AI be permitted, limited, or prohibited in educational settings? AI can either enhance or undermine the educational experience, depending on the values guiding its use.

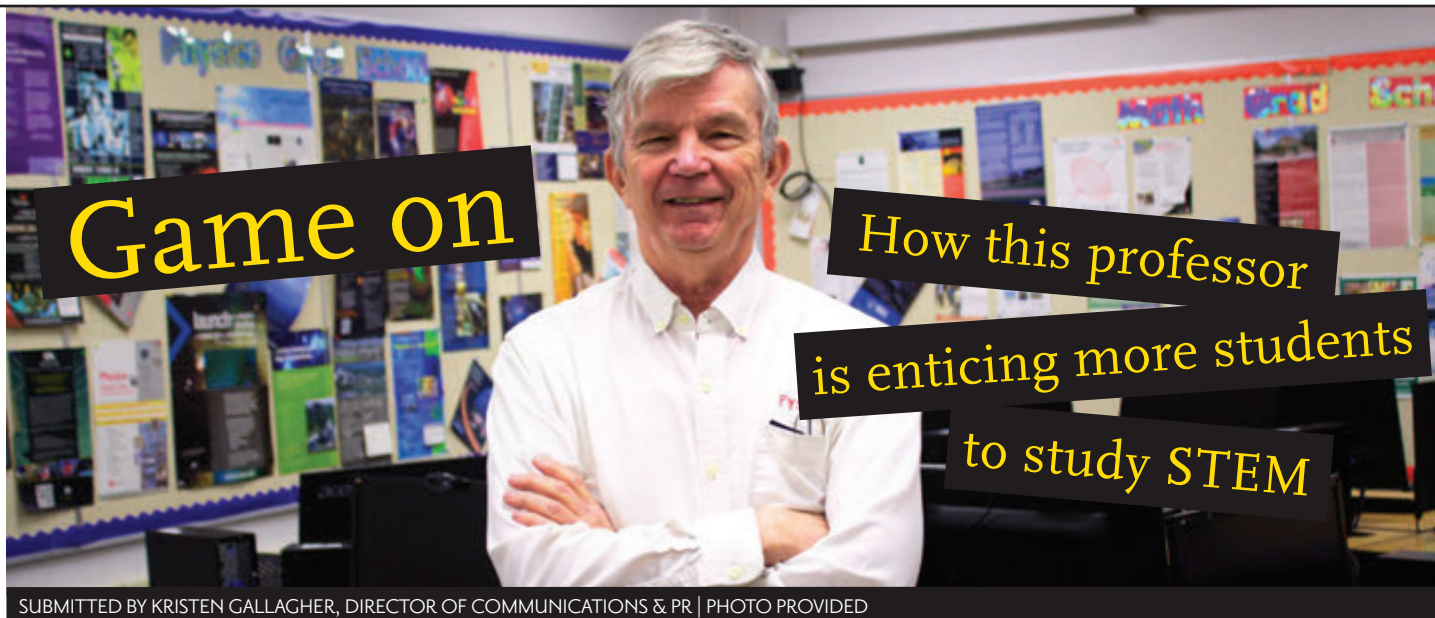
When employed ethically, AI can help develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability in students. However, if misused, it risks becoming a shortcut that dilutes the value of independent thought and moral responsibility. As the next generation of students enters higher education, Catholic colleges must integrate AI in ways that align with their mission and the moral development of students. Parents, alongside faculty and staff, are essential stakeholders in this conversation. They entrust their children to Catholic institutions not just for academic excellence, but for moral and spiritual growth. Ensuring that AI serves this mission requires active involvement from all these stakeholders.

Consider Thomas More University’s mission as an example: it challenges students to “... examine life’s ultimate meaning, their place in the world, and their responsibility to others through the lens of Catholic Intellectual Tradition.” If used appropriately, AI can be an invaluable tool in this mission, aiding in the discovery of truth and fostering deeper reflection. However, the danger lies in allowing AI to do the thinking for students, diminishing their capacity for critical inquiry. To prevent this, Catholic institutions must establish guidelines for the ethical use of AI, ensuring it serves as a supplement to human thought rather than a substitute.

This preparation is crucial for the K-12 generation soon entering college. These students will expect AI as part of their learning environment. Catholic higher education must be ready not only to meet their technological expectations but also to guide them toward balanced AI use that fosters intellectual and moral development. AI has the potential to be a force for good, but only if grounded in ethical principles that respect human dignity and the wisdom of tradition.

In the end, AI’s role in education will be shaped by the choices institutions make today. Catholic K-12 schools and Catholic higher education institutions must proactively craft policies that balance innovation with tradition, ensuring AI remains a tool for learning, not a crutch. AI is intended as a tool to supplement, not supplant. This unprecedented challenge demands a blend of faith and reason. By integrating AI thoughtfully and ethically, Catholic institutions can uphold their mission to educate both the minds and hearts of students. A balance is key as Catholic higher education navigates the ethical implications of AI in the classroom.

MOREOVER



When Robert (Bob) Riehemann, Ph.D., looks around at modern-day life in the U.S., he sees the impact a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) can make. “Sitting in a home, the lights come on with the flick of a switch, the air is warmed or cooled automatically, and fresh food is readily available in a refrigerator,” Riehemann says. “A world of information and communication is available with the touch of a finger on a screen, and entertainment is available 24/7 in thousands of forms. None of this would exist without STEM personnel.”

A professor of mathematics and physics at Thomas More University, Riehemann is co-leading an effort to introduce more students to the possibilities unlocked by a STEM degree. Together with co-instructor Zhou Dong, Ph.D. of Montgomery College, Riehemann hopes to entice students to study STEM by introducing them to game theory.

Throughout the fall 2024 semester, Riehemann and Dong ran a joint class offered both at Thomas More and Montgomery College, a two-year public community college outside of Washington, D.C. The topic: combinatorial game theory. If you’re not familiar with the term, it’s likely that you’ve encountered some of its basic concepts, Riehemann explains. “Famous combinatorial games include checkers, chess, and go. Typically, they involve two players, each having perfect information about the other . . . These games can be quite difficult, but mathematicians have proved that there is an optimal way to play.”

Riehemann and Dong’s class focused on Nim, one of the oldest games of strategy in the world, thought to date back to ancient China. “The students at Thomas More are non-STEM majors . . . we look for patterns in the different ways to play the game,” Riehemann says. “The Thomas More students work with the Montgomery College students, who are STEM-focused and have programming experience. The Montgomery College students have written a computer program to play the game with varying starting positions. Together, the students study the patterns and look for mathematical descriptions.”

The class met three times a week throughout the fall, including a virtual class on Fridays when students from both schools could meet remotely. They worked to summarize their findings, which were presented in April during the Kentucky Mathematical Association of America (MAA)’s spring meeting. The class was made possible by a grant from the Center for Undergraduate Research in Mathematics (CURM), funded by the National Science Foundation. The

overarching goals for the project included forging partnerships between two-year and four-year institutions and encouraging more students to complete four-year STEM degrees. Riehemann says he also had a personal goal in mind – to identify students who are not currently studying STEM who have hidden mathematical talent. It’s how Riehemann himself became a math major, decades ago as an undergraduate student at Northern Kentucky University (NKU).

Professor Bob Riehemann in the classroom.

“My original plan was to be a musician, and I played drums locally. When I went to NKU, I took a ‘physics for poets’ class . . . and kept getting the highest grades on the test. One day, when leaving class, the instructor, Dr. McPherson – a Thomas More graduate in physics – asked me to become a physics major. As I’ve said many times, he was the only person in the world to take an interest in me, so I said, ‘Why not?’ And here I am today, teaching at Dr. McPherson’s alma mater.”

Along the way, Riehemann has led a career spanning an array of topics within mathematics and physics, conducted research in quantum field theory, experimental superconductivity and mathematical physics, earned his doctorate in combinatorial game theory, and has held positions both in academia and for a multi-national corporation.

Which is why Riehemann says he knows it was a stroke of luck when, by chance, he sat down next to Dr. Dong at a recent session on undergraduate research during the Mathematical Association of America’s national meeting. “As we chatted, it became clear that we both had an interest in games, hers from teaching a class, mine for my doctorate and also teaching. CURM was emphasizing teams of two-year institutions combining with four-year institutions. Montgomery College is two-year and Thomas More is four-year. Dr. Dong suggested that we collaborate, and it worked!” Riehemann says, adding: “I’ve said several times that meeting Dr. Dong was one of the lucky events in my life.”

Nurturing a passion for STEM fields is essential, Riehemann says, especially for the next generation, who need to be prepared to grapple with a complex and challenging world. “There are lurking dangers ahead, from climate change, through nuclear war, and these dangers need to be addressed through technical understanding, as well as the ethical portion of a liberal arts education – like the education offered at Thomas More.”

MOREOVER

Kudos to Thomas More faculty and staff on their accolades, presentations, and published works

Robert W. Plaster College of Business



Carr

Michael Carr, Ph.D., assistant professor, marketing, and **John D. (Jack) Rudnick Jr., Ed.D.**, professor, business administration and economics had their paper, "The Shadow of Technophobia: The Hollywood

Blockbuster Effect on Leadership and Transformative Technology Narratives," accepted for leading a roundtable discussion during the eighth Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Leadership Symposium (IPLS), themed Leadership in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, in Mykonos, Greece. Additionally, Dr. Rudnick collaborated with colleagues from Florida and the Netherlands on a second presentation, "Leadership Loneliness: Context and Culture Drive AI Companionship as a Crisis Consultation Tool," which was accepted for the same conference.



Flynn

Steven Flynn, Ph.D., professor, accountancy, was honored in November at the 2024 GC3 Celebration of Teaching awards as an outstanding faculty member at Thomas More.



Robinson

Malcolm Robinson, Ph.D.,* professor, business administration, was tapped by MoneyGeek as an expert for their 2024 article "What Is the Consumer Price Index?"

Robinson also gave his expert advice for a WalletHub.com article on "The Cheapest Cars to Insure," always useful advice especially when there are multiple cars in the family! After the inauguration of President Donald Trump, Robinson was tapped by the Cincinnati Enquirer for his expert opinion on how the agenda of the new president could affect the tri-state and nation in the article "How Trump's vows on education, immigration and more could affect Greater Cincinnati." Robinson was also interviewed by FOX19-WXIX for a report on closure announcements made by two major retailers, Big Lots and Party City.



Rudnick

John D. (Jack) Rudnick Jr., Ed.D.,* professor, business administration and economics, joined the Notre Dame Academy board of directors at their fall strategic planning retreat as a facilitator. Rudnick shared academic pedagogy that Thomas More professors engage in, which helped to reinforce the legacy the Sisters of Notre Dame enjoy at both the academy and the University.

Rudnick also spoke in the Gastrointestinal Diseases and Disorders Division in October 2024 at the 7th Edition of Global Webinar on Gastroenterology & Hepatology, titled "Enhancing Gastroenterology Physician Onboarding through Performance Improvement and Artificial Intelligence."

Michelle Vezina, M.A., assistant professor, co-authored the paper for the material and contributed to the presentation format and graphics. The article was catalogued at the National Library of Medicine's National Center for Biotechnology Information located in the National Institute for Health.

In addition to his presentations, Rudnick was appointed as an assistant editor for Health Sciences and Digital Innovation for the Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (JMR is an international, peer-reviewed publication dedicated to advancing knowledge across diverse academic and professional fields. JMR is widely recognized for its commitment to high-quality, impactful research). Rudnick's role will further improve the journal's mission to publish quality research articles that explore emerging healthcare trends and digital innovation as well as the frontiers of business, communication, education, law, science and technology, and other emerging areas.

Rudnick was also named Life Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives, reflecting long term membership and continuous academic scholarship.



Zimmer

Charles Zimmer '11, Ph.D., assistant professor and department chair, information systems, published the article "Nontraditional Strategies to Find and Retain STEM Faculty in Higher Education" in the

Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, with contributions to the article from colleague John D. (Jack) Rudnick Jr., Ed.D., professor, business administration and economics.

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences



Camp

James Camp, Ph.D., professor, sociology and criminal justice, was honored in November 2024 at the GC3 Celebration of Teaching awards as an outstanding faculty member at Thomas More.



Cox

Elizabeth Cox, M.Ed., adjunct faculty, psychology, was honored in November 2024 at the GC3 Celebration of Teaching awards as an outstanding faculty member at Thomas More.



Dwyer

Caitlin Dwyer, MTS,* assistant professor, theology, had her article "A Theological Case for Sports Feandom" published in the Catholic World Report.*



Johnson

Evan Johnson, Ph. D., assistant professor, history, presented the paper "'The Sheep Have Run Away': Enduring Urban Emigration in the Thirty Years' War" at the annual 16th Century Society Conference in Toronto, Canada. This paper was part of a panel he organized for the Conference entitled German Bodies: Colonizing, Aging, and Barely Hanging On.



Oldfield

Steve Oldfield, assistant professor, communication, was named runner-up in the 2024 Best Television News Reporter in Ohio competition sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists, competing against full-time reporters from across the state. Oldfield produced two stories a week for Spectrum News Ohio and his award-winning video portfolio featured an investigative report on prescription opioid laws along with features on veterans, athletes, and people with disabilities. During the fall 2024 semester he incorporated his coverage of the Cincinnati

Bengals, FC Cincinnati, and high school athletes into his sports journalism course. He is taking a break from reporting to work on several short documentaries and a feature film project with alumnus Jackson Howard '24. Stay tuned.

St. Elizabeth College of Natural and Health Sciences



Christensen

Joe Christensen, Ph.D., dean of the St. Elizabeth College of Natural and Health Sciences, is one of 16 participants in the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU) Advancing Leaders Program.



Lorentz

Christopher Lorentz, Ph.D.,* professor and director of the Biology Field Station, in fall 2024 was selected to become a Climate Change Scholar through the Green Umbrella Climate Research Incubator. This program provides training to researchers related to climate and serves as a platform for fostering collaboration among researchers, community members, and government representatives across the region. Dr. Lorentz is also working with K-12 schools in disadvantaged communities to help enroll them in the Kentucky Association of Environmental Educators Green School Program. In addition to this outreach work, Dr. Lorentz, as current chairperson for the Ohio River Basin Alliance, and represented ORBA at the Mississippi River Watershed Partnership (MRWP) meeting in January 2025. MRWP works with non-profits, academic institutions, watershed conservancies, NGOs, communities, and government agencies to establish common goals for advocating for dedicated federal funding for the Mississippi River and its sub-basins.*



Smith

Harold J. Smith, Ph.D.,* associate professor and chair, mathematics and physics, was interviewed by Kentucky Living for the February 2025 article "Math skills add up for Kentucky's future." Professor Smith and colleagues spoke to the benefits of math as a minor or major to securing high-paying positions in Kentucky's workforce.*



Thapa

Dinesh Thapa, Ph.D.,* assistant professor, physics, was published in American Chemical Society (ACS) Omega in collaboration with the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at North Dakota State University. The article is entitled "Tunable Magnetic Order in Fe-Mg Codoped Montmorillonite Nanoclay Interfaced with Amino Acids." Thapa also is collaborating in research with the University College London, guiding one of his undergraduate students.

Administration/Staff



Amato

Barbara Amato, strategic learning specialist in the Institute for Learning Differences (ILD), had a letter-to-the-editor published in the October 2024 issue of Mensa Bulletin. Editor's Note: Mensa is a worldwide organization in which the qualification for membership is scoring within the upper 2% of the general population on an approved intelligence test.



Hebert

Raymond Hebert, Ph.D., executive director, Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty and Dean of the College Emeritus, was recognized on two occasions in 2024 by the Northern Kentucky Sports Hall of Fame. In August, he received the 2024 Dr. James A. Claypool Award for "his service and dedication to sports in Northern Kentucky"

in recognition of his work as the primary author/internal editor of the Thomas More University Centennial Athletic Volume entitled: "Student Athletes and Athletic Programs at Thomas More University: Post-World War II to 2023." In December 2024, he was officially inducted as a member in the Hall of Fame for a combination of his athletic success during his high school and college years in New Hampshire, including his induction into the Rochester, New Hampshire Sports Hall of Fame and his success in Northern Kentucky, first in slow-pitch softball and later in middle school basketball, coaching his daughters and oldest grandchild, Kyle Beier, who played for Turkey Foot Middle School.



Vogel

Justin Vogel, enrollment, was promoted from dean to assistant vice president for enrollment in fall 2024. Vogel has been instrumental in leading efforts at both the undergraduate and graduate admission divisions leading to the second largest enrollment in University history for 2024-2025.



Williams

Molly Williams,* manager, Biology Field Station, was interviewed in December 2024 by Chip Hart for WLW's Big Outdoors show. During the show, Williams discussed the Station's programs and upcoming summer events.

*Visit the Faculty/Staff Notes page at tmuky.us/spring25notes for links that were provided to presentations and interviews.

Chillo: year five as a top regional leader



Chillo

President Joe Chillo was included for a fifth straight year as one of the region's 300 most powerful business leaders by Cincinnati Magazine in the Cincinnati 300 edition. A visionary leader, President Chillo builds upon the distinguished legacy of the University, pursuing opportunities that advance Thomas More's mission and reputation as the premier Catholic liberal arts university in the region. Notably, he introduced the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan: Lighting the Way, crafted to propel the University forward; In support of this plan, President Chillo and his leadership team launched the largest comprehensive capital campaign in University history, the Second Century Campaign: It's time for More. The campaign is a resounding success, surpassing its initial goal of \$30 million three years ahead of schedule, and continued fundraising efforts exceeding \$41 million to date. Speaking with the magazine, President Chillo explains: "I have built a team that understands servant leadership, how to be innovative and agile, and most importantly can lead and manage their teams to ensure that we have the right people in the right positions."

Why I Give:

Thomas More Educator

Ann Hicks, Ph.D. (1942-2024), Leaves A Legacy

SUBMITTED BY KYLE ISAACK, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT | PHOTOS PROVIDED

Ann was born on June 28, 1942, to Robert Lewis and Leah Kay Lewis Alsobrook. She was raised on the Grandview Guernsey Farms in Pfafftown, North Carolina, by her father after her mother's untimely death. From an early age, Ann loved exploring nature and learning. She graduated from Duke University and went on to obtain a doctorate in chemistry from Vanderbilt University. While at Vanderbilt, Ann experienced a different kind of chemistry, meeting Wesley Vernon Hicks Jr. whom she married and spent the next 55 years with. They settled in Northern Kentucky where Ann taught as a faculty member in the chemistry department at Thomas More University for 31 years. During her tenure, she was twice awarded teacher of the year (1979 and 1993) and was an enthusiastic supporter of women's sports – especially her beloved women's basketball team.

Always on the go, Ann enjoyed spending time with her husband, extended family, and numerous pets – playing Pollyanna and canasta, bird watching, canoeing, and traveling to see beautiful landscapes and wildlife. At home, she spent as much time as her knees would allow in her garden and was a member of Highland United Methodist Church and Asbury Methodist Church where she is remembered as always having a warm smile, kind words, and willingness to share in a good laugh.



Above: Photo of Ann after her retirement from Thomas More.

Right: Triskele photo of Ann giving one-on-one direction to a student.



Ann passed away from Alzheimer's Disease on Jan. 16, 2024, leaving behind her husband, Vern, son Donald Hicks, daughter Polly Hicks and son-in-law Michael Stringer, granddaughters Lucille and Merittia Stringer, as well as extended family, and many, many friends.

In support of Notre Dame Academy STEM graduates

Inspired by the legacy of Sr. Mary Ethel Parrott, SND, the Tapkes create an endowed scholarship specific to STEM

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR

Following the Thomas More/Notre Dame Academy (NDA) historic partnership offering direct admission to the University for all NDA graduates (see [page 6](#)), another announcement was made in support and encouragement of young women pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The Sister Mary Ethel Parrott '69 Endowed Scholarship at Thomas More honors the outstanding legacy of Sister Mary Ethel Parrott '69, SND, and her dedicated service to her alma maters, Thomas More University and NDA. Thank you to fellow alumna Jeanne-Marie Tapke '91, Ph.D., and her husband Richard (Dick) Tapke for creating this scholarship to provide financial aid in support of NDA graduates who attend Thomas More in pursuit of a degree within the STEM fields. Tapke has served on the boards of both Thomas More and NDA. "This scholarship uplifts and grows women in science, which is exciting and a privilege. Blending the great graduates of Notre Dame Academy with the academic excellence Thomas More is known for, makes this an extremely meaningful opportunity," says Tapke.

A Covington, Kentucky native, Sister Mary Ethel studied at NDA and enrolled at Thomas More after graduation. She earned her bachelor's degree in physics from Thomas More in 1969 and went on to receive a Master of Science in physics from the University of Kentucky. She returned to NDA as a faculty member in 1972, and as an educator in the scientific fields touched the lives of thousands of students, inspiring many young women to discover a passion for the sciences and to pursue higher education.

The Sister Mary Ethel Parrott '69 Endowed Scholarship remains open for funding by additional donors. Visit tmuky.us/give and under 'designation' choose the scholarship funds tab to find Sr. Mary Ethel Parrott Scholarship Fund.



Sister Mary Ethel with a student at NDA in the late 1970s.

[MOREOVER](#)



Biology professor and alumna, Shannon Galbraith-Kent '98, Ph.D., recalls, "I take great honor in doing my best to help continue the tradition of care and craft for education – that was shown early to me by the example of Dr. Hicks." Alumnus and biology professor Joe Qualls '02, Ph.D., adds, "It was Ann's ability to take really complex organic chemistry content and explain it in accessible ways, that made the greatest impact on me. I modeled a lot of my own teaching style based on the example Dr. Hicks showed us."

As a tribute to Ann's legacy, Vern, friends, and family created the Dr. Ann A. Hicks Memorial Scholarship. We invite you to be a part of this tribute to an outstanding faculty member through a gift as we strive to reach the \$25,000 mark necessary for this scholarship to be fully endowed and continue to support students into perpetuity. To give to this scholarship fund, visit tmuky.us/give and under 'designation' choose the scholarship funds tab to find the Dr. Ann A. Hicks Memorial Scholarship. Thank you for your consideration and generosity.

MOREOVER

To read a touching memorial to Dr. Hicks by Dr. Shannon Galbraith-Kent, visit tmuky.us/25tribute.

Visit thomasmore.edu/donate to find out more about options to give. If giving online is not your preference, the envelope at the center of this Moreover is always available for sending a donation by mail. For additional information, please contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at 859.344.3344 or advancement@thomasmore.edu.



BISHOP WILLIAM A. HUGHES AWARD DINNER

presented by



Each year, the University honors individuals in three different categories, who have made a significant impact either on the Northern Kentucky region or the Thomas More community through demonstrated commitment to advancing Catholic education and/or using their passion to advance the mission of the University in service both externally and internally.

As Moreover headed to press, the 27th Bishop William A. Hughes Award Dinner, presented by DBL Law, took place at Drees Pavilion on April 2, 2025. Honorees at this year's dinner included Melissa Lueke, Kathleen Siobhan Barone, Ph.D., and Garren Colvin '86.

Bishop William A. Hughes Award – Melissa Lueke

Lueke is a graduate of Notre Dame Academy and Xavier University, and her service to Catholic education spans both sides of the Ohio River. In addition to serving in numerous capacities at Thomas More, Lueke has served on boards and committees in the community, including the Josephine Heck Foundation, the Diocese of Covington Financial Council, Sisters of Notre Dame U.S.A., and serves as president of the board of trustees for New Perceptions, Inc. Professionally, she served as executive vice president, chief financial officer and secretary of Meridian Bioscience, Inc., a global medical diagnostics and life science company.

Dr. Raymond Hebert Distinguished Service Award – Siobhan Barone, Ph.D.

Barone was honored with the Dr. Raymond Hebert Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes those who have made a significant contribution within the University. Barone served Thomas More from 1994 through her retirement in 2022, as a professor, researcher, and chair of the biology department. During her time as chair, the biology department saw the highest level of external funding in its history.

St. Thomas More Medallion – Garren Colvin '86

Colvin received the St. Thomas More Medallion, the University's highest non-academic service award for extraordinary service to the University and to the larger community which it serves. This award is a testament to Colvin's leadership both in the University community and the impact he makes across Northern Kentucky as president and CEO of St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

MOREOVER

To read the press release with complete honoree biographies and photos from the event, visit tmuky.us/25bhad.

Join the fun!

Events are a great way to reconnect, network, and socialize. Mark your calendar today, we can't wait to see you at Thomas More! For more events, visit tmuky.us/alumnievents.

JULY



ALL SAINTS CLUB ATHLETIC GOLF OUTING

Friday | July 25, 2025

A | Jolly Golf Course | Alexandria, Kentucky
 Sponsor deadline July 11 | Golfer deadline July 18
 To be a sponsor or RSVP, visit tmuky.us/tmagolf

RAISIN' HELLBENDERS ON THE RIVER: CONCERT FOR CONSERVATION

Saturday | July 27, 2025 | 3-9 p.m.

Biology Field Station | California, Kentucky
 RSVP required | Visit tmuky.us/bfsconcert

AUGUST

FC CINCINNATI ALUMNI GAME

Saturday | August 10, 2025 | 6 p.m.

Details and tickets available at tmuky.us/fctickets

OCTOBER

HOMECOMING WEEKEND

Wednesday-Saturday | October 1-4, 2025

50TH ANNIVERSARY CLASS OF 1974

Wednesday | October 1

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARDS

Friday | October 3

ALUMNI TAILGATING/SAINTS FOOTBALL GAME

Saturday | October 4

Details coming soon at tmuky.us/alumnievents

WM. T. (BILL) ROBINSON III '67 INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF DIALOGUE

October 15, 2025

First speaker, Rabbi David Saperstein, returns.

More details coming soon

at thomasmore.edu/religiousliberty



2025

Honoring Outstanding Alumni

Do you know someone who should be honored at the Alumni Awards celebration?

The Alumni Awards honor outstanding alumni and community leaders whose talents and expertise have made a significant impact as they continue to live the Thomas More University mission. These awards are held annually and nominations are being accepted in the fields of:

**Citizenship
Service**

**Professional Achievement
Emerging Leader**

Honorary Alumna/Alumnus (New!)

and for faculty/staff/university friends:

**Lasting Influence
Legacy**

Deadline for nominations is **June 1, 2025**.
 For more information, visit tmuky.us/25nominate.

For a complete list of previous award winners, visit tmuky.us/pastawards.

2024 Alumni Award honorees





Growing Courageously

SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR | PHOTO PROVIDED

The Women's Conference returned for a fourth year, taking place on Friday, March 21 in the new Academic Center. The Conference celebrates Thomas More's roots by elevating the contributions of women, especially alumnae, to the community and inspires alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends of the University to seek more in their lives, both personally and professionally. The theme for 2025 was "Growing Courageously" and featured speakers who addressed various aspects of finding courage, both in their careers and in life.

The keynote was delivered by Katie Trauth Taylor '08, Ph.D., and Catherine O'Shea '10, CEO and COO, respectively, and co-founders of Narratize, a generative AI storytelling platform. Taylor and O'Shea shared their entrepreneurial journey after meeting and becoming friends as James Graham Brown Scholars at Thomas More. They spoke to the challenges and successes they have experienced in building and scaling their business, and their persistent pursuit of personal growth and professional impact.

Sessions included Kerry Tuttle, corporate and community program director for 1N5, a nonprofit centered on mental health education; Brenda Beers-Reineke '91/'02, retired executive VP and criminal law advocate; Samantha Mosby '23, associate vice president of organizational engagement for YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, and Stephanie Wright '03, owner and managing director of BrandFuel Co.

During the afternoon Leader Chat, Becky Shelton '18, shareholder and divisional president of Skyline Chili, One Holland Corporation reflected on courage with

Top: Speakers for 2025 included (from left) Kim Kehoe Goodwin '92, Samantha Mosby '23, Becky Shelton '18, Stephanie Wright '03, Kerry Tuttle, Brenda Beers-Reineke '90/'02, Catherine O'Shea '10, and Katie Trauth Taylor '08, Ph.D.

moderator Kim Kehoe Goodwin '92, senior director in Procter & Gamble's (P&G) Global Business Development Organization. The emcee for this year's conference was FOX19 morning news anchor Alexis Cruz. "This year, we were proud to highlight so many of our alumnae, demonstrating not only the value of a Thomas More education but also how a Catholic liberal arts education impacts our graduates' career choices and trajectory," says Courtney N. Kleier '17, director of alumni engagement and annual giving for Thomas More. "From English majors blazing paths in AI spaces to leaders in hospitality, manufacturing, mental health, branding, and so much more, these

women stand as examples that it is never too early to challenge ourselves to become more."

To see the conference agenda with complete speaker biographies and photos, visit thomasmore.edu/womens-conference.

MOREOVER

THOMAS MORE
UNIVERSITY

**TM
WC**

**WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE**

ENGAGEMENTS

♥♥♥ **Joseph Goedde '21** and **Madison Read '21** became engaged on March 23, 2024. They met on the first day at Thomas More and have been together ever since! Their wedding date is scheduled for Dec. 6, 2025.

Will Neltner '18/'23 is engaged to his girlfriend, Karen Wernke.

WEDDINGS

♥♥♥ **Zachary '22** and **Emmey (Frazier) '22 Chin**, were married on Sept. 14, 2024.

♥♥♥ **Natalie (Kleier) '20** married fellow Saints runner **Oscar Ramirez '20** at the end of August 2024. The two met and started dating while running Cross Country and Track & Field for Thomas More.

Sarah Brown '18 married her husband Owen in August 2024.

ANNIVERSARIES

♥♥♥ **Brett '02** and **Monica (Feinauer) '01 Ruschman** starting dating while attending Thomas More. They celebrated their 20-year wedding anniversary on Sept. 4, 2024. Congratulations!

♥♥♥ **Robert '99** and **Emily (Kleier) '99 Shewmaker** celebrate their wedding anniversary on Sept. 13. Married in 2003, they have now been married for more than two decades. Congrats!

♥♥♥ **Jim '74** and **Barbara (Baur) '75 Rowland**, celebrated a wet 50th anniversary at Niagara Falls on Aug. 2, 2024. Congratulations!

We'd love to share your engagement, wedding, and anniversary news! Send your good news (and a digital photo) by email using subject line "news" to alumni@thomasmore.edu or visit tmuky.us/alumninote.

Are You & Your Spouse



If you met your spouse while attending Thomas More (or Villa Madonna), send your anniversary date by email (alumni@thomasmore.edu) or phone (859.344.3545), so we can congratulate you both for years to come! ♥♥♥



**Zachary
& Emmey**



**Natalie &
Oscar**



Jim & Barbara

NEW ARRIVALS

Michael Luebbe '17 and wife, Alexis, welcomed their first child, Madison, on Dec. 9, 2024. Congratulations on this adorable addition to the family!

Alex (Walter) '14 and **Megan (Bohman) '15 Bohman-Walter** welcomed their second son, Robin Everett, on Feb. 2, 2025. Big brother Reese is over-the-moon! Photo by Casey Miller '24



Are you a proud parent of a little Saint? Please share a favorite digital photo of your little blessing(s). Email alumni@thomasmore.edu with names (include mom and/or dad), and class year!



CLASS NOTES

1960s

Colonel Gerald Volloy '63 received the 2024 Disciplinam Award from Covington Latin School in honor of his outstanding leadership in the United States Air Force and at the LexisNexis Corporation.

Richard Grome '69 was elected to the Board of Directors of East Cobb Civic Association, Inc., Marietta, Ga., for the eighth year in a row and has been elected president of the Association for the fifth time.

1970s

Mary Ellen Ziegler '70 was honored at the 2024 Covington Latin School Awards as an Honorary Alumna for her service to Covington Latin School and the community. Congratulation, Ellen!

Saints Sweethearts **Jerome '71** and **Susan '88 Von Handorf**, were jointly honored with the Sr. Reina Award at



Notre Dame Academy's 2025 Women Making a Difference Awards. Jerry earned his undergraduate degree in physics before pursuing engineering at the University of Detroit Mercy. He dedicated 31 years as director of facilities at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, making a lasting impact on the diocesan organization. Susan holds an Associate of Arts in theology, demonstrating her commitment to faith and education. Congratulations to Jerome and Susan!

Chuck Scheper '74 was recognized as one of the 2025 Great Living Cincinnatians for his leadership, business and civic achievements, and impactful service to the community. Congratulations, Chuck! Check out the award video at tmuky.us/scheper.



Cincinnati Magazine highlighted **D. Lynn Meyers '77** as a powerhouse in Cincinnati's film and theater scene, showcasing her innovative and inclusive casting that has shaped countless careers, as well as her bold leadership at Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, ensuring its survival and growth against all odds. Read the article at tmuky.us/dramaqueen.

1980s



Congratulations to **Sr. Jean Marie Hoffman '81**, who received the Pioneer Award from the Kenton County Fiscal Court.

Andrew Kulina '87 returned to campus as a part of the inaugural semester of the revised First Year Experience and spoke to students about his time at

NOTES CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

Biology alumni return to share insights and words of wisdom

On March 4, 2025, several biology alumni returned to campus to share their professional experiences and insights with current students, offering valuable advice on making the most of their time at Thomas More. Following the discussion, they engaged with students in a lively Q&A session, providing further guidance and answering questions. Thank you to the following alumni who were in attendance: **Dr. Vickie Chan '99**, **Mitchell Kriege '16**, **Dr. Katie Neltner '16**, **Kyle Neltner '15**, **Winter Okoth '12, Ph.D.**, **Anna Oliverio '21**, **Erin Rowekamp '15**, **Andrew Seiler '20**, and **Josh Vogel '10**. Thank you all, for giving back to our students!



NOTES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25



Thomas More and what he is doing professionally in the United Kingdom and internationally. Kulina reconnected with the University in 2023 for a five-part, in-depth interview about family, career, and continuing the Thomas More mission. To read that article, visit tmuky.us/kulina.

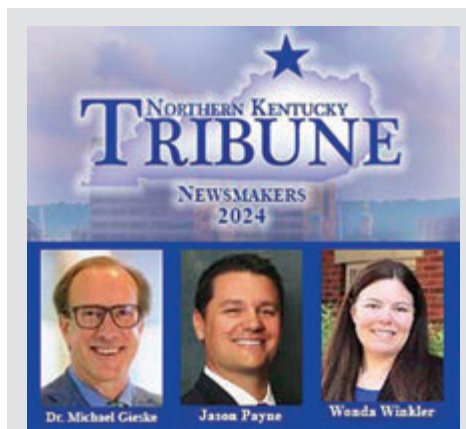
Linda Robinson '87, MSN, RN, CPXP, became a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing.

1990s



Lisa Goetz '94 was appointed as the new county treasurer for the Boone County Fiscal Court. Visit tmuky.us/goetz to read more about the appointment.

Leigh Ann Pansch '97 started a new role with DOCS Dermatology. She is now the clinical director of education.



Congratulations to the 2024 Northern Kentucky Tribune Newsmakers! We are especially proud and love seeing alumni **Dr. Michael Gieske '80**, **Jason Payne '15**, and **Wonda Winkler '90** honored. Read more at tmuky.us/24newsmakers.



Jodie Mader '98, Ph.D., started a new position as associate proposal writer at Pearson.

Laura Thomas '99

became the new chief marketing officer at Pace. To read the article, visit tmuky.us/pace.



2000s

Suzi Zilliox '00 started a position as a senior staff accountant at Thomas More University.

Don Stephens '01 is the new chief operating officer of the City of Roswell, Georgia. Read more by visiting tmuky.us/stephens.



Shelly Koch '02 obtained her Certified Government Financial Manager credential and was promoted to chief of the Revenue Accounting Section in the TTB, a bureau within the U.S. Department of the Treasury responsible for alcohol and tobacco tax and trade regulations.

Andrea Sullivan '02 was inducted as a member of the class of 2024 into the Northern Kentucky Athletic Directors Association Hall of Fame for her high school athletic achievements. Check out other inductees and award winners by visiting tmuky.us/nkadahalloffame. Congratulations, Andrea!

Because of his Thomas More experience, **Jeremy Hiers '03**, converted to Catholicism in 2009. He went on to become an Augustinian friar in 2009 and was ordained as a priest in 2021.



Paul Hardy '04 started a new position as the chief executive officer at Monterey Mushroom, LLC.

An article was written by Bold Journey magazine about **Laura Michelle Berkemeier '06/'18**, highlighting her dedication to Cincinnati's community theatre scene as both an actor and director. To read the article, visit tmuky.us/boldjourney.



Gee Horton '06 created three amazing murals as part of Cincinnati's 2024 BLINK, hosted his second solo exhibition at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center with a show titled "Gee Horton: Chapter 2, A Subtle Farewell to the Inner Child," and hosted his first solo museum exhibit in Louisville at the KMAC Contemporary Art Museum. In addition, this spring, Gee's short film, "Be Home Before the Streetlights," won Best Documentary Short at the 2025 Over-The-Rhine International Film Festival in Cincinnati.



Daniel Noguera '06/'09 is a twice-over alumnus who has created a strong name for himself as an entrepreneur in the Cincinnati region. In 2013, he launched Urbana Cafe as the fulfillment of a desire to spend his work week more meaningfully. Urbana's mission is "coffee with a purpose" and operates with a "desire to create a positive impact on both the coffee industry and the communities around us." This year, the Alumni Association forged a collaboration with Noguera and the team at Urbana Coffee for the creation of a custom Thomas More blend and small-batch bags as a treat for our donors and alumni. We were excited to launch these at the President's Society Christmas Party to keep everyone warm and caffeinated over the winter months! Noguera has been back in the news celebrating Urbana's expansion into a sixth location in Price Hill. Congratulations and thank you to Daniel and his team!



Heather Ackels '07 was promoted from director to vice president of business technology for BERPL Technologies.

Neena LaMendola-Volk

'07 was announced as the chief operating officer of Partners for Change, formerly known as Covington Partners. To read more about the announcement, visit tmuky.us/partners.



Johnathan Mueller '08 returned to Thomas More in the role of IT manager.

Patti Talbert '09 accepted a promotion to associate director with Broadleaf Behavioral Services

2010s



Josh Vogel '10 took the lead on a regional project called Project Heart ReStart. This initiative took root in the Cincinnati Rotary in 2023 and has bridged the river thanks to Josh, who is a Cincinnati Rotary member and Campbell County resident. Thanks to the combined efforts of the Rotary Clubs of Cincinnati, Covington, Falmouth, Florence, and Kenton County, Avive Solutions, a manufacturer of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), will install an AED into every first responder vehicle in Boone, Kenton, Campbell, and Pendleton counties. Learn more about this amazing story by visiting tmuky.us/heartrestart.

Nathan Klare '12 won an honorable mention award at the fall 2024 Bellevue Art in the Park. Congratulations!

David Kennett '13 started a new position as associate director for Events and Strategic Partnerships at Northern Kentucky University.

Dr. Andrew Linkugel '13

and his wife Heather moved to Columbus, Ohio as he recently joined the faculty at Nationwide Children's Hospital as a pediatric/craniofacial plastic surgeon.



Erik Stephens '13 was listed in the Courier's 2024 Forty Under 40.

Jenn Adkins '14 started a position as associate software developer at ConstructConnect.

Brenon Russel '14 returned to campus in October 2024 as a part of the inaugural semester of a revised First Year Experience program at Thomas More hosting alumni speakers on a variety of topics. Russel spoke about his journey in finding his major/minor (psychology/pre-legal studies) and discovering his career path in law.

Jason Payne '15 was appointed as the new board chair for the Northern Kentucky Chamber.

Michael Stephens '15, M.D. was awarded the 2024 Distinguished Young Alumnus Award from Covington Latin School in recognition of his achievement in service to the community and to his profession.



Sara Russo '17 started a position as a hospital partnership liaison at Network For Hope.

CNBC highlighted **Rebecca Smiley '18** and her unexpected shift from college

Non-profit leaders speak out about local housing needs



Wonda Winkler '90 and **Moira Weir '00** wrote an article addressing Northern Kentucky's housing shortage through increasing affordable options for middle-income earners and essential workers. Read the op ed by visiting tmuky.us/housing.

admissions counselor to establishing the very successful Smiley Travel in the hospitality industry. Her story reflects a growing trend among young travelers seeking personalized, hassle-free planning in an age of information overload. Read the article by visiting tmuky.us/smileytravel.



John Young '19/'23 was appointed as Tri-County Bank's next president and CEO.

2020s

Lam Pham '20 started a new position as manager of event sales and operations at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. Congrats!



Sydney Auteri '21 started a new position as an associate at the law firm Keating Muething and Klekamp PLL (KMK Law).

NOTES CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

Shop to Benefit Thomas More University

Use your shopper account at Kroger to make a gift to the University. Their program allows you to designate rewards earned on your account be directed to a charity of your choice.



Register at tmuky.us/kroger

NOTES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27



Sarah Richards '21 published her first children's book, "Hays's Fall Adventure."

Melinda Kellam '22/'24 started a new position as enrollment coach BBA and MBA at Thomas More University.

Sara Wilson '22 started a new job as the executive director of Piqua Arts Council.

Jacob Caruso '23 started a position as a training accountant manager at MegaCorp Logistics.

Abby Hightchew Hatmaker '23 started at Keller Williams Realty Inc. as a realtor.

Michael Logan '23 started a new position as a customer relations advocate at Fidelity Investments.

Phillip Rudolph '23 accepted a position with Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC) in Oklahoma. His new role is supplier specialist - Jackson Family Wines. Prior to this role, he worked as a sales associate for RNDC of Kentucky for 15 years in this region.

Caleb Hightchew '24 was sworn into the Florence Police Department as a police recruit in October of 2024.

Sophie McVay '24 started physician assistant school at Miami University in May 2025.

Jennifer Schalk '24 started a new position as resource advocate at Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission.

Follow Thomas More Alumni on social media:



ThomasMoreAlum



ThomasMoreAlumni



Thomas More University Alumni

STAY CONNECTED Update Your Records

Has your contact information changed? Update your contact records by completing the alumni update form online at thomasmore.edu/alumni or drop a note in the reply envelope located in the center of this Moreover.

Nursing alumni share personal and professional wisdom with soon-to-be alumni during Nursing Graduates Day

Quotes from alumni on Nursing Graduates Day

"Trust in yourself, believe in yourself and you've got this."

"It's not about where we work, but the impact we make."

"This task feels impossible, but you can do it and are made for more."

"Thomas More is preparing you well; it's one of the best programs."

"Listen to your patients and be there for them."

"Nursing can find you!"

"This is a job where you have the chance to be someone's hero. Don't forget how important this work is to each patient."



On March 5, the School of Nursing hosted Nursing Graduates Day, a biennial event. The goal of the event is to "honor its graduates, to maintain their connection to the University, and to inspire current students and faculty by reminding us of the gifts we receive and are able to give when we become nurses." The event included nine alumni, ranging from the class of 1997 to 2022, with each alumna/alumnus shared lessons learned in getting certified, the twists and turns of their professional path, why they chose to become a nurse, and how they stay committed to the profession each day. Thank you to these alumni for giving back to our students: **Tommy Bauman '22/'24, MBA, MSN, RN**, assistant nurse manager, Cardiac Telemetry Unit, TriHealth; **Danny Bellman '20, BSN, RN- RN II**, inpatient psychiatry, Cincinnati Children's; **Megan (Grizzell) Damico '11, BSN, RN**, assistant nurse manager, urology, St. Elizabeth Healthcare; **Rebecca Evans '18, BSN, RN**, director of nursing, Holzapfel and Lied Plastic Surgery; **Jana Riffe '22, BSN, RN**, medical surgical aid, St. Elizabeth Healthcare; **Sean Schwab '21, BSN, RN**, Newborn Intensive Care Unit, Cincinnati Children's; **J. Wes Smith '21, BSN, RN**, night shift team lead, Transitional Unit, St. Elizabeth Healthcare; **Ryan Townsend '09, MSN, APRN, AGACNP-BC**, advanced practice provider lead, cardiac surgery, St. Elizabeth Healthcare; **Lisa Wilson '97, BSN, RN**, department services officer, Cincinnati VA Medical Center.

Michael Thompson '21: A Star Rising

Following '30 under 30,' BLINK success, Thompson brought his visual storytelling to the Eva G. Farris Gallery



SUBMITTED BY KRISTEN GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & PR | PHOTO PROVIDED

To say that Michael Thompson has had a busy year would be an understatement. From being honored by Forbes as one of Cincinnati's top innovators under 30-years-old, to helping create a mural honoring the Hit King in just five days, to winning an underground art battle during BLINK – you could say that, in 2024, Michael Thompson was having a moment. We know he's just getting started. Thompson returned to Thomas More in fall 2024 for a new exhibition, "Prologue to KINFOLKLORE," which appeared at the Eva G. Farris Art Gallery. Moreover caught up with Thompson about what he's been up to – and where he'll be soaring to next.

Thompson and "Murmurations," one of the works that appeared in "Prologue to KINFOLKLORE."

Tell us about "Prologue to KINFOLKLORE"?

MT: I titled this show a prologue because it's an intermediary between my last exhibition, "The Kool-Aid Wino," which focused on nostalgia and memory, and my upcoming show, "KINFOLKLORE," which explores family stories, urban legends, and the importance of cultural understanding through storytelling. Both shows look at the ways that art preserves the human spirit, and I wanted this show to act as a bridge between the two. This exhibit can almost be considered a double feature. It includes an even mixture of new and old works, re-curated in a new environment. The gallery was transformed to allow you to experience part of my artistic evolution and act as a door to what is to come.

What have you been up to lately?

MT: I started off 2024 with my most recent solo show, "The Kool-Aid Wino," that I debuted at Studio San Giuseppe Gallery after a six-month residency at Mount St. Joseph University. I followed that up by spending my summer muraling in Walnut Hills, working on Art in Bloom [the annual spring fundraiser of the Cincinnati Art Museum], and serving as the curator for ArtsWave's Truth and Innovation Showcase. The past few months have been filled with travel, commissions, public projects, collaborations, and making new work in Studio Beechmont, my collaborative studio shared with fellow artist, Jim Tucker. Some other notable highlights have been painting the Pete Rose "14 Forever Mural" and winning the Secret Walls art battle at BLINK, designing a special bourbon bottle for New Riff to support the arts in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, being honored by the Urban League Young Professionals, and being named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 List in Cincinnati.

What did it feel like to return to the Eva G. Farris Gallery?

MT: Back in 2020 when I was a rising senior, I remember spending

the entire summer of the pandemic planning and preparing my senior exhibition, "Strange Fruit" with the hopes of convincing my professors that a college student was capable of pulling off a solo exhibition. Much to my delight, they granted my request. I also remember momentarily thinking, "What did I just get myself into?" and the year of work, late nights, and lots of assistance from my professors and peers to help me pull it off. Looking back on that show and that time, I hadn't really developed a style, habits, or artistic practice yet; I was just really passionate about my work and about telling stories I thought needed to be told. Now as a full-time artist (although I'm still developing and changing), I realize how integral that process was to forming the way that I currently work and think. Bringing multiple mediums into the same space to immerse the viewer, superimposing the historical with the imaginative, and thinking about the space that art holds within both the personal and societal landscapes.

One morning the week before my senior exhibition, I was preparing gallery labels in the classroom where my professor, Liz Neal, was getting ready for class. We were talking about the show and how I was feeling about it, and discussing the nervousness and excitement of putting your ideas out into the world. At one point I said, "Who knows, maybe in 10 years I'll have another show here when I'm a professional!" Three years later, I'm so grateful to be back in the gallery where I was first able to call myself an artist. Not only does it mark my return to campus as a professional, but it also marks the first time I have shown my work in the same gallery twice. Re-curating a space that previously held my work was both an exciting challenge and a nostalgic moment. I can't wait to see what the next three years will hold and I'm looking forward to continuing my relationship with Thomas More and the many people that made it so special for me for four years and everything that has unfolded thereafter. Go Saints!

MOREOVER



In Memoriam

"This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day." - John 6:40

Mary Adams '81, April 4, 2024

Dr. Kenneth Billman '55, Jan. 26, 2025

Janet Bresser '56, Aug. 31, 2024

Margaret Butler '61, Nov. 28, 2024

Thomas Colley '84, Sept. 30, 2024

Donna Cooper '03, Nov. 24, 2024

Thomas Culbertson '63, Feb. 22, 2025

Sister Marilene Cullen '61, Dec. 18, 2024

Barry Cummins '63, Sept. 28, 2024

Richard Davis '73, June 5, 2024

James Deters '51, Feb. 23, 2025

Robert England '73, Dec. 21, 2024

Ramon Fancher '76, Dec. 4, 2024

Mary Grosser '72, July 16, 2024

Dr. Stephen Hellebusch '72, Feb. 5, 2025

Carol Haberman '83, April 27, 2024

Sister M. Michyl Habermehl '68, Feb. 22, 2025

Donald Hellmann '73, Oct. 17, 2024

Dr. Donald Von Hoene '59, Dec. 5, 2024

Daniel Jansen '73, Dec. 4, 2024

Rosemary Jansen '75, May 24, 2024

Nancy Kuchle '56, Feb. 7, 2025

William Lyons '59, Jan. 12, 2025

James Mahoney '58, Jan. 29, 2024

Wilma McGlasson '84, June 13, 2024

Joyce Ravenscraft '76, April 27, 2024

Stephen Riesenberg '63, May 14, 2024

Lois Ross '82, Jan. 6, 2024

Peter Samples, Jr. '67, Oct. 20, 2024

Thomas Spindler '73, Sept. 14, 2024

Nancy Stiefvater '71, June 29, 2024

Patricia Sumida '52, Nov. 23, 2024

Nancy Tomasella '73, Sept. 26, 2024

Della Treadway '72, Jan. 22, 2025

Sister Ann Wehry '52, Sept. 17, 2024

Gayle Wells '93, Sept. 5, 2024

R. David Zerhusen '77, Nov. 15, 2024

Thomas Zumbiel Sr. '56, Nov. 2, 2024

CLASS OF 1975

50

year anniversary

IT'S A CELEBRATION FOR YOU!

Members of the class of 1975, mark your calendar to return to campus for Homecoming activities this fall. A 50th Reunion Luncheon is planned specifically to honor you and your classmates (see **page 22** for dates). We are also excited to announce a unique giving opportunity in the form of a 50th Reunion Class Gift. You helped shape Thomas More, help us shape the next 50 years by coming together to make a gift to the Second Century Campaign and cementing your legacy.

We are seeking Class Champions to honor the Class of 1975 during the Homecoming celebration. Watch for more information from the Institutional Advancement team. If you are interested in helping, please email advancement@thomasmore.edu or call **859.344.3344**.

Monsignor Murphy Legacy Society

CREATE YOUR LEGACY AT THOMAS MORE UNIVERSITY

Can YOU leave a lasting contribution to the mission of Thomas More University? Charitable planning empowers you to create opportunities for generations to come. **THANK YOU** to all of the existing members. Through the Monsignor Murphy Legacy Society, you can join a fellowship of devoted friends and alumni who have made a pledge to support Thomas More through their will or other estate planning documents. Your contribution will sustain the mission of Thomas More while creating a lasting legacy for yourself on campus.

Have you considered making a legacy plan with Thomas More? There are many options to explore which give you the freedom to craft your legacy, and it may be easier than you imagine. Contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at **859.344.3344** to explore opportunities for planned giving or to notify the University of your intent. Additional information can be found at tmuky.us/plannedgiving.

All prospective donors are encouraged to consult with their legal and tax advisors.





Video scoreboard unveiled in honor of Coach Jim Weyer

SUBMITTED BY TOM BRADY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT | PHOTOS PROVIDED

In October 2024, Saints Athletics welcomed a new addition to the Connor Convocation Center (CCC) with the installation of a state-of-the-art video board dedicated in memory of the late Jim Weyer. Weyer proudly served Thomas More (first as Villa Madonna College, and later as Thomas More College) from 1958-78 in the roles of head baseball and men's basketball coach, and as athletic director. Coach Weyer had a tremendous impact on so many individuals as a coach, a mentor, and a friend.

When Weyer passed away several years ago, discussions began to identify a meaningful way to honor his legacy and establish a connection between the university's rich athletic history with its recent journey into NCAA Division II athletics. With feedback from Vice President and Director of Athletics Terry Connor and the All Saints Club, the idea of raising the financial support to purchase a video board for the CCC took form. It seemed a natural way to honor an individual who paved the way to continued success by the late Jim Connor, who also served as a well-known coach and athletic director at Thomas More for over two decades.

The new video board measures approximately 14x10 feet – offering a commanding presence on the concourse wall next to the Hall of Fame room. The board includes advanced technology beyond the previous Saints Athletics scoreboards, enhancing the gameday experience in a variety of ways, including the ability to

project videos, high resolution graphics, and promotions for our valued community sponsors and business partners during games.

The cost of this project totaled over \$100,000, with much of the initial funding generously raised through the support of several leadership level donors who played under Coach Weyer and learned from his leadership valuable lessons about sports and, more importantly, lessons of life. Numerous additional donors supported this project and allowed the additional purchase of a new supporting scoreboard and shot clocks.

The Jim Weyer Scoreboard was installed in time for the volleyball and basketball seasons. A special dedication and ceremony took place on Dec. 5. Weyer's family, including his wife, Jo Ann, son, John, and many other family members and friends, were all in attendance. When the project was first shared with the Weyer family, they agreed it was the perfect way to provide a lasting legacy for a new generation of Thomas More student-athletes and supporters to enjoy.

MOREOVER



Top: Generations of the Weyer family at the dedication ceremony. Above: The scoreboard in action.

SUPPORT YOUR SAINTS! Become a member of the

The mission of the All Saints Club is to provide the financial aid and resources necessary to all Thomas More University athletic programs. With your support, students like those highlighted in these pages can compete at the highest levels in their sport and graduate. We can enhance the overall experience for all 600+ student-athletes by building a culture that promotes commitment to excellence in the classroom, on the playing fields, and in the community.

For more information about the All Saints Club, visit thomasmore.edu/athletics or contact Tom Brady at 859-344-3642 | bradyt@thomasmore.edu





Student-athletes as James Graham Brown Scholars

A SERIES OF ARTICLES BY ISABELLA SCHULTZ, THOMAS MORE UNIVERSITY STUDENT
PHOTOS PROVIDED



James Graham Brown
SCHOLARS PROGRAM
at THOMAS MORE UNIVERSITY

The James Graham Brown Scholars (JGBS) is an honors program that recognizes and challenges students to become well-rounded leaders and citizens of the world. Along with a full tuition scholarship, the students selected for this rigorous program also participate in special seminars, experiential learning in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in research within programs that are of interest to them. This program is difficult to excel in, but adding to that the layer of being a student-athlete is almost unheard of.

In this series, these student-athletes share their experiences as accomplished students in the classroom and outstanding athletes on the field and court. The sports that the student-athletes compete in range from soccer to football to volleyball. These student-athletes do the unthinkable and persevere throughout their daily lives. They always go the extra mile, whether that is on the court or in the classroom.



Lotte Derksen #8 *women's soccer*

Lotte Derksen is nothing short of extraordinary. She has done it all from coming to the United States from the Netherlands to play soccer to excelling in the exercise science program at Thomas More.

Derksen is a senior midfielder on the women's soccer team, but more importantly, she is a member of the James Graham Brown Scholars. With the help of the JGBS program, she was able to adapt to a new life in the United States very quickly during her first year. She credits both the JGBS and soccer programs for her transition as she would not have known JGBS existed without soccer. "I actually heard about it first through my coach," Derksen says. "He came to tell me about the program and told me that he thought I would be a good fit for it."

Once Derksen went through the grueling process of writing essays, getting letters of recommendation, making videos, and getting through the interviews, she became a part of the JGBS during her sophomore year. Since then, Derksen has been able to participate in many different activities such as taking honors seminars, going on retreats, workshops, and cultural activities, and having the opportunity to get to know other students in the program better.

During this past semester, she had the opportunity to participate in an honors seminar called, "Leadership Under Stress," and also had the opportunity to advance her leadership skills at a United States

Left: Lotte in the field for Saints women's soccer.

Marine Corp base in Dayton, Ohio, and apply everything she learned in the honors seminar there.

Ben Albers #28

men's volleyball

When you first meet Ben Albers, you may think he is like every other student-athlete who eats, sleeps, and breathes their sport. But after talking to Albers for a couple of minutes, someone would find out quickly that he is more than just his sport. Albers is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, an Elder alumnus, and a senior outside hitter on the Saints men's volleyball team.

Albers has earned many accomplishments on the court, including being the men's volleyball program's all-time leader in kills, but he wants people to know that he is more than his volleyball accomplishments and that those accomplishment don't define him. In addition to being an athlete, he is also a full-time biology student, a medical assistant at OrthoCincy, and a proud member of the James Graham Brown Scholars.

JGBS is a program for the most well-rounded and virtuous thinkers at Thomas More. With being in a scholars program, Albers has to make time to complete 90 service hours per year for

On top of all that JGBS requires to stay in the program, those who run the program can't forget that Derksen is a full-time athlete. Derksen credits Thomas More for a lot of how her soccer career has panned out and ultimately she said that choosing Thomas More was rather easy. "I wanted to be able to combine playing soccer at a high level while also studying, and in the Netherlands that was not an option as universities are not set up the same as here," says Derksen. "Back home, you play sports just at clubs. That is why I wanted to go to the U.S. I got recruited by the soccer coach here and I decided that Thomas More was a good fit for me." Since committing to Thomas More, her career has been nothing short of amazing. She has played in 65 matches, started in 25 matches, scored five goals, has had three assists, and has played a total of 2,615 minutes.

Outside of both JGBS and soccer, she has been able to make friends and connections that will last a lifetime. "I've been here for almost four years and one of the things I like the most is the fact that wherever I go on campus, there is usually someone I know," says Derksen. "The contact with professors is also very low-key. When you walk in the hallway they might stop by for a little talk or just to say hi, which makes the step to ask for help way easier."

As of today, after she graduates from Thomas More, Derksen is planning to move back to Europe and earn a master's degree in sports science or human movement science. One day she hopes to enter the field of sports performance analysis or healthy aging.

The JGBS program has been an outlet for Lotte during her time at Thomas More. Although it is a rigorous program, she wouldn't have traded the opportunity to be a part of something so special for anything in the world.

MOREOVER



JGBS in his hectic schedule. To complete these service hours, he introduced the Red Cross blood drives to Thomas More.

Above: Ben on the volleyball court for the Saints.

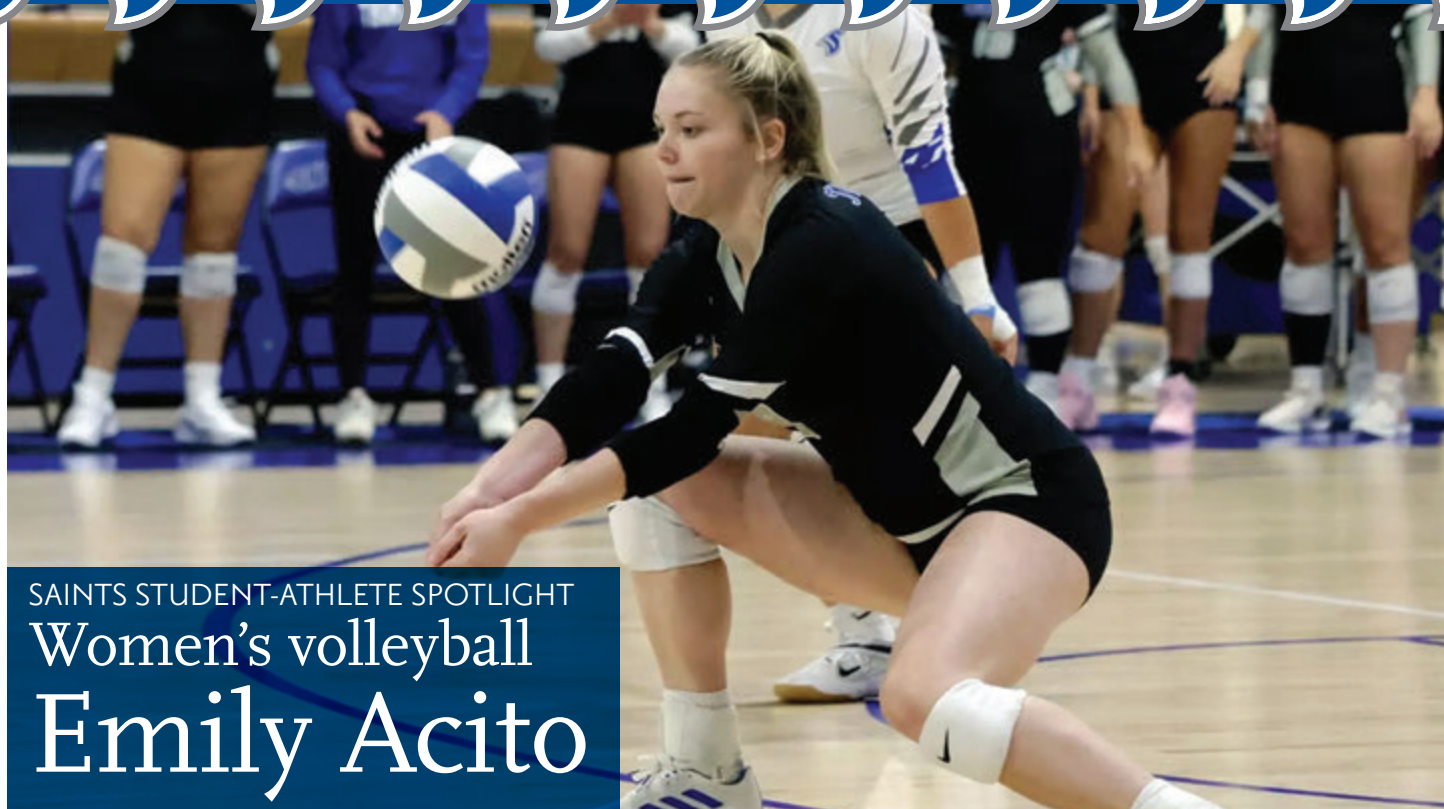
Albers was first introduced to the Red Cross as a sophomore when his volleyball coach told him about an internship called the Red Cross Collegiate Leadership Program. "I got accepted [into the internship] out of the couple thousand applications," says Albers. "There were 12 of us, and we worked at the Red Cross National Headquarters in Washington, D.C., a block from the White House." During his summer in Washington, D.C., Albers had the opportunity to learn from those who work at the headquarters while also interacting with congressmen and regional managers.

Albers then took what he learned in Washington, D.C., and applied it back home to JGBS, where he impacted the community at Thomas More. To Albers, the JGBS community has helped him thrive as a student-athlete even with his many commitments and responsibilities.

On the volleyball side, Albers hopes to make a deep run in the 2025 International Volleyball Association tournament. "I'm very excited for our season," says Albers. "I think we can really make an impact in the IVA tournament... I, hopefully, can make a good impact on my final year here. I want to leave the program on a good note and hopefully continue to excel the program in the right direction."

Ben is a great athlete, but an extraordinary student. After he graduates from Thomas More, he hopes to continue his education in medical school. The JGBS program has helped advance Albers throughout his years at Thomas More. The connections he's made will last a lifetime, and even though it is demanding, JGBS has been a lifeline during his four years at Thomas More.

MOREOVER



SAINTS STUDENT-ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

Women's volleyball Emily Acito

SUBMITTED BY ISABELLA SCHULTZ, THOMAS MORE UNIVERSITY STUDENT | PHOTOS PROVIDED

To the blind eye, Thomas More junior Emily Acito may seem like your average collegiate athlete. She learned how to excel early-on on the volleyball court as a six-rotation outside hitter, and in the classroom as a nursing major. Some people may even assume that everything in her life comes easily to her and that she is living the dream life; a life that most aspiring young athletes hope to achieve someday. However, those close to Emily know that her life has been anything but easy. She once went from a young, joyful athlete to fighting for her life in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). At just the age of 14, she thought that she would never be able to play volleyball again, and never to be able to fulfill her dream of becoming a collegiate athlete. A dream that she wanted more than anything in her life.

After making her high school's JV volleyball team, one day she began coughing up blood and ended up being rushed to the hospital with no explanation as to why this was happening. She was quickly transferred to the PICU where it was discovered that she had an undiagnosed lung condition. "I was in and out of the PICU and went through very traumatic events including being put on life support," states Emily. "I ended up having my entire right lung removed. The first thing I asked about when waking up from surgery was if I could still play volleyball."

During her time at the hospital, volleyball was all she could think about. After such a traumatic event, she had to learn how to reinvent herself and relearn everything there was to volleyball. Just two months after her right lung was removed, she jumped right back into competition, determined and ready to play.

She soon learned that it wasn't going to be as easy as she thought.

Due to her right shoulder muscles being cut to remove her lung, she had to go through an immense amount of rehab to regain her shoulder strength. She also was faced with challenges such as being out of breath from the simplest activities and having to learn to play a different position. She had to relearn how to endure volleyball again and how to regain her stamina.

Emily has had an immense amount of support from her parents, coaches, and trainers to push her to her full potential in volleyball. In addition, Thomas More women's volleyball coach Holly Bronner-Stiver has had Emily's back even before her time at Thomas More began. Bronner-Stiver coaches at a local volleyball club, Northern Kentucky Junior Volleyball, and was Emily's volleyball coach during her time on the 17U team. For Emily, Bronner-Stiver was a key factor in her decision to come to Thomas More, and she is grateful to have a coach like Bronner-Stiver in her life. "[Emily] Has a very positive attitude and she is a good example of how to bounce back," states Bronner-Stiver. "I have seen such a boost of confidence in her throughout the years and seeing her believe in herself."

On the outside, Emily has a normal life. She enjoys normal college activities such as hanging out with friends and meeting new people, but the scar on her neck from her surgery will always be a reminder of how strong she is and how she did not allow a health scare get in the way of fulfilling her dreams. She will always be grateful to the people who saved her life and repays them by not taking anything in life for granted. "Every touch, every practice, every game is something to be grateful for," says Emily.

Above: Emily in action on the volleyball court.

MOREOVER

FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

THOMASMORE.EDU/ATHLETICS

Follow the Saints on social media #LetsGoSaints





Academic accomplishments put Saints in the spotlight

CSC Academic All-District Teams

The College Sports Communicators (CSC, formerly CoSIDA) each season honors Academic All-District Teams by recognizing the nation's top student-athletes for their combined performance on the field and in the classroom. Athletes from NCAA Division I, II, and III are recognized for this honor. The following headlines highlight Saints student-athletes who earned spots on these teams.

Men's soccer has four earn CSC Academic All-district Honors | tmuky.us/24cscmsoccer

Women's soccer has two earn CSC Academic All-district Honors | tmuky.us/24cscwsoccer

Women's volleyball has three earn CSC Academic All-district Honors | tmuky.us/24cscwvolleyball

And Still More Good News

Athletic Department achieves 3.12 GPA during fall semester | tmuky.us/24fallgpa



Athletic performances result in Saints headlines

G-MAC Weekly and All Conference Awards

The G-MAC honors student-athletes who are outstanding in their sport on a weekly basis, as well as all-conference teams. See the following headlines and visit the links for those that made the list.

Wrestler Cole Thomas claims G-MAC Championship | tmuky.us/25gmacwrestling

Four Saints football players earn G-MAC All-Conference Honors, Iden earns Elite 26 Award | tmuky.us/24gmacfootball

Three men's basketball players earn G-MAC All-Conference Honors, Simpson named Freshman of the Year | tmuky.us/25gmacmbb

C.J. Herbers earns second G-MAC Men's Bowler of the Month Honors | tmuky.us/24gmacherbers

Jack McCune named G-MAC Athlete of the Week | tmuky.us/24gmacmccune

Jared Pogue earns G-MAC Men's Bowler of the Month Honors | tmuky.us/25gmacpogue

Baylee Spickard earns G-MAC Women's Bowler of the Month Honors | tmuky.us/25gmacspickard

Mitchell Rylee named G-MAC Men's Basketball Athlete of the Week | tmuky.us/25gmacrylee

Baseball's Gavin Vogelgesang named G-MAC South Division Player of the Week | tmuky.us/25gmacvogelgesang

Jack Perdue named G-MAC Pitcher of the Week | tmuky.us/25gmacperdue

Casey George named G-MAC Men's Basketball Athlete of the Week | tmuky.us/25gmacgeorge

Spencer Lethbridge Named G-MAC Men's Lacrosse Offensive Athlete of the Week | tmuky.us/25gmaclethbridge



NCAA DII News

Andjela Popovic (women's soccer) earns USC NCAA DII Second Team All-region Honors | tmuky.us/24diipopovic

Finn Battenstein (men's soccer) earns USC NCAA DII Second Team All-region Honors | tmuky.us/24diibattenstein

And Still More Good News

Saint Bonnett and Mattassini (rugby) named to NCR DI All-American Team | tmuky.us/25ncrrugby

Notable achievements in the Saints record books



George



Pierani



Hasler



Lanter



Benjamin

BASKETBALL

men's

Casey George surpassed 1,000 career points

LACROSSE

women's

Meg Pierani breaks career goals record

TRACK & FIELD

athletes break multiple indoor records

women's

Dyllan Hasler Mile Run

men's

Nick Lanter 3,000 Meter Run

Benjamin/Ellison/Toro/Theriot 4x200 Meter Relay

Witherington/Ellison/Benjamin/Miller Distance Medley



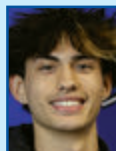
Ellison



Toro



Theriot



Miller



Witherington

Opinion – Judy Harris '69:

What's not to love about university students? Always much to learn

REPRINTED FROM SEPT. 2, 2024, NKY TRIBUNE (WITH PERMISSION)

“Learning never exhausts the mind.”

Leonardo da Vinci

Thirty-three years on university faculties. What's not to love about university students? My current retirement milieu includes student-athletes at Thomas More University, hundreds and hundreds of them. Wonderful! As always, there is much for me to learn.

“Hello, I'm Judy.” Exchanging first names, we're acquainted and on a first-names-only basis. That means we greet each other with smiles when our paths cross. Friendship begins.

As a former professor of education, I traveled to a wide range of schools in Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana as our students wished for clinical placements in their home bases. As a result, I know about many of their high schools when I meet freshmen and welcome them to Thomas More. A simple connection. However, the world of high school changed much over these last 10 years. I welcome the updates. The greeting becomes “Zdravo, I'm Judy,” when I've heard the student-athlete or assistant coach is from Yugoslavia. Such clear surprise lights their faces as they realize that someone from here might be aware of their native language. We have good laughs realizing that Zdravo is the limit of my Serbo-Croatian. Frequent chats about their country are ahead.

A few years back, a men's basketball player was from Lithuania. He was shocked when, one day, I brought the Lithuanian translation of one of my books to show him. The only English words were my name on the cover. With just two work trips to Lithuania, I had only a beginning knowledge of his country but was always ready to learn more about these resilient people.

Attending games and competitions as often as possible allows me to follow the athlete part of them excelling in their sports, adding joy as we also celebrate their academic successes. Knowing the first names of the student-athletes personalizes the game, increases focus. We get to know each other. We have things to chat about. What's

not to love about student-athletes? There is much to learn about competitive dance, collegiate wrestling, women's lacrosse, and men's lacrosse. International student-athletes extend my understanding of the variations they find in American versions of their sport. Fascinating.

And then there's rugby! My Scottish cousins played rugby. Our Saints rugby team won the National Collegiate Rugby trophy

Judy Harris is well established in Northern Kentucky life, as a longtime elementary and university educator. A graduate of Thomas More, she began her career there in 1980 where she played a key role in teacher education and introduced students to national and international travel experiences. She has traveled and studied extensively abroad. She enjoys retirement yet stays in daily contact with university students.



Former Thomas More Professor Judy Harris (center) with Thomas More students attending a game in the Connor Convocation Center.

several years ago. With rugby student-athletes from Argentina and South Africa, I hear about Thomas More's summer break being in their winter season, Christmas being in their summer. Something I'd known about hemispheres but in a most remote way.

If I ever thought I knew enough about any sport, that isn't true today. Every aspect seems in constant flux and change. Staying knowledgeable takes work if just to enjoy being a spectator. Occasionally, we find ourselves engaged in an extended conversation. It is a pleasure in retirement to have time to listen to what these young people have to say. A level of trust has developed. Integrity demands confidentiality always. I listen, nod, understand, ask a question, make a comment. A few years ago, such a conversation occurred. This poem resulted.

HUMILITY

He met humility
In temporary scruffy jobs,
Realizing
Humility is a gift.
* * *

Humility arrives
As an effervescence
Held gently
In one's cupped hands,
And over time
Makes its way deep inside
To thrive within us.
* * *

Humility's twin, Gratitude,
Appears simultaneously,
Taking its place;
Twin gifts heralding
Our evolving Humanity.



Minute Spiritual Break

Provided by Thomas More University Campus Ministry

SUBMITTED BY ANGELO CENTENO | BISHOP ROGER J. FOYS SCHOLAR

Seeking God in the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life

If you're anything like me, you probably recognize God most easily in the grand moments of life – the highs and the lows. Maybe it's when everything is going right: you finally got that promotion you prayed so hard for, or you just bought the new car you've been dreaming about. Or maybe it's when life feels like it's falling apart: you and your significant other are struggling to conceive, or you're finding it hard to pay the bills.

In those big moments, both joyful and painful, it's often second nature to say, "Thank you, God," or "God, why is this happening?" But what about when life is just... ordinary? Do we still say, "Thank you, God," then? Do we still pray as often? If your relationship with God feels anything like this, I want to share a quote from Theodore James Ryken, founder of the Xaverian Brothers, a missionary congregation of religious brothers: "If you allow yourself to be formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, you will gradually experience a liberation and a freedom never before imagined."

This quote is a gentle but powerful reminder: God is present in the simple rhythms of daily life. He is relational by nature, always drawing us closer, even in the mundane. And after this beautiful Lenten season, we are invited to reflect more deeply on our relationship with Him.

When we look at the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – God in the flesh – we see the kind of intimate, personal relationship God desires to have with us. It's not just in the miraculous or the dramatic. It's in the everyday: the quiet, the repetitive, the ordinary, that we can grow closer to Him.

So, I invite you to reflect on the moments in your life that feel simple, normal, or even boring. Those are the very spaces where God is gently at work forming us, shaping us, loving us.

As a first-year college student studying theology and education, I'll admit, life often feels unspectacular and repetitive, but writing this reflection has opened my eyes. This season of life, while simple, is full of grace. Opportunities like this one: to write, to reflect, to connect with others, are reminders of God's quiet presence in my daily life.

Thank you for taking the time to reflect with me. May you find God in the *common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life*. God bless.



Angelo on a common, ordinary day with students at the secondary school in Bungoma. Visit **page 11** to read a *Saints Spotlight* about Angelo's time in Kenya.

Know a Prospective Student?

Tell us about a prospective student:

Prospective Student Name _____

Phone Number (_____) _____ Email Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

When do they plan to attend college? ☐ Fall 2025 ☐ Spring 2026 ☐ Fall 2026 ☐ Other _____

High School _____ Student H.S. Graduation Year _____

Are they a transfer student? ☐ Yes ☐ No Previous College or University _____

Interests/Desired Major _____

Referred by (name) _____ Thomas More grad year or affiliation _____

Phone Number (_____) _____ Email Address _____

Please return in the business reply envelope included in the center of this issue or submit online at tmuky.us/newstudent. Thank you!



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