

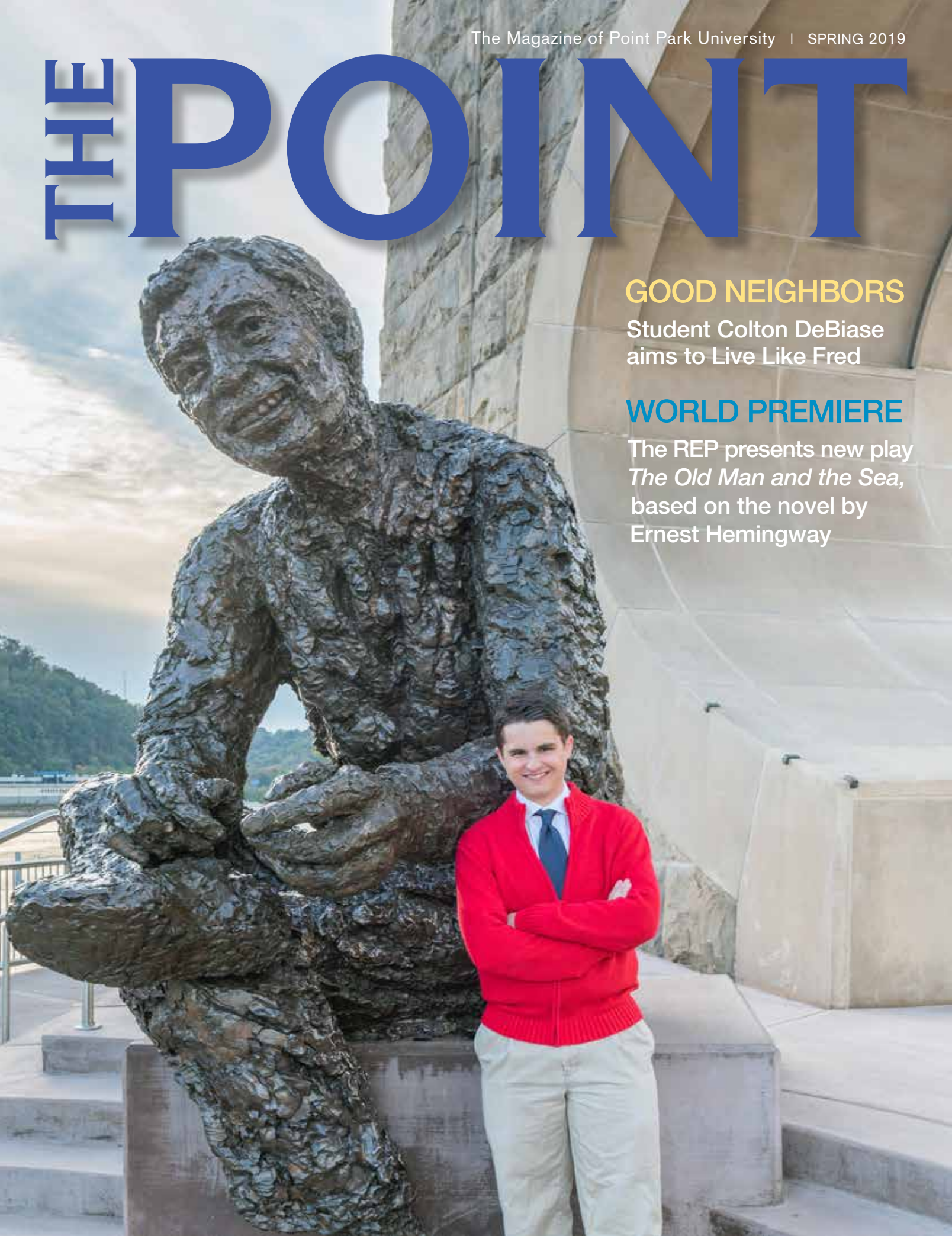
THE POINT

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Student Colton DeBiase aims to Live Like Fred

WORLD PREMIERE

The REP presents new play *The Old Man and the Sea*, based on the novel by Ernest Hemingway





Dear alumni and friends,

It will soon be commencement season, followed immediately by summer vacation season, but the work never stops at Point Park. From world premiere entertainment productions to growing academic programs, there's always something new happening on our Downtown campus.

One of the most distinctive aspects of our University community has been a shared commitment to making a constructive impact in our own neighborhood and in the greater Pittsburgh area. In this issue of *The Point*, we're proud to introduce some of those Point Park people, including students, faculty and staff who are working to make their communities a kinder and better place to live. This is not a new concept at Point Park. In fact, we recently established a Department of Community Engagement to incorporate an interdisciplinary approach to academics, initiatives, critical thinking and social entrepreneurship efforts. We look forward to sharing more stories about the power of community in the future.

Creative and innovative thinking is a way of life here. For example, during the current academic year, we opened the largest piece of the Academic Village Initiative – the award-winning Pittsburgh Playhouse on Forbes Avenue in Downtown Pittsburgh. The new Playhouse is a one-of-a-kind interdisciplinary center for all facets of entertainment management, including our nationally ranked Conservatory of Performing Arts. The world premiere of *The Old Man and the Sea*, staged at the

Playhouse this spring, is the perfect example of collaboration among professionals and students, from many different disciplines, to create this truly groundbreaking production. You can learn more about the project on page 16.

A decade ago, Point Park began a journey to transform our urban campus through the Academic Village Initiative. Step by step, through many projects, together we have transformed the neighborhood our University has been proud to be a part of for more than 50 years. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the participation of the entire Point Park community, including our alumni.

We're thankful that you've been along for our journey, and pleased to share our progress with you. This is only the beginning! We'll be sure to stay in touch.

Warm regards,

Dr. Paul Hennigan
President



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ON THE COVER:
Broadcasting student Colton DeBiase with the statue of his hero, Fred Rogers, on Pittsburgh's North Side. Photo by photojournalism student Nick Koehler.

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TALK TO US!

The Point wants to hear from you. Send your comments and suggestions to:

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This policy affirms Point Park University's commitment to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and the pursuit of diversity. Point Park University does not discriminate on the basis of: sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, age (40 years and over), ancestry, individuals with disabilities, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, height, weight, genetic information, marital status, caregiver status or familial status, in the administration of any of its educational programs, activities or with respect to employment or admission to the University's educational programs and activities.

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Professional Advancement

Michele L. Langbein, Ph.D., professor in the Roland School of Business, received the Empowering Women in Philanthropy Award from Inspiring Lives Magazine on December 7, 2018. The ceremony was held at Foxtail on Pittsburgh's South Side, where Langbein and four other women received awards for their service in volunteering, raising donations and other charity work. Langbein has helped dozens of charities throughout the past year. She also volunteers to help small businesses with promotional activities. She earned her undergraduate degree in 2002 and her M.B.A. in 2004, both at Point Park.

Diane Krill, Ph.D., professor of biological sciences, presented research focused on the electrical stimulation of small flowering plants (known as *Arabidopsis thaliana*)

at the International Conference on Plant Science in Paris, France. Additionally, she received a Certificate of Recognition at the conference for her research work. Led by Krill, this research was performed in the labs in the Department of Natural Sciences, Engineering and Technology at Point Park, in collaboration with Electrical Engineering Professors Donald Keller, Ph.D., P.E., and Gregg Johnson, Ph.D.

Helena Knörr, Ph.D., organizational leadership professor in the Rowland School of Business, presented remotely as a panelist for the Portuguese BioEntrepreneurship Conference in Peso da Régua, Portugal. The title of Knörr's presentation was "Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Trends in the Wine-Making Industry." She discussed the systems approach to innovation and the Triple Helix Model as a strategy to foster collaboration and trends for this industry, including internationaliza-

tion and best practices. Knörr was invited by Dourto Start UP, a business incubator, by Gil Ferraz CEO of MDA Formacã, a leading consultant company in Europe.

Christine Secilia, M.S., has been appointed a full-time lecturer for the Department of Criminal Justice and Intelligence Studies. She has 14 years of law enforcement experience, including six years as a sergeant. Secilia also worked with DANET (Allegheny County District Attorney's Narcotics Enforcement Team) in undercover narcotics investigations and has been recognized in a variety of areas such as high risk search warrant completions. She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees at the University. "I appreciated that Point Park's criminal justice and intelligence studies professors had field experience in the subjects they taught."






Honoring Pittsburgh Police

More than 150 police officers and civilians were honored at the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Inaugural Years of Service Recognition Ceremony Dec. 12 at Point Park. Public administration alumnus Lee Schmidt '16 was the master of ceremonies, Associate Professor **Richard Linzer**, J.D., gave the keynote address, and Pittsburgh Police Chief and criminal justice alumnus **Scott Schubert** '07 '10, recognized officers and civilians with 25 or more years of service. Linzer told the audience: "It is my honor to stand before you and have the opportunity to talk to you and thank you for your service to this community. I do so on behalf of Point Park University, as a member of the community of greater Pittsburgh and as a member of the Jewish community. Your efforts and service

are appreciated by all of Pittsburgh." Before presenting the awards, Schubert encouraged the audience to not forget the four injured officers still recovering from the mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood. "I love Pittsburgh Police and the community that we have here. We'll always be family," Schubert said. In his keynote address Linzer said: "As a prosecutor and government lawyer for more than 30 years, I understand your sense of duty and commitment to our society. To know that you place yourself at risk in the service of others is the highest level of service and duty. Truly, the Pittsburgh Police department and each of you are Stronger Than Hate." Photos by Amanda Dabbs.

POINT PARK ALUMNI RECEIVE A VARIETY OF BENEFITS!

Graduates gain:

-  Lifetime access to the Career Development Center
-  Discounted tickets to performances at the new Pittsburgh Playhouse
-  Invitations to exclusive alumni events across the country

See the list of benefits:

 PointPark.edu/Alumni/BenefitsandServices

Update alumni contact information:

412-392-4204
alumni@pointpark.edu
PointPark.edu/Alumni/UpdateYourContactInfo



Graduate Students Conference

Archish Maharaja, Ed.D. is the leader of Point Park's Second Annual Graduate Students Conference. Point Park University and Duquesne University graduate students were invited to present their research, related to exploring diversity, on campus on March 30. The annual conference aims to provide high quality, professional interactions for the enrichment of graduate students' research experience. Research presentations, poster sessions and faculty

roundtables focused on such areas as: Business Administration; Communication; Education; Engineering Management; Environmental Sciences; Health Care Management; Psychology and Community Health; and Screenwriting and Playwriting.

New Fully Online Ed.D.

Point Park's Ed.D. program in leadership and administration—with a new fully online option—enables educators to expand their leadership skills and

reach a higher-level career position. The 54-credit, cohort-style degree program can be completed in just three years—or less—if transferring in post-master's credits. The three-year program offers three concentrations: Professional Leadership; Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility; and K-12 Administration (including principal certification). In the two-year option (with an individualized concentration), students may transfer up to 18 post-master's credits. For more information, visit PointPark.edu/Leader.

New Low Residency Ph.D. in Community Engagement

There is a new low residency option for Point Park's doctorate in community engagement, a unique social lab designed for working professionals who want to improve their effectiveness as leaders while gaining a broad understanding of public policy, program development, community

psychology and best practices in leadership and engagement. The community engagement Ph.D. program prepares leaders for outreach and partnership work in civic, business and community organizations. Students who attend full time (two online courses per term) can expect to complete the program's coursework in two years, followed by dissertation. Courses are offered during three terms a year: fall, spring and summer.

Students participate in a four-day residency in Pittsburgh, Pa., every August for three years. For more information, visit: PointPark.edu/CommunityPhDLowRes

Hams at Point Park

Actors from the Angelica tour of *Hamilton*, which played the Benedum Center in Downtown Pittsburgh in January, made their Pittsburgh Playhouse debut hosting a Q&A with Conservatory of Performing Arts students on January 10. For nearly two hours, "Alexander Hamilton" – played by **Edred Utomi** – and "King George III" – who is **Peter Matthew Smith**, a former theatre major at Point Park – highlighted their career paths, answered questions and offered useful tips to students. They also critiqued the performances of three musical theatre majors. "Hearing about the audition process from two people who have been in the room with some of the most influential people in contemporary musical theatre and have not only survived, but thrived, is extremely beneficial," said **Emily Botnen**, a B.F.A. musical theatre major. Student questions covered such topics as the audition process, how to balance personal life and work, how to adjust to changes in the industry, and how performing on tour compares to Broadway. Advice from Smith included, "Don't let your head get too big. We get to play for a living, so remember that and just play. Be grateful for every job you have as an actor." He also said, "You have to learn how to adapt in your career and be comfortable with who is in the mirror."

Tax Prep Volunteers

Through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, junior accounting students **Kortney Lampel** and **Gary Mills** gained experience in tax return



Superfund: Tailing History

A group of environmental photography students journeyed to Missoula, Montana last May to document an ongoing clean-up of the Upper Clark Fork River, largest Superfund site clean-up in the U.S. The result of that effort is a 17-minute documentary entitled *Superfund: Tailing History*. Tailing refers to residue or waste materials left over after separating valuable ore, such as copper, from rock. Students interviewed environmental activists, academicians, biologists, Native American tribal leaders and concerned citizens about how this once pristine river was so severely polluted that it became an environmental disaster, negatively impacting public health in the region for decades. After a massive settlement paid by the polluting companies to the State of Montana for clean-up, stakeholders are now challenged by how best to use the funds to ensure the long-term health and survival of the watershed.

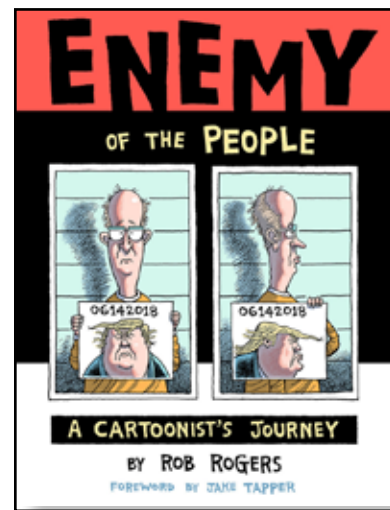
Christopher Rolinson, professor of journalism who led the trip, credits the Clark Fork Coalition with helping the students understand what happened to the Clark Fork River basin. "The individuals our students interviewed for this film took an enormous amount of time and care to explain how this environmental disaster happened and the decades of work it's taken to try and right the course." The trip was funded by the Heinz Endowments, which specifically earmarks funds for student travel and is part of the organization's ongoing support of the Environmental Journalism program at Point Park. The film can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/superfundtailinghistory>. It will also be posted to environmental-report.org, a site created by Point Park students for environmental projects and initiatives, and will be entered into the Stories of Our Watershed Film Festival. Photos by Christopher Rolinson.

Winning Challenge

The Fifth Annual "I Heart Point Park" fundraising challenge, which ran Feb. 10-16, was a smashing success. A total of \$60,500 was raised from 246 donors, including a record number of 53 students, during the event. During the first part of the Challenge, Board of Trustees members **Anne Lewis** and **Lisa Cibik** announced that if the campaign could garner 150 donors, they would unlock \$20,000. That goal was met midway through the week. During the second part of the Challenge, the entire Board of Trustees announced that if the campaign could keep the momentum going and reach 200 total donors by the end of the Challenge, the Board would collectively unlock \$25,000. That goal was met also. Six School of Communication students, all practicum students with the University's Center for Inclusive Excellence, worked on the campaign from start to finish. The students produced and managed social media for the Challenge, including a trip down memory lane with vintage photos from the University Archives, as well as filmed and edited promotional videos in the Center for Media Innovation studios. The students also hosted an on-campus "I Heart Point Park" table on February 13 and 14 with prizes and giveaways to encourage students to engage in student philanthropy. See the videos at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx_ixiGVA8E and <https://youtu.be/yyYgkRbBrBg> and see photos and images on Facebook and Instagram: @pointparkalumni.



Gazette, was also exhibited last year at George Washington University's Corcoran School of the Arts and Design. "The controversy over Rob's firing raises interesting questions about journalistic expression and who controls the flow of ideas and information," said **Andrew Conte**, director of the Center, a state-of-the-art facility that provides hands-on experience for students, while serving as a hub for local media, the Downtown Pittsburgh community and beyond. "Our goal is to shine a light on images that were not published in the Pittsburgh region, while also sparking discussion about editorial behavior and who owns forums for public discourse." Rogers' new book, *Enemy of the People*,



features highlights of his political cartoons over the last three years, his coverage of past presidents, a tutorial on creating editorial cartoons and two long-form comics. It also includes brief essays contributed by notable cartoonists and journalists championing the First Amendment and lauding the craft of editorial cartooning. "Satire is the ultimate expression of free speech," Rogers said. "It reminds us that we live in a healthy democracy. But we are living in a time like no other in our country's his-

tory – a time when the media is under attack, a time of extreme partisanship. We need satire and editorial cartoons now more than ever."



Monae Findley, a broadcast reporting major at Point Park, is Miss Black Pennsylvania USA 2019. The Miss Black USA Organization is the first and oldest scholarship pageant for women of color, awarding more than \$500,000 in scholarships. "I'm honored to be selected to represent Pennsylvania and to be part of the Miss Black USA legacy. As a woman of color, I'm excited to be involved in an organization that celebrates a woman's mind, body and spirit," said Findley, who will represent the state in the organization's national pageant, taking place in August 2019 in Baltimore, Md. A native of Kingston, Jamaica, Findley came to the United States in 2015 and attended Gateway Senior High School for a year before enrolling at Point Park. Last year, she established the Point Closet, a campus thrift shop that provides free clothing, accessories and decorative items to students and members of the campus

community. In addition, she is also a member of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and an E2 Private Soldier. "Monae is an energetic, dedicated and engaged member of the campus community and represents what we hope all our students strive for – to go a step further and find ways to help others," said **Keith Paylo**, vice president of Student Affairs and dean of students.

In the Field

Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc., a top 200 environmental firm in the nation, headquartered in Pittsburgh, recently invited Point Park graduate students to join them on a client project measuring stream flow in Schenley Park. **Ingrid (Reiland) Pearson '13**, Point Park biological sciences alumna and project scientist for CEC, Inc., connected the Master of Science in environmental studies students to the opportunity. The students measured stream width, depth and velocity at eight stream sites, providing hydrologists with valuable knowledge about stream flow conditions such as flood frequency. "I believe it's important to offer students information and opportunities outside of academia while they are pursuing their degrees. This flow monitoring project was ideal for a group task, provided hands-on learning and was conveniently located in Schenley Park," Pearson explained. This particular flow monitoring project will provide stream flow data that will be incorporated into research for the eventual restoration of Panther Hollow Run and Phipps Run, as part of the Four Mile Run Stormwater Improvement Project to alleviate stormwater issues.



December Hooding Ceremony

Point Park held its first mid-year hooding ceremony for recipients of doctoral and graduate degrees on Dec. 16, 2018 at the new Pittsburgh Playhouse in Downtown Pittsburgh. The new Ph.D. and Ed.D. and master's degree recipients gathered with their families and friends in the PNC Theatre for the event. It was the first time a

commencement event was held on Point Park's campus. The general commencement and hooding for recipients of undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees, respectively, is held each spring at PPG Paints Arena. The University's 2019 commencement and hooding will take place on April 27.

Living Like Fred

Student Colton DeBiase shares stories of Pittsburghers who continue Mister Rogers' legacy of kindness and love



Colton DeBiase with the monument to his inspiration, Fred Rogers, on Pittsburgh's North Shore. Photos by photojournalism student Nick Koehler.

Sophomore broadcast reporting student Colton DeBiase recalls being captivated by the Pittsburgh-based WOED-TV program, *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, when he was a toddler.

"My babysitter didn't have cable, so instead we watched reruns of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* on local television," DeBiase recalls. That experience was the "best thing that ever happened to me," he says, because it marked the beginning of a lifelong love and appreciation for Fred Rogers and his philosophy of kindness toward one's neighbors.

Flash forward two decades, and DeBiase is doing his part to encourage everyone, young and old, to live like Mister Rogers. His "Live Like Fred" project involves traveling around Pittsburgh neighborhoods to interview people he calls "inspiring neighbors." The interviews can be seen on DeBiase's "Live Like Fred" YouTube channel and are promoted on social media channels including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

According to DeBiase, a native of the Pittsburgh suburb of Export, he and his mother came up with the idea last spring when he was a first-year student in Associate Professor Robin Cecala's broadcast production class. Cecala suggested that students take advantage of access to the University's U-View channel and equipment for projects such as "man-in-the-street" interviews.

It was a lightbulb moment for DeBiase. On the way home from class, he told his mom that he wanted to do a broadcast project involving Mister Rogers, "because he was a true Pittsburgher" who spread positivity and the importance of kindness. The Live Like Fred project was born, and since then DeBiase has used Point Park broadcast equipment to travel around the region and interview inspiring neighbors.

For example, he recently interviewed fellow Point Park student Christina Wonnacott, a screenwriting major, who organized a Cut-a-thon to enable students and other neighbors to donate hair for the Wigs for Kids project (see page 10).

Spreading kindness and love

DeBiase also recently interviewed kindergarten teachers at Pittsburgh's Beechwood Elementary School. Every Friday, kindergarten students watch an episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and do activities related to that particular episode they watched. DeBiase was invited to come on a "Mister Rogers Day" to interview the teachers and talk to the kids about Mister Rogers. "It is a wonderful way to express Fred Rogers' philosophies of kindness and love, especially to a generation who do not have a general idea of who he really is," he says.

DeBiase is also a busy full-time student himself. At Point Park, "I am a reporter/analyst for U-View's Pioneer Sideline and The Halftime Show, co-host of CJ/RJ Sports Point on WPPJ and a play-by-play/color commentator for Point Park Sports Network." He is also in the Honors Program and a member of the Honors Student Organization. He says his dream job would be doing broadcast play-by-play for any sport.

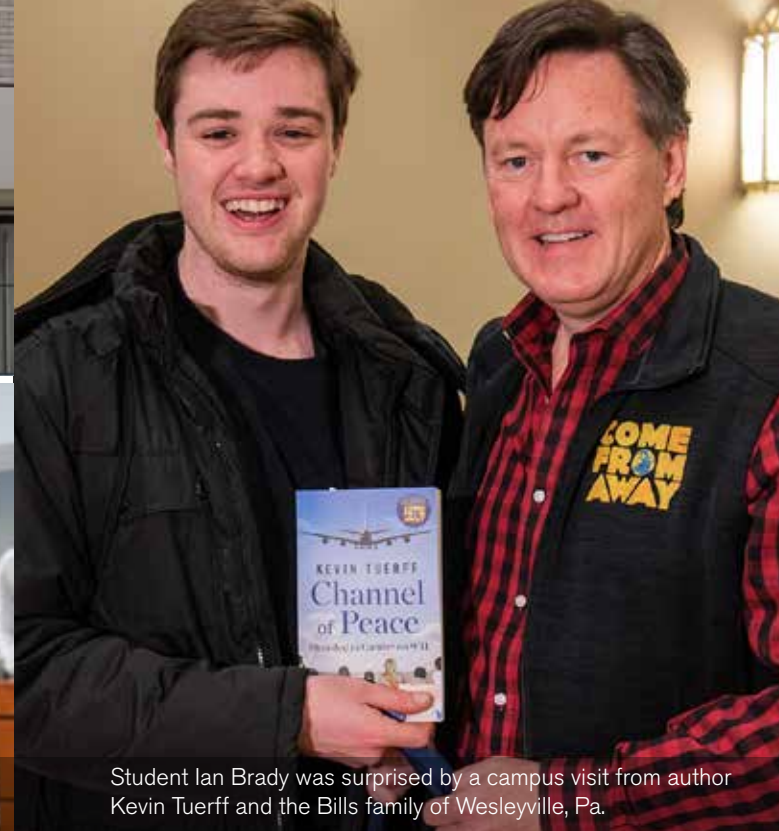
DeBiase also had the thrill of a lifetime when he earned a spot as an extra in the upcoming feature film about Fred Rogers, *You Are My Friend*, produced in Pittsburgh last year. Some segments were filmed on Point Park's campus and several University alumni were involved behind-the-scenes. "It was a dream come true for someone who loves Fred Rogers as much as I do," says DeBiase. "Along with other extras, I was fortunate enough to film a short scene with Tom Hanks as Mister Rogers."

"When I started the 'Live Like Fred' campaign, I never dreamed it would give me so many amazing experiences such as this. It also made me proud to know that I am representing Point Park University in the movie. We'll see if my scene makes the final cut when the film is released in October 2019. Either way, it was an experience of a lifetime and one that I will never forget. It has motivated me to continue on with our mission of spreading kindness and love just as Mister Rogers taught us.

"I hope to continue to encourage everyone, young and old, to Live Like Fred."



Student filmmaker Christie Wonnacott organized the fundraising event Wigs for Kids.



Student Ian Brady was surprised by a campus visit from author Kevin Tuerff and the Bills family of Wesleyville, Pa.



Good Neighbors

Students help young cancer patients by raising donations for Wigs for Kids

Point Park cinema student and 65-year-old grandmother Christina Wonnacott wanted to turn her class assignment into an effort to help others.

"I needed to create a four-minute film for my screenwriting class, and thought why not make a promotional film that an organization could use to increase awareness and donations?" said Wonnacott. The downtown Pittsburgh resident chose Wigs for Kids, a national non-profit organization that provides free, custom-fitted wigs for children 18 years and younger who have experienced a medical-related hair loss. Several years ago, Wonnacott herself experienced hair loss due to an illness. The result of Wonnacott's effort was a "Cut-A-Thon" and fundraising event that took place on Feb. 10 on the University's downtown campus. Cardamone's Salon on Wood Street provided free haircuts to those donating 12" of hair or longer. Regular haircuts for men and women were also available, and all proceeds benefited Wigs for Kids. T-shirts, wristbands, silent auction items, postcards and raffle tickets were sold in nearby Lawrence Hall, the staging area for those awaiting haircuts. In addition to Point Park and Cardamone's, event donors included

Bill and Walt's Hobby Shop, CulinArt Group, Katie's Kandy, Pizza Fiesta and Hello Bistro, among others.

Doing good

"As an older, non-traditional student, Wonnacott said the opportunity to combine a class assignment with an opportunity to do good for others was just the kind of college experience she was looking for at Point Park. "I returned to school when most people are retiring, but it's been the best decision of my life," said Wonnacott, who spent the fall semester living in the Lawrence Hall dorm on campus.

Colton DeBiase, a sophomore broadcast student who interviews inspiring neighbors through his Live Like Fred project (see page 8), visited the Cut-a-thon on Feb. 10 to document the event for broadcast on Point Park's U-View channel. DeBiase said Wonnacott is a great example of someone who was living out Fred Rogers' philosophy of kindness toward one's neighbors.

According to Keith Paylo, dean of students, the University was happy to help Wonnacott and her film director and co-producer, sophomore Dylan Hartigan. "An important part of what we hope our students learn while they are at Point Park is how to help others. The fact that Christina and Dylan turned a class screenwriting assignment into a fundraiser is exactly the kind of effort we encourage."

Student is surprised by inspiring author after sharing his apartment with a family in need

It was almost Christmas 2018 when the Bills family of Wesleyville, Pa. found themselves in need of a place to stay so they could be near husband, father and Wesleyville Mayor Paul Bills, who was recovering from a brain aneurism as a patient in Allegheny General Hospital.

Enter Point Park senior Ian Brady, who had known the Bills family since 2017 when they met during a production at the Erie Playhouse. When he learned about the family's situation, he didn't hesitate. Brady invited Shani Bills and the couple's two young daughters to stay in his own Pittsburgh apartment while he and his roommates were away during the University's holiday break. He even bought the family food and trimmed the apartment with Christmas decorations for his unexpected guests.

Extraordinary compassion

Shani said that Brady's kindness and support during her husband's hospitalization inspired her to do something for him in return, so she reached out to Kevin Tuerff, the author of *Channel of Peace: Stranded in Gander on Sept. 11, 2001*. The book was inspired by

Tuerff's experience on the day of the 9-11 terrorist attacks, when he and his partner were among the 7,000 airplane passengers whose flights were diverted to Gander, Newfoundland. The kindness of the Gander community in opening their homes and businesses inspired the Broadway musical *Come From Away*.

She asked Tuerff if he would sign a copy of his book for Brady, a longtime fan of *Come From Away*. But the author, who knew he would be passing through Pittsburgh in mid-January on his way to speak on "The Ripple Effects of Compassion" at Thiel College, was so taken by Brady's act of kindness that he decided to go a step farther.

Tuerff made a stop at Point Park and surprised Brady by delivering the book in person. Both Shani and Ian's mom Mary Beth Brady were on hand when Brady and the inspiring author met face-to-face in Lawrence Hall on Jan. 16.

Although Brady said he doesn't believe he did anything extraordinary by helping friends in need, Tuerff said that the student exemplifies the compassion that can have a big impact on the lives of others. And according to *Come From Away* fan Brady, it was a "great and exciting" experience to meet Tuerff. ❖

A New Stage

Pittsburgh Playhouse Artistic Director Ronald Allan-Lindblom steps down

Respected artist, director and educator joins Conservatory faculty this fall

Ron Lindblom at the original Pittsburgh Playhouse in 2010. Photo by Martha Rial.

Ronald Allan-Lindblom, artistic director and a driving force behind the success and growth of Point Park University's Pittsburgh Playhouse, officially steps away from his position at the end of the current season and will return to a teaching post within the Conservatory of the Performing Arts this fall. The University is undertaking a national search for his replacement.

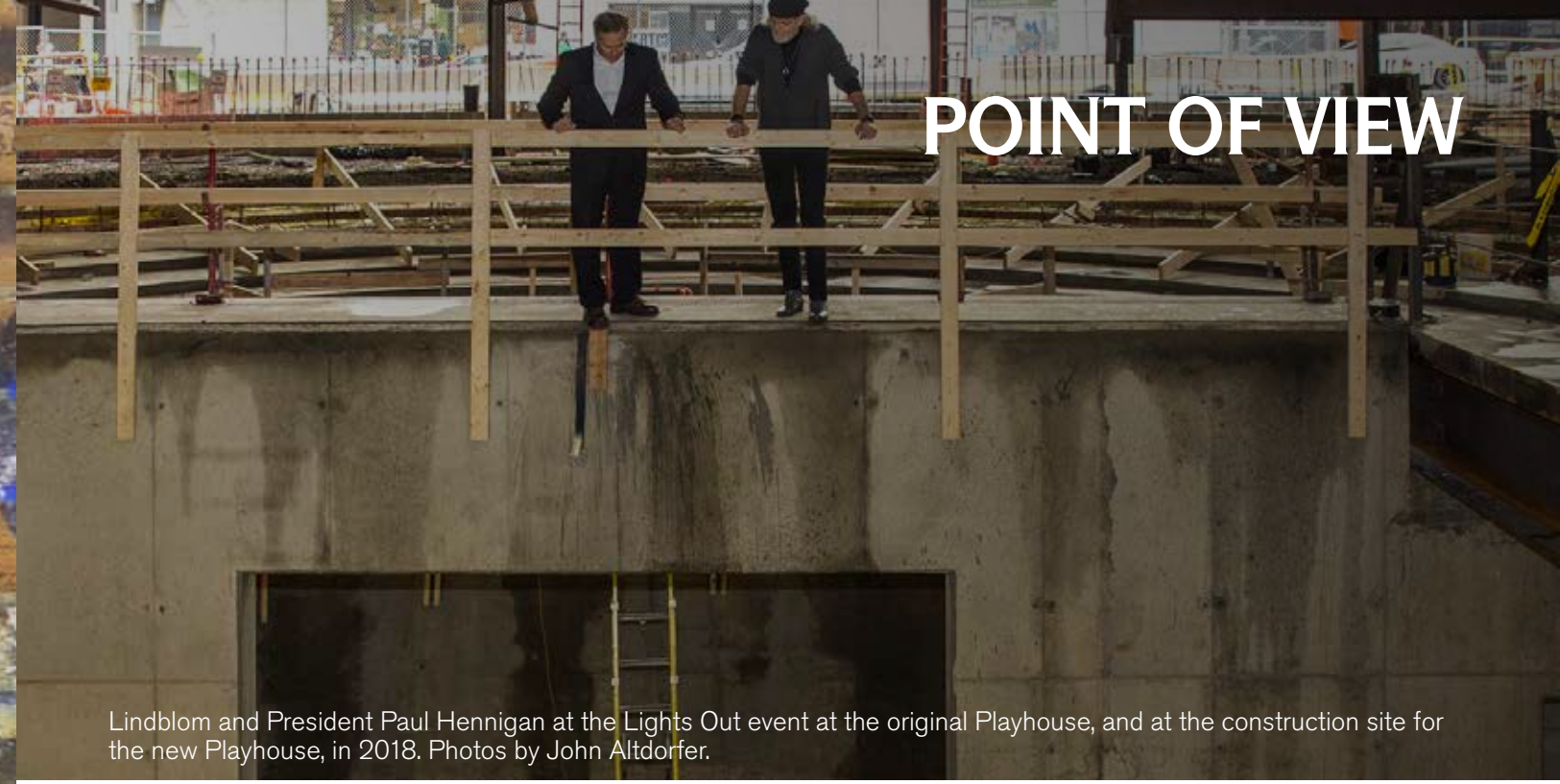
Lindblom has held the position of artistic director for 20 years. During his career, he has produced, directed and acted in hundreds of theatre and dance productions on three continents. He came to Point Park from Los Angeles, where he served as associate artistic producing director and co-founder of California Repertory Company in Long Beach. "When Ron arrived at Point Park two decades ago, it was a different place," said President Paul Hennigan. "Ron was able to breathe new life into the Pittsburgh Playhouse, creating daring, seminal and career-shaping productions that helped develop the Playhouse into the artistic laboratory it is today." During Lindblom's time at Point Park, he helped establish the Conservatory of Performing Arts, The REP,

Point Park's professional theatre company, and Point Park's cinema department. He has produced over 350 professional and education productions of theatre and dance and has served in numerous positions as chair, dean and vice president at the University. "My time as artistic director has been the second greatest privilege of my life; the first is marrying my wife Penny," said Lindblom. Penny Lindblom is a distinguished actor and director and a longtime faculty member at the Conservatory. Ron Lindblom recently directed the world premiere stage adaptation of the iconic Ernest Hemingway novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, which premiered in February at the Playhouse. The Point talked with Lindblom this spring:

Q: What brought you to Point Park 20 years ago?

RL: What initially intrigued me the most, after seeing the [original] Pittsburgh Playhouse, were the artists that were here at Point Park. So, Penny and I said, 'Yes, let's get out of L.A. This sounds interesting.' That was in 1998. Honestly, when

POINT OF VIEW



Lindblom and President Paul Hennigan at the Lights Out event at the original Playhouse, and at the construction site for the new Playhouse, in 2018. Photos by John Altdorfer.



we came to Pittsburgh, I thought I would spend only a few years here. I thought this would be a good launching pad for me to run a big regional theater, or perhaps a Shakespeare festival. But then I fell in love with Pittsburgh, which to me is a cross between Andy Griffith and Andy Warhol. It's a very unique place! And more importantly, I fell in love with the people; the artists of the Pittsburgh Playhouse.

Q: What has changed over the past two decades?

I was hired as artistic director of Point Park's fine and performing arts department in 1998. Within the first six months, however, I recognized what we had here, and I said we should become a conservatory. So, in 1999 we became the Conservatory of Performing Arts. What was originally a single department was turned into a separate school with three departments, including theatre, dance and cinema arts. To put it in perspective, we now have more musical theatre majors than we had students in the entire department when I arrived 20 years ago. We now have two nationally

ranked programs [theatre and dance], and the cinema program that I initiated, which was the first digital program in the country, will be nationally ranked. We now have a state-of-the-art dance facility and of course the new Pittsburgh Playhouse. Our vision for the Playhouse is to become a national artistic laboratory.

Q: Why did you decide to step down as artistic director?

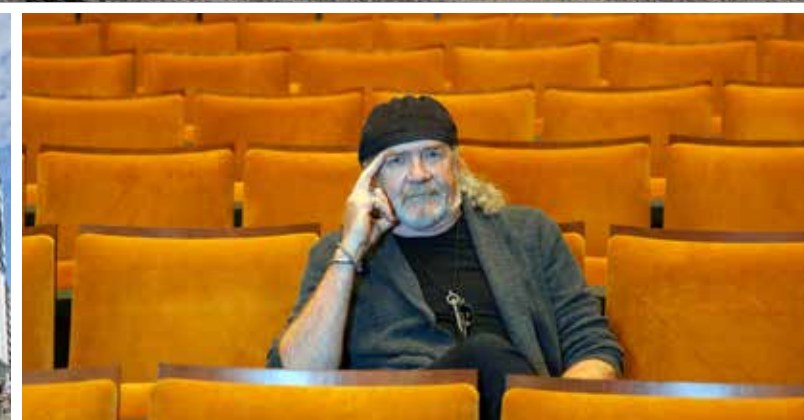
Last July was my 20th anniversary at Point Park, and I feel it's the right time for me to transition out of my longtime role as artistic director. I am looking forward to retiring from my administrative duties at the University, and spending more time directing, teaching and reconnecting with students at the classroom level. My goal has always been to explore, create and export future generations of artists and entertainment professionals. As I said to President Paul Hennigan, there are no more dance studios to build, and no more Playhouses to build, and I am never going to get to play in this place as long as I'm running it! So, I'm actually looking forward to this new chapter.



Lindblom at work on the first day at the new Playhouse (before delivery of office furniture).



Lindblom with director and producer Robert Miller.



Q: As you look back, what are some favorite projects?

There are so many. I've acted in, directed or produced 350 productions here in Pittsburgh alone. I think that among the things that are very special and memorable to me are all of the works and time we've spent with Robert Miller [director, producer and distinguished visiting artist]. Also, the new works we have been able to do with [alumnus and director] Tomé Cousin, as well as the new works The REP created with [playwright] Tammy Ryan. Those were all very special. I look back on the careers we've helped to launch, and the guest artists we've been able to bring here to the Playhouse. I look back at the people we've loved and the people we've lost, such as dance professor Ron Tassone. And the students! For example, I remember taking Ryan Stana [founder of RWS Entertainment Group] to the Kennedy Center when he was a Point Park student. Now he's a Univer-

sity trustee, and running a major entertainment organization in New York City. Alumnus John Magaro is now an accomplished stage and screen actor. And just last spring, we handed [acting graduate] Gabe Florentino his COPA diploma, and this spring he was back on stage here as a featured actor in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The list goes on and on.

Q: How does *The Old Man and the Sea* fit into the vision for the Playhouse?

The Old Man and the Sea project is a perfect example of the Playhouse as a national artistic laboratory. The production represents the creative efforts of everyone from students to Tony Award-winning guest artist [lead actor Anthony Crivello] and composer and musician Simon Cummings of Cello Fury. We have a cast made up of professional actors, including young

alumni. Cinema students worked on the film and multimedia aspects of the production. Business and communications students worked on everything from ticket sales to marketing and social media. And it's our first collaboration with RWS Entertainment Group. The process is what is important. We can create, and eventually export, new works here at the Playhouse that would cost millions of dollars to create and produce in New York. And for me personally, this show represents the first part of my personal transition back to creating and directing new works, which is one of the things I love the most.

Q: What are your hopes for the new Playhouse?

I love the fact that the Playhouse is now part of Downtown Pittsburgh. This new building represents not only what we can become in the future, but also gives the [historic] Playhouse

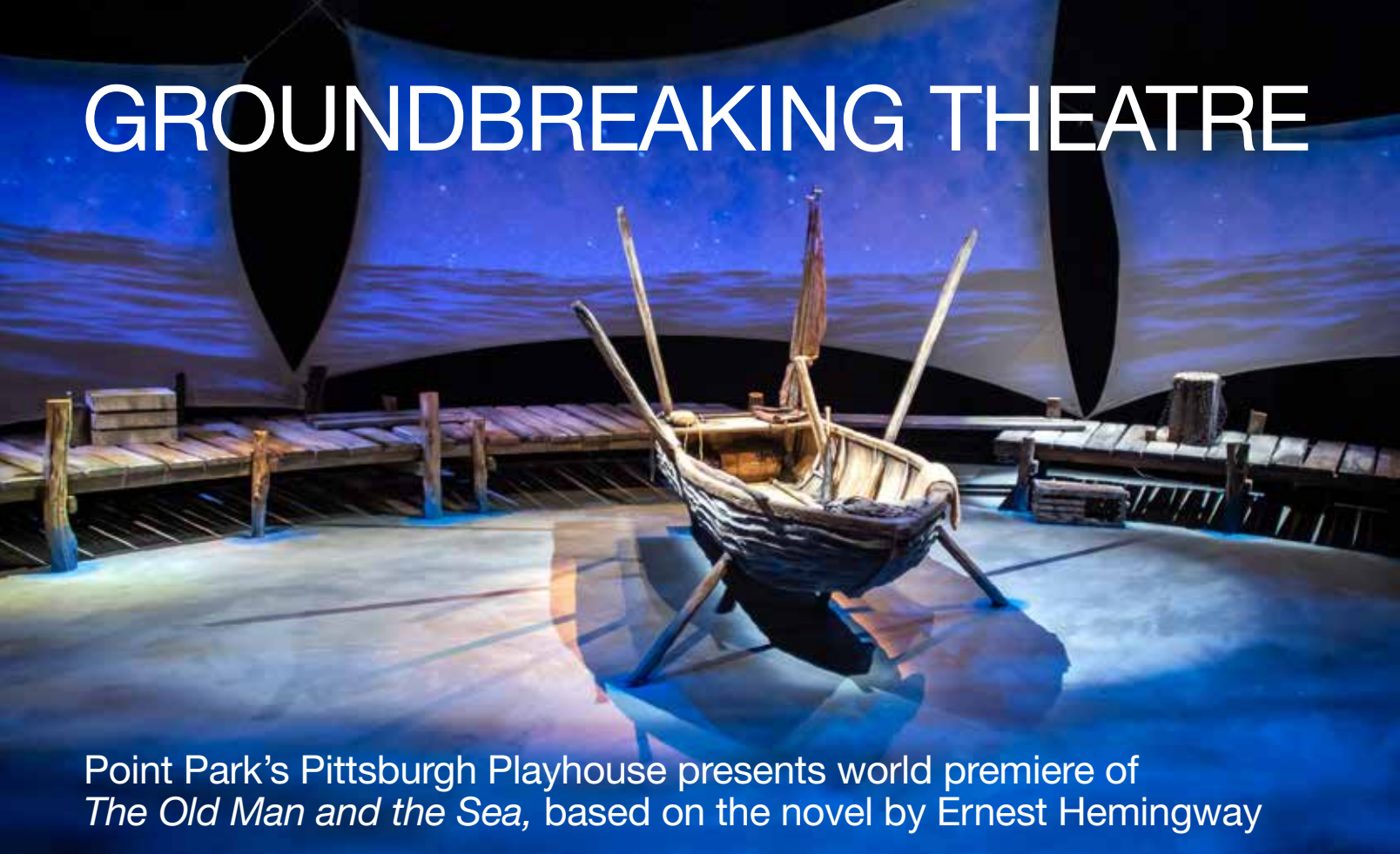
itself another 80 years. We are already doing things that could never have been produced at the original Playhouse, because we didn't have the facilities. I have often said that the Playhouse is a hothouse for new works, and now we have the facilities to truly make that happen. There are so many opportunities to grow, particularly on the technical side of theatre. We are on the threshold of limitless possibilities, limited only by our collective imaginations. That's the truth. I really believe that. ❖



Point Extra

For more conversation with Ron Lindblom about *The Old Man and the Sea*, visit: PointPark.edu/ThePoint

GROUNDBREAKING THEATRE



Point Park's Pittsburgh Playhouse presents world premiere of *The Old Man and the Sea*, based on the novel by Ernest Hemingway



Tony Award-winning actor Anthony Crivello as Santiago. All photos by John Altdorfer.



University becomes launching pad for innovative plays and musicals in collaboration with RWS Entertainment Group

Point Park University's Pittsburgh Playhouse presented the world premiere stage adaptation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, based on the iconic novel by Ernest Hemingway and adapted for the stage by centenarian playwright A.E. Hotchner and Tim Hotchner, and directed by Pittsburgh Playhouse Artistic Director Ronald Allan-Lindblom. The new play, which was presented by Highmark and staged in the High-

mark Theatre in the new Playhouse in Downtown Pittsburgh from Feb. 1-17, 2019, was the first production produced by Point Park in collaboration with RWS Entertainment Group.

Artistic laboratory

The Old Man and the Sea is based on the Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning 1952 short novel that tells the story of Santiago, an aging Cuban fisherman who struggles with catching a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream off the coast of Cuba. One of Hemingway's most famous works, the story has been adapted for the screen three times and has become one of the most taught novels in American high schools.

The cast featured Tony Award-winning actor and Broadway veteran Anthony Crivello as Santiago, David Cabot as Hemingway and Gabriel Florentino (COPA '18) as Manolin. Simon Cummings, from Cello Fury, created and performed original music for the show.

"This is a grand experiment, the first time we are using the new Pittsburgh Playhouse as a true artistic laboratory," said Lindblom. "It's a brilliant piece of literature, an exciting and dangerous undertaking meant to engage Pittsburgh's sophisticated theatre audiences and provide unparalleled opportunities for students across multiple majors to gain unique experience."

The project included several interesting collaborations. Hotchner, who created the stage adaptation with his son, was Hemingway's official biographer and Hemingway's good friend until his death in 1961. The Hotchners worked closely with Lindblom and the University to refine the script for its stage debut.

Florentino, who less than a year ago was a senior musical theatre student who led tours of the new Playhouse for admitted COPA students, said he was thrilled to return to play the role of Manolin. "One of my goals in my life was to originate a role. I never thought it would be this soon and in the new Pittsburgh Playhouse," he said. "It's all an honor. Also, it's such an



interesting and rewarding perspective to come back to the place you trained, but this time as a professional. My heart is full of gratitude."

Fostering talent

In addition, RWS has had a longstanding relationship with Point Park. RWS CEO and founder Ryan Stana (COPA '02) received a bachelor of fine arts in theatre arts from Point Park and serves as a current University Trustee. Stana has long been committed to fostering Point Park talent in the entertainment industry as well as within his own company. RWS includes several Point Park graduates, some of whom hold executive positions.

"As a state-of-the-art facility unsurpassed for a university setting, the new Playhouse will not only have a global impact on arts education, but also serves as a creative laboratory for creatives and talent," said Stana. "Point Park has established itself as a competitive performing arts program among the best, and I am proud to continue working with students, faculty and artistic professionals in Pittsburgh."

"Building our beautiful new Playhouse was just the first step for the University," said Point Park President Paul Hennigan. "With the announcement of this relationship with RWS Entertainment Group, we are developing a new model where we will not only be able to bring cutting-edge productions to Pittsburgh for the theater-going community, we will provide

our students with the opportunity to meet and work with professionals from all over the country, in every area of the entertainment creation process."

"The new Pittsburgh Playhouse is a true gift to the entire University community as well as Pittsburgh's theatre-going audiences," Hennigan added. "We are giving our students and the entire community the opportunity to be part of cutting-edge theatrical experiences and exposure to artists and new work from all over the country."

The Playhouse's rich history as the theatrical home of such award-winning musical and theater greats as Shirley Jones and Rob Ashford makes it a perfect venue to launch an inno-

novative model that will create and advance new works, while at the same time, offering Point Park students an opportunity to work on professional productions bound for national stages.

The brand-new Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University is a 90,411 square-foot theater complex that serves as an artistic laboratory for the prestigious Conservatory of Performing Arts (COPA), comprised of professional, artist educators dedicated to an approach to training that enables students to pursue careers as professionals. COPA includes Departments of Theatre, Dance, and Cinema.



State of the art

The four-story, state-of-the-art facility, located at 350 Forbes Avenue, is home to the professional theatre company, The REP and student companies—Conservatory Theatre Company, Conservatory Dance Company and Playhouse Jr. The Pittsburgh Playhouse features the 550-seat PNC Theatre, the backstage and inner workings of which are visible from the street, resulting in an intentional glimpse into performing arts classes; the 200-seat Highmark Theatre; and the 99-seat Rauh Theatre.

The new Pittsburgh Playhouse is designed to be a learning laboratory for all Point Park students, providing experiential learning opportunities in producing, marketing, management, sales, ticketing and programming. The Playhouse also collaborates with the University's Rowland School of Business and Center for Media Innovation on events, lectures and related programming.

The new Pittsburgh Playhouse's first season runs through April 14, 2019 and has featured the award-winning musicals *Cabaret* and *Sunday in the Park with George* as well as the Broadway smash *History Boys*. Full price season subscriber

packages include a complimentary season parking pass at the PNC Garage, across the street from the Playhouse. More information about the 2019-20 Playhouse Season is available at pittsburghplayhouse.com.



Point Extra

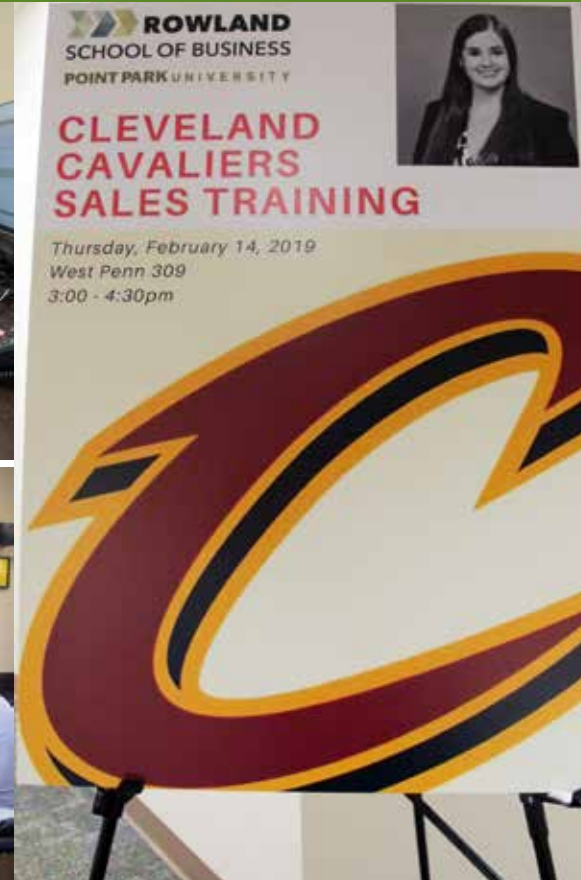
For interviews and other video features on *The Old Man and the Sea*, visit: PointPark.edu/ThePoint.

SALES FORCE

SAEM students boost ticket sales for the Pittsburgh Playhouse and the Cleveland Cavaliers



From left: Brandon Dujmic, assistant box office manager; Professor Robert Derda; and Box Office Manager Anthony Dennis.



Cleveland Cavaliers' Dana Drewniak speaks with business students at Point Park.

Selling is a key business skill. At the Rowland School of Business, students have the opportunity to put sales skills they've learned in the classroom into immediate practice by helping to build ticket sales for premiere productions at the Pittsburgh Playhouse and professional sports organizations such as the Cleveland Cavaliers.

This spring, students in Professor Robert Derda's Personal Branding and Business Development class learned sales techniques in the classroom and later participated in the actual ticket sales process by making calls to prospective patrons in the Playhouse Box Office.

Entertainment management lab

Derda, along with Playhouse Box Office Manager Anthony Dennis, supervised the students as they worked by phone to increase ticket sales for the world premiere of The REP production of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. SAEM students have worked on ticket sales for previous Playhouse productions, in keeping with the mission of the new Playhouse to serve as a learning laboratory for all aspects of entertainment management.

Dennis spoke to students in the class on two occasions before the actual sales calls began. The sales training is comprised of two parts, according to Derda, who is also head of the Sports, Arts and Entertainment Management program. "We begin by doing sales training – learning phone sales skills – prior to the students making the calls. Later on, they do a person-to-person sales experience.

"The beauty is, students learn how to sell, then have the opportunity to actually sell in a working box office environment," he says. "So, they gain an understanding of the challenges and how difficult it can be, and also the rewards when somebody says 'yes.' They're learning about the highs and lows of selling. And they are supporting the University during the process."

Student Matthew Whitaker, a senior SAEM major, says the class has provided valuable hands-on experience. Students learned about the story, script and production process of *The Old Man and the Sea*, "so that we understood what we were selling," he says. "This project helped me branch out and try something new that will be very beneficial for me moving

forward. I now have some actual experience with ticket sales. Professor Derda does an excellent job with teaching us real world applications to get us ready for life after graduation."

Haley Adams, who earned a degree in SAEM in 2018 and expects to complete her M.B.A. in 2020, agrees. "Our class was able to see exactly where the production would be taking place, to help us answer any questions that might have come up during our calls. We then went over a script that Professor Derda created to help us get the conversations started during our calls. It was a great experience getting to know some of the customers, and engaging in conversations with them while promoting *The Old Man and the Sea*.

"Once I got started, it came very naturally to me and I loved it. It benefited me a ton because I stepped out of my comfort zone and did something I never thought I would do."

Calling for the Cavs

Outside of the classroom, more than a dozen SAEM seniors signed up to participate in sales training and volunteer ticket sales for the Cleveland Cavaliers, led by Point Park alumna

and Cavaliers' sales director Dana Drewniak. She visited campus on Feb. 14 to tip-off the sales training.

"These students had the benefit of receiving the very same training that the Cavs provide to their full-time staff," says Derda. After the training sessions with Drewniak, the students made calls on behalf of the team, from mid-February through mid-March, in the University's phone center in Frontier Hall. The ongoing training sessions were coordinated by Graduate Assistant Jessica Martin.

On April 7, the student volunteers will attend a Cleveland Cavaliers game, where they'll be recognized by the team before the game. "The Point Park student who is the top sales person will receive an interview with the Cavaliers for a sales job," according to Derda, who praised the work ethic of the participants.

"Most of these students are seniors and ready to graduate," he says. "They saw the value of volunteering for this project in order to build their professional skills." ❖



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 4 (Pittsburgh) Alumni Outing at the Pirates

May 15 (Pittsburgh) Professional Pioneers Happy Hour

June 15 (Pittsburgh) Alumni and Family Outing, Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium

Visit PointPark.edu/alumni for more information.



Adamczyk and her mother Beth (Glick) Adamczyk (COPA 1975) in the Rauh Theater at the original Pittsburgh Playhouse in Oakland.

Dear fellow alumni and friends,

Legacy. The Urban Dictionary defines the word simply; *forever remembered*.

The idea of leaving a significant or profound legacy for future generations is a concept that guides many of us in the choices we make. Most of us feel moved to leave our mark, in a positive and lasting way, with our families, our workplaces and the institutions that helped to raise and shape us. Legacy was at the forefront of my mind as I came back to campus this year as the assistant vice president of development and alumni relations.

I am a 2005 legacy Conservatory of Performing Arts alumna. My mother graduated from Point Park College in 1975 and moved to New York City to launch a career as a lighting designer. Thirty years later, I did the same thing. Graduating with a diverse resume of experience, thanks to Point Park's immersive program, I moved to New York City where I immediately found employment at a Broadway production company. Nearly 20 years later, as I return to my alma mater, I am reminded that this is where my career began, the place that shaped the working professional I am now.

Today, Point Park University still delivers on its promise to prepare its graduates to achieve their goals, advance their professions and serve their communities. As I seize this opportunity of a lifetime to give back

and create a lasting and profound legacy, I invite you to do the same. You might not know what kind of legacy you want to leave yet, but there are so many opportunities to explore and engage in something meaningful here at Point Park.

Attend an alumni networking event here in Pittsburgh or at one of our regional events; catch a show or an installment of the Media Innovators Speaker Series at the new Playhouse downtown, visit the Center for Media Innovation or the new WPRJ studios, or cheer on one of our nationally ranked athletic teams. If you aren't living in the Pittsburgh area, consider mentoring a student or offering an internship position, or join the Pioneer Alumni Recruitment Team to help spread the good word about Point Park.

Whether you are a member of the alumni body, a parent, a neighbor or a friend, Point Park has something to offer everyone and everyone has something to offer Point Park. Please join me in building a strong and engaged community of alumni, friends and supporters working actively to leave something forever remembered here at Point Park University, our legacy.

Stephanie K. Adamczyk '05, M.B.A.

Assistant Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations
sadamczyk@pointpark.edu

1970s IN MEMORIAM

Bob Rager (A&S 1974), longtime Pioneers men's basketball coach, passed away on September 19, 2018. He was head coach for 27 seasons, from 1989 to 2016, and spent a total of 34 years at Point Park as an NAIA All-American player, assistant coach, head coach and athletic director. Rager was the all-time winningest college basketball coach at four-year schools in the city of Pittsburgh. He led the Pioneers to the NAIA national tournament three times, including a trip to the NAIA Final Four in 1996-97. His 2006-07 team set a school record for wins in a season, finishing with a 29-2 record and an NAIA national tournament appearance. The Pioneers earned a No. 3 national ranking in the NAIA Top 25 that year, also a program record. Point Park went to the Sweet 16 of the NAIA national tournament in 2000-01. Playing Rager's fast-paced style, Point Park led the NAIA in scoring average

four different seasons. In his 27 seasons, Rager took the Pioneers to the conference playoffs 23 times. Rager's playing career at Point Park spanned from 1970-74. He was the Pioneers' first NAIA All-American and a highly touted player in Pittsburgh. In 1972-73, he was voted by the Pittsburgh basketball writers as their Small College Player of the Year. Rager played a key role in supporting and developing many student-athletes during his time at the University. He went above and beyond to forge strong relationships with his players, and his mentorship allowed them to reach their potential on the court and in the classroom. Read his obituary in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: bit.ly/2z6W2wX.

James M. Robinson (BUS 1970), after surviving prostate cancer for over ten years, succumbed to his illness, surrounded by family, on December 13, 2018. According to his

obituary in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, he was married to Denise (Luvara) Robinson for 43 years; father of Daniel (Emily), Devlin, and Andrew (Lauren); Pap Pap of Madelyn and Liam; and son of the late James and Jeanne (Hawthorne) Robinson of Dormont; He is survived by his nine siblings; numerous cousins; and many nieces and nephews. He served in the U.S.M.C. (1970-1976); served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a probation and parole officer (1970-2005); proud member of the PA Prison Warden's Association, serving as the organization's Sergeant at Arms. In retirement, Robinson worked for the Pirates. Many remember his warm greeting upon entering the Lexus Club. He was also an avid golfer and a proud member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH).

1980s

Randy Skubek (COM 1980) recently completed the second of three filming sessions as an extra for the upcoming movie "Kecksburg." The film is based on actual events surrounding a UFO landing in the town by the same name on Dec. 9, 1965. In one of the two scenes already shot in the fall in nearby Mount Pleasant, Skubek works alongside two of the major characters in the film. The film also adds a different twist in that three young boys encounter and befriend aliens. In the script, a reporter named John Murphy—based on an actual reporter who covered the event more than 53 years ago—arrives at the site attempting to uncover the truth. The military, which also was on hand that day in Kecksburg in 1965 to remove the object on a flat-bed truck as several witnesses can attest to, takes the reporter's rolls of film in the movie, but he manages to hide one. Later,

the government returns to confiscate that last roll, and he then dies in a mysterious accident. According to Skubek, "Something definitely streaked across the sky and came down in a ravine in Kecksburg that day. That much is known. But it's less about what I believe happened that day, and more about having a face and name that will always be associated with a film. Even though not too many people are going to recognize that years from now, that's OK." Skubek will also have his name listed in the credits as an "alien abductee." "Plus, I just thought it would be an interesting and fun way to get a glimpse into how the motion picture industry works, even though it was on a smaller scale...And I think those are the reasons the vast majority of the extras wanted to be part of it." Filming has already taken place in West Virginia, Kecksburg and Mount Pleasant. Another session is scheduled for May 2019. Extras in the film were required

to dress in garb from the 1960s. Scenes were also shot with vehicles and items from that time period. The film is tentatively scheduled to debut Sept. 12, 2019 at The Palace Theatre in Greensburg. Kecksburg is approximately 43 miles southeast of Pittsburgh and a half-hour south of Latrobe, where Skubek was born and has been a life-long resident. Five days (May 1, 1980) after graduating from Point Park with a degree in journalism and mass communication, Skubek joined the Latrobe Bulletin. He has been the sports editor there since 1982.

1990s

Stu Zolot (BUS 1992) retired from MARC USA at the end of 2018 after 43 years of service with the firm, most recently as executive vice president and chief financial officer. He joined the agency in 1976 and spent his entire career at MARC USA, where he was a significant partner in the company's financial

strategy and growth, as well as an industry leader who helped shaped financial best practices across the advertising agency world. During his time at MARC USA, he helped manage over 25 acquisitions, divestitures and start-ups. Zolot earned an MBA from Point Park – graduating first in his class. He came to MARC USA as a corporate accountant and moved up rapidly to assistant controller, controller, treasurer, VP finance, senior VP finance and administration and served as EVP/CFO since 1998. In addition, he served as President of MARC Promotions until it was divested. He is also a member of the MARC USA Board of Directors and Secretary of the corporation. In recognition of Zolot's career achievements, the Pittsburgh Business Times named him Midsize Business CFO of the Year in 2007.

2000s

Kelly Marie McKenna (COPA '06) writes, "I am attending York University in Toronto,

Ontario in the M.F.A. Theatre program. I am in the Performance track and was recently chosen by the faculty to receive the Donald and Murray Davis Scholarship [which] is awarded to a second-year student in the Graduate Program in Theatre in recognition of outstanding ability and achievement as demonstrated by artistic growth in studio and performance work. I'm researching my thesis on fear and boundaries as a woman in theatre, along with assisting other faculty in research in indigenous dialect work and interoceptive awareness in movement. I'm also appearing in a new play debuting at the Toronto Fringe Festival."

Don Kelly (BUS '01) was hired in November 2018 as Houston Astros first base coach after playing for nearly a decade in Major League Baseball. For Kelly, who spent nine years in the majors, mostly with the Detroit Tigers, it was the next step in his post-playing career. This latest move brings him back down onto the field as one of the top

members of the coaching staff of a contending team in MLB. The 38-year-old Kelly had been a pro scout for the Tigers in the two years since his playing career ended in 2016. A favorite among managers, teammates and fans during his playing days, Kelly reached "folk-hero status as a super-utility player" during his career, according to the post on the Houston Astros website. He played all nine positions during his career and had some big moments. Kelly's appointment to the Astros' coaching staff caught some attention on social media such as ESPN Senior Writer Buster Olney tweeting "This surprises no one who knows him: since his playing days ended, Don Kelly has quickly ascended to a big-league coaching staff." Kelly was a part of four straight AL Central Division titles for the Tigers from 2011-14. He came up clutch hitting .389 (7 for 18) during the AL Divisional playoffs during his career to help push Detroit to three ALCS appearances and one World Series during that time. Overall he played in 584 career MLB games and 24 playoff



Matt Bush (COM '02) is the news director for Blue Ridge Public Radio in Asheville, N.C. and is a 2017 graduate of Leadership Asheville. He recently participated in a panel that examined how the media covers and interacts with local government. Bush joined participants including Christina Hallingse, public information officer for the Asheville Police Department as well as Katie Wadington, editor of the Asheville Citizen-Times and Jennifer Emert of WLOS-TV in the panel discussion. **Jan Getz**, retired professor and broadcaster in Residence at Point Park from 2002-10, now lives in Asheville and is active with Leadership Asheville. She organizes programming and photographed the panel discussion.

games. At Point Park from 1999-01, Kelly was an NAIA First Team All-American shortstop. He is the Pioneers' all-time record holder in career batting average at .413. He was inducted into the Pioneer Athletic Hall of Fame in 2010. In his honor, the Don Kelly Student-Athlete Leadership Award is presented annually to one male and female student-athlete at Point Park who best embody what it means to be an all-around student-athlete.

Anthony Pignetti (COM '08) executive director of business development for the Reading (Pa.) Fightin Phils, was named to the Reading Eagle's 40 Under 40 Awards. The awards, sponsored by Penn State Health St. Joseph, recognize outstanding leaders in the Berks County region who are excelling in their organization through their leadership role. "We are honored that Anthony Pignetti is receiving this prestigious recognition," said Scott Hunsicker, general manager of the Fightin Phils, the A.A. Affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies. "'Pigs,' as we affectionately call him, is outstanding at everything he does. He is an outstanding person, a tireless community volunteer, and a tremendously important contributor the Reading Fightin Phils business success. In the 10 years that Pigs has been here in Baseballtown, he has forged tremendous relationships with

his R-Phils partners, established firm roots in this community, and become our great friend."

Abbey Helbling Parrish (COM '05) was recently promoted to marketing lead and assistant vice president at PNC. Parrish earned a degree in advertising and public relations at Point Park.

Stephanie Rex (COM '07) was recently hired as the new director of communications and marketing at Rodef Shalom Congregation in Pittsburgh. At Rodef Shalom, Stephanie works closely with senior management, clergy and the Board of Trustees to lead public relations and media strategies, including marketing, social media, internal and external communications. She brings a wealth of experience and professional insights to assist Rodef Shalom with its newly designed marketing programs. Her background allows the venerable synagogue to further highlight the many new and existing programs at the congregation and in the community.

2010s

Dominique Hildebrand (COM '16) is an associate photography editor for National Geographic in Washington, D.C. "It is my

responsibility to source images for daily production, breaking news and short feature picture stories. Often, I spend my time trying to illustrate a story that has not been photographed or even more often, cannot be photographed," she says. "I am currently pursuing a Master of Science in multimedia, photography and design from Syracuse University, and secured my job by first earning an internship at National Geographic. I got this internship not just through my grades and work ethic, although I hope that helped. But what really helped me stand out was all the extracurricular projects I took on. It showed that I was passionate about photo editing, so much so that for fun after class, I do more photography-related work." At Point Park, Hildebrand was a member of the Photography Collective, The Globe and NPPA. "My professors were incredibly influential in not just my education and career, but they became close friends and now colleagues," she says. "It helps that we are such a small team, so you really get close with your professors ... I love these people endlessly and really owe a lot of my career thus far to them." In her current role, "Working with photographers is easily the best part of my job. It is what drives me every day to be the best picture editor I can be! I love meeting the Nat Geo 'legacy' photographers because they have so much knowledge. Through them I learn a lot about storytelling."

Peter Frenchak (BUS '14) is director of physician practice operations at Broward Health in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. A resident of Coral Gables, Frenchak earned his under-

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Bright Shining Pioneers

Sierra Barnett (COPA '17), **Cailin Orn** (COPA '11) and **Marin Helppie-Schmieder** (COPA '15), pictured left to right, joined together to light up theaters during the 2018 holiday season with Lightwire Theater's national and international tours of "A Very Electric Christmas!" All three are alums of Point Park Dance. Designed for children and audiences of all ages, the production features a story of family, friendship and adventure set to holiday hits from Nat King Cole, Mariah Carey and Tchaikovsky. In the show, Santa's helpers are putting the final touches on presents as little bird Max and his family head south for the winter. When Max gets blown off course during a snowstorm, he ends up alone and lost at the North Pole. As he tries to make his way home, his adventure begins when he encounters friendly caroling worms, dancing poinsettias, Nutcracker soldiers, mischievous mice and an evil Rat King.

graduate degree in public administration at Point Park in 2014 and a master of science in health services administration from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2017. Among his favorite memories of Point Park: "Seeing the library for the first time, and how the transformation of Downtown Pittsburgh has been enhanced with Point Park's growth."

Alexis Sherman (A&S '18) is a paralegal at Kraemer, Manes & Associates in Pittsburgh. She graduated last spring with a degree in legal studies and political science. At Point Park, she was captain of the Cross Country and Track & Field teams, United Student Government senator, Chi Alpha Sigma Student-Athlete National Honors Society and work study in the athletics department. "My legal studies and political science classes

have helped me so much in my current job. When I'm faced with a case that requires me to know the ins and outs of the law, I bring myself back to sitting in my Introduction to Legal Studies class," said Sherman. "In my classes at Point Park, I learned about the statute of limitations for certain laws, the burden of proof, when a state law trumps a federal law and so much more, all of which I use every day at work when evaluating a case." Sherman added, "I work on the 48th floor of the U.S. Steel Tower, the tallest skyscraper in Pittsburgh, so that's really fun. I am on KM&A's legal team, which involves a lot of case evaluation. I take the facts of a case, research laws pertaining to that specific issue, brainstorm what kind of legal action we can take and give a final determination whether our firm can ultimately win this case.

Michael Gartland (BUS '10) has completed Federal Acquisition Management training provided by West Virginia SBA and celebrated more than three years in his current role as project manager/senior compliance reviewer, focused on federal health program compliance, at Healthcare Management Solutions LLC. Gartland, who earned his M.B.A. in health systems management at Point Park, says he also enjoys "spending time with my wife, Sandy, and four children, performing with the local church's music ministry (guitar and bass), home improvements and reading." He adds, "I am glad to find myself working with fellow Point Park alumni at Healthcare Management Solutions!"

Chelsey Driskel (A&S '18) recently joined the legal team at WESCO as a Government Contracts Specialist. She earned her undergraduate degree in public relations and advertising, and a graduate degree in intelligence and global security, all at Point Park.

Tori Adams (COM '15) is a producer of the program "Not The News" on WFXB-TV in Myrtle Beach, S.C. She earned her degree in on-camera broadcasting/broadcast production and programming at Point Park.

Olson Kelly (COPA '17) writes, "I've been promoted to artistic associate at Theatre Under the Stars in Houston, Tex. I will be providing support for the overall artistic objectives for the organization, as well as assisting on casting and new works development projects." Kelly earned a degree in theatre arts at Point Park.

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Remembering WPPJ radio during the early years of hip-hop



From left: Ray Rollins, Willie Brooks, Barry Young, and David "Noonie" Peters on The Bridge in 1978.

By **Timothy Cox** (COM 1980)

In the fall 2018 issue of *The Point*, I noticed the article on the new campus space for the University's radio station, WPPJ. Forty years ago, in the fall of 1978, I was a journalism-communications major at Point Park. I was a member of both *The Globe* and *The Pioneer* student-run newspapers, as well as on the staff of WPPJ.

I worked a Sunday afternoon shift for WPPJ, then located in the basement area of Lawrence Hall. I, along with a student colleague **Arlethia Perry (Johnson)**, was a proponent of jazz fusion-funk sounds by such artists as Herbie Hancock, the Yellowjackets, Earl Klugh and Harvey Mason. Conversely, the most popular show on campus was the weekly shift headed by several newly-arrived freshmen who were part of the burgeoning hip-hop evolution – many of them originating from the New York City boroughs.

David "Noonie" Peters, of Teaneck, N.J., who earned a photography degree from Point Park in 1982, still recalls the Sunday night hip-hop-flavored shows that became a weekly on-campus phenomenon. "In between the rap music, the deejays delivered what amounted to be personal drama that occurred between students and campus life at Lawrence and Thayer halls," said Peters.

"You might say it was a forerunner to what Wendy Williams now does on TV," says **Willie Brooks**, who lived in Mount Vernon, N.Y. before moving to Pittsburgh to attend Fifth Avenue High School and eventually, Point Park. "Lots of on-campus gossip talk," he said. Meanwhile, the pride of J&C student

majors was a real-life professional deejay who actually attended Point Park and lived on campus. **W. Kevin Trower**, a Schenley High School graduate from the Hill District, actually worked for the 100-thousand watt WAMO-FM, then the city's premier urban-formatted radio station. But make no mistake, Trower was never affiliated with the student-run hip-hop shows. He was way too professional for that scene. Trower eventually pursued a law degree and is now a practicing attorney in downtown Pittsburgh. Another notable J&C student and radioman was **Kenny Davis** of Clairton High School. Davis was a popular hometown deejay, and had already earned the moniker "DJ Kenny" by the time he entered Point Park as a freshman. He too had a popular dance-oriented shift on WPPJ.

Students like the late **David Evans** of Vineland, N.J.; **Troy Allen** and **Carlos Hardimon**, both of McKeesport, Pa., were the primary ring-leaders of the Sunday night gossip-hip-hop shows. Allen, who died unexpectedly last year, ultimately earned his Ph.D. and became a professor at Southern University in Baton Rouge, La. His son Said Allen was a star basketball player for the Pioneers from 2014-17.

Brooks recently said he recalls fellow student **Barry Young** predicting that "hip-hop was here to stay." Young studied business administration and came to Point Park from his hometown of White Plains, N.Y. Even then, Young wore Kangol caps and shell-toe Adidas sneakers, many years before RUN-DMC made the NYC clothing style a rap music staple. Young recalls receiving special cassette tapes in the mail from his friends

who were at the helm of the hip-hop revolution. Now age 58, Young reflects on what he saw during those 'good ole days.' "We had the cassette tapes that were recorded by the young crews from home, who used what they called echo-chambers – and recorded music without vocals. They looped the music over and over. I would bring my cassettes and boom-box to the Lawrence Hall cafeteria and the basketball players just couldn't get enough of that New York rap flavor," said Young. "All this was a new style of music – it was a fresh sound," he said. But mainstream music industry-types weren't [yet] sold on the nouveau sound or its longevity.

Eventually, the on-campus deejays started incorporating Young's music into their Sunday afternoon shows. "But make no mistake," adds Young, "my boys were always Public Enemy, Scott La Rock and KRS-One from Brooklyn." Young is now a retired railman who worked for the Grand Terminal Railroad in New York City. He's also a grandfather of five.

By the fall of 1979, Englewood, N.J.-based Sugarhill Gang had released the groundbreaking "Rapper's Delight" and rap music as an idiom had finally become recognized and respected by the entire music industry. The tune was heard throughout Point Park's campus and was a staple on WPPJ and on boombox speakers owned by teenagers throughout downtown Pittsburgh.

Dance graduate **Theresa Smith** (COPA 1982) also lived in Teaneck, N.J. and recalls watching B-boys and B-girls thriving throughout her neighborhood. "My neighborhood was full of aspiring rappers and breakdancers," she recalls. In addition to her dance studies, Smith also worked a radio shift at WPPJ during her senior year. "I sided on the smooth-jazz idioms," she said, in comparison with the Sunday night hip-hop shows. Smith once owned her own dance studio and is currently a successful realtor in Bronx, N.Y.

Ultimately, the hip-hop genre found its niche among more major idioms of funk, R&B, country, rock, blues, classic rock, pop, jazz, soul, heavy metal and even punk rock. But it's likewise vital to note that initially, hip-hop had a major impact and presence at Point Park University. ❖

ON A ROLL

POINT PARK RUNNING TO THE TOP IN TRACK AND FIELD AND CROSS COUNTRY

By Kevin Taylor



In just over four years as a program, Point Park University Track and Field has made a huge mark.

In Downtown Pittsburgh, in the shadow of tall buildings with not much room for running tracks or jumping pits, the Pioneers have risen up as a formidable program taking the River States Conference and the NAIA by storm. The Pioneers have won several conference championships and produced many NAIA All-Americans in just the short time since they were

first established in 2014-15. Already with many years of cross country tradition, the addition of indoor and outdoor track and field have pushed those programs to new heights as well.

Propelled by victories

The results have been near – and in some cases complete – domination of the RSC with a big impact on the NAIA as well. All of that in less than five years. Point Park women's cross country has

won three of the last four River States Conference championships and two in a row in 2017 and 2018. The Pioneers' women's program also has won the last two RSC indoor track and field titles (2018 and 2019). Those victories helped propel the women to their first RSC outdoor track and field championship in 2018, which followed three years of coming close as conference outdoor runner-up each time.

The Pioneers' men's program has also experienced great success with back-to-back RSC indoor track and field titles in 2018 and 2019. That goes along with an RSC cross country championship in 2015 and runner-up finishes in 2017 and 2018. Much like the women's team, the men's program has enjoyed consistent success as a top team in the conference and has now broken through with team titles. The men were the RSC runner-up in each of their four outdoor seasons. And with the last two indoor track titles, the Pioneers

were able to get their first taste of a championship. Nationally, the Pioneers have made their mark there as well. Just this past fall, the women's cross country team spent the entire season ranked in the NAIA Top 25, and it registered its highest national finish of 18th place at the NAIA meet.

National champion leads the way

“That included NAIA cross country national champion Anna Shields, who

at the time had already won six national titles and 10 NAIA All-American honors combined between track and cross country.

Shields is the most accomplished athlete in Point Park history, and she has established herself as a top athlete in the NAIA, regardless of sport. A four-time NAIA National Athlete of the Year in track and cross country, Shields shows the caliber of talent that has been brought to campus.



On the men's side, they too have been represented at the NAIA cross country national meet the last several years in a row. On the track and in the field, the Pioneers continue to increase their number of NAIA national qualifiers. They sent five qualifiers to outdoor nationals in 2018, the most ever for the men's team. For the indoor 2019 season, the men qualified their first relay to nationals, the 4x800.

The most decorated men's performer in program history is jumper Jryi Davis. He earned four NAIA All-American honors during the first four years of the program and placed as high as third in the country for the triple jump at his final college meet.

Academic achievement

The Pioneers' performance at meets shows the success of the programs. What has not been outwardly apparent is how the programs have had to adjust their training tactics being a track and cross country program in an urban environment. Despite not having ideal conditions to throw javelins, run sprints or get repetitions in the jumps, the Pioneers have not let that stop them from achieving success.

The Pioneers have also achieved highly in the classroom. For the last two years, both the men's and women's programs have been named to the United States Track

and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association's "All-Academic Team." That honor is for programs that have a team GPA or 3.0 or higher.

With all those accomplishments on and off the course and track, the beginnings of Point Park track and field and the uprising of Pioneers cross country will be remembered for years to come. And the programs will continue to make an impact on the athletic department and school.

Kevin Taylor is director of athletic communications at Point Park. ❖



WOMEN'S SOCCER

The Pioneers won the River States Conference regular-season title with a record of 7-2 RSC. They were 11-8 overall to earn their most wins ever in the regular season and second-most in program history. The Pioneers put together an eight-game winning streak to secure first place in the RSC. The Pioneers had four players earn All-RSC honors with Tia Horew (RSC Newcomer of the Year), Gabby Widman, Ashtyn Webb and Chloe Bowser all named to the first team.

MEN'S SOCCER

The Pioneers had another successful season ending the year at 10-6-1 overall. It was the sixth time in the last eight years the program achieved double-digit victories, and it was their eighth playoff appearance in a row. Freshman defender Lorenzo Diaz and sophomore midfielder Geert Bijl were named to the All-RSC first team, and senior goalkeeper Juan Somoza made the second team.

VOLLEYBALL

The volleyball program put together a strong season of 19-12 overall, 12-4 River States Conference and earned a top playoff seed as the second-place team in the RSC East Division. It was the first year under head coach Bridget Bielich, who was an assistant coach the previous three seasons. The Pioneers had five all-conference players on roster with seniors Ashley Taylor, Morgan Dangelo, Jordan Dixon and Destiny Tucker and junior Julia Menosky.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

The Pioneers made a return to the conference playoffs after a two-year absence. They were under the direction of first-year and interim head coach Joe Lewandowski, who was hired on Oct. 1. Led by the senior class of six players, the program picked up some key

SPORTS ROUNDUP

wins in the RSC East Division to earn a playoff spot. Senior Daniel King was named All-RSC second team, and senior leader Asim Pleas gained RSC Champions of Character honors.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The Pioneers finished the season strong, winning seven of their final 10 games to earn an RSC postseason bid. Senior forward Sam Weir and senior guard Kaitlyn Smith led the Pioneers into the playoffs for the seventh time in the last eight years. Weir ended her career with over 1,200 points, 700 rebounds and a school-record 232 blocks in just three full seasons. Weir and sophomore guard Michelle Burns were All-RSC first team.

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