

# THE POINT

## Community Impact

Educating agents of change  
in diverse community settings

## Lights Out

A fond farewell to the “old”  
Pittsburgh Playhouse





Dear alumni and friends,

It's summer vacation season, but work is humming along at a rapid pace at Point Park. From new academic programs to new facilities, there's a lot happening on our Downtown campus and we are eager to share the news with you.

One of the most vibrant aspects of our community of students, faculty and staff has been a shared commitment to making

a positive impact in our own neighborhood and in the greater Pittsburgh region. Last fall, Point Park established a Department of Community Engagement to incorporate an interdisciplinary approach to academics, initiatives, critical thinking and social entrepreneurship efforts. In 2018, members of the first cohort in our new Ph.D. program in community engagement will receive their doctoral degrees. You can learn more about the many aspects of community engagement at Point Park in this issue of The Point.

This summer, we bid a fond farewell to an "old friend," and we're preparing to welcome an exciting new addition to our Downtown campus. On June 18 we gathered together to share memories as we turned the lights out at the "old" Pittsburgh Playhouse in Oakland. The Lights Out event was a nostalgic celebration of the history, entertainment and friendships that have flourished in its 85-year history.

Today, we stand on the threshold of opening the largest piece of the Academic Village Initiative – the new Pittsburgh Playhouse located along Forbes Avenue between Wood Street and Smithfield Street in Downtown Pittsburgh. Set to open in October, the new

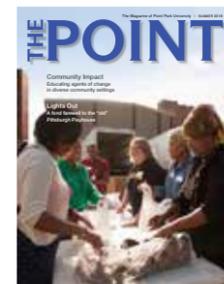
Playhouse is an incredible, one-of-a-kind interdisciplinary center for all facets of entertainment management, including our nationally ranked Conservatory of Performing Arts.

Ten years ago, Point Park embarked on a journey to transform our urban campus through the Academic Village Initiative. Piece by piece, through many projects, together we have transformed the neighborhood Point Park has been proud to be a part of for more than 50 years. This journey would not have been possible without the support of the entire Point Park community.

We're grateful that you've been along for the journey, and proud to share our progress with you. Stay tuned, the best is yet to come.

Warm regards,

Dr. Paul Hennigan  
President



**ON THE COVER:**  
The first cohort of doctoral students, who began in 2015 and will receive their new Ph.D. in community engagement degrees in 2018, volunteer together for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Photo by Christopher Rolinson.

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#### TALK TO US!

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

Managing Editor  
Marketing and Communications  
Point Park University  
201 Wood Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: 412-392-6108 Fax: 412-392-6185  
Email: [thepoint@pointpark.edu](mailto:thepoint@pointpark.edu)

President  
Paul Hennigan, Ed.D.

Vice President of  
External Affairs  
Mariann Geyer

Managing Editor  
Cheryl Valyo

Managing Director,  
Communications and  
Client Services

Nancy Commella

Managing Director,  
University Marketing and  
Public Relations  
Lou Corsaro

Graphic Designer  
Judy Sporka

Manager of Printing  
Services  
Don Pastorius

Director of Online  
Communications  
Keith Kuzmovich

Web Services Manager  
Stephen Shanahan

Writers  
Amanda Dabbs  
Gina Puppo  
Kevin Taylor  
Barbara Vilanova

Photographers  
John Altdorfer  
Nathan Gentry  
Nick Koehler  
Martha Rial  
Christopher Rolinson

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## Professional Advancement

**Sarah Schulz**, Ph.D., LSW, assistant professor of psychology and director of the M.A. in clinical-community psychology program, was one of 13 individuals appointed to the City of Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission. The Commission is a new effort by the Pittsburgh City Council to conduct a five-year analysis on gender bias within the city. Schulz's research focuses on mental health, medical sociology and gender studies, with an emphasis on addressing barriers to health care faced by members of the LGBTQ community. Her research interests are grounded in more than 10 years of practice as a psychiatric social worker in a variety of practice settings.

**Helena Knörr**, Ph.D., associate professor of organizational leadership, taught a full-day workshop April 16 to more than 40 faculty members in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Escuela Superior Poli-

técnica del Litoral in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Knörr's workshop, "Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship in the Context of Multi-disciplinary Approaches," focused on how professors can incorporate their social innovation entrepreneurship projects when submitting proposals and applying for grants. Knörr also gave a motivational speech April 17 to about 35 women entrepreneurs from socioeconomic-disadvantaged communities in Ecuador.

**Patrick Mulvihill**, D.Ed., assistant professor of management, interviewed Lee Cockerell, retired executive vice president of operations for the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla., as part of his leadership-focused podcast "Take the Hill." Cockerell has authored five books and speaks around the world about leadership.

**Steve Tanzilli**, J.D., dean of Point Park University's Rowland School of Business and SAEM and M.B.A. alumna **Ashley Dobransky**, assistant to the dean and

former Disney College Program intern, joined Mulvihill on the trip to Orlando. Mulvihill's leadership podcast series launched in January 2018 with co-host **Dennis Frketch**, D.Ed., Point Park business management alumnus and part-time business faculty member.

**Garfield Lemonius** has been appointed chair of the Department of Dance. An associate professor, Lemonius joined Point Park in 2010. He holds an M.F.A. in dance from Southern Methodist University and a B.F.A. in dance and Bachelor of Education from York University in Toronto. According to Lemonius, Point Park has long been recognized as one of the premiere dance Conservatory programs in the country. "My vision is to: maintain this tradition of excellence yet find new and innovative ways to ensure constant visibility for our program; engage in creative and collaborative relationships with choreographers, entrepreneurs and our

colleagues in our thriving local community and the industry at large; re-evaluate our curriculum and its delivery by employing best practices to support our students in their academic and artistic pursuits; and think and act boldly in the best interests of all our students and the department, by providing them with lasting tools and skills to ensure that they become successful artists and innovators."

**Tammy Ryan**, an instructor at Point Park and a widely produced playwright, has been named a New Dramatists resident playwright for the class of 2025. According to an article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "each of the residents in the program 'becomes the artistic director of his or her own seven-year long new play laboratory.' The names were revealed at a New York luncheon honoring actor Denzel Washington. Ryan will maintain her home in Pittsburgh but travel often to New Dramatists in New York, where writers are empowered to select what to work on, as well as their collaborators. From September through July, New Dramatists hosts new play and musical readings and presentations of works from writer-driven Creativity Fund projects. "I'm honored of course and encouraged by this gift and promise of support, which comes at a time in my career and life that I can really benefit from it," Ryan said from New Dramatists' August Wilson Room. "I'm beyond grateful and excited for the future and ready to get to work but also thrilled to be part of this amazing community of writers, so many of them whose work I've long admired."

**Ed Traversari**, M.B.A., associate professor of Sports, Arts and Entertainment Management, was among a group from Pittsburgh (which included the Mayor's Office, City Council, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, The Cultural Trust and WYEP) selected to attend the 2018

Sociable City Summit hosted by the Responsibility Hospitality Institute Feb. 18-20 in New Orleans. The conference focused on how cities can harness the power of the nighttime economy. It was a continuation of the 2017 Sociable City Leadership Summit Traversari attended in Austin, Texas, as part of his continuing efforts to make Pittsburgh a music city. Traversari attended workshops titled "The Music City and Investing in Talent Development," "Has Your City Been 'Studentified?'" and "Business District Management and Nightlife."

**Matt Fazio**, Ph.D., part-time instructor in the Department of Literary Arts, co-authored the book *Detours and Designs*, a novel for young readers about real issues and problems they face. The book is co-written with Josh Malacki. "We wanted to connect with young readers about issues they actually face in their everyday lives," according to Fazio, who teaches on-campus and online composition classes as well as a World Literature course. Fazio is also a marketing supervisor for Donnelly-Boland and Associates in Pittsburgh.



**Dan Swalga** has retired after 12 years as director of athletics. Swalga guided the Pioneers to great success during his time at Point Park. The athletic department has been one of the top schools in its conference in recent years and the Pioneers have competed nationally in many sports. During Swalga's tenure, the athletic department has grown from nine varsity

sports to 17. Sports added include men's and women's golf, men's and women's indoor and outdoor track and field, and competitive cheer and competitive dance. During Swalga's time the Pioneers were accepted into the River States Conference (previously known as the Kentucky Intercollegiate Athletic Conference). Since joining the RSC, the Pioneers have claimed the RSC Commissioner's All-Sports Cup three times. Swalga was named the KAC Athletic Director of the Year in 2014-15. Point Park also situated many athletics facilities during his time, including the first-ever on-campus venue for intercollegiate athletic competition, the Student Center Gym, the home of Pioneers volleyball. Arrangements were also secured with Highmark Stadium for men's and women's soccer, Point Park Field at Green Tree Park for baseball, Fairhaven Park for softball and CCAC-Allegheny for men's and women's basketball.

**Jim Ice**, Ed.D. (A&S '17), managing director and owner of jim ice & associates, delivered the keynote address at Point Park's 2018 Graduate Hooding and Degree Conferral on April 28. Ice has been a trusted adviser to business leaders for more than 30 years, designing and implementing programs to improve individual and organizational performance for companies such as Westinghouse, Allegheny Energy and Alcoa. In 2017, Ice was a member of the first class of graduates from Point Park's Ed.D. program in Leadership and Administration. "As a student, Jim came to Point Park in the midst of a successful career in business. We're honored that he thought highly enough of our doctoral program to return to the classroom," said President Paul Hennigan. "Someone with his depth of experience and desire to learn is the perfect type of person to speak to our region's future leaders."

“Setting up a gift you pay across the year, it makes so much sense. That relatively little bit each month doesn't pinch so much. When students walk across the stage at graduation, even if you can't draw a direct line, you can draw an indirect line that you helped in some small way to aid and assist every single person to achieve that goal.”

**DAVE FABILLI**  
Professor, Point Park University

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Dave believes philanthropy can give students the chance to participate in opportunities they may be unable to afford otherwise; Point Park University and its students have provided him with experiences he couldn't imagine in his "wildest dreams."

You, too, can make a lasting impact on the opportunities available to students through a gift to the Annual Fund.

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## Documenting River Cleanup in Montana

**Christopher Rolinson**, associate professor in the School of Communication, led a group of environmental photography students on a trip to Missoula, Montana last May to document the cleanup of the Upper Clark Fork River. The trip was funded by the Heinz Endowments, which earmarks funds for student travel and is part of the organization's ongoing support of the Environmental Journalism program at Point Park. Students participating in the project included **Megan Bixler**, **Amanda Chelosky**, **Lauren Clouser**, **Gracey Evans**, **Hannah Lapiska**, **Rebecca Lessner**, **Ashley Murray**, **Elana Shahan**, **Zachary Shahan**, **Briana Walton**, **Derek Watson**, and **Morgan Willis**. Rolinson said that the river cleanup began in 2012, but without constant community engagement environmental projects can get stalled. "We wanted our students to go to

Montana, listen to the people's concerns and understand their environmental challenges. This river, while strikingly beautiful, is the largest Superfund site in the U.S. It's so big, it will take generations to undo the damage from copper mining." The journalists are producing a documentary that will be entered in film festivals. "For our students, it's not about winning a prize for the film but about helping to directly impact a project in a profound way," said Rolinson. "If our film can re-invigorate interest in the clean-up, our efforts will be well worth it." The Clark Fork, or the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, is in the U.S. states of Montana and Idaho, approximately 310 miles long. The location was listed as a Superfund site in 2012, which followed a decade-long effort from local environmentalists to begin a 56-river mile clean-up. Photo by Christopher Rolinson.

## National High School Dance Festival

Point Park welcomed high school students from around the country and around the world to the National High School Dance Festival, Feb. 28 - March 4. The opening ceremony at the Byham Theater featured Jessica Lang Dance, a New York City-based dance company. The festival featured scholarship auditions for dance programs and summer intensives in front of prestigious schools from across the country, and more than 150 master classes led by guest artists and choreographers in Point Park's state-of-the-art dance facilities. The young dancers participated in workshops about the college admissions process, careers in arts management, business management, marketing for dance and performing arts, as well as creating and managing a professional dance company. Hundreds of scholarships were awarded to students at the end of the festival.

## Emerging Trends in Sports

Students connected with sports professionals and learned about important topics in the field at the inaugural Emerging Trends in the Sports Industry seminar March 27. The seminar kicked off with keynote speech on "The #MeToo Movement and the Sports Industry" by **Buffy Filippell**, founder of TeamWork Online, an industry leader in web-based talent recruiting for sports and live events. Filippell shared her personal experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace and discussed equality research she has done with her company. The event was organized by more than a dozen sports, arts and entertainment management students and led by **Jessica Martin '17**, SAEM alumna, M.B.A. student and Rowland School of

Business graduate assistant. Following the keynote speech, panel discussions were held on the "Integration of Analytics in Sports" and "Hot Topics in E-Sports." "We were very fortunate to have directors, managers and owners from the Pittsburgh Pirates, Pittsburgh Penguins, Pittsburgh Steelers, Visit Pittsburgh, Cleveland Cavaliers and the new Pittsburgh Knights organization serve as our panelists and share insights on their areas of expertise," said **Robert Derda**, M.S., SAEM assistant professor.

## Graduate Student Conference

More than 80 graduate students, faculty and staff attended Point Park's inaugural Graduate Student Conference on April 14. The conference opened with a welcome from Assistant Provost **Jonas Prida**, Ph.D., followed by graduate student research posters and presentations on various topics from global economic inequality and community violence to social innovation and solar farm planning. Participating were graduate students from a variety of disciplines, including those pursuing master's or doctoral degrees in business administration, community engagement, education, engineering management, environmental sciences, health care management, leadership and administration and psychology. Alumnus **Billy Hartung** (COPA 1993, '08, executive director of The Center for Theater Arts, served as keynote speaker. Hartung has written curriculum and taught acting and musical theater for the performing arts faculties of The Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, the Carnegie Mellon University Pre-College Program and the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts. President **Paul Hennigan**, Ed.D., and Rowland



## Honoring Art Blum

**Arthur M. Blum**, the second president of Point Park who was prominent in the founding of the University, received an honorary degree at the 2018 Commencement on April 28. When Blum was named president in 1967 he was, at age 34, the youngest college president in the United States. A corporate secretary of the Business Training College, Blum managed the process and legal obligations required by the state of Pennsylvania to issue the charter for Point Park Junior College in 1960. He served as director of admissions and executive vice president in the early

1960s. Following the retirement of founding President **Dorothy Finkelhor**, he was named Point Park's second president in 1967 and served until 1973. "Arthur helped nurture many new academic programs at Point Park, including the dramatic arts," said President **Paul Hennigan**. "The creation of that program led the University to acquire the Pittsburgh Playhouse in 1968. It's gratifying that, 50 years later, Arthur can witness the birth of the new Pittsburgh Playhouse." Alumni, faculty, friends and family joined Blum for a reception in his honor on April 28.





## Governor Wolf at the CMI

Pennsylvania Governor **Tom Wolf** visited Point Park's Center for Media Innovation (CMI) on Feb. 1 for an event to seek public input about redistricting Pennsylvania's congressional map. The public discussion followed a January ruling by state Supreme Court ruling that the commonwealth's map is unconstitutional and must be redrawn. Wolf joined a panel of professors and community advocates, including Suzanne Broughton of Fair Districts PA and Point Park political science professor **Nathan Firestone**. It was the last of three "listening sessions" held by the governor about redistricting. The governor said the "listening tours" provided him with the chance to hear what the people of Pennsylvania envision for the future of the commonwealth's districts.

School of Business Dean **Steve Tanzilli**, J.D., presented awards, including Best Paper: "The Impact of Community Engaged Racialized Conversations on Educational Planning for African American Students," Trish Gadson, Community Engagement Ph.D. doctoral student; and Best Poster: "Diversity Awareness Initiatives in Three Western Pennsylvania School Districts," Robert Kartychak, Jason Olexa, Laura Ward, Leadership and Administration Ed.D. doctoral students. Faculty members

**Archish Maharaja**, Ed.D.; **Brent Robbins**, Ph.D.; **Yaser Roshan**, Ph.D.; and **Sarah Schulz**, Ph.D., organized the conference with student volunteers.

### ULI to Honor Academic Village

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) of Pittsburgh has announced its "6th Annual Placemaking Awards for Excellence Honoring Point Park University: The Academic Village and Pittsburgh Playhouse." Each fall, ULI Pittsburgh

recognizes outstanding projects, achievements and leaders in the city who are committed to the creation and celebration of "place." The award will be presented on Sept. 27 at a banquet and ceremony at the Omni William Penn in Downtown Pittsburgh. According to ULI Pittsburgh, more than 200 commercial real estate professionals will attend the event, which convenes thought leaders from a wide array of disciplines who promote the responsible use of land.

### Accounting Scholarship Winners

Accounting students **Andre Bennett** and **Jenna Herman** were awarded \$4,000 and \$3,000 scholarships, respectively, from the Pennsylvania CPA Foundation, part of the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants. "Point Park's accounting program and its faculty have equipped me with the knowledge and tenacity to be one of the top accounting students in Pennsylvania. The faculty also does a great job of promoting scholarship opportunities," said Bennett, an international senior accounting major from Montego Bay, Jamaica. Herman, a junior from New Castle, Pa., said: "I was so excited and grateful to receive this scholarship, especially from such an amazing organization like the PICPA." Bennett and Herman's career goals both include earning a CPA license and working in the public accounting field.

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### McKeesport Media Oasis Project

A joint project in McKeesport is emboldening young people to tell their own stories in a city where traditional media no longer exists. The McKeesport Media Oasis Project is a partnership between Point Park's Center for Media Innovation (CMI) and the Youth CAST (Community and Schools Together) Leadership Network, with a grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation. "This is a one-of-a-kind project here in Allegheny County, and the youth of McKeesport will not only tell their stories but also gain the skills and techniques necessary to report the news in their communities," said **Keino Fitzpatrick**, founder of the Youth CAST Leadership Network. Students from sixth to 12th grades are receiving training throughout the summer from **Matt Petras**, a journalism tutor at Point Park.

### Community voice

Petras presents lessons in interviewing, how to structure stories, photography and video, and other areas. The students will be out in the community doing interviews for their stories, whether it's a written piece, a photo essay or a video. Their projects will be highlighted at a special event in the fall. It was the shuttering of the McKeesport Daily News in 2015 that created the media desert for the city. "For the residents of a so-called media desert, it can be challenging to learn about what's happening in their community," said CMI Director **Andrew Conte**. "This project will allow the community to discover the stories and images from the residents' perspectives. It will not solve the problem of lacking a local newspaper, but it will give the community a voice again." The project's concept was accepted for presentation Sept. 30 at the annual conference of the Engagement

Scholarship Consortium in Minneapolis. Fitzpatrick and Conte will co-present at the three-day conference.

### Sustainable journalism

Among those who pledged to support the young journalists is state Rep. **Austin Davis**, who helped to kick off the project by meeting with the Youth CAST students on March 20 at McKeesport City Hall. "The goal is to provide training opportunities for students at the CMI and in the McKeesport community," said Conte. "Giving students access to community leaders is critical for this type of project. We are grateful to Rep. Davis for being so generous with his time." According to Conte, "This program creates opportunities for residents to cover their community in ways that are journalistic and sustainable. We want to lay the groundwork for something the community can take ownership of and build on."



*Celebrate the opening of this state-of-the-art learning and performance center in Downtown Pittsburgh!*

- ★ **6 p.m.:** Cocktail reception in grand lobby
- ★ **6:45 p.m.:** Inaugural performance in PNC Theatre
- ★ **8 p.m.:** Dinner by Duquesne Club
- ★ **After Dinner:** Cast party, live entertainment and dessert reception in Highmark Theatre

**TICKETS:**  
[PointPark.edu/2018PlayhouseGala](http://PointPark.edu/2018PlayhouseGala)

**PITTSBURGH  
PLAYHOUSE**  
POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

# PRESERVING THE PAST

## Historic facades completely restored and installed at new Pittsburgh Playhouse

By Lou Corsaro

The careful restoration of three historic Forbes Avenue façades is complete and they are now installed in the outdoor courtyard of Point Park's new Pittsburgh Playhouse in Downtown Pittsburgh.

University Architect Elmer Burger said about 95 percent of the façade pieces were salvaged. The pieces of the façades, depending on size, were fastened to backup walls in a variety of ways, necessitating a slow and careful removal process. The removal team was delicate in its approach to avoid chipping or damaging the corners of individual pieces. The glazed face of the terra cotta is fragile and can be easily damaged.

"We have been told it's the largest terra cotta salvage and rebuild in Pittsburgh," Burger said. "It was a pleasant surprise to be able to salvage so many intact, whole pieces of the façades.

Repairs were necessary – terra cotta is a clay product and it's been fired and exposed to the elements for a long time – but the high percentage we were able to reinstall is remarkable."

The façades at 320, 322 and 330 Forbes Ave. were documented and numbered for careful dismantling, cataloging, storage and reinstallation. Franco Associates was contracted to handle the removal, storage and reconstruction of the façade pieces. The removal work cost \$160,793, while reinstallation cost another \$200,000.

### Fine commercial architecture

Although the lower sections of the three façades were long-ago removed by previous owners, the upper façades represent a fine example of the commercial architecture that once characterized the district, said Ellis Schmidlapp, president of

Landmarks Design Associates, a longtime partner of Point Park that oversaw the process.

"The historic value of those buildings rested in the terra cotta ornament on the façades, so we concentrated our preservation efforts there," Schmidlapp said. "The most sculptural is the façade of the Royal building." The Royal, located at 320 Forbes Ave., was designed by well-known architects Alden and Harlow, and served as the longtime home for Honus Wagner Sporting Goods. It was the last of the three façades to be installed into the courtyard.

The outdoor courtyard will be open to the public once the new Pittsburgh Playhouse opens, offering an intimate view of the three façades. They will be rebuilt as they were, right down to the replication of the windows, according to Burger. "They look virtually the same," he said. ❖



Photos and video by Christopher Rolinson.



Point Extra

See a video about installation of the historic facades at [PointPark.edu/ThePoint](http://PointPark.edu/ThePoint)

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Department of Community Engagement educates agents of change in diverse settings



Above: Heather Starr Fiedler, Ph.D. in the Department of Community Engagement's Innovation/Idea Lab. Opposite: Ph.D. students volunteer with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Photos by Christopher Rolinson.



This December, the first hooding ceremony will be held for recipients of doctoral degrees in Point Park's new Ph.D. in community engagement program.

The doctoral program is 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 and social entrepreneurship. It prepares leaders for outreach and partnership work in civic, business and community organizations.

The new Ph.D. recipients will be prepared to be agents of change who inspire others and foster prosperity in a range of

community settings. It's all part of the overarching mission of the University's newly established Department of Community Engagement (DCE), according to Heather Starr Fiedler, Ph.D., DCE chair and professor of multimedia. "I think we've accomplished a lot, and we have a lot of exciting things on the horizon," she says.

## Community-focused

The new DCE incorporates interdisciplinary approaches to critical thinking, innovation, human-centered design and social entrepreneurship as they relate to community engagement. From academics to initiatives, community engagement is the

focus of intensive efforts at Point Park. It is housed in a new Innovation/Idea lab in Thayer Hall, a flexible space for group work, meetings, brainstorming and other creative activities.

In addition to Fiedler, DCE faculty includes business professor Jamesena Talbott, Ph.D., who has expertise in organizational leadership and inclusion; Sera Matthew, Ph.D., who specializes in women's and gender studies; and history professor Jehnie Burns, Ph.D. Research associate Elian Rosenfeld, Ph.D. has expertise in public health, and graduate assistants include Kelly Wilding, Lindsay Haslett and Meggan Lloyd. The team is pursuing a Carnegie Classification on Community Engagement in 2020.

The DCE oversees the first-year experience course, University 101, which involves more than 700 undergraduates and includes service learning and a poster project. "We want to instill a sense of community service into each of Point Park's incoming students," says Fiedler.

Undergraduates have the opportunity to minor in community engagement or minor in women's and gender studies, both of which are coordinated by the DCE. Additional academic opportunities are in development on the graduate and undergraduate level, says Fielder.



Above: Veronika Panagiotou in the Pioneer Pantry on Point Park's campus. Photo by Nick Koehler.  
 Opposite: students participate in a poverty simulation exercise. Photo by Christopher Rolinson.



The DCE oversees Wood Street Communications, which enables students to gain experience while providing communications services to nonprofits. Since 2015, more than 150 local organizations have received more than \$200,000 worth of services from Point Park students, says Fiedler.

### Ph.D. leaders

The new Ph.D. in Community Engagement, a three-year program, began in 2015. The first cohort is completing their dissertations and will soon graduate. Since then, dozens of doctoral students have entered the program, presented at numerous conferences, and initiated many different community practicum projects.

Ph.D. candidate Veronika Panagiotou says she was attracted to the interdisciplinary program and its focus on servant leadership, social justice and community. She is the driving force behind the new Pioneer Food Pantry, which addresses food insecurity issues among students. "On the first day of the Ph.D. program, [our] cohort volunteered with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, and it inspired research on food insecurity in Southwestern Pennsylvania," she says. "While visiting the University of Nebraska at Omaha, I saw their food pantry and thought that Point Park may need one too. With the support of faculty and administration, I was able to send out a survey and determine that a food pantry was needed on campus."

### Collective impact

Ph.D. candidate Danielle Davis led the inaugural Pittsburgh Collective Community Impact Forum at Point Park in August 2017. The event attracted 120 participants and connected the region's leaders to female and minority businessowners and entrepreneurs. The forum explored economic opportunities in technology, construction, agriculture, engineering and architecture, based on a model of urban growth that is inclusive and sustainable.

The owner of Davis Consulting Solutions, Davis co-hosted the event with business professor Patrick Mulvihill, D.Ed. "As a [Ph.D.] student focusing on community economic develop-

ment, it was wonderful to have the support of Dr. Mulvihill, who [serves] as the chair of my dissertation committee."

The Pioneer Food Pantry and Collective Community Impact Forum are among many new initiatives led by DCE faculty and students. Other projects include a Courageous Conversation Series, which has featured such presenters as John Stahl-Wert, author of *The Serving Leader*. The DCE will host a major conference, "TEDx PointParkUniversity - Building Bridges," on Sept. 14. Visit [TEDxPointParkUniversity.com](http://TEDxPointParkUniversity.com) for more information.

A poverty simulation exercise, presented with Circles of Greater Pittsburgh, enabled students to better understand the challenges of those experiencing poverty. The DCE has also sponsored



Lunch and Learn sessions such as “Bringing Rain to News Deserts,” presented by Ph.D. student Andrew Conte, director of Point Park’s Center for Media Innovation. Conte’s work was supported by a Social Impact Grant from the DCE.

### Community support

In addition to Conte, other faculty who have received Social Impact Grants include professor Helen Fallon, who is working with nonprofit The Giving Heart; biology professor Matt Opydyke, who is working with the Allegheny Land Trust on Project Bee Watch; and psychology professor Brent Robbins, Ph.D., who is working with homeless persons in Pittsburgh. The DCE also presents three annual awards to recognize extraordinary efforts in community engagement.

This year, the Student Award went to Panagiotou for her efforts with the Pioneer Food Pantry, the Faculty Award went to psychology professor Sarah Schulz, Ph.D. for her work with the LGBTQ community, and the Community Partner Award went to Light of Life Rescue Mission.

“It’s important to support and reward both individuals and organizations for the community engagement work that they are doing, as well as to provide opportunities for the University to get involved with the community,” says Fiedler, who says the DCE is developing a system to track and assess faculty and student projects.

“Point Park faculty members are already very engaged. We just need to spend time learning more about what they are doing – and celebrating it.” ❖



## PRO BONO FASHION

Point Closet thrift shop combines fashion with giving back to fellow students



Point Closet founder Monae Findley didn’t have to look far to find inspiration for her love of fashion; her mom, Ameela Boyd is a fashion designer. “My mom has her own clothing line and does empowerment styling for women who are survivors of domestic violence, so combining fashion with giving back to others is part of who I am,” said Findley.

A free thrift shop for Point Park students, the Point Closet offers students a way to update their wardrobes and at the same time, reduce, re-use and recycle unwanted clothing and other items that were previously getting tossed. “Students were throwing away perfectly good clothing, shoes and accessories because they couldn’t find a convenient location to give their items away,” said Findley. The 20-year-old broadcast major decided that a campus thrift shop would be the perfect solution to both finding a way to recycle gently-used clothing and make it easy for students to donate.

She brought her idea to Dean Keith Paylo, who loved the idea and challenged Findley to get her thrift shop up and running as soon as possible. Findley also credits Dean Michael Gieseke for his efforts to facilitate a physical location for the effort and Heather Starr-Fiedler, chair of the Department of Community Engagement, to ensure the Point Closet was getting all the help it needed. Findley and a team of student volunteers set up donation boxes in Academic Hall that were soon filled to overflowing. “We’re getting a lot of donations but we’re choosy because we want to give students only the best of what we collect. Nothing goes to waste though. What we can’t use, we donate to other nonprofit organizations like Goodwill or the Salvation Army,” she said.

### Proud to make a difference

The Point Closet hosted a pop-up shop last spring in Academic Hall where some 150 students browsed through racks of clothing and accessories. Findley organized a partnership with the Pittsburgh Multicultural Cosmetology Academy where three students enjoyed free hair and makeup makeovers and got a new outfit. In addition to clothing, the Point Closet also accepts decorative items, artwork, small appliances, lamps, fans, mirrors, and vacuums.

A native of Kingston, Jamaica, Findley came to the U.S. in 2015. She attended Gateway Senior High School for a year and after that, enrolled at Point Park where she participates in the Point Park Competitive Cheer and Dance team. As if that’s not enough, Findley is a member of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and is currently an E2 Private Soldier. “I know students who are struggling with not having the money to buy clothes or items for their dorm rooms,” she said. “If having a free thrift shop on campus can help alleviate some of that stress, I’m proud we can make a difference.” ❖

# LIGHTS OUT

The “old” Pittsburgh Playhouse turns out the lights with a nostalgic celebration of the 85-year-old theater



Point Park’s “old” Pittsburgh Playhouse hosted about 400 former performers, alumni, current students, faculty, theater friends and theater-loving community members in a nostalgic and sometimes bittersweet celebration on the evening of June 18.

At the Lights Out celebration, the historic theatre opened its doors for the last time to those who have enjoyed it for the past 85 years in its Oakland home. It was the final event to be held at the current Playhouse before the brand new, four story,

state-of-the-art teaching and theatre facility opens this fall in Downtown Pittsburgh. The sold-out celebration featured an open mic in the Rockwell Theatre, a memorabilia and merchandise boutique in the Rauh Theatre, a photo booth, slideshow, and many opportunities for guests to leave their mark in the (old and new) Playhouse. One alumni couple took the opportunity to renew their vows in the Rockwell Theatre, which was also the site of a special closing ceremony in which attendees listened to farewell remarks and joined together in singing “What I Did For Love” from *A Chorus Line*.

## Fond memories

“Entering the Rockwell Theatre this evening was very nostalgic for me. It reminded me of the opening scene from *Follies*,” said Mary Lee Casey, who studied at Point Park from 1972-74. She was among the many Playhouse alums who perused vintage posters, programs and other memorabilia for sale on the stage of the Rauh Theatre. “We would work backstage for the main stage shows, and afterward we’d often watch movies in the Rauh. That’s one of my fondest memories,” she said.

Among those searching for their names on a backstage graffiti wall was Shane Richardson (COPA ’15), a stage management graduate who is now a production manager for the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. Like many Playhouse alumni, he recalls signing the graffiti wall as a student. He said he has fond memories of working with Conservatory of Performing Arts faculty such as Producing Director Kim Martin, “a living legend.”

“The Playhouse was always such a great place to learn. It’s a place so many of us still feel connected to,” said Richardson.”



### Testament to love and family

Colleen Grutsch (Sheley) (COPA 1996), a technology executive who traveled from St. Louis to attend Lights Out, said, "I knew it would be an emotional experience, but I was actually in tears when I walked in this evening." A musical theatre graduate, she took the opportunity to sign her name on a newly painted blue "Rock Wall" at the rear of the Rockwell stage. She also signed for her former classmate and friend Monte Smock (COPA 1995), who is now deceased. "The number of people who are here tonight, I believe, is a testament to the love and the family that was created at the Playhouse," said Grutsch.

Performance and Practices student Malle Winters, who was staffing the memorabilia sales table in the Rauh Theatre, couldn't agree more. "I feel a special connection to this building because my mom, Kim Martin, is the producing director. I'm 20 years old, and I've been coming to the Playhouse for 20 years."

An acting major with a concentration in directing, Winters said she "feels a strong attachment to the old Playhouse, and I'm a bit sad to see it go. At the same time, I'm super excited about the opportunity to work and learn in the new Playhouse," she added. "The new building will be incredible."

### Lovely ghosts

Retired dance professor and choreographer Douglas Bentz also has decades worth of memories connected to the Pittsburgh Playhouse. A Pittsburgh native, he spent time dancing in Europe and with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (PBT) before being recruited to teach at Point Park in 1976. Nicolas Petrov, who founded both the PBT and Point Park's dance program, urged Bentz to join the Conservatory faculty to teach jazz dance. "That was 40 years ago, and I learned that I love teaching," said Bentz, who retired in 2017 and now teaches Pilates.

"This is bittersweet," he said. "I grew up at the Playhouse. I became an artist and a man. My first piece of choreography was here at the Playhouse, in 1977, followed by four decades of teaching and choreography at Point Park."

"Tonight, I see a lot of lovely ghosts from my heart. People who have passed, and people who are still here. They will be forever young. I see those who danced with me, or danced for me, or through [my choreography]."

"And that's beautiful." ❖



## "WILLKOMMEN! AND BIENVENUE! WELCOME"

### Playhouse inaugural season includes Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning productions

Point Park University will open the doors to its new four-story, state-of-the-art Pittsburgh Playhouse with a highly anticipated season featuring multiple award-winning, show-stopping productions, including *Cabaret*, *Sunday in the Park with George* and *History Boys*. This history-making season runs Oct. 26 through April 14, 2019, at the new Pittsburgh Playhouse, 350 Forbes Ave., in Downtown Pittsburgh.

The new Playhouse, showcased by beautifully preserved historic facades and a stunning, painstakingly restored stained-glass ceiling in the former Stock Exchange Building, will be a 24/7 operation with three different academic and theatre spaces, a large scene shop, sound stage, prop shop, costume shop and café. The PNC Theatre seats more than 500, the newly named Highmark Theatre seats 200, and the black box theatre, 100. The Playhouse also has a 10,000-square-foot production area, and 11,147 square feet of tech space for technical theatre and cinema arts programs. The Playhouse will serve as an artistic laboratory embracing the training, exploration and development of all Point Park students, faculty, staff and guest artists in all the business and performance disciplines of the entertainment industry.

### Groundbreaking productions

Uniquely connected to Downtown life and community, the new Playhouse will offer the public an intimate view of the making of art, as large windows offer an

unobstructed view of performance venues typically shielded from observation. A hangar door connects one theatre inside the Playhouse to the outdoor courtyard, providing students the opportunity to perform for the Downtown public at large.

"For the inaugural season in our beautiful new home, we chose groundbreaking productions that explore themes of politics, gender identity and culture, which seem particularly fitting for these turbulent times," said Ronald Allan-Lindblom, artistic director of the Conservatory of Performing Arts and the Pittsburgh Playhouse. "Seminal works like *Cabaret* and *History Boys* will encourage not just students but also audiences to examine how aspects of life and performance transform for entertainment and learning."

### *Cabaret* opens CTC season

"Willkommen! And bienvenue! Welcome" to the Kit Kat Klub in 1930s Berlin, and welcome to the first Conservatory Theatre Company production at the new Playhouse: *Cabaret*. Opening Oct. 26, the Tony Award-winning musical follows free-spirited singer Sally and American writer Cliff through brassy songs such as "Cabaret" and "Maybe This Time." Their understanding of life and love changes along with the world around them, as fascist ideas take root. Zeva Barzell directs this version of the Broadway classic. The CTC will present *Coram Boy*, Nov. 16-Dec. 2, directed by Tomé Cousin. Set in 18th century England, the play follows

the lives of very different people against the backdrop of the Coram Hospital for Deserted Children. Next up is *Vinegar Tom*, Feb. 22-March 10. Written in 1976, the play explores issues surrounding gender inequality with inspiration from the 17th century English witch trials. The Tony Award-winning musical *Sunday in the Park with George* runs March 15-24. With music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, this winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama represents a fictionalized version of real life artist George Seurat and the creation of his most famous piece, "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte." The CTC season concludes with the Tony Award-winning drama *History Boys*, April 5-14. Set in an English school, the play follows several boys as they prepare for entrance exams to Oxford and Cambridge. With the guidance of three history teachers, each bringing different methods of educating the young men, the students discover that education can inspire personal growth and wisdom.

### Conservatory Dance Company

The Conservatory Dance Company's 2018-19 season includes a variety of innovative dance productions. The season opens with Contemporary Choreographers, Oct. 11-14. Student Choreography Project I will follow, Nov. 16-18. The Winter Dance concert, a powerful performance of works by Edwaard Liang, Aszure Barton, Tyce Diorio and Nacho Duato, will be the first dance production to hit the stage in the new Pittsburgh Playhouse, Dec. 7-16. In the

spring is the Faculty Dance Concert, Feb. 21-24, followed by Student Choreography Project II, April 5-7. The season concludes with the Spring Dance Concert, April 18-21, in the new Pittsburgh Playhouse.

### Subscribe Now!

Subscription deposits are now being accepted. The six-show season subscription packages start at \$84 for Preview performances (starting at 7:30 p.m.), \$96 for Thursday evenings, and Saturday and Sunday matinees, and \$108 for Friday and Saturday evenings. Subscription benefits include the opportunity to pick your seats, flexible exchange policy and exclusive presales to non-Conservatory shows. If you purchase three subscriptions, you'll receive a fourth subscription free. In addition, full-price season subscribers will receive a complimentary season parking pass at the PNC Garage – just steps from the new Pittsburgh Playhouse (one pass per account). Students can save more than 20 percent by purchasing a Student Season Subscription for just \$60. Individual tickets prices range from \$20 to \$30 (senior tickets are \$15-\$20, students are \$13) and go on sale at 10 a.m. on Monday, Oct. 1 in person at the Playhouse box office, online at [www.pittsburghplayhouse.com](http://www.pittsburghplayhouse.com) or by calling 412-392-8000.

## ON STAGE THIS FALL AND SPRING

### CONSERVATORY THEATRE COMPANY

***Cabaret***  
Music and Lyrics by John Kander and Fred Ebb  
Book by Joe Masteroff  
Directed and Choreographed by Zeva Barzell  
Oct. 26 - Nov. 11

***Coram Boy***  
Adapted by Helen Edmundson, Based on the novel by Jamila Gavin  
Music by Adrian Sutton  
Directed by Tomé Cousin  
Nov. 16 - Dec. 2

***Vinegar Tom***  
By Caryl Churchill  
Directed by April Daras  
Feb. 22 - March 10

***Sunday in the Park with George***  
Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim  
Book by James Lapine  
Originally directed on Broadway by James Lapine. Directed by Michael Rupert  
March 15 - 24

***History Boys***  
By Alan Bennett  
Directed by Sheila McKenna  
April 5 - 14

### CONSERVATORY DANCE COMPANY

***Contemporary Choreographers***  
Oct. 11 - 14  
GRW Performance Studio

***Student Choreography Project I***  
Nov. 16 - 18  
GRW Performance Studio

***Winter Dance Concert***  
Dec. 7 - 16  
Pittsburgh Playhouse

***Faculty Dance Concert***  
Feb. 21 - 24, 2019  
GRW Performance Studio

***Student Choreography Project II***  
Apr. 5 - 7  
GRW Performance Studio

***Spring Dance Concert***  
April 18 - 21  
Pittsburgh Playhouse

### SPECIAL OFFER FOR ALUMNI

Point Park alumni can purchase tickets for \$15 for each theatre show. Visit or call the box office: 412-392-8000.

For more information on the 2018-19 Playhouse season, including tickets, subscriptions, student & alumni discounts, visit: [pittsburghplayhouse.com](http://pittsburghplayhouse.com).

# COMING ATTRACTIONS

*Conservatory of Performing Arts admitted students get a sneak peek at the new Pittsburgh Playhouse*



Graduating senior Gabe Florentino in the new Playhouse. Photos by John Altdorfer.

Dozens of young actors and dancers, all of whom had passed the highly competitive audition process to be admitted to Point Park's Conservatory of Performing Arts, got a behind-the-scenes look at construction of the main stage theater in the new Pittsburgh Playhouse during a campus visit on April 13.

The admitted students spent the day touring Point Park's downtown campus and learning more about Conservatory programs, to help them make a final decision in their college selection process. At the end of the day, they received a glimpse of the extraordinary new artistic laboratory that will open for the

upcoming fall 2018 semester. "I haven't made a final college decision yet, but seeing the new Playhouse has definitely helped," said aspiring jazz dance major Meridyth Rosato of northern Virginia, who said she was excited to do a few informal dance spins amidst the construction dust on the new main stage of the Playhouse.

"This new theater is incredible," said new acting major Jack Holmes, who traveled from Seattle for a first-hand look at the University where he plans to spend the next four years. Fellow acting major Jeremy Spoljarik, who was about to graduate from Norwin High School in a suburb east of Pittsburgh, agreed.

"I can't wait to come to Point Park," he said. They were joined in the tour by an aspiring actor from the opposite coast, Mei Lu Barnum of Boston, who also plans to attend the Conservatory. All three said they were excited about the opportunity to learn and perform in the new Playhouse.

## New era begins

Among the Point Park students leading the tours was senior acting major Gabe Florentino, who was preparing to graduate and return to his hometown of Brooklyn in New York City. He too said he was dazzled by the new performing arts facilities.

"This is so much better than the old Playhouse in Oakland. And it's what our school has needed for so long," he said.

"Even though I'm a bit sad that I won't have the opportunity to perform in the new Playhouse, I feel like I've been part of the end of an era at the old Playhouse, and that is also a blessing," said Florentino. "And who knows what the future holds! I hope to return as an alumnus.

"I am just so excited for all of these new students, because they'll be part of a new era at Point Park. And it is going to be amazing!"

# ALUMNI CONNECTION



Dear fellow alumni and friends,

I hope that you are enjoying the summer days with family and friends. It's been a year since I became the director of alumni engagement, after serving as assistant director for more than two years. In April, I experienced another exciting Point Park milestone when I walked across the stage at PPG Paints Arena to be hooded with my master's degree in communication technology. I can now proudly call myself a Point Park alumna. The atmosphere at commencement and the hooding ceremony was electric, and the excitement I shared with my classmates was contagious as we all entered into the alumni community that day. Thank YOU for making our alumni community special!

All of us at Point Park are incredibly thankful for the support, engagement and enthusiasm of our alumni. During the past academic year, many of you have shown your support for the University, whether it was by attending events, connecting with students to give advice, coming to campus to speak to classes or supporting Point Park philanthropically. Your dedication to your alma mater does not go unnoticed. You are the piece of the puzzle that makes Point Park University so unique and special.

As we enter the next academic school year, I would like to encourage more alumni to become engaged with the University. Please do not be a stranger! We have events all around the

country and here in Pittsburgh. Come out for an evening to meet other alumni. Let us know when you are in Pittsburgh and get a tour of campus. There have been many changes over the past few years and we would love to show them to you. As the new Pittsburgh Playhouse opens in the fall, I hope you would consider coming back to campus to see a show in this cutting-edge complex. Share your knowledge! Come back to campus to speak to classes or join the Pioneer Alumni Recruitment Team - PART for short - to connect with incoming and current students to share your advice and love for Point Park. There are so many ways to get involved, and we hope that you consider doing so.

To get involved and learn more about alumni events, programs and benefits, please visit [PointPark.edu/alumni](http://PointPark.edu/alumni), or contact me at [jmoritz@pointpark.edu](mailto:jmoritz@pointpark.edu). I look forward to hearing from you, and seeing you, in the near future!

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen".

Jen Moritz, M.A. '18  
Director of Alumni Engagement  
[jmoritz@pointpark.edu](mailto:jmoritz@pointpark.edu)

# CLASS NOTES

## 1960s

**Thomas J. Oswald** (BUS 1968) writes, "I enjoyed reading the winter 2018 issue of *The Point*, especially the Green and Golden article [about the 50th anniversary of Pioneers Men's Basketball]. This brought back some fond memories of my years at Point Park, starting [when it was] a Junior College and then graduating with the first senior class of 1968. Allow me a short stroll down memory lane. I earned an associate's degree from Point Park Junior College, served in the U.S. Army, then completed my education with a bachelor's degree in business management in 1968, 50 short years ago. Back in the day, Point Park was mainly a commuter school with an emphasis on business careers. As a commuting student, I took the PAT bus to and from classes, working at a local supermarket part-time. I remember favorite professors [such as] Mr. Kurki, Mr. Schmid and Mrs. Hurst, and also the friends I met, including Rick Santa, who is still a close and valued friend. After graduation, I worked as an auditor for the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, at what is now Station Square. In 1977, I resumed my education at St. Francis College. Ironically, the classes were held in Academic Hall [and in buildings on] Wood Street and the Boulevard of the Allies. I graduated in 1981 with a master's degree in Industrial Relations. I have been blessed with marrying my wife Bonnie, who has put up with me for almost 46 years. We have two wonderful daughters, Trisha and Katie, and now three grandchildren. Now retired almost seven years, I am enjoying life as never before. I owe my solid career to Point Park University and the fine faculty that taught me way back in the 1960s. Thanks for everything!"

**Denise Steffanus** was the associate editor of *The Globe* in 1969 and is now a journalist in the equine and horseracing industry. In January 2018 she received the highest honor in thoroughbred racing, the Eclipse Award. She also received the 2002 Award for Media



## Alums in *Hamlet* at the Public

The Pittsburgh Public Theatre's production of *Hamlet*, which ran April 19 - May 20, 2018 at the O'Reilly Theater in Downtown Pittsburgh, featured several actors and theatre professionals with Point Park connections. Alumni who appeared in William Shakespeare's classic masterpiece included actors **Tony Bingham** (COPA 1994), **Chris Cattell** (COPA '06), **Luke Halferty** (COPA '15) and **Monteze Freeland** (COPA '09). Assistant Stage Manager **Phill Madore** also studied at Point Park, and actor **Patrick Cannon** is an M.F.A. candidate in screenwriting and playwriting at the University. Actor **Ben Blazer** teaches movement and acting as a part-time faculty member in the Conservatory of Performing Arts. Ted Pappas chose *Hamlet* as the final play he would direct to complete his illustrious career as the company's longtime producing artistic director.

Excellence from the governing body for horse sport. In 2011, the scientific community honored her with the Michael E. DeBakey Journalism Award, bestowed by the Foundation for Biomedical Research in Washington, D.C. Steffanus began writing for the *McKees Rocks Gazette* when she was 12 years old. She became its principal political reporter at age 14 and wrote a weekly teen column at age 15, in addition to her political reporting. During her time at Point Park, Steffanus received one of five Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Press Awards.

## 1970s

**Margaret Duffy** (COPA 1979) is the owner of the Kay Duffy School of Dance, started in 1955 by her mother. The studio, which recently celebrated its 62nd annual recital, recently hosted a master class by **Callan Bergman** (COPA '10), who is currently appearing on Broadway in *Kinky Boots*. Duffy and Bergman, though decades apart, shared many of the same teachers while at Point Park.

IN MEMORIAM

**Thomas F. Milewsky** (A&S 1974) passed away on Jan. 26, 2017 at the age of 74. A resident of Suwanee, Georgia, he was born in 1942 in Steubenville, Ohio and earned his bachelor's degree at Point Park College in 1974. In addition to his wife of 51 years, Judith Milewsky, he is remembered by their children Bryan Milewsky, Kelly Davis, Jennifer Bertrand and Tommy Milewsky, as well as a large extended family including many grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Judith writes, "Tom was a proud graduate of Point Park, a proud veteran of the U.S. Army, and a loyal fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers. His family still is!"

1980s



**Stephen Hammel** (COM 1983) has been named vice president of business development for Larson Design Group, a nationally emerging architecture, engineering and survey firm with 10 offices in four states. Hammel will lead LDG's business development efforts, collaborating with each of its six business divisions in developing contracts with public- and private-sector clients by spearheading the company's capture planning efforts and sales strategies. In his 35-year career, Hammel has contributed to the development of several billions of dollars' worth of design and construction across a spectrum of programs, ranging

from the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to health care systems, universities and airports. He has built strategic business relationships with clients such as Bechtel Marine Propulsion Corporation, Valspar, and FedEx Ground, in addition to dozens of developers, private corporations, local municipalities, and other federal clients. Hammel, who is located in the firm's Pittsburgh office, previously held senior business development positions with two large architectural and engineering firms, a leading provider of program and construction management services and two design-build contractors. As well, while managing a Pittsburgh advertising agency office relocation, he obtained a firsthand client's perspective about how to plan and lay out a project, work with designers and contractors and negotiate leases. Hammel earned his degree in journalism and mass communication at Point Park.

**Joe Pinchot** (COM 1988) and his wife, Judi Swogger, have formed PS Pinchot-Swogger Publishing LLC, which publishes a monthly newspaper, NEWS On the Green, in Masury, Ohio, with online content, and performs freelance writing and editing for such clients as the city of Hermitage, Pa.

**Roi Tamkin** (COPA 1989) recently joined the writing team at Sketchworks: Industrial Strength Comedy, a sketch comedy troupe that performs in Atlanta. His photography was recently published by Foliage Oak literary magazine and can be seen at: <https://www.foliageoak.com/roi-tamkin.html>

**Alan Fisher** (COPA 1981) still makes magic wherever he goes. The magic world gathers every three years to hold the triennial World Championships of Magic. Since 1948 this event has been coordinated by the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés Magiques (known as FISM). The next Championships will be in July 2018 in the city of Busan, South Korea. The two largest fraternal magic organizations in the world, the International Brotherhood

of Magicians and the Society of American Magicians, held a combined convention in Louisville, KY where the North American Championship of Magic was conducted. This served as one of the qualifying competitions to determine who would receive invitations to Busan next year. Out of 1,000 eligible artists, Fisher was one of thirteen finalists in the Close-Up or "sleight of hand" category. From those acts, the ones with the highest scores were awarded invitations to move on to FISM 2018. He is one of only five in all of North America to receive an invitation to compete in his category. Fisher received his degree in musical theater from Point Park.

1990s

**Josh Trust** (COM 1995) has been named publisher of River Valley Newspaper Group in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Lee Enterprises (NYSE: LEE), a leading provider of news, information and advertising in 49 markets, made the announcement in March. Trust will manage operations at The La Crosse Tribune, Winona Daily News, The Chippewa Herald and six additional non-daily publications. "Josh is an accomplished executive with vast experience in the industry," said Lee Group Publisher Chris White. "He brings not only a record of outstanding business performance but also a great sense of civic responsibility." Prior to joining Lee, Trust was vice president and chief revenue officer of Advance Ohio, a division of Advance Local, after serving as vice president of digital for Gatehouse Media's Central Division and regional vice president of their Community East Group. Trust's career also includes publisher and president of the Rockford Register Star in Illinois, publisher

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of the Daily Star in Canandaigua, New York, and publisher of the Dover Post in Delaware. He began his career as a media buyer with Marc Advertising in Pittsburgh in 1995. "I am thrilled and humbled to lead the talented employees of our publications in River Valley," Trust said. "I look forward to developing partnerships with business owners as well as weaving myself into the fabric of the community," Trust holds a B.S. in public relations from the University of Pittsburgh and an M.A. in communications from Point Park.

**Pamela Zagar** (COM 1990, BUS '10) has been named Supervisor of Provider Services at UPMC Health Plan. She earned both her bachelor's degree in journalism and communications, and her M.B.A., at Point Park.

**John Trump** (COM 1990) is a managing editor at the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh, N.C. He writes, "In 2017, I published my first book, *Still & Barrel: Craft Spirits in*

*the Old North State* (Blair). It explores the burgeoning distillery scene in North Carolina, and I've been speaking and promoting it since its publication. Trump says his favorite Point Park memory is "Ed Meena's history classes."

**John Tommasino** (A&S 1993) is working as a freelance writer/editor in Los Angeles. He is also a volunteer English literacy tutor and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher within the Los Angeles Public Library System, serving students in the communities of Van Nuys and Pacoima, Calif.

**Chris Kilhoffer** (COPA 1991) is the assistant manager for ISS Facility Services at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh.

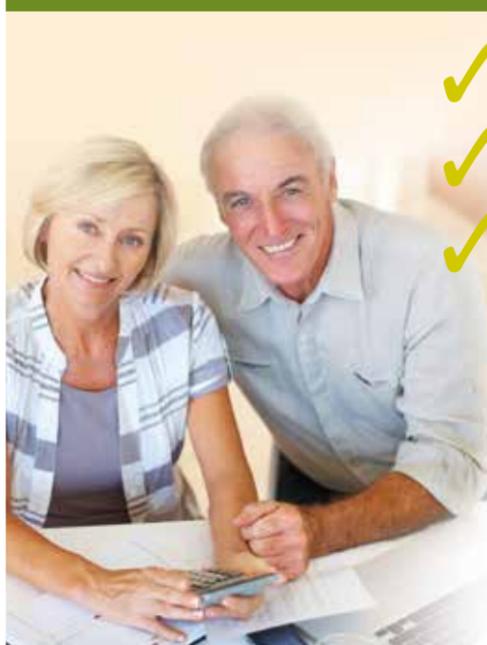
2000s

**Tia Ewing** (COM '08), has joined Fox 32 in Chicago as a reporter. She was previously an anchor in Cleveland, where she was named

one of Cleveland's Most Interesting People in 2016. Ewing earned her master's degree in journalism at Point Park in 2008.



**Robin Abramson** (COPA '03) played the lead role of Georgie in *Heisenberg*, a romantic comedy by contemporary British playwright Simon Stephens, at Pittsburgh Public Theatre's O'Reilly Theatre in spring of 2018. Abramson, who earned her degree in musical theatre at Point Park in 2003, has frequently performed in Pittsburgh. She recently moved to New York and starred in an acclaimed Off-Broadway production of *Shadowlands*.



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**Kelly Coccia** (COM '01) has been nominated and selected as one of Pittsburgh's 50 Finest for 2018. Pittsburgh's 50 Finest is an accomplished group of 25 men and 25 women who show involvement in the community, dedication to charitable causes and success in their careers. "With the distinct honor, I committed to raise awareness of Cystic Fibrosis through various fundraising events this spring and summer," says Coccia, who will be honored at a gala on August 18. For the past five years, Coccia has been employed by PNC. She is a member of the alumni board of directors at Point Park. She earned her degree in journalism and mass communications in 2001.

**Maggie O'Hara** (COM '09), who earned her B.F.A. in photography at Point Park, recently installed an exhibition at the Jepson Center for the Arts, a contemporary art museum in Savannah. The show ran from July through November, 2017. Read more at: <http://www.telfair.org/ohara/> and <https://www.connectsavannah.com/savannah/5-questions-with-maggie-mullin-ohara/Content?oid=5227864>.

**Phillip Pineno** (COPA '07) performed in a dance piece, short play, and reading of a new musical from Hokum Arts. Pineno also performed in the new musical *The Gunfighter Meets His Match* at the New York Musical Theater Festival in the summer of 2018. He has fond memories of "working with Michael Rupert, and performing in *Ragtime* during my senior year. Also, Keisha Lalama's dance class in the "fish bowl."

**Megan Duncan** (COM '05) writes, "I graduated with a Ph.D. in mass communications from the University of Wisconsin-Madison this spring. After I finish a digital journalism workshop at Texas State University, and a good bit of traveling this summer, I'll start in August as an assistant professor of data journalism and analytics in the Department of Communication at Virginia Tech."

**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." McKenna also appeared in a new play that debuted at the Toronto Fringe Festival.

**Stephan Bontrager** (COM '06) has been appointed vice president of communications and outreach at Riverlife, the nonprofit organization working to reclaim, restore and promote Pittsburgh's riverfronts. Bontrager oversees the organization's public messaging, branding, marketing, media relations, community engagement, and special events. During his time at Riverlife, Bontrager produced the 2013 grand reopening celebration for the \$40 million renovation of Point State Park and its signature fountain, as well as celebrations and media coverage for Riverlife projects at South Shore Riverfront Park, the Mon Wharf Landing, Allegheny Landing and Strip District Riverfront Park. He is also the producer of Riverlife's annual fundraiser gala "Party at the Pier," now in its ninth year. He has served on the Board of Directors for The Sprout Fund, the Community Advisory Board for 91.3fm WYEP, and was previously Board Chair for the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience (PULSE).

### 2010s

**Harrison Buzzatto** (COPA '14) has released a debut single titled "Marlayna/One More Day," a track on Through Binoculars, which is now streaming on Spotify and iTunes, as well as [www.throughbinoculars.com](http://www.throughbinoculars.com). Buzzatto first started writing Through

Binoculars in 2010 while studying theatre arts at Point Park. After graduation, he spent a year in Burlington Vt., working in broadcasting as a hockey play by play announcer, then returned to his home town of McMurray, Pa., to record with local producer and engineer Brian K. Smith. Through Binoculars, a five year project, features nine original pieces, all of which are composed and arranged by Buzzatto. The album shares the songwriter's journey through young adulthood, conveyed through a rich blend of indie, folk, and country elements, occasionally garnished by alt and garage rock energy. The instrumentation is partnered with Buzzatto's distinct vocal sound; a clear, yet soft and melodious voice, which is accented with lush and vibrant waves of stacked major harmonies. Listen at: [www.throughbinoculars.com](http://www.throughbinoculars.com).

**Erica Messionier** (COPA '14) has joined the Broadway Nation tour of Rodgers + Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. A resident of New York City, Messionier earned her B.F.A. in modern dance at Point Park in 2014. She spent time dancing in local performances in New York City, and on various cruise ships, before joining the national tour of *Cinderella*.

**Alicia Lyons** (COM '13) is an associate producer at Page Six TV. She earned her degree in broadcast journalism and secondary education at Point Park in 2013. She writes, "I am so excited to be living my dream -- that I've had since I was a freshman at Point Park. I am now working in New York City as an associate producer for a daily entertainment news show airing on FOX. It is more than I could have ever hoped for, and I really believe

that my time at Point Park prepared me for this role." Among her favorite student memories is "starting the Pioneers cheerleading squad in 2009, becoming a club, transitioning to a recognized sport, and honestly the most rewarding thing is (post-graduation) hearing that the team is now part of the NAIA."

**Elena LaQuatra** (COM '14), a general assignment reporter with WJET-TV, served as keynote speaker for the Woman's Day celebration, "Meeting Life's Challenges," a dinner sponsored by the Woman's Club of Erie. At age 4, LaQuatra lost the ability to hear and to balance due to bacterial meningitis. She shared her story of how she met this challenge and went on to represent Pennsylvania in the 2016 Miss USA Pageant. She also discussed how she managed to graduate with a degree in broadcast communications from Point Park and later become a reporter on local television.

**Callan Bergman** (COPA '10) recently taught a Broadway master class at the dance studio of Margaret Duffy (COPA 1979). Callan is currently appearing on Broadway in *Kinky Boots*. Margaret's studio, Kay Duffy School of Dance, started in 1955 by her mother, will soon celebrate the 62nd annual recital. Bergman and Duffy, though decades apart, shared many of the same teachers while at Point Park.

**Chelsea Oliver** (COM '13) is the 2018 recipient of the Credit Union National Association Rising Star Award, and three-time state champion powerlifter. Oliver earned a master's degree in mass communication at Point Park. Oliver recalls, "Watching the progress of Point Park's outdoor waterfall wall being built [in the Village Park], and being able to enjoy that space afterwards."

**Marissa Rayes** (COM '18) is a digital strategist for Rivers Casino in Pittsburgh.



## Hanging Out at the New Playhouse

**Philip Irvin** (COPA '14) is a stage rigging installer with Pittsburgh Stage, Inc. He received his B.F.A. in theatre production at Point Park in 2014. According to Irvin, "As a stage rigging installer, I travel about 40 weeks out of the year. My job consists of demolishing old rigging set ups and installing new ones. We make and install our own curtains as well as inspect stages to make sure they meet safety regulations. One of my [recent] projects is working on Point Park University's new Pittsburgh Playhouse, Downtown." Irvin says, "Working on the new Playhouse is amazing! I worked in the existing Playhouse in Oakland and am very familiar with those theaters. I can only imagine what faculty and students will be able to do in the new Playhouse. I have to admit that I am a little jealous of the students who get to work in this incredible new space." He adds, "I've always been a theatre nerd and love to see how different places operate. Having the chance to see/work on different stages is pretty cool." Many individuals from Point Park's technical theatre program had a lasting impact on Irvin. "While I could say something about everyone I worked with, the two people who made the biggest impact on me are Associate Professor **Aaron Bollinger** and **James Dworek**, technical director at the Playhouse." Irvin also says that, eventually, he would like to teach. "Ever since I started at Point Park I wanted to teach technical theatre in a university setting one day. My college experience showed me that my dream is possible, but first I need real-world experience to teach this subject well. Technical theatre isn't like any other job. Everyone can have a different idea, and all of them could be right and work. You get to integrate them together to create the best outcome."

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The Point Park competitive cheer team rehearses a stunt in the Student Center Gym on campus.

(Opposite, top) The Point Park competitive cheer and dance teams. Shown here are members of both teams. Both photos by Nathan Gentry.



The Point Park competitive dance team poses with its first-place trophy at the Siena Heights Classic during the 2017-18 season. Submitted photo.



Point Park competitive dance team members who earned NAIA All-American honors during 2017-18. Submitted photo.

# ON TOP

## Competitive cheer and dance teams making a name in second year

By Kevin Taylor

In only their second year of existence, the Point Park University competitive cheer and dance teams made an impact on the national stage.

Established for the first time as varsity sports in January 2016, the Pioneers completed their second year of competition during the 2017-18 academic year. After the first season gave them a taste of competition, the Pioneers made a big improvement for year two.

The Pioneers finished second in the NAIA regional qualifier for both compe-

titive cheer and competitive dance.

The competitive dance team advanced to the NAIA National Championship as an at-large bid and finished fourth in the nation.

Although the competitive cheer team came up short of national qualification, it too had a big accomplishment of finishing second in the region. The winners of each regional qualifier earned an automatic bid to the NAIA national finals with all other teams relying on at-large bids.

### Hard work earns respect

"In our first season we learned what our baseline was for expectations at competitions," said Bettina Herold, the head coach of both teams. "This year, we were better prepared for what was needed to prepare and execute our routines. I think that the strong results of our first year fueled our inspiration to work hard and earn respect for our program."

The cheer and dance teams existed as club sports for several years before achieving varsity status for the 2016-17

school year. Herold coached the team for five years under club status, and she was named the head coach when they transitioned to competing in the NAIA and under the athletic department.

The NAIA is the first organization to offer national championships in competitive cheer and dance, which offers a unique experience for student-athletes. Point Park offers athletic scholarships to members of the competitive cheer and dance teams, and the Pioneers compete around the region and for the right to make the NAIA national championship finals.

"The key to our success in the second year was getting out there and competing as many times as possible," said Herold, whose team competed in a total of 12 events from December to March spread across the region. "The cheer and dance teams both competed the most times during regular season out of all of the NAIA teams across the nation."

"We were exposed to a wide variety of competitors as well as judges. Competing on a regular basis has really paved the path that this is a competitive-based

program. Our athletes were very prepared for competitions as a result of our training all year long, and they embraced the process."

### National achievement

The competitive dance team powered its way to second in the region and fourth in the nation led by Emily Kirsch, Deanna Harris and Kenny Sickles. All three of those athletes earned NAIA All-American honors in dance while six other dancers were named honorable mention.

*continued on next page*



The Point Park competitive dance team poses with its fourth-place hardware at the NAIA National Championships in March 2018. Submitted photo.

The Pioneers' regional performance was second only to defending national champion Midland (Neb.) University. At the national finals, the Pioneers came up with their best scores of the season to earn hardware as fourth place in the country. The competitive cheer squad came up just short of qualification for the NAIA National Championships, but its second-place showing was a big improvement from ninth place the first year. The Pioneers came within one point of winning the region.

"Our next goal is to earn national bids for both teams in the same year," said Herold. "It would be an amazing experience to have both of the teams competing at the national level together and showing our Point Park pride. We also are looking to

grow our teams in size and skill and are considering opportunities to compete in other collegiate championships."

The continued development of the teams looks to build on the success of year two. Incoming recruits bringing their unique set of skills as well as current team members developing new skills are ways the programs will improve into the future.

### Point Park proud

The unique aspect of Point Park offering this outlet for competition in cheer and dance has been attractive to prospects. And the development of the teams has helped spread Point Park pride and spirit across campus and the region.

In addition to the many competitions throughout the year, the Pioneers perform at various events around campus to increase school spirit. The cheer and dance teams performed at every home basketball game this past year as well as during pep rallies and special events.

"We were the first in our conference to declare varsity status in cheer and dance," said Herold. "We have branched out and competed in many events around the region. The connections we have made have helped us to establish our reputation in the NAIA." ❖

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



## SPORTS ROUNDUP



The Point Park baseball team is shown with its championship banner and trophy from the RSC Tournament in May 2018. Photo by RSC.



Point Park women's golfer Lindsey Swanson was the top player for the Pioneers this year. Photo by Robert Berger.



Point Park men's golfer Max Kaminsky was the top player for the Pioneers this year. Photo by Robert Berger.

### ► BASEBALL

The Pioneers got back to within a couple of games of the NAIA World Series with a strong year of 47-9 overall. Point Park won the River States Conference Tournament title with its talented roster of 12 seniors. The Pioneers won two games in the national tournament to reach the finals of the NAIA Opening Round. The 47 wins are the fifth-most in school history, and it was one of the few seasons to end with single-digit losses overall. The Pioneers led the RSC with 11 all-conference selections with eight of their hitters and their top three pitchers selected.

### ► SOFTBALL

The Pioneers made it to the semifinals of the RSC Tournament to conclude the season on a pretty high note. Point Park won three playoff games to make it all the way to the final three teams left in the tournament. Point Park played one of its toughest schedules ever with many NAIA Top 25 opponents and ended up with a final record of 17-22 overall with three all-conference players.

### ► WOMEN'S GOLF

The Pioneers battled through a rebuilding year to finish sixth in the River States Conference spring championship. Point Park beat three other teams to improve on their performance from the RSC preview tournament in the fall. Junior Lindsey Swanson and freshman Carley Henry were the top players of the year for first-year coach Graham Hoffman.

### ► MEN'S GOLF

Senior Max Kaminsky earned all-conference honors once again to lead the Point Park men's golf team in 2017-18. Point Park placed eighth in the River States Conference spring championship after being third in the conference's fall preview. A highlight of the season was the Pioneers taking first place at the CMU Spring Invitational. It was the first year under new head coach Graham Hoffman.



The Point Park men's and women's track and field teams both won first place at the RSC indoor championships in February 2018. Photo by RSC.

### ► WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

Point Park claimed first place in both of the RSC Track & Field Championships in 2017-18. The Pioneers won the team title in the inaugural conference indoor meet in February and won another title at the outdoor meet it hosted in April. Junior Anna Shields led Point Park's NAIA national qualifiers as a multi-time national champion and NAIA All-American of the year.

### ► MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

The Pioneers won first place at the inaugural RSC Indoor Track & Field Championship held in February and followed that up with a runner-up finish at the RSC Outdoor Track & Field Championship that it hosted in April. Point Park had many men's athletes qualify for the NAIA national championships with senior jumper Jryi Davis leading the way as a multi-time NAIA All-American.

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