

# ALUMNI NOTES

## 60s

**Laura Hines-Jurgens '64** writes that she taught fifth grade, married, had two children, earned a second degree in general arts and attained an M.F.A. from California State University Long Beach. Laura's artwork appeared in numerous Los Angeles art galleries for more than 20 years, and she also designed clothing for daytime and evening wear. Laura has traveled to 31 countries with her husband, Henry, an international banker. Author of several books, Laura recently published "Dating: Shaping Your Marriage Before it Begins." Laura and Henry reside in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA.

## 70s

**Carol Kammer '73, M '78** wrote that she loved her Eastern experience. Prior to moving to Florida, Carol spent 25 years at Ledyard Middle School where she was a developmental reading/interdisciplinary study skills/literature writing teacher.

**Peter '73 and Lydia (Bombaci) Myers '73** write, "We are happily retired from our careers in education, counseling and

hospice. We enjoy visiting family and friends in the Burlington, VT, area and spending time at the beach in Annisqual, MA."

**Mark Schuster '73** shared memories of Professor Leo Schneiderman: "He was one of the three most influential mentors in my life. He willingly and graciously shared his knowledge and wisdom. He was a scholar as well as a good man who made you want to be a better student and human. He brought enhanced meaning and purpose to my life." Now retired, Mark was the founder and executive director of Bridge House, Inc., a unique clean and sober living environment in Kona, HI.

The Connecticut High School Coaches Association (CHSCA) announced E.O. Smith boys basketball coaching legend **Ron Pires '76** is among its 2023 Hall of Fame inductees. In his 43 years coaching at E.O. Smith High School, Ron compiled a record of 591-378 (.608 winning percentage), two state runner-up finishes, 12 league championships in the NCCC and six conference tournament championships. He was also named CHSCA Boys Basketball Coach of the Year in 2015 and was inducted into the E.O. Smith Foundation Hall of Fame and the Eastern Connecticut State University Hall of Fame, where he is still a top-10 all-time scorer.

**Michael Wierzbinski '78** wrote that he and his wife, Suzanne, are both retired educators. Suzanne has also retired from art and Michael is retired from real estate. "Our daughter lives in Europe

along with her husband. Between our cruises, we visit them in Germany, Italy and England. Our two grandsons have been staying with us in the United States for their college experiences. One has just graduated from the Air Force Academy with honors. The other attends college in Boston."

**Julie (Jaiven) Zander '79** wrote, "I loved my time at Eastern! My degree helped me get my job and established me in a career as a vocational rehabilitation counselor." Julie retired as lead counselor for the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and she resides in Seattle.

## 80s

**Tom Connors '80** has been elected to serve a two-year term as vice president of the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). Tom is a 14-year member of the Piscataway Township (NJ) Board of Education. He received his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Connecticut and is retired from the Technology Division of the Colgate-Palmolive Company.



Tom Connors '80

**Patti Ann Schulein '81** is retired and living in Lake Forest, CA. She taught Spanish at both the high school and middle school levels and even taught elementary students when language programs were expanded. "Eastern was where I fell in love with Spanish, thanks to Dr. Lee Watts." Patti Ann still speaks Spanish every day and will soon begin volunteering as an ESL instructor.

## ALUMNI DIRECTORY

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## RONALD WELCH '92, M '07 LEADS FIGHT FOR VETERANS' SERVICES



After 45 years of either serving in uniform or working to support veterans and their families, retired Brig. Gen. **Ronald Welch '92, M '07** has a new mission. The U.S. Army and Connecticut Army National Guard veteran was nominated by Gov. Ned Lamont in May to serve as the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs.

"I will fight to ensure we have the proper programs, services and outreach to educate our members (on) how to apply for benefits and services they and their families have earned for their service and sacrifice," he said. Welch said his goal is "to serve those that have served our great state and nation."

Welch enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1978 in his senior year at East Lyme High School. He served with the 2nd Ranger Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Lewis, WA, for four years. In 1981, he was seriously injured in a line-of-duty parachute accident and returned to Connecticut. After significant physical therapy and surgeries, Welch enrolled in a community college and then the Officer Candidate School of the Connecticut Army National Guard. When education requirements changed, he needed a bachelor's degree to be promoted to captain and beyond.

"Eastern had an exceptional reputation of working with service members in degree completion programs," Welch said. He enrolled and earned his bachelor's degree in 1992. As time went on, he completed several military school/specialty skills courses, earned promotions and was encouraged to enroll in a master's degree program.

"After researching other universities and programs, I once again found Eastern to be the best fit," he

said. Professor Emerita Elizabeth Scott, then dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies, "patiently explained the flow of the program and was always available as a mentor to assist if needed," he said. "This was critical for me as I had to step away from the program for a year while I was deployed to Afghanistan."

Like many others who served, Welch faced reintegration challenges when returning to the United States. Despite these hurdles, he found that "the master's program was a tremendous learning experience... The interaction with the staff, faculty and fellow students was extraordinary," he said. He earned his master's degree from Eastern in 2007 and a master's degree in strategic studies in 2011 from the U.S. Army War College.

He was appointed chief of staff of the Connecticut National Guard in 2008 and in 2012 became commander of the 85th Troop Command. In 2014, he was selected as the director of the joint staff and in 2015 was promoted to brigadier general of the line. He retired from the military in 2017 and then worked with nonprofits serving veterans and those with disabilities.

As commissioner, Welch is drawing on his years of experience to support veterans and their families. "The service member thinks problems will get better with time, so they don't seek help, primarily out of pride or embarrassment of being judged by others," he said.

The challenges veterans face include PTSD, depression, anxiety, employment issues, substance abuse, relationship issues "or just struggling to blend back into what others may consider normal society," he said.

**Gregory Hennen '85** is a landscape painter living and working in Virginia. His work was featured in a solo exhibition titled "Where I Wander" at The Center for Contemporary Art in Bedminster, NJ, and displayed work inspired by his extensive time spent in nature, which included 15 years as the property manager for Manitou Point Nature Preserve in Garrison, NY. Gregory's work has been featured in group exhibitions at the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Huntsville Museum of Art, University of Southern Mississippi and the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences.

**Carla (Harvey) Cooper '87** was honored by the Cape and Islands Democratic Council as the Democrat of the Year "in recognition of her leadership and commitment to advancing the ideals of the Democratic Party, and her tireless campaign and fundraising work for Democratic candidates locally, statewide and across the country."

**Steve Berube '88** recently became chief operating officer of FIGS, an apparel and lifestyle brand for health care professionals. "Together we are driving meaningful change while empowering and serving health care professionals every day. This is near and dear to my heart as both my wife and daughter are pediatric nurses." Steve had previously served as senior vice president of distribution and logistics at Levi Strauss & Co., and had also held positions at Lululemon Athletica Inc., Cole Haan and Nike.



Carla (Harvey) Cooper '87

**Margaret (Wheeler) Tuttle '88, M '92** writes that she had her "sailing adventure" for several years and then moved to Floral City, FL. "I live in a small country town with lots of animals around. Life is good."

**Joseph Danao '89** was promoted to deputy commissioner at the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs. He has served in a number of positions since joining the department in 2015 as director of operations. In addition to his work in the department, he also serves as adjunct faculty instructor at the Connecticut Fire Academy, deputy team leader for the Connecticut Region IV Incident Management Team, and vice president of the Eastern Connecticut Emergency Medical Services Council Inc.

# 90s



Mark Bradley '90

The Hartford has promoted **Mark Bradley '90** to director of MLC operations. Mark will lead the Northeast, Southeast and North Central account manager teams for general industries, technology and life science. He has been at The Hartford for 28 years.

**Angeline (Rai) Chand '90** returned to campus for the first time in more than 30 years last summer. Born in Fiji, Angeline came to the United States under the sponsorship of her aunt and uncle who lived in Mystic. "They did some research on American schools and encouraged me to apply to Eastern. It felt very homey to me, and it was affordable." Angeline resides in California where she works as a medical researcher.

The Noah Webster House in West Hartford named **Jeffrey Mainville '91** as its new executive director. His previous positions included managing director of Ball & Socket Arts in Cheshire, director of operations at the New Britain Museum of American Art, and cultural affairs/public programming manager at Hartford Public Library. Area music fans know Jeff from his self-titled Jeff Mainville Band, which plays a mix of pop, rock, classic, southern rock and country.

**Patricia Tedford '91, M' 01** is the new director of online learning and regional on-site support, East Coast at New Perspectives on Learning, an inquiry-based math curriculum that uses math workshops "to transform classrooms into communities of mathematicians."



Angeline (Rai) Chand '90

**Laura Evangelista '92** is a new residential clinician at Gilead Farrell, a treatment center in New Britain focused on addiction, treatment and recovery.

**Diane Ellsworth '96** was selected by the Hartford Business Journal as one of 2023's Top 25 Women in Business. She is the chief of staff for Nassau Financial Group and has been with the company since 1996.

**Melanie Shadish Dugas '98** is a senior scientist at Boehringer Ingelheim, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. Recalling her experience at Eastern, Melanie noted, "The Tropical Ecosystems course and associated fieldwork was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I am extremely thankful to Dr. (Phillip) Elliott and Dr. (Charles) Booth for their support."

**Jeff Brown '99** has been selected as the boys basketball coach at Norwich Free Academy. He is a physical education teacher at NFA and a former student-athlete at the school.

The Meriden Board of Education named **Bob McKee '99** as the athletic director for a new position that combines AD responsibilities for Maloney High School and Platt High School. He was originally hired as a health and physical education teacher at Maloney in 2000 and became Maloney's AD in 2016. Bob was part of Eastern's 1998 Division III national championship baseball team. He

## LIZA GINONI-GAMBINO '96 CROWNED MRS. CONNECTICUT AMERICAN

**Liza Ginoni-Gambino '96** won the Mrs. Connecticut American crown on June 4, more than 20 years after a life-threatening surgery led her to switch career paths from advertising to fitness.

"I hung up my high heels for a pair of Nikes," she said of her journey rehabilitating herself and changing careers.

Ginoni-Gambino traveled to Las Vegas in August to represent Connecticut in the national Mrs. American competition, which included an interview, evening gown/swimsuit contests and a state-themed costume parade.

Ginoni-Gambino majored in business administration at Eastern, which prepared her for a career in fitness. "Anytime I work at a gym, I end up being the manager," said Ginoni-Gambino, who teaches at four locations of Club Pilates and at her home studio in Shelton.

She began her career in advertising sales with newspapers in Connecticut. After surgery for endometriosis went awry — leaving her with a damaged nerve and artery — she switched to a sales job for a fitness club. When the club's spin instructor was absent one day, Ginoni-Gambino taught the class and took on a new career path.

The corporate philanthropy for the Mrs. American pageants goes to the Victoria's Voice Foundation, established by David and Jackie Siegel after their daughter died of a drug overdose. Ginoni-Gambino plans to coordinate a local charity event in Connecticut to benefit the foundation.



received a merit award from the CIAC in March and was named the Athletic Director of the Year for Connecticut Unified Sports in 2022.

**Jara (Messere) Rijs '99** was honored by Soroptimist International Greater Hartford with a profile in its Exceptional Woman Series. Jara is a licensed clinical social worker, working in Windham Public Schools for the past 15 years. She



volunteers as a member of the Windham Task Force Against Child Abuse, the annual Lock in for Literacy high school event, and the Take Time to Play experience promoting the protection of Windham's children. She is an adjunct professor in the social work program at Eastern, a faculty advisor for the UConn M.S.W. program and is a field instructor overseeing interns from multiple clinical disciplines.



Jara (Messere) Rijs '99

## 00s

### ROC ROCHON '09 PUBLISHES ON FITNESS INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Sport and leisure management major **Roc Rochon '09** is the co-editor and co-author of the recently released anthology "Deconstructing the Fitness Industrial Complex: How to Resist, Disrupt, and Reclaim What It Means to Be Fit in American Culture."

This book brings together broad intersectional insights and life experiences within fitness, bodywork, health and wellness spaces in the United States and Canada, reminding readers that the fitness culture operates "within oppressive systems like racism, sexism, transphobia and capitalism."

Rochon successfully defended their dissertation, titled "Reimagining 'Bodywork' in the Wake: A Collection of Black Queer, Transgender and Nonbinary Oral Testimonies" on June 20 at Florida State University in the Department of Sport Management. They recently accepted a postdoctoral research associate position at the University of Connecticut in the Department of Educational Leadership within the Sport Management Program.

Rochon's research in critical sport studies is interdisciplinary with concentrations in cultural studies and sport media with an emphasis on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and place.

In 2016, Roc founded Rooted Resistance, a grassroots bodywork space committed to reimagining bodywork for queer, transgender, nonbinary and intersex people in the southern United States. Rochon is interested in narrative stories and the ways in which Black, queer, trans and nonbinary people create bodywork counter spaces that tend to collective Black life.

**Angela (Dacunha) Garofalo '00** has three daughters and resides in Southbury. She recently launched Minx Boutique, an online shopping platform featuring apparel, accessories and shoes for women, teens and girls.

**Luis Borges '02** has been promoted to manufacturing engineering manager at Putnam Plastics Corporation.

**Heidi Davis '02** has been selected as the new principal for Coventry Grammar School after having previously served as the K-5 district literacy coordinator for Plainfield Public Schools.

**Michael Grabski '03** has been promoted to branch manager at Cintas where he previously worked as operations manager.

**Benjamin MacNeil '03** has been promoted to lead engineer at Travelers.

**Andrew Bessette '05** is a new territory business manager at Takeda Pharmaceuticals.

**Hector Pena M '05** was named chief financial officer at GRID Alternatives. Hector brings 22 years of financial management experience to his new position, including 14 years of renewable energy experience in development, financing, construction and operation in wind and solar power for utility, community, commercial and residential projects. GRID Alternatives is a leader in helping economic and environmental justice communities get clean, affordable renewable energy, transportation and jobs.

**Aileen Charland '06** is an executive assistant to the CEO and CFO of TRUMPF North America. When she is not working, Aileen loves to travel and visit warm places and also enjoys running, weightlifting, yoga and spending time with friends and family.

**Gene Labonte M '07** is the new chief of the University of Connecticut Police Department. He most recently served as associate vice president and chief of police at Salem State University in Massachusetts.

**Philip Lohman '07** is a correctional officer at the Washington State Department of Corrections, Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

**Adam Brzozowski '08** has recently started a new position as head of data insights at Health Outlook Corp., a start-up health care company that is in the business of providing better predictions of future health events.

**Kelly Franklin '08** was elected to the Cromwell Board of Education in 2021. She is also director of local and digital sales at NBC Universal Media, LLC in West Hartford.



Michael Grabski '03



## MELISSA LAMBERT '07 IS MLB'S FIRST DUGOUT PSYCHOLOGIST

**Melissa Lambert '07** joined the dugout of the Kansas City Royals baseball team this season as Major League Baseball's first dugout psychologist and the first female to join the Royals' on-field staff.

As director of behavioral science for the Royals, she coaches players on their mental performance and helps them deal with the stresses of being a professional athlete in the world's premier baseball league.

"The dugout is also a place to have conversations in the moment and talk about the game as it's happening," said Lambert. "I would say the two most common issues that come up are around stress tolerance and perfectionism. When I'm in the dugout and on the field, players feel like I can better relate to some of the challenges that they are going through." She added, "I'm often seen as another coach and can decrease the stigma of talking about psych-related issues."

Lambert, a native of Montville, earned her psychology degree at Eastern, where she played soccer for four years. She made first-team All-Little East twice and played on two teams that won the Little East Conference regular-season championship and two that won the Little East tournament. She earned a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling from Springfield College in 2009 and is a licensed professional counselor. Before joining the Royals in 2020 as the assistant director of behavioral science, she was a mental-skills coach for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

"A smaller school allowed for more time to build relationships with the psychology department," she said of her Eastern experience. "The professors all played a significant role in my development and prepared me for furthering my education in clinical psychology. When my career shifted into working as a therapist in sport, my athletic background and experiences in soccer have helped in my ability to relate to players."

Besides coaching in the dugout, Lambert makes sure that players have mental health resources and support on and off the field, and she oversees the return-to-play psychological protocol for players who have been in rehabilitation. Her work also extends to Royals-affiliated minor league teams and to community programs on mental health and substance abuse in the Kansas City area.

MLB data show that the most common mental health problems for players are anxiety, depression and substance abuse. The MLB requires that players have access to mental health counseling at all times.

But she is the first mental health professional in the dugout. "I always felt like I was part of a team and community at Eastern, which has been one of my favorite parts of working in professional sport," she said. "I love working with an interdisciplinary team and collaborating on the needs of our players."

**Andrew Lavigne '08** left his job as manager of business development and special projects at the Connecticut Port Authority to become manager of Connecticut's Clean Economy Program. In this role, he will coordinate the state's efforts to develop a green economy and a renewable energy industry.

**David Mariasi '08** was named associate director of student employment at Eastern. Dave was first hired at Eastern as a unit supervisor in the Registrar's Office in 2002 and became assistant director of Financial Aid two years later.

After more than five years at Cigna, **Cecilia Hughes '09** has a new position as communications director at Cisco, where she leads environmental and sustainability communications. She specializes in strategic counsel for senior executives, including communications planning and operations, stakeholder engagement, thought leadership and reputation management.

Prior to his move to Greystone, he was vice president of originations at Amherst Capital Management and earlier served as vice president for Cantor Fitzgerald's CMBS platform. Ryan earned a B.S. in business administration from Eastern.



Ibrahim Isik '10

**Ibrahim Isik '10** dropped by the Alumni Office with Professor Emeritus Branko Cavarkapa after they had lunch together this summer. Following his graduation from Eastern, Ibrahim returned to his native Türkiye, where he is on the board of directors of the Tilya Resort Hotel on the Black Sea in Akçaabat/Trabzon, Türkiye. He also serves on the board of directors of Omer Isik Insaat Construction Company in Istanbul.

**Michael Prentiss '10** has been promoted to vice president at Starkweather and Shepley Insurance Brokerage, Inc. He joined the firm as an account executive in 2015.

**Joseph Turner '10** was promoted to vice chancellor at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy, which has a vision to create an innovative academic environment that strengthens the knowledge, skills and abilities of the workforce. Joseph has served in a number of roles in his 12 years with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Mike Whelan '10** is the operations director of Unilever in Jefferson City, MO. He recently represented Unilever on a panel of Jefferson City and Cole County leaders of nonprofit organizations, businesses and community groups to discuss the childcare crisis and its impact on working parents. He said Unilever would be initiating a subsidy program to help offset childcare costs for employees.

**Shawn Gilblair '11** has been named head baseball coach at Mitchell College. He most recently served as pitching coach at Eastern for the 2023 season, and pitching coach and recruiting coordinator at Mitchell from 2019-22.

## 10s

Greystone Commercial Capital, a national commercial real estate finance firm, has hired **Ryan Carlin '10** as a director of capital markets and syndications.



Michael Glennon '11

**Michael Glennon '11** has a new position as senior manager, global talent acquisition at Quest Global, a worldwide engineering firm.

**Michelle Thakur '11** was promoted to senior learning partner operations associate at Guild Education, a public benefit corporation that bridges the education needs of workers and the employment needs of businesses.

Stony Brook University Career Center presented its Administrative Partner of the Year Award-Undergraduate Colleges to **Mariana Torres '11**, director of academic learning communities at Stony Brook.

**Wiley Dawson '12** will be among those honored at the 2023 100 Men of Color Gala in Hartford in October.

**Kristen Fitzsimons '12** is the new principal at Hazardville Memorial School. Kristen previously served as assistant principal at Eli Whitney Elementary and as a STEM and mathematics teacher at John F. Kennedy Middle School, both in Enfield. She holds an M.S. and sixth-year certificate in educational leadership from Central Connecticut State University and is pursuing doctoral studies in leadership from American College of Education.

Eastern was well represented at the wedding of **Judith (Frankel) Halpern '12** and Andrew Halpern, who were joined by **Amy Gorman '11** (bridesmaid), **Ben Foran '12** (man of honor), **Mita (Lad) McAuliff '10** (bridesmaid), **Sarah Potrikus '11** (bridesmaid), **Chelsea (Zimmitti) de Oliveria '12**, **Cody Hall '13**, **Jackie (Giuntini) Schoeman '12**, **Jaime O'Connor '12** and **Stephanie (Perez) Hall '12**.

**Andrew W. Minikowski '12** recently accepted a new position as the director of the Office of Adjudications at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. He is married to **Melissa (Dwellely) Minikowski '12** who is the assistant director of marketing for the Yale Young Global Scholars program at Yale University. Andrew and Melissa live in East Haddam.



Andrew W. Minikowski '12



Melissa (Dwellely) Minikowski '12

**Samantha (Bielecki) Scian-dra '12** is assistant director of advising at Western Connecticut State University.

**Henry Graffeo '13** is general manager of Cumberland Run Harness Track in Corbin, KY, and The Mint Gaming Hall Cumberland in Williamsburg, KY. Both venues were recently profiled on KentuckyLiving.com.

**Sydney Hanlon '13** is an operations executive for SXSW in Sydney, Australia. SXSW Sydney is a week-long event where technology and innovation, games, music and screen industries converge.

**Amy (Smallwood) Kacerik M '13** was recently promoted from dean of enrollment management to associate vice president for student affairs at the Community College of Rhode Island. She helps to serve 15,000 students across four statewide campuses. Prior to joining CCRI, Amy was the director of student services at Quinebaug Valley Community College.

**Rob Kavalier '13** has been promoted to graphic design manager at RCN Capital, a nationwide direct lender providing short-term fix and flip financing and long-term rental financing for real estate investors. Rob and his team scored



Judith (Frankel) Halpern '12

# THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Honoring Eastern Alumni & Donors  
& Supporting Academic Excellence

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Each year, Eastern proudly honors alumni and friends for distinguished professional achievement and outstanding community service through the President's Leadership Awards.

Nominations are now being accepted:

- Distinguished Alumni Award
- Distinguished Service Award
- Hermann Beckert "Friend of the University" Award

The awards are presented at the President's Leadership recognition event, held on campus at a date to be determined.

For information about the awards and to submit a nomination online, scan the QR code with your smart phone. ►



two winning submissions in the 59th Anniversary American Graphic Design Awards Competition. Only 10 percent of the more than 12,000 entries are selected for recognition in this best-of-year program.

**Scott Petit '13** has been named chief operating officer at Don Petit's Store of Floors in Plantsville, which has been named a top flooring store 13 years in a row.

**Laura (Wooley) Pasqua '13** and her husband, **Michael Pasqua '12**, welcomed their daughter Ava on February 27. Laura is a supervisor at General Dynamics Electric Boat, and Mike is an elementary health and physical education teacher in East Granby.

**Pearson Davis '14** is assistant general manager of the XL Center in Hartford. In addition to ensuring the smooth operation of hundreds of entertainment and sporting events each year, Pearson and his team ensure that Eastern's annual commencement ceremonies go off without a hitch. "We love hosting Eastern's commencement each year, and we're glad that we help make it memorable for all the new alumni and their families."

**Mauricio Cubillos '15** has been included in Marquis Who's Who, the first publication of Who's Who in America. He entered the manufacturing industry at age 19 and most recently joined Tecomet, Inc. as SIO (Sales, Inventory, Operations, Planning) business transformation leader, as well as manager of the largest of Tecomet's 16 facilities worldwide. Tecomet manufactures high-precision products and services for the medical device, aerospace and defense markets.

**Erin Miller '15** completed her fourth season as head softball coach at Mitchell College. The Mariners had their most wins as a Division III program, and celebrated their first winning season in eight years, finishing 24-19. Erin was named Coach of the Year for the second year in a row by the New England Collegiate Conference, and eight of her players were named to the NECC All-Conference Team.

**Robert Scheim '15** has a new position as director of sales at RPM Raceway. Robert and his wife, Danni, bought a house in East Setauket, NY, where they live with their adopted puppy, Bodie.

**Taylor Shannon '15** has been named the varsity girls lacrosse coach at Waterford High School. She spent the past six seasons at Norwich Free Academy, five as head coach.

**Betsy Ramos Soto '15**, executive director of the Vernon Housing Authority, was recently selected as the Top Executive Director of the Year 2023 by the International Association of Top Professionals (IAOTP) for her outstanding leadership and commitment to the industry.

**Beau McDowell '16** is starting a new position as sponsorship manager at The Ridgefield Playhouse.

**Quanece Williams '16** graduated from Cornell Law School in 2022 and is currently a first-year associate at a large firm in New York City. "I am eternally grateful to Eastern for all the opportunities the university provided me, and for preparing me, both professionally and personally."

**Jessica Dastous '17** recently began a new position as communications coordinator for the town of Frisco, CO.

**Devyne Doran '17** has been named head coach of Eastern women's lacrosse team, the first Eastern alumna to assume the role. Devyne played four seasons and served as an assistant coach for two additional seasons, all under former head coach Christine Hutchison. She then served as head coach at Mitchell College for two seasons, followed by two seasons at the helm at Framingham State University, where she compiled a two-year record of 23-16, 11-3 in the Massachusetts State College Athletic Conference regular season.



Alexandra Steward '17

**Alexandra Steward '17** has been promoted to manager, human resources business partner at PAR Technology, a leading global provider of software and service solutions for the restaurant and retail industries.

**Nadia Balassone '18** is human resources officer for the Town of Hamden, and earned her master's degree in English and diversity, equity and inclusion from Trinity College. Nadia was a virtual panelist for April's "English@Work" series, which featured English alumni who are pursuing different career paths.

## MORGAN CUNNINGHAM '18 ANCHORS CONNECTICUT'S LARGEST RADIO STATION



**Morgan Cunningham '18** has wanted a career in radio broadcasting since childhood. Thanks to Eastern, Cunningham is fulfilling his dreams as the morning news anchor for WTIC-AM, Connecticut's largest radio station.

Even while in high school, Cunningham was encouraged to have his own weekly show on WECS-FM, Eastern's student-run radio station. "I am so thankful for people like station manager John Zatowski and others at Eastern for encouraging and supporting me."

Cunningham enrolled at Eastern as a communication major and continued his radio show, recalling how faculty members like the late Edmond Chibeau critiqued his work and gave him story ideas for his radio program. "I wouldn't be doing the morning news on Connecticut's biggest radio station without all the people at Eastern who gave me an opportunity. At Eastern I learned about the craft of broadcasting, journalism and professional writing."

Even before graduation he had lined up a full-time job at WTIC-AM as the overnight news anchor, working the night shift from 10:30 p.m. to 6:30 a.m., six days a week. After two years of this grueling schedule, Cunningham moved to the afternoon and evening shift. Highlights included covering COVID-19, Tropical Storm Isaias and a live phone interview with Sen. Richard Blumenthal during the middle of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Since March 2022, Cunningham has anchored WTIC's morning news, radio's prime time slot. "I need to know a little bit about a lot," he explained. Cunningham's reporting emphasizes local news: "We want to focus on stories that impact our Connecticut listeners."

On the weekend, Cunningham stays busy with his Saturday afternoon talk show, "Spotlight Connecticut." The show stays clear of politics, law, finance and other hard news angles. "Listeners on the weekend don't want to think about work or taxes," he said with a smile.

**Casey Collins '18** has a new position as manager of advertising and search at Rebel Interactive Group. Prior to joining Rebel, he was a search analyst for Converge, a marketing and advertising firm based in the New York City area.

**John Burchard '19** received a special certificate of appreciation by Professor Alex Citurs at the annual BIS Banquet in May. John is one of the top BIS alumni donors, earmarking his gifts for the BIS Fund, and has returned to campus to speak at career fairs on a number of occasions. He is a data science advisor at Cigna.

## 20s



Amanda Heffernan '20

**Ara Daglian '18** is a master's student in the Middle East Studies program at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington. He received his B.A. in history from Eastern and is a Rob-novich Family Fellow and a Stroum Center Graduate Fellow at UW. Ara presented a draft of part of his master's thesis, tentatively titled

"Anglo-Saxons of the East: Armenian Self-Definition in Early 20th Century America."

**Natnael Belay '20** gave a presentation on technical project management for students in the Business Information Systems Department. At Eastern, Belay was an Honors Program graduate, where he earned degrees in computer science and business information systems. He is a technical program manager in the android engineering department at Google.

**Amanda Heffernan '20** has been promoted to senior university relations consultant at Travelers after having worked as a project administrator. Prior to her graduation from Eastern, Amanda also served as an intern with Travelers.

**Nicole Reinschmidt '20** has a new position as a clinician at Sound Community Services, Inc., an organization providing support and services to persons with behavioral health and substance abuse disorders. Nicole recently passed her social work licensure exam to earn the L.M.S.W. designation.

**Emily St. Lawrence '20** is a new marketing associate at CareCentrix, a home care services company responding to the needs of more than 19 million members through a national network of approximately 7,400 provider locations. Emily had most recently been with Golden Horizons Elder Care Services.

**Peter Ereshena '20** was presented with a certificate of appreciation by Professor Alex Citurs at the annual BIS Banquet in May for his work as the BIS-ITSA Club Event Partner. Peter is a business intelligence consultant, personal insurance research and development, data engineering at Travelers.

**Vania Galicia '20** works for Grow Windham as a community farmer and uses her writing and communication skills as an immigrant rights activist. Vania was a virtual panelist for April's "English@Work" series, which featured English alumni who are pursuing different career paths.

**Emma Avery '19** was the featured speaker at the annual reception for seniors graduating from Eastern's Honors Program. Emma majored in environmental earth science at Eastern and earned her J.D. and a certificate in energy and environmental law from the University of Connecticut School of Law. She is currently an associate attorney in family law and general litigation at Wofsey

Rosen Kveskin & Kuriansky, LLP in Stamford.

**Kayleigh Shettleworth '20** began working as development manager at the Connecticut Humane Society. "In this role, I will be working on the Together Forever Capital Campaign which centers around building the new CHS Animal Resource Center in Wilton, with a low-fee veterinary clinic, pet food pantry and adoption center."



Kayleigh Shettleworth '20

**Kaylee Blackwood '21** is editor at Biolumina, a full-service, omnichannel global health care agency that uses the power of science to translate customer insights into brand messaging that is both captivating and motivational. Kaylee was a virtual panelist for April's "English@Work" series, which featured English alumni who are pursuing different career paths.

**Jackson DeLaney '21** is a press aide for Connecticut House Democrats. He previously worked as a research editor at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, and as a public relations assistant at Susan Oliver Consulting.

**Keira Integlia '21** has a new position as head field hockey coach and athletic administration coordinator at Albertus Magnus College. Keira graduated from Eastern with a degree in sport and leisure management.

**Tyler Madden '21** has joined the WKRC Cincinnati Local 12 news team as a reporter. Prior to joining WKRC, he was a reporter and weekend anchor at WTOV in Steubenville, OH.

**John Mesagno '21** is a scouting intern for the Oakland Athletics, covering the Cape Cod Collegiate League and its 10 teams.

**Connor Chute '22** was the keynote speaker at the annual BIS Banquet in May. He is a member of the business insights and analytics leadership development program at Travelers, working on a large agile data product team.

**Zachary Gagnon '22** was hired as marketing lead at Mohegan Sun. He earned a B.S. in business administration.



Zachary Gagnon '22

**Emma Hopkins '22** is a case manager at Perception Programs in Willimantic. Emma completed an internship at Perception Programs as she earned her B.S. in health sciences.

**P.J. Jimenez '22** is entering their second year in the Art Therapy master's program at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR. P.J. was recently named a recipient of a Meriden Puerto Rican Festival Scholarship.

**Ian Keroack '22** is a business intelligence consultant at The Hartford. He earned a B.S. in business information systems.

**Sierra Nastasi '22** is pursuing her master's degree in psychology at Southern Connecticut State University and plans to pursue a Ph.D. in social psychology. She will present a collaborative autoethnography at the annual conference of the National Women's Studies Association in Baltimore in October. Sierra currently teaches history at Westerly (RI) High School.

**Jack Wallace M '23** excelled in both baseball and golf during his athletic career at Winthrop High School, and now has been named the new head coach of the Winthrop golf team. Jack was a key pitcher on Eastern's 2022 national championship baseball team.

**Andrew Zaino '22** started a new position as content marketing associate at Candlewood East Marina in Brookfield. He earned a B.S. in communication at Eastern.

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# I N M E M O R I A M

Lewis O. Lamb '54  
Saint Petersburg, FL  
May 17, 2019

Victoria Concetta  
(Gagliardi) LaCava '56  
Wethersfield, CT  
Aug. 13, 2022

Louis P. Leta '57  
Norwich, CT  
May 8, 2023

Phyllis (Fogil) Aaron '58  
Woodstock, IL  
May 20, 2023

Roberta K. Harris '58  
Grafton, WI  
March 19, 2023

Catherine (Newman) Potter '58  
Wethersfield, CT  
April 22, 2023

Joan Lorraine (Milek) Kastner '59  
Glastonbury, CT  
Jan. 22, 2020

Anne (Blanchette) Boulaine '63  
Dayville, CT  
April 24, 2022

Carolyn Beers (Anderson) Shea '64  
Belchertown, MA  
Aug. 11, 2020

Neil L. Mesick '65  
Willimantic, CT  
June 30, 2023

Merlejean "MJ"  
(Leverly) Terry '65, M '73  
Venice, FL  
June 15, 2019

Sylvia (Schneider) Hellstrom '70  
Manchester, CT  
May 23, 2023

Elaine (Anderson) Berk '71  
Suffield, CT  
April 13, 2023

Pamela (Burdick) Bramlett '72  
Brooklyn, CT  
March 12, 2023

Linda (Adams) Graham '72  
Windsor Locks, CT  
July 14, 2023

John M. Herringer '73  
Oak Park, IL  
April 8, 2021

Lynne A. Keleher M '77  
Willimantic, CT  
March 31, 2023

Norma F. Chick '78  
Bolton, CT  
Oct. 5, 2022

Chester G. Cwilichowski '78  
Ansonia, CT  
Dec. 10, 2021

Simone (Gothberg) Gauthier '80  
Waterford, CT  
June 28, 2023

Chris Heidkamp '80  
Walcott, CT  
June 11, 2023

Arlene M. Edmonston '83  
Woodstock Valley, CT  
Oct. 30, 2021

Oscar Meimers '83  
Farmington, CT  
June 29, 2023

John F. Blowey '85  
Winter Garden, FL  
July 3, 2023

Henry Frederick Dieter M '86  
Mount Pleasant, SC  
March 21, 2023

Donna (Hayn) Costanzo M '88  
Somers, CT  
March 10, 2023

Kathleen (Royroll) Marcoux '88  
Boiling Springs, SC  
April 8, 2022

Edward Page '88  
Norwich, CT  
July 2, 2021

Joseph P. Brady '91, M '96  
Charlestown, RI  
May 21, 2023

Kevin Scott Myjak '92  
Hamden, CT  
May 22, 2023

Kimberly Ann Ammons '93  
Española, NM  
Feb. 12, 2023

Matthew Robert McGuinness '93  
Willington, CT  
Dec. 26, 2022

David Ross Brown '94  
Vernon Rockville, CT  
July 2, 2023

Roland C. Dunham '00  
New London, CT  
Nov. 5, 2020

Peter J. McDevitt Jr.  
Friend  
Willimantic, CT  
July 31, 2021

Eldon Rudolf Downing  
Professor Emeritus  
Friendship, ME  
April 3, 2023

James P. Shores  
Former Professor  
New London, CT  
April 2, 2023

Catherine L. Tannahill  
Professor Emeritus  
Burlison, TX  
July 7, 2023

Craig D. Teschner  
Former Professor  
Ware, MA  
July 7, 2023

Elena Y. Varshavskaya  
Former Professor  
Voluntown, CT  
March 2, 2023

Camaury Norman-Clark  
Current Student  
Norwich, CT  
May 10, 2023

