The University of Akron Magazine Class Notes, Fall 2026

1960s



Patricia Ann Dawson Lee, BS ’63, MS ’75, Ph.D. ’94, a charter member of the 1961 undergraduate chapter Delta Pi, the first African American sorority, The University of Akron, Great Lakes Region, proudly awarded the first of her Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Education Advancement Foundation (EAF) Endowment Scholarships during Zeta Theta Omega Chapter’s 2025 Founders’ Day Celebration. Zeta Theta Omega is the AKA-sponsoring graduate chapter for Delta Pi. Lee established her endowment for members of Delta Pi because she felt it was her calling and aspiration to assist the next generation of Alpha Kappa Alpha women in reducing financial burdens they may confront in pursuit of their educational goals. As a mentor and leader, Lee expressed immense pleasure in presenting the $1,000 scholarship to Delta Pi member Kaela Rocker. Lee praised Rocker for her 3.5 cumulative and 4.0 semester GPA and her university and community engagement activities.

Joseph C. Pescatrice, BSE ’68, and Michelle E. (Guzzetta) Pescatrice, BSE ’75, met at UA and later were married. Their grandson Enzo will attend UA this fall as a freshman. The family cruised with Zippy on Allure of the Seas to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.





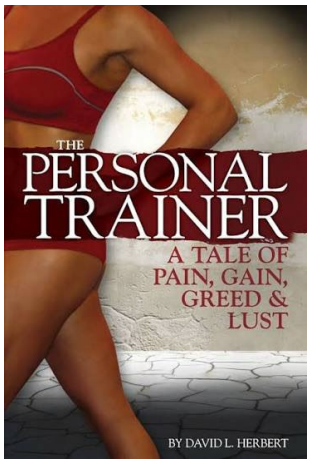
Lary I. Zucker, BA ’69, JD ’72, retired after 52 years as a litigation and trial lawyer practicing in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In 1983, Zucker was designated a certified civil trial attorney by the New Jersey Supreme Court and has significant trial experience in both states. Zucker was a shareholder in Marshall Dennehey, P.C., where he served as chair of the firm’s Sports Entertainment and Amusement practice group. He is also a founding member of the International Amusement and Legal Defense Association, Inc., and currently he serves as legal counsel to New Jersey Attractions, Inc. Zucker has been honored for his career and achievements and is recognized as an industry leader.

1970s

Gust Callas, BSA ’75, JD ’78, an attorney with Black McCuskey Souers & Arbaugh, LPA, has been named by Ohio Super Lawyers magazine a top attorney in Ohio for 2027. This is an exclusive list, recognizing no more than five percent of attorneys in Ohio.



Rodney E. Deitz, BSA ’78, retired from Aultman Health Services on Feb. 20, 2026. He originally retired in December 2023 but stayed on as a part-time casual worker to assist with special projects in the Information Technology Department. Deitz specialized in banking and hospital software over his 45 years in IT, as well as in technical training and technical writing.



David L. Herbert, JD ’74, recently had his first fictional book, “The Personal Trainer: A Tale of Pain, Gain, Greed & Lust,” recognized as a 2025 award finalist by the American Book Fest. The recognition was made in the category of Legal Thrillers for The American Legacy Book Awards. The book is reviewed and available from Amazon along with other nonfiction books David published over the years, including “Corporations of Corruption,” a college textbook about organized crime, and a trial book entitled “Attorney’s Master Guide to Courtroom Psychology.” Herbert retired in 2023, closing out approximately 50 years of active practice.

Margaret M. Semancik, BSN ’76, and William J. Semancik, BSEE ’77, celebrated 50 years of marriage on Sept. 11, 2026. The couple met at UA during freshmen orientation in 1972 and were married on Sept. 11, 1976.

1980s



John R. Adams, BSBA ’88, was honored in Crain’s Notable Leaders in Finance 2025. Adams is the founder and private wealth advisor at Adams, Gut & Associates.

Suzanne Banister, MM ’85, enjoyed a distinguished 38-year career as a music educator, conductor, clinician, adjudicator and composer. In 1995, she composed a high school choral piece, “Sing Gloria,” published by Alliance. In 1999, she composed a high school choral piece, “Nocturne,” which premiered at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference in Chicago in 2000 and was published by Wingert-Jones. Banister’s new high school concert band composition, “A Celtic Aire,” is a new piece that depicts the lush green rolling hills, the mesmerizing landscapes, and the splendor of the Emerald Isles.





May J. Chen, MAE ’88, was one of 10 outstanding Ohioans inducted into the state’s Senior Citizens Hall of Fame in 2025 by the Ohio Department of Aging. The Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame honors older Ohioans who represent a positive image of aging and have significant accomplishments in their professions, vocations and communities. Chen organized after-school programs to assist immigrant and refugee children with homework. She brought in specialists to discuss high-risk behaviors in a culturally sensitive way. She staged a health fair for the community with free sugar, cholesterol and blood-pressure screenings. In 1995, Chen and her health-fair collaborators founded Asian Services in Action (ASIA). The new organization worked on getting grant funding, identifying needs, and partnering with the Ohio Commission on Minority Health. Over the years, Chen built ASIA into a powerhouse.



James P. Hanratty, JD ’89, a shareholder and office managing attorney at the Jacksonville office of Marshall Dennehey, a leading civil defense litigation law firm, was admitted to membership of the International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC). The IADC is an invitation-only, peer-reviewed association that has been serving a distinguished membership of corporate and insurance defense attorneys and insurance executives since 1920. Its members include the world’s leading corporate and insurance lawyers and insurance executives. Board-certified in civil trial law by the Florida Bar, Hanratty is an experienced first-chair trial lawyer who has taken more than 150 civil jury trials to verdict since 1989. He is rated AV-Preeminent by Martindale-Hubbell and is recognized among the Best Lawyers in America in personal injury litigation.

Dave C. Hickey, BA ’84, now has an e-book, “Marbles Down the Register,” available at barnesandnoble.com. The humor book is about growing up in a partially unsupervised neighborhood in the Portage Lakes. Hickey is currently the publisher of a newspaper in west central Minnesota.



Annette M. Januzzi Wick, BS ’89, released her latest book, “Something Italian: From Distant Shores to Family Tables, The Recipes That Held Us Together,” a heartfelt blend of storytelling, culinary tradition and family history. The book is a lyrical fusion of memoir and cookbook exploring heritage, home and the dishes that bind generations.



Denise L. Preece, AAB ’85, was named an honoree for the 11th annual ASPIRE Awards. The OneAmerica Financial ASPIRE Awards program recognizes people of all levels of the organization who have made a notable contribution towards growth, strength, and excellence goals. Honorees live the organization’s values every day and have a record of strong performance over multiple years. An ASPIRE Award is

the highest honor an associate can receive. Honorees are given $5,000, a trophy, and are invited to attend a special ceremony and dinner. A 26-year veteran with OneAmerica Financial, Preece now serves the employee benefits division where she leads complex projects bringing process improvement not only to this team, but to distribution partners and policyholders.

Judy F. Rohlfing, BSE ’89, MSE ’98, was honored at the President’s Awards for Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana. She was honored as the Adjunct Professor of the Year for 2025-2026 at the Columbus campus, a six-county region in southern Indiana. She has taught early childhood education for the college since 2003.



Lori Shells Simmons, BS ’85, MPA ’91, and JD ’91, was honored with Crain’s Notable Women in Law for 2026. Shells Simmons is the current law director for the City of Youngstown.



Lori M. Wemhoff, BA ’88, MA ’95, has been appointed executive director at YWCA Alliance. Wemhoff brings over 15 years of nonprofit, community and membership-based leadership experience with a strong track record in community outreach, organizational growth and collaborative leadership. Throughout her career, Wemhoff has remained actively involved in community service and volunteer leadership, including serving on the board of social service organizations and participating in initiatives addressing poverty, food insecurity, education and equity. She is also an advocate for women’s leadership and empowerment, participating in regional women’s organizations and mentoring efforts.

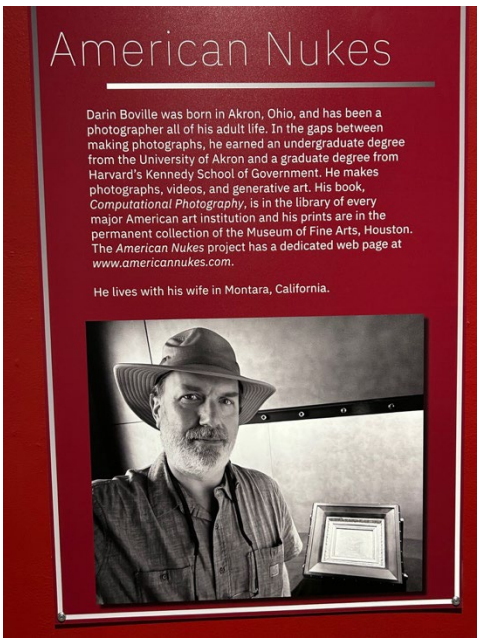


1990s

Tierney J. Bates, BA ’99, MAE ’02, vice chancellor for student affairs at the University of South Carolina-Upstate, was named one of NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education Foundation’s Pillar of the Profession Award recipients.

Tami M. Bolder, BSA ’95, has been appointed to the National Judiciary Subcommittee of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) for a two-year term.





Darin M. Boville, BS ’94, makes photographs, videos and generative art. His book, “Computational Photography,” is in the library of many major American art institutions and his prints are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The “American Nukes” project has a dedicated web page at www.ameriannukes.com. Boville resides in Montara, Calif.

Thomas J. Connick, MPA ’94, was honored in Crain’s Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys 2025, which spotlights 41 of Cleveland’s exceptional litigators and trial attorneys whose expertise and commitment to justice set them apart in the legal community. Their ability to navigate complex legal challenges makes them leaders in the field. Connick is partner, Schneider Smeltz Spieth Bell.





Lisa Courtice, Ph.D. ’97, president and CEO of United Way of Central Ohio, was named a large nonprofit finalist for *Columbus CEO’s* 14th annual CEO of the Year 2024. Courtice, a successful executive, possesses four key qualities: strategic leadership, collaboration, innovation and empathy. She has led her team of 46 employees since 2017, building a culture focused on effective fundraising for the organization’s 75-plus nonprofit partners and leading strategies to improve community outcomes.

Laura B. Culp, MT ’91, will be honored with the 2026 Bert A. Polsky Humanitarian Award on Nov. 17, 2026. She will be the 57th recipient of the award, which recognizes those who show “selfless dedication to humanitarian causes in Akron. Culp has given decades of nonprofit board service and volunteerism to the Greater Akron community, as well as generous charitable contributions.





Joseph D. DiRocco, BSA ’93, has joined Unison Risk Advisors, the Cleveland-based parent company of Oswald Cos. and four other platform businesses, as its new chief financial officer, effective April 7, 2025.



Michael A. Discenza, BA ’93, MA ’94, has been named chief financial officer at Timken Co. Discenza has worked for a quarter-century at Timken in financial and accounting roles of increasing responsibility, including the last 10 as vice president, finance and group controller. The Timken Co., based in North Canton, is the maker of engineered bearings and industrial motion products.



Anthony R. Fossaceca, BFA ’93, was elected to Chagrin Falls Village Council in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. He is currently employed as the executive director of development and alumni Communications at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.



Zarna R. Garg, BSBA ’94, with her unique blend of humor, wit and fearless social commentary, has emerged as a comedic trailblazer. An Indian immigrant mom based in New York City, Garg showcases her sharp and relatable humor in her first comedy special, “One in a Billion,” available on Amazon Prime. Her second special, “Practical People Win,” is currently streaming as part of Hulu’s Hilarious Comedy Series, making another major milestone in her skyrocketing career. Garg’s debut book, “This American Woman,” also made waves, reaching the New York Times Best Seller list, further solidifying her voice as both hilarious and culturally resonant.



Donna M. Haire, BS ’92, has been appointed chief operating officer at FluoGuide. Haire will lead development, including regulatory strategy and the U.S. clinical program toward the first approval of FG001 in high-grade glioma. Haire has more than 30 years of global R&D leadership experience, with a focus in regulatory affairs and clinical development.

Daniel E. Herstine, AAS ’93, has been appointed president of Hasenstab Architects. With more than 33 years in the profession and 26 years at Hasenstab Architects, Herstine has been an integral part of Hasenstab’s growth and success and will lead the firm as it embarks on this new chapter. He specializes in healthcare design with a particular orientation towards behavioral healthcare.





Alice I. Kim, BS ’93, has been named by Cleveland Clinic the new vice president and chief medical officer (VP/CMO) of Marymount Hospital, effective Sept. 15, 2025. This is the top leadership role at the hospital. Kim is returning to Cleveland Clinic after serving as the president and chief executive officer of ID Care, LLC, in New Jersey, the largest infectious disease group practice on the East Coast and the second-largest in the United States.

Stephen A. Koerner, BS ’92, has been named acting director of Johnson Space Center by NASA. Koerner joined Johnson full-time in 1992 and has an accomplished career serving human spaceflight. His vision and dedication to the Johnson workforce make him the perfect person to lead the Johnson team forward as Acting Director. Throughout his career, Koerner has been recognized for outstanding technical achievements and leadership, receiving two Superior Accomplishment Awards, the Outstanding Leadership Medal, the Johnson Space Center Director’s Commendation Award, two group achievement awards, the Exceptional Service Medal and the Presidential Rank Award.





Christina “Chrissy” M. Lisowski, BA ’91, MA ’93, retired from Amphitheater Public School District in Tucson, Ariz., as of May 23, 2025. Lisowski had a full career starting in Ohio in nursing care facilities. In her 31-year career she went from being a medical speech-language pathologist to a school-based speech-language pathologist for 25 years.

Kristina L. Malcolm, BFA ’98 (sculpture and metalsmithing), had artwork on display at the Myers School of Art’s Reflections exhibition, held March 18-April 18, 2025.



Brian R. Mertes, JD ’95, attorney with Black McCuskey Souers & Arbaugh, LPA, has been named by Ohio Super Lawyers magazine as a top attorney in Ohio for 2027. This is an exclusive list, recognizing no more than 5% of attorneys in Ohio.

Christine L. Myeroff, MSE ’91, was honored in Crain’s Notable Leaders in Philanthropy 2025. Myeroff is board chair of the Cleveland Zoological Society.





Eustacia O. Netzel-Hatcher, BSA ’98, MBA ’05, will serve as Trailhead Community Health Foundation of Greater Akron’s inaugural CFO, a position she assumed on March 30, 2026. Netzel-Hatcher’s experience in nonprofit financial leadership, consulting and commercial banking will help her build up the foundation’s financial operations.

Nevin C. Nussbaum, Jr., BSA ’98, has been appointed a new board member of Team NEO. Nussbaum is a partner at Cohen & Co. in the real estate and construction to professional services and distribution practice. He specializes in private equity and investment companies and has extensive experience in the manufacturing, transportation and food/retail industries.



Robert J. (Rob) O’Neil, BFA ’92 (photography), had artwork on display at the Myers School of Art’s Reflections exhibition March 18-April 18, 2025.



David M. Polacek, BA ’91, has been promoted to chief at the Barberton Fire Department effective May 2025.

Thomas A. Prislipsky, JD ’96, was honored as “Best Lawyers 2026 Lawyer of the Year,” Akron, Ohio, for Medical Malpractice Law-Defendants. Prislipsky is the partner-in-charge of Reminger’s Youngstown office and handles cases throughout Mahoning Valley.



Donald F. Ronyak, BSIM ’91, local client liaison and HR consultant with CPS HR Consulting, brings over 25 years of HR experience across government and nonprofit sectors, holding both SHRM-SCP and SPHR certifications. Ronyak is passionate about helping public agencies modernize HR practices to better serve their communities.

Andrew J. Rubino, BSIM ’97, MBA ’01, has been named chief operating officer at Third Federal Savings and Loan Association of Cleveland. Rubino joined Third Federal Savings and Loan in 2000 and has served as a manager in areas including loan production, customer care, internet services and operations support. He also served as the company’s chief marketing officer.



John M. Vasuta, BS ’90, JD ’92, MBA ’92, has been named president and chief executive officer at Johns Manville (JM), effective Aug. 1, 2026. Johns Manville is a global building and specialty products manufacturer and a Berkshire Hathaway company. Vasuta’s proven leadership, industry expertise and strong relationships with both customers and employees make him exceptionally well-suited to lead JM into the future.

Kevin P. Vonderau, BSBA ’92, has been named the regional president for commercial banking in Northeast Ohio at First Financial Bank, the banking subsidiary of Cincinnati-based parent First Financial Bancorp.





Christopher N. West, BSA ’97, was honored in Crain’s Notable Leaders in Philanthropy 2025. West is president and CEO of North Coast Community Homes.

Stephen D. Yusko, Jr., BFA ’90 (sculpture), had artwork on display at the Myers School of Art Reflections exhibition March 18-April 18, 2025.



2000s

Stephanie D. Adams, JD ’06, was honored with Crain’s Notable Women in Law 2026. Adams is senior corporate counsel at Sherwin-Williams Co.





Aaron M. Barnhart, BSBA ’01, has been named vice president and district leader for retail banking in Northeast Ohio at First Financial Bank (FFB), the banking subsidiary of Cincinnati-based parent First Financial Bancorp.

Michael S. Bigler, BSA ’07, has been promoted to director in the Assurance & Advisory Department of Bober Markey Fedorovich. Bigler has built his career at BMF with a strong focus on employee benefit plans, making him a go-to resource for clients managing retirement and health plan audits. His expertise spans compliance with ERISA regulations, risk assessment and best practices for plan governance. As an experienced leader, Bigler guides clients through the intricacies of benefit plan management, providing proactive strategies to maintain compliance and improve operational effectiveness.





Jamie E. Bromley, Ph.D. ’04, received the Clifford and Paula Dietz Award for Faculty Excellence at Franklin College. The award recognizes a faculty member who demonstrates extraordinary dedication and commitment in service to the college. The award, which provides a prize of $5,000, plus a professional expense allowance of $1,000, is made possible through the generosity of late trustee, Dr. Clifford Dietz and his wife, Dr. Paula Dietz. Bromley, a member of the Franklin College faculty since 2009, is a professor of psychology.

Charles Budde, JD ’08, partner, Grisi and Budde, is one of Crain’s Notable Litigators & Trial Attorneys 2025. Crain’s recognized 41 of Cleveland’s exceptional litigators and trial attorneys whose expertise and commitment to justice set them apart in the legal community.



Dragana Crnjak, BFA ’02, had artwork on display at the Myers School of Art Reflections exhibition March 18-April 18, 2025.





James J. Genovese, MAP ’06, spent years in the rough-and-tumble world of politics before turning his pen toward fiction. A longtime political operative turned public servant, he has written speeches, strategies, and commentary for campaigns, candidates, and government – and even contributed his own opinion pieces to the New York Observer. Genovese has worked in Oneida County government since 2013 and currently serves as Commissioner of Planning. His debut fantasy novel, “Before the Ember Sparks,” was born from a fascination with how ordinary people confront extraordinary systems of control.

Robert L. Girton, Jr., BSBA ’07, was honored in Crain’s Notable Leaders in Finance 2025. Girton is managing partner at Edgewater Capital Partners.





David H. Hamilton, BA ’07, Akron Municipal Court administrative/presiding judge, has been appointed to Leadership Akron’s Board of Trustees effective July 1, 2025. Hamilton is a graduate of Leadership Akron Signature Class 34 and has remained active with the organization since he completed the program. Hamilton will also continue to serve as the administrative/presiding judge of the Akron Municipal Court for 2026. In this role, Hamilton oversees the court’s administration, docket and court calendar, as well as the

observance of the rules of superintendence and the timely reporting and termination of all cases in the court. Additionally, Judge Hamilton has been appointed to the Akron Marathon's Board of Directors effective Feb. 24, 2026.



Aubrie A. Knight Wancata, BA '03, has rejoined the Cleveland office of Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP, in an of counsel position in the firm's litigation practice area. Knight Wancata represents businesses and individuals in a wide range of matters, including class action defense in all phases of litigation from discovery to trial strategy and appellate advocacy.

David Mullen, BA '09, BA '09, has joined the financial services litigation (FSL) team at McGlinchey Stafford. Mullen's practice includes defending banks, mortgage lenders and other financial institutions in litigation in state and federal courts. Mullen has a great deal of consumer collections experience spanning individuals to large financial institutions. He also has litigation experience on both sides of the aisle in the environmental, class actions, employment, personal injury and mass torts, criminal, immigration and administrative law contexts.





The Honorable Jon A. Oldham, JD '02, Akron Municipal Court judge, is now leading the court's specialized docket that increases public safety and supports recovery and treatment for repeat Operating a Vehicle While Intoxicated (OVI) offenders. Oldham also leads Akron Recovery Court and has done so since 2017. Specialized dockets are courts that are dedicated to specific types of offenses or offenders and use a combination of different techniques for holding offenders accountable while also addressing the underlying causes of their behavior.

Jason D. Pirock, BSBA ’07, has been appointed vice president global brand marketing at Outrigger Hospitality Group. In his new role, Pirock will drive global brand strategy and lead the development of media and marketing initiatives. He will oversee creative and content strategy, brand campaigns, social media strategy, digital/SEO marketing and communications while managing brand resources and ensuring consistency across all touchpoints, including all branded on-property amenities and programs.



James J. Reagan, JD ’06, was promoted to associate counsel and associate manager of the Cleveland Legal Litigation office for the Cincinnati Insurance Company.



Christopher “Ryan” Stuart, BSBA ’03, has joined the Sunflower Bank as regional president for Dallas. In this role, Stuart is responsible for leading the growth of Sunflower Bank’s middle market commercial banking business in the region.

Donzell (Don) S. Taylor, AAS ’09, president and CEO of the Welty Building Co., has been named the new board chair at Team NEO.





Cindy J. Torress-Essell, JD ’01, chief people officer for Heinen’s Inc., has been named the new board chair for JumpStart Inc. Torress-Essell has served on the JumpStart board since 2020 and has held several leadership positions there. She brings a clear strategic vision, proven governance expertise, long-term connections with the regional corporate community and a deep passion for inclusive economic development.

Meredith M. Wise, MAE ’07, recently became a published author with her debut middle grade novel, “Wild Wonders: Yellowstone.” It follows 8-year-old Marie and her older brother, Miles, as they discover a hidden message in their grandmother’s old National Parks passport. That clue sends them on a magical scavenger hunt through Yellowstone, blending adventure, family connections and nature-driven mystery for young readers.





Jeffrey C. Wolfe, BM ’06, became the CEO of Institute for Therapy through the Arts (www.itachicago.org), a robust creative arts therapy nonprofit organization serving the greater Chicago community. While the primary outpatient clinic is based in Evanston, Ill., the institute currently serves ages 4 months to 102 years at over 200 different sites across the city.

2010s

Brissa E. Bradfield, BA ’19, has been named a new member of the 3News team for GO! and 3News traffic anchor at WKYC-TV. Bradfield will join as the 4:30 a.m. anchor and will also report traffic during the 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. broadcasts.





Kevin D. Burwell, JD ’19, has joined the Wall Street Journal Council of Chief Compliance Officers. Burwell is VP and general counsel at Kloeckner Metals.

David R. Charles, MT ’15, was recognized in Crain’s Cleveland Business – People on the Move. Charles has been promoted to partner at Cohen & Co. in the firm’s tax practice. Charles focuses on pass-through entity taxation, specifically for rental real estate and construction companies, investment partnerships and private equity groups. He assists clients with transactional tax compliance, planning and consulting, and specializes in partnership formation and liquidation, sale transactions, waterfall and 704 special allocations.



Rebecca A. Cool, BASW ’16, MSW ’19, has been appointed interim CEO at Victim Assistance Program (VAP). Since joining VAP in 2019, Cool has led a team of over 40 staff and volunteers who provide 24/7/365 crisis intervention and advocacy services to nearly 5,000 individuals each year. During her tenure, she has spearheaded several innovative initiatives, including the Children who Witness



Violence Drop-in Center at the Summit County Domestic Relations Court and the distribution of more than $115K in flexible financial assistance to victims of gun violence through the Gun Violence Response Fund.



Mohsen Zaker Esteghamati, MS ’18, is one of just two people nationwide to receive the American Institute of Steel Construction’s Terry Peshia Early Career Faculty Award. This award is named for the late president of Garbe Iron Works in Aurora, Ill., who served with great distinction in many leadership roles in the industry and on the AISC Board. His namesake awards recognize young professors who demonstrate promise in structural steel research, teaching, and other contributions to the structural steel industry. Esteghamati, assistant professor at Utah State University, was honored for conducting research that transforms steel design practice by integrating artificial intelligence with performance-based earthquake engineering to create intelligent frameworks that aid designers in achieving resilient and efficient steel structures. (Second from right in photo)

Stephanie A. Hand-Cannane, JD ’13, has been honored with Crain’s Notable Women in Law 2026. Hand-Cannane is partner at Weston Hurd.





Christopher J. Hardesty, BS ’14, MA ’16, has been named Akron’s inaugural executive director of the Downtown Akron Development Corporation and is ready for the tall task of stabilizing downtown. His responsibilities will include spearheading redevelopment projects from mixed-use to hotels to retail. He will also be responsible for

assembling funding, marketing key sites, hosting developer events, connecting with investors and identifying programs to support long-term growth.



Zachary A. Hawks, LLM ’14, JD ’14, has been named a partner at the firm of Black McCuskey Souers & Arbaugh, LPA. Hawks’ diverse practice spans estate planning, probate and trust administration, business and corporate law, real estate law and intellectual property law, including patents, trademarks and copyrights. Hawks was also named an Ohio Rising Star for 2027. Every year, no more than 2.5 percent of the lawyers in the state are selected by the research team at Super Lawyers to receive this honor.

Shawndell Hood, AAS ’11, BS ’12, was elected president of COMTO Boston for the 2026-2028 term. Hood also serves on the Board of Directors of CMAA New England and works as a program coordinator III and EBO-B2Gnow system coordinator within the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s Office of Diversity and Civil Rights. A U.S. Navy veteran, Hood is committed to expanding professional development opportunities, strengthening connections across the transportation and construction-management industries, and supporting historically underrepresented professionals.



Isaiah J. Kaiser, BSME ’19, Ph.D. ’23, is the co-founder and CEO of Aeris Biosciences. Founded in 2022, Aeris Biosciences is pioneering a new class of advanced biomaterials designed to accelerate skin tissue regeneration and improve infection management. With over 6.5 million people in the U.S. affected by non-healing wounds—resulting in healthcare costs exceeding $50 billion annually—Aeris’ innovative technology directly addresses this critical and growing medical need.



Scott V. Kapusta, MBA ’13, JD ’13, was recently promoted to chief wealth management officer of First County Bank in Stamford, Conn.

Michael J. King, MSE ’10, was named Ohio High School Principal of the Year by the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators (OASSA). He is principal at Geneva High School. King has dedicated himself to the mission that purposeful professional development, program innovation and the creation of student-centered opportunities are the foundation of student success for a leader.





Melissa M. Klinksiek, BSN ’11, was recognized in Crain’s Cleveland Business – People on the Move. Klinksiek joins the executive team as chief partnership officer at Lifebanc. A dedicated donation advocate, she brings clinical expertise and leadership from her roles as a nurse, Lifebanc board member, and medical advisory board participant. She will lead efforts to grow partnerships and increase donor engagement across the region.

Nathan A. Lieb, BSBA ’11, was recognized in Crain’s Cleveland Business – People on the Move. Lieb is partner at Bober, Markey, Fedorovich & Co. Lieb joined BMF as an intern in 2012 and has since become a key leader within the firm's tax practice, particularly in ASC 740 tax provision work. He serves various multi-jurisdictional companies, including public and private C-corporations, S-corporations, limited liability companies, and partnerships.





Margaret E. (Maggie) Manges, BA ’17, recently accepted a position at the Rochester Institute of Technology as an assistant professor in Clinical Psychology. She received her Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University at Buffalo in May 2023 and is completing her postdoctoral fellowship at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

Evarist J. Muhaya, MA ’10, recently released a book, “Disenfranchised Global Citizens: Double Disconnection, Layered Belonging, and the Future of Identity in a Permanently Mobile World.” The book was released on April 28, 2026, and has been trending as No. 1 Amazon hot new release in demography students and top new release in emigration and immigration and globalization. The book explores one of the defining realities of our time: globalization transformed how the world moves, but not how the world belongs.





Cesare P. Piermarini, BA ’17, has joined Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP’s Cleveland office as an associate in the firm’s litigation and construction practice areas. Piermarini focuses on construction related legal matters and other complex commercial issues, including disputes between contractors, subcontractors, material supplies and owners in all phases of litigation. Named as an Ohio Super Lawyers Rising Star in 2025, Piermarini provides comprehensive legal counsel on project delays, defects, and payment issues.

Anthony Ponikvar, BS ’12, has been elected to firm partnership at BakerHostetler effective Jan. 1, 2026. Ponikvar (Cleveland Office) is a go-to litigator for clients’ most important and contentious cases. From pre-suit investigations to trial advocacy, he has extensive experience with nearly every aspect of litigation. Ponikvar has overseen complicated discovery efforts and is well-versed in modern e-discovery protocols.



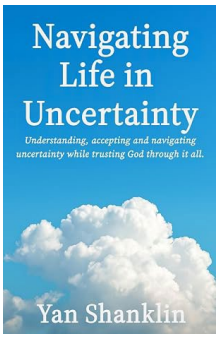


Kelli L. (Fetter) Pritt, BSBA ’10, MSE ’12, UA alumna and executive director of University of Akron Alumni Relations, married fellow UA alumnus, Ryan S. Pritt, BA ’08, on June 14, 2026, in Chicago. The couple was joined by many fellow University of Akron alumni who celebrated with them on their special day.



Andrea M. Ramunno, BA ’12, was listed in the prestigious 2025 40 Under 40 by the American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC), recognizing the rising stars shaping the future of political consulting in the United States. Selection for the 40 Under 40 list is highly competitive and bipartisan as only 20 Democrats and 20 Republicans nationwide are chosen. Recipients are evaluated for their outstanding contributions to political strategy, innovation in campaign work, and demonstrated leadership within the industry.

Keyantamora L. “Keya” (Yan) Shanklin, AA ’13, BS ’14, completed her first book, “Navigating Life in Uncertainty,” which was scheduled to release in November 2025. The book is a faith-based motivational resource that helps readers build resilience and navigate uncertain seasons with confidence. PHOTO (of book)





Jacob A. (Jake) Solomon, BSE ’11, is the director of “Breakout,” which made its Ohio premiere at the Oscar-qualifying film festival, the Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF). CIFF included over 300 films from over sixty countries and “Breakout” was fortunate enough to be one of them. “Breakout” is a raw and intimate short film that follows a college student’s emotional journey through severe acne and the desperate pursuit of clear skin. The film was shot almost entirely on UA’s campus with help from current and former students as part of the cast and crew. “Breakout” has been accepted into over fifteen film festivals and has won at least three Best Dramatic Film awards on its current festival run.



John J. Thuermer, JD ’11, has been elevated to principal at the law firm Fish & Richardson, effective Jan. 1, 2026. Thuermer advocates for clients in complex IP litigation involving electrical and computer technologies, medical devices, and energy and chemical processes before the ITC and U.S. district courts.

Travis R. Vance, BSA ’16, MSA ’17, was named principal effective Sept. 1, 2025, at Novogradac, a national accounting and consulting enterprise. Vance provides audit, tax, and agreed-upon procedures services in the NMTC, HTC and renewable energy arenas. Vance specializes in providing services in the renewable energy sector, including transaction consulting, financial forecasting and cost segregation studies.





Dennis E. VanFossen, Jr., BSE ’16, has been appointed the Soap Box Derby’s CEO. VanFossen will be responsible for overseeing operations of the organization’s youth racing and education programs, as well as relationships with volunteers, sponsors, donors and community leaders.

Stacey M. Zipay, JD ’11, was appointed the Stark County public defender effective March 1, 2025.



2020s

Julia R. Dawson, BA ’21 and Alex M. Nguyen, BS ’21, were married on April 26, 2025. They met as UA resident assistants and have been in love ever since.



Derek M. Firth, JD ’24, has joined the firm of Black McCuskey Souers & Arbaugh. Firth is an associate whose practice focuses on estate planning, probate and trust administration, business and corporate law, and real estate matters.

Sera M. Martin, BS ’21, JD ’25, was welcomed by Hahn Loeser & Parks as a new associate attorney to the Cleveland office, following the Ohio Supreme Court’s recent swearing-in ceremony, admitting her to the Ohio Bar. Martin will work closely with construction litigation, real estate litigation and commercial litigation matters.





Angela G. Mullen, AA ’20, AASPE ’20, BSE ’20, and Matthew D. Slanta, BSE ’20, got engaged on July 31, 2025, outside of Kolbe Hall on campus.



Lindsey K. Noland, BBA ’24, began her full-time position as account and media coordinator at Innis Maggiore effective January 2025. Previously a client services intern, Noland will fill a hybrid role as an account and media coordinator. She will collaborate with the agency’s digital marketing and client services teams to provide research, strategy and recommendations. She will also help produce the Brand Shorthand podcast.

Alexis M. Schultz, BSME ’26, has been named to Team USA for the 2026 World Dodgeball Federation (WDBF) World Championships, which will be held in Dec. 5-13 in Bangkok, Thailand. A three-time National Collegiate Dodgeball Association Women’s Player of the Year, Schultz will compete on Team USA’s women’s foam squad.



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

The following alumni were recipients of the Greater Akron Chamber’s 2025 “30 For the Future.” Since 2007, the chamber has celebrated professionals aged 25-39 who demonstrate exceptional leadership and are making an impact on our region:

Leigh Ann Andreani, BA ’14 – Playhouse Square
Kofi R. Boakye, AA ’18 – BlaBoak Ventures
Morgan L. Ferrell, BS ’18, MAP ’20 – Summit County Fiscal Office
Nathan M. Fulmer, JD ’19, MT ’19 – Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC
Kelly M. Le, BS ’14 – Asian Services in Action
Rebecca M. Miklos, MA ’20 – FirstEnergy

The following alumni were recipients of Crain’s 40 Under 40 for 2025:

Laura A. Feller, BSA ’10, MSA ’10 – VP and Chief Accounting Officer, Hyland
Heather J. Gilleland, BA ’11 – VP and Broker, Jones Lang LaSalle
Derek J. Reed, BSBA ’10 – VP & Senior Relationship Manager, KeyBank

The Trailhead Community Health Foundation of Greater Akron announced on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, that it has named a chair, vice chair, treasurer, secretary and board members. The announcement marks the official launch of the foundation, intended to serve residents of Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne counties. Trailhead leadership team includes:

Chair: Martin P. “Marty” Hauser, BA ’75 – retired president and CEO of SummaCare
Treasurer: Naomi D. Ganoe, BSA ’98, MT ’02 – managing director and private client services practice leader at CBIZ
Secretary: Steven S. Cox, JD ’94, MT ’95 – attorney and shareholder at Roetzel & Andress

Mildred A. (Roach) Avramovich, BSE ’51, shared that five of her nephews are UA alumni:

Allen Avramovich, BSME ’73
Daniel Avramovich, BSA ’73
Jim Avramovich, BSME ’71
Raymond Avramovich, AAS ’74, BSA ’79
Steve Avramovich, BAE ’72

The following alumni were recipients of the Greater Akron Chamber’s 2026 “30 For the Future.” Since 2007, the Chamber has celebrated professionals aged 25-39 who demonstrate exceptional leadership and are making an impact on our region:

Abigail E. Burke, JD ’24 – Roetzel & Andress, LPA
Kate Calla, JD ’21 – Summit County Juvenile Court
Darnell D. Davis, Jr., BS ’16, MPA ’18 – Business Volunteers Unlimited (BVU)
Nathan Z. Dreger, Ph.D. ’19 – Avient Corporation
Joy Edwards, BA ’09, MAE ’12 – Akron Children’s Museum
Nick Glavan, BS ’16, MBA ’18 – Bounce Innovation Hub
Megan Gosset Hatfield, AA ’13 – Fairlawn-West Preschool
Marissa Rufe, BBA ’19 – NAI Pleasant Valley
J. Noah Spinner, BA ’21, MAP ’23, JD ’23 – Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP
Abigail Spraggins, BS ’15 – Abby’s Helping Hands, Hopeful Hearts
Andrew West-Barry, BA ’19, BA ’19, JD ’22 – Summit County Executive’s Office
Jeananne M. Wickham, BA ’15, JD ’18, MBA ’18 – Amer Cunningham Co., LPA
Rosemarie E. Wilkins, BBA ’19, MT ’23 – Huntington Bank
Jaimie Yu, BBA ’13, MBA ’20 – Clorox Purell