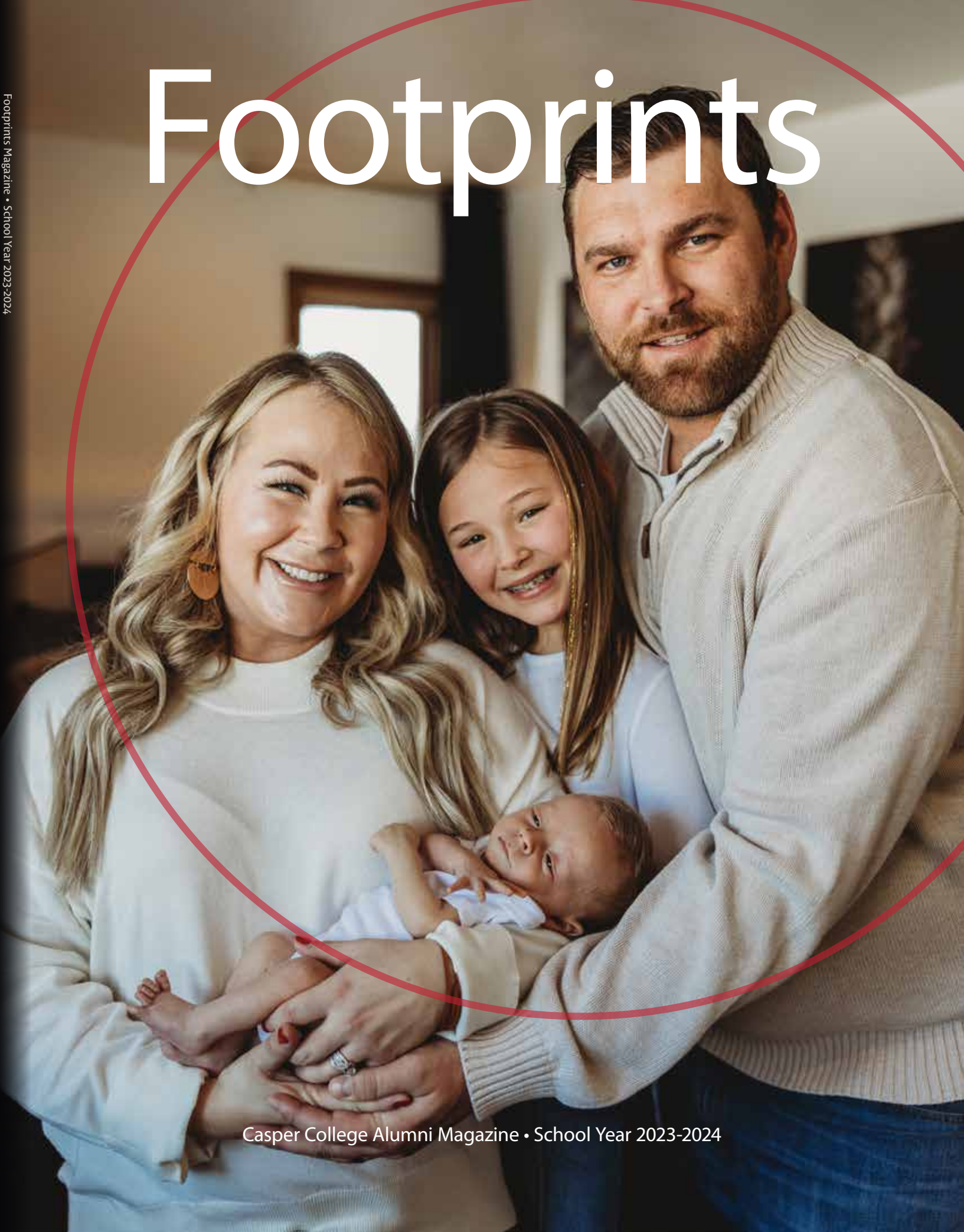


Footprints

Footprints Magazine • School Year 2023-2024



Casper College Alumni Magazine • School Year 2023-2024

In this issue

Twenty-three Deadly Injuries to 2,500 Hunts.....	2
NASA Selects Casper College	6
Breaking Barriers — The STAR Program	8
Students Experience Oxaxaca	10
Five Retire	12
Year-end Honorees.....	29
2024 Commitment to Excellence: Kathy Dolan.....	30
2024 Distinguished Alumnus: Jon Schaffner	31
UND's OT Program at Casper College.....	36
Update on the Western History Center	42
Asian Giant Honeybees and Will Robinson	48
Success with Dough and Buttercream	52
Holiday High Tea	54
Love People for Who They Are	56
Divine Resigns	61
CC Sound Design Program	66
News from T-Bird Athletics.....	69
Glowing and Beautiful.....	76
Jhett Johnson's New Career	78

Cover photo: **Colton Sasser** (AS, '16) with his wife **Holly** (AS, '10) and daughter **Kolynns** and son **Corbin** in 2023. (Courtesy photo/Colton Sasser)

Footprints

A publication of the Casper College Alumni Association, published once a year.

Alumni Board Members

President — Ryan Hieb (AAS, CERT, '08, AA, '09)

Vice President — Baleigh Hite (AA, '11)

Treasurer — Linda Nichols (AB, '01)

Dale Anderson
(AAS, '89, AB, '93)

Luella Hinderliter ('66)
Deyonne Jackson (AS, '98)

Samantha Andrew
Preston Blakely (AA, '04)

Brenden Lamb (AAS, CERT, '05)
Kerri Mahlum (AS, '90)

Virginia Bodyfelt (AA, '01)

Amanda Montgomery (AA, '16)

Kevin Bromley (AAS, '77)

Mike Stepp (AAS, '80)

Derrel Carruth (AS, '65)

James Stress ('03)

Jan Cundy ('79)

Hannah Wille (AS, '13)

Nancy Gerlock
(AA, AS, '95, AS, '97)

Ben Winckler ('04)

Editorial Staff

Foundation Executive Director

Denise (Neville) Bressler ('84)

Associate Director of Development and Alumni Engagement

Ann Dalton

Database Manager

Becky Wise (AAS, CERT, CERT, '12)

Public Relations Director

Chris Lorenzen

Art Director

Eric Valdez (AA, '87)

Editor and News Coordinator

Lisa S. Pearce Icenogle (AA, '79)

Photographer/Videographer

Zach Nagy (AA, '24)

Keep in touch!

Email: alumni@caspercollege.edu

Mail: Ann Dalton
Casper College
125 College Drive
Casper, WY 82601


Phone: 307-268-2325 or 800-442-2963 ext. 2325

Or drop by!

Walter H. Nolte Gateway Center, third floor,
Casper College Foundation and Alumni Office, Rm. 306

Find us on the web and social media:

 @CasperCollegeAlumniAssociation

 Instagram: @ccalumniassociation

 CasperCollegeFoundation.org

Alumni Board President's Letter

(Courtesy photo/Ben Winkler)



Ryan Hieb (AAS, CERT '08, AA '09)
Casper College Alumni Association president.

Fellow Alumni, Donors, and Friends of Casper College,

It is an honor and privilege to write to you as the Casper College Alumni Association president. When I was a Casper College student living in Bailey Hall, I would have never imagined connecting with all of you as the alumni president. Whether you graduated recently or many years ago, you are an integral part of the Casper College family, and we are thrilled to have you with us.

As the president of the alumni board, I am excited for the opportunity to connect with you, celebrate our shared experiences, and foster lifelong relationships among our alumni network. Casper College has a rich history of academic excellence and community engagement, many of which are highlighted throughout the Footprint publications. All of your contributions have played a significant role in shaping the institution into what it is today.

I encourage you to explore all that our alumni association has to offer and take advantage of the opportunities available. Whether you attend an alumni event, a sporting event, make a financial gift, mentor a current student, or simply stay connected through our online platforms, your involvement strengthens our community and enhances the Casper College experience for generations to come.

The year 2024 has brought many exciting things to our Casper College community. One of these events was Casper having the honor of hosting the Women's National Junior College Basketball Tournament, where the Lady T-Birds continued their winning season. As the nation's top junior college teams converged in Casper, our alumni rallied together to support our T-Birds and create an electrifying atmosphere of sportsmanship and pride. It was an occasion that highlighted the rich tradition of excellence in Casper College athletics and the unwavering dedication of our alumni and community.

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Alumni Association's T-Bird Trek 5k, 10k, and half-marathon, which offer a unique marathon experience with incredible views of Casper, the

Casper College campus, and unmatched support for its participants. Last year, the Trek netted nearly \$9,700, which helps to support scholarships and college initiatives at Casper College. Plus, we had 336 participants, a record for the T-Bird Trek. I encourage everyone to come together to make this year's event our biggest one yet.

Lastly, as we celebrate these achievements, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to Darren Divine, Ph.D., who served as the president of Casper College from July 2015 to May 2024. Divine's leadership, unwavering dedication, and tireless commitment to excellence have profoundly impacted our institution and laid the foundation for future success. We extend our deepest thanks to him for his outstanding service and wish him all the best.

Our alumni community is diverse and dynamic, representing a wide range of professions, industries, and locations around the world. Whether you are pursuing a successful career, furthering your education, or making a difference in your community, your achievements inspire us all, and we are eager to hear and share your stories.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to Casper College. I look forward to connecting with each of you and celebrating our shared journey as proud alumni.

Warm regards,

Ryan Hieb
President, Casper College Alumni Board

From Surviving 23 Deadly Injuries to Sponsoring 2,500 Hunts: How Colton Sasser Turned a 200-pound Bomb into a Lifesaving Nonprofit

Colton Sasser (AS, '16) likes to point out that someone always has it worse, and he usually has a specific person and condition in mind. Then he'll describe how, despite their hardship, this individual still has an unshakeable attitude, sense of humor, and drive. He seems genuinely unaware he is the obvious manifestation of this person.

Young adults enlist for any number of reasons: patriotism, tuition assistance, travel opportunities, legal trouble, or maybe an unstable home. For Colton, given his family's history of service and his personal sense of responsibility, enlistment was inevitable. He graduated from Kelly Walsh High School in Casper in 2009 and then enrolled at the University of Wyoming. In 2011,

he joined the Army and was serendipitously assigned to the 4th Infantry Division — his father's former unit.

It took less than a day in Afghanistan to inaugurate Colton into what many veterans describe as the best and worst time of their lives. He watched in awe and terror as the helicopter directly in front of his received fire, as experienced soldiers were largely unaffected. In Kunar Province, a notoriously dangerous site near one of Osama bin Laden's areas of operation, this was just another day at the office.

Part of the Quick Reactive Force, Colton predominantly served as security to units responsible for disarming improvised exploding devices, or IEDs. He says the 2011 film "Hurt Locker" is a blisteringly accurate portrayal of the

work, as well as a soldier's addiction to service. "It's the national title game every day," Colton shook his head, still in disbelief 13 years later, "playing Metallica and getting ready for battle and the camaraderie." Every day was devoted to keeping his brothers and sisters alive, all as they learned to love living with one another.

On April 15, 2012, Colton was driving a tactical vehicle when it struck a 200-pound IED, killing his squad leader and severely injuring everyone else on board. The blast left a crater 16 feet wide and 10 feet deep. The Army didn't expect Colton to survive, and



*What was left of the tactical vehicle **Colton Sasser** was driving when it struck a 200-pound improvised explosive device. The explosion left a crater 16 feet wide and 10 feet deep, changing Sasser's life forever. (Courtesy photo/Colton Sasser)*

The youngest in a family of five, Colton grew up in Casper with a classically Wyoming childhood. He played every sport he could, snowboarded, and loved to hunt and fish. The Sasser family was big and close, and Colton looked up to his oldest brother **Joa** ('96-'01), a former Marine, and idolized his father, **Steve** (AAS '73), a Vietnam veteran.



The long road to recovery, Colton Sasser is pushed in his wheelchair by his cousin Max Bolger. The man to the left is Sasser's brother, Joa, and the boy is Joa's son, Gibson. The photo was taken by Sasser's father, Steve. (Courtesy photo/Colton Sasser)

by all accounts, he shouldn't have. He sustained 23 life-threatening injuries, including two broken legs, a broken spine and neck, a deflated left lung, lacerated liver, and fluid in his brain. His parents rushed across the world to say goodbye, but Colton again proved himself a fighter. He spent 15 days in a coma, then endured surgeries every 24 to 48 hours for several weeks, including removing a piece of shrapnel lodged in his lower back. Miraculously, after blood clots, ulcers, 14 major operations, a couple of very close calls, and thousands of prayers from across the world, he relocated to the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Here, Colton was expecting his own rigorous rehab, but what he didn't know was that this would also be the birthplace of a cause that would someday save hundreds more veterans.

Dan (AB, '71) and **Nelda** ('72) **Currah** met at Casper College in 1969, following Dan's service in Vietnam. They married in 1971 and moved to Austin, Texas, in the early '80s, but they've always followed their home state news. In 2013, the Casper Star-Tribune published a story on Colton, who was still rehabbing in nearby San Antonio. In a conventional Wyoming twist, Nelda went to the same high school prom as Colton's mom, Kathy. As most Casper College alumni know, no matter the distance from campus, Wyoming neighbors are always close by.

Dan made lunch arrangements with Colton and his cousin **Max Bolger** (AAS, CERT, '10), who had put college on hold to be Colton's full-time caregiver. "He weighed around 120 pounds and could hardly walk, but he wouldn't let Max bring the wheelchair," Currah recalled. They became fast friends, bonding over service and a shared love of all things outdoors. They went golfing and hunting together, and despite limited mobility and chronic pain, Colton always found a way to take part. He wasn't able to swing a golf club, but he rode along in a cart. Hiking terrain was impossible, so he scouted from a pickup.

These outings were a welcome distraction from the grueling therapy Colton was undergoing daily. But as punishing as relearning to walk felt, it was sometimes easier than trying to sleep at night, where Colton found himself on the front line against his inner demons. The alternate universe where getting blown up and killed was just part of the job description still haunts Colton: "The hardest part was that no matter what happened that day, you had to get up and do the same thing again the next day."

Today, Colton wears a thick beard and baseball hat and projects affable self-assurance. Good-natured but serious, he somehow both is and isn't a quintessential Wyoming veteran. He walks with a pronounced limp and likes wearing shorts to see kids' reactions to his prosthetic leg. Long bouts of sitting can be painful, but too polite to say anything, he'll bend and straighten his leg or shift his hips through the discomfort. Though deliberately apolitical, he's open about his service and honest about the toll it took.

With an astonishingly full schedule, Colton causes people to feel important by the time he makes for them. He is now an owner of the company his father founded: Caspar Building Systems. What started as a small family business where Colton and his siblings spent their summers working is now one of the region's largest construction companies that has built much of Casper, including David Street Station. Even with a legacy portfolio, it will always be a family business.

Listing faith, family, and country as the most important things to him, he laughs at his own predictability. He says things like, "The difference between adversity and adventure is attitude," and "Tough times don't last, but tough people do," sometimes even tapping his finger on the table to emphasize each word. As cliché as they may be, these mantras are authentic and meaningful to him. Even with the unfairly heavy burdens he carries — chronic pain, a traumatic brain injury, his squad leader and friend dying next to him, and most recently, losing both his brother and father within the last three years — an unwaveringly positive attitude and remarkable toughness keep Colton a present and devoted husband, father, son, brother, uncle, business owner, and director of a lifesaving nonprofit.

From Surviving 23 Deadly Injuries to Sponsoring 2,500 Hunts, cont.

After a naval career spanning more than 20 years across the Persian Gulf, Okinawa, and Bahrain, Ron Nading only knew himself as a soldier. By the time he retired in 2011, most of his body had been surgically altered, including his back, shoulder, elbow, and both knees, but Nading's spirit seemed beyond repair. Diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression, he felt detached and isolated. "My family didn't recognize me. I used to have to look at pictures of me as a kid to try to remember who I was."

A bar fight in 2013 resulted in court-ordered anger management classes at the Casper Veterans Center, where Nading saw a Hunting with Heroes flier. A Native American, he'd always felt connected to the land, and it was quieter in nature than it was in his head. He signed up for a hunt guided by a veteran more than 20 years his junior — Colton Sasser. They went to area 73 near Hell's Half Acre and spotted an antelope. "I went to sniper schools, but I literally went through a box of shells and didn't hit this antelope," he laughed. His first shot with Colton's rifle got the job done.

After Currah took Colton hunting in Texas, they thought other veterans might want a similar experience, so when Colton returned to Casper, they officially founded a 501(c)(3) with a simple mission: take veterans with a Veterans Administration-certified disability rating of at least 50% on free guided hunts in Wyoming. Nading's hunt was one of nine Hunting with Heroes completed in the 2013 inaugural season.

The program has always relied on the generosity of dozens of landowners, tag donors, guides, and volunteers. On his hunt, Nading was overwhelmed by this outpouring of generosity, and he "... couldn't believe all of these acts of service, all of the people that were willing to give so much to make this happen for me." It was a glimpse into how the child in his old photographs felt.

In 2014, 54 veterans went on a hunt, then more than 200 in 2015, spanning every generation of veterans from World War II up through current occupations. Though

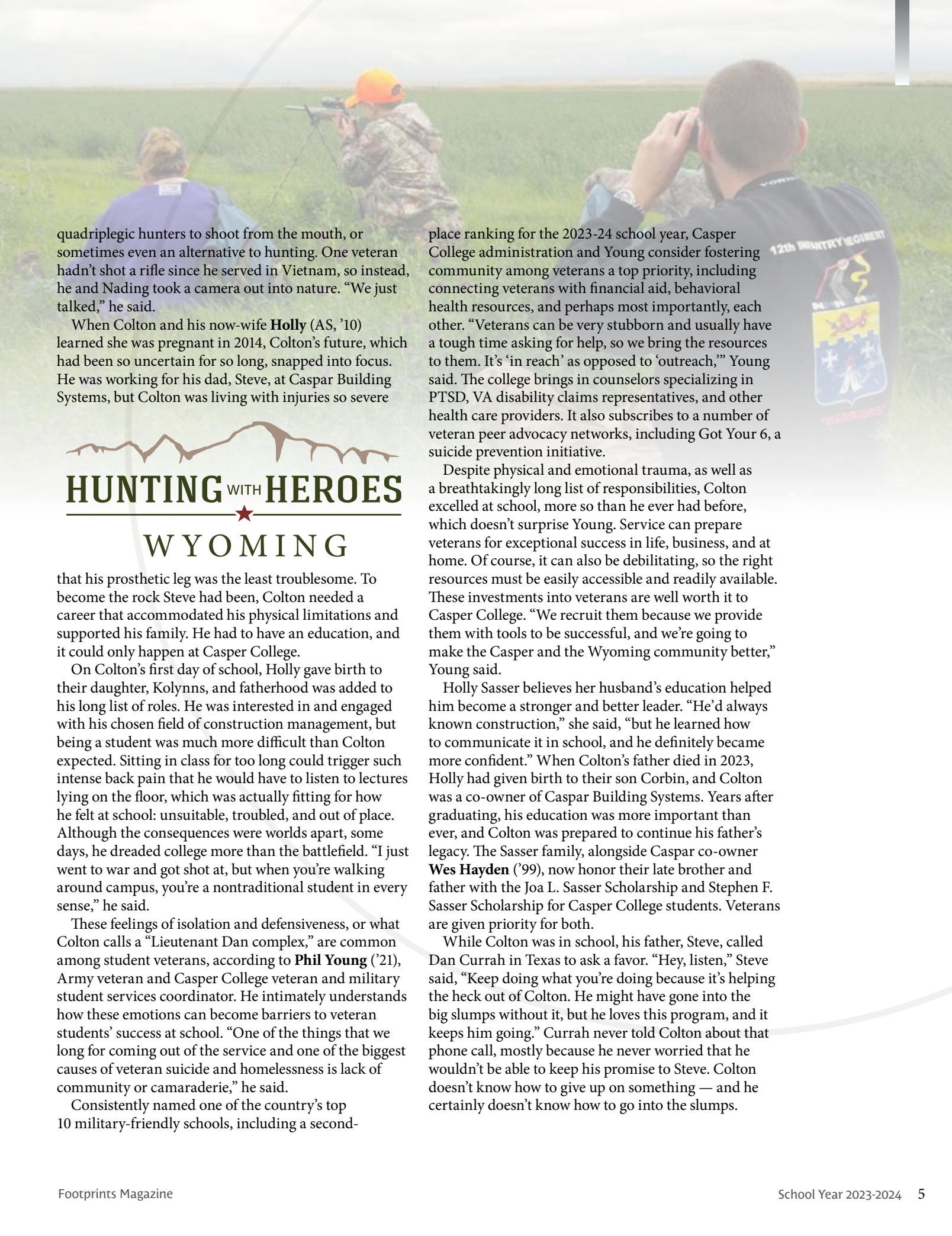


L-r: Dan Currah, co-founder of Hunting with Heroes, former Wyoming Gov. Mike Sullivan, and Colton Sasser, co-founder of Hunting with Heroes. (Courtesy photo/Colton Sasser)

Currah and Colton couldn't explain the program's demonstrative growth, the reason was obvious to the late **Brian Scott Gamroth** ('84), a Casper personality and Hunting with Heroes volunteer. Scott told Currah, "You got a lot more here than just taking these guys hunting. This is therapeutic as hell."

Hunting with Heroes has now taken more than 2,500 veterans from all 50 states on individualized, guided hunts. Those veterans, as well as their families and the civilian volunteers who have made it possible, are all seeking something even bigger than big Wyoming game. Nading was so affected by his experience that he became a guide. "The camaraderie that vets have is hard to explain to someone who hasn't served," he said. Being with someone who understands the high highs — brotherhood, adrenaline, order, purpose — as well as the low lows — scars, addiction, isolation, darkness — is a form of therapy not offered on any insurance policy.

Because Hunting with Heroes isn't really about hunting, the organization tries to make hunting available to every single veteran, regardless of disability. The accommodations are vast, including heavy-duty track wheelchairs made for terrain, special scope attachments for visual impairments, a blower for



quadriplegic hunters to shoot from the mouth, or sometimes even an alternative to hunting. One veteran hadn't shot a rifle since he served in Vietnam, so instead, he and Nading took a camera out into nature. "We just talked," he said.

When Colton and his now-wife **Holly** (AS, '10) learned she was pregnant in 2014, Colton's future, which had been so uncertain for so long, snapped into focus. He was working for his dad, Steve, at Caspar Building Systems, but Colton was living with injuries so severe



HUNTING WITH HEROES

★

WYOMING

that his prosthetic leg was the least troublesome. To become the rock Steve had been, Colton needed a career that accommodated his physical limitations and supported his family. He had to have an education, and it could only happen at Casper College.

On Colton's first day of school, Holly gave birth to their daughter, Kolyynns, and fatherhood was added to his long list of roles. He was interested in and engaged with his chosen field of construction management, but being a student was much more difficult than Colton expected. Sitting in class for too long could trigger such intense back pain that he would have to listen to lectures lying on the floor, which was actually fitting for how he felt at school: unsuitable, troubled, and out of place. Although the consequences were worlds apart, some days, he dreaded college more than the battlefield. "I just went to war and got shot at, but when you're walking around campus, you're a nontraditional student in every sense," he said.

These feelings of isolation and defensiveness, or what Colton calls a "Lieutenant Dan complex," are common among student veterans, according to **Phil Young** ('21), Army veteran and Casper College veteran and military student services coordinator. He intimately understands how these emotions can become barriers to veteran students' success at school. "One of the things that we long for coming out of the service and one of the biggest causes of veteran suicide and homelessness is lack of community or camaraderie," he said.

Consistently named one of the country's top 10 military-friendly schools, including a second-

place ranking for the 2023-24 school year, Casper College administration and Young consider fostering community among veterans a top priority, including connecting veterans with financial aid, behavioral health resources, and perhaps most importantly, each other. "Veterans can be very stubborn and usually have a tough time asking for help, so we bring the resources to them. It's 'in reach' as opposed to 'outreach,'" Young said. The college brings in counselors specializing in PTSD, VA disability claims representatives, and other health care providers. It also subscribes to a number of veteran peer advocacy networks, including Got Your 6, a suicide prevention initiative.

Despite physical and emotional trauma, as well as a breathtakingly long list of responsibilities, Colton excelled at school, more so than he ever had before, which doesn't surprise Young. Service can prepare veterans for exceptional success in life, business, and at home. Of course, it can also be debilitating, so the right resources must be easily accessible and readily available. These investments into veterans are well worth it to Casper College. "We recruit them because we provide them with tools to be successful, and we're going to make the Casper and the Wyoming community better," Young said.

Holly Sasser believes her husband's education helped him become a stronger and better leader. "He'd always known construction," she said, "but he learned how to communicate it in school, and he definitely became more confident." When Colton's father died in 2023, Holly had given birth to their son Corbin, and Colton was a co-owner of Caspar Building Systems. Years after graduating, his education was more important than ever, and Colton was prepared to continue his father's legacy. The Sasser family, alongside Caspar co-owner **Wes Hayden** ('99), now honor their late brother and father with the Joa L. Sasser Scholarship and Stephen F. Sasser Scholarship for Casper College students. Veterans are given priority for both.

While Colton was in school, his father, Steve, called Dan Currah in Texas to ask a favor. "Hey, listen," Steve said, "Keep doing what you're doing because it's helping the heck out of Colton. He might have gone into the big slumps without it, but he loves this program, and it keeps him going." Currah never told Colton about that phone call, mostly because he never worried that he wouldn't be able to keep his promise to Steve. Colton doesn't know how to give up on something — and he certainly doesn't know how to go into the slumps.

NASA Selects Casper College and NCSD #1 to Participate in Eclipse Project

NASA selected Casper College and Natrona County School District #1 to participate in the Nationwide Eclipse Ballooning Project for an annular solar eclipse on Oct. 14, 2023, and a total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. When the new moon covers the sun's center, causing the sun's outer edges to form a "ring of fire" or annulus, this is known as an annular solar eclipse. An annular solar eclipse appears as a partial eclipse

engineering category. For engineering projects, each team launched one balloon during each eclipse, floating its 12-pound payload, which included live streaming cameras, at about 90,000 feet or higher," said Marquard.

Each launch, which took approximately three to four hours, also involved following the balloon until it burst and landed to collect the payload. "Collecting the payload could take another few hours, depending on where it landed," Marquard noted.

"The NEPB was an important educational experience for participants," said Angela DesJardins, director of the Montana Space Grant Consortium. "But it was also designed to gather important, solid science."

According to the NEPB, "The project fully supported 53 teams. Of the 75 participating institutions, more than 30% were minority-serving institutions, and 15% were community colleges. The teams were divided into nine pods to facilitate effective education. NEBP provides a learning environment that uses evidence and equity-based practices to make certain the 750+ participants feel supported, engaged, and valued. In addition, NEBP provided infrastructure tools and best practices to help participating institutions build collaborations that could continue far beyond the scope of this project."

NEBP is supported by NASA's Science Mission Directorate Science Activation program and by NASA's Space Grant College and Fellowship program, award number 80NSSC22M0003.

In addition to funding from the Montana Space Consortium, the Casper Board of Cooperative Educational Services helped fund the project. "The project received a \$8,356 grant from BOCES because it was a partnership with NCSD #1 for the local portion of the project," said Jeana Lam-Pickett, BOCES manager. In addition to the grant, BOCES also funded tuition for the Natrona County School District #1 high school students to take the classes needed to participate in the balloon launches.

According to NASA, all teams participated in both eclipses, and the resulting data will be analyzed and made publicly available.



At the table, left to right: Instructor **Kendall Jacobs**, Hannah Kerkes, and Lily Trujillo. Standing, l-r: Oliver Orozco de la Torre, Luv Shiner, Jack Dawson, Lucas Cooper, Travis Jenkins, Jens Lloyd, Nathan Henson, Ashlenn Stoneking, Kelly Walsh faculty partner **Chad Sharpe**, and instructor **Paul Marquard**. (Casper College photo)

over a region of the earth thousands of miles wide. The students traveled to Richfield, Utah, to view and launch their balloon for the annular eclipse and to Idabel, Oklahoma, to view and launch their balloon for the total solar eclipse.

Before the October event, the students launched their first test balloon. According to **Paul Marquard**, engineering instructor at Casper College, the launch was one of two or three scheduled practice launches before the October eclipse.

Much of the launch hardware for the launches was built during the 2023 spring and fall semesters to allow for the summer test launches. Students were composed of both Casper College and Natrona County and Kelly Walsh high school students, and all were enrolled in the Casper College class ES 1490, "Special Topics, High Altitude Ballooning." The class continued into both the fall 2023 and spring 2024 semesters.

"NEBP payloads focus on either atmospheric science or engineering. Casper College is participated in the



Total eclipse, Idabel, Oklahoma, April 8, 2024. (Casper College photo)



A



B



C



D



E



F

(A-D) The ballooning team prepares the balloon and tracking station for launch in Idabel, Oklahoma, minutes before the total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. (E) Shows the launch point from a picture taken from the balloon in the air. (F) The ballooning team retrieves the payload from the balloon after it descended. (Casper College photos)

Breaking Barriers: The Success of the STAR Program at Casper College

The STAR Program Grant began at Casper College in February 2020, and student participation has been continuous since the fall of 2020.

Casper College's then Vice President for Student Services, **Kim Byrd** and **Greta Hindelighter Spencer** (AS, '93), a Natrona County School District teacher on special assignment to work with homeless students in the district, joined forces with Byrd to see if there was a way to transition high school graduates to college successfully. They looked specifically at three groups of students: the homeless, those aging out of foster care, and first generation to attend college.

The two presented a draft request to the Board of Cooperative Education Services. BOCES is a joint venture between NCS and Casper College. The grant fell under the organization's third rubric: "To meet the ongoing needs of the community by serving as a catalyst for the development and implementation of innovative programs benefiting both institutions."

The proposed program, Successful Transition and Academic Retention or STAR received a warm reception and support from BOCES board members.

The program's specifics were put into place, and the services the program would provide to students were noted. These services included academic coaching, financial aid assistance, year-round on-campus housing, professional and personal development, and other services needed to help each student complete college degrees.

To qualify, students must have been registered in the NCS within the last five years, qualify for a Pell Grant, and not have already earned an associate degree. Finally, students would need to fall into one of the three groups of students the program was designed for: homeless, aged out of foster care, or first-generation to attend college.

"In addition, our Student Success Advocate, **Dannielle Anderson** (AA, '11), serves as a resource for these young adults by assisting them with the development of the interpersonal skills necessary to become self-supporting, community leaders, role models, and competent professionals in their selected programs," said **Linda Toohey**, vice president for student services at Casper College.

"I enjoy working with this population of students, primarily because there's a chance that they would not be able to complete their education without these additional supports in place," said Anderson. Anderson noted that

she liked getting to know the students and learning about their school lives and what each student needs to be successful in school. "What I really enjoy is that one-on-one time that I get with each student, which enables me to learn more about what their homework struggles are, what their family life is like, and what we need to do in order to help them to be successful and complete their education."

Each student must maintain

a 2.0 GPA, be enrolled in 12 hours, meet with the STAR student success advocate twice a month, follow through on appointments, and work part-time when living on campus to stay in the program.

The numbers speak volumes as to the success of the program so far. When the program began in the fall of 2020, 14 students were enrolled. That number climbed to 32 for the fall of 2021, followed by 28 in 2022 and 36 for the fall of 2023.

According to Toohey, highlights of the last two school years, from the fall of 2020 to the fall of 2022, include a retention rate of 69% in the first year and 62% in the second year, a graduation rate of 31%, and an average GPA of 2.54. All current participants are pursuing associate degrees, and most chose to live off-campus.

Two of the program's current students, Valerie Liska and Taye Haney, felt that the academic coaching they received was helpful. "The STAR Program has helped coach me on how to find a stable career with my disabilities and helped me out financially to go to college and eventually a university and help plan for my future," said Liska. For Haney, the coaching sessions help him to stay on task and budget his time better. During those sessions, Haney can check on his grades. "If I'm falling behind, that little kick helps get me back on task and wanting to improve," he said.

Now, the biggest challenge STAR faces is finding long-term funding resources. Initially funded for three years, the program has been extended. "We will continue the STAR program for as long as funds are available," Toohey said.



Valerie Liska



Taye Haney



Dannielle Anderson

"I enjoy working with this population of students, primarily because there's a chance that they would not be able to complete their education without these additional supports in place."

Casper College Foundation and Alumni Upcoming Trips



Scotland, Wales, & England: Historic Sights of the United Kingdom

Departs April 2, 2025 for nine days.



Colors of Majestic Morocco

Departs November 4, 2025 for 12 days.

Contact Ann Dalton for details, 307-268-2325,
or ann.dalton@caspercollege.edu.

CC Students Fly to Oaxaca, Mexico, for Language Immersion

Over the past two years, they have studied, tested, and practiced with peers. They have built up their vocabulary and learned phrases; they have done everything possible to prepare for the moment. Some have had to wait through a pandemic, while others were lucky enough to travel immediately after completing their program. Finally, these students are on their way to southern Mexico to apply all the knowledge they have worked on for so long. It is now time to put theory into practice.

Oaxaca, Mexico, is a uniquely special place where culture and history are woven into every aspect of life. It is a place where cultures are celebrated for their people and heritage, not just for show. Despite being one of the poorest states in Mexico, Oaxaca is rich in history, cuisine, and traditions. About 40% of the population are indigenous, belonging to 16 formally recognized groups such as Zapotec, Mixtec, Tacuate, and Mixe. For many of them, Spanish is not their first or second language, but it serves as the region's lingua franca. Oaxaca is a place where people still practice "calor humano," a term that describes the warm and affectionate way of greeting, recognizing, and engaging with others on a genuine level. It is an ideal destination for a first international experience.

Nine students, enrolled in a Casper College language and cultural immersion class, spent two weeks in the city of Oaxaca to practice their Spanish language skills. The group represented CC's student population well, consisting of both traditional 18-year-old learners and students who returned for a second chance. The students worked hard to save money for the trip, as it was self-funded. Some were fortunate enough to receive scholarship money from the Casper College Foundation

to help with the costs, while others had to pay out of pocket or with the help of their families. **Connie Morgan** (AA, '22), one of the students on the trip, expressed the value of the experience despite the costs, saying, "For me, this opportunity to travel abroad wasn't just about studying Spanish; it was about empowerment, courage, sacrifice, and experience. As a nontraditional student at CC, I was already experiencing many firsts, and this trip felt like the cherry on top. I'm so grateful for this opportunity because it changed my life forever."

Upon arrival, students were introduced to the layout of Oaxaca, a metropolitan area of around 500,000 residents. Familiarity is the first step toward giving them the confidence and autonomy to navigate the city together. The participants were divided into groups of three and stayed with vetted local families to give them a sense of how people in Oaxaca lived their daily lives. This glimpse into the lives of others was an invaluable chance for the students to learn and grow as individuals, understand and exercise empathy, and build tolerance toward others.

After having breakfast with their host families, which ranged from fresh mango and papaya to enchiladas and mole — students made their way to the language school in the city center. On the way, they pass 500-year-old churches or walk along a 300-year-old aqueduct. In class, learners review useful grammar structures and learn colloquial vocabulary before practicing it in conversation groups later in the morning. The chats are built around local themes, like culture, history, or current affairs so that students can speak Spanish and learn about the context in which it is used and the people who use it.



Students take a break from their sightseeing. L-r: **Kellee Schuerman** (AAS, CERT, '23), **Connie Morgan** (AA, '22), **Leslie LeClair** (AA, '21, AA, '23), **Kayla Jones** (AS, '21, AA, '22), **Kalina Proudfoot** (AS, '23), **Hannah Scott** (AA, '21), **Ava Martinez** ('24), **Zach Nagy** (AA, '24), **Suzee Sanford** ('24). (Casper College photo/Eric Atkins)

After having comida — lunch — with our families, our group would meet at different locations throughout the city each afternoon. One day, we visited the Metropolitan Cathedral, built in 1535, which is the literal and figurative center of Catholicism in Oaxaca. We went to the tianguis — open-air — market on another day to learn about local trade and common, daily-purchased products. Each day’s experience had learning objectives embedded within it. Whether to examine Catholicism’s role in daily life or interpret what the market offerings reveal about what people need and value, these little pieces help us understand how different humans live their lives. One of the CC students, **Ava Martínez** (’24) reflected, “I loved comparing the ways of our everyday life with the lives of our teachers and seeing how different yet so similar everything is.”

On the weekends, we would go on excursions to visit major Zapotec ruins across the Valles Centrales — Central Valleys. These are major pre-Colombian civilization centers like Monte Albán, 500 B.C.E.-850 C.E. and Mitla, 900 C.E.-1500 C.E. Our local expert, Moises, whose knowledge covered everything from ancient architectural practices to botany, explained to students how people without beasts of burden or modern engineering tools built a thriving city on top of a mountain one thousand years ago. His talk described how ancient Zapotecs used tree resin to make copal — incense — and rubber balls used in the famous ballcourt games. He then plucked green leaves from the tree which were used to make tea for the ill.

After exploring pyramids and tombs, we visited several area villages, each known for a distinct traditional practice. At each stop, we were invited into the living room/studio of a local artisan, where students had the opportunity to ask questions in Spanish about the practice, heritage, and importance of the work. This allowed them to better understand the place and its people; each question answered made them feel more connected and familiar with the culture.

As part of their formal coursework, each student chooses a topic or location to research before departure. Upon visiting a local site, the student whose research concerns that site gives the group a presentation before we arrive. This way, each student is responsible for being our “expert” and delivering their topic in Spanish.

Recent studies have shown that students are looking for immersive and experiential ways of learning. They want to connect with what they are learning in a more meaningful way. One of the participants,

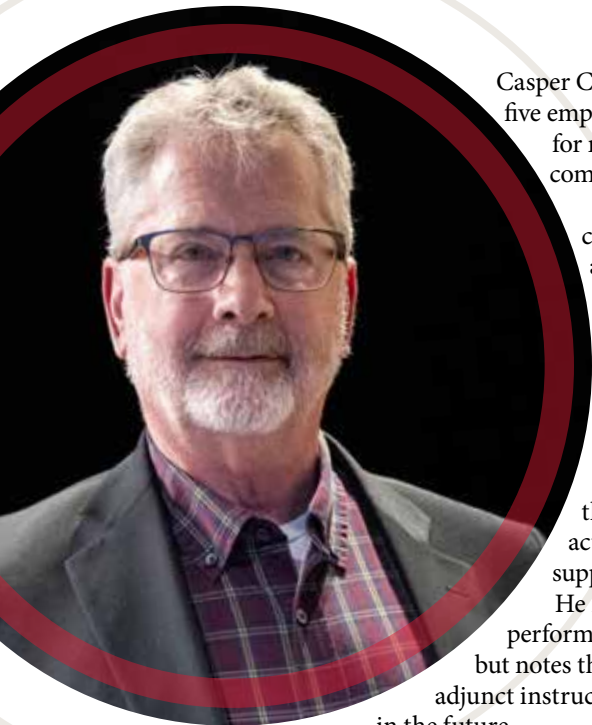


*An exploration of culture took the students to a church where they are pictured outside with traditionally dressed Oaxacans during Guelaguetza. L-r: **Leslie LeClair** (AA, '21, AA, '23), **Ava Martínez** (’24), **Kayla Jones** (AS, '21, AA, '22), **Connie Morgan** (AA, '22), **Kellee Schuerman** (AAS, CERT, '23), **Zach Nagy** (AA, '24), **Hannah Scott** (AA, '21), **Kalina Proudfoot** (AS, '23), **Suzee Sanford** (’24), **Eric Atkins**, Spanish Instructor (AA, '01).*

Leslie LeClair (AA, '21, AA, '23), said of the experience, “Their (Oaxacan) words all around me and their history upon every block. I was there and somehow a part of it all. This trip went well beyond educational and landed in a place in my heart that was deeply human and unquestionably life-changing.” This kind of travel course has many benefits, including teaching students to be resilient and independent. It also helps them to navigate uncertainty and think critically. Collaboration and cooperation are also essential skills that can be developed through such experiences. Overall, these courses help students learn essential life skills, not just job skills.

On one of the last days in Oaxaca, students met a group of English learners from in and around the city to practice each other’s language. The looks on everyone’s faces were a mix of excitement, nervousness, and uncertainty. An incorrect word or expression was followed by laughter and the occasional red face — a cognizance and empathy for making mistakes in another language. Genuine human moments, connecting with people from the country next door but a world away from anything students have ever known. And yet, an understanding that they were different yet altogether the same.

Five Retire From Casper College



Casper College says farewell to five employees who accounted for nearly 90 years of combined service.

Richard Burk began his career as a theater instructor at Casper College on Aug. 19, 1991. He retired at the end of the spring semester. When he started at Casper College, he noted that he believed that ... “theater is a people art. My commitment is to the people of the theater: actors, designers, technicians, support staff, and audience.”

He retires as the theater performance program coordinator but notes that he plans to become an adjunct instructor in the theater program in the future.

When Burk came to Casper College, he had directed 20 productions, was an independent artist, and had vocal and design tech experience. But that wasn't all. Burk's other skills included stunt choreography, stage combat, mime, and circus. All these skills were utilized in play productions at Casper College throughout the years.

In retirement, Burk plans to enjoy life with his wife, Susan.

John Ganley started his employment at Casper College on March 1, 2011, as a shipping and receiving assistant. When he retired on Feb. 2, 2024, he was the shipping and receiving specialist in campus services.

Originally from the State of New York, Ganley came to Casper College with extensive inventory, warehousing, and freight experience. Ganley was a

pleasure to work with, always greeting employees with a smile when he delivered freight to their offices.

When Ganley joined the shipping and receiving department, they had lost employees and he was instrumental in rebuilding the processes that the department still uses today. He also received Staff Employee of the Month recognition in September 2016 and served on the Casper College Staff Alliance Executive Committee earlier in his career.

When asked what he would miss about his time at Casper College, Ganley said, “The people. **Mitch Masters**, **Liz Romsa** (AAS, '20), **Marcie Carter** (AA, '16), and the campus services' boys, **Josh Richards** (AA, '23) and **Kyle Carlisle**, have been especially great to work with these past few years.” For retirement, he plans to travel and spend more time with his family, pets, and fish.

Bryan Goltermann arrived at Casper College on April 18, 2005. His first position was as a custodian. Five months later, in September, he moved into the preventative maintenance tech position he has held since.

Before Casper College, Goltermann worked in custodial, warehousing, and moving positions in Montana and Arizona. In October 2017, he was named Staff Employee of the Month.

According to Goltermann, the Walter H. Nolte Gateway Center, the Thorson Early Childhood Learning Center, the Residence Hall, the Music Building, the Casper College Student Union and University of Wyoming at Casper building, and the Dick and Marialyce Tobin Visual Arts Center have all been built during his tenure at Casper College. He has worked hard in the upkeep and maintenance of these buildings. He





noted that he has had four different supervisors and has served under two different presidents.

“The one thing that hasn’t changed throughout my time here is the dedication and focus Casper College gives to every student so that they will have the best educational experience possible. It has been an honor and privilege to have served one of the best community colleges in the country,” he said. Goltermann plans to continue learning and gaining new experiences in the next chapter of his life.

Kathy Nottingham started working at Casper College on Nov. 17, 2008. She had heard of the position opening from a friend who also worked at Casper College. “I had been on the audit team that audited the college, was familiar with the finance department, and knew Casper College was a great place to work,” she said.

After about a year, Nottingham was appointed to the Casper College Policy Committee and served until she left in February. She was also the treasurer for the Casper College Administrative Alliance for four years, was appointed by the president to serve as a member of the Casper College Grievance Panel, and served on several other committees during her time here.

Nottingham served as the associate controller in the finance department for almost 16 years. “I really enjoyed the people and the environment at Casper College and considered it a privilege to get to work with my fellow employees in the Casper College Accounting and Financial Management Office,” she said.

Gail Schenfisch began her full-time teaching career on Aug. 17, 2015, as a world languages instructor teaching American Sign Language. According to Schenfisch, “American Sign Language I” was introduced as a four-credit language course at Casper College in 1996. “Over the past 28 years, I have been privileged to say that I have worked as the college’s primary

American Sign Language instructor. With the support of many, I have built from this first ASL class, using outreach to develop a collaborative, community-minded, culturally-informed, and broad-reaching ASL program,” she said. Through her efforts, Casper

College became the first college in the state to offer four levels of American Sign Language classes. In 2017, Casper College became the first and only college or university in Wyoming to provide an American Sign Language Studies degree. “I am proud to say that Casper College still holds these distinctions to this day,” Schenfisch said.

“Over my 28 years in this position, I have grown as an educator and a person. I am grateful for the many life-enriching opportunities afforded me throughout my years of service,” she said. “I feel the time has come for me to resign my position and allow this program to flourish and grow even more through someone else’s guidance,” Schenfisch added.



Around Campus

Mike Rowe and Casper College: A Perfect Match

The idea to bring Mike Rowe to Casper seemed like a dream a year ago for former Casper College President **Darren Divine**, Ph.D. and **Denise Bressler** ('84), Casper College Foundation executive director.

But, after some more thought and talking with those involved in three speaker series at the college: the Carl and Georgina Grosz Health Science Lecture Series, the Philip O. Doornbos Agriculture Lecture Series, and the Roy Chamberlain Business Enrichment Lecture Series, the dream took hold and became a reality. Mike Rowe and Casper College really were a perfect match.

Rowe came to Casper and delivered two presentations on Oct. 26, 2023. The first presentation, in the afternoon, was to Casper College and area high school students. The talk was geared toward young people still not employed in the workforce full time.

That evening, Rowe entertained a large crowd at the Ford Wyoming Events Center. "I like what he has to say, and his values align with a lot of Wyoming residents," said Bressler. "Mike's appearance also helped promote Casper College as a tremendous resource right in our own backyard," said **Rachel Chadderdon**, dean of the Casper College School of Business and Industry. "He elevates the trades to the status they deserve," she added.

Rowe is best known as the creator and host of Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs." After many years as host of "Dirty Jobs," which took him to every state in the nation, Rowe discovered that there was a disconnect in the country with the concept of "blue-collar workers." Rowe found that blue-collar workers "... didn't resemble the unflattering, blue-collar workers often portrayed in the media. ... Our society didn't, and still doesn't, have a trained workforce standing by or willing to fill the positions that actually exist."



(Courtesy photo/Mike Rowe)

CC's Caleb Lindsay Named One of 32 Future Leaders



(Casper College photo)

Casper College student **Caleb Lindsay** (AFA, '23) was one of 32 student veterans in the United States to receive a 2023 Student Veteran Leadership Award.

The award comes from G.I. Jobs magazine, which reached out to schools across the U.S. to nominate outstanding veterans in their organizations. The choice was simple for former Veteran and Military Student Services Coordinator **Nick Whipps**. "Caleb was my choice, and this is a recognition that is not only well deserved but highlights all of the selfless work Caleb has done at Casper College to make our institution a better place for veterans. It has been an honor to work with him and see him grow over the past three years."

Lindsay, who at the time of the award was president of the Casper College Veterans Club, served in the U.S. Army from 2015 to 2018 with the rank of Specialist (E-4). "My commitment to fellow veterans is rooted in the resiliency I witness and the power of community," he told G.I. Jobs. "By embracing resilience and fostering a sense of belonging, I dedicate myself to building a welcoming community based on shared experiences, commitment, and service. ... I am devoted to ensuring that no veteran walks alone as we forge a path forward toward a brighter future, united by our common experiences and dedication to service," he added.

In announcing the 32 leadership award winners, the magazine noted, "Anyone who believes the United States is on a downward trajectory toward ruin hasn't met the 32 outstanding student veterans selected for this year's Student Veteran Leadership Awards." Lacking space to share each veteran's accomplishments and service records with their schools, communities, and fellow veterans, the magazine assured readers that if the 32 were any indication of the next group who will lead the nation into the future, "... there is hope indeed."

CC Among Top Small Employers on Forbes 2023 'America's Best Small Employers' List

Casper College was named to Forbes' 2023 "America's Best Small Employers" list at No. 104 in the country. The list features companies with between 200 and 1,000 employees.

The survey used a variety of assessment tools, including anonymously surveying employees, tracking job-related websites, and social listening, which included text analysis of news websites and blogs, including social media. Forbes partnered with Statista, a market research firm.

From those methods, hundreds of thousands of data points were created, categorized, and combined into a total score. "From an initial pool of 10,000 businesses, the 300 companies with the highest scores made it onto the final list," according to the article.

The article noted that small colleges and private schools account for 20% of the list. "This is perhaps because, in a school setting, an intimate environment can often translate into better results," offered Rachel Rabkin Peachman.

A journalist and author, Peachman contacted Casper College for answers to three questions: "Can you share a few things you think are needed to create a positive work environment when you're a smaller institution/employer versus a bigger university or employer? What are the benefits of working in a smaller organization rather than a large business? Do you feel the college offers a more personal and intimate workplace than a larger college? If so, is there any example you might share?"

Peachman quoted Human Resources Director **Rhonda Franzen** in the article: "All (Casper College) employees have the opportunity to get to really know our students, which can directly impact our goal to provide students with a challenging and rewarding educational experience" and "it is easier for all of us to get to know each other, meet face to face, and work collaboratively."

"We are just thrilled at this recognition," said Franzen. "It is exciting to be included in the survey results of a nationally-known organization and compelling given the scope of the analysis they underwent to arrive at their final list of top small employers," said Franzen. "Plus, we had no idea this was occurring behind the scenes as we didn't know about this survey until after it was finished and they asked for comments," Franzen added.

Forbes Media is a global media, branding, and technology company with a focus on news and information about business, investing, technology, entrepreneurship, leadership, and affluent lifestyles. The company publishes dozens of lists annually and noted that "...our list business is informed by our entrepreneurial nature and anchored by our 105-year legacy — affording Forbes the time, influence and prestige to shepherd worthy listers to their 'arrival.' Receiving a position on a Forbes list is a true testament to success and showcases the individuals or companies that deserve a seat at the table."

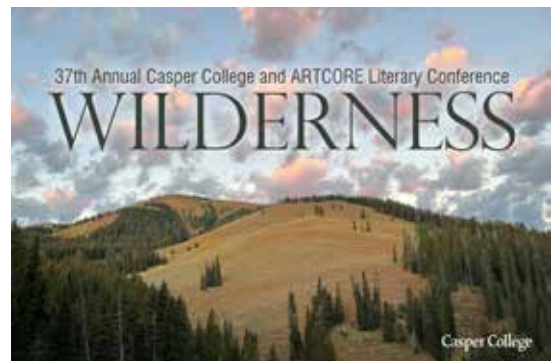


'Wilderness' Theme for 2023 CC Literary Conference

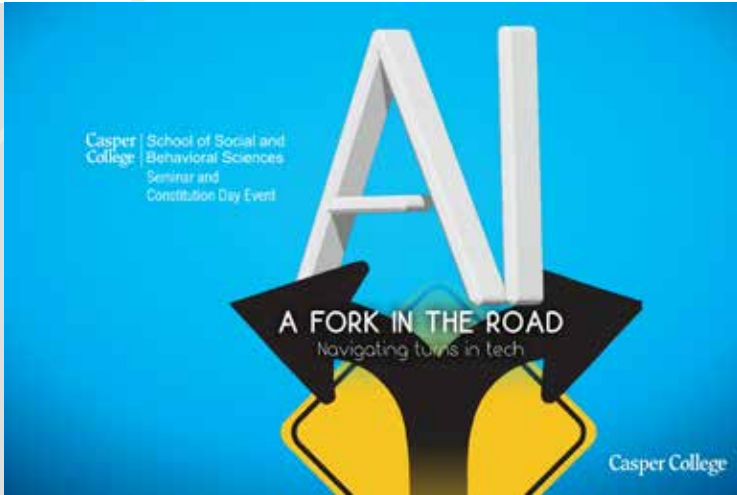
"Wilderness" was the theme for the 37th annual Casper College Literary Conference held Nov. 7-9.

The conference theme looked at wilderness as an idea that shapes our daily actions, how wild landscapes inform artists, and "... how artists use the natural world as a springboard to explore ideas and create art," said **David Zoby**, conference director and English instructor.

The free workshops for the conference were led by writer and naturalist Elizabeth Bradfield, nonfiction writer Christine Peterson, fiction writer Rich Chiappone, and photojournalist Natalie Behring.



Around Campus, cont.



Casper College Hosts Seminar on Artificial Intelligence

As industries either embrace or battle AI technology, Casper College took on the topic at the 2023 Social and Behavioral Sciences Seminar. The theme of the event was “AI: A Fork in the Road, Navigating Turns in the Tech.” All seminar events were free and open to the public.

The keynote speaker was A.J. Juliani, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today bestselling author of “Adaptable.” Juliani serves as faculty for the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and is the former director of learning and innovation for Centennial School District. He is also an award-winning blogger, speaker, and author of multiple other books, including the bestsellers “Empower,” “Launch,” and “The PBL Playbook.”

Other presenters included political science instructors **Nathan Blank** and **Daniel Gallegos** (AA, '09); **Heather Lloyd**, criminal justice instructor; **Amanda Nelson**, paralegal instructor; **Kristina Pham**, psychology instructor; **John Ordiway**, psychology instructor; and **Bri Weigel**, communication instructor.

Natrona County GEAR UP Celebrates 18th Year

A large group of people attended the 18th year of success with GEAR UP staff and alums during a special celebration held last fall.

The celebration was part of National GEAR UP Week. GEAR UP, which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is a federally-funded, statewide grant in Wyoming that provides services to 2,000 seventh-twelfth grade, income-eligible students annually.

“We are excited this year to celebrate all the students and families currently working with us to prepare for postsecondary education. Additionally, we are honored to celebrate the hundreds of students and families we have worked with over the past 18 years and the successes they have achieved,” said **Andrea Covert** ('08), GEAR UP regional director.

According to Covert, 280 Natrona County students were currently participating in the program, whose services are free to qualifying youth in Natrona County. “The goal of our program is to increase the number of eligible students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education,” Covert noted.



Six Retired Instructors Receive Emeritus Status

Six Casper College instructors, **Dale Anderson** (AAS, '89, AB, '93), **Diane Ginsbach**, **Fred Kuck** (AS, '96, AS, '04), **Doug Neubert**, **Kent Sundell**, and **Eric Unruh**, received emeritus standing from the college. All six instructors retired from the college in June or July 2023.

"All of these instructors were dedicated and engaged with their students. They were also highly connected in their fields and committed to Casper College," noted **Brandon Kosine**, interim president.

Anderson became a fire science instructor at the Casper College School of Business and Industry in August 1997 and later became the program director. He retired at the end of his 26th year.

Ginsbach started at Casper College in 1995 as an adjunct math instructor and the Casper College Math Lab supervisor. In August 1998, she became a full-time math instructor, a position she held until her retirement at the end of her 25th year.

Kuck began his dream job as a radiography educator at Casper College in 2005. After 18 years as a radiography instructor at Casper College, Kuck retired at the end of his 11-month contract in July 2023.

Neubert came to Casper College in July 2002 after a 20-year career at Wyoming Medical Center to start the college's brand-new respiratory therapy program as the program's director. The first admitted class began their studies in the summer of 2003. Neubert had 21 years of directing and 20 years of instructing when he retired at the end of his 11-month contract in July 2023.

Sundell began as an adjunct instructor in the spring semester of 1996 before becoming a full-time geology instructor in August 1996. He participated in the discovery, removal, and mounting of Dee the Mammoth, the removal of Lee Rex the *T. rex*, and the discovery and mounting of Nicole, the best *Torosaurus* skull ever found. All fossils are on display in the Tate Geological Museum. During his time at Casper College, Sundell also served as department head for the geology department. Sundell retired at the end of his 27th academic year but continues to teach at the college as an adjunct instructor for the geology department.

Unruh became a music instructor with Casper College, teaching piano in August 1989, a position he held until 1991. He was chair of the Casper College Music Department from 1991 to 2006 and fine arts division chair from 2006 through 2009. He then became the dean of the Casper College School of Fine Arts and Humanities and served in that position from July 2009 until June 2022. In his last academic year at Casper College, Unruh served as interim special assistant to Kosine, while Kosine was vice president for academic affairs, and completed the mid-year evaluation for the Higher Learning Commission. Unruh retired after 34 years of service to the college.

To be considered for emeritus selection, candidates must retire and not resign from Casper College, have provided a minimum of 20 years of total service or 15 years of continuous service at age 60, and have the recommendation of their school.

Health Care Job Fair

Thirty-nine businesses involved in the health profession participated in Casper College's Health Care Job Fair last fall. According to **Ashley Bergeron**, former career services coordinator at Casper College, the fair was well attended by prospective college and high school students, alums, and the general public.

"The goal of this job fair was to provide an opportunity for employers from the health care industry to connect with our Casper College School of Health Science students and any community members interested in employment options in this industry, which I think the fair did. Attendees were able to practice their networking skills and apply for and interview on the spot for open positions," said Bergeron.



Around Campus, cont.



Seventh Annual Deaf Expressive Arts Festival Showcases Literary Forms and Art

American Sign Language students from Casper College, Kelly Walsh High School, and Dean Morgan Middle School, as well as local deaf community members, showcased a variety of ASL literary forms and student-created art in November.

The Deaf Expressive Arts Festival — or D.E.A.F., — marked its seventh year at Casper College. It was a collaborative effort of American Sign Language classes taught at Casper College by **Gail Schenfisch**, Kelly Walsh High School by Maria Paris, and Dean Morgan Middle School by Joan Mahnen. During the event, students shared their love of ASL with the community.

Local deaf community members and students performed traditional ASL ABC, number and classifier stories, percussion signing, and folklore stories. “This intergenerational presentation and sharing of ASL and its culture help build and establish an appreciation of the deaf community and the importance of being global citizens learning diversity through world languages,” said Schenfisch.

The free festival was open to the public, and interpreters were provided for all hearing guests.

The Ben Markley Big Band with Drummer Ari Hoenig Jazz Festival Headliners

The Ben Markley Big Band, with drummer Ari Hoenig, headlined the 57th Annual Kinser Jazz Festival in February. The concert also featured two other musical acts: The Wyoming All-State Jazz Choir and John Roberts y Pan Blanco.

The concert is part of the Casper College Kinser Jazz Festival. Nearly 700 college, senior and junior high school students and their instructors participated in the festival through their jazz bands, combos, and vocal groups. The festival provided a setting for the groups to perform in a noncompetitive environment over three days.

The 57th Annual Kinser Jazz Festival was sponsored in part by grants from the Wyoming Arts Council, Enroll Wyoming, BOCES, ARTCORE, and the Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association.



'Human/Nature' Topic for 39th Annual Humanities Festival

"Human/Nature" was the topic for the 39th Annual Casper College Humanities Festival and Demorest Lecture held in February. All festival events, except for the dance concert, were free and open to the public.

The festival featured keynote speaker Susan Rogers, a multiplatinum-earning record producer, engineer, mixer, and audio technician best known for her work with Prince from 1983 to 1987. In 2021, she became the first female Music Producer's Guild Award recipient for Outstanding Contributions to U.K. Music. She teaches psychoacoustics and neuroscience for Berklee College of Music, Boston, and earned her doctoral degree in behavioral neuroscience from McGill University in 2010. Her book on music listening for W. W. Norton is titled "This Is What It Sounds Like: What the Music You Love Says About You."

The festival included two exhibitions at the Goodstein Foundation Library: "Development and Character of Casper College," curated by Casper College student and biology major **Hannah Baldwin** (AS, '24) with support from the Casper College GIS and Social Work Club students, highlighting phases of the growth of Casper College and the character found within, according to **Valerie Innella Maiers**, Humanities Festival director and art instructor.

"Human/Nature," curated by Casper College museum and gallery studies major **Rae Mann** (AA, '24), was a digital exhibition highlighting the proximity between people and nature and the City of Casper's early development as seen through its residents' eyes. Mann was assisted with the exhibit by the Casper College Social Work Club.

Another exhibition was held at the Natrona County Library: "Ethnology of Casper's Sandbar," curated by Casper College Western History Center Librarian and Archivist **Hanz Olson** (AA, '09) and Mann.

Other presenters included rancher and author Cat Urbigkit; Tate Geological Museum Education Specialist **Russell Hawley**; Adam A. Blackler, Ph.D., associate professor of history at the University of Wyoming; Ricia Anne Chansky, Ph.D., professor of English at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez; **Jodi Youmans-Jones**, Casper College dance program coordinator; visual artist **Tina Opp** (AS, '97, AFA, '06); Opera Wyoming who presented "Gnossienn" and "Rabbit," a play by David Foxtan along with dance choreographer **Anthony Gamroth** (AA, AFA, '06); environmental educator Valerie Bayer; and **Julia Whyde**, dean of the School of Fine Arts and Humanities at Casper College.

The festival also included the opening-night performance of Casper College Dance instructor **Amy Fitzsimmons'** production of "Pencils Down," a contemporary dance performance comprised of a collection of vignettes, each with a theme of school-related scenarios or ideas, conceived, directed, and choreographed by Fitzsimmons.

The 2024 Humanities Festival Sponsors included the Wyoming Humanities Council, the Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association and Margaret Demorest Endowment, the Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library, the Casper College School of Fine Arts and Humanities, the University of Wyoming at Casper, the Casper College Visual Arts Department Galleries, and Casper College.

The 2024 Humanities Festival Additional Partnerships include the Natrona County Library, Werner Wildlife Museum, ARTCORE, the Jack McCann College Store at Casper College, the Casper College Department of Theatre and Dance, the Western History Center at Casper College, and Workforce Development.



Around Campus, cont.



Dash Lloyd shows his award for his recognition as Casper College's Shaping Wyoming's Future Student winner. Lloyd is pictured with former Casper College President **Darren Divine**, Lloyd's girlfriend **Isabelle Peters**, and Casper College Director of Public Relations **Chris Lorenzen**. (Casper College photo)

Worland's Lloyd Selected as Casper College's Shaping Wyoming's Future Student

Dash Lloyd, a Casper College nursing major, was selected as the 2023-2024 Shaping Wyoming's Future Student award winner.

According to those who know him, Lloyd is one of those people others are drawn to and enjoy being around because of his thoughtful, compassionate, and easygoing personality. "If you ask Dash about someone, he almost always can tell you some fun fact about them because he consistently notices people, asks them how they are, and includes people," said one of his instructors.

Lloyd was recently accepted into the nursing program at Casper College. After Casper College, he plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Wyoming.

"The combination of Dash's care for those he works with, his commitment to his chosen communities, and his excellence in his academic pursuits is illustrative of the quality of Casper College students," said the instructor.

The award is possible thanks to a partnership between the Wyoming Business Alliance and the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees. Each community college in the state selects a student as its winner of the Shaping Wyoming's Future Student Award. The students selected have a high focus on the industry of their choice and are role models for their peers.

All eight winners traveled to Cheyenne, where they were introduced to the Wyoming state legislators on both floors and then attended a banquet in their honor. Each student was awarded a \$250 scholarship check from the WBA.

Many Exciting Job Opportunities Available at CC Spring Job Fair

The spring job fair, held in April, featured an exciting lineup of full-time, part-time, and seasonal jobs. A large number of job seekers attended to see what current jobs were available in Casper and Wyoming. "Obviously, folks looking for immediate employment can be offered jobs as a result of this event," noted **Ashley Bergeron**, former career services coordinator at Casper College.

The job fair featured employers from over 70 companies.

Those who needed professional business clothing before the job fair could stop by the Casper College Student Success Center's clothing closet, which has free professional business clothing options for men and women. The free professional business clothing was also displayed at the event, and folks could take whatever they wanted.

The Spring Job Fair was sponsored by the Department of Workforce Services, the Natrona County School District, and Casper College.





Smiles all around as the Casper College Sophomore Judging team shows their winnings from the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. L-R: **Conor Christensen** (AS, '24), **Kale Benton** (AS, AS, '24), **Luke Raudebaugh**, **Jessica Wilkinson** (AS, '24), **Kassadee Lym** (AS, AS, '24), **Ceara Moffatt**, **Faythe Fowler** (AS, '24), **Gavin Masters**, **Hunter Jensen**, and **Robert Choma**, (AS, AS, '24). (Courtesy photo)

Casper College Livestock Judging Team Score Wins in Contests

The Casper College Livestock Judging team found success during two spring 2024 contests: the Sioux City Empire Livestock Show held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo in Fort Worth, Texas.

The college's two sophomore teams and one freshman team competed at the Sioux City Empire, and all three teams placed. Casper Team 1 took third high team overall, high team reasons, high team cattle, third high team sheep and goats, and fifth high team swine. Casper Team 2 took fifth in team cattle. The Casper Freshman team took fifth in sheep and goats.

Individually, **Robert Choma** (AS, AS, '24), from Etna, Wyoming, placed ninth as overall individual, third in high individual reasons, seventh in high individual cattle, and sixth in high individual swine. **Luke Raudebaugh**, Butler, Ohio, took seventh in high individual reasons. **Hunter Jensen**, Vernal, Utah, was 10th high individual in reasons and ninth high individual in sheep and goats. **Gavin Masters**, Pinedale, Wyoming, placed fourth high individual in sheep and goats, and **Jessica Wilkinson** (AS, '24), Morrill, Nebraska, took second high individual in cattle.

Individually, two freshmen placed at the contest: **Stetson Rothlisberger**, McKinnon, Wyoming, was fourth high individual overall and ninth high individual in cattle, while **Alaina Barger**, Cascade, Montana, was eighth high individual in sheep and goats.

"I was so proud of our T-Birds at Sioux Falls," said coach **Heath Hornecker** (AS, '97). "Everyone worked hard, and it showed in the results."

The following weekend, the sophomores headed to Fort Worth, Texas, to compete. The team had a large number of wins, as did individuals. As a team, the T-Birds placed third as the high team overall, third high team in reasons, third high team in sheep and goats, and third high team in cattle. The team was fourth high team in hogs and the fifth high team in horses.

On an individual level, Choma was third overall in hogs, 10th overall in sheep and goats and horses, and 11th overall. **Kale Benton** (AS, AS, '24), Buffalo, Wyoming, took third overall individual in horses, Masters placed fifth overall in horses, and Raudebaugh took 12th overall in cattle.

"Our judges are a great group of individuals with talent and a strong work ethic. They did great in Fort Worth, and I am happy to be their coach, Hornecker said.

Around Campus, cont.



(Casper College photo)

Australia's Lewis Gordon Chosen as 2024 CC Graduation Speaker

Lewis Gordon (AS, '24), of Sunshine Coast, Australia, was selected as the 2024 graduation speaker for Casper College.

Gordon was chosen from a group of students who applied to compete in the 2024 Graduation Speaker Tryouts. Each applicant was required to prepare the speech they would use for the graduation ceremony before a panel of judges. Each presenter was judged on having a clear topic and purpose in their speech, the quality of content, organization, structure, and finally on their delivery.

In addition to an outstanding speech and presentation, the 2023-2024 Graduation Speaker Tryouts winner had to have a minimum 3.0 GPA, graduate in the 2023-2024 school year, and be in good standing with Casper College. Thanks to his selection as the speaker at Casper College's 2024 Commencement, Gordon also received a \$500 scholarship to his transfer school.

Gordon graduated with his Associate of Science degree in mathematics. He plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in engineering, work for a while, and then obtain his master's degree either in the United States or Australia.

Gordon, who played on the Casper College Men's Soccer team for two years as a forward, plans to continue playing soccer while earning his bachelor's. "I was very blessed to have followed in the footsteps of my brother, **Ewan** ('22), who was previously here before me, and I am very thankful he inspired me to join him," said Gordon. "From the moment I arrived from Australia to pursue my academic and athletic dreams, I knew that the community would become my second home," he added.

Gordon decided to try out for graduation speaker because doing so would look good for the future. He knew many of the fans, employees, and students, and he could bring a unique perspective as someone who came to Casper just two years ago.

"Being on the men's soccer team, my time here has been full of highs and lows. Going from losing our semifinal in my freshman year to having the best season in Casper College history last semester was very special and something I will remember for the rest of my life."

When asked if he would recommend Casper College, he immediately replied, "Yes, I would. Casper College is a great junior college and one of the better ones I have seen. The dorms are really nice, and so are the people."

'The Power of Many' Combines KWHS, NCHS, and CC Orchestras

A free concert featuring the chamber orchestras from Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools and Casper College took place in March.

"The Casper College Music Department was proud to host the annual combined string orchestra concert. All string players from Kelly Walsh High School, Natrona County High School, and Casper College combined forces to present various string orchestra music," said **Jennifer DePaolo**, string instructor and director of the Casper College Chamber Orchestra.

According to DePaolo, the three co-directors of the event, including herself, **Gary DePaolo** ('05), from Kelly Walsh High School and the adjunct viola instructor at Casper College, and **Zach Walker** (AFA, AFA, '13) from Natrona County High School, collaborated to make the concert a reality.

The evening featured a wide variety of music from composers, including W.A. Mozart, Lauren Bernofsky, Jean Sibelius, David Shaffer, Johann Strauss Jr., and others.





Richard Burk Directs Final Production at Casper College

Longtime Casper College Theater instructor **Richard Burk** presented his final production at Casper College with “The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical.” The show ran April 18-20 and 25-27, 2024, on the Mick and Susie McMurry Main Stage.

Burk began his teaching and directing career with Casper College at the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year. During that time, he has directed everything from tragedies to comedies, drama to farce, musicals, and everything in between.

For his last directorial production, “The Lightning Thief,” Burk cast 10 Casper College students who played 43 different characters.

Thanks to a grant from the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, BOCES, guest choreographer **Matthew Dailey** ('19) was hired to work with the students. Dailey has enjoyed a career in New York City as an actor, spending three years starring in the hit Broadway show “Jersey Boys” as Tommy DeVito and two years in Cameron Mackintosh’s “Miss Saigon.” In 2020, Dailey returned to his hometown of Denver, working as a director and choreographer. “I am very thankful to Richard Burk and the entire Casper College team, who allowed me to share this time with the incredibly talented students,” Dailey said.

Casper College Appoints Brandon Kosine, Ph.D. as Interim President

Casper College announced the appointment of **Brandon Kosine**, Ph.D., as its interim president, effective May 13, 2024. The decision came after thorough consideration by the board of trustees.

Kosine brings with him a wealth of experience in higher education leadership. He holds a Master of Science degree in clinical psychology and a doctorate in counselor education and supervision. Before coming to Casper College, Kosine was an associate director in areas that spanned student services, residence halls, and campus activities for the University of Wyoming. He was named the dean of the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences in 2015 at Casper College following three years as a psychology instructor. In 2018, Kosine was named the vice president of academic affairs for Casper College. His commitment to academic quality and to students aligns perfectly with the mission and vision of Casper College.

As interim president, Kosine will lead Casper College through a period of transition and growth, working closely with stakeholders to ensure the continued success and advancement of the institution. His leadership will be instrumental in maintaining the high standards of academic excellence, fostering a vibrant campus community, and furthering Casper College’s reputation as a leader in higher education.

“We are delighted that Dr. Kosine has agreed to the interim president role for Casper College,” said Steve Degenfelder, chair of the board of trustees. “His proven leadership, dedication to academic excellence, and commitment to fostering a supportive campus environment make him the ideal choice to guide our institution during this transitional period.”

“I am very excited to serve Casper College in this new role. It is truly an honor,” said Kosine.

Kosine assumed the role of interim president following the departure of Darren Divine, Ph.D., who had served as president since 2015.



(Casper College photo)

Around Campus, cont.

35th Annual Wellness Conference

The 35th Annual Casper College Wellness Conference was held in April. The Thursday sessions were free and open to the public, and the Friday sessions and an afternoon workshop were geared to mental health professionals.

Hosted and organized by the Casper College Wellness Center, the conference examined various wellness topics. “Casper College’s Annual Wellness Conference is a wonderful way for community members and providers to network, expand their knowledge, and get exposed to some of the most current topics,” said **Erin Ford**, director of counseling.

On Thursday night, the PBS documentary “Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness” with Casper College alumna **Kee Dunning** (AA, '79) was shown and well-received by the audience. Audience members were also able to participate in a Q&A with film participants.

During the mental health professionals’ Friday sessions, Dunning also presented “The Kee Concepts of Communication.”

This year’s wellness conference was sponsored by the True Care Women’s Resource Center; Wyoming Behavioral Institute; Specialty Counseling and Consulting; Pro-Choice Wyoming Education Project; the University of Wyoming College of Health Sciences, Division of Social Work; Banner Health Wyoming Medical Center; and Casper College.

Remembering Our Fallen



CC Veterans Club Hosts 'Remembering Our Fallen'

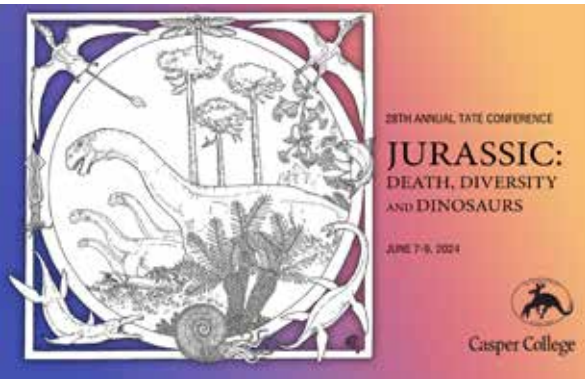
“Remembering Our Fallen, Tribute Towers of America’s Fallen from the Global War on Terrorism” was on display at Casper College May 3-5, 2024. Hosted by the Casper College Veteran Services, the memorial was displayed in the “Swede” Erickson Thunderbird Gymnasium.

The memorial display included 34 tribute towers with military and personal photos of almost 5,400 of our nation’s military fallen from Sept. 11, 2001, to Aug. 30, 2021. In addition, “Remembering Our Fallen” also included tribute towers that recognized the servicemen and women who died from training accidents or attacks while stationed stateside or on overseas bases. Those

who return from war with the invisible wounds of post-traumatic stress disorder and succumb to suicide are also included to recognize the tragedy of PTSD.

The memorial’s opening ceremony featured keynote speaker, retired Army Maj. Gen. Richard Kaiser. According to **Philip Young** ('21), veteran and military student services coordinator, Kaiser was his commander when he was in the Army, and they both deployed to Iraq in 2011. “At the time, he was a colonel and the commander of the 20th Engineer Brigade, so he wasn’t someone that typically interacted with privates and someone that privates didn’t typically interact with either,” Young said. “However, General Kaiser was a bit different. If you passed him, he always had time to check on you and remembered who you were the next time you spoke to him. He was a leader who understood that lower enlisted troops were what made the Army the fighting force it is, and he always made his respect for the lower troops well known,” recalled Young.

Young noted the “Remembering Our Fallen” memorial was chosen because “it holds a special connection to many of the veterans at CC, including myself, who fought in the Global War on Terrorism and lost friends. (This country has) been at war for 20-plus years, and the memorial is a tribute to the most battle-hardened generations of soldiers to serve this country ever.”



28th Annual Tate Conference Presents' The Jurassic: Death, Diversity and Dinosaurs

For the 28th year, the Tate Geological Museum at Casper College hosted its Annual Tate Conference in June. This year's topic was "The Jurassic: Death, Diversity and Dinosaurs."

The conference featured speakers, two field trips, and a dinner keynote speaker, Matt Wedel, Ph.D., of Western University of Health Sciences. Wedel is co-author of "The Sauropod Dinosaurs:

Life in the Age of Giants," author of "Totally Amazing Facts About Dinosaurs," and co-producer of the Sauropod Vertebra of the Week website.

The first field trip took participants to Alcova Reservoir southwest of Casper to look at Jurassic rocks, including the marine Sundance Formation and the terrestrial Morrison Formations. According to **Dalene Hodnett**, director of museums, two stops included where pterosaur tracks were first discovered in the Windy Hill Sandstone and an in situ sauropod site where the Tate collected a pair of feet. The other field trip took participants on an exploration of the historic Como Bluff near Medicine Bow, Wyoming. The field trip featured the paleontological history of the area and visits to an ongoing dig site, Nail Quarry, a dinosaur track site, and Bone Cabin, a small building built of dinosaur bones in the 1930s as a tourist site.

The Saturday portion of the conference featured experts from throughout the country who spoke on various topics related to the Triassic Period.

Talkin' T-Birds Haul Home Medals From Final Tournament

The Casper College Talkin' T-Birds returned from the Phi Rho National Tournament with three gold, two silver, and 10 bronze medals.

Dani Schulz, a freshman from Cheyenne, Wyoming, studying secondary education at Casper College, came home with two gold medals, one in poetry interpretation and the other in dramatic interpretation.

Pearl Taylor took the gold in prose interpretation and a bronze in International Public Debate. Taylor, a sophomore from Box Elder, South Dakota, is pursuing a degree in respiratory therapy. **Nina Bivens**, also a sophomore from Box Elder, won a silver in the International Public Debate. Bivens is majoring in public relations.

Kambrie White (AA, '24) took home a bronze in both duo interpretation and speech to entertain. The sophomore was a social work major. Majoring in political science, sophomore **Sienna Gomez** (AA, '24) received a bronze in communication analysis. Freshman **Davin Ro** took home three bronze medals in duo interpretation, speech to entertain, and poetry interpretation. Ro is a computer science major. White, Gomez, and Ro are all from Cheyenne.

Sophomore **Tyler Cooper** and freshman **Jack Cochran**, both from Casper, also had success at the tournament. Cooper took silver in dramatic interpretation and bronze in extemporaneous speaking, and Cochran took bronze in informative speaking. Both are pursuing a degree in psychology.

"The team received bronze across the board," said **Doug Hall**, communication instructor and head forensics coach. Bronze medals were received in individual events, debate, and overall points — combined IE and debate — in the Wyman Division for large schools. "As a team, the competitors broke 15 entries to elimination rounds," Hall added.



The 2023-2024 Casper College Forensics team poses with the awards won both by the team and individually during the 2024 Phi Rho National Tournament. Pictured l-r, back row **Nina Bivens**, **Ella Cassity** (AS, '24), **Tyler Cooper**, **Kambrie White** (AA, '24), **Dani Schultz**, **Pearl Taylor**, and **Eva Stone**. Front row, l-r, **Jack Cochran**, **Cass Baedke**, **Sienna Gomez** (AA, '24), **Josie House**, and **Davin Ro**. (Casper College photo)

New Scholarships Aid CC Students

Each year, the Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association are privileged to receive scholarships from various donors to help Casper College students. Below is a brief look at the 14 scholarships received during the year.

12-24 Club Scholarship Endowment Established at Casper College

Thanks to HB001, a scholarship endowment gift from the 12-24 Club of \$25,000 has been doubled to \$50,000 with a state match. The endowed scholarship will provide \$500 to two Casper College students in recovery.

To qualify for the “12-24 Club Recovery Scholarship,” applicants must have a minimum 3.0 GPA, be enrolled in at least six credit hours, and be a Wyoming resident. In addition, each applicant must be in recovery, provide an essay detailing their personal experience as someone impacted by substance use disorder, describe their hardship and recovery experience, including financial need, and preferably use the services offered by the 12-24 Club.

Scholarship Created in Memory of Former NCS D Teacher

The “Geraldine (Jeri) Coryell Alloway Teacher’s Scholarship” has been established in memory of Coryell Alloway.

To qualify, applicants must have at least a 3.0 GPA, be enrolled in 10 credit hours, major in education, be a Wyoming resident, preferably from Natrona County, and be committed to teaching in the county. Financial need will be a factor if a Natrona County resident does not qualify.

Endowed Music Scholarship for Instrumentalists Established

An endowed scholarship for students majoring in instrumental music has been created by donor Ann Whitefoot.

The “Jerred Stoll Memorial Music Scholarship” will provide \$1,000 split evenly between the fall and spring semesters. In addition to majoring in instrumental music, students must have at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA, be enrolled in 12 credit hours, be a Wyoming resident, be a graduate of Natrona County High School, and have been involved in instrumental music groups at school. If no NCHS graduates apply for the scholarship, it will be awarded to a graduate from another school in Natrona County.

Tom and Susie Galles Pay It Forward

Casper residents Tom and Susie Galles have established the “Tom and Susie (Shreve) Galles Scholarship” for Casper College students majoring in business or nursing.

The \$1,000 scholarships will be split between the fall and spring semesters. Business and nursing majors must be enrolled in 12 credit hours, have a minimum 3.0 GPA, and be a Wyoming resident.

National Board for Respiratory Care Provides Funds for Scholarship

The National Board for Respiratory Care provided funds to create scholarships for respiratory therapy students.

Recipients are required to be respiratory therapy students and have a 2.0 GPA. Students could be full or part-time.

Casper's Freiberg Family Establishes Scholarship

The family of Ferne J. and the late Patrick J. Freiberg have established a scholarship for Casper College students.

The scholarship is open to any Casper College student with a 3.0 GPA and taking at least six credit hours. The recipient can be a resident or nonresident of Wyoming. The \$1,000 scholarship will be split evenly between the fall and spring semesters.

Nursing Scholarship Established

The "Virginia H. Bila Nursing Scholarship" has been established in memory of Virginia H. Bila.

The scholarship will be awarded to a nursing major with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 and enrolled in a minimum of six credit hours. The scholarship, open to Wyoming and non-Wyoming residents, will be awarded during the fall and spring semesters.

CC Welding Program receives support through Enbridge Fund

The Casper College Welding Program and Casper College students in the program will benefit from the Enbridge Funds. The funds can be used to support the welding program as well as students in need of supplies, such as boots, gloves, hood, etc., so that they can successfully complete their certificate or degree from the CC program.

Society of Professional Journalists Creates Scholarship

The Society of Professional Journalists has donated \$1,250 to create a scholarship worth \$625 for the 2024 and 2025 spring semesters.

The "Society of Professional Journalists Scholarship" is targeted at a media communications major at Casper College. Other requirements include a 3.0 GPA, enrollment in a minimum of six credit hours, and having served on the Chinook newspaper staff.

New Scholarships, cont.

Memorial Scholarship Set for Stephen F. Sasser

The “Stephen F. Sasser Memorial Scholarship” will be split between the fall and spring semesters and will be awarded to one student who is a construction major at Casper College. Other criteria for the scholarship are a GPA of 2.5, enrollment in six credit hours, a residency in Wyoming, and no prior degrees.

Zak Werner Memorial Scholarship Established

The Carl and Kathryn Werner Trust has established the “Zak Werner Memorial Scholarship.” The new scholarship will provide a Casper College student \$2,000 for a school year.

To qualify, students must be art majors with a minimum 2.0 GPA and take at least six credit hours. Wyoming residents are preferred.

Scholarship Established for Geology Majors

The “Paul Graff Geology Scholarship” will provide a second-year geology major with \$1,000, to be distributed over the fall and spring semesters.

In addition to the second-year geology major requirement, applicants must have a cumulative 2.5 GPA.

New Scholarship for CC Aviation Majors Announced

The Fly Casper Alliance created a new scholarship for Casper College aviation majors and will award \$2,500 to two aviation majors to be split between the spring and fall semesters.

Students must be aviation majors working on a certificate or degree, registered for the commercial flight class, have a minimum 2.0 GPA, and take at least six credit hours to qualify for the scholarship.

Scholarship to Honor Bernard Ambrosino Established at Casper College

Two “Bernard Ambrosino Hospitality Scholarships” for \$1,500 each will be awarded beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

To qualify for consideration, a student must be a business, hospitality, or tourism major working on a degree, with preference given to Pathways Innovation Center culinary students and current or past employees of the Silver Fox Steakhouse. In addition, each student must have a minimum 2.0 GPA, take at least six credit hours, be a Wyoming resident, and demonstrate a financial need to qualify for the scholarship.

These and other Casper College scholarships can be applied for at caspercollege.edu/financial-aid/scholarships/foundation-institution.

2023-2024 End-of-Year Honorees Named at Casper College

Seven Casper College employees were recognized with 2023-2024 year-end honors during the college's annual retirement and recognition reception.



The Casper College School of Fine Arts and Humanities Academic Assistant, ◀ **Tabitha Siemens** (AS, AS, CERT, '19), was recognized with the Robert O. Durst Classified Staff Award. The award is designed to recognize a classified staff member who demonstrates an outstanding service reputation in their job performance, knowledge, effectiveness, character, communication, cooperation, judgment, and interactions.

The Outstanding Administrator was **Mike McLemore** ▶ (AAS, '83), digital learning audio-visual coordinator. The award was designed to recognize an administrator who demonstrates an outstanding service reputation in their job performance, knowledge, effectiveness, character, communication, cooperation, judgment, and interactions.



The Judith Bailey Scully Award recipient was ◀ **Patrick Amelotte**, English instructor. Established by Casper College Alumnus **Marlan O. Scully** (AA, '59) in honor of his wife **Judith** ('59), the award recognizes faculty who demonstrate academic excellence as characterized by Judith's outstanding accomplishments as a Casper College and University of Wyoming student.



The Shanklin Award is named for longtime Casper College Emeritus psychology instructor **Garth Shanklin**. The award promotes recognition of a full-time Casper College teaching faculty who displays exceptional commitment to teaching and has made significant collegial contributions to the college. The Shanklin Faculty Leadership Excellence Award winner was **Cassady Hoff** ▶ (AS, AA, '98), occupational therapy assistant instructor.



◀ **Erik Atkins** (AA, '01), world languages instructor, was recognized with the Rosenthal Outstanding Educator Award. To be chosen for the award, the recipient must possess the qualities of an outstanding educator, document participation in professional organizations and/or activities, and take an active role in the community and/or out-of-school cultural activities.



Kendall Jacobs, ▶ mathematics instructor, was named the Phi Theta Kappa Terrific Learning Coach of the Year. The award recognizes the instructor who has made a difference in Casper College students' educational careers.



Finally, the Kim Byrd Service to Students Award went to ◀ **Jerry Hawkes**, dean of the Casper College School of Science. The Casper College Student Senate created the monthly Service to Students Award to recognize Casper College nonfaculty employees' outstanding work done to support students and help them succeed. The student senate chooses a yearly winner from that list of monthly winners.



Longtime CC Supporter, Kathy Dolan 2024's Commitment to Excellence Winner



(Casper College photo/
Cory Garvin)

Kathleen "Kathy" Dolan was selected to receive the Casper College Alumni Association's 2024 Commitment to Excellence award.

Dolan is best known for her presence at nearly every Casper College event. Not only has she been serving on the college's board of trustees since her election in November 2002, but she is a friendly face at college concerts, plays, groundbreakings, athletic games, festivals, and conferences. "Kathy's tireless dedication to all

things Casper College has been a hallmark of her service to Casper College. Her efforts to increase student success and enhance the college experience for our students have been, simply put, tremendous," noted former Casper College President **Darren Divine**.

Dolan came to Casper with her husband, John, in 1989. The two had lived in several places due to his

"Kathy's tireless dedication to all things Casper College has been a hallmark of her service to Casper College."

Darren Divine, former Casper College president

career as a petroleum engineer. Once they landed in Casper, the family never moved again. "My husband loved trout fishing, but more importantly, we loved the people of Casper and the places of Wyoming," she said.

Dolan earned her bachelor's in occupational therapy from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota, and her MPA from the University of Wyoming. Before coming to Casper, Dolan worked in North Carolina, Minnesota, and South Dakota. She and John moved to

Riverton in 1977 and she worked at the Wyoming State Training School in Lander, Wyoming, and also as an independent contractor. After a year in Riverton, John's work took them to Denver, where she worked as an OT for the public school district and a skilled nursing facility from 1978 to 1989. Dolan held leadership positions in state occupational therapy associations throughout her moves.

In the summer of 1989, the couple moved to Casper, where Dolan began her long association with the Child Development Center of Natrona County. She assessed and treated 3 to 5-year-olds with special needs, developing a myriad of skills from self-feeding to mastering school tools and self-regulation. "It was always a joy witnessing the 'ah-ha' moments when the children knew they were successful," Dolan noted.

While working full-time at the center, Dolan was a professional-level coordinator for the University of North Dakota's satellite occupational therapy program on the Casper College campus from 1994 to 1996. She was also an adjunct faculty for the UND. "I taught the class 'Occupational Therapy with the School-Aged Child.' It was an honor to teach the students, many of whom had graduated from Casper College, about a profession I loved and then interact with them as colleagues as they worked in school systems throughout Wyoming," she said.

In 2010, Dolan retired from the Child Development Center of Natrona County and, in 2017, from adjunct teaching at UND's satellite occupational therapy program on the Casper College campus. She continues to serve the college

on the board and has been the president, secretary, and treasurer at various times. For many years, she was Casper College's representative on the board of the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees. Dolan currently represents the college on the Board of Cooperative Educational Services and serves on the Casper College Foundation board.

2024 Distinguished Alumnus: Jon Schaffner

Jon Schaffner (AS, AS, '98) was selected to receive the Casper College Alumni Association's 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Casper College Psychology Instructor Emeritus **Rob Wilkes** wrote in his nomination letter: "Military command necessitates a combination of unique personal characteristics and skills. Critical to command are intelligence, sharp decision-making abilities, and firm control in the face of extreme pressures."

Wilkes continued, "A commanding officer must also hold to the forefront the well-being of those under his command. This creates the support, backing, and trust of one's crew, without which a ship does not sail. Collectively, these characteristics translate as 'leadership' and are an absolute necessity in a nuclear ballistic submarine commander.

The outstanding naval officer described in Wilkes' earnest letter is Capt. Jon Schaffner, at United States Space Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Schaffner graduated from Casper College in 1998 with two Associate of Science degrees, one in engineering and the other in physics. But Schaffner's road to Casper College and eventually the Navy might have turned out differently if he hadn't spent the summer following his junior year in high school working on a drilling rig for True Drilling. "I had just turned 18, and working that job gave me the opportunity to reflect on my life goals, and this set me on the course of my adult life," Schaffner said.

Looking over Schaffner's many accomplishments and honors received during his naval career, it's hard to imagine that he was not always a serious student in school. As he tells it, his high school academics took a backseat to "rodeoing, working, hunting, fishing, and shenanigans." He admits that he even graduated high school in the bottom half of his class.

When the Casper native began his senior year at Kelly Walsh High School, he was now focused on his new goals. "I applied myself to education and benefited from the Board of Cooperative Educational Services program. BOCES allowed me to take a full course load at Casper College and receive both high school and college credit," he shared.

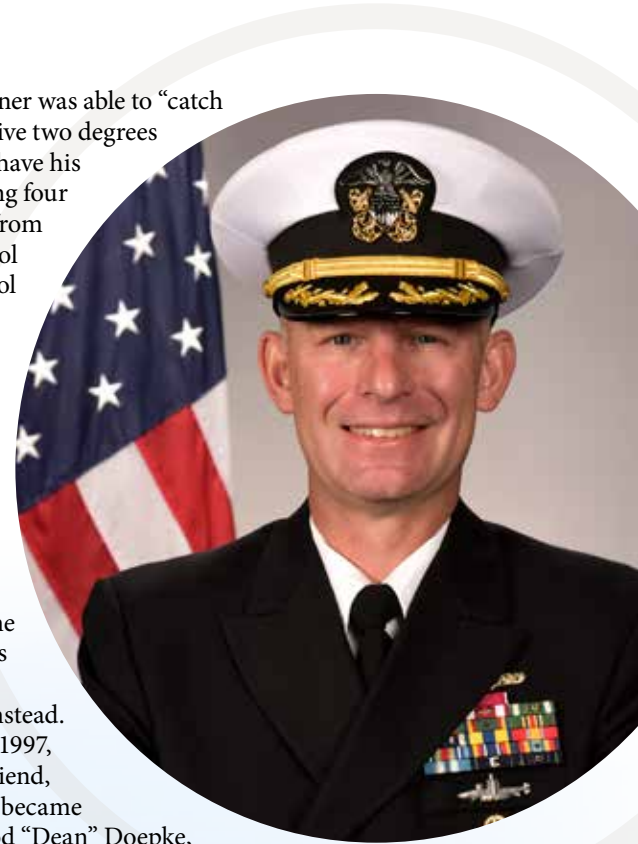
With BOCES, Schaffner was able to "catch up" on his studies, receive two degrees at Casper College, and have his bachelor's in engineering four years after graduating from Kelly Walsh High School in 1996. "My high school teachers and counselor were VERY surprised to see the disparity in my high school and CC academic performance," he said with a laugh.

While in high school, Schaffner looked into the possibility of joining one of the military branches of the United States but decided to attend CC instead. During the summer of 1997, Schaffner and his girlfriend, **Danelle Doepke** ('97), became engaged. Her father, Rod "Dean" Doepke, had been an enlisted torpedo man on a submarine for 15 years. "Dean's stories of serving on submarines were interesting to me. Unknowingly, he had planted the 'seed' of my interest in becoming a submariner," said Schaffner.

"Dean's stories of serving on submarines were interesting to me. Unknowingly, he had planted the 'seed' of my interest in becoming a submariner."

Then, as it had happened to him in the summer of 1995 working on that oil rig, Schaffner had another life-changing experience during the summer of 1997 when the "seed" germinated thanks to meeting his second cousins, Rocky Boggs and Gary Arnold. Schaffner "begrudgingly" cut his trip to Alcova short to have dinner with his parents and second cousins. Rocky had recently retired from the Navy as a naval flight officer, like Goose from the "Top Gun" movies, and his last tour was as a Navy officer recruiter.

"Rocky explained options for me to apply to become a pilot, civil engineer, or nuclear power officer on either an aircraft carrier or submarine. Armed with this knowledge, Danelle and I set up appointments with officer recruiters from all of the services in Denver, and



Captain Jon P. Schaffner, (AS, AS, '98) United States Navy, poses for his official portrait. (Courtesy photo/ U.S. Navy)

2024 Distinguished Alumnus, cont.



Jon Schaffner (AS, AS, '98), enjoys a moment with his executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Terry Turner, on their last battle station missile during Schaffner's command tour. "We are in the control room from where we drive, navigate, and employ the submarine weapon systems. Our uniform is underway coveralls, and we wear tennis shoes to minimize the noise of walking around and to maximize comfort," said Schaffner. "Terry is now a submarine commanding officer," Schaffner added. (Courtesy photo/Jon Schaffner)

we made a road trip," Schaffner said. After exploring all the options open to him, he and Danelle decided that the submarine program was his best option. Because of Navy regulations, Schaffner was not eligible to apply for the program until he had completed his sophomore year of school.

Back at Casper College, two of Schaffner's mentors, his academic adviser, **Don Dobby** (AS, '60), and Wilkes, who also happened to be a former naval aerospace experimental psychologist with medical services corps wings, helped him complete the Nuclear Power Officer Candidate Program application requirements. In the summer of 1998, Schaffner, a newly minted Casper College graduate, was in Washington D.C., where "I went through two technical interviews and a final interview with the four-star admiral in charge of the United States Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program,

and was accepted into the program," said Schaffner. It should be noted that the Navy only recruits from the top 10% of the country's engineering students for the program. Upon returning to Wyoming, Schaffner married Danelle, his high school sweetheart, in Casper on July 24, 1998.

Schaffner fondly remembers his time at Casper College and the other instructors who provided him with guidance, including **Jim Best**, **Jim Howard**, **Jon Blesi**, **Paul Marquard**, and his father, **Joe Schaffner**. While working on his two degrees, Schaffner maintained a high GPA, was an active member of the college's chapter of the national honor society Phi Theta Kappa, served as a math tutor for CC, and worked part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer at Automation Electronics fabricating electronic instrumentation and control systems.

From Casper College, Schaffner attended the University of Wyoming, earning his Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering with honors. During his two years in Laramie, he was active in the Tau Beta Pi engineering honor society, earned his Engineer in Training certification, and represented the UW College of Engineering as a senator to the student senate for the 1999-2000 school year.

After graduating from UW, Schaffner headed to Pensacola, Florida, where he reported to Officer Candidate School, earning a commission as an ensign in the United States Navy. For 12 months, he participated in intensive graduate-level training and certification in naval nuclear-powered propulsion theory, design, and operations. Schaffner was now ready for submarine duty.

"On board the Augusta, I completed a deployment ... that included launching Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles in Operation Iraqi Freedom."

In late 2001, Schaffner and Danelle moved to Groton, Connecticut, where he began his first sea tour aboard the submarine USS Augusta. "On board the Augusta, I completed a deployment to the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and North Atlantic that included launching Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles in Operation Iraqi Freedom," said Schaffner.

Schaffner was recognized as the top-performing junior officer in 2005. He was awarded four Navy



(Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)

At the recent Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association's Recognition event, **Jon Schaffner** (AS, AS, '98), is pictured in the middle wearing his summer whites. Surrounding him are former Casper College

teachers and his father. L-r, **Don Dobby, Joe Schaffner, Jon Blesi, Tom Clifford, and Rob Wilkes.** (Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)

Achievement Medals and a Navy Accommodation Medal for his leadership and excellent results of his teams during his initial three-year sea tour.

In 2005, the couple, now with son Jacob in tow, moved to Colorado, where Schaffner reported to the Navy Operational Support Center in Aurora, Colorado, for duty as the training and mobilization officer for Navy Reserve personnel in the Wyoming and Colorado area. "This was one of the most difficult assignments of my career, as I notified families in the Mountain West that their sailors had been killed," said Schaffner. Schaffner supported each family he contacted "... as I would want my family to be treated in a similar circumstance ..." resulting in many lifelong friendships.

In 2006, while in Colorado, his daughter Waverly was born, and Schaffner completed his master's in engineering management at Old Dominion University. With one year at Casper College to her credit, Danelle completed her Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice at Columbia College.

In 2007, Schaffner was promoted to lieutenant commander and served as the engineer officer on the USS Pennsylvania submarine. During this time, Schaffner was recognized as the #1 engineer officer from a competitive group of seven. His crew was recognized

for superior performance, earning a Meritorious Unit Commendation and the Battle Efficiency (E) Award.

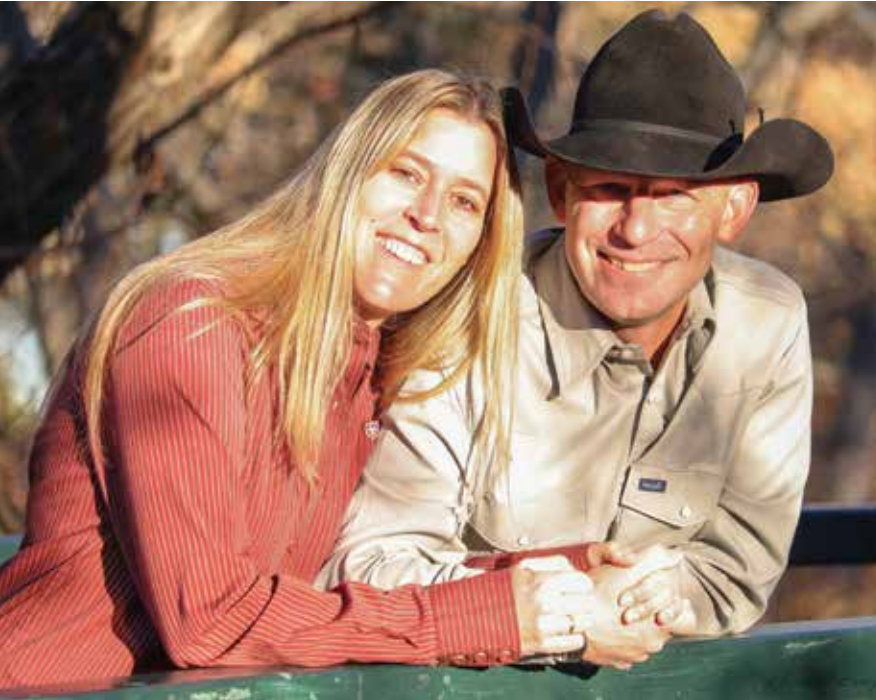
In addition to the Augusta and Pennsylvania submarines, Schaffner served as executive officer on the USS Santa Fe and commanding officer on both the USS Tennessee and the USS Maryland. The Augusta and Santa Fe are Los Angeles Class fast attack submarines, while the Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Maryland are

The Augusta and Santa Fe are Los Angeles Class fast attack submarines, while the Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Maryland are ballistic missile submarines.

ballistic missile submarines. According to Schaffner, he has over 10 years of submarine sea duty, the time assigned to a submarine, and over five years of that time spent submerged. "The balance of time was spent in port performing maintenance and training on the submarines," he said.

During his storied career, Schaffner has also been personally recognized with the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, three Meritorious Service medals, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation medals — three awards — Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal — five awards — and various other

2024 Distinguished Alumnus, cont.



Jon Schaffner (AS, AS, '98) and his wife Danelle ('97), relax for a family photo in Colorado Springs, Colorado. (Courtesy photo/Elizabeth Suazo)

Danelle Schaffner is Jon Schaffner's spouse of over 25 years. In addition to earning her bachelor's degree, "Danelle dedicated herself to raising our young children and serving in leadership positions of various submarine family and spouse organizations," said Schaffner. While Schaffner was captain of the USS Tennessee, Danelle inspired an active family readiness group, directly improving readiness and retention within the ranks. According to Schaffner, the individual families and crew of the USS Tennessee viewed themselves as a big family.

With the success of the USS Tennessee's family readiness group, Danelle was approached to serve as an adviser to other command spouses at the same submarine base as the USS Tennessee in Kings Bay, Georgia, which she was happy to do.

In 2018, with her husband again at sea on the USS Tennessee, she completed the licensing requirements and started a private investigation company. "Danelle's private investigations helped numerous parents in child custody proceedings," Schaffner proudly noted.

Danelle now works for a government contractor conducting background investigations to determine the employment suitability of persons who require access to sensitive or classified U.S. government information.

unit and personal awards. "The award I am the proudest of is the 2019 Arleigh Burke Fleet Trophy award for the Atlantic Fleet," said Schaffner. "The Tennessee Gold crew received this award for having achieved superior performance and the greatest improvement in battle efficiency, the Navy term for warfighting capability," Schaffner added.

In 2021, Schaffner was selected to serve as the executive officer to the four-star commanding general of United States Space Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "I worked directly for an Army four-star general. Space Command is a joint combatant command that reports directly to the Secretary of Defense," Schaffner said.

In the fall of 2023, Schaffner completed his tour as executive officer. He is now the security cooperation division chief within Space Command's Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate, developing strategy and plans to expand and integrate allies' and partners' space capabilities into the United States' space operations.

Schaffner has successfully climbed the ranks from ensign to captain. In just a few years, he will be eligible to become a one-star rear admiral based on his time in service. "Becoming an admiral has never been a significant aspiration, partially because I don't want to live in Washington, D.C., where a lot of those assignments are," Schaffner admitted. According to Schaffner, it is rare for someone to make it as far as he has while avoiding assignments in the District of Columbia. "Instead of pursuing another Navy promotion, Danelle and I have made the decision to retire from the Navy next year and return to Wyoming to start the next chapter of our lives," he said.

"When Danelle and I were deciding to join the Navy," Schaffner recalled, "Danelle said she would follow me wherever the Navy sent us as long as we returned back to Wyoming. Nearly 27 years later, Danelle and I look forward to returning to the great state of Wyoming," he said.

The Distinguished Alumni Award winners are nominated by their peers and chosen by the Casper College Alumni Association board of directors.

Emeritus Instructor Continues Work on Crater Fields

Casper College Geology Instructor Emeritus **Kent Sundell, Ph.D.**, was part of a team of U.S. and German geoscientists who discovered several dozen impact craters in southeastern Wyoming in exposed sedimentary layers from the Permian period, which dates back to around 280 million years ago.

“We have documented 35 crater structures of 10–70 meters in diameter with corresponding shock features, including shocked quartz. Another 70-plus possible craters have been seen on Google Earth,” noted Sundell.

Sundell and a group of current and former Casper College students extensively studied the craters and utilized both on-ground and drone photos for their research. In the summer of 2022, Bradley Carr, associate research scientist in the University of Wyoming Department of Geology and Geophysics, worked with Sundell to drill into several craters. “The craters are filled with redbeds of the overlying Permian Goose Egg Formation, which has eroded off along mountain flanks, exposing the shock-hardened quartzite and sandstone, exhuming the craters,” Sundell said.

According to Sundell, the drilling project resulted in 130 feet of core from the largest crater. “When the core was analyzed with X-ray fluorescence, it showed significant iron, nickel, chromium, palladium, osmium, tin, tungsten, copper, lead, zinc, vanadium, uranium, thorium, and gold in various samples,” he added.

“Further drone flights, sampling, and mapping of the proven and probable craters has occurred, and additional drilling will, hopefully, discover the exact location of the meteorite and test some other craters for iron meteorite chemical signatures,” said Sundell.



Kent Sundell stands on top of red dunes during a recent dinosaur dig in the Republic of Namibia in Southern Africa. (Courtesy photo/Kent Sundell)



Bradley Carr, associate research scientist, University of Wyoming, Department of Geology and Geophysics, is shown with the drilling unit brought in by the University of Wyoming to dig several core samples from some of the meteorite locations. (Courtesy photo/Kent Sundell)

UND's Satellite Occupational Therapy Program at Casper College

As a product of the program she now teaches, Nicole Harris understands the challenge: how to provide occupational therapy to an overwhelmingly rural population.



L-r, Andrea Young, OTD, Kelly Dornbier, OTD, **Breann Lamborn**, Ed.D. ('96), and Nicole Harris, Ed.D., at the University of North Dakota's 30th Anniversary. (Courtesy photo/Amanda Henderson)

"People worry about a level of saturation — that there'll be no jobs — but they're hiring for OTs in every single town in Wyoming," says the assistant professor from her office at the UND Department of Occupational Therapy's satellite campus at Casper College in Casper, Wyoming. "So, we need more students. We don't have enough OTs and need to fill those positions."

This desperate need for health providers in a state even more sparsely populated than North Dakota — which is to say, even more rural in scope — is at the heart of what led **Tom Clifford Jr.**, the son of the former University of North Dakota President, Tom Clifford Sr., and the late **LeRoy Strausner** (AA, '60), who served as Casper College's president from 1991 to 2004, to push for an OT program in Wyoming back in the early 1990s.

To **Breann Lamborn** ('96), this vision has been vital to healthcare provision in Wyoming for three decades.

"We were the first OT program in the country that crossed state lines," says Lamborn, a Casper-based associate professor of occupational therapy for UND and former Casper College student and employee. "And for many years, we were the model for the proprietary programs that opened after us. Nobody had done it before."

The Chair of UND's Department of Occupational Therapy, Sarah Nielsen, agrees, noting how UND has been identified by the Accreditation Council for

Occupational Therapy Education — ACOTE — for its integrated model.

"I did not understand the significant impact UND has had on additional location models," Nielsen says. "When I started on the ACOTE, I was placed on the policies and procedures committee specifically because of UND's role in setting the gold standard for additional locations. We are viewed as doing it right: one program with one curriculum where we collaborate every day."

History header

Last year, the UND Department of Occupational Therapy satellite program in Casper turned 30.

Putting such a milestone in context, Lamborn, who has been with the program almost from day one, recalls how Casper College's gamble on a distance degree was not guaranteed to last more than a few years.

According to a document provided by the department, Strausner was interested in starting an occupational therapy assistant program in Wyoming, which had precisely zero OT or OTA training options at the time. He took the idea to Clifford Jr., then-chair of the Life Sciences Division at Casper College, who, given his contacts up at UND, connected with then-Chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy, Sue McIntyre. Asking McIntyre if she would consult Casper College on opening an OTA program, Clifford was surprised at McIntyre's modified "yes" response.



"Tom had been advising and guiding his students to North Dakota, his alma mater," explains Lamborn. "And, being highly innovative, Sue said, 'Well, what would you think if we were just to deliver the bachelor's degree in OT to you from UND?' That's how the ball got rolling for an OT program in Wyoming."

Founded in 1954 and continuously accredited since 1956, UND's OT program officially established its "mirror" site in 1993, offering a Bachelor of



University of North Dakota students, l-r, Rylie Garner and Erin Ferebee practice range-of-motion testing. (Casper College photo/Cory Garvin)

Occupational Therapy degree in Wyoming. Today, the bachelor's degree has been upgraded to an occupational therapy doctorate, the profession's entry-level degree, and can be earned in both Casper and Grand Forks.

Despite the distance, however, the two student cohorts remain part of a single program with a single faculty.

"When the program started, the faculty in Grand Forks literally shipped teaching material to Casper, and the instructors down there taught it," added Nielsen. "Then came video connection on large televisions that were rolled into rooms, and we started teaching to Casper at a distance. Fast forward to now, and we have four full-time Casper faculty who have different expertise and teach students here while the Grand Forks faculty teach in Wyoming in an integrated way."

Lamborn quickly notes that none of the above would have been possible without the generous support from the UND and Casper College administrations, which helped oversee the partnership.

"The commitment from both the administration and the program here has been unwavering," continues Lamborn. "That's important to note, and we can't thank UND and CC enough for what the support has meant for rural health in Wyoming."

Rural health needs

Lamborn suggests that since 1993, the Casper program, housed in the least populous state in the U.S., has focused on producing therapists for rural practice.

"From the beginning, we intended the Wyoming program to fill a critical need in health care providers for rural practice — because there was no OT school even close to us at that time," she says, citing research data suggesting that rural areas have an especially difficult time recruiting and retaining health providers. "We've always maintained that emphasis on offering this program with the hope, as in North Dakota, that students would come here and then choose to stay here and practice. We've been very successful up to this point with that. The majority of OTs in Wyoming are grads from our program."

Harris serves as a case in point.

"I got my bachelor's degree at the University of Wyoming, but afterward, I really wasn't sure what I was going to do," says Harris. "Then I found out about this program. I was a single mom, and starting at the Casper OT program was wonderful. Being able to be still close to family was helpful. After graduating with my OT degree, I practiced for a couple of years in home health and then saw the position advertised to work at UND's OT program in Casper, so I applied."

And here she is, teaching the students Harris hopes will be her future colleagues.

Such potential colleagues include Casper-based OTD student **Melody (Haler) Mackenzie** ('22).



Andrea Young, OTD, and students, l-r, Hannah Guinan and Rudessa Bedonie practice muscle pressure release. (Casper College photo/Cory Garvin)

A resident of Casper since 2000, Mackenzie spent much of her time at home with her children while working a few part-time jobs around town. In 2010, she obtained a remote position with Google as a search engine evaluator. Until recently, she has been employed by Google but is now an AI trainer.

Mackenzie's long-term goal was to earn a degree where she "... contributes to mental healthcare as a research scientist and practitioner." That goal led her to enroll in classes at both Casper College and the University of Wyoming at Casper to earn a bachelor's degree. However, during the summer of 2021, she worked as an AmeriCorps Summer VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America, at a local nonprofit, the Iris Clubhouse. There, Mackenzie found herself "... providing a work-ordered day for adults with diagnosed mental illness. This experience set me on a new course as I fell in love with the people and the work," she recalled. When the summer term ended, she continued to teach arts and crafts once a week and regularly interacted with UND's OT students. "Learning about OT's impact on mental health from these students inspired me to apply to the UND doctoral OT program at Casper College," she said.

Mackenzie credits her Casper College instructors with helping her succeed in needed math and science classes. "My experiences with professors in the math department at Casper College were truly remarkable. The dedication and helpfulness of the faculty were exceptional," she noted.

Since she had not been exposed to higher-level math for years, she had to start over. "During my

first semester back, **Claudia Stewart** made relearning algebra a surprisingly delightful experience," she said. Her memories of instructor **Teresa Stricklin**, who she recalled as "... another compassionate and outstanding math teacher, ..." shared a personal story during one of Mackenzie's office hour visits to the instructor. "She offered wise advice: to give myself time to rest and relax. Although I have struggled to follow through on this, her words echo in my mind whenever I feel overwhelmed. Consequently, I have set boundaries to ensure weekly downtime, even if it means submitting assignments that aren't perfect," Mackenzie said.

Other memorable instructors include **Jake McIntyre** and **Mark Kuhlman** (AS, '89) for trigonometry and calculus; online computer science with **Charlotte Gruner**; science instructors **Mark Mehn**, **Eric Mechalke** (AA, '08), and **Jared Bowden**; psychology instructor **Kristina Pham**; and **Jane Hamman** ('79) for harp. Mackenzie has nothing but praise for these instructors, who have been kind, patient, resourceful, and understanding.

Mackenzie, who will graduate in May 2025, is participating in fieldwork in Grand Forks, North Dakota. "Through my level 2 fieldwork, I am at LaGrave on First, a permanent supportive housing site with a Housing First Approach. My next fieldwork placement will be at the Child Development Center in Casper," she said.

The ability to have students earn their undergraduate credits at Casper College makes the program a seamless one for students. And then, because the program touches Wyoming and North Dakota, students can participate in a wide variety of fieldwork locations to benefit residents, especially those who live in rural settings.

This is, says Nielsen, part of what makes the program so valuable to both states. "The beauty of this collaboration is that we have found similar issues in health delivery in both states, and we have also found that the ways each state addresses challenges vary," she notes. "One of the most fascinating things we've learned is that Wyoming has incredibly innovative frontier service delivery strategies for education and health care. We then bring that knowledge back to our own state as we impact delivery in North Dakota."

The future

Not content to stand on its laurels, UND's satellite OTD program is looking to the future.

For the next 30 years, says Lamborn, the UND/CC OTD program hopes to continue to grow, increasing



University of North Dakota Occupational Therapy Department faculty from Casper and Grand Forks, North Dakota, pose at the UND at Casper's 30th Anniversary. Back row, l-r: Karianna Iseminger, Grand Forks; Anne Haskins, Grand Forks; Rebecca McOmie, Casper; Linda Clifford, Casper; **Tom Clifford**, Casper; Kelly Dornbier, Casper; and Wanda Lauer, Grand Forks. Middle row, l-r: Allyson Stover, president, American Occupational Therapy Association; Sarah Nielsen, department chair, Grand Forks; Nicole Harris, Casper; **Breann Lamborn** ('96), Casper; and Cindy Janssen, Grand Forks. Front row, l-r: Andrea Young, Grand Forks; Janet Jedlicka, former department chair, Grand Forks; and **Kathy Dolan**, Casper. (Courtesy photo/Amanda Henderson)

the number of grads hired for OT positions across Wyoming. Echoing Harris's quip that "we definitely still need more students," the class size currently is 18 students admitted each year; Lamborn suggests that she also hopes to bring more off-campus fieldwork training sites into the system for her students.

"When our doctoral students complete their experiential placements, they're designing some incredible programs for their capstone projects in areas where OT isn't yet in place but needs to be," she says. "I have a student who created a mental health awareness and suicide prevention program for the Natrona County Suicide Task Force targeted to adolescents."

Because OT is a "perfect fit" for such work, says Lamborn, "Possible locations for program implementation include social service agencies and youth community programs. We try to encourage agencies and our students to understand that while there are traditional placements for OT fieldwork experiences, OT can go anywhere."

Establishing and growing such partnerships with communities is particularly important for rural health providers since such partnerships help expand and stabilize not only state educational programs but also the same rural health programs that are short on staff even now.

All of which, says Lamborn, is a way of restating that relationships with alums — who often end up working in those community agencies — matter.

"We have benefited so much from alumni support, especially in Wyoming, because a significant number of our supervisors at clinical sites are graduates of our program, either here or in Grand Forks," she concludes. "Our alumni continue to give back to us through their willingness to be clinical supervisors for students. They see it as their responsibility to train the next generation of grads — and we can't thank them enough."



Kathy Dolan, left, former Casper adjunct OT faculty member and professional program coordinator, is shown with **Melody McKenzie** ('22) and **Janet Jedlicka**, Ph.D., former University of North Dakota OT department chair. (Courtesy photo/Amanda Henderson)

Meet Your 2023-2024 Alumni Board

We thought our alums would like to learn a bit more about their fellow alums who currently serve on the Casper College Alumni board. We asked each one two questions: How has your degree impacted your life, and what is your favorite memory? Their answers appear below. Please note, our other board members were listed in the last Footprints.



Virginia 'Virg' Bodyfelt (AA, '01)

My time at Casper College ignited my love for learning. My degree in international studies has taken me all over, allowing me to work abroad in Germany, Montenegro, and Serbia. It laid the foundation for a career in policy and regulation.

I fondly remember all my courses with **Erich Frankland** and all my classmates who have done great things.



Preston Blakely (AA, '04)

My degree from Casper College showed me that I could be successful. Casper College provided me with the tools to work with youth in various contexts and fostered my passion for my subject area, enabling me to thrive. I have held various leadership positions in youth-focused organizations and am thankful for Casper College. My best memories of Casper College are

the opportunities I was afforded. I attended service trips worldwide with Campus Ventures, learned Spanish around a dinner table with classmates and community members, and met a Holocaust survivor. All of these memories stay with me today, and I am thankful.



Janette 'Jan' Cundy ('79)

Casper College created an atmosphere of learning and community that impacts and educates all students.

One of my favorite memories of Casper College is living on the second floor of Wheeler Terrace, a married housing complex. Several of us young couples would get together often and play cards and games or just spend time together. Right before Christmas break in 1979, we woke up to darkness and couldn't figure out what was going on, only to discover that there had been a terrible storm that blew dirt and snow in between our windows and screens, leaving all of the residents in total darkness. We all spent hours cleaning the windows and

screens to be able to see out. I always walked to classes, and that morning was like being sandblasted.



Nancy Gerlock

(AA, AS, '95, AS, '97)

Returning to CC as a nontraditional student in the 1990s was both exciting and a challenge! My children were in elementary, middle, and high school at the time, and our financial status was limited in scope. However, I just knew

finishing my two-year college degree was imperative, and I was looking forward to the tasks ahead if only certain obstacles could be resolved. Fortunately, I was encouraged in this endeavor by my family, friends, and close associates, which propelled my faith that college details would work out even though I had no answers then for some of the issues. Thus, my journey began with the goal of obtaining a two-year CC degree. For 26 years now, I have been engaged with elementary students in my hometown of Casper, Wyoming, and I must say with appreciation that the years have been productive and joyful!

My favorite memory was being the first recipient of the Sue Jorgensen Award for Excellence in Teaching which was presented at Casper College. This award later helped launch my career with the Natrona County School District.



Deyonne Jackson (AS, '98)

My associate degree in early childhood education from Casper College allowed me to transfer quickly to the University of Wyoming at Casper for my bachelor's in elementary education degree. The skills and knowledge I gained with my Casper

College degree created a foundation to educate all levels of students, including adults, as an adjunct instructor at Casper College. I vividly remember my

student-teaching experience at the Inga Thorson Early Childhood Learning Center on campus. There, I learned how much I adore working with young children and found my creativity and spirit as an early childhood educator.



Kerri Mahlum (AS, '90)
My degree in elementary education from Casper College provided the foundation for my entire career. I often tell people that I graduated from a different college with my bachelor's degree, but I actually learned how to be a teacher during my time at Casper College. **Charlene Davis** and **Rob Wilkes** helped

me get off to a great start as a kindergarten teacher, which I built upon to eventually become an education instructor back at my alma mater, Casper College.

My favorite memory was the creative parking I used to do in my VW Bug. If I was late for class, I just slipped into any open spot, whether it was a legitimate space or not. I managed not to earn any tickets, although I'm sure I deserved a few.



Amanda (Sewell) Montgomery (AA, '16) Earning my degree from Casper College pushed me both personally and professionally. I was one of the few in my family to earn a college degree. I enjoyed the many instructors who each had their unique way of teaching their subjects. I have always had a good experience at Casper College.



Mike Stepp (AAS, '80)
Beyond the obvious management and other business skills, CC gave me the skills to develop a lifelong appreciation for reading and learning. The ability to communicate effectively with others in the business community was more important than any facts acquired.

My favorite memory was my dad bringing me to basketball games at CC; what better memory could there be than spending time with my dad at the games, an activity he really loved?

Hannah Wille (AS, '13)

My degree has impacted my life in every aspect! The education I received from Casper College opened so many doors for my future. My elementary education degree with an emphasis on early childhood education gave me the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions in my position. The degree was rigorous and well-rounded. I learned about how to teach and the academic content. I loved my time at Casper College!



The education department prepares pre-service teachers for the classroom from the very beginning of the program. I currently teach kindergarten in Salt Lake City, Utah. In June 2023, I received a master's degree in English language learning and teaching from Capella University. All of this is possible because of my excellent education at Casper College.

There are so many wonderful memories of my time at Casper College! Growing up across the street from the library, I spent my whole life dreaming of when I would be enrolled as a student. I always knew I wanted to attend Casper College. My favorite memory was walking into Strausner Student Center for the first time as a student and knowing that I did it! I was a Casper College student. I also loved going to Belize with **Thom DeVoogd**. I still integrate the knowledge and skills I learned from that experience, and the time I spent with **Kerri Mahlum**. She was my first and second-grade teacher, so it was extra special to have her as my college professor. Thank you!

Ben Winckler ('04)

The knowledge I gained at Casper College has definitely impacted how I run my business today!

My favorite memory was spending time with friends and making new friends, learning how to climb through the climbing program, and making lifelong friendships there! Also, I loved ceramics class. The dance parties were always something to look forward to!



Many Collections, More Items: The Western History Center, a Continuing Work in Progress

Amid the global upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, Casper College's Research Librarian and Western History Center Archivist, **Hanz Olson** (AA, '09), checked a job opening at his alma mater, Casper College.

Beginnings

Olson graduated from Natrona County High School and then enrolled at Casper College, where his mom, **Sarah Schneider**, works as a workforce specialist. Graduating with his associate degree in English, he then headed down to the University of Wyoming, where he earned his bachelor's in English.

Returning to Casper, Olson worked for four and a half years at US Welding and Supply, transporting rods, wires, etc., around Wyoming. In 2015, he decided to move to Wisconsin. To make ends meet there, he worked several jobs: occasional night auditing in a hotel, working the night shift in a shipping department, and as a barista on the weekends in a café.

It was during this challenging period that he learned about the Master of Arts degree in library and

information studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Olson knew this was the degree for him. After meeting the residency requirements for Wisconsin, he applied to the program. He began classes in the fall of 2017 in a program that would teach him the skills to, unbeknownst to him, bring him back to his hometown to work at Casper College.

To go to school and succeed, Olson needed to quit his shipping department job and spend more time in the café. During his first semester at UWM, Olson took "Introduction to Archives." That was followed by "Academic Librarianship" and "Reference Librarian." He took classes in both the archive and academic tracks. His practicums included teaching and learning in libraries and working on the digital assets at the law library. "Those were some of my best experiences. I loved the whole program," he said.

Following his graduation, he landed his first full-time job at the T.W. Phillips Memorial Library on the campus of Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia. He noted that he is doing the same thing at the Goodstein Foundation Library as he was doing at Phillips.

The Job

Olson was asked to interview for the Casper College librarian job over Zoom. He passed. Next, he flew in for an in-person interview with the hiring committee and a meeting with Library Director **Katrina Brown** toward the end of the spring semester. "It was during my on-campus interview that I learned the library was looking for an archivist too, and asked if I would be open to combining the roles as that was what I was doing in West Virginia," Olson recalled. He said "yes," and the revised librarian job was his. Olson was heading back to Casper! He started his new job on July 1, 2021.

When Olson arrived, he found that the Western History Center had not been run with archival principles and standards. "When you implement archival principles and standards everyone benefits, and you can crosswalk and update things as the field advances. When you do not, your only option is to start from scratch, using what information you have, but keeping in mind that a lot may not have been recorded and saved along the way. We basically started from scratch; some filing systems were in place, but these had to be given a finer approach," Olson said.

"For the past three years, we have been working on addressing the latter situation being the status quo, both physically and digitally, for a long time," he said.



Hannah Baldwin (AS, '24), a returning University of Wyoming at Casper student, is piecing together a timeline of directors and events for the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra Records project currently being processed and made into a publicly accessible digital collection. (Casper College photo/Hanz Olson)



Hanz Olson (AA, '09), stands at the end of a long row of boxes of Western History Center materials that are now processed and researchable collections that, ... "actually have finding aids," said Olson. "Finding aids are something relatively new for the repository to have available for folks to access. They also hold the key to determining and projecting the work of collection management and stewardship, whether of physical materials or digital," he noted. (Casper College photo/Lisa S. Pearce Icenogle)

Many Collections, cont.

According to Olson, this situation created a crisis of sorts from a collections management perspective. The “precarious situation” was one that Olson had to adjust to working in. Still, he also realized that it was opening the door for what he refers to as “... authentic and exciting projects, and opportunities to build new relationships. Eventually, too, you have a repository that can facilitate 21st-century information and archival research processes,” he added.



One of many rows of architectural drawings in the Western History Center waiting to be cataloged. (Casper College photo/Lisa S. Pearce/lenogle)

In the time that Olson has been here, he has put into place or created a policy framework for adequate archival and special collections management, a learning program with an associated model for its implementation drawing on constructivist or question/problem-posing principles to guide learning; several service-learning projects through the college’s grants office and its partnership with ServeWyoming; a way to teach students how to do research for projects and internships, and created an atmosphere where students like to work and participate in a variety of programs and events. In addition, the Western History Center became a more meaningful part of the Goodstein Foundation Library, allowing “... us to capitalize on a curatorial model with museum and gallery studies majors,” he said.

One of the first steps before digitizing could begin was to get the various photo collections cataloged and in order. The Casper Star-Tribune and Casper College photo collections were so extensive that Olson and his student workers had to think about how the collections would be managed and named. “Casper College

student **Hannah Baldwin** (AS, ’24) worked on the Chuck Morrison and CC collections, and did a great job organizing them,” Olson said.

Baldwin is just one of many students who work under Olson. Within a few short years, he accomplished his goal of creating an atmosphere where students like to work. When he started, the WHC had two students for the fall 2021 semester and three that spring. In Fall 2022, that number “exploded,” and at the end of the spring 2024 semester, Olson had 21 student staff members and one intern. “We hire students from a lot of different majors.”

Settling In

When he first arrived, Olson found everything scattered about with little to no archival processing. Thousands of architectural drawings, some of which are still rolled up in the garbage pails he found them in, are one of the current hurdles.”

Olson ran into a situation where little was moved from the receiving dock order. These needed to not only be documented but made into presentable and researchable collections of materials. This seemed to be the prevailing law of the land for a long time. “Upgrading from filing cabinets to good box shelves helped us transition out of this,” Olson recalled.

For instance, the repository now has a research guide designed to connect students to primary sources on Wyoming history and help them build archival research skills. “As a collecting repository, we consider the collecting missions of other repositories across the state when working with donors to find a home for what they want to see preserved.”

“The scope of the WHC is the history of Casper College, Casper, and Natrona County,” said Olson. “Our priority is to balance helping the community archive its history and the history of its families with the local history that mirrors the educational track of the college.” When the WHC does receive a donation that is more about the history of Wyoming, Olson reaches out to other groups around the state.

Olson has also gotten a handle on the maps, old newspapers, and books housed in the WHC’s storage rooms. While there is still much to be done, the progress made is palpable.

The Future

Now entering his fourth year at the library and WHC, Olson has many plans in the works. “There are tons



Hanz Olson (AA, '09), examines a document from one of many drawers that continue down a long row in the Western History Center. Olson believes the rows contain map cases from Amoco Refinery: "Holding our true mind over matter challenge on top and in the drawers are architectural drawings, maps, posters, and bits and pieces of things that had been thrown into the drawers over the years," said Olson. (Casper College photo/Lisa S. Pearce Icenogle)

of things happening at the library and the WHC all the time," he said excitedly. We have the potential to collaborate with various entities in town. Who knows what partnerships and collaborations we will have in the future," he said.

Olson also wants to see the community become involved in the WHC. "I would love to have people from the community come up and volunteer here and keep that tradition alive."

When he first started, Olson spent most of his time in the WHC. Now, he spends half of his time in the library and half of his time in the WHC. "I am now able to work on teaching and learning in the library and act as a liaison to the School of Fine Arts and Humanities. This past year, the students and I worked on three exhibits that were part of the Humanities Festival. One showed at the Natrona County Library, and the other two were on display in the Goodstein," he said.

According to Olson, Brown proposed creating a permanent collection of student art in the library starting this year, so two pieces of art from the 2024 juried spring student art show were purchased. The plan is to buy artwork and photographs from art students each year. "Our hope is that the library will be able

to purchase a piece of student artwork, and the Western History Center will purchase a student photograph. Students will then archive and curate books, magazines, and databases to facilitate projects like the art collection, which will become an engaging part of the library," said Olson.

Olson believes it will become necessary for the library and the WHC to record and reflect on how what the two organizations are doing to find opportunities for students

to get involved in projects. "When those projects align with the college's dual college and community missions, we see some exciting things happen," Olson said.

Two interns have already been hired from Casper College's Museum and Gallery Studies program for the fall 2024 semester. Each intern will be able to work on either a soft launch for a collaboration of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums' exhibits on the themes of chaos, pattern, and order or on something that aligns with their specific interests and learning style. "Our learning program has a learning styles survey that will help us match interns with projects, mapping areas of the museum field using books in the library in order to pose questions and solve problems," Olson noted. In this way, interns will assemble an electronic portfolio with photos and text at the end of the semester.

The digital preservation processes will also guide the WCH in training students in digital preservation. "We are hoping to purchase another scan system this fall so we can keep up with all of the digitizing we would like to do. We are undertaking a digital archiving project with the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra, who hired **Hannah Baldwin** (AS, '24) a recent Casper College graduate and returning University of Wyoming at Casper student, who has a lot of practice implementing the digital preservation standard we will need to use here," said Olson.

"In about three years, we've come a long way, but there's still more to do," Olson said with a grin.



Portugal and the vibrant cities of Spain

The breathtaking views of the coastal towns of Portugal and the vibrant cities of Spain were spellbinding — the alumni office, along with 41 travelers, ventured to these two historical, picturesque countries. We cultivated many friendships, walked miles, enjoyed local favorite foods, and treasured many lasting memories.

Above: The group at the Plaza de España in Maria Luisa Park. Back row, l-r: Jim Clark, Jim Sullivan, Becky Bulfer, Sue Schilling, Carlla Smith, Anne and Jim Thorpen, Renee Smith, Billy and Mary England, Allen Smith, Leslie Vandeventer, John Christensen, Jon Ewing, Rhonda Dilts, Robert Russell, Laurie Fletcher, Mary and Wayne Reynolds. Second row, l-r: **Ann Dalton**, Jodie Blaeser, Mary Houck, Kris and Michael Gaither, Leanne Woodfill, **Janet de Vries**, Joyce Jones, Bonnie Bitner, Nancy Kidd, Janet Stephens, Kathy Christensen, Joyce Ewring, and Mary Alice Bruce. Front row, l-r: **Denise Bressler** ('84), and **Eric Atkins** (AA, '01), Not pictured: Connie Sullivan, Gene Smith, TJ Jones, Joe and Tonya Yelton, and Laurie Wilson. (Photo courtesy/ Gene Smith)

Exterior of the Basilica. Interior photo looking up at the ceiling, and interior photo of the brilliant lighting. The Sagrada Familia is the largest unfinished Catholic church in the world. The construction began on March 19, 1882, and the Basilica is planned to be finished in 2026. (Casper College photos/Eric Atkins)





A dancer from our Flamenco show, Seville, Spain.
(Courtesy photo/Tonya Yelton)



Belem Tower, Lisbon Portugal (Courtesy photo/ Michael Gaither)



Below: The small medieval walled village is filled with cobbled streets and whitewashed houses, Obidos, Portugal.
(Courtesy photo/Michael Gaither)

Left: Melt in your mouth croissants, Evora, Portugal. (Courtesy photo/Kris Gaither)

Right: The vibrant flowers at Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain. (Courtesy photo/Janet de Vries)



Will Robinson Continues His Work on the Asian Giant Honeybees

Biologist and Asian giant honeybee (*Apis dorsata*) expert **Willard S. Robinson, Ph.D.**, and his wife, Maria Katherman, were recently involved in a project in Thailand under the auspices of the World Wildlife Fund, known internationally as the Worldwide Fund for Nature International.

The two worked on an interpretive sign project where they managed the construction and placement of interpretive nature signs at a unique migratory stopover site for giant honeybees. In information Robinson provided, he wrote: "The site is unique in that no other stopover site is known where numerous migrating,

in Thailand, we agreed that a sensible beginning point was to erect sturdy interpretive signs at the center of the stopover site.

"Completed in November 2023, the interpretive signs highlight the importance of the site for all four *Apis* species and describe the value of bees as pollinators. Hopefully, the signs will be used for years to educate local people, passersby, school children, and other students about the benefits of pollinators, especially the amazing migrating giant bees. The signs and accompanying brochures emphasize the conservation of giant honeybees, interesting behaviors of both the giant bees and Indian hive bees (*Apis cerana*), and the need to protect other honeybees and pollinators."

Both Robinson and Katherman worked on the fall project. "Maria was really instrumental in getting the signs designed and constructed, as well as in designing much of the accompanying brochure," said Robinson. The brochure was created to accompany the interpretive signs along one of the bees' migratory stopover sites.

Robinson, who taught biology and entomology classes at Casper College from 1991-2020, is no stranger to the giant honeybee. It was in 2009, while on sabbatical, that Robinson first discovered the bees and began to study their migration habits and stopover sites. The stopover site ... "is a mango orchard on the grounds of an agricultural research station on the Pai River in northwestern Thailand," said Robinson. The couple returned in 2010 and 2016, during which Robinson did more research in conjunction with Mae Hong Son Community College, thanks to a cooperative agreement established by then-President **Walter H. Nolte** with Casper College and MHSCC. "That's what got us there originally, with Maria volunteer teaching at the college," recalled Robinson.

When Robinson and Katherman first traveled to Thailand, Robinson discovered large clumps of bees in the mango orchard. He came to refer to the clumps as "bivouacs." The bivouacs were comprised of giant honeybees resting during their yearly migration. "It's absolutely incredible to have an entire group of 50,000 bees fly right over your head. The adrenaline rush is like nothing I've ever experienced. It is soul-stirring," he said in the April issue of the Murie Audubon's Plains and Peaks newsletter. According to Robinson, an entire hive of bees will migrate across Thailand on a set yearly route timed to the availability of food sources.



Will Robinson's wife, Maria Katherman, poses in front of the English version of a new two-way interpretive sign. The other side of the sign is in Thai. The couple returned to Thailand under the auspices of the World Wildlife Fund, known internationally as the Worldwide Fund for Nature International. "It was quite a job shepherding the signs project, from authorship and photography to design, production and construction," said Robinson. (Courtesy photo/Will Robinson)

bivouacking swarms congregate simultaneously, year after year. In addition to giant honeybees, three other honeybee species (genus *Apis*) native to Thailand also commonly utilize the same location for nesting, feeding, and defense against predators.

"After the discovery that the stopover site was used annually, it became clear to us that it was worthy of recognition and protection by local people. We hoped to establish conservation measures that would protect the site well into the future. Consulting with WWF officials



A foraging giant honey bee enjoys the nectar from a sunflower. (Courtesy photo/Will Robinson)

Q: While looking at one of your photos of the bees, I noticed that they seem very calm. Either those bees are naturally calm, they know you and don't care you are there, or you smoked them to calm them down! What's the story?

A: The giant honeybees, as I study them, are actually relatively gentle, though I do my best not to stir them up. They are in the midst of migration, not on wax combs with honey and larvae that they would be protective of. So they are a bit slow to anger, and it's pretty safe to cozy up with them. Gentle as kittens!

Q: Are these bees about the size of those "murder" hornets, and do they pose a problem to the giant honeybee?

A: They are not nearly as big as the murder hornets you hear about. They're less than an inch long, though they sure look big to someone used to honeybees here in the U.S. Murder hornets are twice that size. The orange-banded hornet in one of the photos on the WWF website is more comparable in size to the murder hornet, but even it is quite a bit smaller.

Q: Do people in Thailand get honey and related products from these bees like we do with our honeybees in the U.S.?

A: Yes, the Thais harvest honey and beeswax from the giant bees. It takes specialists performing a feat of daring, climbing tall trees or cliffs and hacking away with a machete at the entire colony on its big, single comb. Unfortunately that form of harvest is tough on the bees, often killing them entirely or at least driving them away with the loss of all that energy invested in the mature colony. Hive products aside, the most critical thing these bees, and all bees, do is pollinate crops and wild plants.

Q: How the honey is harvested from Thai honey hunters sounds brutal. Do any Thais keep bee hives like we do here in the United States?

A: Yes that method of honey harvest from the giant bees is brutal. Thais also keep small bees, such as Indian hive bees, in hives and harvest some honey from them. In parts of the country, our "European" honeybees have been introduced and are kept in hives. They produce a good quantity of honey but are susceptible to hornet predation and blood-sucking mites. So it's a challenge to keep them.

For those interested in discovering the content of the interpretive signs, including the text and photos taken by Robinson, go to wwf.or.th/en/scp/campaign/apia.



Will Robinson is shown observing a "nice swarm of giant honey bees in a pomelo tree." (Courtesy photo/Maria Katherman)

New Photography Lab Prepares Students for 21st-Century Work

Film is making a comeback among the younger generation as well as some well-known professional photographers. To this end, Casper College has included incredible facilities to accommodate this type of photography, but it takes a lot of space and equipment.

The Frank D. Neville Photography Suite, so generously sponsored by my partners, Williams, Porter, Day, and Neville, P.C., is one of the most advanced and state-of-the-art digital and film photography studios in the nation. Casper College, already surprisingly high in the national ratings of junior colleges, will advance to an even higher level once this photography suite is factored into the ratings formula. The suite is located in the newest building on campus, the Dick and Marialyce Tobin Visual Arts Center.



Along the back and sides of the darkroom are two banks of enlargers.



A long "sink" in the middle of the room that **Shawn Bush**, photography instructor, explained, this is where the developing chemicals are mixed and placed in the trough to develop the actual photographs. The chemicals are quite toxic, and this trough is the most advanced one available. Note the "slots" near the top along each side of the trough. These slots suck out the toxic vapors created by the chemicals, thereby protecting the students. The size of the table allows many students to develop photographs at the same time.



One of three individual film loading darkrooms dedicated to loading film to canisters for developing.



One of two individual darkrooms used to expose photographic paper in order to create black and white photographs.

Now for the digital side of photography. Instead of darkrooms, chemicals, enlargers, etc., digital photography just requires a disk from the camera and a good computer and monitor. Casper College provides those in spades.



Above is the state-of-the-art 44-inch printer that is able to print a photograph 44 inches wide and as long as one wants since the photo paper is on a roll.



Above is a photograph that some of the students recently printed. **Shawn Bush**, photography instructor, is standing next to it and gives some perspective. Interestingly, he says that this photograph contains about 1/2 of a gigabyte of data and would normally cost approximately \$500 for anyone to print out in the open market. The students are able to print for free, which is an incredible learning experience that would not be available in other photography departments.



These are state-of-the-art Mac Studio computers with Eizo computer monitors, which represent 99.9% of the color space used for digital design and output. Both are industry standards for digital editing and print production. Below is a small room attached for smaller and quicker printing.



Additional photo printers are available to handle smaller digital print jobs.

Casper Alum Finds Sweet Success with Dough and Buttercream

Yummy creations come from the Frosted Tops bakery owned by **Kirstin (Nash) Bott** ('01). The mother of two began her cake-baking and decorating business in her kitchen in Casper.

Before that, however, there was school and working at Samuels Jewelers in Casper. While she was taking a metal arts class from former Casper College art instructor **Linda Ryan** while working at Samuels, she filled out an application to work at Riddles' Jewelry. During her interview for the Riddle's job, Troy, the jewelry store manager, asked Bott if she would like to learn to be a goldsmith. She said yes, and after attending a goldsmith school in Rapid City, South Dakota, Bott spent more years working in the jewelry business.

While she was working at a Kay Jewelers store in a mall in Greeley, Colorado, she actually met her future father-in-law before she met her husband, Jeremy. While they were in conversation, Bott jokingly said, "I need a husband." Jeremy's dad replied, "Well, I have a son who needs a girlfriend." Sweet, here's my business card," she said. Four months later, the two were married. For Bott, it was love at first sight, and Jeremy's beautiful eyes were an added bonus. "Oh my gosh, his eyes are like ...," her voice trailing off in dreamy contemplation.

After their first child was born, she stopped working at the jewelry store and became a stay-at-home mom. "I didn't want to put my kid in day care," she recalled.

So, since Jeremy was an electrician and could find work almost anywhere, the two decided to head to Casper so Bott could be closer to her family and help out her sister, **Heather (Nash) Fransted** (AA, '04). "Heather was also pregnant at the time, so our babies were only four months apart. So, besides my daughter, I watched her son since she was working full time."

With time, there were two more babies between them, and Bott decided she missed the jewelry business and the interactions with co-workers and customers. Her brother, **Paul Nash** (AA, '06), told Bott about an opening for a goldsmith at Okes Jewelers.

All the while, Bott had been making cakes for her children. "My mom made cakes for my sister, me, and my brother when we were kids, and I wanted to keep up that tradition and pass it on to my children," she said. Back then, no online tutorials or Pinterest were available to help Bott learn how to make cakes and decorate them with frosting, royal icing, and fondant. So, she turned to cake magazines and tried her hand at the various recipes and ideas she found. "Oh, I would say to myself, 'I can try to make that,' and then my attempts, in my mind, were just horrible!" But Bott, a perfectionist, persevered and continued to make cakes and cupcakes for her family. With time, Bott soon was receiving calls from friends and then strangers. "I hear you make cakes,' they would say, and 'maybe you could help me,' so there I was baking cakes for others and charging hardly anything," said Bott. Soon, cake baking became a side business for her.

She had applied for the goldsmith position at Okes Jewelers and was hired. "I would work for **Mark Okes** (AB, '74) for four or five days, and I thought that if I could make and decorate two cakes a week, then I could make my side business work." But Bott ended up making more than just two cakes on the weekend. The final tipping point came when her husband and family could no longer use the kitchen. "The refrigerator was full of nothing but cakes and no food for the family, so we were eating out a lot," Bott explained.

Bott had always wanted to own her own business, and with a kitchen full of cakes, she decided the time was right. She found out that a space was available in the Parkway Plaza. She talked to the owner, Pat Sweeney, and discovered the rent was affordable. Plus, initially, she shared the space with a few different food-related businesses to help keep the rent low. Eventually, they



Summertime cupcakes. A variety of cupcake flavors With hand crafted fondant toppers. (Courtesy photo/Frosted Tops)

moved on, leaving Bott with the entire space. Then the Parkway changed hands, and Bott found herself in a space with no heat in the winter or air conditioning in the summer. It was time to move.

The space where Frosted Tops now resides is on David Street in downtown Casper, right across from the David Street Station. “We were downtown at one of the farmers’ markets and noticed that construction was going on in this building and that spaces were for lease. Jeremy knew some of the construction workers, so he went over to check it out,” said Bott. Jeremy thought the space could work, and Bott agreed after looking it over. The building had been totally gutted and renovated. “There were no walls, nothing. The bathrooms were still intact, and that was it,” Bott recalled.

With her design acumen, Bott designed the space; her husband provided the electrical, including overhead chandeliers using the large whisks once used in her heavy-duty mixers, and her father helped as well. They also hired JNL Designs and Construction to do some of the interior work. Frosted Tops officially opened in their new location on Jan. 15, 2019. With five years at the Parkway, Bott has been in a business location for nearly 11 years.

In that time, the business continued to grow. Bott now has eight employees, and there are times when there are so many orders that all eight are needed to help out, making the kitchen area a bit tight. Recently, Bott and her crew worked on the many orders for graduations, and with the summer wedding season, they will be kept busy. “It’s insane, but we love it,” she said.

Bott’s cakes and cupcakes are delicious and come in a wide variety of flavors. Besides cakes, visitors to Frosted Tops will find macrons, cookies, cinnamon rolls, brownies, muffins, and even Cascade Glacier ice cream. Her cakes range in size from 6 inches to 14 inches and can also be made in various designs and edible decorations. Bott is most proud of a gumball machine cake that included a working gumball dispenser she made for one of her daughter’s birthdays. Other creations include whimsical cakes featuring Alice in Wonderland, The Mario Brothers, and more.



Two tier cake with vanilla buttercream frosting, chocolate bark and fresh flowers. (Courtesy photo/Frosted Tops)

But the biggest thing you will notice about Bott is that she and her crew just love people. “We love people. And we want to make their day a little bit sweeter. A cake can be just a cake, right? But it can also be the centerpiece of your wedding or the grand showstopper,” said Bott. “We want to cater to all, but also, we’re not everybody’s cake decorator. That’s why we offer cupcakes and cookies and different things. I just feel really privileged when people do choose to spend their money here. I feel really blessed.”



Holiday High Tea Raises Money for CC Student Senate Food Pantry



Ann Dalton, associate director of development and alumni engagement, offers Barbara Crews tea. (Casper College photo/ Zach Nagy)

The Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association held its first “Holiday High Tea” to support the Casper College Student Senate Food Pantry.

Nearly 50 people attended the event, raising \$2,425 for the pantry.

Denise Bressler ('84), executive director of the Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association, came up with the idea of the High Tea fundraiser, with the funds going to the pantry. Checking with the rest of the foundation and alumni

staff, she found that ... “the office wholeheartedly agreed.” With the Holiday High Tea held in December, close to the holidays, Bressler felt that the extra funds could help ... “students who need extra support during this time of year.”

Feedback from high tea participants was very positive, so plans are already underway to do another Holiday High Tea this coming December 5, 2024, as well as a summer luau event that was held in July. “We had donors, staff, retirees, OLLI members, and people who didn’t have a connection to the college. It was great to see such a diverse group of people together on campus,” noted Bressler.

Holiday High Tea attendees were treated to nine different kinds of Harney & Sons tea, steamed milk, lemon slices, sugar cubes, and honey from Sunshine Honey to put in the tea. According to Bressler, the honey was donated by James Colva, owner of Sunshine Honey. “We also had scones and biscuits with clotted cream, little cheesecakes, cucumber, tuna fish and egg salad sandwiches, and little brownies. Each person received a Hammond’s candy cane to take home, and one lucky person won a reindeer made of sticks with a pot of succulents,” Bressler said. **Zachary Vreeman**, DMA, brought the Casper College Collegiate Chorale to the event to sing Christmas Carols at each table.



*L-r: Casper College Interim President **Brandon Kosine**, former Casper College President **Darren Divine**, and Dean of Students **Corey Peacock** are seen enjoying the festivities at the Holiday High Tea. (Casper College photo/ Zach Nagy)*



Guests enjoy Christmas carols performed by members of the Casper College Collegiate Choral under the direction of Zach Vreeman, far right. (Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)

The pantry opened in the fall of 2020. “The food pantry started as an initiative led by the CC Student Senate. The Senate was eager to address food insecurity as an issue among students,” said **Devin Fulton**, student life coordinator.

The food pantry is open to any student attending Casper College and its partner institutions, the University of Wyoming at Casper and the University of North Dakota OT Program at Casper. Students from the Castellow Adult Learning Center at Casper College can also use the pantry.

According to Fulton, popular food items with the students who use the pantry are frozen dinners, Hot Pockets, ramen noodles, canned tuna or chicken, and pasta sauce and noodles. Popular hygiene items include toilet paper, paper towels, shampoo and conditioner, body wash, and razors. The pantry is open to students living both on and off campus.

As an indicator of how used the pantry is, from August to November 2023, the pantry saw over 500 visits, with 185 unique students. More women, 61%, than men, 39%, used the pantry.



Each table at the Holiday High Tea was loaded with various teas, sandwiches, and tasty treats. (Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)

Student Senate



The servers for the Holiday High Tea pose for a photo during a break in their hosting duties. L-r: **Kari Hawthorne**, chief financial officer, Casper College Foundation; **Ann Dalton**, associate director of development and alumni engagement; **Katie Schwieger** (AB, '14), data assistant, Casper College Foundation; **Denise Bressler** ('84), executive director, Casper College Foundation; **Rachel Macy**, office assistant, Casper College Foundation; and **Tina Silva**, executive assistant, president's office. (Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)

Love People for Who They Are



Kee Dunning (AA, '79) addresses a crowd of mental health professionals at the 35th Annual Casper College Wellness Conference in April. Dunning's presentation, "The Kee Concepts of Communication," was well received by the audience. As part of the conference, Dunning also presented the PBS documentary "Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness." Following the film, Dunning and one of her clients, Maclayn Clark and his father, Joe, participated in a Q&A with the audience. (Courtesy photo/Daniel Sullivan)

"Love people for who they are" is just one of the many mantras that **Kee Dunning** (AA, '79) not only tells others to do but also tells herself on a daily basis. The Billings, Montana, professional counselor also believes in one-on-one relationships and the power of hugs, which she gives freely and powerfully. You won't forget Dunning's hug if you are fortunate enough to receive one.

Dunning grew up in Lander, Wyoming. When it came time to go to college, she said she was looking for purpose in her life and chose Casper College, a choice she doesn't regret. "My experience at Casper College was life-changing and the best of all my educational experiences," she stated. Dunning gives credit to her instructors, including **Jane Katherman** and **LeRoy Strausner** (AA, '60). During Dunning's time at CC,

Strausner, who served as the college's president from 1990-2004, was the director of counseling, closely worked with students, and taught the class "Human Potential Seminar." "He shaped me in many ways," she said. She left with a degree in social sciences and headed to Eastern Montana College, where she earned her bachelor's in education and social political science. While at EMC, Dunning worked at a mental health center in Montana and a group home in Casper.

Dunning's life was also shaped by where she worked, which led her to the career that would give her purpose in life: working as a counselor with youth, adults, and families, particularly those suffering from or affected by mental health issues, with a focus on young people and their families struggling with self-worth and thoughts of suicide.

As she continued working in the mental health arena, Dunning realized she needed more education. That led to two master's degrees from Montana State University, one in education and the other in interdisciplinary studies. "The courses I took for these degrees met all the criteria for me to be able to successfully take the exams needed to become a licensed clinical professional counselor," she noted.

Before she opened her private practice, Dunning Counseling and Consulting in Billings, she worked in many different mental health settings, including Montana State Women's Prison, as an in-patient therapist at a youth psychiatric unit, a case manager, a school counselor, and at the nonprofit, Tumbleweed, where she helped children and young adults at risk for homelessness.

Because she had worked with many therapists and psychologists, clients, and people she had touched through her various jobs and private practice, Dunning gained a reputation for working with kids and families.

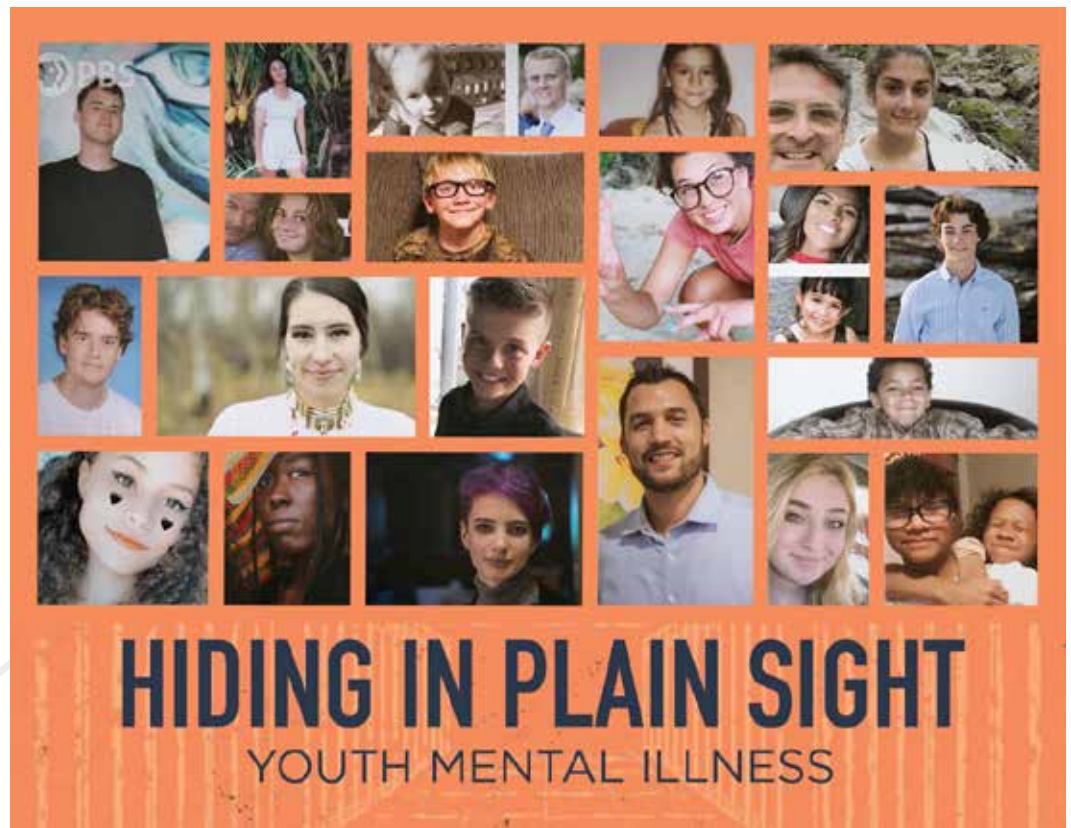
This reputation brought her to the attention of the filmmakers working on a Ken Burn's documentary titled "Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness." Dunning was one of several therapists interviewed for the documentary, and some of her young clients and their families were part of the final film. The film was shown on PBS stations throughout the United States. "When that documentary came out, my life changed. I got calls from every state wanting me to come and talk to them. I had no idea how much my life would change," she said.

Dunning would like everyone, especially those who live in rural states like Montana and Wyoming, to see the film to learn about and also to know how to approach the hidden mental illness and suicide epidemic that youth in America are suffering through. “We need to get this film out and teach people how to communicate so that kids would be able to tell you about conflicts they have,” she noted.

Her work throughout the years and her participation in the film led Dunning to create a nonprofit called “KEESTONE Communication.” Within KEESTONE Communication is the cornerstone of the nonprofit: The Kee Concepts of Communication. The Kee Concepts of Communication are what Dunning calls “Six proven tools to promote mental wellness and build stronger relationships.” Those concepts are “Respect,” “Listen And Validate,” “What Don’t You Know?,” “Meet Them Where They Are... Not Where You Want Them To Be,” “Don’t Feed The Bears,” and “Back Out Of The Power Struggle.” Dunning has presented these concepts to counseling students, nursing students, nurse practitioner students, and mental health groups, including the Wyoming mental health professionals and providers attending the Casper College Wellness Conference in April 2024.

“We all need to be kinder, have more grace, be more tolerant, and love people for who they are. When people have a sense of belonging and purpose and love for themselves, they can, most often, get through anything,” Dunning said.

To learn more about Dunning’s work, visit the “KEESTONE Communication” website at keestonecommunication.org.



The poster created for the documentary “Hiding in Plain Sight,” which Kee Dunning (AA, '79) was a part of. (Courtesy photo)



Kee Dunning (AA, '79) hugs her patient Maclayn Clark in her office in Billings, Montana. Clark was one of the youth featured in “Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness.” (Courtesy photo/Daniel Sullivan)

Letters to the Editor

The letter below is referencing a thank you letter to the benefactors of the Zula and Deryl Safford Scholarship.

What a lovely letter! Thank you so much for sharing it with me. Karina's obvious pride in earning what she receives from life reminded me so much of the benefactors she's celebrating with her letter: my Aunt Zula and Uncle Deryl Safford. They would applaud her achievement and her attitude.

My Aunt Zula was the very embodiment of independence and reliability. From her humble beginnings — raised barefoot in the dark, rich farm soil of the Mississippi delta — through her years of college study, and well beyond her long career as a gifted and respected teacher, she too credited her success to hard work, determination, and discipline. She would, I'm sure, see her own life experiences and values reflected in Karina's words.

I was very close to my aunt and uncle. Growing up, I spent almost as much time under their roof as I did anywhere else. Her hand was in mine when she drew her last precious breath. Beyond the memories of that cherished, personal bond, I am also reminded of my Aunt Zula's crystal-clear blue eyes that could dance with laughter or pierce their way through you

to uncover the truth of a matter. She had a delightful, clownish sense of humor and an unshakable sense of responsibility toward her community and the lives of the students she encountered. This is reflected in the endowments she and Uncle Deryl made to higher education in Wyoming, specifically to their beloved Casper College and the students who benefit from the educational opportunities available there.

Of course, Zula and Deryl Safford were not all seriousness and dour responsibility. Uncle Deryl was respected for his uncannily astute business acumen that is true — but his other signature traits included his irreverent, uncensored observations about life, work, and people — and the fact that he unapologetically popularized wearing cowboy boots with his tuxedo.

I continue to feel so grateful for these letters and have made provisions to continue our family's legacy of scholarship funding at Casper College via my own modest estate when that time comes.

With my sincere best wishes,

Vanessa Anderson



(Courtesy photo/Dave Bowman)

Sarah Reed ('15) who took classes at CC while attending high school in Casper, is pictured with Casper College Alum **Dave Bowman** (AA, '67). The two met by chance at a networking meeting in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Dave attended Sarah's Masters Chamber recital at the University of Arkansas. "Her musical specialty is the clarinet. Her performance was sterling, including two duos, one with a trombone and the other with a saxophone, followed by leading a clarinet quartet, playing a world premiere written by a local student. It is a fact ... your Casper College experience follows you to support you never anticipated!" wrote Dave.

Hello. My name is **Pat Tagart** (AA, '73), and I graduated from Casper College in 1973. Those two years at Casper College were the best college years of all the college I've had — and I've had plenty.

Thank you for sending me Footprints. I love it! I so enjoyed and appreciated the Winter 2022 issue, and in particular, the article by **Dr. Stephen W. Nicholas** (AS, '74). We were apparently there at the same time. He mentioned **Mrs. Katherman** and **Mrs. Demorest**. They were two of my favorites. I remember “arguing” with Mrs. Katherman about the abilities of women versus men. She basically argued that women are inferior to men. I totally disagreed. She may have simply been baiting me to get me to think.

Then there was Mrs. Demorest. She remains in my heart as my dearest teacher ever. I loved reading and was pretty excited to know that I could get credit in college for reading. She really challenged my class that year. We had all arrived in a class that was supposedly a little higher level because we had good grades in high school. She very quickly showed us that we didn't really know very much. She gave us all Fs most of the first semester and into

I always enjoy paging through each Footprints issue as it finds me in the Dallas area. The articles and photos bring back wonderful memories. My two years at Casper College provided me with excellent academics and exciting basketball watching — Go T-Birds! — while I saved money to go out of state to complete my bachelor's degree. Our longtime visionary college president back then, **Dr. Tim Aley**, built a special place and dreamed of it becoming the state's second four-year college. However, the University of Wyoming's power with the state legislature prevented the natural evolution. I resented that, so off I went in my '69 Chevrolet Impala with my associate degree in hand. Casper College prepared me well to complete my undergraduate

the second semester as she taught us how to write. I know I was shocked by my grades, but by the time I left at the end of that year, I knew how to write a good paper. She was amazing! One time, she told us that if she could teach each one of us one thing during the year, she had accomplished her goal as a teacher. I have never forgotten what she said. She was a remarkable teacher and woman.

My major was in psychology, and I dearly remember **Dr. Tollefson** and **Mr. Wilkes**. They were also outstanding teachers.

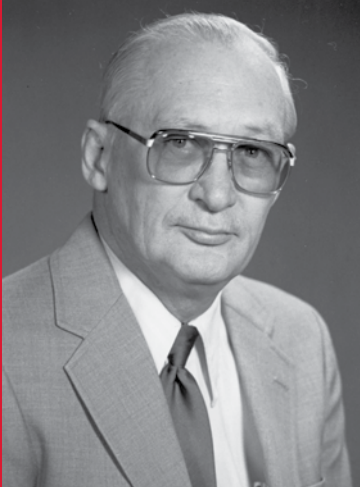
I only had my two years there, but those professors changed my life. Always, I brag about the education I received at Casper College. I had a goal to be a child psychologist, but God led me to be a teacher in special education. That's exactly what I needed to do. I retired last May after 43 years of teaching — all in special education and in New Mexico, southeast Alaska, and Boise, Idaho, where I live presently. It was a very good run.

Again, I thank you for sending me Footprints. I plan to stay in contact with you.

studies at Arizona State and earn master's degrees from the University of Minnesota and SMU. My academic journey at the foothills of Casper Mountain prepared me for more than just academic success. It ignited a passion for life-long learning that served me well during my 40-year career in the software field, which included exciting stops at companies like Texas Instruments, Netscape, Sun Microsystems, and Oracle. Each Footprints issue reassures me that Casper College is still a vibrant place to enjoy enriching experiences and build a solid foundation for a fulfilling life. I am proud of Casper College, and I think Dr. Aley would be too. Thank you, Casper College!

Tom Barrett (AB, '75)

Casper College Remembers Former CC President Lloyd Loftin



A portrait of **Lloyd Loftin, Ed.D.**, taken during his time as Casper College president.

Lloyd H. Loftin, Ed.D. had big shoes to fill when he replaced **Tilghman H. Aley** as president of Casper College. But Loftin, who had served under Aley for 16 years, was more than up to the task. He had seen the successes and the disappointments that Aley had had during his 18 years at the helm. While he learned from Aley, he also learned a great deal from serving in other college capacities, beginning as an instructor. Loftin died at 94 on Sept. 27, 2023, just three days shy of his 95th birthday.

Loftin came to Casper College in 1963. Before he was appointed president, out of a field of 200 applicants, he taught microbiology and zoology classes. From teaching, Loftin moved to the administrative side as dean of students, dean of faculty, and vice president for academic affairs.

Loftin served as Casper College president from 1979 to 1988. His enduring legacy is the high-quality faculty and staff that came to the college as a direct result of his work in that area.

Loftin's career at Casper College is best summed up by **Kevin Anderson** (AA, '74), former Casper College Western History Center director, who wrote in his book "Spirit of the Thunderbird,"

"... (Loftin's) positive influence (on) his students and his great love of the academic arena, though, will be considered by many to be his lasting legacy. The recruitment and training of a strong faculty were his strong suits, too. It is important to remember this: he was not only president of Casper College but a teacher as well."

Shortly before he retired, Casper Star-Tribune staff writer Dan Whipple interviewed Loftin. Whipple wrote, "Casper College President Lloyd Loftin, who retires this week ... says one of his major achievements during his nine-year tenure was 'the development of quality faculty and staff.'"

In addition to the quality faculty and staff, Loftin oversaw the construction of new facilities on the college's campus. At the time of his retirement, almost one-third of the buildings on campus were built during his nine-year presidency. Loftin considered the



Lloyd Loftin often found himself on the telephone discussing college business.

construction of the Gertrude Krampert Theatre as an important accomplishment. "The theater will always be a jewel," he told Whipple.

Loftin received his bachelor's degree in botany from Eastern Illinois State Teachers College, now Eastern Illinois University, and his master's of education in school administration and doctorate of education from Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Oklahoma State University-Stillwater. Following graduation, he taught for seven years in Ponca City, Oklahoma. In 1963, he signed a contract to teach at Casper College. After 25 years of service to Casper College and the community, Loftin retired on May 31, 1988.



L-r: **Lloyd Loftin, Thomas H. Empey**, and actor **Hayden Rorke** at the grand opening of the Gertrude Krampert Theatre, now known as the Gertrude Krampert Center for Theatre and Dance.

(Loftin for College. Casper College Public Relations Department Photographs and Records, CCA 04.xiv.2023.01 WyCaC US. Casper College Archives and Special Collections Western History Center)

Divine Resigns as President, Kosine Appointed Interim

Casper College President **Darren Divine's**, Ph.D., last day in office was Friday, May 10, 2024. Divine began his presidency at the college on July 1, 2015, following the retirement of **Walter H. Nolte**, Ph.D., on June 30, 2015.

Early in his tenure at Casper College, Divine faced a budget shortage due to state funding issues. He successfully led CC through the budget shortage with the goal of preserving the college's programs and services for students.

Then, COVID-19 hit. Divine partnered with the city of Casper and the Casper-Natrona County Health Department for their expertise and assistance in creating a safe environment on campus so classes could resume following the lockdown. The health department came to the college on several occasions to provide COVID-19 immunity shots and boosters. The health department also used the Casper College Fire Station as a drive-thru facility, allowing community members to access COVID-19 vaccines easily.

Divine led the college in the creation of a new master plan as well as a new strategic plan that will help the college continue to grow and better serve students, employees, and the community. During his tenure, general education courses required for graduation were revamped, and he created the academic chair model of leadership, a broader mode of leadership that includes more departments, rather than the department chair model that the college had been operating under. Divine was instrumental in the college's continued accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission in 2019.

Divine oversaw the construction of a new building, the Dick and Marialyce Tobin Visual Arts Center. The center features state-of-the-art equipment in a modern and updated facility for the college's visual arts instruction. He was also involved in creating the Tom Parker Arena used by the Casper College Rodeo team for practice and updating barns for athletes to keep their horses in.

Athletics cannot be forgotten. Under Divine's leadership, men's and women's soccer teams were formed. In addition, a full-time athletic director was hired, and many other improvements were made.

Before coming to Casper College, Divine served as vice president of academic affairs at the College of Southern Nevada. He also served as a visiting faculty member at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

To serve as interim president the Casper College board of trustees selected Vice President of Academic Affairs, **Brandon Kosine**, as the interim president, effective May 13. The board is currently in the search process for the next president of Casper College, with plans for the new president to begin work on July 1, 2025. See "Casper College Appoints Brandon Kosine, Ph.D." on page 25.





(Casper College photo/Rachel Macy)

Enchanted Canadian Coastline

From August 12 through 19, 2023, Rachel Macy, Casper College Foundation and Alumni Association executive assistant, led a group through Nova Scotia, Canada.

Nova Scotia is an enchanting Canadian Province along Canada's Atlantic coast. The country is full of rolling hills, rugged wilderness, landscapes with rich history, and many types of marine life. The quaint villages and towns visited were colorful and lined the narrow streets. This was a trip to remember.



A sentry stands guard at the Citadel National Historic Site in Halifax, Nova Scotia. (Casper College photo/Rachel Macy)



Top: The endless rolling rocks at Peggys Cove, Nova Scotia. (Courtesy photo/Kay Smith)

Bottom: Rachel Macy stands at the base of iconic Hopewell Rocks, famous for the world's highest tides, over 50 feet, in Hopewell Cape, New Brunswick. (Casper College photo/Kay Smith)



Top left: Alyssa Jendrasheske, with her Anne of Green Gables doll at the Anne of Green Gables Museum, Prince Edward Island. (Casper College photo/ Rachel Macy)

Top right: **Susan Guile** (AS, '72), plants potatoes at the Ann of Green Gables Museum, Prince Edward Island. (Casper College photo/Rachel Macy)



Left: A delicious lobster supper experience was enjoyed at the New Glasgow Lobster Suppers, New Glasgow, Prince Edward Island. (Casper College photo/ Rachel Macy)

Below: A stop along the Cabot Trail. This particular spot was "dedicated to the memory of Canadians who died overseas in the service of their country and so preserved our heritage, Petit Etang, Nova Scotia."

L-r: Alyssa Jendrasheske, Kerry Miller, **Chancey Rogers** (AS, '75), Sally Sarvey, **Marilyn Ingram** (AA, '71), **Rachel Macy**, Connie Avey, Sue Schilling, Kay Smith, **Susan Guile** (AS, '72), **Mary Comings** ('76), **Susan Easton** (AAS, '99), and James Burris. (Courtesy photo/Karen Hyde)





Fancy dancer Jonathan Underwood performs at the Traditional Powwow.

Far right: Red grass dancer, Fergie Littleshield, participates with another unidentified dancer at the Traditional Powwow.

Bottom left, l-r: Candace SoldierWolf and Delaina Becenti are shown in their Jingle Dresses as they prepare to perform one of many dances that took place during the Traditional Powwow.

Bottom right: Beautiful and elaborate costumes were part of the celebration at the Traditional Powwow.

Casper College Holds Second Annual Traditional Powwow

The Casper College Indigenous Student Alliance hosted the Second Annual Casper College Traditional Powwow on Saturday, April 20, 2024, on the Casper College soccer practice field. The free event was attended by more than 250 people. The powwow ran from noon to 6 p.m. and included a grand entry that began the festivities. It featured dancers, singers, and drum groups.

The traditional powwow is a way for Indigenous tribes to come together to celebrate the community and to ensure everyone is doing well, according to club president **Lysander Blackbird** (AS, '23), who is a two-spirit of Northern Arapahoe and Assiniboine Sioux descent. The festivity included a tiny tot special, sweetheart special, cake walk, and hand games. All singers and dancers were welcome to the event.

"It's a lot bigger than last year, which is so exciting to see," Blackbird said. "It's been going great today, plus, we had more time to plan it," Blackbird told Oil City News the day of the event, adding, "I just love seeing all the people, seeing them dancing and having a good time."





Students enrolled in the Sound Design Program at Casper College go over recording levels with instructor **Larry Burger**, center. Students in the program work hands-on with state-of-the-art recording equipment with actual bands from Wyoming. Students pictured, l-r: **Alyssa Bullock**; sitting in chair behind elbow, **Laura Kearns**; **Gregory Kearns**; and **Bridger Jones**.

Casper College Sound Design Program: Crafting Artistic Soundscapes with Third Rail of Cheyenne and Saratoga

In an exciting collaboration, the Sound Design Program at Casper College recently embarked on a unique learning experience by recording two singles for the country music band Third Rail out of Cheyenne and Saratoga, Wyoming. This hands-on project not only provided students with a practical application of their sound design skills but also allowed Third Rail to benefit from a state-of-the-art recording studio and the fresh talent of students.

Third Rail: A dream in the making

“Third Rail is a band I put together over five years ago after committing to playing a street dance for Lingle, Wyoming’s 100th year anniversary in 2018. The gig came before the band,” said lead singer Casey Jones, lead singer/acoustic guitar/mandolin, who’d been playing

live with fiddle and guitar player Logan Feezer and his cousin Alan Jones.

Casey Jones and The Trainwreck played the Lingle gig, a name that later changed to Third Rail with the addition of three new band members later in 2018. Third Rail is in reference to the additional rail added to a railway locomotive or train supplying electrical current according to the band’s website. Their music certainly is energizing.

Jones believes it’s a blend of influences and strengths that ultimately led to Third Rail’s sound, including newer country sounds and songwriting like the Turnpike Troubadours and Wade Bowen, older traditional country like Merle Haggard and Vince Gill, and a touch of rock-n-roll that most of them grew up playing.

He also happens to be a talented songwriter and his work has been written in notebooks dating back to his high school years. Many of Third Rail's originals have been written since the band formed to fit its unique sound and the individual talents of its musicians.

The band travels regionally, performing in a number of different live venues. In 2021, they released their first album, "Centerline," available on Spotify, Amazon Music, and Apple Music. The album includes songs written by Jones about his life experiences and journeys.

In addition to Jones, now living in Saratoga, and Feezer, Third Rail's musicians include Bill Snow, lead guitar/lap steel; Devin Smith, drums/harmony vocals; and Connor Koch, bass guitar. "We really enjoy the music and the opportunity to perform together. Each of the musicians in the band brings a ton of talent and experience," said Feezer. It's a blast watching these guys put together their music for a song."

A Call Out to Musicians

Each year, Casper College sound design instructor **Larry Burger** puts a call out to area musicians to come record at the college. Burger was fortunate to already have a connection with Third Rail, which performed in Casper at The Gaslight Social.

"My goal for students in the program is to take them through the recording process, from A to Z, where they learn everything from setup to expertly running the software and recognizing potential issues in the recording," said Burger. "Involving professional musicians in their learning process is a great way to give them hands-on experience."

"It was exciting for us to be able to get the band together and to work on new music," said Jones. "Knowing that we're helping students to learn was a big bonus."

Much Like Music, Recording is Its Own Art Form

Recording music is much different from performing it live, said Burger. His experience was on full display during the recording session as he guided students through the process and worked with the musicians to fine-tune their sound.

The band played together, and then the musicians individually perfected their parts in separate recordings. The students brought it all together into a final recording

that was mastered over several weeks.

"It was surprising for me to see how much effort the students put into our recording session. They were on-point the whole time and actually ran the majority of the recording session themselves," said Jones.

The two singles, titled "I'll Get All This" and "It'll Work Out ... or not?" presented diverse musical challenges that engaged the students in various aspects of production. The band released the singles to kick off their summer performances.

Hands-On Learning for Students

For the students enrolled in the Casper College Sound Design Program, this collaboration was a transformative learning experience. The opportunity to work with a professional band like Third Rail allowed them to apply their skills in a real-world context, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and problem-solving in a live recording environment.

The project's hands-on nature gave students a chance to work with state-of-the-art equipment, refine their critical listening skills, and collaborate with a musical ensemble. The experience not only enhanced their technical proficiency but also instilled a deep appreciation for the collaborative nature of their work.



Casey Jones, founder of Third Rail, is shown playing and singing one of the songs he has written for the band during a recent recording session at Casper College.

Students of the Sound Design Program at Casper College work on setting up the equipment needed to record a session with Wyoming band Third Rail recently. L-r: **Bridger Jones, Alyssa Bullock, Laura Kearns** (AA, '02), and **Gregory Kearns**.



Fiddle player and guitarist Logan Feezer, left, rehearses with bass guitar player Connor Koch, prior to a recording session at Casper College. The two are part of the band Third Rail and were at the college to take advantage of the professional studio and recording opportunities available to the band through the Sound Design Program at Casper College.

After recording, the students went to The Gaslight Social to enjoy the band at their live performance.

Impact on Third Rail

Third Rail, known for their music and ability to put country dancers on the floor, found the collaboration with the Casper College Sound Design Program to be a refreshing and enriching experience. The students' creative input and technical expertise made it possible for the band to record

their new music and share two more of Jones' stories and life experiences.

"It was so fun doing this and being able to sit back and experience the talent of the musicians in Third Rail. It gave me a greater appreciation of what we have to offer through our music," said Jones. "Maybe I'll write a song about it."

We All Travel Together

The collaboration between Third Rail and the Casper College class not only produced two exciting singles but also exemplified the power of partnerships between seasoned professionals and emerging talents. This unique venture showcased the potential for creativity, learning, and community building within the realm of music. As both Third Rail and the students continue their respective journeys, the echoes of this collaboration are sure to resonate in the music produced by the band and the careers of the budding musicians involved.



Third Rail performing at the Gaslight Social in Casper, Wyoming. Members of the band, first row, l-r; Bill Snow, lead guitar and lap steel; Casey Jones, lead singer and acoustic guitar; Logan Feezer, fiddle and guitar. Back row, l-r: Devin Smith, drums and harmony vocals, and Connor Koch, bass guitar.

News from T-Bird Athletics

CC Basketball Presented 'Haunted House of Hoops' Oct. 30

The Casper College Men's and Women's Basketball teams held a free, fun event for kids and their families with the "Haunted House of Hoops" a day before Halloween.

The well-attended event featured 3-point shooting, a kids' uniform relay race, a dunk contest, musical chairs, and a costume contest. In addition, fans met the teams, watched the women's and men's teams do a little scrimmage, took pictures with the players, and got an autographed team picture.



CC Men's Soccer Team Plays in NJCAA Tourney for First Time

During the Region 9 and Northwest Plains District Championship finals, the Birds moved to the national stage thanks to beating the Otero Rattlers of Otero College 5-4 in penalty kicks after the game was tied 1-1.

The lone goal for the T-Birds came from **Cole Venable** (AS, '24), Worland, Wyoming. During the penalty-kick phase of the contest, goalkeeper **Hugo Amo** (AS, '24), Burgos, Spain, "Saved two penalty kicks for us to win," said Head Coach **Ben McArthur**.

The team was seeded at No. 12 for the NJCAA tournament, which did not surprise McArthur, as the team stepped onto the field with an overall record of 9-6-5. However, McArthur noted that the team was currently peaking, having won the last seven times out of 10 with a 7-1-2 record. "We felt like we were dangerous, and if we peaked at the right time, we could beat other teams," he said.

There were four pools in the championship. Casper was in Pool A with No. 1 seeded Arizona Western College and No. 8 seeded Louisiana State University-Eunice. Casper lost its first game to the Arizona Western Matadors, 1-0. The T-Birds then beat LSU-Eunice Bengals 2-1. Arizona and LSU-E then played against each other, with the Matadors winning 3-0. With that win, the Matadors advanced to the semifinals, having previously beaten Casper. The men finished their season with a top-eight finish.



T-Bird News, cont.

Two CC Men's Soccer Team Members Receive National and Regional Nods

Casper College soccer players **Yuto Hatayama** (AS, '24) and **Kohta Yamanashi** (AS, '24) were selected to the National Junior College Athletics Association Third Team All-Americans. Both players were sophomores from Tokyo.

"Kohta was also the Region 9 Defender of the Year," said **Ben McArthur**, head coach. According to McArthur, the sophomore defender was a leader for the team on the backline and the key defender in helping the team to the Region 9 Championship. "Kohta started 38 games in his two seasons at Casper College," McArthur noted. In addition to his selection from the NJCAA, Yamanashi was selected to the 2023 United States Soccer Coaches Junior College Division I Men's All-America Team.

Hatayama was named Region 9 Player of the Year. "The sophomore attacker led the team with 14 goals and five assists and started 19 games for the Thunderbirds in his sophomore year," said McArthur. "He was instrumental in the team winning the Region 9 Championship by scoring the game-winning goal in the semifinals vs Northwest College in a 1-0 win on the road," added McArthur. During the 2023 season, Hatayama led the team with 33 points, including 14 goals.



Yuto Hatayama



Kohta Yamanashi

McArthur Named Coach of the Year

Casper College Men's Head Soccer Coach **Ben McArthur** was named the Northwest Plains District Coach of the Year and the Region 9 Coach of the Year.

However, McArthur didn't want to take all the credit: "I think it is important to recognize that the awards should be called 'Coaching Staff of the Year.' Assistant coach **Conner Schmidt** is a huge part of our success and he is a really good coach," said McArthur. "Coach Schmidt has done a great job building relationships with players and building our team chemistry," McArthur added.

McArthur also gave credit to the team. "As cool as this award is for Conner and me, we couldn't do it without the players. They bought into our team culture, the team goals, the style of play, everything. They were 100% invested in each other and the coaching staff, and that makes it fun every day. I am really proud of the group and our accomplishments this year."

McArthur led his team to a 10-7-5 overall season and a record of 7-1-4 in conference play. The men's team won the Region 9 and Northwest Plains District Championship, beating the Otero Rattlers of Otero College 5-4 in penalty kicks after the game was tied 1-1.



Ben McArthur



Conner Schmidt

CC Women's Soccer Players Recognized in Region 9



Haley Seach



Haylee Anderson



Kaylinn Gallup



Michelle Cave



Emma Goetz

Five Casper College Women's Soccer players were named to the 2023 Region 9 All-Region Teams. "These five players were a huge contributing factor to our success this season," said **Jocelyn Norcross**, assistant coach.

Haley Seach, a freshman defender from Clinton, Utah, was named to the All-Region 9 First Team. Three freshmen, **Haylee Anderson**, **Kaylinn Gallup**, and **Michelle Cave**, were named to the All-Region 9 Second Team. Finally, **Emma Goetz** (AS, '24), a sophomore front midfielder from Lander, was named an Honorable Mention All-Region.

"Overall, any of these girls will tell you that it wasn't strictly them that produced such a great season for us this year. Our girls really took 23 players from a team to a family, which is why they were so successful," said Norcross. "We remained unbeaten in conference with only one tie to Laramie County Community College and took first in the regular season with a record of 13-2-2. These five players were a huge contributing factor to our success this season. Although we didn't win the tournament semifinal, we didn't lose either. Unfortunately, a penalty kick shootout only determines who moves on," added Norcross.

The Thunderbirds ended their season ranked No. 14 in the country by the National Junior College Athletics Association.



Dwight Gunnare



Nate Macy

For the Seventh Year in a Row, Gunnare Named North Coach of the Year

For the seventh year in a row, **Dwight Gunnare**, the Casper College Women's Basketball team's head coach, has been named Coach of the Year for the All-Region 9 North Sub-Region for the 2023-2024 season. It also marks the 12th time since Gunnare began coaching at Casper College in 2008 that he has been named Coach of the Year for Region 9 North.

"I am very appreciative of being recognized by my peers in the North Sub-Region. There are a lot of very talented coaches in the North who are equally deserving! I also view this award as a team award. It is usually based on team success, and there are so many individuals that play a huge role in that, including, but not limited, to (Assistant) Coach (**Nate**) **Macy** and our players," said Gunnare.

Sharman recognized as North Coach of the Year

Casper College Women's Volleyball head coach **Angel Sharman** was named Coach of the Year for the All-Region 9 North Sub-Region for the 2023-2024 season.

The 2023 volleyball team not only won the Region 9 North Championship and the Region 9 Northwest Plains District B Championship but competed in the NJCAA National Volleyball Tournament for the first time in nine years. At the end of the season, the T-Birds were ranked 10th in the nation.

"Coach Sharman had an amazingly successful year this past year," noted Casper College Athletic Director **Paul Marble**. "Coach Sharman had some terrific players this past year (and) brought out the best in them with her demanding yet genuinely concerned style," said Marble. Marble added that Sharman did a great job recruiting and teaching and that her coach of the year award was just one of her rewards for doing so well.

"It is an honor to receive this award, especially coming from other coaches in the north region," said Sharman, adding, "It is greatly due to the athletes hard work that makes it possible."



T-Bird News, cont.



Casper College Volleyball Team Honored Regionally and Nationally

Under the leadership of head coach **Angel Sharman**, the Casper College Volleyball team had an unprecedented year of success. After winning the Region 9 North Championship, the team competed in the Region 9 Championships, winning the Region 9 Northwest Plains District B Championship, which got the team into the NJCAA National Volleyball Tournament for the first time in nine years.

The volleyball team went into the tournament with a record of 28-12. The T-Birds lost their opening match to No. 3 Miami Dade College but defeated No. 11 Blinn College and No. 9 New Mexico Junior College. In the match to see who would take home ninth place, the Birds lost to No. 13 Indian Hills Community College and took 10th place in the country. At the end of the tournament, the CC Volleyball team ended up first

in the nation with total matches, 44; sets, 161; kills, 1,917; total attacks, 5,545; receptions, 2,990; points, 2,586.5, and ended the season with a 30-14 record.

“The team atmosphere was a big key for the success of this group,” said Sharman. According to Sharman, the team worked so well with each other and supported one another so well that it made them hard to beat. Because the team was like a family on the court, they were able to overcome their opponent on many occasions. “The team dynamic was fun to watch and coach,” Sharman added.



Mia Hutchinson



Katarina Vulic



Amelia Piekut



Nia Surman



Paulina Dziedzic

Mia Hutchinson (AS, '24), a 5'11" outside hitter from Star Valley, Wyoming, was named to the NJCAA Second Team All-Americans. She led the nation in kills with 583 and points scored as a sophomore at 690.

Regionally, the women's volleyball team had two players named to the 2023 Region 9 First Team: Hutchinson and setter **Katarina Vulic** (AS, '24), a 5'9" sophomore from Belgrade, Serbia. In addition, Hutchinson was named the 2023 Region 9 Player of the Year, while Vulic was named the 2023 Region 9 Setter of the Year.

Sophomore **Amelia Piekut** (AB, '24), a 5'11" opposite hitter from Warsaw, Poland, and **Nia Surman**, a 5'5" freshman libero from Christchurch, New Zealand, were named to the 2023 Region 9 Second Team.

Finally, Hutchinson, Vulic, and sophomore **Paulina Dziedzic** (AS, '24), a 5'10" middle blocker from Nowy Sacz, Poland, were named to the Region 9 All-Tournament Team.

Three Lady Thunderbirds Receive Regional Recognition

Two Casper College Lady Thunderbirds basketball team players were named to the 2024 Region 9 North Sub-Region team and one to the All-Defensive Team.

The three were honored for their high level of play during the Region 9 North Sub-Region regular season. Freshman guard **Andi Schissler** from Kersey, Colorado, and sophomore guard **Logann Alvar** (AA, '24) from Casper's Kelly Walsh High School were named to the All-Region Team. Sophomore guard **Anna Csenyi** (AS, '24) from Szolnok, Hungary, was named to the All-Defensive Team.

During the 2023-2024 regular season, Schissler averaged 12.9 points per game, Alvar 10.9, and Csenyi 8.6.



Andi Schissler



Logann Alvar



Anna Csenyi

Six Cowboys From CC Rodeo Team Compete at CNFR

Six Casper College cowboys competed in the College National Finals Rodeo, June 9-15.

The six Casper College Men's Rodeo team athletes who qualified to compete in this year's CNFR at the Ford Wyoming Center were sophomore **Talen Elshere** from Hereford, South Dakota. Elshere, majoring in ag business, ended the regular season in first place in saddle bronc riding with 870 points. Coming in second and just five points behind Elshere was **James Perrin**. Perrin, an ag business major, comes to Casper from Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, Canada. **Eastin West**, Hereford, South Dakota, also competed in saddle bronc riding. He tied for third place with 745 points, giving him a ticket to the CNFR.

Chase Siemens represented CC in bareback riding. Siemens was second in the region with 1,100 points. The freshman, majoring in ag science, is from Chetwynd, British Columbia, Canada.

The final two competitors for Casper College were team ropers **Rowdy and Roan Weil**. Roan heeled for Bodie Mattson from the University of Wyoming. Rowdy headed for Tel Sorenson with Gillette College. The Weil brothers come from Kersey, Colorado. Both sophomores are majoring in ag business.

Unfortunately, at the end of the CNFR on Saturday, June 15, none of the six Casper College cowboys could place in the top three in their respective contests. However, through all the points earned during the CNFR, the team placed sixth in the week-long competition.



Talen Elshere
Saddle Bronc Riding



James Perrin
Saddle Bronc Riding



Chase Siemens
Bareback Riding



Eastin West
Saddle Bronc Riding



Roan Weil
Team Roping Heeler



Rowdy Weil
Team Roping Header

Where They Went



We are thrilled to share that many of our Casper College athletes have moved on to compete at four-year schools, taking their talents to new heights. It's incredibly exciting to see these dedicated individuals continue their athletic journeys at schools across the country!

Men's Soccer:

Hugo Amo (AS, '24), University of Evansville
Isa Bramble (AAS, CERT, '24), Union Commonwealth University
Hubert Deragon (AS, '24), East Tennessee State University
Yuto Hatayama (AS, '24), California State University East Bay
Hayden Hollinger (AB, '24), Winthrop University
Sho Horie (AS, '24), Felician University
Mads Huegel (AS, '24), Northern Michigan University
Zack Meunie-Gorman (AS, '24), Lourdes University
Garrett Morris (AS, '24), University of Southern Indiana
Louis Simon (AS, '24), University of Detroit Mercy
Bogdan Stere (AS, '24), Holy Family University
Hawkin Sweeney (AS, '24), Pacific University
Cole Venable (AS, '24), University of Colorado, Colorado Springs
Kohta Yamanashi (AS, '24), Felician University

Women's Soccer:

Regan Camp ('24), Defiance College
Tatiana Ferreira ('24), Shorter University
Emma Goetz (AS, '24), Alabama State University
Gabrielle McVay ('24), University of Providence
Kendra Michaels ('23), Drake University

Volleyball:

Paulina Dzedzic (AS, '24), Cumberland University
Licia Echevarria (AS, '24), University of Arkansas at Monticello
Mia Hutchinson (AS, '24), College of Idaho
Amelia Pickut (AB, '24), University of Louisiana Monroe
Katarina Vulic (AS, '24), William Carey University

Men's Basketball

Josh Ijeh (AA, '24), University of Kansas City Missouri
Kuon Kuon ('24), Carroll College
Andrija Maric ('24), Bluefield State University
Jaden Peters ('24), Belmont Abbey College
Malyk Rebetez (AA, '24), Augustana University
Darius Robinson ('24), Oral Roberts University

Women's Basketball

Logann Alvar (AA, '24), University of Wyoming
Angela Astorga (AS, '24), Haskell Indian Nations University
Anna Csenyi (AS, '24), New Mexico University
Irene Fernandez de Caleyra (AS, '24), Wagner University

Gunnare Reaches 400th Win as T-Bird Coach, Ends Season With 425



Dwight Gunnare, head coach of the Casper College Lady Thunderbirds basketball team, reached a career milestone on Nov. 24, 2023, with his 400th Casper College win. He ended the season with a total of 425 wins at Casper College.

The 400-win milestone occurred during a home game against the North Idaho College Cardinals, where the T-Birds won 85-64.

“I am proud of the fact that our program has now eclipsed 400 wins during my tenure,” said Gunnare. And, in true Gunnare fashion, he gave others credit as well: “A lot of people play a role in this accomplishment, including my assistant coaches, our campus community, administration, and most importantly, our athletes,” he said, adding, “I have had the opportunity to coach a lot of great basketball players that were also outstanding young adults.”

The 2023-2024 basketball season was successful for Gunnare and Assistant Coach **Nate Macy**. The Thunderbirds won the Region 9 North Sub-Region Basketball tournament, the Region 9 Basketball Tournament, and won their first-round game in the NJCAA Division I Women’s Basketball Championship, beating the 19th-seeded Blinn College Buccaneers 72-61.

The 14th-seeded T-Birds then took on the third-seeded Northwest Florida State Raiders in the second round. In the second half, the Raiders’ defense dampened the T-Birds’ solid shooting skills, which the Birds demonstrated in the first half when they were ahead 47-38. The Raiders, the defending national champions, ousted the Birds, winning the game 76-69.

At the end of the season, with 15 seasons as head coach, Gunnare’s Thunderbirds have won 425 games, a testament to his coaching skills. Next season promises to be another winning season, as Gunnare had to replace only four sophomores from the 2023-2024 team. The 11 freshmen will enter the season as sophomores hungry to take the team to another national tournament, and Gunnare will be right by their side to help them get there.



Refurbished, Glowing, and Delightful!

The T-Bird Sign is a Beautiful Sight

If you haven't noticed a red neon glow emanating from the hill at Casper College, you have missed a beautiful sight: the newly refurbished, glowing, and delightful Thunderbird sign at Casper College.

The all-metal Thunderbird sign was originally erected sometime during the 1966-1967 school year on the hill where the new "Swede" Erickson Thunderbird Gymnasium was under construction. The sign's Thunderbird design was based on the original emblem for Casper College.

According to **Kevin Anderson** (AA, '74), in his book, "Spirit of the Thunderbird: The Growth of Casper College," "The Thunderbird was chosen as the emblem for Casper College by a vote of the students of the first class. ... The nickname was officially chosen in February 1946."

An artwork contest was held, and **Warren Weaver** (AA, '48) created a thunderbird "... standing upright with a streak of lighting running through its beak and into the background." Weaver's artwork was approved in April 1946 and, among other places, was once part of the college's official letterhead and was used in the masthead of the school newspaper, the Chinook.

Since the 1966-1967 school year, the sign has overlooked many changes to the school, most notably the variety of construction projects that have taken place in the ensuing years. And, let's not forget about the elements: blazing sun and heat in the summer and snow and subzero temperatures in the winter. Oh, and of course, on the hill, wind. Lots of wind.

But, thanks to former Casper College President **Darren Divine**, the sign underwent a complete restoration project that included Divine's idea, a spectacular addition of red neon outlining the sign to light up the area beautifully. "It seemed like the neon would make the T-Bird really come out at night and further enhance the iconic and prominent tradition for Casper College," said **Chris Lorenzen**, director of public relations.

Casper College alum and neon artist **Connie Morgan**, (AA, '22), was sought out, and the college asked her for input on the design. "From beginning to end, placing neon on the Thunderbird took about a year. From the planning phase to the finished product, there was a lot that needed to happen in order for this project to become a realization," Morgan said.

*The T-Bird sign glows an electric red at night.
(Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)*

The revitalized T-Bird sign looks out over campus, shortly after being mounted in a short concrete base. The new metal supports on the back are painted to blend in to the design. (Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)

According to Morgan, owner of GloW Neon Lights LLC, the most challenging part of the project was making a pattern of the sign to work off. “When I make a pattern for neon, everything has to be backward,” she explained. She discovered the sign hanging from the rafters when she arrived at the college’s maintenance building. Standing on tall ladders, Morgan taped her pattern paper to the steel and used a pencil to get a rubbing of all of the edges. Morgan elaborated: “I needed to make sure all of my lines overlapped so I could match them up back at my shop. I had to use brown paper because that’s all I had. When I got the pattern back at the shop, my friend and shop neighbor Rachel, from T. Hawk Studio, helped me devise a way to make my pattern in reverse using charcoal and white paper.”

Meanwhile, the college’s facilities and maintenance department was busy at work, first digging up and removing the sign for significant refurbishment in the shop, then sanding and repainting the sign, digging a hole for the base, fabricating, installing electricity, path work, and installation of flagstone around the base. The sign then silently stood, awaiting for its neon coat. “The base was completely rebuilt to make it easier to service the sign and to strengthen its resistance to the wind,” Lorenzen added.

Once Morgan had her pattern, she started bending the glass. “I was worried the entire time that the glass wasn’t going to fit because the pattern process was so convoluted,” she recalled. “I took the glass to the college before processing it, and lo and behold, it all fit. I was very relieved, and it solidified in my mind that I knew what I was doing.”

The renovated sign was put into place, the neon was installed, and finally, the switch was flipped. Morgan wrote in a GloW Facebook post: “You know what this art piece isn’t? It isn’t LED, baby. It’s old skool (sic) NEON like your daddy used to make.” The sign contains 60 feet of 15-millimeter clear glass filled with neon gas. According to Morgan, the beautiful red color that viewers see when they look at the glass is the true color of neon gas when it is electrically charged.

“I’ve been working with neon for almost 27 years, and it makes me absolutely thrilled that people still want to do things like this. I’m very grateful for the college and all the work they have given me. I’m a Casper College alumni, and it gives me great pride that my art has a permanent place on the campus,” Morgan said.



You are missing a treat if you haven’t seen the sign at night. You can see it from College Drive around the front of the campus or drive through the lower part of the campus. For an even better up-close and personal view, go to the far north side of the Thunderbird Gym and view it from your car, or take a short walk up the path to stand next to the beautiful red neon Thunderbird.

For our out-of-town alumni, we hope you will make a point to see our sign and stop by and say “hello” when you are in town.



The T-Bird sign sits on metal stands in the Casper College welding shop. New braces were welded to the back of the sign and a new metal post was created to hold the sign and was placed into the cement pillar. (Casper College photo)

Better than a Gold Buckle: Johnson “Picks Up” New Rodeo Career

In 2011, **Jhett Johnson** accomplished a goal that others only dream about: stepping onstage at the Thomas and Mack (Center) to receive his world champion gold buckle. He and Turtle Powell roped their way through the National Finals Rodeo, handily winning the average and the world title. He’s a million-dollar heeler and has qualified to the National Finals Rodeo five times.

And yet, if he’d found his career as a pickup man before swinging a rope, he never would’ve pursued roping.

For Johnson, the thrill of “picking up” — the term used to describe what a pickup man does — is now his preferred adrenaline rush. It was only fate that led him

to excel in two very different professional rodeo careers, whereas most people enjoy just one. “It’s always fun to be the best you can,” he said.

When asked which he likes better, Johnson said, “Picking up, now. If I’d have started like a lot of guys at 20 years old, I don’t know if I would’ve rodeoed or roped. I really, really enjoy it.”

He doesn’t even own a rope horse anymore.

One could say that Johnson wears many hats, but he really only wears a cowboy hat and does quite a few things while wearing it.

Johnson was brought up on the family ranch between Casper and Medicine Bow, Wyoming. It was homesteaded in 1882, and he is the sixth generation to live there. Johnson’s dad, Jamis, is a Wyoming Cowboy Hall of Fame inductee, and the only thing Jamis knew was ranch work.

“I never roped in an arena until I was 14 years old,” Johnson said. “My brother roped at the neighbor’s one day. He liked it; then I tried it. We built a little arena at the house when I was 14 and started high school rodeoing.”

“I don’t know why my brother Justin and I liked it so much, but we did.”

The pair would continue to rope together throughout their high school, college, and professional careers. Justin attended Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne until Jhett graduated high school, and then the pair attended Panhandle State University in Goodwell, Oklahoma.

“I moved home in 1993 or 1994. Justin stayed down there for another 12 years riding horses for the Lazy E Arena. I went home and started ranching a little bit and kept rodeoing.”

Johnson roped with various partners throughout his five NFR qualifications: Shane Schwenke in 2005, Travis Tryan in 2006, Kevin Daniel in 2007, Steve Purcella in 2009, and Turtle Powell in 2011. Just when the world thought he was at the top of his game, he decided to head back to the ranch to help raise his boys alongside his wife, Jenny.

Having no trouble pivoting careers, Johnson was hired as the assistant coach at Casper College in 2014, teaming up with longtime head coach **Tom Parker**. Johnson’s degree in psychology — obtained due to his fascination with people — helped his credentials in the hiring office, and today, it helps him coach young adults.



Turtle Powell and **Jhett Johnson** won the world title in 2011. (Courtesy photo./Jhett Johnson)



Johnson picks up a bronc at Don King Days. (Courtesy photo/Lisa Scarborough)

It was at a roughstock practice at Casper College when Parker asked him if he had any interest in picking up. Johnson told him, “No, but it looks like it’d be funner than hell.”

“Parker said, ‘Well, you can do this. Bring a horse in.’ I brought one of my ranch horses in and started going at it,” Johnson said.

Shortly after, Johnson was teaching a team roping clinic in Cheyenne when the host asked him if he would pick up a local practice. Johnson said, “‘Well, I’ve only done it once, but yeah, I’ll go out there.’ It turned out to be Blaze and Brody Cress. The first time I really got a taste for it was there, and then I started picking up at the college.”

Johnson credits his neighbor, Jack Miles, and Will Berg, for helping him learn while he was picking up for college practices twice a week.

Tom Parker died in 2017, leaving behind a 27-year coaching legacy. Johnson became his successor.

All the while, Johnson was also raising and coaching his two oldest sons, **Kellan**, (’19) and **Carson** (’19). Kellan won the College National Finals Rodeo in 2018 with **Trey Yates** (’18). In 2021, once Carson was old enough to team up with Kellan after high school graduation, the team clinched another college world title while wearing the crimson vests for Casper.

Two years later, **Sandy Bob Forbes** (CERT, ’00, AAS, ’01) began serving as assistant coach. Forbes Rodeo Company supplies bucking horses for practice, and Forbes picks up alongside Johnson. “He has a deep passion for picking up, and so do I,” said Johnson.

“Sandy Bob and I have an upper hand. I can buy

horses and try them out at practice before I ever have to use them at a pro rodeo and get them seasoned to some of it. I love picking up those college practices and those kids.”

Johnson’s roping accomplishments are nothing to sneeze at. So, what makes a world champion in one event want to master something completely different?

“When you get up beside those real bucking horses, the juice for me is how strong they are when they’re giving it 100%. I roped my whole life, and roping is kind of a thinking deal. The roughstock is trying. You’ll get up next to the best bareback riders in the world and hear those horses jerking them. You can hear the rigging. They’re so strong.”

The best pickup men go unnoticed. They make quick work of getting the hack rein — in saddle bronc riding — picking up the bareback or bronc rider, releasing the flank strap, and exiting the arena.

Johnson loves to pick up because of the high-stakes thrill of saving another man’s life. “There’s always the adrenaline — I hope I never work another one —



Coach **Johnson** watches his two sons, **Kellan** (’19) and **Carson** (’19), rope at the College National Finals Rodeo. (Courtesy photo/Jackie Jensen)

Better than a Gold Buckle, cont.



Picking up requires lots of teamwork between pickup men as well as good horsepower. (Courtesy photo/Jackie Jensen)

but if there's a hang-up or something, there's a lot of adrenaline. If you do help a guy out of a bad jam, it's really rewarding."

In 2019, Johnson received his second PRCA card — this time, as a pickup man.

Binion Cervi asked him to fill in for one performance at the Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo in Casper, then kept asking him to come back. Binion and Chase Cervi endorsed Johnson for his PRCA Permit, an integral step to obtaining his pro card. Cervi Championship Rodeo and Forbes Rodeo Company are some of Johnson's main employers.

Between coaching and picking up all over the country, Johnson still runs his Red Angus cow herd at home. His dad, a lifelong cowboy and horse trainer at 80 years old, is "slowing down."

"He goes to some cuttings when he wants to and helps me on the ranch."

Johnson spends a great deal of time with his co-coach and fellow pickup man, Forbes, but it's a friendship born from a passion for rodeo.

"We have a great time all the time," Johnson said.

Story courtesy of Kaycee Monnens Cortner (AS, '17, AA, '18), assistant and special sections editor, Tri-State Livestock News. Originally published in the Tri-State Livestock News.

A beautiful sign to honor **Tom Parker**, former T-Bird Rodeo coach, is shown in the early light of dawn on the rodeo practice arena. The naming of the Tom Parker Arena is a fitting honor for a remarkable man who impacted many people in his 27 years of coaching the Casper College T-Bird Rodeo team. Though Parker worked on the goal of the indoor practice arena for several years, he never saw it come to fruition, as he died on March 15, 2017, at the age of 67. Tom's wife, Linda Parker, said, "I think it's incredible; it's what Tom wanted exactly."

(Casper College photo/Zach Nagy)



Friends We'll Miss!

The Casper College Alumni Association has removed some old favorites from Footprint's pages, including "Friends We'll Miss." This page is now on our website. The page is dedicated to our alums, friends, faculty, staff, and members of the community who are no longer with us. We hold them in our hearts and minds as we cherish the memories. If you have a friend or loved one to add, please contact us at 307-268-2218 or 800-442-2963, ext. 2325.

Please note: This list includes updates from family members, newspapers, and other sources. Friends you see on our website have been added within the current year.



Help fund scholarships!

Because of you, we are helping Thunderbird dreams take flight as we help shape futures at Casper College. Your unwavering support has transformed lives and opened doors to countless possibilities for our students. Please help us enhance the educational opportunities and the environment at Casper College. **Scan the code to help** or visit

support.caspercollegefoundation.org/give/333644.



"Thank you!" From Our Scholarship Recipients!

Our scholarship recipients are so grateful for the scholarships they receive from our donors. See the student "Thank You" video with this QR code.

Scan the code to view or visit our YouTube page,

youtu.be/sR-xLwzZBes.



Updated contact information? Go to caspercollegefoundation.org/stay-connected, call 307-268-2256, or email alumni@caspercollege.edu.



REGISTER NOW

Downhill Half Marathon

Starts on top of Casper Mountain

Updated downhill course!

Lookout Point Half Marathon • 10K • 5K

Starts at Jorgensen/Bryce Commons Plaza,
Union/University Bldg., Casper College campus

Scan for all your race information or visit
caspercollegefoundation.org/tbird-trek

