

# THE KEYSTONE

A PUBLICATION  
OF ASUMH

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All-Star Lineup*  
ASUMH HONOREES LEAD  
THE WAY

» *Funding the  
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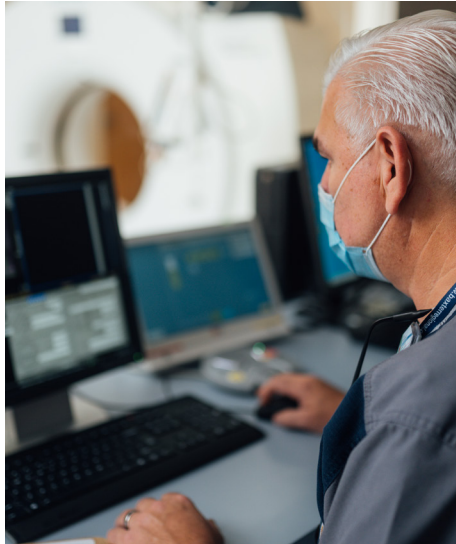
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**On the cover:** From left to right,  
Devin Overshine, Jackson Jones,  
Jordan Ritenburg and Joseph Coon.  
Photography by James Moore.

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PUBLISHER OF BAXTER REGIONAL PULSE MAGAZINE, MOUNTAIN HOME PUBLIC SCHOOL WINGS MAGAZINE  
AND MOUNTAIN HOME CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VACATION RELOCATION MAGAZINE.

Publisher **Sarah Knight**  
Custom Publication Writers **Dwain Hebda** and **Deborah Stanuch**  
Custom Publication Copy Editor **Melinda Lanigan**  
Contributing Photographer **James Moore**

All effort has been made to make this publication as complete as possible. The publishers cannot and do not guarantee the correctness of all that is available to them, and errors will be corrected in subsequent issues if reported by letter to the company. 30,000 copies of The Keystone magazine are distributed bi-annually. Over 28,000 copies are mailed to residents in Baxter and Marion county with the remaining copies distributed to locations within the two counties, including high schools, chambers/visitor centers, doctor offices, hospitals and financial institutions. Copyright January 2022 Wheelhouse Publishing. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission is prohibited.

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## Greetings,

Welcome to the latest edition of the Keystone! We are delighted to bring you this update on the people and events of Arkansas State University – Mountain Home (ASUMH). The fall semester has been an exciting and challenging time on campus. We are proud to present to you a sample of the many incredible people and activities that are a part of ASUMH!

In this edition, you will learn more about the wonderful Coulter Celebration of Lights that has now completed its second season on campus. The holiday celebration is fast becoming a tradition for people in the Twin Lakes Area to enjoy. You will also read about the dedication of the new James and Sally Moore Recreational Trail and the

Kenny and Laura Newth Disc Golf Course. These are great additions to our campus and bring many visitors to ASUMH. Our Trailblazer mascot “Blaze,” a six-foot-tall bronze sculpture of the great horned owl has been installed this fall. Aptly named, “The Guardian of the Parliament,” the owl’s presence will inspire all trailblazers, past, and present.

This issue will introduce you to some extraordinary people representing the best of our students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We are very proud of everyone associated with the success of this institution but honor and celebrate these four individuals for their excellence and success this past year. We also highlight our criminal justice program and club, one of many outstanding opportunities we have here on campus.

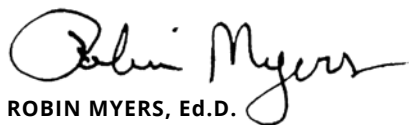
A new era has evolved at ASUMH with the initiation of athletics. We are proud to introduce you to some of those athletes and their respective sports in this edition. These athletes have already added enthusiasm

and excitement to the campus culture and we hope you share in the promise this new addition brings to the institution.

An inspiring story of a new scholarship established by Sharron Chinn will highlight an example of the generosity that supports many of our students here at ASUMH through gifts such as hers. Finally, you will learn about ASUMH’s Performing Arts Council and the great work they have been doing over the past eleven years to bring quality entertainment to the Mountain Home area.

I hope you are both inspired and moved by the work and accomplishments of your college! Enjoy this edition of the Keystone, and share in the success that comes when education opens the door to opportunity.

With warmest regards,



**ROBIN MYERS, Ed.D.**

Chancellor  
Arkansas State University  
Mountain Home

# THE KEYSTONE

A PUBLICATION OF  
**ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
MOUNTAIN HOME**

## key-stone

noun \ˈkē-,stōn\

: a large stone at the top of an arch that locks the other stones in place

: something on which other things depend for support

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by DEBORAH STANUCH



**2ND ANNUAL**

## Coulter Celebration of Lights

As evening fell over ASU-Mountain Home during the holidays, the busy campus was magically transformed into a winter wonderland of twinkling lights, a gift from Dr. Ed Coulter, Chancellor Emeritus of ASUMH and his wife, Lucretia.

This was the second year of the Coulter Celebration of Lights, an annual event held in cooperation with the City of Mountain Home and the Mountain Home Area Chamber of Commerce. Mollie Morgan, ASUMH development officer and coordinator of the event, said more than 10,000 vehicles drove through the lighted display while hundreds more families, adults and children toured the displays along the campus walking trails.

"The generous donations from over 40 local businesses, civic organizations

and community members and 350 volunteers who spent countless hours decorating and working each evening of the 30-day event make this gift to the community possible," said Morgan.

New this year was a carousel and train. "They were probably the most popular activities," said Morgan. "Everyone wanted to ride them!"

Among the many lighted displays were the 12 Days of Christmas, Reindeer Court, Gingerbread House, Santa's Toy Shop, Piggy Bank, Mrs. Santa and Elf Making Cookies, and the Coulter Lights Concession Stand, hosted by Santa and Mrs. Claus. Holiday music was played throughout the campus and campus FM radio channel.

"Our committee is already hard at work planning the next Celebration of Lights. Our goal is to make each year bigger and better."

The Coulter Celebration of Lights is dedicated to the memory of Fran Dryer Coulter, former professor at ASUMH.



**RIBBON-CUTTING**

## Recreation Trail and Disc Golf Course

Formal dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremonies officially opened the James and Sally Moore Recreational Trail and Kenny and Laura Newth Disc Golf Course. The events were held on campus September 15.

Sally Moore assisted ASUMH Chancellor, Dr. Robin Myers in the ribbon-cutting to open the 1.6-mile paved pedestrian and bicycle trail, named for her and her late husband, James. The trail winds through more than 120 acres of the ASUMH campus and features three resting areas with benches made from Arkansas natural stone amid 50 newly planted trees. Landscaping plans include the planting of an additional 200 trees.

Mr. and Mrs. Newth, who were unable to attend the dedication of the 18-hole disc golf course named in their honor, were represented by their friend, Sandra Monger. The 4,725-foot-long course features permanent metal baskets and signage.

*Both the recreational trail and disc golf course are open to the public daily from dawn until dusk.*



**NEW INSTALLATION**

## Keller Green Fountain Centerpiece

A statue of an owl was installed on the fountain in Keller Green in early September. **Dr. Robin Myers,**

chancellor of ASUMH, said a campus committee decided on an owl statue to represent the school mascot, the Trailblazer, and students choose the name Blaze.

"It is a very fitting dedication to our mascot, the Trailblazer, and this beautiful piece of art," he said.

The bronze sculpture, which

sits upon the book of knowledge, is the work of renowned artist Stefan Savides, who is famous for his sculptures of birds. The campus named sculpture of a great horned owl "Guardian of the Parliament."

*Keller Green is named for Joseph Keller whose donation to ASUMH endows Keller Green and the centerpiece fountain.*



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# MOVIN' ON UP

## *A second chance for success with ASUMH's Business Administration program.* by DWAIN HEBDA

Bethany Lee Ferrell's first run at an ASU-Mountain Home degree in 2002 ended prematurely. The Norfolk High School graduate came to an agonizing fork in the road — the same faced by many college students balancing life, work and school.

"During my first semester and my second semester when I originally started college, I was working full time at Burger King as a drive-thru operator because I needed to pay for a place to live," she said. "I was struggling with that. Something had to give so I dropped out of school, which I've always regretted."

Ferrell stayed in the workforce for the next seven years, climbing the management ladder in food service and then moved to the Ranger Boats manufacturing facility in Flippin. When the latter laid her off, she decided to go back and finish what she'd started, which she did with a vengeance, determined not to let any aspect of the experience pass her by.

"I never really had much of a problem in the classroom. I always enjoyed school," she said. "When I enrolled the second time, I was doing a full-time courseload every semester, sometimes even more. I did 18 credit hours, and I did the Fran Coulter Honors Program as well, participating in a lot of extra curriculars."

Besides participating in the Honors Program, which loaded on additional coursework, Ferrell was a member of Ambassadors and Circle K service organization. By the time she graduated, she'd also been inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and Phi Beta Lambda business association.

"The second time around, I had a better feel for the sense of community that comes along with ASU-Mountain Home," she said. "I never had any problems relating to my professors, and I enjoyed the interaction I had with them. I prefer that type of environment, both in school and at work. Achieving that sense of community has become a big part of what I know I want to do professionally."

When the dust settled, Ferrell had earned two associates degrees from ASUMH, one of which provided the foundation for

the bachelor's degree she'd complete through A-State in 2013. Today, she's a mother and senior accountant II at Meramec Regional Planning Commission in St. James, MO, where she recently became the 2022 Employee of the Year. The future has never looked brighter.

Her advice to others dreaming of a college degree is to go for it with gusto, no matter what stage of life.

"I would say that it is important to put 100 percent into what you're doing," she said. "I never really wanted to drop out of college, but I think I was more focused when I went back because I knew what I wanted for myself and what I didn't want for myself. I didn't want to end up in a dead-end job that I absolutely hated." ■



## ➤ BUSINESS IS OUR BUSINESS

ASU-Mountain Home's dynamic Business Administration curriculum provides the utmost flexibility, enabling students of all backgrounds to meet their educational and professional goals.

"I think the key takeaway at ASU-Mountain Home in the area of business is that students have options," said Karen Heslep, dean of business and technology. "They can do an applied science degree and go straight into the workforce. We also have many things in our applied science program that are transferrable, so students have the flexibility to move and ultimately earn their four-year degree."

The program also offers additional learning and networking opportunities

helping students put their classroom studies and leadership skills into practice.

"We offer an internship within the program that gives the student exposure to the work environment," Heslep said. "It helps them get some references and connections in the business world. It kind of beefs up that resume for them a little bit. I think that's a real strength."

"Another strength of the program is our co-curricular student organization FBLA Collegiate, the largest business student organization in the United States. It's a great way for students to participate in competitive events, participate in conferences and take on leadership roles."



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## What Will I Study?

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- ✓ Business Ethics
- ✓ Principles of Macroeconomics
- ✓ Business Leadership and Decision Making
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## What's the Job Outlook?

A business administration degree can be applied across a variety of job fields making the graduate highly employable. Information about specific job areas, including additional required education or training, is available at [careeronestop.org](http://careeronestop.org), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.

### A sample of job growth projections through 2030 includes:

- » Business Operations Analyst, 42% job growth
- » Logistician/Supply Chain, 35% job growth
- » Marketing Specialist, 24% job growth
- » Human Resources Manager, 11% job growth
- » Commercial Banker, 10% job growth
- » IT Project Manager, 10% job growth

This degree also provides a solid foundation for those looking to open their own business. Per Hubspot.com, entrepreneurship has been trending upward in the United States for the past 19 years, with nearly 5.4 million new businesses registered in 2021.

## How Can I Learn More?

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A group of four people, two men and two women, are standing outdoors in front of a brick building with large windows. The woman on the far left is wearing a black velvet dress and glasses. The man next to her is wearing a blue button-down shirt and glasses. The woman in the center is wearing a blue top and a large, colorful geometric patterned poncho. The man on the far right is wearing a dark suit, a light blue tie, and glasses. They are all smiling at the camera. The photo is framed by a large, stylized circular graphic with a white border and a teal background.

# THIS YEAR'S ALL-STAR LINEUP

*The 2022 All Star designees have been announced, denoting the best among staff, faculty, students and alumni. Individuals selected in these respective categories have distinguished themselves inside the classroom and out, serving the university and community at large – some for many years. They represent the highest ideals of ASU-Mountain Home, and for that, we are proud to tell their stories here.*

# A VOICE for OTHERS

» Elsie Clark always knew she wanted her life's work to help people, a desire leading her into the therapeutic medical field. The second-year liberal arts and sciences student intends to earn her degree in communication disorders and sciences.

"I'm really interested in communication and the art of speaking, and I've always been really interested in the sciences," she said. "My ultimate goal is to teach college-level courses in this field."

It's fitting for Clark to engage in such a profession, which literally helps people find their voice, as that's what she's done in a figurative sense through her collegiate extracurricular activities.

"I'm a chapter officer of Phi Theta Kappa (academic honorary) here," she said. "I'm leading meetings and talking with students and trying to be a voice for people who do not have the ability or don't want to speak up for themselves."

"It takes a lot of practice and guidance to speak for someone else and do it factually and with good intent. I learned a lot through my instructors, faculty advisors and faculty sponsors."

Clark also got involved with the Student Government Association, an activity advancing her philosophy of representing others, which took her well outside of her comfort zone.

"(Student government) was never something I had an interest in," she said. "They sent out this announcement when they were

starting it back up after COVID, and at that time I was wanting to get more involved on campus. I started as vice president and last semester they voted me president.

"I just grew a passion for it as I went along, and I got to learn something new. That's always what I strive for — to take those chances and learn new things."

Born in Paragould, Clark spent a portion of her growing up in Mountain View before moving to Mountain Home a few years ago. Her early years in public school were difficult, which might explain her passion for helping people communicate and process language.

"I wasn't doing well at traditional public schooling," she said. "After fourth grade in public school, my parents switched me because I was starting to fall behind. They wanted to try alternative methods."

Home-schooling proved to be the answer, and Clark turned into an eager and willing student. She said the home-schooling model taught her more than just subject matter; it included time management and accountability, something particularly useful in college.

"(Home-schooling is) more about a well-rounded education that sometimes public schools cannot give," she said. "Being home-schooled, I was used to being responsible for my own education. I was expected to sit down and do my work and then go on with my day. I was really in charge of what I studied and practiced and things like that."

"When you get into a college course, it's really on you to make sure you do

your work, turn in your work, show up to class. So, college really came quite naturally to me."

Clark's decision to attend ASU-Mountain Home came almost by happenstance — she completed her GED there, during which time the instructor suggested she visit the admissions office. Upon finding out she qualified for a scholarship, she reported for class two months later and hasn't looked back since.

"The campus is so well-structured and the architecture is just beautiful," she said. "I had such a good experience in adult education that I felt if I did come here, I would have that same great experience with the rest of my instructors, which has been true. The faculty and staff here are just amazing."

"ASUMH does not give their students limits. They let you run as far as you want to run until you drop, you know?"

Following graduation, Clark plans to continue her studies at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. Her advice to other ASUMH students is, not surprisingly, to immerse themselves in the university's many opportunities.

"College is really about engagement and learning about others and being friends and going to campus events," she said. "Ask questions, get involved in clubs and do as much as you can or want to do. Even if this is all the higher education you're going to have, make sure it's not just all about your classes, your grades and what other people think. Make sure you've enjoyed it."



# ALL-STAR LINEUP

**ELSIE  
CLARK  
ACADEMIC  
ALL-STAR**



ALL-STAR LINEUP



ALLEN  
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ALUMNI  
OF THE  
YEAR

PHOTO BY JAMES MOORE



# THE RAINMAKER

» After nearly two decades in banking, during which time he's risen to the rank of senior vice president of First Security Bank, Allen Moore has had a hand in building his community to the tune of millions, funding one dream at a time.

Getting here has taken education, training, business acumen and an undying faith in Main Street America. In fact, you could say he's always been a small-town kid at heart.

"I grew up in Ash Flat, which is about an hour east of Mountain Home," he said. "I chose ASU-Mountain Home because they offered a full-tuition scholarship based on my ACT score, and it was close to home. I loved the campus and the beautiful setting there.

"Being from Ash Flat, with a population of about 1,000, and going to Mountain Home with a population of 12,000, that was a big city for me. It was a good stepping stone from there to Fayetteville where I completed my bachelor's degree at the University of Arkansas."

After earning an associate of art degree from ASUMH, Moore tackled his Bachelor of Science degree in accounting. As the first in his family to graduate from college, everything about his experience took some getting used to.

"ASU-Mountain Home did a great job of helping make the transition (to college) easier," he said. "What stood out to me is how approachable everyone on campus was, just their willingness to listen and

engage and accommodate. ASU-Mountain Home gave me a good foundation and a good transition from the community college setting to the university setting."

While attending ASU-Mountain Home, Moore took an entry-level job with First Security Bank, beginning a career that continues to this day. He transferred to a Fayetteville branch while finishing his undergrad.

"I've literally done every job from teller on up," he said with a chuckle. "After graduating from the University of Arkansas, I had the opportunity to come back here and continue my banking career with First Security. So, I moved back here in December of 2007 and continued to work with the bank.

"The primary driver to come back was to be close to family. Family is very important to me. I met my wife, Lauren, while we were both going to school at ASU-Mountain Home, and once I finished my degree at Fayetteville, she was ready to come home. It just worked out great."

Upon returning to his old stomping grounds, Moore set about the business of helping others fund their dreams through lending and encouraging savings. He's also remained connected to his alma mater.

"I was asked to join the ASUMH alumni board," he said. "As an organization, I think it's important for us to focus on things that connect people back to the university, something that the alumni can point to and can see, feel and touch and feel like they're a part of.

"Last year I served as the chairman of our local chamber of commerce board, and that has connected me to ASU-Mountain Home as well. A community college is really key to a successful rural community. Those things kind of go hand in hand."

Through his leadership roles, Moore hopes to preserve and enhance the excellent educational programs he experienced during his time at the university.

"Going back almost 20 years now, what I really enjoyed in the classroom was we had some healthy debates, whether it was in science classes or through economics," he said. "That really challenged my thinking. There were more diverse perspectives than what I had in a graduating class of 100 in high school, among people I'd probably known most of my life.

"In college, I experienced new faces and new ideas, and that was something that I really enjoyed. ASU-Mountain Home was small enough to where they knew who you were, but it was in a big enough setting for me that it allowed for good healthy debate."

Moore also has a message for future students, words as relevant today as when he first delivered them in his ASUMH commencement address.

"Take advantage of the opportunities that are there," he said. "There are so many people who just stop and don't keep pursuing their education. I just want to convey the message that you can do it, and you can do it here in Mountain Home."

# NUMBERS DON'T LIE



Dr. David Bendler felt his heart sink into his shoes. He'd just fielded a question during his job interview with Arkansas Technical College, now ASU-Mountain Home, and his characteristically straightforward answer had gotten ahead of him.

"During the interview I said, 'I don't think math is the most important thing,' then immediately thought, 'Oh, I just blew it,'" he said. "The interviewer looked at me kind of funny, and I said, 'Well, character, in my mind, is a lot more important. Anybody can learn math, but character needs encouragement. What is your word worth to you?'"

Bendler's candor carried the day, beginning a decades-long career which had begun in the high school classroom and would now firmly root itself at the college until his retirement last spring. Much would change over that time; standing before nearly five decades worth of students, he saw style, fashion and vernacular shift practically with each passing year. He'd even stay long enough to teach from afar thanks to the pandemic, loathsome though Zoom calls are to his educator's soul.

Even the numbers changed, or at least the learning of them, providing brilliant moments of illumination and discovery which brought him back year after year.

"I was grading a high schooler's test one time, and they were not answering the question the way I thought they should," he said. "They got the right answer, but I

marked it wrong. Then I got to a student who did something similar but this time, when I looked at the work, I saw it was mathematically correct. So, I went back and looked at all the other ones I'd marked wrong. There were five different ways to solve that one problem.

"From that point on, I approached my work as there are lots of ways to get from point A to point B. I would tell them in class, 'If you show me the work and the work is correct, even though I didn't do it the same way you did, you're going to get full credit for it.'"

This epiphany was one among many for the 75-year-old Bendler, whose love of teaching is rivaled only by his love of learning, both personally and through his students. Raised outside of Chicago, Bendler graduated from Andrews University in Michigan with a bachelor's degree in engineering and from the University of Michigan with a bachelor's in electrical engineering. Engineering jobs followed, then he completed his master's degree in urban teacher education from Governors State University in Illinois.

In 1977, he moved to Mountain Home, teaching all grades of high school math and chemistry in Gainesville, Missouri. He would put in 15 years there, including the baptism by fire year every educator knows.

"The first year wasn't too bad; the second year it really hit me," he said. "There was a definite learning curve of delivering the material and doing it fluently so the

kids could understand. Patience is a huge thing, and I learned that at the high school level."

Bendler taught part time at ASUMH while teaching in Gainesville. He finally decided to get the necessary credentials to land a full-time gig at ASUMH, pursuing another master's degree from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. Once on the faculty, he spent 29 blissful years as a valuable asset both inside the classroom and out. He served on many faculty committees through the years, ones he thought would most directly benefit students, including the curriculum committee, the scholarship committee and the library committee, to name a few.

If it weren't for COVID bringing a shift to distance learning, he might be in the classroom still, but being separated from students was a hurdle he just couldn't clear. He retired last May, thankful for the many years and thousands of students he got to experience during his run.

"I loved the students, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with colleagues — laughing with them, joking with them, sometimes crying with them," he said. "When you get to know people that well and you work with them for 15, 20, some of them 25 years, it's a bittersweet decision to retire.

"In fact, I'm thinking very seriously about going back if they need somebody to teach a college algebra class, just to keep that touch. There are so many good memories, and I miss the classroom already."



DR. DAVID  
BENDLER  
FACULTY  
OF THE  
YEAR



# ALL-STAR LINEUP

LACIE  
PHARIS  
STAFF  
MEMBER  
OF THE  
YEAR



# LIGHTING the WAY

» Nearly every day Lacie Pharis is on the job with the ASU-Mountain Home Admissions Department, she finds herself across the desk from another version of herself. As enrollment services coordinator, her official job description includes processing applications, providing students help with the necessary documentation and getting their feet pointed in the right direction.

But what she's really in the business of is setting students up for success, believing in them even when they lack the confidence to believe in themselves.

"We have a lot of nontraditional students here, a lot of people who are in their 30s or 40s and they're scared to go to college," she said. "Having someone here to talk to who's been there, someone who has kids and works a job and still took on the class caseload and successfully did it, helps them know that they can do it, too."

Pharis was born and raised in West Memphis, Arkansas, and moved to Salem in 1998 after high school. She holds three associate degrees from ASU-Mountain Home and is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree from Arkansas State University. Getting this far, she didn't follow the traditional route or timetable, either in school or at work.

"I didn't start college here until 2012," she said. "I worked at Powell True Value up until then. When that closed, I decided

to take the opportunity to go to college. I graduated in 2015, and when I became a full-time employee in 2019, I went back to school and got some more degrees.

"I started as a work-study back in 2013, and then I worked part time in marketing for a while. When this full-time position came up, I applied for it, and I've been in admissions ever since."

Pharis said what she enjoys most about her job is helping students get off to a running start, regardless of their background. It's a responsibility she takes seriously, along with the rest of her admissions department colleagues.

"We work with the whole school," she said. "We work with other members of the staff and faculty to try and work together to get things done so everyone is in the loop. When we hand people off to someone else, we walk them over to the person and say, 'Hi, this is so-and-so. Can you sit down with them for a minute?'"

"We're very personable here and take people where they need to be. We'll help them along instead of just saying, 'Oh no, you need to go over there and do that.' That's not just me, that's anyone up here. That's just what we do."

In addition to her work, Pharis is also a mother of four. Her son, Charles, is a student at ASUMH, making her particularly empathetic to parents' concerns and questions.

"I have been there as a parent, and so I enjoy helping other parents through the processes and things they might not think of," she said. "Many of them are scared about their child not being at home. I assure them that their kids are OK; if they need us, they can come up to admissions and talk to us. We have people here to help your child if they need help."

"There have been several times I've been like, 'I know how you feel. I have kids; I work. I've stressed out like crazy, but I had good people helping me.' We're all here to help."

The ultimate payoff to her job, Pharis said, is to be the one who gives a little extra motivation to a student and seeing their attitude change as a result.

"When they leave saying, 'I feel so much better now. Thank you so much,' that's the best reward ever," she said. "When someone says, 'I'm so excited to come to school now. I was scared, but now I'm excited,' that makes everything worth it right there."

As for being named this year's All Star among staff, Pharis said it was an honor she never expected but one she finds deeply meaningful.

"I was shocked, but I'm really happy," she said. "This wasn't something the administration just gave me. It came from a vote of the people I work with and even some of the people I don't work closely with but who I have helped every now and then. That means a lot to me." ■

ASUMH students in the Criminal Justice Club work a staged crime scene to gain real world knowledge outside of the classroom.



## | CAMPUS CLUBS

# LAW & ORDER

## Criminal Justice Club enhances classroom work

by DWAIN HEBDA

Angel Ray didn't set out to study criminal justice, but when her original plan to study nursing fell through, she began looking around at other options. Criminal justice gave her similar opportunities to help people and make a difference.

Along the way, she discovered the Criminal Justice Club and today considers the organization to be as key to her education as her classroom work.

"What I enjoy the most is that we are very close," she said. "There is nothing forbidden, and everything's always on the table. We work with the community and provide our services to community events. We also have speakers and other activities that help us start to think outside the box and see the big picture in society."

The club meets twice a month and seeks to provide students with additional training opportunities outside the classroom, said Tim Bentley, faculty adviser. A retired police officer, Bentley uses his contacts in law enforcement to provide speakers and other experiences for club members' benefit.

"We've done tours of the Baxter County jail, and they have talked with the sheriff," he said. "One time we had a big discussion about use of force in law enforcement. We had FBI agents come over here and discuss specific cases or talk to our students about color of law investigations, meaning is the amount of force used by a particular officer under the color of law? Was it appropriate?"

Bentley said the goal is to provide real-world issues for discussion, expose students to the many opportunities within the criminal justice system and provide a balanced look at a profession that's often maligned in the media.

"I want them to realize that there's more to criminal justice than just being a police officer," he said. "There are opportunities in the court system, there're opportunities in juvenile probation and adult probation and parole."

"Law enforcement's taken a pretty hard hit and a pretty bad rap here in recent years, but I've been around people in law enforcement and criminal justice my whole life, and I think they're special

people. I think they're special people who do a special job, and most are in that business because that's what they want to do. They're there for the right reasons."

Ray is one prime example; she has a career path picked out for after graduation that she credits in part to the things she learned as part of the club.

"I want to take this and go into the mental health profession so I can help those who have mental health issues, with deviancies and behavioral problems," she said. "I can work with inmates one-on-one and try to help them, like a restorative process. Or a juvenile who's been in trouble; I want to be able to provide them someone to talk to."

"People in this situation often don't have any social outlet, and that's why they keep getting in trouble. If somebody's there for them, maybe we can stop that circle of violence, that circle of misconduct." ■



**"I want them to realize that there's more to criminal justice than just being a police officer."**  
— Tim Bentley, faculty adviser and retired police officer



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— David and Lisa Hays

# Let's Go, Trailblazers!

*New ASUMH athletics programs taking flight*

by DWAIN HEBDA

The Trailblazers Era is upon us. ASU-Mountain Home fielded teams in four sports this year, with another team in the wings, providing a new aspect of campus life for students and the community to enjoy. Baseball, softball, cross country and bass fishing all began their first season of play in 2022, competing as part of the National Junior College Athletic Association with esports, currently in the organizational phase, to follow shortly.

"With the influx of junior colleges starting sports programs in the state of Arkansas, we had the opportunity to get out in front of a bunch of other schools that were about to start athletic programs," said Spencer Adcock, head baseball coach and athletic

director. "Our leadership wanted to get in front of that rather than be a follower."

Adcock, who was brought on over the summer, has been running at break-neck speed to get the programs ready to compete for the 2022-2023 school year. That included everything from recruiting athletes to ordering gear to firming up competition schedules.

"Ideally, we would have liked to have had more time to recruit and get things set in place because you're not just talking about recruiting, you're talking about recruiting, finding facilities, ordering jerseys and scheduling games," he said. "A lot of programs will take a year to do that. But everybody's first year is a struggle. There's

a lot to learn; if we'd had a year to prepare, we'd still be changing a lot of stuff anyway."

Adcock said the sports programs are a win-win for student-athletes and the university alike. He said the impact of collegiate sports programs reaches farther than a lot of people think, from enhancing campus life to attracting students to connecting with the larger community.

"ASUMH has a lot to offer, with really good academic programs," he said. "A lot of these kids on the athletic teams may not have known about that had it not been for baseball, softball or cross country."

"On the other hand, a lot of schools right now, their enrollment numbers are down because of COVID and a lot of people going

## » THE FOLLOWING ATHLETES ARE BLAZING THEIR OWN TRAIL!

### Devin Overshine

SOFTBALL

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

*Devin Overshine didn't graduate Truman High School with the goal of playing college softball. Instead, college softball found her.*

"I quit softball after high school," the right-hander said. "I went to ASU-Newport, and my dad got a call from Coach (Jennifer) Rowe who was like, 'We really need your daughter on the team. One of our pitchers got hurt, and we don't have anybody else.'"

"I told my dad I thought I should play again. It felt like I left the game with unfinished business, and I really needed to prove some things to myself."

**"I wanted to prove to myself I could be a college athlete, and I think I've done that."**





online. The biggest compliment we get is that we're bringing everybody on campus. The faculty loves to see that because there's a different level of engagement."

While the long-term goal is to offer players athletic scholarships, the first crop is largely here playing on their own dime. Some of the Trailblazers have already gained attention from larger schools after they leave, but for most, getting the chance to compete at the college level represents a dream fulfilled. To do it while holding a special place in the history of the university is a bonus, Adcock said.

"This is a special time period; everything these kids do, whether it's baseball, softball, cross country or bass fishing, is going to be a school record," he said. "People might try for years to break those records. Being a part of those very first years is really cool. You are literally blazing a trail for everybody else."

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

To support or learn more about athletics, contact the Athletic Director at [spencera@asumh.edu](mailto:spencera@asumh.edu).

Enrolled in softball at age three by her mother as an outlet for making friends and expending energy while her father was deployed, Overshine quickly fell in love with the game. Under her father's tutelage, she dominated club and high school ball, earning all-conference and multiple player of the week honors her sophomore year. But after a junior season canceled by COVID and a disappointing senior season, she hung it up at graduation thinking she'd never look back.

Instead, she's working to get the Trailblazers off to a fast start in the program's first year.

"I do want to be competitive, but at the same time I want to have fun," she said. "I wanted to prove to myself I could be a college athlete, and I think I've done that. Now I'm all about trying to help the team as much as I can so when I leave, we'll be a better program than we started off."



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# Joseph Coon

BASEBALL

## MAN ON A MISSION

*Joseph Coon can't remember a time he wasn't playing baseball. The Texas native has been throwing and hitting practically from the time he could walk.*

**"I want to see how good I can get and see how far I can go, but I'm content wherever God leads me."**

"I've always wanted to play baseball at the highest level possible," he said. "When I was younger, I thought of it like this: my short-term goal is to play college baseball, and my long-term goal is to go and play professional baseball. In doing that, I put a lot of pressure on myself. I've learned that in baseball, you can't put that much pressure on yourself. It's a very mental game, and it can just tear you down."

# Jordan Ritenburg

CROSS COUNTRY

## THE ONE AND ONLY

*To say she is one of a kind is figuratively and literally accurate.*

Among her classmates at Mountain Home High School, only she can claim to have withstood the climate extremes of being born in Buffalo, New York, and raised from age 11 to 15 in Florida.

Entering her first year at ASU-Mountain Home, Ritenburg earned the additional distinction of being the first runner to compete in intercollegiate competition for the school. In fact, she's the ONLY runner, male or female, to have laced up for the Trailblazers in this, the school's inaugural season.

**"I had some opportunities to go away, and I just found (ASUMH) to be the best option for me."**





"Now, I just focus on how much I love baseball. I want to see how good I can get and see how far I can go, but I'm content wherever God leads me."

Thus far, the game has led the right-handed infielder to ASU-Mountain Home's inaugural Trailblazers baseball team where, with just one fall mini-season under his belt, he's already catching the attention of larger programs.

While it's exciting to know the next step of his dream is on the horizon, Coon has learned not to let what lies ahead distract him from the here and now, setting a firm foundation for the program.

"I want us to go big here because that helps the program, and that's what gets guys looked at," he said. "It would be really cool for Arkansas to look at us and know we're the state's top junior college program and we produce really good guys."

"It's just me right now," she said. "I am it."

Ritenburg, 18, has been running competitively since sixth grade, making it to the state championships in her final two seasons of high school and placing second in her senior year. Along the way, she set her sights on running at the collegiate level.

"I was a little nervous about going far from home," she said. "I had some opportunities to go away, and I just found (ASUMH) to be the best option for me."

Ritenburg's lack of teammates means the onus of training, including road work and time in the gym, rests on her own shoulders. In a sport already known for solitude, her ability to motivate herself is impressive.

"I really enjoy it," she said. "It's an awesome opportunity to get to go here and stay local. I really love representing the Trailblazers, and I hope in the future we get some more runners."



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# Jackson Jones

## BASS FISHING

### FAMILY TRADITION

*Trailblazer bass fisherman Jackson Jones holds the unique distinction of being on the first NJCAA fishing team in ASUMH history, yet in doing so he continues a family legacy.*

That's because before the school organized a competitive team, fishing was a club sport led by Jones' brother Justin.

"My brother was the president of the fishing club in their inaugural year. All three years he was there, he ran it," said Jackson, 19. "He led them and really made the club what it is today. I'm just trying to follow in his footsteps."

Jones, a graduate of Mountain Home High School, came to college hoping to play baseball. When that didn't pan out, bass fishing was the next logical alternative, given he'd competed in high school. Now he's preparing to lead this historic team as it begins its quest to compete at the highest level of competition.

"To be the best, you've got to work at it every day," he said. "I'm currently out on the water fishing three days a week, plus weekends when I can. Even on the days I have class and can't get out there, I'm doing my homework after my real homework, studying everything I can study about the largemouth and smallmouth bass."

"There is so much that goes into it. It's more than just sitting out there with a sinker and a bobber and line and waiting. It's work. You go out there, and you work. It's completely different than leisure fishing."



**"To be the best, you've got to work at it every day."**



### ESPORTS

## A WHOLE NEW GAME

In case you hadn't noticed, video games aren't just for killing time anymore. For proof of that, just look at what's underway at ASU-Mountain Home. The school's esports team — as competitive gaming squads are called — will soon lead the Trailblazers into a new and fast-growing competitive world.

The Trailblazers have about 25 players in the program, who will break into teams of three to six individuals depending on

the game. The program is currently in its organizational phase in the hopes of starting competition in the near future.

Sara Anderson, ASUMH testing center coordinator and team sponsor, said one big reason for the rise in esports is its inclusive nature.

"It's all walks of life in that room, but they're all on the same team," she said. "You're coming together and playing on equal ground. It doesn't matter gender, size, athleticism; it's all about equality in that esports center."



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## | ASUMH ALUMNI UPDATES

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### CLASS OF 2003

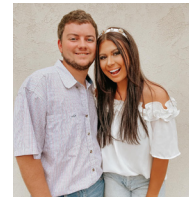
**Bonnie Kenney** started ASUMH in January 2000 as a non-traditional student. She planned to upgrade her secretarial skills and re-enter the job market after a 10-year absence. While attending, she developed a passion for learning. After graduating with an A.A.S. in Information Systems Technology, she continued her educational journey by earning a B.S. from John Brown University in Organizational Management in 2005. Bonnie completed the online Master of Education in Information Science & Learning Technology in 2009 at University of Missouri - Columbia. A few years later, she went to work for the Army National Guard at Camp Robinson as an Instructional Designer and then at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in 2013, also as an Instructional Designer. While at UAMS, I was promoted to Assistant Professor. Now retired in 2021, she would never have had the professional opportunities that I did without my start at ASUMH. It's never too late to change direction!

### CLASS OF 2010

**Terry Lippis/Kidd** moved to Seward, Alaska, in 2019 and became certified with the CDC for Infection Preventionist. She purchased a home in Soldotna, Alaska, and is now working with people battling addiction. It's a field she had no experience in and has discovered it is completely amazing. Just a gal and her dog running around the roads of Alaska!

### CLASS OF 2011

**McKenzie Jackson** completed her Associate of Arts degree at ASUMH and went on to ASU-Jonesboro to obtain her Bachelor's degree. She then attended Louisiana State University to obtain her Master's in Business Administration (MBA). Currently she is working as the Director of Admissions at Ozarka College.



### CLASS OF 2017

**Brooke Grissum** is the new Marketing Specialist at Ultimate Auto Group and owner of the online boutique, Bloom Babe Boutique. Brooke and husband Charlie Grissum are in the midst of a home remodel and are proud parents to two bulldogs, Beef and Dumplin.



### CLASS OF 2018

**Casey Whitfield** graduated in 2018, then attended A-STATE where she received her bachelors in Strategic Communications. Now, she works for a privately owned apartment complex in Springfield as the assistant manger and leasing agent.

### CLASS OF 2019

**Rhiannon Casey** recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in marketing at Missouri State in Springfield, MO and is working towards her masters degree in communication at A-State.

### CLASS OF 2020

**Riya Patel** is graduating from University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, AR in the Summer of 2023 with a BSc in Biology.

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# Honoring the Past,

*Funding the Future.* by DWAIN HEBDA

In the world of higher education, Sharron Chinn is not your prototypical benefactor. She's not an alum of ASU-Mountain Home, nor has she amassed great monetary wealth to devote to such a cause. When pressed, she's even a little hazy on details about when the scholarship she's established will first be awarded.

But in all the ways that matter, the 73-year-old is the model by which any college or university would like their students to be measured — hardworking, persevering in difficult circumstances and thoroughly committed to being the best person she can be through self-improvement and caring about the people around her.

Chinn's early years were spent between Lincoln, Arkansas, and the Pacific Northwest where her parents would annually pack the brood to work the fields. From the time she could recognize a ripe strawberry, about 5 or 6 by her estimate, Chinn joined her siblings in lending a hand, picking berries, beans, apples and in Arkansas, cotton.

"As kids, we didn't know we were poor because everybody around us was exactly the same," she said. "We understood the concept of family and sticking together and making it all work."

She and her siblings attended school in various vicinities according to their farm work, but attend they did, at her mother's insistence. Chinn said her father's formal schooling lasted about six months, so crippling was his anxiety being around others. Her mother's fifth-grade education was put to use reading to her husband every night, and she was determined her children would read on their own.

Despite these efforts, Chinn remembers being at a disadvantage compared to her peers, and she had to work extra hard to make her grades.

"When I had to do a paper or a report in high school, I had to do it over the lunch break or something like that," she said. "We didn't have any reference books at home to look things up. We just had a dictionary and cookbooks."

Chinn graduated from high school in Oregon with a dream of being a medical lab tech but lacked the self-confidence to believe she could do it. So, she completed a one-year course as a medical assistant and went to work in a doctor's office as the receptionist.

"I liked it; I liked the medical field," she said. "I liked the fact that there were people who believed in what I could do. I just liked it, period."

Encouraged, she'd enroll in nursing school in Louisiana, but when her mother took ill, she dropped out of school and never went back. Life took over and brought with it a husband, children and new addresses. In 2000, she married a second time, to Elroy Chinn, a widower who one day suggested the couple move to Arkansas where they settled in Midway.

Elroy Chinn offers a backstory as interesting as Sharron's.

Denied an education as a youth, he was nonetheless successful in his working life and learned to read at the age of 84 by attending the Twin Lakes Literacy Council in Mountain Home, earning national and international student honors prior to his death in 2011.

For Sharron, there is no more perfect tribute to both of their journeys than by establishing the Elroy and Sharron Chinn Scholarship for Women.

"I thought back to when I went to school," she said. "It was difficult because I knew that I was obligated with a loan when I graduated. I want this money to be used for a young woman who sincerely wants to benefit herself, with no other strings attached."

"I'd like to meet the recipients; I'd like to see who is going to carry on this tradition. Most of all, I want them to know that someone cares about them and believes in them. I'd want them to feel like whatever they want to do in life, they can do it." ■



Sharron Chinn in the Vada Sheid Community Development Center.



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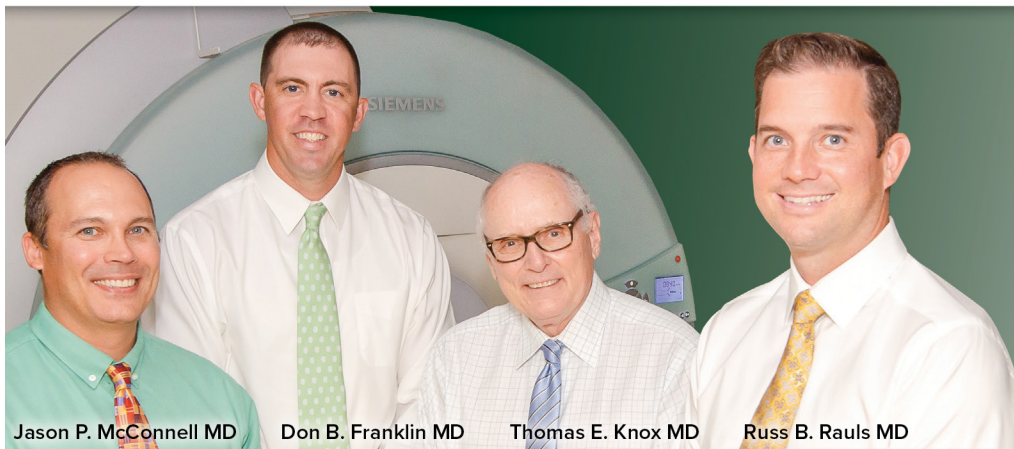


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(From left) Kelly Householder-Giuliano, Caroline Kraft Carroll, Gayla Thompson, Katie King Risk, Denise Clarke, Terre Ware, Deb Peterson and Lang Zimmerman.

## | COMMUNITY RENEWAL

# Bravo!

## ASUMH Performing Arts Council's 11th Entertainment Season

by DWAIN HEBDA

The 11th season of the ASU-Mountain Home performing arts series kicked off in October, continuing the tradition of bringing top-quality entertainment to the campus and community.

This year's series featured performances of "Swan Lake," "BritBeat: A Tribute to the Beatles" and "Million Dollar Quartet Christmas" and in early 2023 will host "Neil Berg's 50 Years of Rock & Roll" and "The Jungle Book" musical, part of the Arvest Concert Series. The lineup is the result of a finely tuned partnership between the university and the Performing Arts Council.

Caroline Carroll, head of the Performing Arts Council, has played a role in the series ever since the beginning.

"I think our first show was the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, and that was a huge hit," Carroll said. "Phillip Mann, the conductor, was brand new to the symphony and he was quite a show himself. So, our first season really took off. Since then, we try to have a musical, a play, we try to bring

in Broadway shows. It's a variety of things."

Today, Mountain Home patrons look forward to the performances brought to town to play ASUMH's Ed Coulter Performing Arts Center located in the Vada Sheid Community Development Center. But when Coulter, founding chancellor of ASUMH, expressed his vision for creating a performance series, it sounded to some as too grandiose a goal for a community the size of Mountain Home. Yet here it is today, and the series is still going strong, 11 years later.

"Our purpose as a council was to act in an advisory capacity by offering recommendations regarding the type and timing of the performing series events," Carroll said of the early days. "There was a theater season series of shows at the high school then, and so we had a little bit of knowledge of what performances the community liked.

"But this was different; we were more hands-on, we needed to get patrons and we needed to get sponsors to get the money

to help us bring in some of these shows."

Throughout its tenure, the series has been buoyed by the generosity of corporate sponsors, endowment funding and individuals with a love for the arts. Some donors wanted their funds to go to a specific type of programming, which brought about the Christmas show and productions with cultural significance, which are now highly anticipated on the local calendar.

"The performing arts series really brought out people from the community who gave a lot of money toward these shows," Carroll said. "There are very generous people in Mountain Home, and a lot has grown from this as a result."

An easy and affordable way to help keep the performing arts alive and well in Mountain Home is by becoming an ASUMH Performing Arts Patron. Each level of patronage delivers added benefits while helping to bring quality productions to campus. To learn more, please visit [thesheid.com](http://thesheid.com). ■





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