Authors
Cate Weeks, Shane Bevell, Erin O'Donnell, Eric Leake, Lori Bachand, David G. Schwartz, and David Ashley
THE QUESTIONS WE'RE ASKING FOR

Beautiful Minds, Healthy Bodies

Are these shoes hurting his knees?
Can a killer be a cure?
Is your weekend warrior suffering?
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Got memorabilia? UNLV wants your stuff for anniversary exhibit.
Our Role in Improving Health Care

In my conversations this fall with alumni and community members, one question often came up: How will the proposed University of Nevada Health Sciences Center affect UNLV?

With limited resources and a booming population to serve, higher education leaders are looking for ways to address Nevada’s pressing health issues. The Health Sciences Center is one statewide solution being proposed. It will take advantage of the strengths of each of the state’s higher education institutions by integrating health education, research, and patient services.

So what is UNLV’s role in this?

First, it is to be a partner with our sister institutions — especially the University of Nevada, Reno. While UNR’s new president, Milton Glick, and I will remain rivals on the athletic field, we are committed to a holistic approach to enhancing the educational experiences we offer future health-care providers. This summer we sat down with system officials to determine how to better coordinate our efforts. In August, the Board of Regents signed off on an unprecedented agreement to create a fundraising foundation for the proposed Health Sciences Center. The health sciences foundation will be jointly managed by the UNLV and UNR foundations.

Second, UNLV’s role in educating future health professionals will continue to expand. As the largest university in Nevada, we have already made great strides in increasing the programs we offer, most notably in providing advanced degrees in such critical areas as public health, nursing, dental medicine, and physical therapy. This will help ensure that all institutions in Nevada will be able to fill their classes with well-qualified instructors.

At the same time, we are expanding undergraduate classes to accommodate more students and working to ensure that students who transfer from the state’s community colleges transition easily into UNLV’s upper-division courses.

Third, our role in advancing research will continue. The vision for the Health Sciences Center is to bring together researchers and health-care providers in a setting that will foster new medical developments and delivery of integrated health care. A conversation with the professors featured in this issue of the magazine will give you an idea of just how eager they are for the center to develop. They foresee the ways in which the center will help extend their work in the lab to real-world applications.

Finally, our role in providing much-needed services to the community cannot be understated. The UNLV School of Dental Medicine, for example, is doing much more than providing low-cost services to thousands of patients. Its students and faculty members are traveling across the state to screen students for oral cancer and are launching outreach programs to serve victims of domestic abuse. The School of Public Health has worked with state health officials to remove candy tainted with lead from store shelves. The list of public outreach programs is extensive and growing.

We hope that, as graduates and friends of UNLV, you will support our efforts to improve the educational infrastructure for health-care education.
What’s it like to be a Rebel today?

What do students think about hip-hop music and stereotypes? Plastic surgery? The new union? UNLV journalism and media studies students are reaching beyond the Rebel Yell paper to explore campus news and culture. Fortunately, you can listen in.

Launched last spring, the student-run Rebcast programs grew out of professor Cathy Hanson’s podcasting class, Exploding Radio. Some shows are just plain fun — check out Garret Heinrich and Chris Palmer’s offbeat sports show — but students aren’t shying away from tough topics. Last semester Lindsay Johnson’s “Sex and University” tackled binge drinking and the juggling act for single moms in school. This semester the “Roving Reporter” will take a look at local and national politics.

The podcasting class is part of a drive in the Greenspun School of Journalism & Media Studies to prepare students for rapidly evolving media careers. This semester the students are expanding with video. “There will still be some specialization, but media is requiring employees to provide content in a variety of media,” Hanson says. “Newspaper reporters have to blog and provide podcast interviews in addition to their print story. Broadcasters have to develop resources on station websites for listeners to explore topics in more detail.”

Survey Says …

In the spring, UNLV Magazine surveyed readers to find out if we’re capturing your attention. While you rated us highly in some areas — great feature articles and photography — you also told us where we can improve. We’ll use the results over the next year to revitalize some sections and bring you more of what you said you like. Our thanks to those who took the time to respond. Here’s some of what you told us:

- “Need meaty articles that appeal to a thinking mind. UNLV Magazine spends too many words on self-congratulation.”
- “More articles on the [fill in your major here].”
- “Try to get younger readers interested.”
- “My favorite part of the magazine is always seeing what my peers are up to. I like to track the people who graduated around when I did.”
- “Include more information on alumni outside Nevada.”
- “Take a few risks.”

Got More to Say? Magazine Welcomes Your Letters

We know you’re a diversely opinionated bunch. Let’s hear it. In the next issue of UNLV Magazine we will launch a section for letters to the editor. When a story touches you, angers you, or brings up a fond memory, we want to know. Our policy on printing letters is posted on our website at magazine.unlv.edu.

Write to us at:
UNLV Magazine
4505 Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1024
E-mail: magazine@unlv.edu.

80 percent say UNLV Magazine keeps you connected to what is happening at UNLV. And, 54 percent said the magazine was your number one source for university information, well ahead of the Internet (20 percent) and mainstream television/newspaper media (17 percent).

77 percent of you are interested in general UNLV news, followed by research (71 percent) and campus history (69 percent).

23 percent say they always read about Rebel sports — almost equal to the number who say the never do (25 percent).

90 percent rate the value of the education you received at UNLV as excellent or good. Alums from out of state were more likely to rate it as excellent (42 percent) than were local graduates (34 percent).
The Scarlet Letter?
_The Story Behind UNLV’s First Letterman Sweaters_

Alumnus James Bilbray unpacked his letter sweater for the upcoming exhibit to commemorate UNLV’s 50th anniversary. The former student body president was in the first class of students who earned a letter sweater. In 1959, he had attended a conference with student leaders from other colleges, most of whom sported the then-fashionable sweaters. Bilbray returned to campus and pitched the sweater idea to his fellow students. “I’ve always enjoyed the fact that the first letter sweaters on campus were for student government, rather than athletics,” the Las Vegas attorney says.

Bilbray is responsible for a few other campus firsts. It was his idea to adopt the freshman beanie, a common tradition at larger Eastern schools. Freshmen were supposed to wear the beanies on campus their first semester, but at UNLV the idea just didn’t take hold. “I guess it was the rebel coming out in the student body,” he says. “That, and we didn’t have any fountains to throw students into who were found violating the tradition.”

His class of student leaders also started University Days, which pitted the classes against one another in sporting events. The capstone event was a muddy tug-o-war.

Bilbray went on to become the first alumnus to serve in several public offices, including the state Legislature and Board of Regents as well as U.S. House of Representatives. He also was the founding president of the UNLV Alumni Association.

About That Mascot: Painted on the wood floor of the campus’s first gymnasium, now the Barrick Museum, was the first mascot on campus. “Beauregard” was the rebellious cousin of UNR’s Wolf Pack back when UNLV was just the southern division of UNR. At some point the mural was hidden beneath an ichthysaurus skeleton and long forgotten. When the dinosaur bones were moved in the late 1980s, Beauregard was rediscovered and restored to preserve a piece of campus history.
Clean Out Your Closets
Your Memorabilia Wanted for an Anniversary Exhibit of UNLV History

By Cate Weeks

You know it’s around somewhere — maybe tucked back in the closet under the stairs or stuffed into that box in the garage. Somewhere there’s a stash of stuff from your days at UNLV. Go dig it up.

The university is collecting memorabilia for a special exhibit on UNLV’s history and has put the call out for your collectibles. The exhibit, curated by the Barrick Museum, will open next fall as part of UNLV’s yearlong 50th anniversary celebration.

“The exhibit will celebrate the people who have been part of the Rebel family during the past 50 years,” says Schyler Richards, chair of the anniversary planning committee. “UNLV’s history is so much more than the buildings we’ve built and the programs we’ve added. We hope the people who have lived UNLV’s history will share their memorabilia and, more important, the stories behind the pieces.”

The exhibit — the biggest temporary exhibit the museum has hosted — will chronicle the evolution of UNLV since the 1957 opening of its first building, Maude Frazier Hall. Its photos and memorabilia will focus on campus life and the changing makeup of the student body, academic development, and architectural changes.

Barrick Museum curator Aurore Giguet emphasized that items don’t need to be old to be significant to the exhibit. “A CSUN flyer from two years ago is as important as an election button from the 1960s,” Giguet says. “It may actually be harder for us to find modern-day items. People don’t hold on to things as much these days, and they might not see its value yet.”

The exhibit will also highlight the university’s evolution as it relates to Southern Nevada’s growth. “Being such a young university, many of the people who contributed to our development were not students or faculty; they were local leaders who saw the value that a university brings to its community,” Richards says. “We hope they will also participate in the exhibit.”

Is Your Collectible Notable?
The memorabilia will be matched to historic photos from the UNLV Lied Library’s special collections. The university already has some items, like yearbooks, in its archives. Here are some things for you to look for:

- Sports and club uniforms, megaphones, freshman beanies, and homecoming sashes
- Report cards, acceptance letters, and other university correspondence
- Event programs, posters, and tickets
- Student government election paraphernalia
- Your own snapshots — “We have a collection of formal photographs done by campus photographers, but we don’t have any candid shots from, say, the ski club trip,” Giguet says.

Lending Process
During homecoming week, Oct. 30-Nov. 3, staff at the museum and in Tam Alumni Center will be available to collect your items.

You will be issued a receipt. Museum staff will then catalog the memorabilia.

If the piece doesn’t fit the exhibit, the curators will contact you to return the item. If your item is selected for the exhibit, you will be sent formal loan forms. After the exhibit, lenders will be contacted to make arrangements for collection or pieces may be donated permanently for future display.

More info: Share your memories and learn more about the exhibit by visiting celebrating50.unlv.edu or call 702-895-5946.

It Dawned on Smee
David Smee is an archaeological illustrator at UNLV’s Harry Reid Center for Environmental Studies.

“Hey Reb! We remember you as a kid in the Sixties. How have you kept in such great shape after all these years?”
Packing A Punch

UNLV Boxers Upset Military Academies to Win National Title

By Shane Bevell

Entering the final match of the 2006 National Collegiate Boxing Association (NCBA) championships, the UNLV boxing club was in an unfamiliar position. With the team title up for grabs, the Fighting Rebels had to cheer for one of its most bitter rivals. An Air Force win would give UNLV its first team title, while a loss would give Navy the title.

“We aren’t normally ones to cheer for (military) academy fighters because they are our biggest rivals, but we screamed our hearts out for the Air Force fighter,” says Greg Murrell, a junior history major.

When the official raised the Air Force boxer’s hand, UNLV had won the closest contest in the 30-year history of the event and became the first nonmilitary school to bring home the championship since 1993.

“We always knew that man-for-man we had the best individual boxers, but we just never had the depth on the team,” says head coach Skip Kelp, a former professional boxer who competed in the 1988 Olympic Trials at age 17 and won two national Golden Gloves championships. “We would qualify six or seven boxers for nationals and consistently win individual titles, but the team championship would elude us because the academies would come 12 strong. This year we had 11 committed boxers and four determined coaches.”

However, because two fighters couldn’t...
Kelp says he feared a nine-man roster would not be enough to topple the perennial national powers. “Losing two of our top boxers was definitely a blow, but we told everyone if they boxed like they were capable of boxing, we could still get the job done,” Kelp says. “The rest of the guys made a commitment and came together to carry the load.”

Looking to prove himself after losing at the regional tournament, Murrell upset three No. 1 seeds en route to winning his second national title. Sophomore Jason Morris, senior Jeff Watkins, and junior Jason Crocco all took second places in their divisions and return this season to defend UNLV’s team title.

Club Sport Challenges
Since boxing is a club sport not recognized by the NCAA and not affiliated with the university’s athletic department, it can’t offer scholarships. Just as with NCAA athletes, however, student-athletes must be pursuing a degree full-time at an accredited institution. Without scholarships, many of UNLV’s boxers work to put themselves through school. “Very few students would go through the demanding boxing program without receiving any sort of scholarship,” Kelp says. “It takes a special student-athlete to excel in this program, and we’ve been lucky to attract many of those students in our eight years of existence.”

The club started in 1998 when Kelp was watching the college boxing championships on television with Bruce Korbin, a friend and local businessman. “We basically agreed that UNLV should have a boxing team being that Las Vegas is the boxing capital of the world,” Kelp says.

Kelp, who has been the club’s only head coach, says he is proud of the team’s 90 percent graduation rate. “It’s a great feeling because the students didn’t come to school to become boxers; they came to get their education,” he says. “Boxing is an activity that builds character and enhances their college experience.”

Murrell is a good example of that, Kelp says.

Better Late Than Never
Murrell has been a standout since arriving at UNLV as a 22-year-old freshman. He got a late start on his college education because he served four years in the Army after graduating from high school.

The Army helped prepare Murrell for the rigors of being a student-athlete. “I can’t complain about running three miles or studying for finals when I think about walking in miserable Alaska conditions carrying an 80-pound rucksack,” he says. “The Army instills drive and motivation.”

Those qualities help Murrell juggle his daily schedule of school, training, and work. “My education is my safety net,” he says. “I want to be able to box professionally, but don’t want to keep fighting when it’s past my time and risk injury. Too many boxers have nothing else to fall back on when the money runs out, as it often does.”


A Family Affair:
It isn’t often that an athlete gets to play major college basketball with his father as the coach. But such is the case with UNLV graduate student Kevin Kruger.

Kruger enrolled in UNLV after learning that the NCAA now allows student-athletes with a year of eligibility remaining to transfer and play immediately when they have earned an undergraduate degree in four years. He will use his final year of eligibility at UNLV under his father, head coach Lon Kruger.

Having never played under his father, Kevin said it was an opportunity he couldn’t pass up. “To be close to my family and play for UNLV, an institution that has an exciting basketball tradition, will be a great experience.”

Although it could be seen as favoritism, Kruger, who is pursuing a master’s degree in sports education leadership, can hold his own. He was honorable mention All-Pac-10 last season averaging a team-high 15 points and a school-record 38.96 minutes per game at Arizona State.

Coach Kruger adds, “As a parent, it is a great opportunity to see my son every day rather than the three or four times a year I might see him otherwise. He has three years of Pac-10 experience and there is no substitute for experience.”

Senior guard Kameca Simmons is returning for the 2006-07 Lady Rebels season. The season opener is Nov. 12 against Pepperdine. It will be the first of six straight home games. Coach Regina Miller and the Lady Rebels also will face Michigan, DePaul, and the usual conference foes. For a complete schedule of Rebel sports, visit unlvrebels.cstv.com.
By Eric Leake

Rachel Flanigan, a senior in kinesiology, remembers growing up in Las Vegas and watching the championship Runnin’ Rebels games on television. She remembers the red-wigged fans and the towel-bitters. “That’s a side of UNLV that we always saw. It was a huge deal,” Flanigan says. “We really want to see that back at UNLV, that Rebel fever, and our alumni want to see it as well.”

Flanigan is working to continue that spirit as vice president for traditions in the Student Alumni Association (SAA). After keeping a lower profile for a few years, the association is stepping up its efforts to build school pride and traditions and enhance the university experience, primarily by working as a liaison between students and alumni.

SAA President Johnathan Raucci, a junior in business finance, says the association is entering the fall semester reinvented. He credits the change in part to better relations with the association’s sponsor, the UNLV Alumni Association. “In past years it seemed like the Alumni Association was not really involved with students until they were seniors and as they were leaving,” Raucci says. “So we re-evaluated our events. We’re looking to create more student-alumni opportunities.”

Events Bring Students, Alumni Together

The association has at least nine events planned for the fall semester, and a third of those are new ones. “We’re turning out more events from brainstorming than we can actually do this year,” Flanigan says. Among the more significant events are the Rebel Rock-n-Bowl to introduce freshmen to alumni and a week full of spirit activities preceding the UNLV-UNR football game.

The opportunity to meet alumni is central to the SAA mission. Flanigan tells of a student who by attending a homecoming dinner met an alumnus and secured an internship in Washington, D.C. So many students wanted to participate in a recent Dinner With a Rebel, the association had to run an overflow list.

When asked if the alumni have been enthusiastic about their efforts, Flanigan and Raucci laugh. “Big time,” Raucci says.

Russel Kost advises the SAA as the university’s associate vice president for alumni relations and development. He makes little distinction between students and alumni. “All of our students are our alumni. They are either alumni in training or alumni in residence. That’s the view we’ve taken here.”

Why Should Graduates Help Current Students?

One reason, Kost says, is that today’s students are a reflection of the university; the stronger an institution is today, the more valuable an alumnus’s degree will be. Plus, working with students is fun.

Raucci admits there are difficulties in attempting to build school pride and traditions at UNLV. “It’s a pretty new university, and it’s also in a city where almost everybody is from somewhere else, so many students already are loyal to a school where they, or their parents, used to live.” He points to the spirited crowd of Rainbow State natives that come to UNLV-Hawaii games as an example.

Many of the university’s students are commuters — Raucci notes that most SAA members are commuters — and scheduling events for commuters can be difficult.

But UNLV also has its advantages. At a recent conference, Flanigan and Raucci were talking to other student leaders who complained...
of the difficulty in maintaining relationships with alumni dispersed across the country. In contrast, the UNLV Alumni Association reports that more than 60 percent of UNLV alumni still live in the Las Vegas area, and there are pockets of graduates in other cities as well.

“Our alumni still have a positive charge about UNLV, and that makes it such a great experience,” Flanigan says. “They’re here and they’re willing to just jump right in and participate.”

As the program improves, the Student Alumni Association hopes to see membership rise. Students may join free, but the association is looking to recruit active members, not merely a lengthier roll.

Flanigan and Raucci are excited to be a part of building new traditions, an opportunity that those at more established universities don’t always have. “There’s a lot more to come,” Flanigan says. “I’ll get to come back here in four or five years, and I want to see that these events are going on.”

Be a Host: Dinner With a Rebel is tentatively scheduled for the first week of November. All alumni are invited to volunteer. For information, call 702-895-3621.

Young Alum Mixers — Alums under 30 can swap stories (and business cards) at this networking event. The mixers will be held Oct. 17 at Kennedy restaurant and Nov. 7 and Jan. 9 at Maize restaurant. All mixers start at 6 p.m.

Football Tailgates — Join the crowd at Sam Boyd Stadium before the games Oct. 14 (New Mexico), Nov. 4 (TCU), Nov. 18 (Wyoming), and Nov. 24 (Air Force). The association is also planning a roadtrip to California Nov. 10-11 for the San Diego State game.

Lose A Pound, Walk Your Hound — The UNLV Alumni Association and the Student Alumni Association are teaming up with Heaven Can Wait Animal Shelter for this charity event on the UNLV campus. It will be held 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oct. 28.

More info: Call the Alumni Association at 702-895-3621 or visit alumni.unlv.edu.
Vu Tran, a Schaeffer fellow in the English department, won the O. Henry Prize, the nation’s most prestigious honor for short fiction. The stipend provided by the fellowship program enables promising writers to focus on completing a publishable work.

Fellow Wins National Writing Award

**Obsessive Reviser Draws on Heritage for Short Stories with Dark Plots**

By Eric Leake

Vu Tran, ’06 PhD English, spends nights writing fiction. But it’s the reality of life in the desert that concerns him as he enters a coffee shop near campus. He is having car troubles. He wants shade and a drink.

“Being a writer really is not as romantic as people try to make it,” he says.

Minor troubles aside, Las Vegas has been good for Tran. He recently finished a three-year Schaeffer Fellowship in creative writing. In June came word that Tran had been awarded the O. Henry Prize, generally considered short fiction’s highest honor.

Tran won for his short story “The Gift of Years,” originally published in the literary magazine Fence. Tran’s story will be anthologized in The O. Henry Prize Stories 2007: Best Stories of the Year by Anchor Books. The annual collection has included many of the best American and Canadian fiction writers, among them John Updike, Raymond Carver, Alice Munro, and T. C. Boyle.

If the success has fed Tran’s ego, he doesn’t show it. “I’m a nobody right now, and this gives me national exposure,” he says. “It’s also nice because I’ll be published alongside some of my favorite writers.”

Tran was born in 1975, just after the city formerly known as Saigon fell at the close of the Vietnam War. Tran’s father had fled Vietnam at the end of the war to Tulsa, Okla., where the rest of the Tran family reunited five years later.

In Tulsa, Tran developed a bit of a drawl and a desire to write, starting in grade school and continuing through a master’s in English at the University of Tulsa. “I distinctly remember writing stories in my reading group in first grade — it was the most exhilarating thing,” Tran says. “I’ve always wanted to write.”

Writing eventually drew Tran away from Tulsa and to the Iowa Writer’s Workshop. The master of fine arts program there was “very much like a two-year summer camp,” and he finished with a more distilled style. Then
came the difficulties of writing late at night while holding a day job at a local Dillard's. “It was one of those awkward and confusing transitional times in life, especially in my case because I'd been in school all my life,” Tran says. “I understand how difficult it is to try to be a writer and maintain a regular job.”

Looking for a way to write more led to UNLV and its Schaeffer Fellowship program.

A Place to Write in the Desert
Schaeffer Fellowships cover tuition and provide recipients $75,000 over three years for living expenses. The fellows complete their doctoral degrees and teach courses; during one year they are free of teaching obligations so they may concentrate on writing. The fellowship was exactly what Tran had been searching for. “I wanted to find a place where I'd have time and money to write,” he says. “I found that here.” During his fellowship, Tran had stories published in places such as The Southern Review, Harvard Review, and Glimmer Train Stories. He won awards and found an agent. “I was — and still am — very naïve about the publishing business.”

Working from his one-bedroom apartment, Tran completed a short story collection and began work on a novel. “The last few years I’ve written more than during any other time in my life,” Tran says. “Some writers I know in the program like to go to coffeehouses. I can’t do that — I’ve got a laptop computer that’s never moved from the corner of my desk.”

Richard Wiley, English professor and associate director of the Black Mountain Institute, served on Tran’s dissertation committee. He said Tran’s short-story collection is probably the best creative dissertation he’s read. “It’s just a beautiful collection. There’s not a weak story in the bunch.”

As the author of five novels, Wiley understands the difficulty in publishing fiction, particularly short stories. “The work has to be good, I mean really good, because there are a lot of people trying to publish books.” He says Tran’s award could not have come at a more auspicious time for his career. It has the added bonus of bringing attention to UNLV’s relatively young fellowship program.

The program began in 2001 and is named after benefactor Glenn Schaeffer, a resort industry executive and himself a graduate of the Iowa Writer’s Workshop. The fellowships are awarded through the UNLV English department and the International Institute of Modern Letters.

The support and guidance Tran found through his fellow writers and UNLV faculty helped spur his writing. He recalls something a professor said about the need to enjoy writing. “I had to make myself enjoy it, and I think I’ve found that place now,” Tran says.

The Lens of Personality
He’s also gained confidence as a writer in the last three years, and the O. Henry Prize adds to that. Tran’s winning story centers on a Vietnamese man who, because of the war, saw his children only sporadically as they grew up. There is a murder, and the father worries about violent tendencies he recognizes in his daughter. Tran agrees that the story is one of his finest. He says it’s also one he had the most difficulty getting published. The winning version is the product of more than 20 drafts and four major revisions. “I’m an obsessive reviser,” Tran admits.

Many of Tran’s stories relate to his family’s Vietnamese experience and his travels to Vietnam, but his writing is more fiction that autobiography. “A lot of it is simply invented, made up. It becomes autobiographical because it’s through the lens of my personality,” he says.

He describes both himself and his writing as controlled and subtle. His stories are deeply layered with meaning through often dark plots. “I tend to write about wary characters who can’t help romanticizing some part of their world, who are sentimental in a very reserved and detached way, which is me in a nutshell,” Tran says. “The characters can often reflect amplified qualities of myself.”

Tran is currently teaching part time at UNLV and finishing his first novel. “I don’t want to sound too dramatic, but it really is the most terrifying thing I’ve done,” he says of the long-form endeavor. He is in talks with a publisher for his novel and story collection. He is getting to where he wants to be as a writer.

And an O. Henry Prize helps.
UNLV Debate Team Returns with Indisputable New Resources

UNLV’s competitive debate team will return to the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs. The Sanford I. Berman Debate Forum is named for the local donor who, along with Sande Mamaghani, has committed providing an endowment to cover general operations, including travel costs, materials, and scholarship support.

Burkholder says that current undergraduates and prospective students have expressed keen interest in a debate program. Berman’s gift places UNLV’s program in distinctive ranks, according to Burkholder. Most university teams must seek support each year from their administrations or student governments. UNLV participants and the faculty advisor can focus on students’ analytical and research skills, which Burkholder compares as equivalent to those needed to write a doctoral dissertation.

“Aside from these obvious benefits, students [in debate programs] are well-prepared for graduate and professional schools — any profession where poise and self-confidence are necessary for success,” he says.

Berman, known by the stage name Dr. Michael Dean during his three decades performing on stage as a hypnotist, retired to Las Vegas 16 years ago. He holds the distinction of being the only stage hypnotist known to hold a doctorate and is a past-president of the International Society of General Semantics.

Curtain Call: Donor Supports Program for Youth

As the UNLV Performing Arts Center closed out its season last spring, the audience offered up a standing ovation for the performers. Just as deserving of the applause was a patron sitting in her usual Row M seat of Ham Concert Hall.

Longtime supporter Bernice Fischer had given the College of Fine Arts a donation and told Dean Jeff Koep to spend it where it was most needed. He earmarked some funds for the ArtsBridge America program, a collaborative effort between universities and local school districts to incorporate arts into K-12 education.

More Than Frosting on a Cake

Louisa McDonald, associate professor of art history and the program’s faculty mentor, says that ArtsBridge does more than bring art into the classroom; it becomes woven into every thread of the children’s learning experiences. Graduate students spend a semester working in elementary school classrooms as ArtsBridge scholars.

“The (graduate) students invent a way to bring their art form into the core part of the curriculum,” McDonald says. “It’s not art as the frosting on the cake, but art as the most nutritional part of the learning process.”

The ArtsBridge America program strives to demonstrate that having the arts in education is valuable — particularly in urban and underserved areas — and promotes interdisciplinary knowledge while enhancing students’ appreciation of cultural activities.

“Last spring, one dance student worked with elementary students enrolled in a science class,” Koep says. “The UNLV student helped the elementary students create a dance that explained different types of insects and how they move given the body types of specific insects.”

Fischer’s gift provides the ArtsBridge scholars a stipend to assist them with tuition, materials, and transportation to the school where they will be teaching. Recipients are selected based on their creative teaching proposals, and McDonald expects the application process to be competitive again this year.

A Childhood Without the Arts

Fischer is gratified that her donation is being used to bring today’s youth something her childhood lacked. As a young girl in rural Alabama, she had no opportunity to hear live concert music, visit an art gallery, or watch a dance troupe perform.

“I wasn’t introduced to the arts until I went to Texas Women’s College,” she recalls.

There, she developed a zeal for performing and visual arts, and, since she arrived in Las Vegas in the late 1950s, has been a dedicated supporter of all types of arts programs. Her seat was originally assigned to her by noted writer, producer, and former president of the Directors Guild, Charles Vanda, who was the director of the Performing Arts Center from 1967-88.

“We all need art in our lives, especially as young children,” Fischer affirms, in her signature Southern lilt. “My heart is with the arts, and we all should do our part to make sure they’re not forgotten.”

— Lori Bachand
Designer’s Challenge

Health Science Schools Use Funds to Conduct Space Planning Study

Faculty and staff in the Division of Health Sciences spent their summer term immersed in an unlikely set of coursework: architecture and engineering.

The division is carefully developing a space allocation plan to accommodate current programs and projected growth. As part of that process, the deans of the schools of Allied Health, Nursing, and Public Health engaged a consultant with expertise in public health and research lab design as well as in medical master planning.

University budgets generally do not fund projects that fall outside traditional academic or research scope. The deans of the three schools partnered with the division’s community advisory board and pooled money from its Dean’s Associates and annual giving sources to fund the much-needed project.

Unrestricted funds, donated by alumni and industry members with no specific earmark, allowed the deans to carry out the project quickly in response to the space concerns. Currently, 2,200 students, together with nearly 100 full- and part-time faculty and staff, occupy the Rod Lee Bigelow Health Sciences Building, but classrooms and laboratories are also spread out in seven other buildings on UNLV’s main campus. The project achieved three goals:

- Cataloging existing areas and detailing their usage.
- Assessing how much space will be needed to function more efficiently with expected program growth.
- Recommending development for lab, instructional, and program space that should be located next to each other.

Overall, the division hopes to gain flexibility through its detailed space planning.

— Lori Bachand

Hotel Students Return from Educational Trip to Italy

“Mille grazie,” say Dominic Sachet and Louis Fiorentino. The two undergraduates learned the correct pronunciation of the Italian phrase for “thank you very much” during a seven-day educational adventure through Tuscany.

The William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration students were this year’s recipients of the Banfi Research Fellowship. Banfi Vintners, which owns the vineyard estate and winery Castello Banfi in the Brunello region of Italy, funds the merit-based award for students.

During their tour from Milan to Rome, Sachet and Fiorentino visited several Banfi properties to learn more about winery operations and regional ingredients like Parmesan cheese and balsamic vinegar. This is the fourth year the fellowship has been provided to UNLV students.

Deborah Barrash, a professor in food and beverage management, accompanied the students on the trip. She says Sachet and Fiorentino, students who both work locally in the food and beverage industry, were selected because of their high academic qualifications and their professional accomplishments.

“Dominic and Louis knew what they wanted to learn from this trip,” she explains. “They, like many of our students, have a passion for food and wine, and they know that this experience will greatly benefit their careers.”
Cutting the Wire
Gaming Prohibition and the Internet
David G. Schwartz
University of Nevada Press

David G. Schwartz, director of the Center for Gaming Research, continues his examination of Nevada gaming (see also Suburban Xanadu in UNLV Magazine, Summer 2004) with this look at the 1961 Wire Act, which resulted from U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy's crusade against organized crime.

The Wire Act was intended to control illegal bookmaking by preventing the use of telephone and telegraph lines to transmit gambling information. Schwartz focuses on the history, but the law has new relevance given the interest in Internet betting.

Of the many aspects of Nevada gaming history, Schwartz was attracted to the Wire Act because of the “disconnect between prohibitory gambling law and the popularity of American gambling.”

Noting that states maintained, but did not fully enforce, anti-gambling laws, Schwartz believes using the Wire Act to suppress Internet gambling was an extension of this trend.

He wrote Cutting the Wire to provide a “better understanding of how Americans have historically approached the prohibition of gambling and how and why the Wire Act was actually passed. Rather than a catch-all prohibition against gambling in general, it was enacted specifically to fight organized crime.”

Schwartz’s next book, Roll the Bones, a comprehensive history of gambling, is scheduled to be published by Gotham Books.

Unaffected by the Gospel
Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion 1673-1906: A Cultural Victory
Willard Hughes Rollings
University of New Mexico Press

Unaffected by the Gospel, ethnologist Willard Rollings’ second book about the Osage, shows how this Native America tribe interacted with Euro-Americans, whose desire for lands on the prairie Plains eventually resulted in the relocation of the tribe to northern Oklahoma. Most tribes that fought the Euro-Americans lost and suffered at the hands of the victors. The Osage managed to avoid violent conflict, thus, Rollings argues, gaining some control over their destiny.

The Osage had little choice but to make peace with the Americans, once the Europeans — the source of the guns the Osage relied upon to rule the Plains — left the continent. With a trade embargo, the United States forced the Osage to cede traditional land. With the help of Protestant missionaries, the U.S. also sought to assimilate and “civilize” the Osage.

Rollings argues that the Osage defeated 52 years of efforts by the Protestants, as well as the Roman Catholic Jesuits who proselytized without U.S. encouragement, to convert to Christianity. They “remained Osage — with their culture and cultural adaptations firmly in their control.”

The missionaries failed, Rollings writes, because they were asking the Osage to give up the good life they had developed, to trade “a life of community for one of individualism and loneliness (single-family farming), a life of generosity for one of miserliness.” The Osage were able to play off competing interests while maintaining their cultural and spiritual integrity until the late 1900s, when they embraced a new Native American religion: Peyotism.

Rollings' wife, Barbara, a member of the UNLV provost’s staff, is a former art student and did the artwork for the book’s cover, a print made from a photograph of an Osage chief.

Rollings, himself a Cherokee, also has recently published a book about another Plains tribe, the Comanche, as well as numerous articles about these and other Native Americans. An associate professor at UNLV, Rollings had at least one unusual challenge in the course of writing the book: he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and treatment delayed his writing. Funds from the sale of the book will be donated to the Barrows Neurological Institute in Phoenix.

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Books on the Bedside Table

We asked UNLV health experts to help readers find the gems among the enormous collection of health and fitness books on the market.

Larry Golding, UNLV Distinguished Professor of kinesiology: The Mind and Body Connection by Dr. Steven Knope; Big Fat Lies: The Truth About Your Weight and Your Health by Glenn Gaesser; The Culprit & The Cure: Why Lifestyle is The Culprit Behind Americans’ Poor Health and How Transforming That Lifestyle Can Be the Cure by Steven Aldana; and Healing Moves: How to Cure, Relieve, and Prevent Common Ailments with Exercise by Carol and Michael Krucoff.

Carolyn Yucha, School of Nursing dean: The Antioxidant Revolution by Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper as “an interesting work on how to keep fit through exercise without creating more oxidative stress damage to the body.” And, Barry Sears’ The Zone: A Dietary Road Map to Lose Weight Permanently, “an informative and accurate book written by a biochemist.”

Also recommended by faculty: You Can Be Happy, No Matter What by Richard Carlson; A Woman’s Guide to a Simpler Life by Andrea Van Steenhouse; and Ask a Nurse: From Home Remedies to Hospital Care from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Handbook of Special Education Technology, Research and Practice
Kyle Higgins, Randall Boone, and Dave L. Edyburn
Knowledge by Design

“For most of us, technology makes things easier. For a person with a disability, it makes things possible.”

With this quotation attributed to Judy Heumann, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, two College of Education faculty members and a colleague from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, launched a massive collection of articles about the use of assistive technology for people with disabilities.

Kyle Higgins and Randall Boone from
Adventures in Lighthearted Living:
A Baby Boomer’s Reflections on Getting Older and
Adventures in Menopause:
A Lighthearted Guide to Surviving the Meno Monsters
By Jayne Garrett
Brown Books

UNLV Hotel College alumna Jayne L. Garrett is determined to help her readers see the lighter side of life. There’s no question that her two small-format books address her mission. Lighthearted Living contains 99 pages of humorous verse about common subjects, with an occasional anecdote or cartoon for a change of pace. Menopause salts the rhymes in its 69 pages with word puzzles, as well as the occasional wise aphorism.

Garrett, a former UNLV homecoming queen nominee, says her decision to make a positive difference in people’s lives was the result of life-changing events, starting in 2000 when her mother died. “It made me stop and take notice of my life,” she says. Then in 2002, while consulting at a corporation that was downsizing, she was asked to work with employees left behind at the company.

“One night I realized that coaching is all about the energy that I bring to the client. Since many employees were in turmoil, it was important that I bring positive energy to the meetings to assist them through the transition. I made a conscious choice to lighten up.”

That choice led to the formation of her company, The Lighthearted Side of Life, LLC. “My vision for this company is to bring smiles, chuckles, and feel-good moments through a series of lighthearted products.”

The idea for Menopause, her first book, came while she was having coffee with a few friends. “One started to heat up (hot flash), and I casually asked her if she has hot flashes often. Surprised, she looked at me and asked if it was OK to talk about it.” Garrett assured her friend she was not alone with her problem and that women were increasingly open about their symptoms.

“As the group of women opened up and started to share their ‘horror’ stories, I grabbed a pen and started making notes. Being a lyricist for years I began to play with words that captured the highlights of our menopause conversation. A few asked if I was going to do something with the poems I created. That is how the book evolved.”

Because many menopausal women complain about forgetfulness, Garrett included the word puzzles for mental exercise. Garrett calls her time at UNLV “memorable.” She was president of the Hotel Sales Management Association student chapter, and active on many committees to support the student-run Hotel Association. While Garrett says she determined to be a positive force in people’s lives after the life-changing events of 2000, former Hotel College Dean Jerome Vallen remembers her as a student already in positive mode.

“She was a very effervescent, happy student with good leadership skills,” he said. “You could be sure she would carry things out.”

UNLV and Dave L. Edyburn from Wisconsin recently published the 873-page Handbook. The volume contains 41 articles by more than 90 authors on topics ranging from the history of technology use to current trends and issues.

Higgins and Boone both came to UNLV 15 years ago and have collaborated on a number of works. They met their co-author, Edyburn, in the 1980s, and Higgins says the three-way effort to put together the Handbook “was a joy and a labor of love.”

The authors write that public policymakers began showing serious interest in the potential of technology in the early 1980s, when a number of individuals reported the positive benefits of technology in their lives. The examples were so persuasive that the federal government enacted laws to “provide mechanisms for capturing the potential of technology on an ever-increasing scale.”

They also confess that as editors “we perceived the need for an authoritative work compiling the knowledge base of the discipline of special education technology. Lest anyone question our motivation, let us be perfectly clear: Selfishly, we wanted this book on our desktop.”
Dr. Georgia Dounis is a dentist who is fond of quoting Socrates, so she may have found her ideal position instructing students in the clinics of the UNLV School of Dental Medicine. She is a prosthodontist — a specialist in restoring and rebuilding the oral cavity and surrounding structures. In particular, she focuses on patients who have undergone cancer surgery around the face or mouth. Nevada faces a difficult situation in providing oral health care to a booming population, one that often lacks insurance and other means of access. Dounis and the dental clinic are helping address that issue through education, clinical care, and the timeless reminder to brush and floss daily.

— As told to Eric Leake

An Ounce of Prevention

Dr. Georgia Dounis, dental medicine professor

**Coming to UNLV:** This was a unique opportunity to be a part of starting a dental school. Our mission is to have an integrated curriculum of biological, clinical, and behavioral sciences. We’re at the leading edge nationally with our integrated curriculum.

**Teaching:** As the greatest teacher and philosopher Socrates said, “To teach is to learn twice.” With a love of teaching and love of the profession, I am able to share my knowledge with my future colleagues as well as expand my knowledge.

**Total Health:** The mouth is the gateway to the digestive system and a mirror of other conditions. The muscles, nerves, lymphs — all these systems are interconnected. Oral infections have been associated with systemic conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes, just to mention a few. We cannot compartmentalize the oral cavity as if that’s it and it doesn’t affect any other system.

**Candy:** If I have candy, it has to be sugarless, maybe gum.

**Advances in Dentistry:** We have laser dentistry, computerized imaging, diagnostic saliva tests. And there have been many recent advances in materials. Do you still need manual dexterity? Absolutely. However, with the advances of soft- and hard-tissue lasers, some day the laser may replace the high-speed hand piece. And then there’s the bioengineering aspect of dentistry. They’re growing enamel in a petri dish. It’s really, really an exciting time to be in this profession.

**Prevention:** Dentistry has always been at the forefront of prevention. I think it is a profession that truly is eager to put itself out of business because all we talk about is prevention, prevention.

**Oral Health Care in Nevada:** The state has made constructive efforts to improve access. But, being the fastest growing state in the country, Nevada is being challenged by the growth. Many people are low-wage earners and either don’t have insurance or are under-insured. To find an oral health care provider who can meet their needs is a challenge. The mission of this institution is to fulfill that need. We provide care to children, the elderly, and all other types of people. We reach both the urban and rural areas.

The message is getting out, and I think we have made a considerable contribution to the community. The waiting room, have you seen it? It’s packed.

**Losing Teeth:** People feel that the loss of teeth is a natural process of aging. Unfortunately, that is not true. Teeth are here for a lifetime. Losing them affects the way we chew, the way we speak, the way we live.

**Memorable Patients:** It has been very rewarding to help patients who are undergoing cancer surgery. One patient was a young lady from South America. She had a benign tumor that had expanded and she needed to have her eye and part of her palate removed. She had two young kids with her and her husband.

The day after surgery, I saw her and she said, “Oh my God, I have turned into a monster. How am I going to face my children?” The psychological impact was terrible. I reassured her that we would make an oral prosthesis and that she would receive a prosthetic eye. She came back a year later and said she was able to live a very normal life. That stays in my memory as a reminder of the impact we can have on someone’s life.

**Reaching Out:** I’m really proud of the work our students and faculty have done in the community. For example, students recently launched a program called “Smiles for Success” to serve physically and emotionally abused women. It is the first such effort in the U.S. that is organized completely by students, and it will also involve volunteer faculty and staff.

**One Thing People Should Understand:** Oral disease is a silent epidemic. People don’t realize that they have it. Cavities, gum diseases, abscesses — kids have ended up in emergency rooms due to abscesses. Researchers have discovered an association that exists between gum disease and ear disease as well as gum disease and low birth-weight babies.

**Brushing:** I try to follow the recommendations to brush and floss three times a day. I may have missed doing that, but it’s a rare occasion. I try. I try very hard.

**Reaction to Dentists:** It used to be that dentists got a very negative response. People associated dentistry with pain. Maybe they thought that they were going to have their teeth pulled. Now we’re more into prevention of disease. With new advances in technology, people are actually eager to see the dentist. I don’t think we have eliminated dentist-phobia, but at least it’s declining.
“I don’t think we’ve eliminated dentist-phobia, but at least it’s declining.”

Aaron Mayes
My life changed forever on April 26, 1999. I was working with a personal trainer, and she said, “I don’t like the way you're carrying your arm, and I don’t like your gait.” She said I should see a doctor, so I did. He told me to walk down the hall and back. It could be one of three things, he said. Either I had a brain tumor, had suffered a stroke, or I had Parkinson’s disease. I said, “Isn’t there something else? Isn’t there a choice ‘D?’”

A neurologist confirmed that I had Parkinson’s. For about a week or so I wanted to curl up in a ball on the floor. Then I decided, “I’m going to do something. I’m going to enjoy my life.” It was a wake-up call.

I re-evaluated my life. I had already done so much, too much to list. I had started from nothing to build the biggest insurance agency in the state. I had served on the Nevada State Athletic Commission. I ran, unsuccessfully, for lieutenant governor. I had a great family and tremendous friends. When I thought about my life, it was my family and friends I thought about. They had helped me become who I was. I would be facing this disease with them.

I have to mention my grandmother, Mimi. She taught me so much. I remember numerous times, her holding my hands, looking two feet from my face and saying, “You’re special, Brucie.” I’ve drawn strength from that all my life, especially now. She taught me to fight and struggle and work for a positive purpose.

I remembered my grandmother as I thought about my life as I struggled with Parkinson’s. I sold my business. I traveled. I spent time with my family. I wrote a book with Jack Sheehan about my life. The book is titled My Gift, but it could just as easily be My Gifts because there are so many of them. They start with my grandmother and include my family and life lessons.

You have to have a sense of humor. You have to appreciate people, every day. I’m really big on appreciation; a terminal illness will make you that way. Myself included, we’re all too appreciation-deficient.

I’m giving back to the community, as I always have, but more now. This year I started visiting schools. I talk to the kids and I support the teachers. I love it. I think it’s the most important thing I’ve ever done. I’m excited because I’m just starting. I think I may have found what I want to do.

I know what’s coming. I have a sense of humor about it, but Parkinson’s is a nasty disease. It leaves you shriveled up in a wheelchair. I’m 60 now. I move more slowly than I used to. My hands have begun to tremble, and at times, yes, I drool. But I’m in pretty good shape for being seven years along this road.

I like to joke that the disease is en vogue. Muhammad Ali, Pope John Paul, Michael J. Fox — all the movers and shakers have it.

We need to do more to battle Parkinson’s. We need more education and more funding for research. All the proceeds from my book go toward research and to education.

My fight against the disease is personal and public. I feel like I’m spitting in the dragon’s eye, and it makes me feel good.
The questions we’re asking about your brain
Wanna know the secret of being a great university professor? Ask the right question. In the classroom, lightbulbs go on when professors challenge their students to find answers.

And in the lab, researchers will tell you that getting the answer they expected isn’t nearly as exciting as discovering new questions. So X results in Y — but why did Z happen? “Researchers know they are on a fruitful route when their investigation leads to several, even more intriguing questions — that’s when they start revealing the mysterious nuances of nature,” says Shaun Sommerer, development director for the Division of Health Sciences.

So what are some of the questions our professors are asking about the inner reaches of your mind and body? Here’s what we found.
Can we kill cancer cells without killing brain cells?

Breakthroughs in health care over the past few decades have been amazing. Vaccines eradicated small pox, heart transplants have become widespread, and test-tube babies born each year now top 45,000. Yet, for patients with malignant brain tumors, the medical community has had little new to offer.

Survival rates for patients with the highest grade tumors is only about a year — the same it was more than 40 years ago. “Because so little has worked,” says health physics professor Steen Madsen, “there’s so much more to try — gene therapy, drugs, focal radiation therapy. Researchers are getting very creative because they have to — everything else, everything usual has already been tried.”

Madsen and neurosurgeon Henry Hirschberg, an adjunct professor at UNLV, have been working for eight years to figure out how the combination of laser light and light-activated drugs can be used to treat brain cancer.

The current treatment for these tumors is surgery, which removes the bulk of the tumor, but invariably leaves some cancerous cells around the edges. “There’s a limit to what you can cut out of the brain,” Madsen says soberly. “What it comes down to is that you have to kill the cancer without destroying the patient’s quality of life.”

After surgery, doctors usually turn to radiation or chemotherapy to kill the remaining cancer cells. But in the brain, the cancer cells happen to be very resistant to radiation. And the same mechanism that protects the brain from toxic substances — called the “blood-brain barrier” — also prevents chemo drugs from reaching the cancer cells hiding among healthy cells.

Their initial research in the lab focused on drugs that make cells sensitive to light. Because the blood vessels around the tumor were already damaged — thus that blood-brain barrier was already broken — the drugs leached into the tumor. Laser light was then used to activate the drug and kill the cancer cells.

The research indicated that this technique, called photodynamic therapy (PDT), was very effective at destroying the bulk tumor, but most of the lab rats still died soon after the surgery. “Every time we try something, there seems to be a whole series of new questions,” Madsen says. “You go back to your research and you get new ideas.”

The duo shifted their investigation to why the lab rats died and found two causes. Some died from edema, a build up of fluid in the brain that is a common side effect of treatment. The others eventually died when new tumors grew from cancer cells that had migrated into healthy parts of the brain.

“Now our question is, ‘Can our techniques eliminate those infiltrating cells while minimizing edema reactions?’” Madsen says.

Instead of using the photodynamic therapy to directly kill the cancer cells, Madsen and Hirschberg hope it can be used to help chemo drugs pass through the blood-brain barrier. Opening the barrier can be done with other methods, but because they are not precise, they lead to life-threatening edema.

Once the chemotherapeutic agents have crossed the barrier,
the next challenge is to get the agents into the nucleus of the cancer cells. The agents typically stop at the edge of the cellular membrane. The membrane eventually wraps itself around the chemo agent, where it essentially sits in a bubble doing nothing. "Our idea is to inject our light-sensitive agent and a chemo agent at the same time. Then through microsurgery we can very selectively apply laser light, which excites the light-sensitive drug. That destroys the membrane, allowing the chemo agent to reach the nucleus and destroy it," Madsen explains.

The Nevada Cancer Institute recently awarded Madsen and Hirschberg a grant to extend their research into this new area. They've also reached out to community resources for some research tools; Steinberg Diagnostic Medical Imaging has allowed them to use MRI facilities, for example.

If successful in the lab, the researchers' next step would be patient trials, but Madsen doesn't expect a quick breakthrough. "It takes a long time for a new technique like this to go to clinical trials. We hope to get there in the next few years," he says, adding the proposed Nevada Health Sciences Center will help UNLV researchers advance their work.

"I love my work because it challenges me; it forces me to keep learning new things and to learn in more depth," he says. "I find the interaction between physics and biology fascinating, and I suspect there are a lot of puzzles in biology that physics might be able to solve. And as we try to solve those, we might stumble across applications to other diseases."

— CATE WEEKS

What's GABA got to do with it?

In the last years of his life, Bryan Spangelo's grandfather always kept family pictures by his bedside. They weren't simply snapshots of loved ones; they were a record of a life he had trouble remembering. "He needed those pictures in front of him to know that he had kids," Spangelo says. "You know, for most people there's nothing more important than their memories. It's their identity. It's who they are."

Spangelo's grandfather was diagnosed as senile, more a condition than a disease, but today would likely be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Though time has lead to an improved diagnosis, many questions still remain about the disease that affects an estimated 4.5 million Americans.

A chemistry professor at UNLV, Spangelo is focusing on an essential question: What chemical processes in the brain are involved in the onset of Alzheimer's disease? Though Alzheimer's was first described a century ago — as would be expected, by Dr. Alois Alzheimer — much about the disease remains a mystery. "We know kind of what's happening during the disease. We know the hallmarks and features of it," Spangelo says. "But we still don't know how it's initiated, and therefore we don't know how to treat it. I want to know how it begins."

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke awarded Spangelo a $221,750 grant for a three-year investigation into the neurological mechanisms associated with neuroinflammation, a condition which destroys neurons and is a hallmark symptom of the disease.
Spangelo has zeroed in on the role of a particular neurotransmitter — a chemical that transmits signals between nerve cells — in preventing the progression of neuroinflammation. The research appears promising, and he says his lab is the only one in the country he knows of that is currently studying this approach.

Previous research had shown that the levels of the neurotransmitter GABA fall as Alzheimer’s disease takes off. “GABA is the major inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain. Its sole function is to stop things from happening.”

To understand the role of GABA, a review of basic brain chemistry is useful. Spangelo describes two types of brain cells: neurons and astrocytes. Neurons are the information conductors. Astrocytes act as support cells to keep neurons working. But, in the case of Alzheimer’s disease, the support system malfunctions. Astrocytes become activated and start releasing products that lead to neuroinflammation and the destruction of neurons. One of those destructive products is a small protein called interleukin-1, which further excites astrocytes.

In research presented two years ago, Spangelo established for the first time that GABA suppresses some of the activity of the interleukin-1 protein. Spangelo believes GABA works as a “physiological brake” on what is otherwise the runaway process of neuroinflammation. He is using his grant to further that research and study exactly how GABA slows the process.

“If we could figure out exactly what the mechanism is behind GABA, then we could start thinking about interventional therapy, what sort of drug might do the same thing and help prevent neuroinflammation,” Spangelo says. “I’m looking for anything that gives us clues as to how the disease progresses.”

By finding answers to the right research questions, Spangelo hopes to help improve the quality of those additional years.

As the Baby Boomer generation ages and people live longer lives, Spangelo believes the need for treatments of Alzheimer’s disease and other chronic neurological disorders will only become more acute. “Diseases of aging are problematic right now,” Spangelo says. “We’re having a problem with adding years to people’s lives but not really making them effective years.”

— Eric Leake

How can physical therapy help Parkinson’s patients?

Last year, two UNLV researchers found that a subtle change by physical therapists can reap significant benefits for people with Parkinson’s disease. Cool, they thought, we got the answer we expected. But then they
wondered: What else might this mean?

Physical therapy professor Merrill Landers and kinesiology professor Gabriele Wulf are exploring ways to treat Parkinson’s disease through physical therapy and balance exercises. In a study published last year, they found that directing patients’ attention to the outcome of their movements, rather than the movement itself, improved patient balance. Landers describes the distinction as the difference between a golfer focusing on the movement of the club rather than the movement of the golfer’s arms. The distinction is subtle, he says, but the implications could change how physical therapists work with Parkinson’s patients to prevent falls and preserve health.

A loss of balance is a critical issue for patients with Parkinson’s, which attacks the central nervous system, causing tremors, slurred speech, and muscles that are no longer responsive to the will. “Training to compensate for the balance problems is a big part of treatment,” Wulf says. “We hope our research will make that training more effective.”

Debilitating falls that cause fractures and trips to the hospital are common in Parkinson’s patients. “Also, people who fall have a fear of falling, so they socially isolate themselves. They stop going to church, to restaurants. When they socially isolate themselves, they become more depressed,” Landers says. “It’s just a vicious cycle.”

But the results of the study helped spur research beyond the use of physical therapy in improving balance. Now they want to know what effects exercise might have on the brain. Exercise slowed the development of symptoms of Parkinson’s disease in rats, and Landers is now proposing a similar study on people. “The idea is to see if exercise doesn’t just improve muscle function and a person’s ability to do things, but if it also changes the underlying course of the disease,” Landers says.

As he sits in his office and talks about the research, Landers is enthusiastic about developments in Parkinson’s treatment. He talks about the effects of exercise on all aspects of a person’s health: muscular, physical, cardiovascular, skeletal, and emotional. Recent research indicates a relationship between the physical activity and protection against degeneration of the brain.

“The underlying implication is that if you have early detection of Parkinson’s disease and get on an exercise program, it can slow the course of the disease,” Landers says. “This is really exciting stuff.”

— ERIC LEAKE

Can a killer be a cure?

Kinesiology professor Mark Guadagnoli looked back 5,000 years to find an idea that may lead to a novel treatment for Parkinson’s disease. The catch: the treatment is derived from a crop that today contributes to hundreds of thousands of deaths each year. “One of the oldest documented medical techniques was to use a nicotine derivative to treat people whose symptoms were remarkably similar to Parkinson’s disease,” Guadagnoli says.
He recently found similar motor behaviors in a study comparing Parkinson’s patients and tobacco users suffering from nicotine withdrawal. Guadagnoli measured the movements of the research subjects using a device he developed along with Parkinson’s researchers at Arizona State University. The device, a two-foot by two-foot digitizing tablet, is similar to a tablet computer. The test is a simple one: “Basically, it’s the adult equivalent of coloring inside the lines as fast as you can,” Guadagnoli says. His next step is to see what effects nicotine has on Parkinson’s patients.

Guadagnoli realizes the risk in granting anything but a negative association to nicotine. “I am not suggesting that people with Parkinson’s disease start smoking or chewing tobacco,” he says. But initial results call for more exploration of nicotine’s seemingly beneficial effects.

Guadagnoli’s primary research interest is the mechanisms of the brain, and he found research on Parkinson’s disease as one way to better understand the brain. He considers neuroscience one of the great frontiers of science. “I think that there are really two major areas that we know very little about,” he says. “One of them is the deepest depths of the ocean, the other is the human brain.”

Since Guadagnoli began working with Parkinson’s patients, he has learned more than he expected about the impact of chronic neurological diseases upon the individual. “Even though I didn’t get into Parkinson’s research ‘to find a cure,’ seeing these people and understanding more about what they have to combat on a daily basis motivates me to do what I can to help.”

He is not alone in the effort, and UNLV researchers are increasingly taking an interdisciplinary approach. Guadagnoli, for example, is working with colleagues in biology and psychology to draw together the strengths of each discipline to better understand the human body’s nervous system. “We believe very strongly that you need to have the interdisciplinary work or you’re not going to make the advances,” Guadagnoli says. “Pooling our resources is the best way for UNLV to compete with larger universities for vital research dollars.”

Harvey Wallmann, chair of the physical therapy department, says the possibility for collaboration on campus creates incredible research opportunities. He mentioned research in chronic neurological diseases as well as studies combining the resources of departments within UNLV’s Division of Health Sciences. They’re also reaching out to some areas you would expect, like biology, and others you would not, like dance.

The researchers are drawn together, Wallmann says, by the need to share perspectives in addressing universal problems. It boils down to an essential question, he says: “What can we all do that’s going to have an important impact on the community?” The answers, he says, will be found through collaboration.

— ERIC LEAKE
If we know exercise is good for us, why don’t we do it?

You probably know you’re supposed to get 30 minutes of exercise every day.

But you’re busy. You’re tired. You’ll do it tomorrow.

These aren’t excuses, and you’re not just lazy, says Tim Bungum, associate professor of health promotion. They’re obstacles, and he wants to help you overcome them.

Bungum’s research is helping people get past the daunting 30-minute recommendation and start working activity into their day little by little. His research has shown how the simple act of posting public reminders to be active — such as taking the stairs or parking far from a destination — can influence behavior and produce benefits.

“Most of the work of being a human has been taken out of our lives. We don’t have to walk to work, or hunt or gather our food,” Bungum said. “But we are designed to move.”

While health experts would still love to see Americans commit a half-hour a day to working out, they now acknowledge that you can gain some health benefit through intermittent bouts of moderate activity. “What that won’t do is sculpt your body,” Bungum said. “But your body doesn’t have to be beautiful to be healthy.”

For his study, signs were posted around Bungum’s own building at UNLV and at the Clark County Health District with slogans such as “No time to exercise? Take the stairs.” The researchers observed the proportion of people in the building who used the stairs before and after the signs went up, and found that they did choose the stairs more often with the suggestions in place.

What seems like such a minor shift in behavior can be the impetus to start a new fitness habit, Bungum said. It’s a matter of managing your life, not just your time.

“People who exercise are every bit as busy as people who don’t,” Bungum said. “What ultimately builds toward a habit is if you reward yourself in the short term. If you reward yourself externally, eventually you may find yourself saying ‘I really like feeling strong,’ or ‘My pants don’t fit as tight.’”

The benefits of publicly posted fitness messages may soon lead to communities that are designed for fitness, not the drive-through. Bungum said planners, architects, and public-health officials are seeing the wisdom of working together to include activity-friendly elements in new developments such as sidewalks, narrow and connected streets (versus cul-de-sacs), greenbelts, and mixed-use areas.

— ERIN O’DONNELL
How can we jazz up exercise programs for aging adults?

Stepping off a treadmill one day, nursing professor Patricia Alpert was reminded of her age. The former hula dancer was active and healthy, but she noticed her sense of balance wasn’t what it used to be. She changed up her exercise routine and enrolled in jazz dance classes. Over time she found her core muscles were getting stronger and her balance improving. “I saw myself following along with all these young students,” Alpert says. Her experience got her thinking, and she decided to research what effect jazz dance might have on senior dancers.

Alpert partnered with dance professor Richard Havey for a study of 13 women, ages 52 to 88. After seven weeks in jazz dance, the women’s balance improved significantly, Alpert says. After 15 weeks, the improvement was dramatic.

Any improvement to balance can also potentially save lives, Alpert says, as falls late in life can result in complications and death. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, falls account for 70 percent of accidental deaths in people 75 and older.

Alpert is currently researching factors that may contribute to the loss of balance. She plans to expand the study to include emotional and mental health components with a greater number of participants.

“As anecdotal evidence, people said that this really was a lifesaver,” Alpert says. “Some were going through some hard times and the support group really helped them.”

Havey modified his class to accommodate the women. He says the effect was apparent and more than in merely dance ability. “I realized that weekly they waited for this class. They loved coming and talking to people, practicing their routines,” Havey says.

Alpert and Havey hope the results of the research will help promote a change in attitude toward exercise and aging. With clear-cut benefits derived for dance, they hope healthcare professionals will consider recommending the activity to patients. “It’s the confirmation of how important exercise is in our life,” Havey says. “When we get older, we tend to slow down and do less activities. It’s very important to keep the body moving and agile. It improves not only our health but our lifestyle as well.”

— ERIC LEAKE
What’s the best anti-aging treatment?

The best anti-aging treatment around has nothing to do with needles or pills, and it’s virtually free. It’s exercise, and Lawrence Golding says it can combat just about every sign of aging aside from gray hair and wrinkles.

Golding, the director of the Laboratory of Exercise Physiology at UNLV, has spent more than 30 years tracking the effects of exercise over time with the adult exercise research program. Inactivity, not time, is what robs us of strength, flexibility, and stamina.

“Aging is when you can no longer do the physical things you used to be able to do,” Golding says. “If you’re exercising, you can still do them.”

Golding started the UNLV program in 1976. Men and women ages 30 to 65 are invited to participate in the study, which looks at how daily exercise affects risk factors for heart disease. Participants work out almost daily and are monitored for variables such as blood pressure, cholesterol, body fat percentage, flexibility and strength, and the heart’s response to exercise.

About 60 percent of participants are faculty or staff, and many have stuck with the program for years. Their mean age is 47, but Golding said it’s creeping higher — probably because his workouts are a bare-bones affair of calisthenics; stretching; and walking, running, cycling, or swimming. It might be a boring proposition for a younger generation, but keeping it simple means anyone can participate regardless of skill.

“I don’t have music — I think it’s noise pollution. I don’t have any equipment,” he said. “Why do these people come back every year? They see results.”

Staying in shape has also helped some participants continue playing the sports they love, Golding said. “When you don’t get fatigued, you don’t lose your skills.”

Now Golding is focusing on the age of participants when they return to exercise, and how it affects their results. Even people who start in their 60s show improvement when they commit to a regular regimen, if on a smaller scale. “The people who are successful are the ones who become selfish about themselves and say, ‘By golly, I’m going to take an hour every day for this,’” Golding said. “They come every day without thinking, ‘Should I go?’”

— ERIN O’DONNELL
The Questions We’re Asking About Your Fitness

Are those new sneakers protecting your little ballplayer from injury?

Although gym uniforms are a schoolhouse staple, the only guideline children usually get on footwear is to make sure it won’t mark the floor.

But with sports-related injuries on the rise among this generation of active kids, a UNLV researcher wants to change that. Kinesiology professor John Mercer’s research could influence the way sneakers are designed for children.

“There’s not a lot of shoe development for kids because they go through them so fast,” Mercer said. “But kids just aren’t miniature adults. I think it’s hard to take a shoe designed around an adult and reduce it down to kids.”

Mercer received a grant from the National Athletic Trainers Association to study the impact to children’s bodies during running, and how it affects their bodies differently from adults. His subjects, all 9 to 12 years old, have been going through their paces on treadmills in Mercer’s lab since this summer.

The program draws on the findings of Mercer’s past research into adult impact characteristics — the effects on the body of different running surfaces, shoes, and conditions. “Every time a foot hits the ground, it’s a collision,” Mercer said. “One of the reasons runners get hurt is because running is an impact sport, and impacts do damage.”

Impacts also do some good, such as building bone density, but the trick is finding the happy medium before an overuse injury occurs. And that’s where the data on children is lacking, Mercer said. As more kids participate in organized sports — most of which, like soccer, involve running — more of them are showing up with tendonitis and stress fractures.

It’s not only the impact of feet on pavement that causes trouble, Mercer said. More likely, the culprit is the high number of times a foot slams into the ground, with the force of up
to two times the body’s weight behind it.

“It’s a very short applied force, but if you count the footsteps during a 30-minute run, that’s 2,500 to 3,000 collisions,” Mercer said. “It’s quite a bit of load on the body.”

Running injuries have been Mercer’s primary research interest. He was an avid runner himself until he was sidelined by overuse in the form of rheumatoid arthritis.

Mercer said he hopes to submit his initial findings for publication by the end of the year.

Although his work is still in the early stages, Mercer thinks organized sports play a role in the increase in overuse injuries. Sports leagues are more prevalent now than in previous generations, and many kids participate in something every season. Few kids are into running as their main activity, but Mercer said many middle-schoolers at least have to run a mile for P.E. class.

Each youngster in the study plays an organized sport, Mercer said, but the only requirement for participation was a willingness to spend time on the treadmill. Two of his subjects are his own sons, ages 9 and 12. (The older boy started playing flag football this year, while the younger son is into scuba and springboard diving.)

“Kids are just different. They respond differently to instructions, and they run differently in the lab. We’re finding some unique challenges that we didn’t foresee,” Mercer said. “It’s neat for them because they are part of a research study, but on the other hand it’s weird for them — we’re putting instruments on their heads and legs that are wired to a computer.”

Children in this age group are also beginning to learn physical fitness habits that will probably last a lifetime, Mercer said. And footwear is critical to making exercise enjoyable — if their shoes are causing problems, they might develop negative attitudes toward physical activity.

Just as car seats and bike helmets have become childhood necessities, Mercer hopes his work will eventually lead to standards that parents can follow when shoe shopping for their kids — something a little more reliable than the classic thumb-on-the-toe test.

— ERIN O’DONNELL

How do you avoid weekend warrior injuries?

Too much enthusiasm can actually sabotage your new exercise regime. The overzealous tend to get injured, says Mack Rubley, assistant professor of kinesiology and director of UNLV’s athletic training education program. “Most people want to go from sitting in front of a computer to playing basketball, but you need to improve your physical fitness before you participate in athletic activity.” Make a smart start in the gym or on the court with these tips:

1. Frequency and Duration — Work out at least three times a week to see training results, Rubley said, and health experts recommend raising your heart rate to an age-appropriate level for at least 30 minutes a day for overall health. But don’t overdo the length of your workout. At least in the beginning, working with a qualified personal trainer will help you find the right mix, Rubley says. Rest is important, too.

   If you’re weight training, skip a day between workouts for the same muscle group; muscles need 48 hours to recover from the exercise. Daily cardio workouts are encouraged, but only if you have gradually progressed to that level.

2. Intensity — Again, Rubley says, determine the right intensity for your workout: how fast you walk, how much you lift. “A lot of people ramp up way too fast and that’s when they get hurt.” As with frequency and duration, intensity should be increased only in small increments. Rubley recommends sticking with a routine for at least two weeks before changing any of the three core elements.

3. Warm Up — You probably don’t need as much warm up as you think, but don’t short-change it either. A few minutes of walking or some type of cardiovascular activity should do the trick — and save stretching for afterward.

   “When you’re warm, you start to sweat. It’s that simple,” Rubley said. “You should break a sweat before you start to stretch.” Remember to cool down as well, to allow the body to process the waste and byproducts of exercise.

4. Water — Everyone knows to drink water, Rubley said, but most don’t know how much. A good rule of thumb: drink six ounces (half a small bottle) for every 15 minutes of activity. Don’t forget before and after — drink one or two bottles a couple of hours before your workout, and replace what you have lost when you’re done. And save the sports drinks until you’re working out for more than an hour at a time; they won’t hydrate you any better than water for moderate exercise, and you probably don’t want the extra calories.

5. Pick a Qualified Trainer — It’s easier than you may think to hang out a shingle as a personal trainer, Rubley said. And a poorly qualified one can put you at risk for injury. Check for a reputable certification, such as the HFI certified fitness instructor from the American College of Sports Medicine or CSCS (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist) from the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

— ERIN O’DONNELL
Chef’s Surprise

Favorite dish to cook? Jambalaya or a whole hog

Least favorite? Baked goods in general. “I don’t enjoy exactness.”

Favorite kitchen gadget? His ancient, one-of-a-kind garlic press. “I nearly threw a full conniption when the pin that holds it together was missing.” Other musts: Sharp knives, a good cutting board, and a big pepper grinder.

Favorite place to eat in Las Vegas? Four Kegs, for the stromboli

What don’t you eat? Eggs and broccoli. “I had broccoli come out my nose when I was a kid.”

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1970s

Jim Pumphret, ’70 MBA, retired in June after 45 years with the IRS. His final IRS job was as an international tax specialist. He plans to continue teaching as an associate professor at Austin Community College in Texas and to do consulting work for local accounting firms. He is a big fan of the city’s music scene, serving as a volunteer stage manager at the annual SXSW Music Festival and as a volunteer crewmember for the Austin City Limits television show. He and his wife of 43 years, Judy, live in Austin.

Albert Ginchereau, ’71 BS Hotel Administration, recently accepted the position of chairman of the business operations-casino concentration program at Gibbs College in Cranston, R.I. It is the only college in the state offering an associate degree in business operations with a casino concentration. He and his wife, Jean, live in Newport.

Nicholas Aharon Boggioni, ’72 BA and ’74 MA History, recently published his first novel, The Nativist’s Daughter. A historian and lawyer, he describes the book as a provocative look at contemporary America, where 21st century politics are mired in religious fundamentalism. He earned an MBA at Claremont Graduate University in 1983 and a law degree from the University of Toledo College of Law in 1994. He lives in Toledo, Ohio.

Jim Germain, ’75 BS Hotel Administration, and his wife, Mary, bought the Castle Valley Inn Bed and Breakfast near Moab, Utah. In addition to running the inn, he has joined the local volunteer fire department.
A Little Bling With Your Blintz

Guy Fieri, celebrity chef

You’ll probably never see Emeril go platinum blonde or Rachael Ray with a half-dozen tattoos. Paula Deen? No bling.

Guy Fieri, on the other hand, won his own Food Network show with his blend of California cool and Vegas energy. The UNLV alum was crowned the Next Food Network Star earlier this year on the channel that has elevated chefs to celebrities.

Fieri’s show, Guy’s Big Bite, premiered in June. It appeals to a new generation of unfussy foodies who prefer a rockin’ beach bash to a buttoned-down dinner party. “The network is full of a bunch of great all-star players. Maybe (the network executives) brought in the rookie who can adapt and learn from the styles of all of them,” says Fieri, ’90 BS Hotel Administration. “I brought a little bit of edge, probably a little bit more smack — but smack in a positive sense. I’m honored to be sitting at the table with these people.”

The show features Fieri dishing up specialties such as a rich blackened chicken alfredo — a dish he created for class at UNLV. It’s now a top-seller at Johnny Garlic’s California Pasta Grill, his flagship restaurant in Santa Rosa, Calif. He also co-owns Russell Ramsay’s Chop House and Tex Wasabi’s, a barbecue-and-sushi joint that epitomizes Fieri’s flair for fusion.

Avoiding Less Palatable Chores

Fieri discovered cooking while growing up in Northern California. Whoever cooked in his house got to pick the menu. One day at age 10 he dove in and fixed two New York steaks, pasta, and sauce by the time his parents got home.

“They were just thrilled that I cooked dinner, and not just because I made it and they didn’t have to,” he says. “I remember that look on their faces, and I vividly remember thinking, ‘If I do this, I have to stack less wood.’”

He’s one of those kitchen savants who cooks by sight and taste (good luck finding a measuring spoon on the set of Bite). And even after a full day at the restaurant, he unwinds at home by cooking for his wife, Lori, and their two sons. Hunter is 9 and baby Ryder was born last New Year’s Eve, just nine days after dad’s win on Star.

He spoke frequently of his family during the reality show’s interviews and then lobbied to stay in California when Food Network asked him to move to New York. The chef’s specialties at Johnny Garlic’s are called “Hunter’s Selections.” And each boy has one of Dad’s arms dedicated to him in tattoos.

Devotion to family “is something I got from my parents. They always put our family first,” Fieri says. “I wanted a pretzel booth when I was in fifth grade and my dad says, ‘OK, let’s do it.’”

At 16, Fieri went to France as an exchange student; when he came home, he decided he was done with high school. His parents let him jump to junior college, and by the time his friends were going to prom, he was working in restaurants. Soon he transferred to UNLV.

“If you want to become a leader in the industry of hospitality, you go where hospitality is king, and there’s nothing better than Vegas,” he says.

Don’t Leave Home Without It

Though classes on equipment management and hotel law seemed tedious at the time, Fieri says now he’s glad to have gotten such a global view of the industry. “In the hospitality business, if you have an interest in making people happy and have personality, you can be a superstar,” he says. “It’s kind of the American Express card of education — if you can do hospitality, you can do anything.”

That must include TV. Fieri was thrilled with how Guy’s Big Bite turned out, and he’s in talks about whether to continue the show or develop one of the other two pilots he’s shot for the network.

“I tell people they see about 80 percent of me on the show,” he says, adding that shooting six shows in three days took its toll. “I was under the gun to get it done and do it right. My friends say I wasn’t as mouthy as usual.”

Those same friends — who know him affectionately as “Guido” — pestered Fieri repeatedly to audition for Next Food Network Star. But once he made the pool of eight contestants, Fieri played to win. “I think one of the reasons I did well in the competition is because I didn’t have to win. I have my life with my restaurants,” he says. “I can have a Food Network show and the next minute I have to answer a call about where the soda cups are.”

— Erin O’Donnell
Edward Joseph Malik, ’83 BA Psychology, has been in private practice as an optometrist since 1988. He is president of Eyes and Optics Ltd., Oculus Ltd., and the Shade Brigade Sunglass Co. A drummer and musician, he is the owner of Turtlehead Studios in Red Rock Canyon, ScrumptDillyDisc Productions, and the Melancholics. His hobbies include history, Red Rock Canyon, and, increasingly, naps. He and his wife, Lauren Fabry, ’82 AS Radiological Sciences, have two children, Paige, 9, and Ethan, 7.

Saundra Johnson, ’81 BS Business Administration, was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of UNLV’s College of Business Alumni Association. She chairs Vistage International, the world’s largest international organization of chief executives. Previously, she managed financial functions for the campaigns of U.S. Sen. John Ensign and for Wolfgang Puck Fine Dining in Las Vegas. She has been a certified public accountant in Nevada since 1983.

Thomas Foskaris, ’83 BS Hotel Administration, is branch manager for AIG Financial Advisors in Henderson. His practice focuses on providing retirement and estate planning solutions to high-net-worth individuals and families throughout the United States. He remains active at UNLV, serving as a dean’s associate to the Division of Health Sciences and as a member of the UNLV Foundation Planned Giving Council. He also is a lifetime member of the UNLV Alumni Association.

Geoffrey Combs, ’84 BS Hotel Administration, is the accounting and human resource manager for the Colorado Horse Park. Located in Parker, it one of the nation’s largest equestrian facilities. He lives on the eastern plains of Colorado with his wife, Gina, and stepson, Nick.

Vida Chow, ’86 BS Hotel Administration, is the director of human resources at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. She has worked in a variety of jobs during her 17 years at the hotel, including catering sales, convention services, front office, and event management. Bikram yoga is one of her hobbies.

Valarie Young, ’86 BS Secondary Education and ’92 MA History, teaches

at the Advanced Technologies Academy. A 20-year employee of the Clark County School District, she has taught at both junior and senior high schools. In 2005 she was selected as a Milken National Educator, one of 41 U.S. secondary teachers to receive the honor. She received $25,000 and a trip to Washington, D.C., as part of the award. She and her husband, Lyn, have three children and four grandchildren.

Scott Deveau, ’87 BS Hotel Administration, works for the U.S. General Services Administration. A 15-year employee, he is involved with government-owned properties and commercial real estate. A four-year resident of Anchorage, Alaska, he is in the process of adopting two boys, ages 4 and 8.

Lisa A. Symanski, ’87 BA Communication Studies, is casino special events manager for Caesars Palace. She previously worked 17 years as casino special events director for Bally’s & Paris Las Vegas. She transferred to Caesars Palace as the result of the merger with Harrah’s Corp. She is married to former Runnin’ Rebel Leon R. Symanski, ’87 BS Business Management, ’94 Master of Public Administration, and ’01 JD. They have a daughter, Noelle. They live in Henderson.

Michael Chesley, ’88 BS Hotel Administration, is the owner of a restaurant, Grazia by Jennifer James, and a lounge, Gulp!, in Albuquerque, N.M. He was named 2005 Restaurateur of the Year by the New Mexico Restaurant Association. A 14-year resident of the state, he is married and has two children.

Anthony R. Griffiths, ’88 BS Business Administration, is CEO of Global Presenter, a Pro-Av systems integrator in Huntington Beach, Calif. He lives in Seal Beach.

Antoinetta “Toni” Dunning Nance, ’89 BS Business Administration, is a production operations manager for Mortgage Lenders Network USA in Rocky Hill, Conn. She previously worked as assistant director of banking relations for Advest Inc. Married for 11 years, she enjoys billiards, bowling, and entertaining friends. She lives in Hartford.

James P. Reza, ’89 BA Political Science and Communication Studies, is vice president of Cultural Development Co., a Nevada-based retail and hospitality development firm that operates the award-winning Globe Salon. He is the founding publisher of SCOPE magazine, now known as Las Vegas Weekly. He also is the associate publisher of Vurb magazine, a new Las Vegas-based publication focusing on the renewed sense of city living in the New West. It is published by Urban Village Publishing, which he was instrumental in founding.
in Chinatown to promote me up to the Chinese media,” says Kwan whose parents were born in Canton. “The Wynn had given me a month off before the fight to exclusively train. I felt like I couldn’t have won either way.”

After the loss, Kwan and Perozzi regrouped and she left her position at the Wynn to pursue her career as a boxer. She hopes to have her second professional match this fall.

Nicknamed “School Girl” because of her commitment to education — she’s now working on her master’s in marketing — Kwan started boxing as an undergraduate. “I walked into the gym at UNLV and was inspired by what was going on there,” she says. “And I met Vinny there. I was a tennis player and I’d always been athletic, but being a small person (5 foot 3 inches), I thought it was important to be able to defend myself. I came down to Las Vegas by myself at 17.”

In addition to getting her sheepskin, sport, and spouse at UNLV, Kwan also established several relationships with faculty and students. “My favorite professor was (marketing professor) Michael Mejza,” the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society and Golden Key National Honor Society member says. “I still talk to him to this day. He was one of my toughest teachers but he was also the best.”

As for now, Kwan is planning on opening a boxing gym in Summerlin later this year but still is intent on going the distance as a fighter. “My main thing is just getting the fights under my belt right now,” she said.

Joe H. Smith, ’89 BS Accounting, recently was promoted to director of audits and finance for the National Indian Gaming Commission. The position entails managing the regulatory compliance auditing process and being responsible for the commission’s internal accounting function. A seven-year employee of the commission, he has 25 years of experience in gaming. Previous jobs included casino internal auditor, Nevada Gaming Control Board agent, and investigator for the Clark County department of business license. He and his wife, Teresa Ann, have three children. The couple is moving from Oregon to the Washington, D.C., area.

Deborah Winningham, ’90 Master of Social Work, is the state director for Phoenix Homes, a foster care organization in Ohio. She lives in Lewis Center.
Michael S. Gerenda, ’91 BS Hotel Administration, teaches culinary arts at a high school in Bucks County, Pa. He also coaches high school soccer and lacrosse. An avid sailor and traveler, he is the owner of a small catering business that deals primarily with home parties and events.

Ki-Joon Back, ’92 BS and ’94 MS Hotel Administration, recently joined the University of Houston as associate professor and graduate program director in the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management. He lives in Sugar Land, Texas.

David Pokorny, ’92 MBA, is the product manager of Intelligent Table Systems, a security system for casino blackjack and baccarat, for Shuffle Master Inc. Recently, he received his certification as a project management professional. A member of Source-Ers Toastmasters, he married Heather Rogers last year.

Kristie Close Wakefield, ’92 BS Sports Medicine, retired from her physical therapy career and is now the owner of Sunflower Kids, a children’s resale boutique in Henderson. She has two children, Hannah and Cooper.

Christian E. Hardigue, ’93 BS Hotel Administration, was promoted to associate professor in UNLV’s College of Hotel Administration in July. She and her husband, Chris Brown, welcomed a son, Parker J. Brown, to their family on April 5.

Shellie Michael, ’93 MA Communication Studies, is an associate professor in the communication and English departments at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tenn. She earned a master’s degree in English at Tennessee State University in 2001. At Vol State she is speaker of the Faculty Council and in 2002 won the college’s outstanding faculty award. She is married to Mark Michael, who was a member of UNLV’s philosophy department faculty from 1990 until 1995 and is now a philosophy professor at Austin Peay State University. The couple has one son, Alexander. The family lives in Nashville.

Robert Davenport, ’94 BS Business Administration, was recently appointed to the board of directors of UNLV’s College of Business Alumni Association. He is a financial planner and partner with Partners Financial Group. He is the president of the Entrepreneurs Organization and also serves on the board of advisors for UNLV’s finance department. He also is a member of the International Association of Financial Planners, the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils, the Society of Financial Planning Specialists, and the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce.

Holly Ansley Shumate, ’94 BS Hotel Administration, is the general manager of the Glorietta Bay Inn, a boutique hotel on California’s Coronado Island near San Diego. She previously worked five years with Grand Pacific Resorts as the general manager of Carlsbad Seapointe Resort and Coronado Beach Resort. She lives in La Mesa.

Kristine Le Blanc Duncan, ’95 BS Hotel Administration, and her husband, Dan, welcomed their daughter, Lindsey Mae, into the world on Feb. 18. They live in Denver.

Alicia Jackson, ’95 BA Communication Studies, ’90 MA Communication Studies, works for Audatex as a field support trainer. She trains insurance clients on auto claims software. Her hobbies include listening to music, attending concerts, and surfing the Internet. She recently moved from Las Vegas to Arlington, Texas.

Alison Rossman, ’95 BA English, is an associate with the law firm of Quarles & Brady Streich Lang in its Phoenix real estate practice. She focuses on representation of developers and homebuilders in the preparation and negotiation of purchase agreements, CC&R’s, easements, and homeowner association documents. She received her law degree from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

Rachel Ego Conneely, ’96 BS Hotel Administration, recently accepted the position of general manager for Fox Acres Country Club, located in the northern Colorado Rockies. She previously was clubhouse manager at Wyoming’s Powder Horn Golf Club, where she helped open a new 30,000-square-foot clubhouse facility, and worked in a number of management positions at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass. In January 2005 she married Sean Conneely in a beach ceremony on a Caribbean island. They live in Red Feather Lakes.

Tasha Anne James, ’96 BA Theatre Arts, is an actor and director who recently played Maria in Twelfth Night and also directed Wilely and the Hairstyman for Las Vegas’ Rainbow Company Youth Theatre. She also produces and directs trade-show presentations and events. A runner, she completed the sprint distance in the Tri for the Cure in Denver in 2005 and in the Chicago Triathlon in 2000. She expects to finish the Olympic distance in the Chicago race this year. She lives in Chicago.

Nichole Lovely, ’96 BS Accounting, was recently appointed to the board of directors of UNLV’s College of Business Alumni Association. She is a senior audit manager with the Nevada practice of Deloitte & Touche. She helped establish the Greater Las Vegas chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants and currently serves as its president. She is working to establish a student chapter of the organization at UNLV. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Nevada Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Kimberley McGee, ’96 BA Communication Studies, is the managing editor of three Las Vegas magazines, What’s On the Las Vegas Guide, What’s On Henderson, and What’s On Summerlin. She works as a reporter for the Las Vegas Sun and freelances for many national publications. She launched www.lasvegasfreelancers.com, an educational site for aspiring and published writers. She recently married Scott Schofield, who is an illustrator. Together they are writing children’s books.

Kim Tun, ’96 BS Hotel Administration, was recently hired as the advertising manager for Pinnacle Entertainment Inc. She advises and manages six properties’ advertising departments. Pinnacle has properties in Nevada, Louisiana, Indiana, and the Bahamas.

Mark Benjamin, ’97 BS Hotel Administration, is chief operations officer for flowerpetal.com, an online e-tailer of flowers and gifts. He is also director of operations for net.insights, a marketing company that provides web management and search-engine marketing services. He lives in Chicago.

Jason Cooper, ’97 MA Anthropology, is a professional archaeologist with the environmental consulting firm Jones & Stokes. Based in Bellevue, Wash., he directs and manages archaeological surveys and excavations across the West. He recently returned from Egypt where he finished working on an archaeological survey near Abydos sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the University of Pennsylvania. He lives in Seattle.

Tony Llanos, ’97 BS Hotel Administration, recently became the director of administrative services for Alcatraz Cruises. The company, which is affiliated with Hornblower Cruises and Events, launched its service in September. The National Park Service awarded Alcatraz Cruises an exclusive contract to transport tourists round-trip between San Francisco and Alcatraz Island. He previously spent five years as controller and human resources director of San Francisco’s Orchard Hotel.

Diane I. Morris, ’97 MS Civil Engineering, was profiled in Changing Our World: True Stories of Women Engineers, a book on extraordinary women engineers, in the September/October 2004 issue of the National Association of Professional Women Engineers. Morris lives in Montgomery, Ala.

Ian M. Nixon, ’97 BS Elementary Education, is beginning a doctoral program in curriculum and instruction at New Mexico State University this fall. He returned to the United States this summer after spending eight years teaching in American schools in four foreign countries. He enjoys traveling, aviation, reading, and learning. He and his wife, Siddharta, who is from Columbia, have been married three years.

Kristin Brooks Rivero, ’97 BS Hotel Administration, is a customer service representative in the construction industry. Her hobbies include travel, music, cooking, dining, and reading. She lives in North Las Vegas.
Where in the world are you?

Have you gotten a promotion? Completed your first marathon? Tell us all about your latest and greatest accomplishments.

Submit your newest accomplishments to the Class Notes section. Or, if you’ve moved recently, let us know your new address.

(Class Notes entries must be received by Nov. 25 for the next issue.)

Alisa Acosta, ‘98 MS Hotel Administration, is a consultant focusing on organizational efficiencies for her company, Alisa Acosta Business Consulting. She also is an instructor in UNLV’s College of Business. Her hobbies include hiking at Red Rock and Mount Charleston, skiing, walking, reading, rollerblading, and traveling.

Roger Armstead, ‘98 BS Hotel Administration and ‘06 BS Leisure Services, works with youth enrichment for the city of Henderson’s parks and recreation department. Previously, he spent 11 years working with Marriott Hotels.

Ryan P. Gullion, ‘98 BS Hotel Administration, is the general manager of Houston’s Lancaster Hotel. Previously, he worked at the Hotel Valencia Santana Row in San Jose, Calif., as director of operations. He and his wife, Andrea, have a daughter, Caroline.

Robert Gurdison, ‘98 BA Architecture and ‘01 Master of Architecture, was the project manager for Carpenter Sellers Architects on the Center for Maternal-Fetal Medicine project. The center, a 13,000-square-foot, two-story office and retail building is located in Las Vegas’ new medical district. It opened in January.

Bonnie Korkow, ‘99 BS Hotel Administration, recently received her teaching certificate and is working as a substitute teacher at Clark County School District elementary schools. She enjoys spending summer vacations in Vancouver, British Columbia; hiking; boating; and shopping.

George Okinaka, ‘99 BS Business Administration, works as the retail leasing manager for American Nevada Co., a Southern Nevada real estate developer. He handles the company’s leasing portfolio, including Aliante MarketPlace and the District at Green Valley Ranch. He previously worked for the commercial real estate brokerage CB Richard Ellis Inc. and for Scenic Airlines. He enjoys fine dining, mountain biking, racquetball, travel, and yoga. He and his wife, Julie, have one son, Alexander. They live in Henderson.

Chad Heese, ‘03 BS Management Information Systems, is a lending manager at Clark County Credit Union and has written two computer programs specifically for the company. His hobbies include working out at the gym, playing racquetball and chess, and building and repairing computers. He is married and the father of a son and daughter.

Melissa Beevers, ‘04 BA Psychology, was crowned Miss Black Nevada USA 2006. In October she will compete in the National Miss Black USA Scholarship Pageant in Washington, D.C. Her platform is promoting post-secondary education among low-income and disadvantaged students. The undergraduate commencement speaker in 2004, she now works as a GEAR UP school coordinator for UNLV’s Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach.

Jason Gonzales, ‘04 BS Biology, is a lab technician at the Nevada Cancer Institute.

Michael Stamps, ’04 PhD English, recently was notified by the University of Delaware Press that his critical variorum edition of Ben Jonson’s Volpone — a project that began as his doctoral dissertation at UNLV — has been accepted for publication. Profiled as an outstanding graduate at commencement in 2004, he now teaches college composition and literature in southeastern Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife, April, and their new daughter, Paloma.

“Jenny” Qin Yu, ‘04 BS Hotel Administration, is in the leadership development program of the Venetian Resort-Hotel-Casino. She previously worked for Radisson Plaza Hotel in Hangzhou, China, and for Treasure Island Las Vegas. She is from Hangzhou.

Henry L. Schuck, ’05 BS Hotel Administration, ’05 BS Accounting, is pursuing a joint law degree/MBA at Ohio State University’s Mortiz College of Law. He lives in Columbus.

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The Marjorie Barrick Museum will host “Nuclear West” Oct. 13-Dec. 10. The exhibit is a series of contemporary landscape photographs from the “Altered Landscape: The Carol Frank Buck Collection” of the Nevada Museum of Art. (Pictured above: An industrial safety sign at the Nevada Test Site by Robert Del Tredici) The photographs represent the work of a diverse group of photographers working in the Western states where there has been an ongoing history of atomic weapons, nuclear energy, and military land use. The exhibition of 31 photographs reflects a relatively new interest by photographers in documenting landscapes altered by human presence and politics. “Nuclear West” is part of the Nevada Touring Initiative, a program of the Nevada Arts Council, and is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Nevada Museum of Art.

October


14 Las Vegas Philharmonic: Masterworks I Concert. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

17 Music: UNLV Symphony Orchestra Concert I. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

18 Charles Vanda Master Series: I Musici (The Musicians). 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

20-21 Dance: “Collaborations” with Korea National University. 8pm, Oct. 20-21. 2pm, Oct. 21 Judy Bayley Theatre.

21 New York Stage and Beyond Series: “Hello Jerry! Celebrating the Music and Lyrics of Jerry Herman.” 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

22 Music: UNLV Jazz Ensemble I in Concert. 4pm. Judy Bayley Theatre.

24 Classical Guitar Series: Brazilian Carlos Barbosa-Lima. 8pm. Beam Music Center Recital Hall.

November

3 New York Stage and Beyond Series: Wynton Marsalis. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

4 Charles Vanda Master Series: The Moscow State Symphony Orchestra. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

9 Music: UNLV Community Concert Band I. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

10-19 Nevada Conservatory Theatre's Second Season: Click – Boom. 8pm, Nov. 10-11, 14-18. 2pm, Nov. 11-12, 18-19. Black Box Theatre.

12 Music: “76 Trombones Plus 4” Concert. 2pm. Ham Concert Hall.

16 MBA Infosession: 5:30pm. Wright Hall.

18 Las Vegas Philharmonic: Masterworks II. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

21 Classical Guitar Series: Ricardo Cobo. 8pm. Beam Music Center Recital Hall.

21 Music: UNLV Symphony Orchestra Concert II. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.
Since its inception in 1985, the University Forum lecture series has offered free lectures, poetry readings, demonstrations, music recitals, and dance performances. Different from other lecture series that bring “big names” to campus, the University Forum provides a much more intimate experience, allowing easier access to the speakers, who usually mingle after the event. Attendance averages 125 people.

This year’s lineup offers some provocative titles:

**October**
- **9** “Cowboys Full: The Story of America’s National Other Pasttime — Poker,” author James McManus
- **10** “Ancient Flutes of the New World,” recording artist Michael Graham Allen
- **18** “Working With War: Henry Nevinson and the Changing Role of the War Correspondent,” Angela V. John, University of Wales
- **20** “The Novel as Modern Myth,” John Bender, Stanford University
- **25** “The Great American Sideshow: 100 Years of Freakish Spectacle as Viewed from Postmodern Las Vegas,” Dana Marie Miller, UNLV Libraries
- **2** “Stud, Dud, Thud: The Evolution of Human Male Reproduction,” Richard Bribiescas, Yale University
- **4** Desert Chorale: Desert Chorale’s Annual Celebration of Christmas. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **9** Las Vegas Philharmonic: Peter and the Wolf (Family Concert). 7pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **13** Las Vegas Philharmonic: Peter and the Wolf (Family Concert). 7pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **16** “Vikings, Eskimos, and Mongolians: Frozen ‘Empires’ of the Arctic,” William Fitzhugh, Smithsonian Institution
- **18** “Intelligence Testing: A Matter of Life or Death,” Chad W. Buckendahl, University of Nebraska
- **27** Charles Vanda Master Series: Lorin Maazel conducts the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

**November**
- **2** New York Stage and Beyond Series: Manhattan Transfer. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **4** “Stud, Dud, Thud: The Evolution of Human Male Reproduction,” Richard Bribiescas, Yale University
- **9** Las Vegas Philharmonic: A Holiday Celebration. 8pm, Dec. 9, 2pm, Dec. 10. Ham Concert Hall.
- **22** Music: UNLV Jazz Ensembles. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **23** UNLV Jazz Ensembles II and III in concert. 7:30pm. Black Box Theatre.
- **29** Music: UNLV Jazz Combos in concert. 7:30pm. Black Box Theatre.
- **30** Music: UNLV Choral Ensembles Winter Concert. 7:30pm. Ham Concert Hall.

**December**
- **2** New York Stage and Beyond Series: Manhattan Transfer. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **4-10** Las Vegas Philharmonic: Las Vegas Philharmonic Youth Concert. 10:15am and 11:45am, Jan. 4-5, 9-11. Ham Concert Hall.
- **11** Las Vegas Philharmonic: Peter and the Wolf (Family Concert). 7pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **12** UNLV Jazz Ensembles II and III in concert. 7:30pm. Black Box Theatre.
- **16** Commencement: 9am. Thomas & Mack Center.
- **18** Charles Vanda Master Series: Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **26** “Cowboys Full: The Story of America’s National Other Pasttime — Poker,” author James McManus
- **27** Charles Vanda Master Series: Lorin Maazel conducts the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

**January**
- **4-10** Las Vegas Philharmonic: Las Vegas Philharmonic Youth Concert. 10:15am and 11:45am, Jan. 4-5, 9-11. Ham Concert Hall.
- **13** Las Vegas Philharmonic: Peter and the Wolf (Family Concert). 7pm. Ham Concert Hall.
- **18** Charles Vanda Master Series: Lorin Maazel conducts the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini. 8pm. Ham Concert Hall.

**More Info:** Visit liberalarts.unlv.edu/forum.
Back in 1996, Sunny Gittens was asked to create a new tradition for UNLV to cap off opening week of the fall semester. Brain-storming, and a little borrowing from other universities, led to the now 10-year tradition of Premier UNLV. The name was chosen because of timing (television shows premier in the fall) and because UNLV had recently adopted the phrase “premier urban research university” to describe its aspirations.

The first year, much to Gittens’ surprise, more than 800 students showed up at North Field to light up the school’s acronym with flashlights. The event has evolved into a nightlong celebration with a picnic, student organization fair, and local bands in concert. Getting a crowd count is difficult, but this year’s attendance easily topped 2,000.

Gittens will tell you her favorite year was 1998, “the first year you could really tell there were students out there holding the flashlights.” But we suspect otherwise. A year later, fireworks went off in more than one sense when she met her future husband, Tom, who was part of the crew hired to provide pyrotechnics.
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