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UNLV’s Team of Cancer Fighters
What is the difference between a good university and a great one? The support and involvement of alumni and friends.

Contributions from donors like you directly benefit students at UNLV and help to expand academic programs. With your growing support, UNLV will fulfill the bright promise of its future as a premier urban university. This year, “Rebel Ringers” will team up to ask for your help. Please consider how much UNLV means to you and the community, and when a student calls, give generously!

For more information, contact the UNLV Foundation at (702) 895-3641.
Collaborating Against Cancer

The founding members of the new UNLV Cancer Institute have joined together in the fight against cancer. These committed scientists are trying to improve the prevention, detection, and treatment of the deadly disease.

BY SUZAN DIBELLA

Fostering A Greater Understanding

The foster care system in our country is facing a crisis, according to Ramona Denby. As the social work professor attempts to sort out the issues through her research, she finds that easy answers are hard to come by.

BY LAURIE FRUTH

Artistic Feat

When dance professor Louis Kavouras isn’t choreographing, teaching, composing, painting, or performing, he’s chairing his department and finding time to dance professionally in New York. It’s just all in a day’s creativity, he claims.

BY BARBARA CLOUD

Metropolitan Man

Twice-elected Sheriff Jerry Keller started out with a couple of different career ideas, but law enforcement wasn’t one of them. The UNLV alumnus reflects on how and why he became the top cop in the fastest-growing city in the nation.

BY DIANE RUSSELL
Bennett Donates $5 Million to Build New UNLV Preschool

A $5 million gift from William G. Bennett, owner of the Sahara Hotel and Casino, will build a new preschool on the UNLV campus, President Carol C. Harter announced recently.

The gift came from the Bennett Foundation through the UNLV Foundation and is earmarked for an early childhood center building.

"This new gift will help us build the third phase of a project that began with moving the Paradise Elementary School into a new building on the UNLV campus in 1998," Harter said. "Mr. Bennett's generosity and interest in education also made possible the new William G. Bennett Professional Development Building, which is located adjacent to the Paradise Elementary School. The three facilities will provide a professional development education program that we believe will become a national model."

Bennett gave $2.7 million in 1998 to support construction of the professional development building that bears his name.

"Mr. Bennett and I have a tremendous amount of respect for Carol Harter, and we appreciate the fine job she is doing at UNLV," William Bennett said. "We are pleased that the prior gift we made has been used to build the Professional Development Building. We were excited by the opportunity to fund the construction of a new preschool facility adjoining that building. We believe that these two buildings will complement each other, providing the university and the community with a one-of-a-kind complex."

Gene Hall, dean of UNLV's College of Education, said, "We are excited about the opportunity to develop a model space for the educational development of young children. We expect this facility will be excellent for the children who are enrolled in it, and we hope it will become a site that educators around the country will want to visit."

Construction Under Way on New Lee & Thomas Beam Music Center

Construction has begun on UNLV's new Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center, located along Maryland Parkway on the campus' northeast corner.

The $7.3 million project's first funded project is another product of the university's long-standing partnership with the Beam family, according to UNLV President Carol C. Harter.

"UNLV is extremely fortunate that the Beam family has supported this very important project for the College of Fine Arts," said Harter. "Lee and Thomas Beam have helped build the remarkable Fine Arts programs here at UNLV. Their generosity has supported the arts for more than 20 years, and the number of music majors has doubled to nearly 500. We have also doubled the size of the faculty in the same period. Now graduate degrees have been added in several music areas to answer to local and national demands. Local growth requires additional space; the Beam family's generosity exists in dealing with the space problems and lets us move toward the future."

The building will include a music library, listening center, a state-of-the-art recording studio, and a 300-seat recital hall.

Philanthropist Jim Rogers and Sheriff Roger Wagner received the UNLV Alumni Silver State Award, the highest honor awarded to a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Rogers, a prominent Las Vegas attorney, presented a $28.5 million charitable gift pledge and donation to the new William S. Boyd School of Law in November 1998. He founded Valley Broadcasting Company in 1971 and has served as CEO of KBVS-TV Channel 3 in Las Vegas since 1979. He is also the principal owner of Sunbelt Communications Company, which owns and operates NBC-affiliated television stations in Nevada, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.

Keller (see page 18 in this issue), who graduated from UNLV in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in education, has been Named Alumnus of the Year, considered the highest honor awarded to a graduate by the UNLV Alumni Association. Keller, a native Las Vegas, was elected sheriff in 1994 and then re-elected in 1998. He began his career in law enforcement in 1969 when he joined the Clark County Sheriff's Office. To that end, scientists from the state, the U.S. Geological Survey, the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board are meeting regularly to discuss project findings.

Part of Cline's mission is to build a consensus based on findings of the study, so that the conclusions of the project, matters are resolved to the satisfaction of both the state and federal governments.

Geologist Studies Yucca Mountain with $1.4 Million Grant

UNLV geologist Jean Cline has been awarded a $1.4 million federal grant to conduct a study that will help determine the suitability of Yucca Mountain as a nuclear waste repository.

The funding, which came from the U.S. Department of Energy, is paying for a two-year study in which Cline and other scientists will try to determine whether hot fluids have seeped into the site that is being considered for the repository and, if so, when that infiltration occurred.

"If water did seep in, it is important to know whether it happened within the past two million years," said Cline, an associate professor of geoscience. "If fluid made its way in more than two million years ago, that would not necessarily make Yucca Mountain a risky site for a repository. However, if the invasion occurred more recently, it could indicate the potential for the same thing to happen again, which could make a repository in that location risky."

In conducting their study, Cline and other scientists will examine small samples of ancient fluid, called "fluid inclusions," that are trapped in the rock at Yucca Mountain.

New UNLV Foundation Building Scheduled for Completion in May

The new UNLV Foundation Building, located in the northeast area of the campus near Maryland Parkway, is scheduled for completion in May. The 23,000-square-foot structure was designed by Tate and Snyder Architects and is being built by C.E. Construction at a cost of $1.9 million. UNLV Foundation trustees, who initiated the project, have taken an active role in providing the necessary private funding. The building will provide office space for the Foundation staff who are responsible for generating private financial support for the university.

To that end, scientists from the state, the U.S. Geological Survey, the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board are meeting regularly to discuss project findings.
UNLV Alumni Association Offers Free E-mail to Alumni

Let the UNLV Alumni Association be your door to the world of cyberspace. The Alumni Association now has the means to offer free E-mail service to all alumni who want it. And, all alumni, regardless of where their E-mail accounts are based, are eligible to receive alumni@RebelNet, a series of E-mail messages alerting alumni to upcoming events of interest. Additionally, alumni can do their Internet shopping through the Alumni Association’s home page and benefit their alma mater at the same time. “We’re excited to be able to offer all these electronic services to our alumni,” said Carl Cook, assistant director of alumni relations. “The alumni themselves can benefit by subscribing to the free E-mail service and then provide a benefit to the university by accessing our home page to do their Internet shopping.” The free lifetime E-mail service, GoRebel.net, is provided by Phutnotsoft, a company founded by a UNLV alumnus. To sign up for the service, go to GoRebels.net. There you will find the instructions necessary to register. The “Alumni Bulletins” updates are already being sent to all alumni for whom the association has E-mail addresses. If you are not yet receiving this information and would like to, call Cook at 895-3621 or E-mail him at algmail@unlv.edu and provide him with your E-mail address. To do your Internet shopping, go to the Alumni Association’s home page at www.unlv.edu/alumni and click on “zUNLV.com.” Then click on “Shop Now.” This will link you with a wide variety of vendors. When alumni do their Internet shopping through the Alumni Association, the university’s vendor, z-univ, will give UNLV a percentage of the sales made. That money will be used to help fund scholarships and programs that benefit students. So, while many of the vendors could be reached in other ways, UNLV will benefit if alumni shop through the Alumni Association,” Cook said.

Alumni Association Programs Designed to Honor Faculty

The UNLV Alumni Association has instituted two programs designed to recognize and encourage outstanding UNLV faculty members. The new programs—Subsidized Awards—are given each year to six professors who excel in making the students the focal point of their efforts. Professors chosen for the 1999-2000 academic year are Warren McNab, professor of health and physical education; Francisco Menendez, chair of the film department; Shabab Nahmish, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering; Carole Rae, professor of dance; Jerry Simich, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering; and Wanda Taylor, associate professor of geoscience.

The professors were recognized at the fall student leadership luncheon, along with 70 student leaders who were on hand to receive scholarships. “It is a fitting tribute to match our student leaders and our best student-focused faculty in one great celebration,” said Jim Ratigan, UNLV Alumni Association president, said he is proud of the association’s ability to help support those faculty members with the most student-focused goals. “The Alumni Association supports the university in so many ways, and we are glad to be able to help promote student-centeredness at UNLV. As our membership grows, so will our ability to support worthwhile programs such as these,” Ratigan said.

New Degree Programs Available on UNLV Campus

Seven new degree programs are now available at UNLV:

- A master’s degree in management: The new program will prepare students to become construction site managers. The program will be offered in three consecutive, one-year segments. The program is designed to be offered in a master’s degree in engineering.

- A master’s degree in health promotion: The program will be offered in the spring of 2000.

- A master’s degree in education: The program will be offered in the fall of 2000.

- A master’s degree in psychology: The program will be offered in the fall of 2000.

- A master’s degree in health sciences: The program will be offered in the fall of 2000.

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Collaborating Against Cancer

The founding members of the new UNLV Cancer Institute have joined together in an effort to fight cancer through their research. Find out how these committed scientists are trying to improve the prevention, detection, and treatment of the deadly disease.

BY SUZAN DIBELLA

In June of last year, a small group of UNLV scientists formally joined together in the pursuit of a noble shared goal: improving the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer.

Representing three different UNLV colleges, the eight faculty members—all of whom had been conducting research on their own on various subjects related to cancer—officially became the founding members of the new UNLV Cancer Institute.

The reason for formalizing the collaboration of these scientists was perhaps best articulated by UNLV President Carol C. Harter at the time she announced that the institute had been approved by the UCCSN Board of Regents.

“For many years,” she said, “we have had faculty scientists doing intriguing cancer research. We expect the new institute to serve as a valuable think-tank for our cancer researchers while also making them more visible to the external community.”

Today, the institute boasts an additional faculty member and more than eight months of formal collaboration. The team of scientists from the departments of chemistry, biology, electrical and computer engineering, mechanical engineering, and health physics meet regularly to share insights on their research and generate a valuable exchange of data and theories.

But the collaboration doesn’t stop on the UNLV campus; they are being joined in their research endeavors by several faculty members from the University of Nevada School of Medicine and several physicians from University Medical Center. At the same time, members of the institute continue to pursue increased grant funding; the group’s status as an institute is expected to enhance the likelihood of members obtaining such funding. UNLV Magazine recently asked these scientists to describe their research. Here’s what we found out.

George Plopper

Finding ways to stop cancer from moving around the body is cell biologist George Plopper’s research challenge. He believes it could have a remarkable impact on the way cancer is treated.

But to understand why it’s so critical, he explains, you must first understand how cancer works.

“Cancer is a disease that kills people because cells that normally know when and where to grow in your body ‘forget’ this because they mutate, and they grow at inappropriate times and in inappropriate places,” he explains. “For example, if you get skin cancer, skin cells can start to grow in the middle of your lung so that your lung can’t function anymore. People who die of cancer most often die of organ failure, because their organs get ‘mixed up’ in this way.”

He adds that the most common way to treat cancer is to stop cancer cells from growing at inappropriate times; the idea is that a non-growing or dead cancer cell can’t interfere with other organs.

“There are thousands of ways to stop cells from growing,” he says. “The problem is that most of these treatments also stop normal healthy cells from growing, so that patients who receive these treatments often feel worse than they did with just the cancer. This is why their hair falls out, they get diarrhea, or suffer other side effects from treatment. In simple terms, when one takes anti-cancer drugs, one enters a race to see which will die first: the cancer cells or the healthy cells. That ‘race’ can be devastating, and in many cases, the cancer cells outlive the normal cells, so that patients get horribly sick but die of organ failure anyway.”

But, Plopper says, if cancer cells remained in just one place, then treatment could be more effective and less destructive to the rest of the body.

“One way to help increase the effectiveness of cancer treatments is to target the other behavior of cancer cells — namely their propensity to grow in inappropriate places in the body. To grow in a different part of the body, a cancer cell has to crawl, or move, from one organ to another. We want to stop that from happening. The idea here is that if one could at least make the cancer cells stay put in one place, we could target the cells locally with the thousands of treatments available and leave the rest of the body alone.”

But getting cancer cells to “sit still” in one part of the body is very hard to do, since researchers don’t know what makes them want to get up and move in the first place.

“Why on earth would a skin cell want to move into a lung? Really, nobody knows,” Plopper says. “My research tries to address this question in two ways. First, we study how cancer cells move. We compare breast cancer cells to normal breast cells, and ask what differences between them might explain why the cancer cells move. We’d like to focus on these differences, and try to find a way of interfering with the biological processes in the cancer cells that make them move to other organs; if we could design drugs that interfere with this process, we could stop cancer cells from moving. Second, we test new drugs to see if they can interfere with cancer cell movement but leave the normal cells alone, even if nobody knows how they might work.

The idea here is that, regardless of how they work, drugs that would keep cancer cells in one place would be useful in the clinic and would compliment existing treatments for cancer.”

Lori Bruce

Lori Bruce is teaching computer science students how to find breast masses on mammograms, as well as how to determine if they are benign or malignant.

“Radiologists rely on mammograms to detect any abnormal areas of the breast,” says Bruce, a faculty member in UNLV’s departments of electrical and computer engineering. “Our goal is to provide them with a tool to increase the effectiveness of diagnosing breast cancer.”

To that end, her research includes
Chemist Ronald Gary: "We want to know the details of how DNA repair biochemistry works, so that we can appreciate and perhaps enhance our body's natural ability to prevent cancer."

developing computer systems that can automatically detect masses, highlight these areas for the radiologist to analyze, and make determinations about whether the mass is benign or malignant.

In a state-of-the-art computer laboratory, Bruce and her research team train the computer systems to detect tumor images produced by the mammogram and then to make decisions, or diagnoses, based on the shape and texture of the tumors.

"We have a database of mammograms that we use to train and test our automated systems," she says. "The database of mammograms has been read by radiologists. The malignant tumors have been proven by biopsies, and each patient has had a one-year follow-up. So we know the correct diagnosis for each mammogram. We give this information to our computer systems for training purposes."

During the training phase, she also sets aside a portion of the mammograms and does not tell the computer system the true diagnoses.

"We then use these 'unknown' mammograms for testing the system," she says. "We keep track of how well the system is diagnosing the mammograms and use this information for improving our designs.

DNA from damage is very important in preventing cancer.

"Fortunately, normal cells have a built-in way to prevent mutations," he says. "They have biochemical systems that find sections of DNA that have been damaged, and they restore them to their original condition. The more efficiently these systems work, the lower our risk of getting cancer will be."

Hence, his research seeks to discover the details of how DNA repair biochemistry works in the effort to enhance the human body's natural ability to prevent cancer.

Biomcical engineer Bingmei Fu: "The purpose of my project is to develop a strategy that can increase blood vessel wall integrity in order to prevent or retard cancer cells from moving in and out of the bloodstream."

The way cancer cells move through blood vessel walls is the research interest of biomedical engineer Bingmei Fu.

"The spaces between blood vessel walls; her goal is to prevent or retard cancer cells from moving in and out of the bloodstream."

Chemist Ron Gary: "I study natural biochemical systems that repair damaged DNA."

DNA, he explains, becomes damaged to some extent all the time; it is an inevitable part of life. Some environmental factors, such as sunlight, cigarette smoke, and pollution, can accelerate the rate of DNA damage. "If left unrepaird," he notes, "this damage causes changes in DNA, called mutations, that make the cell behave abnormally. If normal cells acquire DNA mutations that cause them to grow uncontrollably, they can become cancer cells."

Therefore, he points out, protecting DNA is important in preventing cancer.

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Health physics professor Steen Madsen: "Several studies have shown that photodynamic therapy may prove useful in prolonging survival and/or improving the quality of life of brain tumor patients."

"We study the properties of specific repair proteins to see what they do individually and also how they work together as a molecular team to repair DNA. We want to learn the precise role of each protein, and then assemble this information to form a model that describes the repair process as a series of steps leading to the end point, which is completely repaired DNA. Along the way, we learn the requirements and vulnerabilities associated with each step; these are the potential sources of problems in terms of cancer development."

Steen Madsen is examining ways to use light to kill a particularly resilient type of cancerous brain tumor.

"Patients with malignant brain tumors have a very poor prognosis," says Madsen, a UNLV health physics professor. "The best available treatment — using surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy — results in typical survival of about 10 months. When the treatment fails, it's usually due to the reappearance of the tumor at the original site. This is due to the fact that the tumor cells not removed during surgery are very resistant to chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy."

One treatment that holds promise, Madsen says, is photodynamic therapy, in which laser light is used to activate a cancer-killing drug that has already been administered to the patient.

"My primary research focus is to evaluate the effectiveness of photodynamic therapy, or PDT as it's called, in the treatment of aggressive brain tumors," he says. "PDT is a two-stage treatment. In the first stage, a drug is administered to the patient; the drug accumulates in the tumor and, in the second stage, it is activated with laser light. The activated drug leads to the eventual destruction of the tumor tissue."

"The effectiveness of this treatment," he says, depends, in part, on being able to deliver the laser light to the tumor. This is usually accomplished by the insertion of optical fibers into the tumor tissue or the cavity in which the tumor is situated, Madsen says.

"The drug can also be used as a diagnostic tool to locate tumor cells. This is possible since the drug emits light when it interacts with the laser. This light can be seen with a special type of camera."

Madsen's research has already attracted the attention of several neurosurgeons who have wanted to use the therapy in clinical trials; he is now collaborating with them to develop experimental PDT treatment for cancer patients in California and Norway. 
Burdened by the quantity of children needing care, a shortage of open homes, and regulations that would test the patience of a saint, the foster care system in our country is facing a crisis, according to Ramona Denby. As the social work professor attempts to sort out the issues through her research, she finds that easy answers are hard to come by.

BY LAURIE FRUTH

Imagine that you are responsible for an 11-year-old child. You provide care, love, and relentless support for her. You attend parent-conference meetings, monitor her homework, and buy her school supplies. You take her to doctors’ appointments and on family outings. You laugh when she’s sickly and comfort her when she’s sad, and you worry that she seems to be sad most of the time. Then one day, you receive a phone call and learn that she will be removed from your home within two hours. You don’t know why she is leaving or if you will ever see her again. But you do know that separations like this happen far too frequently in your home, and the emotional toll may soon be more than you’re willing to pay.

Although the above story is fictional, scenarios just like it are played out all too often in foster homes across the country, according to Ramona Denby, a UNLV social work professor. Denby is conducting research to find out why foster parents leave the system and what can be done to keep their homes open. She explains that such scenarios add to the already overwhelming frustrations faced by those who choose to open their homes to children in need. For some, the rewards of foster parenting are too few and far between, and they are choosing to opt out of the system altogether. At the same time, the number of children in need of foster care is growing, Denby notes. Government estimates report that more than half a million children will spend part or all of this year in some form of foster care. Many will spend that time in group-care facilities — the current equivalent of orphanages — because there aren’t enough foster homes to meet the demand for services.

The crisis in foster care is not news to Denby. Like many of her colleagues, she is concerned about the critical shortage of foster homes and the long-range effects this will have on this nation’s most vulnerable population of children. “These are the kids who tend to linger in foster care,” Denby says. “Most of them have behavioral problems as a result of the drug exposure and neglect they’ve experienced in their homes. Add to that the fact that, in many cases, parental rights are not terminated until the child has been in the system for some time. By the time these kids are free to be adopted, no one is interested in adopting them.”

That leaves foster care. But according to Denby, even when homes are available, the placements are often temporary because most foster parents are not prepared to handle the myriad problems these kids bring into their homes. Denby says it’s a Catch-22; foster parents take a child into their home and are then overwhelmed by the behavioral problems the child exhibits. The child is then removed from the home and placed in either another foster home or a group-care facility. But the move exacerbates the behavioral problems, creating new chal-
lenges for the subsequent care givers. Denby says multiple placements have many consequences as well, noting that children who grow up in multiple foster homes may never learn to form an attachment with another human being. When this happens, we begin to see them in other systems — like the criminal justice system," Denby says.

Denby admits that there are plenty of naysayers who look at the solutions, and she sees her research as another human being.

Midwest, half of which were active parents receive is just over $1,600 a month. And the y wondered why they continue to foster. She knew the decision to remove Johnny was made it clear that the y didn’t become foster children, then we need to be up-front about the critical shortage of foster homes and the language effects this will have on the nation’s most vulnerable population of children.

Families Act of 1997 will make it easier for foster parents to assert their rights. Denby believes the working relationship between foster parents and foster care officials could be enhanced if a concerted effort were made to reorient the image of foster parents from that of ancillary help to that of paraprofessional — an image Denby believes would afford a higher degree of trust, regard, and respect. But she admits that even with a change in attitude, personalized attention will be hard to come by. She notes that

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Dance professor Louis Kavouras is on the move — literally. When UNLV's newest Renaissance man isn't choreographing, teaching, composing, painting, or performing, he's chairing his department and finding time to dance professionally in New York. It's just all in a day's creativity, he claims.

By Barbara Cloud

Watch Louis Kavouras' graceful moves, listen to his thoughtful commentary on aesthetics. You can tell right away — he was born to dance.

Yet, had he not decided to enroll in a certain elective in college, Kavouras might be building freeway bridges or programming computers today instead of serving as one of the premier exponents of modern dance in the United States.

As it is, he is the widely acclaimed principal soloist for the Erick Hawkins Dance Company in New York where he performs about one month each year. In 1997, New York critics named him "Best Soloist in New York" and one of the top 10 performers in the city. His dedication to modern dance extends beyond performing; when he's not teaching dance to UNLV students or serving as chair of his department, he's choreographing his own pieces, designing sets for those pieces, or composing music for them.

And to think it all might have gone so differently but for one rather casual decision.

That decision was made in 1984 as Kavouras was leaning toward majoring in computer engineering at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. "I noticed that I had an open elective in my schedule and saw modern dance on the list of courses," he recalls, adding that although he had been active in dance and theatre in high school, he had never before studied that particular form of dance. "I knew a little about modern dance but not a lot. Ultimately, I found it to be, of all my classes, one of the most challenging."

Never one to avoid a challenge, Kavouras turned his full attention to a discipline that gave him "a context with which to view the world."

"I began to see that dance provided me with a place where I could completely lose myself and completely find myself, where I am constantly torn apart and reborn."

Engineering didn't have much of a chance after that realization hit, he says.

Kavouras not only completed a bachelor's degree in theatre (dance was an emphasis within theatre) at Case Western in 1987, but he went on to earn a master of fine arts magna cum laude in dance there two years later.

"People thought it was such a radical shift from engineering to dance, but for me the two are similar," he says. "Engineering looks at systems and logic and makes sense of structure; the dancer looks at bodies and motion and makes sense of the human instrument."

Kavouras likens choreography to writing computer programs. "The way of thinking and structuring, looking at all the various elements, how the body is moved, the logic of this phrase or that, and the sense of communicating an idea are similar," he says.

But, to Kavouras, the fact that movement is "much more immediate, primal..."
In addition to all of his creative activities, Kavouras serves as chair of the Dance department.

Way of communicating gives dance its special fascination.

"Dance brings us back to what's essential, to what it is to be human," he says. "For me that's the most powerful thing about art. It's an integrating force that brings us back.

He is quick to note, however, that the special fascination he finds in the art of dance was not shared by his parents at the time he chose it as a career. "For me that's true that dance was probably not \"right\" in my family. My parents thought I was out of my mind.\" he says.

It's true that dance was probably not high on the list of career options Kavouras' father had in mind for his son; in fact, it was pretty clear to Louis early in life that baseball would have been his father's first choice. The elder Kavouras frequently took his son to baseball games at the spring training camps near their Florida home.

He wanted me to have the same love of the game he had, and I did love it," he says. "But at the time, I just wanted to go to the beach."

As a boy, Kavouras explains, he had developed a particular fondness for the ocean, and he attributes his early absorption in modern dance in part to his appreciation of the sea's movement.

But, ironically, it was baseball, not the beach, that served as inspiration for his first choreographed work, which he created as a class project soon after he had turned to dance in college.

Interested in characterizing the movements of baseball players, Kavouras created \"The Baseball Dance,\" a piece originally choreographed simply as solos depicting the pitcher and the batter. The work became more complex over time as he introduced the rest of the team.

In addition to dealing with the growing complexity of the piece, he found himself juggling multiple roles in order bringing what he calls a \"more \"natural, \"less contrived,\" way of movement to the dance, a technique that takes years of training to master, he says.

After graduating from Case Western, Kavouras continued on there as a dance lecturer for three years before joining the UNLV faculty in 1992. Through the years he has performed as a dancer in a number of productions, and, since writing \"The Baseball Dance,\" he has created more than 50 other pieces.

They have covered a vast array of topics, some narrative and some abstract. He wrote a piece called \"Rain\" that attempted to capture his longing for a thunderstorm and the \"awe\" of relief that comes from a good, hard rain.

Most recently, he wrote a piece entitled \"Icarus,\" about the mythological character who flew too close to the sun, in an effort to portray the idea of \"being close to the edge, of flying high, pushing the bound­

ary,\" yet needing to stay centered.\"

Representative of the modern dance style, all of his works are short pieces that are not constrained by the formal traditions of ballet.

\"I want to create a kind of astonishment in my audience,\" he says.

Kavouras explains that modern dance is \"the stuff of fluffy tutus and satin shoes.\" He notes that the legendary American dancer Martha Graham, whom he once met, is largely credited with breaking away from traditional ballet to develop modern dance, which is generally characterized as more spontaneous, free-spirited, and highly personal. Other dancers, such as Merce Cunningham, further developed the form.

Kavouras found his expression in a style developed by another modern dance pioneer, Erick Hawkins, whose technique calls for free-flowing movement. The style influenced Kavouras' understanding of how the body should move in dance.

\"In the Hawkins technique, we talk about integration," he says. \"The body is naturally integrated. It is naturally held together. The weights of the body fall back into the center of the body.\"

Despite its focus on the natural movement of the body, it's a technique that takes years of training to master, he says.

Kavouras was first introduced to the Hawkins approach at Case Western. After coming to UNLV, he invited members of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company to conduct workshops in Las Vegas. At one of those workshops the Hawkins dancers identified Kavouras as one of their own and invited him to become a member of their New York company.

He was reluctant at first because of his UNLV responsibilities. In addition to teaching, he chairs the dance department. But he realized that he didn't want to miss the wonderful opportunity to work with a major New York company. Fortunately, he says, he was able to work out a schedule that has allowed him to meet his responsibilities to his students and to the department while pursuing the opportunity.

He has been a principal dancer and soloist with the company since 1996 and has performed as a dancer in a number of ballets. Sometimes, when he is dancing in a role that requires little rehearsal, he flies across country just for a weekend's worth of performances.

\"It's an incredible opportunity for me to be dancing in New York while I'm teaching students," he says. \"I feel I am right in the middle of what dance is -- in both the professional and academic worlds.\"

To say he has been well received on the dance scene is to put it mildly. In addition to the praise he received on him by New York critics -- who named him the \"Best Soloist in New York\" and one of the top 10 performers in New York -- he has gained numerous accolades locally; he won UNLV's Charles Vanda Award for Excellence in the Arts last year.

To Kavouras, the drive and passion that have helped him reach new heights in creative expression are critical to his success.

\"I tell all my students that anyone with drive finds a place for themselves. There's always room for talent, always room for drive, no matter what the field," he says. But for Kavouras, the drive must be directed toward the aesthetic.

\"We're here to train artists. It's not about putting your leg here or there, or doing so many turns. That's craft, and, yes, that's part of it; we're going to work on that, drive our students crazy with it. But the other part is teaching our students what it is to be artists.

\"Artists change things. I hope my students go out there and take dance wherever it needs to go. Change it. Move it around. Make it new. Make us look at it in a whole other way.\" \"Dance brings us back to what's essential, to what it is to be human.\" --Louis Kavouras
LAW ENFORCEMENT WASN'T PART of young Jerry Keller's life plan. Frankly, it wasn't even something he considered at the time he entered college. Instead, Keller began his young adulthood with aspirations quite different than most would think.

When he enrolled in Nevada Southern University in 1964, the native Las Vegan was much more interested in discovering a new species of plant or animal in the Mojave Desert than in arresting criminals. The fact is that Keller, who has served on the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department for the past 30 years and as sheriff for the last five, had decided to become a biologist when he began taking courses at the small university that would soon be known as UNLV.

Throughout his early college years, Keller continued pursuing his goal, refining it as he went along. He had enjoyed accompanying his science professors Jim Deacon, Glenn Bradley, and Chad Murvosh on off-road exploring trips in the area; he could envision himself tramping through the Nevada wilderness in the years to come, observing the plants and animals of the Mojave Desert. He had decided to become a field biologist.

But as graduation grew nearer, reality set in for Keller. He was newly married and needed a steady paycheck. Becoming a teacher seemed to him a safer bet for that than becoming a field biologist. So he changed his major, completed his studies, and graduated in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in education; he hoped to become a teacher at Valley High School, where he had done his student teaching.

He spent the summer after graduation working for the National Park Service while he waited to hear from the school district. During that time he received contract offers from schools in other states, but nothing in Southern Nevada.

Committed to remaining in Las Vegas and still mindful of that need for a steady income, Keller took the advice of a friend who had suggested he sign up for the police academy. When the Clark County School District finally did offer him a job as a general science teacher a couple of days before the start of school, Keller felt a sense of obligation about joining the police academy that led him to turn down the teaching post.

"I had no interest in being a police officer. I was married and needed work," he recalls of his very practical decision at the time. He adds that he thought he might stay on as a police officer for a while and then switch to another job.

Twice-elected sheriff Jerry Keller started out with a couple of different career ideas, but law enforcement wasn't one of them. After 30 years on the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, the UNLV alumnus reflects on how and why he became the top cop in the fastest-growing city in the nation.
entered the police academy, setting the law enforcement experience behind him, at least while working for the sheriff's department, he reasoned, he might be able to use his science background by working in the crime lab. In the early 1980s, Keller began his police career as a deputy sheriff on patrol; he went on to work in the planning and research office of the Clark County Sheriff's Department before it merged with the Las Vegas Police Department to form Metro. He then took an assignment in the crime lab where he was promoted to sergeant in 1975. After that, he served as a patrol sergeant, a SWAT sergeant, and then a deputy in internal affairs from 1983 to 1984, during which time he was promoted to lieutenant. In 1984, he and fellow officer Ed Jensen began the Police Employees Assistance Program (PEAP) that still ranks among the proudest accomplishments of his career. Keller says that both he and Jensen had been involved in a couple of shootings during their careers and knew both from their personal experiences and the experiences of their colleagues that the department was not doing what it might to help officers deal with problems related to traumatic incidents such as duty-related shootings. The circumstances that usually surround police-involved shootings are unique, according to Keller. Often, they require officers to run toward a dangerous situation from which anyone else would flee, he says. Once on the scene, officers too often find a civilian — someone's father, brother, or daughter — pointing a gun at them and have no choice but to shoot, he says.

And in many cases, once the shooting ends, the officers find themselves giving CPR to the person they just shot because once that person is no longer a threat, it is the officers' duty to try to keep that person alive until medical help arrives, he adds.

That unique combination of factors can make shootings particularly traumatic for the officers involved, Keller says. In the old days, he says, fellow officers used to "take the officers out and get them drunk after a shooting and then take them home" instead of helping them deal with the issues. He adds that he, Jensen, and others knew there must be a better way to handle those situations.

So, with the blessing of then-Sheriff John Moran, in September 1984 Keller and Jensen launched PEAP, a program designed to help all Metro employees — officers and civilians — deal with any personal problems that make it difficult for them to concentrate on their jobs.

"We knew we had cops out there who were founders, who were good people," he says. "But they didn't want to go to the yellow pages to look for help."

Through PEAP, Metro employees and their family members can get confidential, professional help with a wide variety of problems. While post-traumatic event counseling may be the most dramatic, people can and do seek help in dealing with everything from domestic abuse and alcoholism to troublesome teenage-agers. Grief counseling is also a major component of PEAP.

"We said that with the assistance program in place we could reduce the use of force by officers — and we did by 70 percent the first year — by dealing with the root causes of an officer's use of force rather than just the force itself. The program focused on what was causing normally good officers to change their behaviors and become more forceful, less subtle, and less tactful," he says.

Jensen parted with PEAP, serving as its director until his retirement last December, but Keller went back to the SWAT unit in 1986, this time as a lieutenant. While there he formed the street narcotics unit. In 1987 he was promoted to captain and with that promotion came a transfer back to the crime lab. He next served in a couple of patrol captain assignments before being promoted by Moran to the position of deputy chief in charge of administrative services in 1993. In that job he "oversaw Metro's fleet, facilities, training, personnel, and recruitment. Then, with Moran set to retire, Keller ran for sheriff in 1994. He was, assuming the job in January 1995, he was re-elected in 1998."
March 2000

1 University Forum: "The Straight Skinny on Fat: Where Are We?" 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3641.

4-5 Art Department: MFA Exhibit - Jackie Franklin. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3409.

6 Concert: Sierra Winds and "All That Jazz" with Stefan Karlsson. 7:30pm. BBT. 895-ARTS (2878).


14 Track & Field: UNLV Open. All Day. FS. 895-3307.


24-25 Dance: Dance Arts Company Concert. Call for times. JVS. 895-ARTS (2879).


26-26 Basketball: UNLV vs. New Mexico. 7pm. FTC. 895-3307.


27 Concert: UNLV Jazz Ensemble. 2pm. JBT. 895-ARTS (2879).

28 & 29 Softball: UNLV vs. New Mexico State. 7:30pm. FTC. 895-3307.

30 Performing Arts Center: World Stage Series. Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. 7pm. FTC. 895-3307.


April 2000

1 Continuing Education: "Ten Ways to Sabotage Your Career and Your Life and How to Avoid Them." 9am. FAC 105. 895-3307.

2 Performing Arts Center: Best of the New York Stage. Acting Company performing Maxfield. 7pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).


3 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra, featuring Charles Castelman. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).

3 University Forum: "The Piano Trio and the Role of Communication Among the Musicians." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.

Barbara Greenmun Lecture: Wolf Blitzer. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).

3 Master Series: Master Ventures. 8pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).

3-30 Art and Field: UNLV Invitational. Call for times. FTC. 895-3307.

9 Basketball: UNLV vs. San Diego State. April 7, 5pm. FTC. 895-3307.

10 Theatre: "Broadway and Amos ' FIGHT DIRTY. May also run April 14-16. Call for times.. FTC. 895-ARTS (2879).

11-12 Art Department: MFA Exhibit - Kevin Davis and Cajun Fujita. DBFA Gallery. 895-3649.

13 UNLV Honors Convocation: 10am. AHCH. 895-1267.


15 Concert: UNLV Symphonic Band. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-3333.

16 Performing Arts Center: Wynon Muzafali and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. 7pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).

17 Concert: Jazz Combos. 7:30pm. BBT. 895-0862.

18-19 Basketball: UNLV vs. Southern Colorado. 7pm both days. FTC. 895-3307.

19 Concert: UNLV Jazz Ensemble. 7:30pm. BBT. 895-0862.

20 Concert: Bill Berins on recital. 7:30pm. BBT. 895-3341.

20 University Forum: "The Afternoon Discovery: Lewis and Clark and the Fate of Western Indians." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.


23 Concert: UNLV Symphony Orchestra. 7pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).

25 Women's Tennis: UNLV vs. Wyoming. 2pm. FTC. 895-3307.

26-29 Art Department: Annual Juried Student Exhibit. Through May. Call for times. DBFA Gallery. 895-3649.

27 University Forum: "Medical Ethics: A Historical Perspective." 7:30pm. MBMA. 895-3401.

27-29 Women's Tennis: Mountain West Conference Championships. Call for times. FTC. 895-3307.

28 Concert: UNLV Choral Ensembles. 6:30pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).

30 Softball: UNLV vs. San Diego State. 1pm. FTC. 895-3307.

29-29 Continuing Education: Eating Disorders Seminar. Call for time and location. 895-3394.

30-30 Theatre: "Crazy for You. Also runs May 5 & 7. Call for times. FTC. 895-ARTS (2879).

May 2000

4 Concert: UNLV Wind Orchestra. 7:30pm. AHCH. 895-ARTS (2879).


14 Commencement: UNLV Graduation Ceremonies. 9am & 1:30pm. TMC. 895-3329.

"I then try and kill these cell lines, with chemotherapeutic drugs to determine how hsp27 protects these cells," says L. "I examine whole cells, as well as DNA, RNA, and proteins removed from these human breast cancer cells. I also do some experiments in test tubes in which I mix together hsp27 and other proteins to see how they interact with each other."

Carper hopes that his research might one day enable physicians to treat patients with breast cancer more effectively. "After surgical removal, the tumor would be evaluated for the presence of hsp27," he says. "If hsp27 was elevated, that's a specific therapy — developed in my laboratory — would be given to kill any remaining tumor cells that had high levels of hsp27. This would decrease the rate of tumor recurrence and potentially improve the survival of breast cancer patients."

Steve Carper

A substance called heat shock protein 27 is at the heart of the research of Steve Carper. The chemistry professor knows that when this protein is produced at high quantities in breast cancer tumors, patients have an 80 percent chance of having their tumor recur. When a substance at low levels, the rate of recurrence is only 30 percent.

"I studied how hsp27 protects breast cancer cells from agents designed to kill them, thus allowing the tumors to spread. When it is continued, the rate of recurrence is only 30 percent."

J. Abiodun Elegbede

If J. Abiodun Elegbede is right, certain substances found in plants that we eat may hold the key to preventing and treating cancer.

Elegbede, a UNLV chemistry professor since 1998, has discovered that a plant product called d-limonene, found in the skins of oranges, seems to have a powerful cancer-fighting ability in laboratory animals. By understanding just how this and other natural agents fight cancer again requires a lesson on how cancer begins.

"Cells grow by dividing according to their DNA message at certain times in the life cycle," Elegbede says. "When something happens to change the message that is dictated by the DNA in new cells — a mutation — the cells usually have an internal mechanism that prevents the incorrect message from resulting in a change to the cell. That mechanism causes the cell to commit suicide, which we call apoptosis."

"We have found that in many cancer cells, something has gone wrong with the DNA that causes them to carry and maintain one of these incorrect messages. As a result, the cancer cells do not obey the internal signal to self-destruct and do not obey any of the control signals regulating their growth. Consequently, cancer cells grow out of control."

Elegbede notes that researchers have found that just as some foods have cancer-causing properties, others have the potential to halt cancer growth or prevent it altogether.

"Some of these components selectively cause the cancer cells to commit suicide while not having any deleterious effect on normal cells," he says. "My research is involved in understanding which of these food components have potential to cause, or, more accurately, to remind cancer cells to self-destruct. Understanding how they are able to do this will help us in determining which of the compounds can be used for preventing and/or treating cancers in humans."

D-limonene is one of those compounds, he says, noting that clinical trials designed to evaluate the substance's effect on humans are underway in several countries.

Lydia McKinstry

Chemistry professor Lydia McKinstry, like several of her colleagues, hopes to stop cancer cells from growing or stop normal cells from becoming cancerous. And like her colleagues, she is beginning this research effort at the cellular level.

"Enzymes are molecules contained in our cells that help control biological processes like cell regeneration," says McKinstry. "In one of my research projects we are synthesizing molecules called enzyme blockers that will regulate normal enzyme activity that is associated with specific biological disorders such as cancer."

"Another focus of my research is on combining molecules that will damage the DNA in cancer cells and stop them from reproducing," she says. "We take the basic molecular structure of a naturally occurring cancer-causing substance and then chemically alter it in order to develop new compounds that will be effective drugs for cancer therapy."

Her research is conducted in a laboratory where the substances the studies are exposed to both very low and very high temperatures, as well as to the absence of oxygen and moisture.

McKinstry’s goals are straightforward: She wants to develop new drugs for treating cancer and then develop molecules that will stop cancer.

"If we could stop cancer cells from growing or stop normal cells from becoming cancerous, cancer would become manageable," she says.

Bryan Spangelo

Biochemist Bryan Spangelo is looking to the body itself for ways to cure leukemia.

"The thymus gland, which is found in the body near the heart, produces proteins that help the immune system to work properly so that we do not become sick," he explains. "So we are using those proteins to develop substances that kill leukemia cells."

"We are excited about early results of his research show that these substances from the thymus gland can stop human leukemia cells from dividing, which limits their ability to spread throughout the body."

"We are correct about our hypothesis that the thymus gland secretes hormones that prevent the occurrence and spread of cancer, then we will be able to isolate a thymic hormone and use it for the treatment of certain forms of cancer. Specifically, we have a thymic peptide that stops leukemia cells from growing in the laboratory. We hope that this thymic peptide will prevent leukemia cells from growing and spreading in the human body."

In his laboratory, Spangelo, who also chairs the chemistry department, uses cancer cells taken from a leukemia patient to create cell lines for testing of various combinations of the thymic peptides.

"It’s our hope that these substances will act the same in the human body as they do in the lab," he says.

Joining the UNLV Cancer Institute this year is nursing professor Susan Machen, who is the director of the university’s new nutrition and cancer prevention program. Machen’s research focuses on cancer-preventing foods, such as green leafy vegetables and soy products.
The editorial of the Brenda D. Mason, ’74 BA and a number of federal agencies. The organization has 500 members representing the news media and the public relations community. She is the former financial editor of the Las Vegas Sun and is the author of 14 books.

60s

Janet Lewis, ’68 BS Business Administration, has been elected president of the San Diego Press Club for the year 2000. The organization has nearly 500 members representing the news media and the public relations community.

70s

Brenda D. Mason, ’74 BA Social Work, is a member of the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada System. She is the author of 14 books.

80s

Brenda Mason ’74

Richard Darder, ’77 BS Business Administration, is a partner in the certified public accounting/consulting firm of Arthur, Bankhead & Barney. He is chairman of the board of directors of the Nevada Federal Credit Union, a member of the UNLV President’s Associates, and a member of the Southern Nevada Estate Planning Council. He is active in the Boy Scouts.

90s

L. Douglas Fritz ’81

Jill Butler , ’82 BS Hotel Administration, is a former sales manager for Marriott Hotels, has been promoted to group sales manager for the resort’s 4,000-room facility in the Midwest division. She is currently handling short-term and group business in the hotel’s central reservations department.

Patricia Ann Miller, ’82 BS Management, is vice president of the Monterey Bay Association of Women, is a former sales manager for Marriott Hotels, has been promoted to group sales manager for the resort’s 4,000-room facility in the Midwest division. She is currently handling short-term and group business in the hotel’s central reservations department.

ON THE COVER

The community college of the University of Nevada has expanded its mission beyond preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions. Its four campuses now offer a wide range of programs, from associate degrees to master's programs, and provide a variety of services to support student success. The college's emphasis on student success has resulted in increased enrollment and higher graduation rates.
Foster Care
continued from page 13

research will have a positive effect on the way in which foster parents are recruited and trained in the future. But she questions whether foster care can ever live up to its ideal when it is so desperately under-funded and under-valued by the population at large.

“The joke is that social workers do this research for other social workers,” Denby says. “It’s unfortunate that the rest of society doesn’t pay as much attention to the results of this kind of research. But the reality is that these are the children of the most disenfranchised groups in our society — the poor, the minority, and the drug addicted. Most of our society doesn’t value these populations, so why should we expect that children of these populations would be valued?”

If Denby had her way, she would have more resources allocated to programs that would identify and intervene in families at risk — those burdened by poverty, substance abuse, or other factors that lead to child abuse and neglect.

“If we could intervene then, we wouldn’t have to talk about recruiting all these foster parents,” Denby says.

She may get at least part of her wish. Denby was recently awarded a small grant from the state to evaluate the effectiveness of family preservation services in Nevada — services that provide one-on-one intervention to a small percentage of families, selected on the basis of key risk factors.

For the fortunate families that are selected, the state provides what Denby calls “the Cadillac of services” — counseling, money, education, and support delivered right in the home. Families typically receive services for three months, with follow-ups scheduled for three, six, and nine months later to assess family functioning, parental skills, and depression levels.

“My role will be to assess the progress the families are making and to project the number of children saved from foster care,” she says.

Denby says this work is critical because, unlike foster care, family preservation services are not federally mandated, and they’re relatively expensive given their intensive nature. Although she is just beginning to collect data now, Denby is optimistic that her research will someday persuade legislators to allocate more resources to family preservation efforts.

Denby is also optimistic about the future of foster care in this country, in spite of its many problems. She says she recently had a student approach her at the end of one of her classes to disclose that she had been a foster child.

“This student told me that she and her brother had been taken from their mother when she was in kindergarten. So she literally grew up in the system,” Denby says. “But she reports that she’s doing well. She’s in college; her brother is in high school. They’re making it, and that makes me feel good. So maybe we are making a difference.”

Keller
continued from page 21

of-state colleges. But Keller says he can’t imagine getting a better education than he did at UNLV.

“It was like going to a private college,” he says. “It was so small that you could go find the professors in their offices, and they would take the time to sit with you and explain very complex concepts.”

Professors such as Deacon and Murvosh took personal interest in their students and became mentors and role models, Keller says.

Deacon remembers Keller clearly. “He was one of the most enthusiastic students I’ve ever had,” Deacon says. “He participated in much of the biology field work we were doing in those days. He was friendly and gregarious, a real pleasure to teach.”

And Keller hasn’t forgotten his alma mater over the years. He often accepts requests to serve as a guest lecturer in government and leadership classes. Additionally, for the past several years he has served as a speaker at the UNLV Alumni Association’s Career Day events.

In 1999, the Alumni Association showed its appreciation by naming him Alumnus of the Year, the highest honor awarded to a graduate by the association.

“I was astounded when I was selected from among the thousands of UNLV alumni,” he says. “It is a great honor for me and a very humbling experience to be recognized by my peers.”

As for his future, Keller says he still has one very specific career-related goal ahead of him.

“I want to work myself out of work,” he says. “I fully intend to be part of the team that wrestles crime to the ground so that we no longer need the police. I don’t know that that ever will be accomplished, but that’s my goal.”

It’s more than just professional pride that drives him to attain that goal, he says. It’s something that’s even more important to Keller than his law enforcement career — his family.

In addition to Charlotte, his wife of 10 years, Keller’s son and two of his three daughters live in Southern Nevada, as well as three of his four grandchildren.

“I want my grandchildren to enjoy the very same quality of life I had as a young child in this town,” he says. “They are the reason I still work every day to make this a better city.”
Your bequest makes a positive statement. By including UNLV in your estate plan, you declare to your family and friends that you believe in the quality of higher education offered by UNLV.

Experience the satisfaction of having a well-considered and well-crafted will (or trust) and think about how a bequest can be a part of the picture. Consider making a gift to UNLV through your estate plan and create your own legacy here. Please call Russ Kost, Director of Gift Planning, at (702) 895-3641 for a complimentary brochure about wills and trusts to get you started.
Your dues and contributions have improved our campus in many ways. Here are just a few of the campus landmarks made possible by the UNLV Alumni Association.

Look for your membership information in May. See our web page: www.unlv.edu/Alumni