

SPRING 2024

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CENTRAL COLLEGE

CIVITAS

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

STORY BY: MARK PUTNAM, CENTRAL COLLEGE PRESIDENT



In the wake of World War II, the United States faced fundamental challenges in promoting American democracy and preserving its future. The interventions applied were broad based as our nation pursued the development of international policy initiatives, legal frameworks and institutional structures purposed to advance international understanding and cooperation. The lessons of a global war were hard learned, and our leaders were determined to not revisit the experience.

Higher education featured prominently in this effort in the late 1940s. President Harry S. Truman appointed the President's Commission on Higher Education, the first of its kind. The members of the commission presented their findings and

recommendations in 1947 through a six-volume report titled, "Higher Education for American Democracy." The comprehensive scope of the commission's interest served as a blueprint for the expansion of the national higher education enterprise through the 1960s and 1970s. The report also paid special attention to the important role higher learning should play in fostering an international mindset. The commissioners offered the following rationale:

American institutions of higher education have an enlarged responsibility for the diffusion of ideas in the world that is emerging. They will have to help our own citizens as well as other peoples to move from the provincial and insular mind to the international mind.

This will involve providing expanded opportunity in colleges and universities for the study of all aspects of international affairs; the nature and development of other civilizations and cultures; nationalism in its relation to internationalism; the tensions leading to war as well as war itself; the ways in which war has been used as an instrument of national policy and the attitudes which nations have had in each war with respect to the justice of that war as they saw it — in other words, an analytical study of war and its causes as these have developed in the past.

Development of the international mind will also involve study of the effect of technology on the present world situation and analysis of the structure and operation of the various new world organizations designed to further international security and the peaceful solution of common problems.

This text could have been written today, though it is now 75 years old. The curse of every generation is the loss of memory, making us prone to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Engaged citizenship necessarily involves an encounter with the other. Human differences and diversity cross national borders through trade, migration and technology. Whatever curbs applied to contain the impact of these three forces, humans have migrated and traded around this globe for millennia, and the advance of technology is an accelerant.

Our students need the knowledge, skill and experience to enable their effective participation in this increasingly complex and interdependent global framework. Preserving American democracy involves international understanding and cooperation. As educators, we have a responsibility to prepare our students for a democratic citizenship that reaches beyond our immediate needs and interests to embrace a wider perspective of international partnership. The future depends on it. ■

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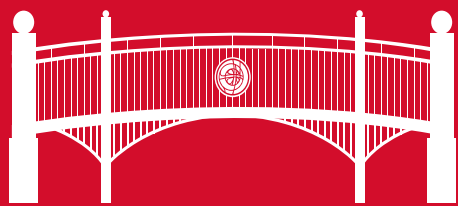
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AROUND THE POND



▲ NEW MAJOR AND TWO NEW MINORS LAUNCHED

Central College now offers a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting in addition to the Bachelor of Arts degree. **Maggie Fisher Schlerman '02**, associate professor of accounting, explains that the B.S. in accounting curriculum focuses on preparing students for the certified public accounting exam and meeting the CPA licensure requirements in Iowa. The new B.S. in accounting encompasses theoretical and applied financial accounting topics with courses in auditing and taxes, needed for public accounting.

Additionally, Central students are now able to pursue new minors in data science and social justice studies. The data science minor will prepare students to extract, explore and examine data to solve problems and support a variety of industries, from government and healthcare organizations to Fortune 500 companies and not-for-profit organizations. The new minor in social justice studies seeks to prepare students to apply knowledge and develop skills to make positive changes for minoritized groups.

Central has more than 60 major and minor programs available to students. It continuously evaluates programming to meet the needs of the workforce and society in order to develop programs that make a positive difference in the world.

48-HOUR CHALLENGE RAISES OVER \$175,000

The Central College community launched into the new academic year with gifts totaling \$175,470 during the 48-Hour Challenge to support the Journey Scholarship Fund. During this concentrated two days of giving, 356 donors contributed to the Journey Scholarship.

The college is grateful to the generous challengers for their incredible support. All gifts up to \$50,000 were matched. An additional \$25,000 match was offered by challengers after the \$100,000 goal was exceeded. Lead donors who funded the matching gifts include Dianne and **Arlo Stoltenberg '60**, **Verlan '61** and **Norma De Bruin Van Rheenen '61**, **Steve De Cook '65**, **Robert '69** and **Charlotte Poppen Foreman '69**, **Mary Anderson '78**, Michele and **Mark VanderLinden '78**, **Jeff Oliver '79**, Julie and **Mark De Jong '81**, Lance and **Judi A. Clauson Vogel '82**, **Paul '83** and **Nancy Thies Van Farowe '86**, **John '87** and **Julie Pothoven Fisher '90**, **Stephen Mc Williams '96**, Dave Kravitz and **Anna Swanson '03**, Gene and **Carol Williamson** and other anonymous donors.



▲ CENTRAL COLLEGE SELECTED FOR IOWA PRIVATE TRANSFER COLLABORATIVE GRANT

Central College joins 16 other Iowa private colleges and universities to participate in a three-year grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and the Teagle Foundation awarded to the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The \$350,000 grant is a part of the foundations' shared Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts initiative.

The grant will fund work across the state aimed at bringing together faculty from community colleges and four-year institutions to ensure the seamless transfer of academic credits and placing a greater emphasis on the retention rate for transfer students from community colleges to four-year institutions.



▲ INTRODUCING FOREVER DUTCH® LAGER

Central released Forever Dutch® Lager at Homecoming weekend. Central was the first private college in Iowa to partner with a local brewery (Gezellig Brewing Co. in Newton, owned by Betsy Duffy and Mindi Vanden Bosch) and a local business partner (Pella Hops Co., owned by BJ Stokesbary) to offer a signature craft beer. Fifteen percent of Forever Dutch® Lager sales go toward the Journey Scholarship Fund. This collaborative effort showcases a community coming together to raise funding for scholarships at Central.



▲ LORI WITT INSTALLED AS ENDOWED CHAIR

Lori Witt, associate professor of history, was installed as the Kenneth J. Weller Distinguished Professor of the Liberal Arts.

Witt has taught at Central since 1998 and was promoted to associate professor in 2008. Most recently, Witt and her students have been doing extensive research and writing the history of Central. As a past recipient of the Hutch Bearce Community-Building and Faculty Leadership Award, Witt was recognized for seeking to build community and interdisciplinary perspectives including her Stonewall riots presentation sponsored by Common Ground and her work with the Pella Historical Society. She has served as History Day District Coordinator for the Historic Highways District for over a decade and on the board of the State Historical Society of Iowa since 2017.

STUDENT SENATE OFFICERS ANNOUNCED FOR 2023-24

Central's Student Senate seeks to establish an effective and representative government for the students of the college. The senate implements policies that benefit all Central students and strives to encourage collaboration among faculty, administrative staff, student senators and students.

Senators are elected by their peers to bridge a connection among students and administration, faculty, staff and the college's board of trustees. The senate's priority is the creation, recognition and financial support of student organizations.

Executive officers for the 2023-24 academic year are as follows:

Jenna-Marie Hernandez was elected as Student Senate president. A biochemistry and biology double major and Spanish minor from Slater, Iowa, Hernandez will graduate in 2024.

DelTon Alexander of Iowa City, Iowa, is continuing in his role as senate leader for a third year. He is majoring in sociology and is also in the Class of 2024.

Cassie Elliott of Cumming, Iowa, is the new parliamentarian. She is a member of the Class of 2026 with a psychology major and English minor.

Gunner Hutton of St. Charles, Iowa, is serving his second term as treasurer. Hutton is an art and business management major in the Class of 2025.

Mya Ehresman of Huxley, Iowa, Class of 2026 with an undeclared major, assumes the role of secretary.

Student Senators, elected by the students, for 2023-24 can be seen on Central's website at central.edu/news.



▲ UPWARD BOUND RECEIVES JOHN DEERE FOUNDATION GRANT

Central's Upward Bound program received a \$43,000 grant from the John Deere Foundation. The college's long-standing Upward Bound program serves students in Des Moines Public Schools who are low-income, potentially first-generation college students who want to attend college. The program supports students to finish high school strong, prepare to be successful in college and secure good-paying jobs.

Kristin Lewis, director for pre-college programs, estimates that this grant, along with the U.S. Department of Education funding, will provide additional STEM-specific services to 190 students. Central's Upward Bound summer program includes hands-on STEM experiences, STEM components on field trips as well as a mentoring program at John Deere facilities for 11th-grade students.

WRITE US!

Civitas welcomes letters and emails from readers concerning the contents of the magazine or issues relating to Central College. Please include the author's name, city and state; anonymous communications will be discarded. Letters selected for publication may be edited for length, content, clarity and style. Address letters to Civitas, Central Communications, Central College, 812 University St., Pella, Iowa 50219 or email **Brittany Carlson Prokupek '16**, Civitas editor, at carlsonb@central.edu.

To read full articles and other news, go to Central's news site at central.edu/news.

PRESERVING IOWA PRAIRIE ONE FIRE AT A TIME

Central College Dutch alumni use their athletics backgrounds in crucial conservation work.

STORY BY:
LARRY HAPPEL '81



Former Central baseball catcher **Kody Wohlers '05** is among eight Iowans with a Prescribed Burn Boss Type 2 credential and has directed or partnered on more than 900 prescribed fires, largely through his work with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Alone on a warm, early summer day, **Kody Wohlers '05** occasionally lets his gaze drift across the gentle slopes of western Iowa's Loess Hills. A thrill washes over him, as sweet as the pure feel of bat meeting ball on the 10 home runs he clubbed as a Central College baseball player.

There are no cheering spectators, no high fives from jubilant teammates sharing the moment. But when he sees native prairie plants like compass plant, lead plant and purple prairie clover bursting into flower in once-charred soil where invasive cool-season grasses and dogwoods had taken over prior

to a prescribed burn he directed, it's a small win that shines as brightly as runs on a scoreboard.

"I would say that's the most gratifying part of the work, is seeing that response," Wohlers says. "A year after the fire, seeing what new plants are showing up, what it stimulates."

Wohlers is Loess Hills land stewardship director for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, among four former Dutch athletes, and seven Central grads overall, working for the organization. Created in 1979 with the help of Governor Robert Ray,

the INHF works with private landowners and public agencies to protect and restore Iowa's land, water and wildlife. Supporters and staff have protected more than 190,000 acres of Iowa land.

For Wohlers, it's not a job but a lifelong mission, spawned as a small boy watching his grandpa install small check dams on his farm to minimize erosion but also slow the release of water, so precious to a cattle farmer.

FIRE AS A CONSERVATION TOOL

His grandfather's efforts to channel a gently flowing Iowa creek contrasts with Wohlers'



After spending hours traveling together through their work with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, former Dutch football defensive back **Ryan Schmidt '12** and former cross country/track and field athlete **Melanie Louis Schmidt '12** grew close and eventually married.

help combatting an angry wildfire racing unpredictably across a Colorado mountain-side, endangering not only trees and wildlife but homes and lives.

Fire brings danger and destruction, but in the fight to restore slivers of Iowa's natural prairie to its vibrant 18th-century majesty, free of invasive species, it's also among the most valuable weapons in conservationists' arsenal. Understanding how to best use it can be accelerated through wildfire fighting, typically in the western U.S.

"Whenever we go west, we bring something back to INHF — we bring something back to Iowa and the people that are in the crews we're managing to implement prescribed fire here in Iowa," says **Derek Miner '15**, another former Dutch baseball player now serving as an INHF land stewardship associate. "You get to utilize fire in different ways and use the tools around wildfire in different ways. You just bring back a whole suite of knowledge, and safety is a big part of that, too."

The fires they direct can restore prairie health.

"Prescribed fire is a really big tool for us as land stewards in Iowa. Bringing back that natural process and natural stressor to the environment that a lot of our ecosystems rely on and they're dependent on fire regimes," Miner explains. "But it can't be the only tool, with our fragmented landscape. We talk about land restoration a lot of times in terms of what it used to be 300 years ago. But we're not operating these ecosystems in the same kind of environment."

Over 16 years of training and study, Wohlers earned a Prescribed Burn Boss Type 2 credential through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. He's one of just eight Iowans with that credential. He has directed or partnered on more than 900 prescribed burns over 80,000 acres. He's also helped fight more than 40 wildfires over 550,000 acres in 11 western states and two countries.

"It is a high-stress environment because when a fire is burning, you're always on a ticking clock," Wohlers says. "And a fire can change direction. It's a very dynamic environment."

PLAYING DEFENSE

At those times, Wohlers is directing the defense, much like he did as a catcher for the Dutch, positioning fielders as a dangerous hitter strides to the plate.

"I think it absolutely helps to be an athlete," Wohlers shares. "Because you're used to having that crew dynamic, that partnering, that cohesiveness, that dependence on somebody watching your back. As a two-year captain at Central being used to a leadership role and willing to take the reins and direct people and having a lot of communication, that played a big part in my career."

Even prescribed burns carry risks.

"Every fire is different," Wohlers explains. "Every day is different. And it's a living, breathing thing. I always take the perspective of not taking it for granted. Respect it."

While Wohlers is playing defense, during tense moments on the fire line, the mind of INHF Volunteer Coordinator **Melanie Louis Schmidt '12** flashes back to her days on the cross country course with the Dutch, pushing her body to its limits.

"The best way I can describe it is that race-day feeling when you're kind of sweaty and your heart's pumping and all of your senses are heightened," she says. "And you just have to stay calm and collected because you can't lose your train of thought. You really have to be in touch with what's going on, inside your body and out."

Yet she downplays the risk.

"This is always what I have to tell my parents because they definitely weren't in favor of me doing this," she laughs. "But because we are a crew that gets put together once a year and we're a group of people who have never worked together, typically we're not put in high-danger situations. That's saved for the hotshots (full-time firefighters on the front lines of the most treacherous fires). I'm not saying the work is not dangerous. Any time you're working with uncontrolled fire, there's always danger. But there's so much training that goes into preparing wildland firefighters. We're constantly being reminded of things to keep an eye on and, especially when you're on a crew, you're constantly looking out for each other."

Schmidt's husband, Central Iowa Land Stewardship Director, **Ryan Schmidt '12**, a former Dutch football defensive back, followed Wohlers into wildland firefighting and the stories he shared of the rigorous, demanding work excited her.

"After hearing about his experience out west, I just knew I had to try," she says.

BREAKING BARRIERS

Fewer than 10% of wildfire fighters are female. But Melanie eagerly began proving her worth as a member of a 20-person hand crew.

"They're hiking into the areas where fire suppression or any other kind of work is needed and where the fire engines can't go," she shares. "It's typically physical work like digging line, laying out hose, digging trenches and things like that. So, it's more physical, which in my personal opinion, is way better."

Wohlers describes firefighting as a grueling experience.

"It's a lot of sacrifice," he says. "You're usually gone from your families for a minimum of 16 days. But it's also taken me to parts of the country that I would never have seen on my own dollar."

Albeit with long hours, Melanie adds.

"It is very exhausting," she expresses. "We probably get up between 4:30 and 5 (a.m.) and then we're on the land out around the fire until about 7 at night and we're

crawling in bed by like 9 or 10. So they're 16 to 18-hour days. And you're typically camping. You're sleeping outside at an area that they designate as fire camp — you're basically eating, sleeping and breathing the fire environment."

Sleep doesn't always come easily, she mentions, and not just because she's among a group of grimy firefighters sprawled on the ground, tents faintly illuminated by the glow of the distant fire.

"The first couple of days, it's really hard to shut your mind off but after day two or three, you're so physically and mentally exhausted that your body just knows what to do," she explains. "And they feed you so much food that I'm sure half of it is probably food coma, which is fine because you burn so many calories."

Returning to the land of daily commutes, emails and fixing supper after a couple of adrenaline-drenched weeks in the wilderness can be jarring.

"It's really a culture shock in some ways," Ryan shares. "Getting back in touch with your family, your friends, your daily job — it's a different world. When you're out west, you're not listening to the radio, you're not seeing any national news. You're focused on the task at hand. You're essentially on an island."

PLANTING THE SEEDS

The roads that led the Central grads to the INHF differ, but the common thread for most is the inner curiosity about the natural world awakened by Central faculty members

Russ Benedict, professor of biology, **Paul Weihe**, associate professor of biology, and **Anya Butt**, professor of biology.

"Dr. B (Benedict) was a huge inspiration in my life to get into prairie research that he was doing and learning more about plant species and things like that," Melanie says.

Central typically sends at least one intern to the INHF annually, according to Benedict. It can be a life-changing opportunity.



Fewer than 10% of wildfire fighters are female, but in addition to helping direct prescribed burns as shown above, **Melanie Louis Schmidt '12** often volunteers to help battle massive fires in the western U.S. and feeds off the challenge of the physical, demanding responsibilities.



As Loess Hills land stewardship director for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, **Kody Wohlers '05** frequently directs prescribed burns like the picture above, which can help restore Iowa's native prairie plants. Less than one-tenth of one percent of Iowa's remnant prairie remains.

"It all kind of opened my eyes to what is out there and there's actually a career here if I work hard enough to go out and get it," Miner shares.

It altered Melanie's perspective as well.

"As I learned more about Iowa's landscape and the plants that make it so special, I definitely turned into a prairie nerd," she says. "I never would have thought I would be so into plants as I am now."

In Benedict's experience, that's a common transformation, often sparked by work at Central's 80-acre Carlson-Kuyper Field Station.

"If there's already a bit of a seed there, once you get kids out and immerse them in nature, it's fairly easy to ignite that fire," Benedict says.

A LOVE FOR THE LAND BETWEEN TWO RIVERS

For INHF employees, that passion is fueled by a love for Iowa. The state maximizes the use of its fertile soil to raise the crops and livestock the world demands. But that use comes at a price. The state that was once blanketed with natural prairie and abundant wildlife between its two mighty rivers is forever changed.

"Iowa is the most altered state in the union," Wohlers explains. "We have one-tenth of one percent of remnant prairie remaining."

Yet as Wohlers pauses to survey the western Iowa landscape, it's still possible to catch glimpses of an Iowa that no longer exists, seen now only in paintings and in the mind.

"I regularly catch myself doing that," he says. "You know, standing on a hilltop. Most of the time when you look across a valley or a river bottom, it's all agricultural now but I think, 'What was it like without all the deciduous trees or the cedar trees on that hill, when all the river bottoms were 6 to 8 feet tall and native prairie?' I try to picture in my head seeing prairie all the way to the horizon. It's tough to imagine, but something that excites me. It would have been fantastic to see."

Protecting what's left of that picture, and finding ways to restore the health of an increasingly fragile environment one fire, one plant at a time, keeps these conservationists energized, even while some leaders ignore the steady stream of frightening news about the planet's future.

"It can be super depressing," Melanie admits. "You've just got to find the little wins. And the people that are trying to make a difference, everything we do matters." ■

ATHLETICS UPDATES

MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY: **Caleb Silver '24** finished ninth in Division III, the second-highest NCAA finish in program history, while **Noah Jorgenson '24** placed 24th to gain All-America distinction and lead Central to a 15th-place team finish.

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY:

In placing ninth at the NCAA Division III Championships in Newville, Pennsylvania, the Dutch recorded their highest finish since winning the national title in 1981. **Caroline McMartin '24** was 12th individually with **Megan Johnson '24** and **Addison Parrott '25** joining her as All-America honorees.

FOOTBALL: Central was 8-2 overall and 6-2 in American Rivers play. Ten players were named to the all-conference squad. Linebacker **Brody Klein '24**, offensive tackle **Kade Tippet '25**, kicker **Logan Sunvold '24** and return specialist **Hunter Wilkinson '24** were first-team selections.

WOMEN'S GOLF: **Mackenzie Biggs '24** earned all-conference honors for the fourth time by placing fourth in the American Rivers tournament. **Lydia Grond '25** was cited for the second time as the Dutch placed second in the team standings.

MEN'S SOCCER: Forward **Noah Piedimonte '27** received an all-conference distinction. A young Dutch squad was 7-8-2 overall with a 3-5 conference record.

WOMEN'S SOCCER: Forward **Grace Coates '25** and midfielder **Paige Cahill '24** were second-team all-region picks. Central was 9-5-4 overall and 4-3-1 in the conference, tied for third place.

WOMEN'S TRIATHLON: **Grace Benson '26** received All-America honorable mention after finishing 21st in Division III at the USA Triathlon Collegiate National Championships in Tempe, Arizona. Central was eighth among 11 Division III schools in the meet.

WOMEN'S TENNIS: Central was fifth in the conference at 4-4 with a 6-6 overall mark. The Dutch will return most of their starting lineup next fall.

VOLLEYBALL: Central gained a conference tournament berth, improving to 22-10 overall and 4-4 in the league. Libero **Colleen Kenney '26** was named the conference defensive player of the year.

For an up-to-date schedule of all sports, visit athletics.central.edu/calendar.

SEEING A DIFFERENCE

Inspired by a trip to Kenya, **Ralph DeHaan**, loyal donor and friend of Central College, founded Schikunga Children's Home of Kenya and Assistance with Eyes, a 501(c)(3). Twenty-one years after the trip that started it all, **Ellie Roorda '24** joined to help provide optometric services abroad.

STORY BY:
BRITTANY CARLSON PROKUPEK '16



Ralph DeHaan examines a patient's eye while in Kenya serving those in need.



DeHaan and team pose with children of the Schikunga Children's Home of Kenya.

The Central College family does good in the world no matter where they go. During her junior year at Central, **Ellie Roorda '24**, a biology major with a Spanish minor, answered the call to do good in Africa alongside fellow Pella native, optometrist and loyal donor and friend of Central, **Ralph DeHaan**.

SMALL SCHOOL, BIG CONNECTIONS

Roorda was looking for a small school experience and an overnight visit with members of the cross country and track and field teams sealed the deal — Central was the right fit.

She arrived on campus planning to study kinesiology and after guidance from and job shadowing opportunities set up by **Katelin Valster**, assistant professor of kinesiology, Roorda discovered optometry. So, she made the switch to a biology major in preparation for optometry school.

Roorda began working part time for an optometry office in Pella after her job shadowing experience. There, she learned of DeHaan and the mission trips his nonprofit arranges to provide optometric care to those in need. She was told there would be another trip coming up, so she reached out to get more information.

"I talked with Dr. DeHaan to learn about what the trip would entail and what I'd need to do in advance," Roorda says. "I spoke with all my professors after I talked to Ralph and they all said they'd help me out and work with me. So that's when I committed to going. I thought, 'Okay, now's the time.'"

HOW IT STARTED

"I grew up here in Pella and married a local girl, Lu Ann Vermeer, after our third year of college," DeHaan says.

After graduating from Calvin College, DeHaan went to work for a bank in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"I found that I didn't like banking quite as much as I thought I would," DeHaan shares. "It just didn't seem like the right fit."

A conversation with an optometrist who banked at the branch was just the beginning. He asked if he could visit the office and ended up shadowing for half a day. He walked away ignited with passion and a hunger to learn more about optometry and the schooling required. After four years in school and the birth of his two eldest children, the couple moved back home to Pella.

In 1985, DeHaan joined the practice **Wayne Vander Leest '77** opened in town.

He knew Vander Leest would go to Mexico

each winter on Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity trips.

"He would come back telling wonderful stories about the experiences," DeHaan says. "And I became interested in that, but I had two small boys at home. So, I let that go for a while and kept working. By the time my sons were a bit older, I went on one of those same kinds of VOSH trips."

"I came across a mention of a fellow going on a trip from Michigan to Africa," DeHaan recalls. "I contacted him and said my son and I were interested in going along for the trip. At that time, people were scared to travel there, and travel was not recommended as the embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, had been bombed in the previous months."

"Seven of us went — three other optometrists, my son Matthew and a couple of other support people," DeHaan says. "We helped quite a few people, but the key thing from that trip was meeting a local pastor. He and his wife and their children were wonderful people who had been called by God to go back to the poor villages where they grew up. We got to know them very well."

This relationship stirred up something more in DeHaan and his son.

"In the evenings, Matthew and I would discuss what God was calling us to do there,



DeHaan meets with patients in need of optometric services in Kenya.

how we could help and how we could make an impact in the area,” DeHaan says. “For both of us to drop everything, go to seminary and become missionaries ourselves was not going to be nearly as effective as working with this couple we’d befriended who were local people already doing missionary work there. That’s what we felt God calling us to do, so we did.”

Inspired by his trip to Kenya, DeHaan later founded Schikunga Children’s Home of Kenya and Assistance with Eyes, a 501(c)(3) organization (SCHOK & AWE).

“I chose that name because I thought it is kind of shocking that these white people from a Dutch farming community in the middle of the United States would be found in a poor village of Kenya, with people so different from us,” DeHaan explains. “I also liked that it referenced the children’s home and assistance with eyes, because that was what my organization was built to do — help through eyecare trips and provide funding for the orphans living there.”

ELLIE’S EXPERIENCE

“My professors got assignments and readings on Blackboard for me before the trip,” Roorda says. “We talked through what

class was going to look like before I left and when I came back, and they did all of this for me while they were preparing for and in the middle of finals! The day we left was the first day of Spring 2023 classes.”

The Pella group started in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and met up with the rest of the team there. They had 14 people total — four doctors, some optometric technicians and the rest were volunteers who didn’t know much about optometry but were there to serve. Some had been going for years and several were first-timers like Roorda.

The team had clinic locations in Shikunga and Bungoma, holding three-day clinics in each town.

“The goal was to serve 300 patients per day, but we’d always try to see more than that if we could,” Roorda explains. “The locals in the area knew what we were doing, but there were lots of people who heard through word of mouth and traveled — sometimes walking for hours — to get to the clinic. The hardest thing was turning patients away who showed up at the end of the day. It was heartbreaking. But for the people that we could help, it was truly awesome. In total, we helped 1,811 patients.”

DISPENSING DREAMS

“The language barrier was difficult,” Roorda admits. “Sometimes we had interpreters, but they weren’t always available as we outnumbered them.”

“Patients would start at registration to record their health history and vitals. From there, they would go to visual acuity to determine near or far-sightedness. After, they would step in front of the autorefractor — which is a machine that scans the patient’s eyes. It speeds up the process so the doctor has an idea of what their prescription could be rather than starting from scratch. After they see a doctor for their eye exam and prescription, they head to the dispensary to receive a pair of glasses.”

On clinic days, Roorda got to do a little bit of several different jobs but spent most of her time in the dispensary.

“We had a computer system we’d plug the prescription into and then a number would pop up to match that prescription as closely as possible. We had about 6,000 pairs of glasses and after 12 years of doing this, the inventory was unorganized. So I’d go searching for the corresponding number and bring three or four pairs of glasses to the patient for them to try on and test out. Unfortunately, we couldn’t always find a pair of glasses that matched patients’ prescriptions. It felt awful to send them away with nothing, so we’d always try to find something.”

“One man had a prescription of -11, which is really high,” she explains. “We didn’t have anything in the computer that matched, so I started searching our inventory and I came across a hot pink pair of children’s glasses. They barely fit his head, but when he put them on, he looked outside and started listing all the things he could see — that was one of the best parts, hearing patients excitedly tell you everything they could see. Some of these patients had never been to an optometrist, so in some cases, people were experiencing things they’d never seen or noticed before.”

“From both faith and educational standpoints, it was just amazing,” Roorda acclaims. “The people there may not have much but they’re so happy, so grateful. Additionally, I learned a lot about optometry, the grad school process and the different optometry schools all the doctors attended. I also made incredible connections. The doctors even offered to write recommendation letters on my behalf. It was so cool to learn about the path I’m pursuing.”

CENTRAL IMPRESSIONS

The DeHaans were always tied quite closely to Lu Ann's parents, Harry and **Bernice Tromp Vermeer '50**.

"We took quite a few cues from them, seeing the causes that they were supporting and why. One of the organizations they supported happened to be Central," DeHaan shares. "Through my eye care work in Pella, we certainly noticed a good share of Central students, faculty and staff coming in as patients. We realized Central was a big part of our practice and also that Central is very much an important part of the community. So, over the years, as there were opportunities to participate in things, we did. It just made a lot of sense for us to be supporters of Central."

"Central contributes to the success of the community. Interacting with students who are going there and those who have graduated from there has introduced me to a lot of high-quality people. As I've gotten older, I've realized more and more that what you end up supporting is actually you giving money to people. And the people of Central impressed me so positively that I became more and more interested in supporting them."

One of these impressive people includes Roorda.

"Ellie was upbeat, positive and very helpful on our trip," DeHaan says. "She would happily do whatever anyone asked her to do. That's what I had hoped for, and that's what we got."

The group doesn't get as much participation from college students compared to years past due to conflicts with the start of spring semesters. Roorda's commitment to the work and interest in optometry stuck with DeHaan.

"She did really well and I could tell she enjoyed it all," he says. "It's an extremely interesting experience. You're immersed in another culture completely. Ellie got to be part of that and I think she found it to be a big blessing. The timing of the trip doesn't really align for college students anymore like it does for doctors, their families and acquaintances. So, I was thrilled when she reached out to me."

WORTH THE WORK

"It was a lot of preparation," Roorda shares. "It was nearly a year of planning and preparing — to communicate with whom I needed to communicate, get the vaccines I needed, fund my travel to Kenya and all other expenses and make sure I had everything I needed."



Ellie Roorda '24 made once-in-a-lifetime memories on the trip — including playing with children of patients while their parents received eye care services.

"Many say they'll do this someday or do that someday and oftentimes they never get to do it," she says. "The timing was right for me. Yeah, I sacrificed things on my end missing two weeks of class and indoor track, but it was more than worth it. It was a really good opportunity, not only to serve other people but to also help me stand out to optometry schools. It felt good to have the support of my professors and coaches. They knew this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

She's certainly open to more mission trips like this in the future — next time, as one of the doctors.

"It was just awesome that we were basically all strangers who came together for this common good," she says.

The group ended the service opportunity with a safari trip to spend time together, reflect and enjoy nature. This provided Roorda with even more memories to carry with her, like waking up to an elephant outside her hut!

"We're doing this not just as humanitarians, we're there because we feel God is calling us there to help these people and promote

Christianity," DeHaan says. "I saw faith in action there and it challenged me in my own faith."

"Trips like this are great for people interested in optometry — they get to see what optometry can do in another country and for others."

But you don't have to be an optometry fanatic to join DeHaan and the team. To learn more about SCHOK & AWE or get involved in future service opportunities, visit their website at: schokandawe.org. ■

Central prepares students for whatever is next, including optometry, dentistry, medicine and other health professions. Help more students realize how they can make a difference in the world by supporting academic programming and student scholarships through the Journey Scholarship Fund! Visit central.edu/journey to show your support today.

Derek DeHaan, former owner of Brand Appeal, contributed to this story.



Ukraine refugee support became a passion for **Mary Worstell '73** along with her friends Kay Buzby, Tamara Bavendam and Teresa Bowers. They traveled to Krakow, Poland, in the fall of 2022, volunteering in refugee centers and purchasing clothes and basic needs for Ukrainian refugees who fled their country when war erupted.

FROM DISASTER TO H PE

In times of crises, lives change instantly. Central College alumni demonstrate their empathy and care for others to lead rescue and care efforts.

STORY BY: **JEANETTE BUDDING**

Central College alumni possess the compassionate and empathic virtue to help individuals in crisis. **Mary K. Glendening '87** and **Mary Worstell '73** used their Central educations with international off-campus experiences and a strong science curriculum to leverage resources and support disasters.

FROM CALM TO CHAOS

Glendening shared her intense 72-hour experience with the Central RED Society in 2023.

June 3, 2018, began as a beautiful sunny day in Guatemala. By day's end, Guatemala's Fuego volcano had erupted spewing a five-mile stream of hot lava and dense smoke and ash down the mountainside burying small villages. The world changed for 1.7 million people in Guatemala from small villages to the capital of Guatemala City.

Fuego erupted right before noon. Many residents had gone to work. Children were in schools. For the small villages closest to the volcano, the devastation was horrific. The ash and gases burned people and killed 150.

The chaos and confusion erupted along with the volcano. Families were separated. "Where are my loved ones? Where can I get help?" echoed throughout the area.

Glendening, RN, MSN, FACHE, a hospital administrator at Shriners Children's Texas, received a message for help. The hospital is a nonprofit pediatric burn center based in Galveston, Texas, and a research and teaching center with the University of Texas Medical Branch.

The rescue collaboration involved the U.S. military, Guatemalan officials, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, Shriners Children's Texas, Shriners in both Guatemala and Shriners International and three hospitals in Guatemala City.

"Our hospital was contacted because it provides care for children with burn injuries," Glendening says. "I'm an administrator so I was called in for logistics and planning."

Glendening elevated her psychology major and Spanish minor from Central to become a registered nurse and advanced healthcare professional who cares for children in crisis. She credits her passion and career for international service to her parents — **Richard '62**, a professor emeritus of economics at Central, and **Mary Roorda Glendening '62** — who took their family three times to Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico.

COORDINATING LOGISTICS

The Shriners Hospital's headquarters is in Tampa, Florida. It helped with resources and making some of the calls needed to bring



Mary K. Glendening '87, a hospital administrator and registered nurse at Shriners Children's Texas, accepted the call to serve when Guatemala's Fuego volcano erupted spewing a five-mile stream of hot lava and dense smoke and ash down the mountainside.

together all the pieces.

"We had collaborated with the army before to bring burn patients from Belgium," Glendening recalls. "We called them because they had a big transport plane. They had to work through the military process of approvals and logistics."

The Shriners' team secured the U.S. Army burn team from San Antonio to help but not the airplane. Then the team contacted the Alabama Air National Guard to provide a large C17 plane with a team of pediatric specialists. It flew to San Antonio where it picked up the team of burn specialists. The Shriners Children's Texas burn-unit specialists all needed to remain in Galveston to accept the incoming patients. This rescue required coordinating air space access and transportation with the airports in and out of Guatemala.

Glendening worked with the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala because the Guatemalan patients didn't have legal papers to travel to the U.S. They needed to travel through customs and across the border. The State Department gave emergency waivers.

"Guatemala security had tight control over access on one side of the airport with the large airplane carrying the huge amount of supplies for the hospitals. The Shriners in Guatemala called around and lined up 12 vehicles — that needed to get through security at the airport."

When the State Department approved the U.S. military going to Guatemala with supplies and transportation for the burn patients, the mandate was that the plane could be on the ground for a maximum of four hours.

ON THE GROUND

A crisis response team of two physicians and Glendening caught the first commercial flight into Guatemala City on June 4, 2018. The flight was delayed due to the amount of ash on the runway.

Upon landing in Guatemala City, a team of local Shriners took them to three hospitals in the area that were treating patients. The Shriners Children's Texas physicians supported the local doctors on burn care.

"That first day, there was so much confusion. The halls were crowded with patients, families, media and healthcare workers all

trying to figure out what was happening,” Glendening recalls. “So many people were searching for loved ones, wondering where their family members were. Imagine all the chaos that the local healthcare providers were dealing with — three hospitals and patients from the entire area coming for help.”

Glendening’s work focused on logistics and coordination for all the moving parts to make this a success. She looked at what resources were available locally, what resources the Shriners hospital could provide and who would go to Galveston for care. She then went from bed to bed identifying a list of patients who qualified to go to Shriners hospital.

Glendening recalls the military saying, “Mary, you need to make sure everything happens so that four hours later the plane takes off with patients. The plane leaves in four hours with or without patients!”

The local hospital logistics team informed Glendening the plane’s arrival time would be peak rush hour. At 7:15 p.m. all the supplies were loaded on the Shriners’ vehicles and convoying through Guatemala City at rush hour. Drivers were advised to remain very close to each other — 10 inches between vehicles.

“At one point a motorcycle slipped into the convoy. Men with machine guns in the operation stopped the convoy to get everyone back together. We arrived at the hospital at 7:53 p.m. I was watching the clock, quite nervous whether we could be back to the plane by 10:15 p.m.”

Glendening met with all the patients and explained what was happening. They were going to the United States, and they should bring their belongings. She remembers the father of one boy with severe burns, who indicated all he had was a backpack. There was nothing left; his wife and son had died in the volcano. All the ambulances lined up to get the patients to the airplane and the flight left with minutes to spare.

At 5:20 a.m. June 7, ambulances arrived at Shriners Children’s Texas carrying six children and their parents.

“Our team who had been down there were ready to go home to go to sleep. We had about four hours of sleep the entire time in Guatemala,” Glendening remembers. “It is a work of compassion and love. At Shriners Children’s Texas, the healing begins. A lot of miracles happen there. Hope starts for the patients and their families.”

WOMEN AND WARTIME

In April 2022, Worstell purchased a stretchy, cloth-covered, beaded bracelet in her favorite fair-trade store in Pella, Iowa, while attending a meeting at Central. The beads were blue and yellow, to match her constant concern for, and emotional connection with, the Ukrainian refugees displaced by the invasion of Ukraine.

After more than 40 years of working in public health around the world and in the U.S., she became deeply concerned about how political actions affect families, the challenges faced by women who, on their own, must feed and protect their children, physically and spiritually, using whatever desperate means available.

“I wore my heart on my wrist,” Worstell says, as she looks at the bracelet.

Through a gift of a similar bracelet to a colleague Tamara Bavendam, retired NIH physician, who shared Worstell’s angst, the two women joined an effort spirited by Teresa Bowers, a retired Polish physician, and Kay Busby, a cinematographer, to journey together to Krakow, Poland, to support Ukrainian women and families sheltered there.

The quartet of volunteers, who called themselves 4Women4Ukraine, raised \$40,000 in gifts from family and friends to underwrite direct refugee support. Worstell and her colleagues each covered their travel expenses personally.

“For my part, I felt powerless to help these women facing terror and trauma of their crisis,” Worstell says. “Throughout my 40-plus years as a public health professional, I have witnessed extraordinary challenges women face to protect their children, and their community, often at great personal risk. This is greatly magnified in a war zone.”

“The Ukrainian women literally escaped Ukraine with nothing except the responsibility of protecting their children,” Worstell explains. “They were forced to abandon their home and they led their children into the unknown, afraid for what they must face and with the deep fear of casualties of family members who remained fighting in Ukraine. With staggering responsibility, the Ukrainian women were utterly dependent on a stranger’s kindness. How can anyone, and especially any woman, not internalize this sense of desolation? Together, our quartet of women knew we had to help in some way. We acted.”

Worstell is a retired advisor to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S.



Mary Worstell '73 volunteered for two weeks in Krakow, Poland, supporting Ukrainian refugee centers. She and three other women self-designated their group 4Women4Ukraine, or 4W4U for short. She connected with the group with a little heart hug from a Pella fair-trade store.



Worstell and her friends were so thrilled when they received photos of refugees wearing the clothes that had been purchased for them. To see the beautiful smiles on the children's faces was priceless, Worstell remembers.

Department of Health & Human Services in Washington, D.C. She also serves as a member of the Central Board of Trustees. At Central, Worstell focused her studies on biology and Spanish, studying in the college's Yucatán program (two semesters) and a year in Central's Spain study abroad program.

"My parents instilled in me a passion and curiosity about the world condition. Central gave me wings to experience our planet and find my path to improve the human condition where people live," Worstell says.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN DO WHEN YOU GET CREATIVE

Immediately upon arrival in Krakow, the quartet began working with the leadership of the two municipal refugee centers. The women worked almost

exclusively in support of the center staff providing refugee care. The refugees feared association with Americans because if the Russians learned of this it might punish their family members in Ukraine.

"The Center leaders were extraordinarily capable and emotionally invested in the refugee well-being. There's always a need for volunteers willing to do the grunt work so that the staff can do their mission," Worstell says. "My colleagues and I acted as their 'extra hands' operating under their direction, asking 'What do you need and how can we get this for you?' The leaders cried, they were so grateful for our support months after the world's attention had shifted away from Ukraine and the refugee plight. And, of course, we respected the refugees' fears and were, essentially, anonymous to them."

Worstell explains that their goal was to provide functional assistance that would

enhance the quality of life for the refugees themselves and the center staff whose caregiving was reaching burnout. Physically and emotionally, 4W4U wanted to lighten the spirits of both.

Their work for the centers focused primarily on shopping for endless amounts of winter clothes and other supplies for children of all ages, as well as adults and seniors. After each shopping expedition, the center leaders distributed underwear, pajamas, clothing, coats, shoes and boots to refugees.

"When there was a gap or a need, we'd receive a new shopping list for unmet clothing categories. We continued until most immediate refugee needs were met, using the funds raised in the U.S." Worstell says.

The women also purchased IKEA gift cards for refugees who were transitioning from the centers to city apartments. These helped purchase household living essentials. Finally, the quartet provided sports equipment and movie and other entertainment passes for refugees and center staff to experience life's joy.

By walking the city, the group identified a second volunteer opportunity at the Krakow Jewish community center and dedicated hours there almost daily. The task was to measure bulk packages of cereal, grains, coffee and tea into individual servings that were distributed daily to refugees living outside the municipal centers.

Through networking, 4W4U learned of two final assistance opportunities in Krakow. They supported the local Rotary Club with their refugee assistance efforts, including retrofitting armored trucks into ambulances for delivery to the Ukrainian frontlines. They also helped a neighborhood soup kitchen, run by volunteers who supplied meals to refugees daily.

MEANINGFUL WORK

The quartet's memories are deeply ingrained.

"There were so many moments," Worstell says. "Seeing a picture of a refugee's joy in receiving unexpected new clothes was all I and any of my companions needed. To see beautiful smiles on the children's faces was priceless. We feel blessed we were able to help in some small way."

The 4W4U journaled their two-week trip on a blog: 4women4urs.wordpress.com. ■

CENTRAL SCENE

Central College's Tropical Ecology course taught by **Russ Benedict**, professor of biology, traveled to Costa Rica over the winter break for exciting hands-on learning opportunities. While there, the group visited Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Preserve in Monteverde, Costa Rica.

Left to right: Kaylee Peiffer '25, Luke Diers '26, Emma Wagler '25, Addison May '24, Gabrielle Fye '26, Kayla Lindquist '25, Karsyn Lamm '24, Kalli Peebler '25, Mary Gustason '26 and Mary Worstell '73.

PHOTO BY: RUSS BENEDICT





Cultural AMBASSADORS

Central College alumni were introduced to new perspectives on global citizenship during their time teaching abroad.

STORY BY: ERIN KAMP



Christine Lundgren-Williams '12 and **Beau Williams '12** with their daughter Amelia in front of the American School in Japan, where Christine and Beau taught for seven years.

For **Christine Lundgren-Williams '12**, studying abroad didn't satisfy the desire to travel: It ignited it.

Today, Christine lives and teaches in Malaysia with her husband **Beau Williams '12** and their daughter Amelia. The couple agrees that even after eight years, this experience is just the beginning.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

It started through Central College's opportunities to travel and experience cultures outside the United States. Christine studied in the Netherlands during her time at Central and her return home left her eager for more.

"When I got back from studying abroad, I missed it terribly," Christine says. "People kept telling me, 'It'll get better,' and 'You'll get used to being back.' That never happened for me."

Instead, Christine was stuck on a memory of an American school in the Netherlands. With the knowledge that Americans could teach the U.S. curriculum at schools in other countries, Christine had a new mission in mind.

"Christine really had this passion of wanting to go outside the U.S. eventually," Beau says. "That was always on the radar. Once we started our careers, I worked at Central for a bit and she worked in Pella. Then we decided to make the jump."

The first step was a recruitment fair in Boston. Christine spoke with a variety of international schools about teaching opportunities and tried to keep an open mind.

"My recruitment coach encouraged me to consider more options since I hadn't worked overseas," Christine recalls. "We were willing to consider anywhere in the world."

A few days later, Christine received a job offer to be a middle school learning support teacher at the American School in Japan.

"We really liked the offerings from Japan," Christine says. "It seemed like a really good fit for us and it had a great reputation as being one of the top international schools."

After months of packing, paperwork and preparation, Christine and Beau left Iowa for Japan.

"We had no idea what we were getting into," Christine laughs. "We probably should have prepared more."

Beau agreed but thought it was good they didn't go into the experience with expectations.

SOMEWHERE NEW

Life in Japan opened their eyes to how cultures differ, but the transition was a challenge when they first arrived.



Christine Lundgren-Williams '12 and Beau Williams '12 traveled Japan and surrounding countries.

"It was definitely a culture shock going from Iowa cornfields to not seeing any grass for a bit," Beau says.

"I had a hard time at first," Christine agrees. "I felt like I stood out everywhere I went. There was no blending in."

With time and patience, Christine and Beau found their home in Japan. Originally on a three-year contract, the couple stayed for seven.

"I was hired to be a middle school learning support teacher, which is kind of like special education," Christine shares. "I did that for four years, and then I switched to teaching math, which is something that I'd been co-teaching, so it wasn't completely new. I did that for three years."

Beau's situation was a little different. As a spouse, his visa outlined strict limitations. To remain within a 28-hour work week, Beau worked as a substitute teacher and coach before transitioning into the assistant athletics director position. He also continued his education online, earning his teaching license, M.S. in sports administration and certification as an international athletics administrator.

"I don't hesitate to try new things because of my Central education," Beau says. "My liberal arts background prepared me to interact with different members of a community."

GLOBAL LIVING

The conversations Christine and Beau had with their students, colleagues and friends in Japan opened their eyes to a culture that was new to them. As teachers at an American school, the students were from a variety of backgrounds and locations.

"We're teaching kids that are also global citizens," Christine says. "Their worldview is so different from what mine was at their age. I am so appreciative that my daughter will grow up that way, too."

After seven years of working in classrooms and exploring Japan, Christine and Beau realized that it may be time for another change.

"We planned on being in Japan for four years at the most," Christine recalls. "After seven, we realized we'd been through a lot there. We wanted to see something different. That's why we moved to Japan in the first place."

"We were recruited last year and accepted an offer in Malaysia," she shares. "We visited Malaysia in 2019 and felt like we could live there, and now we do!"

"We're in our eighth year overseas," Christine says. "We don't plan to move back to the U.S. anytime soon. Our mindset shifted a lot. We like this lifestyle. We like the schools and the friends we've made. We want to keep doing it."



Olivia Svoboda '22 (third from left) connected with many other Fulbright grantees in Spain.

LIFELONG PASSION

Seven thousand miles away, an island in Spain became home to **Olivia Svoboda '22**. Tenerife is the largest of the Canary Islands, and schools in the area host Fulbright grantees, who teach English to primary school students.

Svoboda started learning Spanish in kindergarten, and her interest in the language and culture only grew from there. After discovering the Fulbright program in her first year at Central, Svoboda knew that teaching in Spain was something she needed to do.

Despite her initial confidence when she began preparing her application, the pressure to submit perfect materials was intimidating. Svoboda had to know exactly where she wanted to go and why, and the materials she had to submit were extensive.

"When you apply, you have to pick one country to apply to," she says. "They don't accept people who say they'll go anywhere. You have to have a reason for why you picked that country and why you're going there."

After months of work followed by months of waiting, Svoboda received the news that she had been accepted. Results in hand, it became a race against time to prepare for the adventure of a lifetime.

ON THE ISLAND

A few hundred Fulbright grantees attended orientation in Madrid to connect with others in the program. Orientation lasted a few days, defining what to expect from the cultures and education system. After orientation was complete, Svoboda had another week to get settled before she began teaching.

The week was well spent. Having already obtained an apartment, Svoboda set out to explore where she was stationed. Twelve other participants were stationed on her island and the friendships she made helped her feel more comfortable in the new place.

"There's a lot lost in the language barrier," she explains. "It took a lot of patience. But it all fell into place. We had almost a full week when we got there to get those things in place and get accustomed to the island before we started school."

The connections she made weren't limited to other Fulbright grantees. The community in Tenerife weren't native English speakers, but they welcomed Svoboda and the other grantees with open arms.

"My landlord actually drove me around the island," Svoboda says. "We spent one



Olivia Svoboda '22 presents an English lesson in a primary school classroom.



During her time in Spain, **Olivia Svoboda '22** explored the Spanish island Tenerife in addition to nine other countries.

day at a volcano on the islands. I felt very supported and very at home there.”

“One thing from the Canary Islands that I wish I had everywhere was the community,” she continues. “They cared about each other so deeply and I always felt welcome where I was. That alone was a huge weight off my shoulders to know that I had a community that supported me.”

After some time to explore, Svoboda’s teaching position began. Her role as an English teaching assistant at a primary school was a cultural and professional challenge.

In a school of native Spanish speakers and new ways of teaching, Svoboda had to put trust in those around her and in herself.

“They told the kids at my school that I didn’t know any Spanish,” Svoboda says. “My purpose was to be there speaking English, so they wanted them to only speak English with me.”

COMING HOME

Not all of Svoboda’s time was spent in the classroom. Her teaching schedule provided opportunities to explore.

“Our job there is to be cultural ambassadors, so the number of days we could spend outside of Spain was limited,” Svoboda shares. “That didn’t concern me at all because I went to Spain to be in Spain.”

Svoboda traveled to nine other countries and continued to spend time around Spain, soaking up new experiences. No matter where she traveled to, she was always eager to return to her island.

On more challenging days, Svoboda reminded herself that the nine-month grant was no time at all. When the time to leave came, she realized just how right she was.

“Leaving Tenerife was the hardest part of the whole grant,” Svoboda shares. “Those last few days, preparing to leave, packing up my apartment and saying goodbye to my

students and friends was very difficult. I had to keep reminding myself that the goodbye was so hard because of how amazing it was and how much I had to be grateful for.”

From a classroom in Pella, Iowa, to classrooms in Malaysia and beyond, Central alumni continue to go far. Lundgren-Williams and Svoboda are building on their foundation of curiosity and engaged citizenship to explore the world and do good no matter the zip code, time zone or language. ■

Central provides opportunities for students to discover more about themselves and the world around them. You can help current and future Central students do good in the world by supporting faculty-led trips, mission trips and other off-campus experiences. Visit central.edu/give to show your support today.

2023

HALL OF HONOR

STORY BY: LARRY HAPPEL '81



The newest members of Central's Athletics Hall of Honor were inducted as part of Homecoming weekend. *Left to right:* **Alicia Whisner Fisher '07**, track and field and volleyball standout, **George Wares '76**, Central's head women's softball coach and lecturer of kinesiology, and **Don De Waard '82**, retired football defensive coordinator.

Three graduates who shined on the NCAA postseason stage are the newest inductees in the Central College Athletics Hall of Honor.

Don De Waard '82, longtime football defensive coordinator, **Alicia Whisner Fisher '07**, former NCAA Division III javelin champion and volleyball standout, and **George Wares '76**, Central's lecturer of kinesiology and head women's softball coach and the winningest softball coach in Division III history, were inducted as part of Central's Homecoming 2023 weekend.

Established in 2002, Central's Hall of Honor is intended to recognize those who were not only exceptional performers in the athletics arena as a student-athlete, coach or administrator but who have distinguished themselves in life after graduation through service and leadership. To be eligible for consideration, a nominee must have graduated or served as a Central coach and/or administrator for at least 15 years. Current Central staff members are typically not considered. This year's inductions will raise the hall's membership level to 69. A rotating nine-member selection committee includes alumni from four different eras (prior to 1980, 1980-89, 1990-99 and 2000-09) as well as two alumni at-large, along with athletics director **Eric Van Kley**, director of athletics and head men's wrestling coach, and two other staff members.

DON DE WAARD '82

De Waard displayed a passionate sideline persona in masterminding some of Central's stingiest football defenses during a memorable 35-year run as football defensive coordinator and linebacker coach. In his tenure, De Waard was named the AFCA's Division III Assistant Coach of the Year in 2000 and the Dutch were 302-55 (.801) with

55 shutouts, 18 conference crowns and 18 NCAA berths.

De Waard also helped coach a team of AFCA Division III all-stars at the Aztec Bowl and the Tazon de Estrellas in Mexico, serving as U.S. head coach for six seasons.

A longtime certified public accountant, he was elected as Pella's mayor in 2020 and was actively involved in several major city development projects. For more than

15 years, De Waard also volunteered with Partners Worldwide, sometimes traveling to Honduras twice each year to help residents start and grow businesses. Active in numerous roles at Faith Christian Reformed Church, he was a board member for the Well Resource Center in Pella, which offers assistance to those in need, and for the Cary (Mississippi) Christian Center in one of America's poorest counties.

ALICIA WHISNER FISHER '07

Graduating with honors while competing year-round, Fisher captured the 2007 NCAA Division III women's javelin crown in her final Central performance.

Fisher was a four-time All-America honoree, with previous seventh-, fifth- and fourth-place national meet javelin showings. She was also 13th in the 2007 NCAA shot put. In the conference outdoor meet, she placed four times in the javelin, twice in the

discus and once in the shot put while also placing in the 2007 indoor weight throw and shot put.

Fisher was named Central's 2007 Most Valuable Field Events Performer and was a team co-captain.

A part of four conference volleyball crowns, Fisher was a member of three NCAA tournament teams. She was a two-year team co-captain, receiving the team's

Academic Award in 2005 and Leadership Award in 2006.

An NCAA postgraduate scholarship recipient, Fisher was the conference's nominee for the NCAA Woman of the Year award.

In 2013 Fisher received a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Des Moines University, returning to her hometown of Adel, Iowa, to serve as a physical therapist for Core Physical Therapy.

GEORGE WARES '76

The nation's winningest NCAA Division III softball coach, Wares, posted a staggering 1232-437-3 (.737) record over 40 seasons at the time of his induction, with four national championships, 13 national finals appearances and a record 31 NCAA tourney berths.

Wares inherited a losing program in 1985 and built one of the country's most

impactful by challenging his players to relentlessly pursue seemingly unattainable goals on and off the field. The longest-tenured coach in Central history, Wares was inducted into the NFCA Hall of Fame in 2007 and the Pleasantville High School Hall of Fame in 2022. He served on the NCAA Division III Softball Championships Committee from 2017-19 and chaired the Midwest Region Advisory Committee

and the NFCA Division III All-America Selection Committee. He also served on the NFCA's Coaching Staff of the Year Committee and Top 25 Poll Committee.

Wares previously spent seven years as girls softball coach at NESCO (Zearing) High School, posting a 214-94 record, while also coaching boys basketball at NESCO and Pella High School, with an 18-season mark of 259-106. ■

NEWSNOTES

NAC



▲ The National Advisory Council held its annual meeting during Homecoming 2023. *First row:* **Katie Johnson Hill '85, Madi Gause Wiese '16, Casey McMurray '01, Kimberly Watts '88 and Jeanie Backes Lovell '91.** *Second row:* **Beatriz Mate-Kodjo '11, Trevor Jones '08, Ted Dirkx '11, Amanda Hansen Fletcher '00 and Carrie Hill Romo '06.** *Third row:* **Jeff DeVries '87, Garrett Hill '09, Tony Braida '89 and Stephen Mc Williams '96.** *Fourth row:* **Al Paris '77, Chris Huston '98, Rick Sanger '96 and Ryan Fick '02.**

THE '50s



▲ **Carol Weiss Kolk '55**, celebrated her 90th birthday Sept. 2, 2023, with family, many of whom are Central alumni. *Pictured:* **Carol Weiss Kolk '55, Kevin '78 and Jan Beile Kolk '78, Gina Kolk '84, Heidi Kolk '90 and Jon Walsh '17.**

THE '60s

Ellen Heacock Bonnifield '62 published two poems in the Centennial Poetry Anthology published by the Poetry Society of Colorado. Bonnifield was selected to be a judge for the third time by the Western Writers of America in the Contemporary Non-Fiction (1940-Current) category for the Spur Awards.

THE '70s



▲ Phi Delta Tau alumni gathered Sept. 21, 2023, to celebrate 50+ years of memories. *Left to Right:* **Chuck Menke '70, Mike Croak '72, Bruce Fischer '70, Jerry Bennett '74, Tony Van Houweling '71, Doug Terpstra '72, Bob Weeber '71 and Rich Stienstra '72.**

Terry Garvin '72 is a member of the Heralds of Harmony Choir. The ensemble won a third-place medal in the International Chorus Contest in Louisville, Kentucky. They brought home the first-ever International Chorus medal — the first International Chorus medal from a Florida-based chorus in 57 years.



▲ Sigma Phi Omega held a reunion during Homecoming 2023. *Front Row:* **Peggy Barnes Smith '74, Barb Gensinger Reddish '73, Suzanne Ryerson Sikkink '74, Sue Brunscheen Cerwinski '74 and Whitney Halder Wagner '12.** *Back Row:* **Peggy Veteto Waide '73, Ruth Westra '73, Jean Slingerland Brandt '74, Vicki Paris Shusterman '73, Kim Evers Spreacker '73, Lois Sorenson Boeyink '74, Denise Gosiewski Smith '74 and Gretchen Miller Klein '73.**



▲ **Randy Busscher '75** joined a group of Dutch football alumni in August for a fishing trip to Lac Seul, Ontario, to honor their former coach, Ron Schipper. The group spent a week on a houseboat telling stories, fishing, playing card games and enjoying fantastic food. One highlight was viewing the DVD of the 1974 NCAA Division III Football Championship game. *Front Row:* **Al Paris '77, Craig Wassenaar '84, Randy Busscher '75, Steve Rohach '77 and Al Muhlenbruck.** *Back row:* **Al Dorenkamp '75, Mike Street '75, Steve Paris '73, Mike Hodges '75 and Jim Boeke '77.**

Tim Piester '75 served over 22 years in the Marine Corps as a naval aviator. Piester started his second career supporting the Naval Air Systems Command Program Executive Office for Strike Weapons and Unmanned Aviation as a system engineer on their future drone programs. He retired for the second time in March 2023 upon completing 28 years supporting the Navy's unmanned systems.



▲ **Hildy Bowbeer '76** retired after serving eight years as a magistrate judge with the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota. She continues to be active in several organizations devoted to the development of the law and the legal profession and also serves on the board of Ten Thousand Things Theater Company. Bowbeer and her husband, Bill Klein, live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They recently returned from a trip to Spain, where Bowbeer enjoyed revisiting some of her old haunts from the Madrid program.

Gerald Haas '76 retired from medical practice after 41 years at the Monroe County Hospital and Clinics in Albia, Iowa.

Marvin Sorensen '77 retired from Buckeye High School after 40 years of teaching in Arizona. Sorensen also taught at schools in Benson, Marana and Eloy. He taught social studies for most of his career and was awarded Economics Teacher of the Year on two occasions.

Kevin Curry '78 retired in June 2023 from Bethesda Health Group, Inc. where he served as vice president and corporate compliance officer since 2004.

Evelyn Heusinkveld '78 received emeritus status in May 2022 from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and retired from her full-time position. Heusinkveld continues to teach online as an adjunct faculty member.

Cynthia Burget Gattorna '79 retired after 23 years with A Stepping Stone Foundation. In retirement, Gattorna is president and CEO of BurGat Enterprises, her part-time consulting business.



▲ The second reunion of the 1976-77 Central College Vienna study abroad program was held in September 2023 in Vienna, Austria. The group attended the opera, enjoyed many great meals and visited Bratislava, Slovakia, among other activities. *Left to right:* Jerry Hock, Emmy Lou Hock, Mark Miller '79, Steve Paulsen, Brenda Taylor Conry '78, Stefan Borst, Linda Reinsich, Anne Johnson Borst '78, Lisa Juliano Contini '79, Tom Postema, Michele Postema, Eilene Stephens, Deb Schachet Paulsen '79, Gundi Miller, Hans Eder and Traude Eder.

THE '80s

Daniel Conn '80 retired after 35 years of service to Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care. Conn resides in Hamilton, New Jersey.

James Langstraat '81 is the chief financial officer for Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in Yakima, Washington.

Joan Mc Calmant '82 was honored with the Iowa State Association of Counties Golden Eagle at its 2023 conference. The Golden Eagle is given to commend extraordinary public service to the Iowa State Association of Counties and county government.

Don De Waard '82 was elected for his second term as mayor of Pella, Iowa.

Penny Healy Sullivan '83 started a new position at Mittera Group as the director of leadership and development.

Carol Cook Carnewal '84 retired from IBM and Kyndryl after 36 years.

Helen Ackeberg Sovich '84 is a human resources business partner for HCA Healthcare.

Bob Cronin '85 started a new position as vice president of southwest engineering at NCR Voyix.

Todd McDonald '85 is a school counselor for K-8 at Sioux Center Christian School in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Terry Mc Guire '85 published his first book, "The Last Letter," under the pen name Larry Reynolds.



▲ **Scot Hughes '86** starred in "Our Town" at the Iowa City Community Theatre. Hughes played stage manager, the same role he had at Central in 1983.

Gary Fischer '87 was inducted into the Southeast Polk Hall of Honor as a distinguished alumnus and community member.

Julia Otten Knier '87 is the director of operations and business development for Jill Warren Design in Oak Park, Illinois.

Lee Stoa '87 started a new position at Getac Video Solutions as a regional sales manager. Stoa resides in Allen, Texas.

Spencer Sutton '87 is an IT operations analyst at Community Choice Credit Union.

Crystal Argenta Bruntz '88 is a senior finance director at PowerPollen. Bruntz resides in Baxter, Iowa.

John Sides '88 is a medical benefits analyst for Ablenet, Inc. Sides resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Julia Davis '89 is the director of graduate counseling programs and a professor in the School of Behavioral and Community Health at Moravian University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Rita Bushbaum Taylor-Stewart '89 was honored at the third Annual Legacy Honors Awards Ceremony of the Virginia Gay Hospital Health Care Foundation. The awards ceremony celebrated those in the community who have made significant impacts in philanthropy, service and support of VGH.

THE '90s

Roger De Waard '90 is owner and CEO of Hopkins Roofing in Pella, Iowa.

Greg Thomas '90 retired from Humboldt Community School District where he was activities director.

Trent Vaughn '90 is an assistant vice president of financial risk management with USAA. Vaughn resides in McKinney, Texas.

Kate Bearce Pine '92 recently earned CompTIA's Network+ certificate and the Project Management Institute's CAPM certificate. Pine is an engineering project manager at CCR and serves on the City of Marion's Tree Board.

Sheryl Johnston Barbour '93 is the database and gifts processing coordinator for Waldorf University. Barbour resides in Leland, Iowa.

NEWSNOTES

THE '90s (continued)

Chris Hulleman '93 was promoted to professor of education and public policy at the University of Virginia.

Jason Brown '94 was elected to the Norwalk city council.

Laura Harrison Nagel '94 is the executive director of marketing and public relations for Carl Sandburg College. Nagel resides in Dahinda, Illinois.

Nikki Danks Roorda '94 is the superintendent for Johnston Community School District.

Deanna Ver Steeg '94 is the senior director, headquarters program management office for S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc. Ver Steeg resides in Chicago, Illinois.



▲ **Tim Hoekstra '95** had the privilege of singing with a choir in Carnegie Hall under the direction of composer John Rutter on Memorial Day. Hoekstra also got a tour of the NBC studios at Rockefeller Center from **Harry Smith '73**.

Debbie Tindle Parker '95 wrote "Mister Christmas," a 106-page stand-alone romantic Christmas novella based in the fictional Iowa town of Abbott. This is Parker's fourth fictional work and first novella.

Michelle and **Grady Holt '96** married October 2023.

Stephen Mc Williams '96 is the assistant vice president of finance and planning for George Mason University. Mc Williams resides in Herndon, Virginia.

Shane Rourke '96 is the new managing director of forge solutions for Vermeer Corporation.



▲ **Chad Huyser '97, Mel Blasi, head men's golf coach, Bob Smith and Dave Sutphen '61** represented Central College in the PACE golf tournament in Pella, Iowa.



▲ **Kristi Leonard '97** received the National Wellness Institute's William B. Baun Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Wellness Institute's National Wellness Conference. The NWI Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to individuals who have an outstanding history of service both to the wellness industry and to the National Wellness Institute. Individuals who receive the NWI Lifetime Achievement Award have helped grow the field of wellness and have made significant contributions to the overall discipline of wellness.

Aaron Roerdink '97 is the associate dean for learning enrichment at Central College.

Aaron Kuecker '98 was named president of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois.

Melissa Cox Reynolds '98 was promoted to full professor and currently serves as the chair of the health promotion and exercise science department at Waldorf University.

Michael Thompson '98 is an associate professor of computer science at Central College.

Jamie Kercheval Wisse '98 is the vice president of ag and commercial banking at MidWest One Bank in Pella, Iowa, where she resides.

THE '00s

Gretchen Lange Hoefling '00 is a 6-7 grade math teacher for the OABCIG Schools. Hoefling resides in Odebolt, Iowa.

Timothy Barcz '02 is the vice president of the omni channel at Frontier Co-Op.

Lori Petersma Forsythe '02 is a special education associate at Pella Community High School in Pella, Iowa.

Dave Hopkins '02 was elected to the city council for Pella, Iowa.

Matthew Petersen '02 is an account manager for Rexco Equipment.



▲ **Tiffany Potter Schult '02, Abby Gonzales Larson '02, Mindy Wells Doggett '02, Terah Weaver Henson '02 and Stefanie Bresnahan Perkins '02** get their friend group together once each year.

Linda Bair Snyder '02 is the director of client development for InMotion Care.

Glen Fuhrmeister '03 is a collegiate events specialist at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa.



▲ **Ruby Herrera '03** was awarded Iowa Rotary Educator of the Year 2023.

Lori Durlinger Feilmeier '04 is a total rewards manager for Lozier Corporation.

Jodi Huff Light '04 became an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene. Light is a family pastor at New Beginnings Church and resides in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

Laura Petty '04 is a judicial assistant #2 at the Clerk of Courts in Montezuma, Iowa.

THE '00s (continued)

Ryan Roy '04 was recognized as the first recipient of the new Student Success Impact Award at Grand View University where he works as a completion coach. The award recognizes a faculty or staff member who has demonstrated a significant, sustained commitment to advancing Grand View's student success and student-ready goals. Roy resides in Pleasant Hill, Iowa.

Steven Havemann '05 is chief operating officer of St. Vincent de Paul in Des Moines, Iowa.

Aaron Pearce '05 is president and chief executive officer for Pharmacists Mutual Insurance Company.

Seth Quam '05 joined the Des Moines University Clinic of Family Medicine as a clinician and assistant professor of osteopathic clinical medicine.

Dexter Wallis and **Renae Boeke '06** married June 25, 2022.

Adam Gregg '06 was inducted into the West Sioux Athletic Hall of Fame.

Kerri Salow Hays '07 is a death doula and teaches a death education course called Crafting Your Death Plan. Hays spoke on Iowa Public Radio about how to die well.

Jered Wells '08 obtained a new certification in diagnostic radiological physics from the Florida Department of Health.

Lindsey Epkes Cobie '09 started a new position at John Deere as a construction marketing communications manager.

Dan Krull '09 wrote and published a book about the history of the Britt and West Hancock football and wrestling programs. The book is called "On West Hancock ..."



▲ **Bryanne Hensley Lang '09** was named the 2023 Young Professional of the Year by Urbandale Chamber of Commerce.

Sarah Frese Nickel '09 is a commercial officer for the US Commercial Service in Washington, D.C.

Ryan Vos '09 is the Vice President Marketing Director at Marion County Bank.

Jena Weissenburger '09 works at Iowa Counseling and earned her Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner board certification license.

THE '10s

Mitch Monarchino Morris '10 is the school resource officer for the Pella Community and Pella Christian school districts in Pella, Iowa, where he resides.



▲ **Casey and Kat De Penning Stoddard '11** married Oct. 9, 2023.



▲ **AJ and Cynthia Walker Castellon '12** married Dec. 4, 2022.

Emily Phillips Johnson '12 is the technology director at River Bend School District and resides in Fulton, Illinois.

Jon Mendoza '12 is the director of Crestview School of Inquiry K-6 for West Des Moines Community Schools.

Allison Jensen Arendt '13 is an executive event producer for Advancement Resources.

Megan Overton Bouska '13 was promoted to stewardship program manager at Central College in Pella, Iowa.

Austin Burkland '13 is a high school math teacher for the Pella Community School District in Pella, Iowa.

Emma Putnam Fearington '13 is the team leader for rendering operations at Vista. Fearington resides in Simsbury, Connecticut.

Lukas and **Hannah Harthoorn Schmitt '13** married April 29, 2023.

Aaron Fuller '14 is an assistant track and field coach at Central College.

Em Hutchison '14 is a 7th-grade English teacher and volleyball coach at Roosevelt Middle School in the Oklahoma City Public School district.

Samantha Quick Kotz '14 was promoted to clinic director and physical therapist at No Limits Physical Therapy. Kotz resides in Castle Rock, Colorado.

Shelby Messerschmitt-Coen '15 is a harm prevention specialist for the Iowa National Guard.

Susan Elder '16 is a sales connection executive at Connectify HR.

Randie Dixon Gist '16 is a middle school special education teacher for the Oskaloosa Community School District in Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Kelcey and **Jay Pike '16** married July 8, 2023.

Hunter Thorpe '16 was appointed district associate judge by Gov. Kim Reynolds. Thorpe is in Judicial Election District 2B which includes Boone, Calhoun, Carroll, Greene, Hamilton, Hardin, Humboldt, Marshall, Pocahontas, Sac, Story, Webster and Wright counties.

Nelson Wiese '16 was promoted to program engineering manager at BAE Systems.

THE '10s (continued)



▲ A group of Central College 2017 graduates and their families got together for a reunion of their own. *Front row:* Emersyn Martinelli, Zach Martinelli '17, Sam Markham '17, Riley Gray '17, Adalee Gray, Parker Norgaard and Shannon Norgaard. *Back row:* Lindsey Martinelli, Mikaela Erickson Markham '20, Cole Tanner '17, Blake Boerm, Mitchell Boerm '17, Emma Drees Gray '17, Ebby Gray, Grace Boerm, Sarah Boerm, Sam Norgaard '17, Kelli Williamson, MJ Williamson and Matthew Williamson '17.

Eden and Peter Ferrill '17 married Oct. 7, 2023.

Sam '17 and Mikaela Erickson Markham '20 married July 29, 2023.



▲ *Left to right:* Ramona Miranda, Emily McDonald Miranda '18, Jaime Miranda '17, Elena Miranda, Kris Kluis McDonald '88, Todd McDonald '85 and Lauren McDonald attended the Orange City Tulip Festival.

Jaime Miranda '17 completed his service in the United States Marine Corps as a corporal (E4). Miranda is employed at Northwestern College conducting institutional research for the academic year. Emily McDonald Miranda '18 is a 7-12 school counselor and volleyball coach for the Boyden-Hill School District. The couple resides in Alton, Iowa, with their daughters.

Steven Adkins '18 is an activities specialist at Oakdale Prison in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



▲ The Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus welcomed the holiday season through its annual holiday concert which had the highest ticket sales in 23 years with 957 attendees. *Left to right:* Derek Klopfenstein '07, Keith Meendering '80 and Tristan Miedema '18.

Tristan '19 and Holly VanderPol Peters '18 married Oct. 7, 2023.

Sean Rennich '18 is a senior software engineer at John Deere and resides in Ankeny, Iowa, with his wife, Tristyn Bianchi Rennich '18, a global onboarding specialist at Chevron Corporation.

Catherine Pearce Vande Voort '18 is in the sales development program at Pella Corporation in Pella, Iowa.

Jackson Lewton '19 is an assistant tennis coach at Central College.

Alejandra Maldonado '19 is a program manager at North High for By Degrees Foundation. Maldonado resides in Pleasant Hill, Iowa.

Paige Shanno '19 is an occupational therapist at Kinetic Edge Physical Therapy in Pella, Iowa.

THE '20s

Sydney Cummings Mathews '20 is an occupational therapist at Kahl Home in Davenport, Iowa.

Lexie Patton Messick '20 works at Vermeer Corporation in Pella, Iowa, as a talent acquisition specialist.

Sienna and Hunter Robinson '20 married Nov. 4, 2023.

Cheyenne Scholl '20 started a new position as technician III at Cornell University. Scholl is now working in the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine in the Department of Clinical Sciences. Her new role involves research in cancer and radiation studies.

Shane and Sydney Peterson Schwaninger '20 married Aug. 26, 2023.

Katie Banowetz '21 is an assistant athletic trainer for Central College in Pella, Iowa.

Kent and Morgan Van Maanen Beyer '21 married Sept. 16, 2023.



▲ Dillon '20 and Erin Dilger Maass '20 married May 20, 2023. *First Row:* Michael Anderson '20, Lauren Simon Kimm '20, Joey Parker '22, Brooke Caves Pederson '20, Tayte Barense '21, Katie Wang '21, Dillon Maass '20, Erin Dilger Maass '20, Christian Escobar '20, Madison Egger '19, Cheyenne Kinsella Norem '18, DaLana Kron '21, Melissa Miller '19 and Alex Cloyed '20. *Second Row:* Henry Klaassen '20, Raigen Furness '20, Trevor Kimm '20, Landon Daniels '20, Jenna Bakeris '21, Kiel Pederson '19, Ali Gremminger '20, Joel Collett '21, Kelsey Roxworthy Schroder '17, EJ Schroder '17, Salvador Villanueva '18, Mollie Mason '18 and Jenna Decker Johnson '21. *Third Row:* Brant Mueller '22, Ben Turnley '20, Karleigh Schilling Turnley '21, Jake Dzarnowski '22, Madi Schmiegelt '19, Ben Robertson '17, Ryan Sprain '20, Kristin Fick '20, Taylor Petkovich '20, Phil Garcia '20, Hana Edgerton Nussbaum '20, Calvin Bill '18, Ian Meentemeyer '20, Mitch McComber '21, Daniel Nussbaum '20, Cody Fields '20 Andrew Benhart '21, Tate O'Tool '20, Jordy Borman '20, Jake Johnson '20 and Shannon James '19.

THE '20s (continued)



▲ Former Central College President **David Roe** caught the volleyball team in action at Meredith College against Guilford in North Carolina. *Front Row: Gracie Pierson '25, David Roe, Colleen Kenney '26, Gwen Kahlke '25, Avery Rexroat '26 and Makayla Ribble '26. Back Row: Alejandro Rodriguez, assistant volleyball coach, Gracie Daniels '24, Alexah Mellenberger '25, Zoe Lutz '25, Elyse Johnson '24, Sophia Folkerts '27, Leslie Snow '26, Landry Pacha '27, Sara Sienkiewicz '26, Paige Sexton '27, Emma Wagler '25, Trinity Vos '26 and Jeanne Czipri, head volleyball coach.*

Claire and **Blaine Hawkins '21** married July 28, 2023.

Austin '23 and **Brandi Gilbert Knaack '21** married July 29, 2023.

Paige and **Griffin Sargent '21** married Oct. 21, 2023.

Ben '20 and **Karleigh Schilling Turnley '21** married July 8, 2023.

Luke Lubbers '22 is working at Enterprise in Bloomington, Illinois, as a management trainee.

Doug Pepper '22 is the assistant men's soccer coach for Central College in Pella, Iowa.

Emma and **Timothy Stammeyer '22** married July 8, 2023.

Katie and **Trent Swartwoudt '22** married Aug. 5, 2023.

Carter '22 and **Hannah Vroom Tryon '22** married Nov. 4, 2023.

Tyler and **Alexis De Vries Dafflitto '23** married July 29, 2023.

Caleb Evans '23 is a middle school basketball coach and high school special education associate in the Pella Community School District in Pella, Iowa.

Natalia Mindowicz '23 is a rehabilitation counselor at Cornerstone Montgomery.

Jake '24 and **Gabrielle Brown Schulte '23** married July 8, 2023.

Hailey Swan '23 is an admission representative for Central College in Pella, Iowa.

Landon Thiele '23 works for Washington State Bank in Pella, Iowa, as a lender.

ADVANCED DEGREE

Jessica Terpstra '02 earned a Master of Education in teaching English to students of other languages from Grand Canyon University in March 2023.

Stephanie Welsch Yeoman '05 earned a Master of Social Work from the University of Iowa in May 2023.

Christopher Ellerston '12 received a Master of Music Education in choral pedagogy from the University of Kansas in July 2023.

Emily Miller Gillon '13 earned a master's degree from Drake University in clinical mental health counseling in May 2023.

Em Hutchison '14 graduated from Drake University in May 2023 with a Master of Arts in teaching with endorsements in secondary education of English, speech and theatre.

Jaime Miranda '17 graduated with a Master of Science in business leadership from Trident University and was accepted at Drake University's doctoral program for a Doctor of Education degree.

Joshua Johnson '18 completed a Ph.D. in microbiology from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri in 2023.

Jenna Stewart Pulse '19 completed a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Colorado in 2023.

Sydney Cummings Matthews '20 graduated with a Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree from Drake University in 2023.

Sarah Roberts '21 completed a master's of social work from Aurora University in 2023.

NEW ARRIVALS

Kirstin and **Mark Maurer '99**, daughter Mackenzie Karen, July 2023.

Dexter Wallis and **Renae Boeke '06**, daughter Julia Fern, Nov. 28, 2022.

Sara and **Joel Mudd '11**, son Miles McKnight, July 6, 2023.

Jackie and **Shane Nelson '11**, daughter Lillian Ellen, May 17, 2023.

Justin '11 and **Sarah Shimon Chambers '12**, daughter Mae Leiden, April 18, 2023.

Kristine and **Russ Katz '12**, daughter Kendall Mallory, Aug. 11, 2023.

Kyle and **Celeste James Yoder '12**, son Boone, June 22, 2023.

Devin '13 and **Shannon Skalla Abel '13**, daughter Lillian Alice, Aug. 12, 2023.

Jonathan '14 and **Samantha Quick Kotz '14**, son Hudson Jon, Aug. 7, 2023.

Matt '15 and **Hannah Altheide Ridgway '14**, son Benjamin Leigh, June 28, 2023.

Betsy and **Tim Wilson '14**, daughter Joy Catherine, June 26, 2023.

Jacob '14 and **Emily Benson Edleman '15**, daughter Lily Joy, May 5, 2023.

Michael and **Kelsey Van Tasell McEowen '15**, son Connor Scott, July 11, 2023.

NEWSNOTES

NEW ARRIVALS (continued)

Ryon '15 and **Leah Mouw Rasmussen '16**, daughter Maren Elyse, Oct. 24, 2023.

Andrew and **Karlee Rock Schneider '15**, daughter Ellie Jo, Oct. 3, 2023.

Mark '16 and **Morgan Merritt Dykstra '18**, son, Thys Howard, June 5, 2023.

Josh '18 and **Brittany Carlson Prokupek '16**, son Everett Rhys, Aug. 23, 2023.

Calvin and **Kjerstin Grindberg Brandt '17**, son Luther Thomas, July 3, 2023.

Jaime '17 and **Emily McDonald Miranda '18**, daughter, Elena Amada, Nov. 27, 2022.

Kelli and **Matthew Williamson '17**, son Matthew John (MJ) Jr., March 13, 2023.

Joshua '18 and **Mackenzie Fuller Johnson '19**, daughter Vivienne Mary, May 20, 2023.

Bryant and **Gretchen Mann Clapper '19**, son Brooks Dean, Oct. 5, 2023.

Tyler '18 and **Alaena Pelzer Christensen '20**, daughter Maeve Oakes, May 8, 2023.

Aly Matthews '20, daughter Evelyn Elaine, Oct. 19, 2023.

Delaney and **Brayden Egli '22**, daughter Blair Marie, Sept. 8, 2023.

Alexander and **Madolyn Clark Johnson '22**, son David Iot, Sept. 30, 2023.

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Davey '46, Indianola, Iowa, Oct. 10, 2023.

Francisco Tello '47, Chitre, Panama, Sept. 18, 2023.

Cynthia Vermeer Kaskey '49, Aurelia, Iowa, July 14, 2023.

Vernon Sneller '56, Sioux City, Iowa, Aug. 11, 2023.

Carolyn Missall Vermeer '56, Pipestone, Minnesota, Sept. 22, 2023.

Katherine Paige Brouwer '59, Roseville, Michigan, Sept. 4, 2023.

Neal Busker '60, Pella, Iowa, Nov. 4, 2023.

Doug Heerema '61, Pella, Iowa, Sept. 22, 2023.

Bill Kibby '62, Fort Dodge, Iowa, June 22, 2023.

Linda Dekker '64, Sacramento, California, April 2, 2023.

Ken Piazza '69, New Prague, Minnesota, July 12, 2023.

Denis Bredlow '74, Ravenwood, Missouri, Nov. 8, 2023.

Yewoubdar Beyene '75, San Francisco, California, July 11, 2023.

IN MEMORIAM



BERNICE TROMP VERMEER '50

Bernice Tromp Vermeer '50 passed away Dec. 25, 2023, in Pella, Iowa. Vermeer received a two-year teaching certificate at Central College.

Along with her husband, Harry Vermeer, Bernice was an active member of the Pella and Central communities, attending events on campus, volunteering at her church, the hospital and other parts of the community. The couple were members of Central Club, Cornerstone Society and Heritage Roll of Honor. They were also charter members of Calvary Christian Reformed Church. Bernice taught Sunday school and Vacation Bible School and served as a charter member of the Mission Circle and Willing Worker's societies.

Sue Wetle Kelderhouse '75, Island Lake, Illinois, July 6, 2023.

Cassandra Jean Albaugh Brock '81, Laramie, Wyoming, Aug. 1, 2023.

Kathryn Pierce Hammerly '81, Newton, Iowa, July 25, 2023.

Gene Van Dusseldorp '87, Pueblo West, Colorado, June 24, 2023.

Patrick Moore '91, East Bethel, Minnesota, Oct. 9, 2023.

Dawn Pearson Watson '92, Gold Canyon, Arizona, Sept. 6, 2023.

Scott Vodraska '97, Norwalk, Iowa, Nov. 5, 2023.

Wilma Dykhuis, former clerical staff, Pella, Iowa, Oct. 14, 2023.

Willie Van Wyk, former custodian, Pella, Iowa, July 31, 2023.

MEMORIAL GIFTS AT CENTRAL

Some alumni and friends inquire about making a memorial gift in honor of a special member of the Central family. If you would like to do so, please call 641-628-5154 and ask for **Michelle Wilkie**, director of development, or give online at central.edu/give and add a note to designate your memorial.

SAVE THE DATE!

THE **53** MILE CHALLENGE RETURNS

FEBRUARY 18 – APRIL 10, 2024

Run, walk, bike and move 53 miles leading up to Hoo-Rah Day.
For more information and to sign up, visit: central.edu/challenge.



SAVE THE DATE COMMENCEMENT MAY 11, 2024 • 10 A.M.

central.edu/commencement

Unable to attend in person?

You will be able watch the ceremony live on Central Dutch Network!



LETTING LOVE LEAD

STORY BY: DEREK DEHAAN



Tim Brand '02, Bev De Cook Brand '67, Steve Brand '96 and Shelly Brand Nelson '98 stand before a newly constructed Love-In-Action Center in Mé Bel Mé, Haiti. This center was dedicated to their late husband and father, **Denny Brand '65**, who devoted years of service to Haiti and inspired Tim to start Many Hands (Many Hands for Haiti).

Little did **Tim Brand '02** know, a night of prayer in Pietenpol Hall would change his life forever.

During the summer of 1998, Brand, a recent graduate of Pella High School, joined a church group to help build a new school for Christian Mission of Pignon in Haiti. This trip not only challenged Brand's perspective on God's global heart but was also instrumental in laying the foundation for his future.

Part of that future included Brand choosing to attend Central College. It was here where he found his life's calling, rooted in prayerful obedience.

"One night during my sophomore year at Central I was praying about the direction of my life," Brand says. "In that moment, I heard a voice say to go back to Haiti."

INSPIRATION

In 2008, ten years after his first trip to Haiti and eight years after his prayer on the first floor of Pietenpol Hall, Brand established Many Hands (Many Hands for Haiti). He continues to serve as founder and chief

executive officer of the nonprofit, living out its mission: "Transforming together, to be love in action, in a broken world."

Brand graduated from Central with a degree in computer information systems. He also earned his master's degree in business management from the University of Phoenix. Brand credits his education as the catalyst for the realization he could leverage his business skills for nonprofit work.

"It was always really important for me to get a liberal arts education," Brand says. "I saw how being well-rounded in my education could help me no matter what I ended up doing after graduation. Taking on so many different types of coursework throughout my Central career allowed me to see that when I finally said yes to my calling, I thought, 'Ah, this is why I have all these skills.'"

A FAMILY AFFAIR

For Brand, Central has always felt like home. In fact, he's part of what he calls a generational Central family with parents, **Denny '65** and **Bev De Cook Brand '67**,

brother, **Steve Brand '96**, and sister, **Shelly Brand Nelson '98**, all being Central graduates as well. His wife, **Catie Ruefer Brand '04**, graduated from Central with a degree in education and teaches language arts at the middle school in the Pella Community School District.

Being part of the Central family is more than just a title, it's a lifelong connection that, for the Brands, is rooted in generosity.

"What I've seen in my life is a person who is truly generous isn't just generous in one area of their life," Brand shares. "They're generous with their forgiveness, time, resources, hospitality and with how they view life."

The Brands exemplify this type of true generosity in how they have chosen to give back to Central. The family supports the Central Dutch basketball and volleyball team crowdfunding campaigns through Ignite, serves on multiple advisory councils at the college, guest lectures in classes and volunteers during Homecoming and Scholar Days, just to name a few.

Through the work that Many Hands is doing, Brand has also been able to give the gift of experience to different groups from Central.

"We've taken several groups from Central down to Haiti," Brand says. "These groups have served in ways that expand their worldview and give them a different perspective. It's been a great partnership with Central, one that allows me to give back in appreciation for all that I learned during my time there."

Whether it be at home, working in Haiti or anywhere in between, Brand strives to live a congruent life that is grounded in love, leading to an outpouring of generosity.

"Generosity comes from a point of love," Brand explains. "So, when you can love well is when you can be generous. And my time at Central taught me how to love well by bringing me into this family — a generational Central family that continually showed me how to love well. Because of this, I'm able to, in turn, love others in the way they want to be loved in this world today." ■

A Meditation on Life

IN FIVE HUNDRED WORDS (OR LESS)

POEM BY: ÓSCAR REYNAGA

SENIOR LECTURER OF SPANISH AND CLASS DEAN FOR CENTRAL'S CLASS OF 2027



Óscar Reynaga, senior lecturer of Spanish and class dean for Central's Class of 2027, is pictured with students at an organic coffee farm near San Isidro, Costa Rica. Reynaga co-led the five-week summer research program in 2017 and 2018, among other faculty-led off-campus opportunities.

Where to begin? In a busy airport in California?
Or maybe arriving in a sea of golden cornfields in Iowa?
Or maybe sitting on a bench with all the pretty purple tulips?
Or eating a sweet pastry in the shape of the letter "s"?
What infinite moment makes the most sense?
Ah, yes! I should begin with the wide-eyed confused faces of my students
Listening to a Spanish song and wondering if it will be on the test.
Now when "¡Hola, Óscar!" greets me all across campus
After so many years of teaching
It puts a smile on my face
Knowing hearts and minds have been unlocked
To a new way of seeing the world
A path I treasure like Dorothy's yellow brick road
Which led me to an unfamiliar place
That I now call Home.

I close my eyes and
In less than three heartbeats, I'm back, 8 years old
Sitting in my crowded living room

Staring at the television and imagining myself
In those magical faraway places filled with jungles
And temples and footprints of the unknown
I remember thinking: How do I get there?

I close my eyes again, and wonder,
Was it my mother and father coming home tired from work?
Was it my brothers and sisters' constant fights?
Was it the endless nights of homework until the sun came up?
It must have been all of it! And love.
A love of life
Down to my every single atom
And up into the endless orange sky
That swept me away to Berkeley
And to study abroad
Across the Andes and into Chile
Up to Perú and into the warmth of México
Over to the blue-sapphire ocean water in Havana, Cuba
And ...

What an honor to guide my students on similar journeys.
To know that we get to share these moments

And memories that will live on forever
For many who were afraid to leave home, as I too once was,
Discovering that their family's love could extend far and wide
Even across oceans and continents
On the steps of Machu Picchu
Swimming in the ancient cenotes of the Yucatán
Deep in the lush green forest of Costa Rica
Their warm embrace always found them
Like a strong elastic band that catches you when you fall
And springs you forward when you are afraid.

As Central College students
Just know that your story does not end here.
The knowledge you carry today is only the beginning.
As you leave to move freely in the world
As educated engaged citizens, confident and unafraid,
Use your love of knowledge and wisdom
To give meaning to even the smallest things
To respect and to love those who you may never meet
But who share this world with you,
To show compassion and be of service
To those who do not have your same privileges
To do the right thing, even when no one is looking
To love yourself and to love others.
To live without fear.
To never underestimate yourself.

Know that you belong here,
Not simply because of fate or destiny
But because of the power of the choices you've made for your own life.
To be better than you were a thousand times.
Use it to guide your choices, to guide your purpose in this world
It's up to you.
Where to begin? ■

CELEBRATE HOO-RAH DAY

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10!

**Spread your #CentralSpirit loud and proud with Central's fight song!
Share your school song videos with us on social media for #HooRahDay!**

HOO-RAH HOO-RAH

**SHOW THE WORLD WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE FOREVER DUTCH®
BY MAKING YOUR GIFT AT [HOORAH.CENTRAL.EDU](https://hoorah.central.edu).**