



# WINE

*Magazine*

WINTER 2025

## CONCUSSIONS IN SPORTS

Knowledge is Protection





*Winter '25*

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# WNE

Magazine

WNE: The Magazine is published for alumni, parents, and friends of Western New England University.

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# Message from Dean Hickey, Vice President for University Advancement



Dear Golden Bears,

As the holidays quickly approach, campus is buzzing with energy. Everywhere you look, students, faculty, and staff are pursuing their passions whether in the classroom or laboratory, on the playing fields, or on stage.

In September, we celebrated the arrival of the largest first-year class in Western New England University's (WNE) history. Just a week earlier, more than 300 student-athletes returned for preseason training, and over 100 students participated in our annual Performing Arts Camp—both of which are inspiring showcases of the talent and dedication that define our community.

We also had the honor of welcoming Dr. Anthony S. Caprio back to campus, where he received the Delbridge Family Spirit of Philanthropy Award. Hearing him reflect on his years as President of WNE and the many individuals who inspired him was truly special.

In early October we brought together the entire WNE community for a weekend full of fun and blue and gold spirit during Golden Bear Weekend. Campus transformed into the place to be for alumni, students, parents, and friends to enjoy great food, live music, and to cheer on their favorite teams.

From Golden Bear Athletics, we are proud to share that sophomore Derek Johnson, from Mountain Top, Pa., led the Golden Bear Golf team to a program-best second-place finish at the New England Intercollegiate Golf Championship. Derek captured the individual title and is now ranked No. 1 in New England among all Division III golfers. Congratulations, Derek!

While this is just a snapshot of the amazing things happening on campus, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that none of these achievements would be possible

without you. In the spirit of the season, please know how deeply grateful we are for our Golden Bear community, now 50,000 strong! You fill our hearts with pride and inspire everything we do. Thank you for helping WNE continue to thrive.

Go Bears!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dean Hickey'.

Dean Hickey

*Vice President for University Advancement  
Western New England University*





## **CUB CLOSE-UP**

# Jessica Brown '25

Briana K. Strobel '17/G'23

**Balancing academics, leadership, and service, Jessica Brown '25 has found her calling in Western New England University's 3+3 Occupational Therapy Doctoral (OTD) program, where she works to ensure that people of all ages have the support they need to thrive beyond their challenges.**

**Tell us about yourself and what brought you to Western New England University (WNE).**

I'm from Douglas, Massachusetts, and went to Blackstone Valley Tech in Upton, a technical school that doesn't see a lot of students continuing their education. My older brother came to an open house at WNE when I was a freshman in high school, and I remember really liking the campus. Later, when it was time for me to start looking at colleges, we used niche.com to find schools that would match our goals—WNE came up as my top match. On my tour, my mom told me, "You'll just know." The second I stepped out of the car, I felt it—this was where I belonged.

**You knew you wanted to work in healthcare. How did you land on occupational therapy (OT)?**

Honestly, it wasn't a straight path. I started out in health science and briefly tried the pre-physician's assistant (PA) track. I'll admit that I didn't apply myself in undergrad at first and struggled with my grades, even though I was thriving socially. I was class president my sophomore year, an orientation group leader (OGL), and heavily involved in student government. It was during a student government meeting, Assistant Dean Amy Burton pulled me aside and said, "You'd make an amazing occupational therapist." At the time, I didn't even know what OT was! I looked it up, and it clicked—this was what I wanted to do.

To make this transition official, I had to switch from health science to health studies, which meant some of the harder classes I'd already taken, like organic chemistry, weren't required. But once I had a clear focus, my academics turned around, and by junior year, I was really locked in on becoming an occupational therapist.

**Looking back, what were some of your favorite experiences as an undergrad?**

Peer advising was the light of my life. I loved mentoring students and connecting with faculty. Orientation was also huge for me—being an OGL and then a lead OGL helped me find my voice as a leader. While my study abroad trip to Sorrento, Italy, was such a formative experience that it's still one of the best things I've ever done.



**You found your way into leadership roles, what drew you to those opportunities?**

In high school, I was more into sports, but I did compete nationally in SkillsUSA, which taught me advocacy. At WNE, I wanted to make a difference, so I joined Freshman Council, ran for class president, which kept creating opportunities for me around campus. I realized that being in a leadership role wasn't about being the loudest voice, it was about lifting others up.

**How have you stayed involved as a graduate student in the OTD program?**

On campus, I'm co-marketing chair for the B.E.A.R. P.A.W. Center—WNE's on-campus pro bono occupational therapy clinic that provides free services to both children and adults. I'm also chair of the OT Student Leadership Society, a graduate assistant, and am still active in the athletics recreation department.

**What has stood out to you the most about your experience in the OTD program so far?**

The camaraderie. My cohort has only 18 students, and we're like a family. The professors, many of whom are practicing OTs, are incredibly supportive. They've exposed us to unique opportunities, like observing hippotherapy, which uses horseback riding as a therapeutic tool.

The introduction to this approach of occupational therapy intrigued us so much that it has shaped the research we're conducting, specifically how hippotherapy impacts neurological recovery. It's an emerging field with limited research, but early studies show benefits in posture, gait, and even mental health. I'm also working on my doctoral capstone project, which focuses on community-based OT programs

in Springfield. One of my main focuses is helping people in underserved areas improve quality of life through life skills and meaningful activities.

**What does working in the B.E.A.R. P.A.W. Center mean for you?**

For me, it's been an incredible way to build confidence as a future clinician while making a real difference in people's lives. We rotate through pediatric and adult cases, from kids with developmental challenges to adults recovering from strokes or brain injuries. It's completely student-run under the guidance of licensed OTs, which means we design and carry out treatment plans ourselves. It's given me the confidence to know I'll be ready for my external fieldwork.

**Placement is a part of the program—do you know where yours is?**

Yes! Next year I'll complete two 12-week fieldwork rotations: one in inpatient mental health at Butler Hospital in Rhode Island, and another in acute care at the University of Iowa Medical Center. Placements are a core part of the OTD program—we spend full semesters working alongside licensed OTs in real clinical settings, which prepares us to step confidently into practice after graduation.

**Outside of your studies and campus life, what keeps you busy?**

A big part of my life is InterVarsity, a college ministry in Springfield. We bring together students from seven or eight local colleges and host a large gathering called Encounter each month that draws more than 100 students. I serve on the host team, helping plan events, run icebreakers, and make sure everyone feels at home. It's been a huge source of community and joy for me.

I also attend a church in downtown Springfield, which has opened my eyes to the challenges the community faces and has deepened my desire to bring OT services into underserved areas.

And when I'm home during breaks, I work as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) in an assisted living facility. I've been at the same facility for four years, and I always tell people I love my "grandmas." That work has given me perspective on aging, independence, and the importance of slowing down and making people feel valued.

**What do you hope to bring to your future patients?**

I want people to feel seen and valued. My undergrad struggles taught me resilience, and my CNA work in the assisted living facility has taught me the importance of slowing down and listening. For me, OT isn't just about physical recovery; it's about being present during someone's hardest moments.

**What advice would you give to undergrads considering OT or another healthcare field?**

Make sure your heart is in the right place. Healthcare isn't a backup plan—it has to be your plan. And you can't pour from an empty cup, so build strong support systems. The work is demanding, but it's also so rewarding if it's what you're truly called to do.

**What does the WNE community mean to you?**

It means home. I know I'll always be welcomed here, and honestly, I could see myself returning as a professor one day. The community is overwhelmingly positive—it's hard to walk across campus without running into someone you know. 🐾





# CAMPUS NEWS

For the latest news from Western New England University, visit [wne.edu/news](http://wne.edu/news).



## MEETING A CRITICAL NEED IN BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS

In response to a nationwide surge in demand for professionals in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Western New England University (WNE) is preparing the next generation of leaders through its Master of Science (MS) in ABA and PhD in Behavior Analysis programs.

According to the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BCBA), job postings requiring BCBA or BCBA-D certification have grown from 789 in 2010 to more than 103,000 in 2024—a 13,000% increase. With the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting that 1 in 36 U.S. children has autism spectrum disorder, the need for skilled practitioners is urgent.

“Students in our programs receive exceptional academic, practical, and research training with leading experts in the field,” said Rachel Thompson, PhD, BCBA-D, professor of psychology and director of behavior analysis graduate programs. “They graduate ready to lead in clinical, educational, and research settings.”

Through a partnership with The New England Center for Children, students gain real-world experience while benefiting from generous funding opportunities. WNE’s graduates enter the workforce equipped to deliver evidence-based interventions that improve quality of life and advance the ABA field.

## BULLARD '69 ENDOWS UNIVERSITY'S FIRST CHAIR

Western New England University celebrated a historic milestone with the investiture of Sharianne Walker, dean of the College of Business, as the Janet Johnson Bullard Endowed Chair in Finance—the University’s first endowed chair.

Endowed through a gift from Janet Johnson Bullard '69, a pioneering alumna, trustee, and philanthropist, the chair ensures sustained support for teaching, research, and program innovation. This gift

complements Bullard’s previous philanthropy, which has already expanded opportunities for students in financial literacy and women’s leadership.

“This endowed chair represents a tremendous honor and a new era of opportunity,” said Walker. “Janet’s generosity ensures that we can continue to innovate and prepare Golden Bears to lead.”

Walker has led the College since 2020, guiding its reaccreditation by the Association to Advance

Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), launching the FinTech Incubator, and expanding industry partnerships. The investiture also featured remarks from Interim President Michael B. Alexander and Interim Provost Lisa Celovsky, underscoring how philanthropy fuels academic excellence and student success.





## \$300,000 USDA-NIFA GRANT TO ADVANCE ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH

Western New England University has received a \$300,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) to explore a nutrition-based nanomedicine strategy for Alzheimer's disease.

The project, led by Shuhua Bai, professor of pharmaceuticals, will investigate how blueberry-derived exosomes may support brain health through the microbiota-gut-brain axis. The research team includes Dean John M. Pezzuto of the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Dr. Tianzhi Yang,

Dr. Eun-Jung Park, and external collaborator Amal Kaddoumi of the Medical College of Georgia.

"This award allows us to explore how natural food-derived nanomedicine can shape the future of Alzheimer's prevention," said Bai.

Students will actively participate in the research, gaining laboratory experience and training in precision nutrition. "This investment highlights the power of connecting agriculture, nutrition, and human health," said Pezzuto. "It reinforces WNE's role as a growing hub for interdisciplinary research with real-world impact."



## HONORING LUCIEN PARENT '62

In September, Western New England University posthumously inducted Lucien Parent '62 into the College of Engineering Hall of Fame, recognizing his remarkable career as an engineer, entrepreneur, and trustee.

A non-traditional student, Parent earned his degree at 34 while working full-time. He grew United Engineers into a \$30 million company and co-founded United Innovations, Inc., serving major aerospace firms including Northrop Grumman.

"Lou's story is one of perseverance, vision, and service," said Interim President Michael B. Alexander. "We honor not only his professional achievements but also the values he embodied—hard work, integrity, and family."

His son Chris Parent '74 accepted the award. A bronze plaque now joins 16 others in Sleith Hall's Hall of Fame, serving as a lasting tribute to his legacy and inspiring future Golden Bears.



## 51 NEW CITIZENS. 31 COUNTRIES. 20 NEW VOTERS. ONE UNFORGETTABLE DAY.

In a moving ceremony at Western New England University School of Law, 51 individuals from 31 countries officially became U.S. citizens. Immediately afterward, 20 registered to vote, underscoring the connection between naturalization and civic engagement.

"Moments like this remind us of the strength of our democracy and the enduring promise of citizenship," said Professor Julie E. Steiner, director of the Institute for Legislative and Government Affairs.

The event, hosted in the Blake Law Center Moot Courtroom, was organized with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and presided over by The Honorable Mark G. Mastroianni L'89, U.S. District Court judge. Speakers included Dean Zelda Harris and Steiner.

The ceremony aligned with Constitution Day and Citizenship Week and is part of the Institute's Campaign for Democratic Principles. Law students assisted new

citizens with voter registration and supported follow-up events, including a program on the 60th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and a community forum featuring Ketanji Brown Jackson, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

This naturalization ceremony reflects WNE University School of Law's commitment to civic engagement and connecting students, policymakers, and communities to the democratic process.







# WNE CAME ALIVE WITH SPIRIT DURING GOLDEN BEAR WEEKEND 2025

Briana K. Strobel '17/G'23

Western New England University (WNE) came alive with energy and pride October 3–5 as alumni, students, families, and friends gathered for Golden Bear Weekend 2025. The annual celebration once again combined Family & Friends Weekend with Homecoming, creating three days filled with spirit, cherished traditions, and unmistakable blue and gold enthusiasm.

From the moment guests arrived on campus, the sense of connection was palpable. Golden Bears from across the country returned to Wilbraham Road to reconnect with classmates, engage with faculty, and share in the excitement of campus life. The place to be that weekend—Golden Bear Boulevard, as the Pine Grove transformed into one big, vibrant gathering showcasing the best of WNE. Each of the University's Colleges hosted interactive tents featuring engaging displays and student projects, while alumni-owned businesses, student groups, and campus partners offered activities and giveaways. Families enjoyed the KidZone and a variety of local food trucks, while fans gathered at the Golden Bear Tent, featuring selections from alumni owned Fieldcrest Brewing, as they cheered on the football team.

Athletics took center stage as fans filled the stands to support their teams and celebrate the competitive spirit that defines WNE. The Golden Bear football team claimed a 35–10 victory over Husson University, while the women's and men's soccer teams battled through hard-fought matches against Roger Williams University. As the day transitioned into evening, the celebration continued in front of the Anthony S. Caprio Alumni Healthful Living Center, where alumni, families, and friends enjoyed the second annual Bear Bash. Live music from The Willies provided the perfect backdrop for those in attendance to continue celebrating and reconnecting on campus.

The weekend also provided meaningful opportunities to honor the achievements and legacies of members of the WNE community. On Friday evening, four distinguished alumni were inducted into the Downes Athletic Hall of Fame in recognition of their outstanding contributions to Golden Bear athletics: Chris Body '08 (Men's Lacrosse), Jim Maples '10 (Men's Soccer), Grace Kucharski '15 (Women's Volleyball and Softball), and Braxton Obichukwu Anetochukwu Etuka '18 (Football). The Hall of Fame dinner united past and present student-athletes, coaches, and supporters in a celebration of excellence and tradition.





WNE SOCCER THANKS  
ANTHONY PIO '79



Reunion gatherings also took place throughout the weekend, highlighting the enduring bonds that connect WNE alumni. The Class of 1995 marked its 30th reunion with a special celebration at Theodore's in downtown Springfield, while the School of Law welcomed back members of the classes of 1984 and 1985 for a brunch in the Blake Law Center. The men's soccer program commemorated the 50th anniversary of its 1975 NAIA championship team, while the football team dedicated new sideline benches in memory of James "Hoss" Horbal '93, honoring his impact on the team and the university community. Additionally, alumni from women's basketball, women's lacrosse, and men's soccer returned to campus for friendly alumni games that blended nostalgia with spirited competition.

As Golden Bear Weekend 2025 drew to a close, there is no doubt it stood as a testament to the strength of the WNE community and the pride that continues to unite generations of alumni and students.

Relive the memories—view photos from the weekend at [alumni.wne.edu/goldenbearweekend2025](https://alumni.wne.edu/goldenbearweekend2025). 🐾



# CONCUSSIONS IN SPORTS

## Knowledge is Protection

Mike Vallee

A growing body of research has changed how we think about concussions—and how we care for athletes who experience them. For parents and former athletes, being informed and prepared can play a vital role in prevention, protection, and recovery.



Do you remember when you first started playing sports? You probably thought you were invincible. You would head out to the field, court, or ice, and would play until you physically could not play anymore. As you got older, you carried that same mindset into your organized sports—it was fun, and all you wanted to do was keep playing.

However, injuries happened—you twisted an ankle, and it became swollen or maybe discolored. Easily recognizable. Or maybe you planted to change directions and felt a “pop” in your knee. You found yourself limping, your knee inflamed, and there was a painful “click” or buckle. You clearly were not the same, and you and your coach knew that you could not keep playing.

### Top 10 Youth and Scholastic Sports with the Highest Concussion Rates:

1. Boys Tackle Football
2. Girls Soccer
3. Boys Lacrosse
4. Boys Ice Hockey
5. Boys Wrestling
6. Girls Lacrosse
7. Field Hockey
8. Girls Basketball
9. Boys Soccer
10. Softball

But what happened when you went up for a head ball in your soccer match and hit your opponent’s head? Or were blindsided by a hit in hockey or lacrosse, causing a whiplash injury and a temporary headache where you “saw stars”? Upon immediate assessment, you were able to answer your coach’s questions. There was no blood or swelling, and although you might not have felt quite right, you felt you “had” to keep playing. Maybe you asked your teammates to repeat the play, but that did not matter; you were not coming out. But you remember thinking, “Wow, is that sun bright!”

Since then, concussion education has come a long way, and it continues to make steady progress. Concussion research is now fluid, more data means more information, and our understanding of the topic continues to evolve. There are now resources accessible to recognize, evaluate, and treat—yes,



even treat—concussions. It is now widely understood that multidisciplinary medical teams result in the best outcomes for a concussed student-athlete. What used to be the realm of neurologists now involves athletic trainers, primary care providers, physical and occupational therapists, counselors and mental health professionals, as well as neuropsychologists.

Children often feel invincible—especially when it comes to concussions, which do not leave visible marks. But as a parent, coach, or volunteer, it is your responsibility to emphasize the importance of concussion education and recovery. Doing so helps young athletes stay safe while continuing to enjoy an active, competitive lifestyle.

So, what can you, as a parent, coach, or volunteer, do to ensure your child can be active and safe whether in the backyard or in organized sports?

### Prevention Begins with Education

Parents want to do everything possible to keep their children safe, including preventing concussions. The best way to prevent a concussion is simple: education. While most associate concussions with contact sports, it is important to recognize that they can also occur in non-contact sports or even during everyday activities—making awareness key to maintaining a safe and active lifestyle. For children who participate in contact sports, teaching proper tackling or checking techniques is vital to reducing risk.

There are many resources available for this; however, the Heads-Up Concussion training

program through the CDC is free, easily accessible, and thorough. It also includes educational resources for coaches, parents, and health care providers. Staying up to date with your town and league requirements as parents, coaches, and volunteers can also help make a difference in the safety of your children and their teammates.



**CDC HEADS UP**  
SAFE BRAIN. STRONGER FUTURE.

In addition to online resources, there are several products, from equipment to supplements, that claim to prevent, decrease the risk of, or speed up the recovery of concussions. While there is data supporting many of these products, there are also risks involved with each of them that should be considered prior to use. To ensure you choose what is best for your child, talk with a sports medicine professional about the most suitable options for their needs.

### FAST FACT

**Mouthguard use results in a 28% reduced concussion risk in ice hockey across all age groups.**



## Know the Signs!

There are a myriad of signs and symptoms that can result from a concussion. Concussions present differently in everyone, oftentimes, they can even differ in the same individual who has suffered multiple concussions.

Familiarizing yourself with the signs and symptoms of a concussion can go a long way towards protecting your athlete and their teammates in the long run.

If your child or their teammate is suffering from a potential concussive impact, such as a physical blow in which force was applied or transferred to the head, remove them from activity and monitor them closely. Immediately watch for signs and symptoms, and if any appear, keep them out of play. Once it is clear the athlete has sustained an impact capable of a concussion and is displaying related symptoms, refer them to a healthcare professional for evaluation. Always leave the official diagnosis to the experts.

Concussions are graded on a severity scale, which helps to determine the best course of treatment. The NCAA, along with the majority of sports organizations, mandates that no athlete who sustains a concussion is allowed to return to sport on the same day.

## FAST FACT

**NCAA rules require that team physicians and athletic trainers have the unchallengeable authority to make all medical management and return-to-sport decisions for student-athletes**

## Recovery is Key

If you have ever suffered a concussion, you may remember that recovery once entailed a “strict” rest regimen until all symptoms were resolved. However, as the medical field continues to learn more about concussions, they have adjusted the recovery practice to recommend “relative” rest. This includes limiting physical activity and completely eliminating screen time during the first 48 hours. After that period, light activities are allowed—such as walking or a stationary bike—if they do not worsen symptoms or increase the risk of impact or falling. This approach has been shown to be beneficial in concussion recovery. As always, consult a healthcare provider before progressing in the recovery post-concussion process.

Once an athlete is without symptoms for at least 24 hours, they can begin a gradual return to activity progression. Typically, this timeframe continues for five days, with light aerobic activity on the first day through sport participation with contact on the last day. The athlete must be cleared by a licensed healthcare provider who is trained specifically in the care of sport-related concussions to return to full participation.

## Signs/Symptoms of a Concussion

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Neck pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Difficulty with multitasking
- Poor memory
- Emotional instability
- Increased anxiety
- Mental confusion
- Feeling “foggy” or out of it
- Vision problems







## Risks of Returning to Play Too Soon

While frustrating for athletes, the recovery process is a necessary piece to not only ensure their safe return to play but also for their futures. Educating young athletes on the severity of an untreated or mistreated concussion can better prepare them for success in their sport.

There are many additional side effects an athlete may experience if they do not adhere to the proper return to play progression. A primary concern with an early return to play is that the athlete will experience decreased reaction time, thus placing them at an increased risk of injury, repeat concussion, or even prolonged concussion symptoms. Another concern is the potential of Second Impact Syndrome or SIS. SIS is a serious condition that can occur when someone has repeated concussions in a short period of time, and the results can be catastrophic. Additionally, there is the risk of long-term neurological symptoms and deficits as a result of repeated head impacts and/or recurrent concussions.

### FAST FACT

**51% of concussions among girls who play high school basketball resulted from colliding with another athlete.**

Due to the increase in attention over the past few years, many student-athletes have asked me about the risk of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, or CTE. This condition has drawn significant attention, largely due to groundbreaking research conducted at Boston University's CTE Center, as well as several high-profile cases that have captured national interest. What I tell our student-athletes is that although there are concerning trends, much more research is needed to establish a causal link between concussions and CTE. It is also important to note that the number of confirmed cases remains extremely small compared to the total number of individuals who are actively participating in sports or who have experienced concussions.

## Evolving Our Understanding of Concussions

The first significant advancement in concussion care within the sports medicine field occurred in 2001, when multidisciplinary experts convened in Vienna for the inaugural International Conference on Concussion in Sport. Since then, ongoing research has greatly enhanced our understanding of the dangers associated with premature return to play following a concussion. As this body of knowledge continues to grow, it is essential for families to remain informed and engaged. With appropriate education and training, young athletes can confidently participate in sports and reap the many physical, social, and emotional benefits that come with being part of a team. 🐾

## About the Author

**Mike Vallee** has been a member of the Western New England University Athletics team since 2001. He began his tenure as an assistant athletic trainer and has served as the head athletic trainer for over 17 years. Vallee holds a bachelor's degree in exercise science/athletic training from Ithaca College and a master's degree in exercise physiology/human performance from Southern Connecticut State University.

With extensive experience working with athletes across various sports and age groups, Vallee has built a professional background that spans hospitals, outpatient clinics, colleges, secondary schools, professional sports, and youth clubs. He has consistently applied this expertise to ensure Golden Bear athletes stay safe and are ready to compete. In addition to his role in athletics, Vallee also serves as the NCAA athletic healthcare advisor for the campus.





# Golden Bear Athletics Recap: Records, Reunions, and Rising Stars

## Record-Breaking Season Earns Johnson Top Conference Honors

Western New England University (WNE) sophomore Derek Johnson delivered one of the most remarkable individual seasons in program history—setting records, winning multiple tournaments, and earning the prestigious Conference of New England (CNE) Golfer of the Year title following the fall championships.

Johnson's rise began during his freshman year when he set a program record at the Rich Korzec Invitational at Tatnuck Country Club in Worcester, Mass., carding a 66—the lowest 18-hole score in WNE history, breaking a 20-year-old mark. Coming off a stellar debut that earned him CNE Co-Rookie

of the Year honors, Johnson entered the 2025 season determined to build on that success.

His sophomore campaign quickly gained momentum at the Bowdoin College Invitational, where he shot back-to-back rounds of 71 to tie for first and secure his first individual win of the season. Johnson then dominated the CNE Championships, accomplishing a two-day total of 136 (-8), finishing 10 strokes ahead of the runner-up and setting a new program record for the lowest 36-hole score. The performance earned him CNE Golfer of the Year and All-Conference First Team honors, along with his second tournament victory.

Johnson continued his winning streak at the Skidmore Invitational, a 54-hole event where he posted rounds of 73, 67, and 69. His score of 67 now ranks as the second lowest in program history, just behind his record-setting 66.

The fall season concluded with Johnson leading WNE to a second-place team finish at the New England Intercollegiate Golf Association (NEIGA) Tournament. Individually, he sat atop a field of 119 golfers, claiming his fourth win of the season with consecutive rounds of 72. As of November 12, Johnson is ranked 27th nationally in NCAA Division III men's golf—among more than 1,700 players.

## WNE Men's Soccer Honors 50th Anniversary of Historic 1975 NAIA Final Four Team

During Golden Bear Weekend, WNE celebrated the 50th anniversary of its legendary 1975 men's soccer team—the squad that captured the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) New England Championship and advanced to the NAIA National Final Four. Coached by Bill "Red" Downes '83, the team finished with an impressive 15-4-2 record and placed fourth nationally. Mark Starapoli '76 served as team captain during this historic season.

The anniversary festivities began with the annual Men's Soccer Alumni Golf Tournament at Veterans Golf Course in Springfield. The following morning, alumni gathered for a coffee reception on Golden Bear Boulevard at the College of Business tent.

Later that day, attendees cheered on the current Golden Bears as they faced Roger Williams University in a CNE matchup. At halftime, the 1975 team was honored with an on-field ceremony, where those in attendance were recognized for

this historic anniversary. The celebration continued that evening with a 50th Anniversary Soccer Dinner at The Sheraton Hotel in Springfield, where teammates, family, and friends shared stories, laughter, and memories of their remarkable season.

Recognized as one of the most historic teams in Western New England athletics, the 1975 squad was inducted into the Downes Athletic Hall of Fame in 2000—the first full team to receive this honor.







## ***Mrzywka Makes History in First Season with Golden Bears***

Western New England's first-year field hockey standout Mikayla Mrzywka made an immediate impact, helping the Golden Bears to 12 wins during the 2025 season, including four victories in CNE play. She scored her first collegiate goal on September 3 in a 5-0 win over Westfield State University at Golden Bear Stadium.

Mrzywka's breakout continued in the CNE opener against the University of Hartford, where she tallied a goal and two assists for her first four-point game. The Penfield, N.Y. native delivered clutch performances midseason, recording three game-winning goals in victories over Keene State College, Gordon College, and cross-town rival Springfield College.



## ***Harris Makes History in Final Game for WNE Football***

De'Andre Harris, Western New England's wide receiver closed out his career in spectacular fashion, becoming the program's all-time leader in receiving yards during the season finale—a record previously held by Steven Fedorchak '21. Harris surpassed the 2,531-yard mark in a dominant 63-20 win over Nichols College, finishing the game with six catches for 211 yards. His record-breaking moment came on a 75-yard touchdown reception, pushing his career total to 2,694 yards.

With over 41 games in a Golden Bears uniform, the Weymouth, Mass., native recorded 152 receptions (third-most in program history), 2,694 yards, and 24 touchdowns—ranking second all-time. This season, Harris posted career highs with 52 catches for 1,013 yards, becoming the first WNE receiver to eclipse 1,000 yards in a single season since 2019. He logged five 100-yard games in 2025, four of them in conference play. 🐾





# A Sparkling Path:

## How Madison Marilla Turned her WNE Education into a Platform for Inclusion

**From psychology classes to global screens, Madison Marilla '20 leverages her WNE roots to champion autism awareness, blending creativity and resilience into an inspiring success story.**

Emily Mead Larsen G'07



Madison Marilla, who graduated from Western New England University (WNE) in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in art, is a sparkling jewel in WNE's alumni crown. As one of the newest shining stars from Netflix's celebrated series *Love on the Spectrum U.S.*, her warmth, candor, and authenticity has captured the hearts of audiences around the world, transforming her into an inspiring voice for inclusion and understanding for the Autism community.

Her journey reflects not only her personal resilience and brilliance but also the encouragement and foundation she found at Western New England, where supportive faculty and a nurturing community helped her build confidence and pursue her dreams. Today, as accolades pour in from her appearance on the show, she continues to embody the spirit of WNE, turning possibility into reality and making a difference far beyond campus.

When Marilla first set foot on Western New England University's campus, she felt something she had not found with any other collegiate option: a sense of belonging. For her, choosing a college was not just about academics; it was about finding a community where she could be her true self, one that could offer support for every aspect of her life: social, emotional, and academic, "I knew this campus was the right fit the day I visited," Marilla recalls. "We met with Student Accessibility Services, where they



told us about the social and emotional support available. They even arranged for me to have a single dorm room, which made a big difference for me.”

The personal connections that day sealed her decision. She remembers meeting Eddie Ortiz from Campus Events, who showed her the bulletin board full of student happenings, and recalls having the opportunity to sit in on psychology panels. “Everyone was so friendly,” she said, “I could picture myself here.”

During her time at Western New England, Marilla immersed herself in the cosmopolitan campus life. She made friends from across the globe, many from similar backgrounds, and others who introduced her to new perspectives. Her fondest memories center on the themed events that became a staple of her social calendar, “I loved Disney Night, Carnival Night, and all the holiday events—the Christmas and Halloween activities, even the psychic fair,” she shared with a smile. She also poured her heart into Autism Awareness Week with the Community Service Club, selling her handmade jewelry to raise money for autism awareness, “It meant so much that everyone on campus came to support!”

Those experiences, paired with her warm and outgoing nature, allowed her to form friendships with people across every corner of campus, from student-athletes and theater students to members of the Diversity Club and Gender/Sexuality Alliance (GSA), “The president of the Diversity Club once told me she loved how I showed up to all their events and asked me to help plan some of them,” Marilla reflects on proudly.

Marilla’s choice of psychology as a major was deeply personal. Her journey began in high school, working with children with autism and other special needs through Sudbury Parks and Recreation’s Adaptive Sports & Recreation program, formally known as Aspirations, “I was working with kids in kindergarten through eighth grade—doing art therapy, yoga, music therapy, sports,” she explained. “Sometimes I’d even go to their homes, play board games, help with eye contact, or try new foods. Those experiences made me realize I wanted to do this as a career. I wanted to understand why autistic people behave the way they do.”

At Western New England, the psychology department offered the perfect fit, with special education courses and applied behavior analysis programs. Her professors

encouraged her active participation, especially in classes like Developmental Psychology. Her participation was so great that her educators sometimes had their work cut out for them, “Professors would call on other students because I always raised my hand,” she laughed.

The university’s flexibility made an enormous difference to her success. Dean Brown and Assistant Dean Martini recognized her strengths as a hands-on learner. When certain courses proved difficult, they transformed them into independent studies tailored to her needs, “I would read the material and then discuss it one-on-one with a professor,” she explains. “That kind of support showed me they really cared about me as a person, not just as a student.”

College was a turning point for Marilla; it offered her the first steps toward true independence. She learned to advocate for herself, whether by visiting professors during office hours, going to the Academic Success Center, or asking for help when she needed it, “I cooked my own food, bought my own groceries, and built the confidence to live on my own,” she shared. She also discovered the joy of building relationships with resident assistants (RA), peer advisors (PA), and staff across campus, “I’d sit with RAs on duty at night, making jewelry and just chatting,” she recalls.

Graduation, though unusual because of COVID-19, was still memorable. She remembers the slideshow of seniors presented by President Emeritus Anthony S. Caprio and the alumni weekend that brought her class together for a formal event and brunch, “It wasn’t traditional, but it was still special,” she says. Most importantly, it was proof of her resilience, “Not many autistic people go to college, let alone graduate. Earning my bachelor’s degree meant the world to me.”

Since graduation, Madison has continued her mission to help others. She worked as a special education paraprofessional at Nathaniel Morton Elementary School, becoming the school’s first autistic teacher, “I worked with students on reading, math, and writing,” she said. “I also created engaging academic games and sensory activities. During MCAS testing (Massachusetts’ annual standardized test), my room became a space for kids to take breaks with activities like making slime, stress balls, or bracelets.” She also worked with students who were learning English as a second language (ESL), helping many Portuguese-speaking children learn English through arts and crafts.

Her creativity and compassion did not stop there. A lifelong jewelry maker, she started crafting at age 10 and began selling her pieces at 14—later turning her passion into Madizen® Jewelry. Using the platform she gained from appearing on the Emmy-winning Netflix series *Love on the Spectrum U.S.*, she launched her own online store, “My brother helped me build the website, MadizenUSA.com, and it’s been amazing to share my work with more people,” she says.

Meanwhile, her dreams are still growing. With a psychology degree and an art minor, she hopes to one day pursue a master’s degree in art therapy, “I love making jewelry, sewing, drawing, and painting,” she says. “I’d love to use those skills to help people with special needs, whether they’re kids, teenagers, or adults.” Her goal reflects the same compassion and creativity that guided her during her time at Western New England and beyond, “Making connections with people and helping them feel special, that’s what I want to do.”

Reflecting on her journey, Marilla has clear advice for incoming students, “Ask for help. Go to your professors’ office hours, visit the Academic Success Center, and use the Math and Writing Centers. Those resources will help you so much.” She also encourages students to step outside their comfort zones, “Get involved on campus. Keep an open mind. Don’t be afraid to meet people, talk to your RAs, or build relationships with your professors. Just live life.”

For graduating seniors about to embark on their own journey, she offers more pieces of wisdom, “Use the Career Center. Put your résumé out there. Take everything you’ve learned in college and apply it to the real world. That’s what helped me.”

From her first day on campus to her fame today, Marilla’s story is one of resilience, support, and community. Western New England did not just provide her with an education; it gave her a foundation to build a meaningful, independent life, “College was my first step to independence,” she says. “It taught me how to ask for help, how to live on my own, and how to believe in myself. Western New England gave me the confidence to spread my wings.”

And for Madison Marilla, those wings are carrying her into a sparkling future filled with creativity, success, and the kind of positive impact that will inspire others, especially those in the Autism community. 🐾





# ALUMNI NEWS

For the latest alumni news from Western New England University, visit [alumni.wne.edu/news](http://alumni.wne.edu/news).

## COLLEGE OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH SCIENCES CELEBRATES YOUNG ALUMNI EXCELLENCE

Earlier this fall, the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences hosted its annual Young Alumni Awards, a heartfelt evening honoring six graduates whose early careers are already making waves in the pharmacy profession. Presented by the Pharmacy Student Governance Association and held in the University Commons, the event welcomed students, faculty, and alumni for an inspiring night of connection and celebration.

This year's honorees, Dr. George Abdallah '13/PharmD'15, Dr. Nicole DeFeo '14/PharmD'18,

Dr. Chris Maminakis '16/PharmD'18, Dr. Kristie Reed PharmD'15, Dr. Alana Regan '14/PharmD'16, and Dr. Christy Soverow '16/PharmD'18—shared stories of growth, purpose, and the many paths a Doctor of Pharmacy degree can lead to. From hospital leadership to psychiatric care and pharmaceutical innovation, their journeys reflected passion and impact.

The evening featured remarks from Dr. Joshua Spooner, Kristina Oleksak, and Dr. Daniel Kennedy, and included a lively panel discussion that offered students real-world insight and encouragement.



## LAW ALUMNI AWARDS DINNER HONORS TRAILBLAZING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

On Friday, November 14, the Western New England University (WNE) School of Law community gathered at the Blake Law Center for the 11th Annual Law Alumni Awards Dinner, celebrating three alumni whose careers reflect bold leadership, public service, and a deep commitment to justice.

Hosted by the WNE Law Alumni Association, the evening brought together faculty, students, alumni, and friends to recognize the 2025 honorees across three distinct categories.

Daniel R. Carey L'17 received the Ascending Alumni Award for his dynamic career in public service, including his role as clerk of courts for Hampshire County and former State Representative.

Kathleen Dion L'09, partner at Robinson + Cole, was honored with the Dean's Alumni Excellence Award for her work in civil litigation and white-collar defense, as well as her advocacy for pro bono service and inclusive legal practice.

The Hon. Tina Cafaro L'95, newly appointed First Justice of the Westfield District Court, earned the Distinguished Alumni Award for her decades of impact on legal education, prosecution, and judicial leadership.

The evening celebrated the enduring influence of WNE University School of Law alumni and their contributions to the legal profession and society.





## SKOOKUM AWARDS HONOR OUTSTANDING SENIORS

The Western New England community gathered on Sunday, September 14, for the annual Skookum Awards Ceremony, celebrating students who exemplify leadership, service, and academic excellence. Families, friends, alumni, faculty, and staff filled the room with pride as 15 exceptional seniors were welcomed into the Skookum network.

Keynote speaker Dr. Matthew LaCoille '16, a past recipient, encouraged honorees to carry the Skookum spirit forward through service and impact.

Interim President Michael B. Alexander and Alumni Association President Brandon O'Brien '15/G'16 joined alumni presenters in conferring the awards, presenting each student with a framed certificate and symbolic rock.

### Top honors went to:

- Joshua Farrell, Grand Skookum
- Paul Henderson, Royal Skookum
- Madeline Jarvinen, Royal Skookum

### The following students received Skookum honors:

Kendall Branchaud, Elizabeth Burnham, Jessica Cloutier, Dakota-Marie Dinielli, Zachary Drewry, Kaily Godek, Camden Kaufmann, Zachary Killoran, Emmaleigh Lindsay, Ethan Michaud, Jayden Montagna, Maahi Amit Shah.

Together, these students embody the Golden Bear spirit as leaders, scholars, and role models who will carry the Skookum legacy into the future.



## GET READY TO MAKE WNE'S FUTURE GOLDEN DURING #WNEGIVES

It's #WNEgives' 10th anniversary—and we are celebrating a decade of generosity, impact, and Golden Bear pride! Join the WNE community on **Wednesday, February 18** for #WNEgives, our annual day of giving. Whether you are an alum, student, faculty member, staff member, parent, or friend, your participation matters.

### Here is how you can make an impact:

- Make a gift—any amount makes a difference!
- Support your favorite area of campus
- Join the Social Ambassador Team
- Host a Donor Challenge
- Share your story using #WNEgives

Let's come together to honor our past and invest in WNE's future. Visit [wnegives.com](http://wnegives.com) to learn more and get involved.

## WNE(C) WEDNESDAYS: MONTHLY HAPPY HOUR FOR GOLDEN BEARS

Now in its second year, WNE(C) Wednesdays has become a favorite tradition for alumni to reconnect, relax, and raise a glass to the Golden Bear spirit. Held on select Wednesdays throughout the year, these casual events rotate through local venues and feature complimentary appetizers, a drink on us, and plenty of good company!

Whether you graduated last year or remember when it was called WNEC, everyone is invited to join the fun. These gatherings are all about celebrating the WNE community, catching up with old friends, making new connections, and sharing stories that span generations.

We especially love seeing new faces, so if you have never been, this is your sign to stop by and say hello. Keep an eye out for the next WNE(C) Wednesday—we can't wait to see you there!

## UPCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

### WNE(C) WEDNESDAYS

- 🐾 TAP Sports Bar | Wednesday, January 14
- 🐾 Sophia's Bar & Grill | Wednesday, February 11
- 🐾 The Yarde Tavern, Enfield, CT | Wednesday, March 4
- GOLDEN BEAR GATHERINGS FLORIDA**
- 🐾 Boca Raton | Monday, February 23
- 🐾 Palm Beach Gardens | Monday, February 23
- 🐾 Malabar | Tuesday, February 24
- 🐾 St. Augustine | Tuesday, February 24
- 🐾 The Villages | Wednesday, February 25
- 🐾 Tampa | Thursday, February 26
- 🐾 Sarasota | Thursday, February 26
- 🐾 Naples | Friday, February 27

**57TH ANNUAL ALUMNI GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
Friday, May 22, 2026

**GOLDEN GRADS LUNCHEON**  
Thursday, June 25, 2026

**GOLDEN BEAR WEEKEND 2026**  
October 16-18



# Class Notes

## STAY CONNECTED

Your classmates want to know about the milestones in your life. Send your news, including weddings, career changes, accomplishments, and publications to the Office of Alumni Relations at [alumwne@wne.edu](mailto:alumwne@wne.edu), or visit [alumni.wne.edu/classnotes](http://alumni.wne.edu/classnotes) to submit your note online.

## 1970s



**Charles I. Rose '74** (Business Administration) retired in 2021 as senior director, account relationships at KPMG in Dallas, TX.

## 1980s



**David Loring '85** (Mechanical Engineering) was promoted to senior vice president at Pare Corp., a multi-disciplinary engineering firm, in its western Massachusetts division.



**John Serio L'86** (JD) was named Of Counsel at Day Pitney LLP in the firm's intellectual property practice. Serio advises clients in the food and drug, medical device, healthcare, and scientific equipment sectors.

**Phillip Podgorski '88/G'96** (Accounting/ MBA) has been appointed as TechPrecision Corporation's new chief financial officer (CFO). The company manufactures large-scale, fabricated metal, and machined precision components and equipment. Their products are used in a variety of markets including defense, aerospace, nuclear, medical, and precision industrial.



**Joseph Tata, Jr. '89** (Psychology) retired from the Connecticut Department of Corrections after 25 years. After moving to Florida, Tata now works at Palm Beach State College as a law enforcement career advancement and specialized training coordinator.

## 1990s

**Daniel F. Sullivan '91** (MBA) entered retirement in July 2021 after 30 years of state service with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.





**Kimberly Anne Jacobsen L'94** (JD) was presented the 2025 Ladder Award at this year's Pathways to Leadership for Women Lawyers. The Ladder Award honors a woman attorney who has mentored fellow women lawyers. This award is presented by the CBA Women in the Law Section, in association with the CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Women in Law Committee.

**The Hon. Charles Groce, III L'97** (JD) was nominated by Governor Maura Healy to serve as associate justice of the Superior Court. He has served as an associate justice of the District Court for thirteen years, held the position of first justice of the Westfield District Court and serves as the presiding justice of the Court of Assisted Supervised Treatment Program in the Springfield District Court.



**John Stocks L'98** (JD) was sworn in as the clerk magistrate of the Springfield District Court after being nominated by Governor Maura Healy. He has served as the court's acting clerk magistrate since 2023 but has worked within the system since 1993.

## 2000s



**Nicole Jorge L'03** (JD) was selected to be included in *The Best Lawyers in America* 2026 edition. Jorge practices family law, specializing in high conflict divorce, custody, and domestic abuse matters.



**Janice Ward L'05** (JD) was promoted to senior vice president and head of Fiduciary Services at Berkshire Bank. Ward will lead the bank's fiduciary activities along with its trust business.

**Laura Manasewich '06** (Communications) has written her first short film comedy, *Scooch Down*, a story about a woman's not so ordinary doctor's visit. In addition to co-writing the film, Manasewich also directed it.

**Benjamin Mann L'07** (JD) was nominated by Governor Maura Healy to serve as an associate justice of the Juvenile Court. Attorney Mann is currently an assistant clerk magistrate at the Springfield Juvenile Court.

**Diana (Sigona) Doddrell '08** (Sport Management) has started a new position as project manager, executive learning at Bond University.

**Ronelson Lovaincy '08** (Marketing Communications/Advertising) has started a new position as senior category manager at HEYDUDE.

**Brandon Lord '09** (Finance) has recently joined Fidelity Investments as a vice president to help lead their executive talent acquisition team.



**The Honorable Becky Michaels L'09** (JD) was nominated by Governor Maura Healy to serve as an associate justice of the district court. She served as an assistant district attorney since 2012 and, since 2019, as the director of community prosecution projects at the Northwestern District Attorney's Office.



**Matthew Wallin L'09** (JD) has joined Fisher Phillips as partner in their Woodland Hills, California office. Wallin is an experienced litigator in employment law across industries in California, such as healthcare, construction, technology, and manufacturing. Wallin's practice focuses on claims about discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wages and hours, and workplace violence.



# 2010s

**Katharine Staron '10** (Psychology) has started a new position as senior account manager at Walmart Connect within the food team.

**Sean Staron '10** (Criminal Justice) has started a new position as regional director of asset protection (East) at Saks OFF 5th.

**David Griffin '11/G'16** (Mechanical Engineering/MBA) has started a new position as GTF Advantage deputy chief systems engineer at Pratt & Whitney. Griffin has been with Pratt & Whitney since 2011.

**Rebecca Morin '11** (History) started a new position this fall as a library teacher at Gibbons Middle School in Westborough, Mass. Morin obtained her teaching license after almost seven years as the head librarian for the Worcester Art Museum.



**Courtney Allen L'13** (JD) has been named to the *Hartford Business Journal's* 2025 40 Under Forty list. Allen is vice president of claims at CorVel and has been with them since 2023. She leads strategic initiatives focused on advancing claims management practices that improve recovery and support for injured workers, while also driving efficiency, transparency, and results for CorVel clients.

**David Cicero '13** (Communications) was promoted to manager of the AV Event Execution team at The Hartford Insurance Group, in Hartford, Conn. Cicero has been with the company for nine years supporting various events and meetings.

**Santino Delmolino '13/G'13** (Business Administration/MSA) has been appointed as the new chief financial officer (CFO) of Northeast Bank. Prior to this, he served as the corporate controller for the bank. Delmolino brings substantial financial expertise from his previous roles at Fidelity Investments and KPMG. He is a certified public accountant and is licensed in Massachusetts.



**Dr. Briana Santaniello Garlick '13/G'14/PharmD'15** (Science/MBA/PharmD) was promoted from senior medical science liaison II to principal medical science liaison at AbbVie.



**Lan Kantany L'13** (JD) was appointed by Governor Maura Healey as a member and chair of the Commonwealth Employment Relations Board, a three-member appellate body within the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations. Prior to this appointment, she served as a hearing officer and chief counsel for the agency.

**Emily Newman-Savino '13** (Sport Management) has been promoted to production manager at InCord Custom Safety Netting Solutions.

**Chris Connors '14** (Business Administration) has joined Couch White, LLP, as a partner in the firm's corporate and commercial real estate division.

**Jason Titelbaum '14/G'16** (Sport Management, Marketing/MBA) started a new position as operations manager at Mansfield Public Schools in Connecticut.



**Michael Camille '15/G'19** (Marketing/MBA) has started a new position as senior project manager at Sierra Nevada Corporation.



**Dr. Christina Hannon '15/PharmD'17/G'17** (Health Sciences/PharmD/MBA) was promoted to enterprise director of pharmacy training education and research at Advocate Health, in Chicago, Ill. Hannon has been with Advocate Health since 2017.

**Lauren Zevetchin '15** (Communications-Public Relation) is the new executive director at Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (HYPE), a MetroHartford Alliance initiative.





**Matthew S. LaCoille, Ed. D '16** (Sport Management) has joined the UMass Amherst Foundation as the director of development for their College of Natural Sciences.

**Tim LaFalam '16/G'23** (Business Administration/MSA) was promoted to senior tax manager at MP CPAs. LaFalam has been with MP CPAs since 2015, when he started as an intern and became full-time in 2016.

**Brandon O'Brien '15/G'16** (Accounting & Finance/MSA) has been promoted to deals senior manager - project management advisory at PwC.

**Jennifer Kazeroid '18/G'20** (Business Administration/MSSL) was promoted to assistant athletic director for finance and business services at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass) in November 2024. Kazeroid has been with UMass since 2020.



**Erika Sheinhait '18/G'19** (Sport Management/MBA) is the new creative director at Falmouth Road Race, Inc.



**Joshua L. Woods L'18** (JD) has joined Harris Beach Murtha as senior counsel. He joins the commercial real estate practice group to assist commercial developers, institutional lenders, corporations, partnerships, nonprofits and other businesses in the Hartford and Boston areas. Woods aids in the development, finance, sale, purchase, and leasing of commercial real estate, and has significant experience representing institutional lenders and private equity firms.

## 2020s

**Courtney Carlson '20** (Pharmaceutical Business) has been promoted to manager of clinical supply chain at Alnylam Pharmaceuticals. Carlson has been with Alnylam since graduating in 2020.

**Sarah O'Hazo '20** (Management and Leadership) has started a new position as an account manager with Bond Optics.

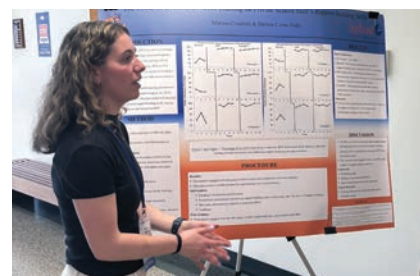
**Natalie Rauh '21** (Elementary Education-English) won the 2025 Grinspoon Excellence in Teaching Award for Springfield Public Schools.



**Alyssa Stefanelli '20/G'22** (Secondary Education-Mathematics/Sports Leadership and Coaching) won the 2025 Grinspoon Excellence in Teaching Award for Chicopee Public Schools.

**Adetayo Olatinwo '21** (Psychology) has joined Glenmeadow as vice president of human resources.

**Taylor Pedley '22** (Mechanical Engineering) has started a new position as engineering change coordinator at Scout Motors Inc.



**Marissa Crisafulli '23** (Psychology) has started as a floating counselor at the May Institute where she collects behavior data, creates academic and independent living programs, and provides care for children on the autism spectrum.

**Cameron Stansbury '23** (Biomedical Engineering) started a new role as a manufacturing engineer at UFP Technologies. Stansbury has been with UFP Technologies since 2024.

**Tyler Millerick '24** (General Business) has been promoted to account manager, member services at the New York Islanders. Millerick has been with the New York Islanders since 2024.

**Brianna Carroll '25** (Sport Management) joined the Springfield Thunderbirds sales office.



**Ashley Figueroa '25** (Biomedical Engineering) has started a new position as a biomedical engineer technical career field trainee at the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

## SEE MORE ONLINE

For more Class Notes and our In Memoriam listing of alumni and community members who have recently passed away, view the online version of *WNE: The Magazine* at [magazine.wne.edu](http://magazine.wne.edu).



## Marriages



**Lindsey Greenleaf '20/G'23** and **Tyler Thomas '20**, July 13, 2024, in Goffstown, NH.



**Denise Cote G'11** and **Donald Mitchell**, November 1, 2024, in Springfield, Mass.



**Lori Bezanson '20** and **Jarred Beauchemin '19**, July 19, 2025, in Pomfret, Conn.



*(left)* **Kes Husselbeck '20** and **Kyle Crowley '21**, August 22, 2025, in Lake George, N.Y.

*(right)* **Kate Schwed '23** and **Christopher Fortier '22**, August 30, 2025, in Holyoke, Mass.



**Jensen Keough '22** and **Jack Cristales '22**, May 25, 2025, in Easthampton, Mass.



**Madeline Dugan '20** and **Francesco Siniscalchi '18**, October 11, 2025, in Ellington, Conn.





(top left)  
Henry Keating, March 15, 2025, to  
**Kaitlyn (Hall) Cameron '13** and  
**Patrick Cameron '13**

(top right)  
Theodore Barrett, April 29, 2025, to  
**Rebecca (Freitag) Miranda '18** and  
Luke Miranda

(bottom)  
Cecilia Rose, August 5, 2025, to  
**Erica (Clayton) DeVita '17** and  
**Anthony DeVita '18**



# UNRESTRICTED GRATITUDE: CELEBRATING YOUR SUPPORT

This past year, the outpouring of support from our alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends has been extraordinary. Each name on our Honor Roll is a reminder of the strength of the Golden Bear community—and the difference you make in the lives of our students.

Your gifts fuel scholarships, enrich academics, enhance athletics, and strengthen every part of the Western New England experience. Together, you've ensured that students are not only prepared for success but inspired to lead with purpose.

As we look ahead to the new year, we remain deeply thankful for your generosity and invite you to continue being part of the journey. Every gift matters, and every gift changes lives.

**To learn more about how you can make an impact, visit [alumni.wne.edu/impact](https://alumni.wne.edu/impact) or contact us at [thefund@wne.edu](mailto:thefund@wne.edu) or 413-782-1335.**



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# CURTAIN CALL

WNE's Stageless Players  
took the stage with their fall  
performance of John Cariani's,  
*Almost Maine*.





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