

Fall 2007

PERSPECTIVES

UMKC MAGAZINE

On a Mission

Humble servants
in the military
and Peace Corps
work in the name
of peace

A parent's
nightmare

Empowering
refugee
women

Dental students
get to root of rock

CONTENTS

Thanks to you more than 2,200 UMKC students can now gain interdisciplinary training in the Health Sciences Building on Hospital Hill. The \$50.2 million facility was made possible by the support of federal, state and private donors.



Paul Hess, fifth-year Pharmacy student, and Clarissa Chambers, senior in the School of Nursing.



Refugees empowering refugees

Women help others like them through UMKC program



Commencement countdown

A behind-the-scenes look at what makes graduation tick



Metal mouth

Dental students let loose in heavy metal band



Too young for cancer

Alumna's book offers honest insight

On a mission

From fighting insurgents in Iraq to AIDS in Africa, peacemakers struggle to adjust to life at home



You're invited to the dedication of the Health Sciences Building
Friday, Sept. 21
2-4 p.m. Program, ribbon cuttings, refreshments and tours
Health Sciences Building, north courtyard
2464 Charlotte St.
Kansas City, Mo.



To learn more about the \$200 million *Your UMKC* campaign, of which the Health Sciences Building is one of many key projects, visit advancing.umkc.edu.

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Points of interest



Never say never

Don and Donna Ross are private people who can't keep track of how many TV crews they've had in their lighthouse-themed living room.

They invite them in because they have to, because their son is missing, and someone who might know something might see Jesse's face this time.

It's a reality they never could have imagined and can't change – not until Jesse is back home where he belongs. They feel helpless, so they take control of the things they can. The data processor and elementary school secretary act as agents and investigators planning press conferences and booking billboards. And they reach out to others living their nightmare.

Before Jesse disappeared, his parents had only been to the Windy City once. Now they have every intersection and alleyway in downtown Chicago memorized. They'll map it out for you with whatever's handy. In an instant, the salt shaker is the Sheraton and a book becomes the river.

It's amazing how people adapt, how the most unlikely things become natural and eventually comfortable.

Never in a million years would Kim Carlos (J.D. '97) have imagined showing her breast to a stranger. But honesty trumps modesty when hope is on the line.

Those scars are a source of pride for the young cancer survivor and promise for those afraid of what's next.

Fear and hope and everything that lies between make you do things you never thought you would, like Kim letting friends clean her toilets when she was too sick or the Rosses consulting a psychic.

Hope is the reason for sharing the stories of the Rosses and Kim Carlos and others featured throughout this issue. Because doing something you never thought you could makes you want to let others know they can do it, too.

—Lindsey V. Corey



Jesse and Donna Ross (page 20).

Perspectives magazine is published twice each year for alumni and friends of the University of Missouri-Kansas City by University Advancement.

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Letters to the editor may be sent to: Perspectives Editor, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 300C Administrative Center, 5100 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO, 64110-2499. Letters can also be e-mailed to perspectives@umkc.edu.

LIFE 101

UMKC experts share advice on almost anything.

How to create the perfect playlist



How to whiten your teeth

How to properly motivate employees



How to win an argument

How to be a good hospital visitor



How to write a complaint letter

How to keep your computer secure



How to help the environment

▶ How to create the perfect playlist

Bill Everett, Ph.D.
Conservatory of Music and Dance
associate professor



iPods are great and allow people to create their own soundtrack for the movie of their life. People are going to choose music that appeals to them directly, and that's going to be different for every individual. Everyone should be exposed to a variety of music and pick the type that speaks to them. But if there is one collection of music, an essential that should be on everyone's playlist, it should be songs by Abba, because they're happy. It's well-crafted music that has a variety of emotions. My warning: overexposure can delete a song's power. Always change the music on your iPod.

What might be your favorite piece of music when you first put it on your iPod will change when you listen to it everyday for about two months. You'll eventually say, "I never want to listen to that again," and that's unfortunate for a piece of music you used to love.

▶ How to properly motivate employees

Denise McNerney, B.S.P. '76, M.A. '82
co-CEO and president of /BossWell, Inc.



One of the main keys is making sure employees are clear on what their expectations are. Next, find out what they want to get out of their careers and this job, and figure out a way you can support an aspect of their goal and make a commitment to support them. The simplest thing to do, but the thing most people miss, is acknowledgement. This isn't just about a pat on the back and saying, "good job" and not about public awards and recognition, but instead being specific, sincere and frequent.

Lots of bosses make the assumption that every employee wants to climb the ladder, which isn't necessarily true. As a boss, if you support your people, they'll get the job done. Motivating is about thinking beyond textbook management 101 and thinking beyond your own pressures of the job, and being open and listening to what others think is important. It just takes a little bit of mindfulness, a little discipline and a lot of emotional intelligence. Now tell me, how many bosses have you had like that?



▶ How to win an argument

Amy Foster, B.S. '07
National Debate Tournament finalist, now enrolled at Baylor Law School



Think before you speak. Take a second and think logically, so that what you say isn't based on emotion or instinct. You have to have a reasonable argument. Formulate your ideas in your head. Try to foresee what the other person's reaction will be to your words, and present

them in a way that will gather the most impact. Most importantly, don't be intimidated. As long as you have a well-reasoned argument, you have a right to say what you want to say. Confidence is one of the most important ways to persuade people.

▶ How to whiten your teeth



Robert E. Menees Jr., D.D.S. '68
private practice dentist in Fairway, Kan.



Most over-the-counter products are pretty worthless, but Crest Whitestrips are a good budget option and do give a result if the teeth are relatively young and straight. If your teeth are irregular, those strips are not going to deliver the bleach effectively.



Whitening toothpastes really have no value, because they are not in the mouth long enough to have an effect.



The best option, even better than in-office bleaching, is to have a dentist take impressions of your teeth, make a custom tray and then send you home with a mixture that is right for you, based on your mouth sensitivity and general oral health. We used to think that you needed to leave the bleach mixture on all night, but research shows that most of the real bleaching takes place in only 30 to 45 minutes.



As far as I'm concerned, and I have studied all of the literature, those laser light treatments are a gimmick. The light does nothing to activate the bleach or help in any way. Loads of studies back this up.

▶ How to be a good hospital visitor

Bringing children to visit is good most of the time; they bring a special healing energy and give people a lift. But please, do not let your kids run loose! The thing that bugs me most is seeing some parents let their children crawl and sit on the floor – this is the absolute dirtiest place there is. Although they scrub those floors well, there's always the chance that some germs from blood or fluids are right there.

Fran Otto, R.N., M.S.N. '02
Missouri Caregiver of the Year 2006



Concerning flowers: first check with the staff on whether there are any restrictions on bringing them in. Patients who have an immunodeficiency are not allowed to have them because of the risk of infectious germs the flowers may harbor. One of my pet peeves is clutter. If you've brought in food, please put the trash in the wastebasket. Also, take a moment to tidy up if you see a lot of disorder. Housekeeping staff and nurses will do this, but visitors can also help maintain a nice environment. If your loved one has a semi-private room, then be careful about crowding the room with guests, and of how long you stay. Healing takes energy, and guests can wear patients out. Just try to be considerate and respectful. Be in tune; it's not hard to see things from the patient's perspective.

▶ How to write a complaint letter

Michael Fitzgerald, J.D., '68
Attorney, Van Osdol, Magruder, Erickson & Redmond



You've got to make sure it's strongly worded but not overdone. It has to read factual, not overdramatic. It's rarely effective to use passionate adjectives. Clearly state the problem and the facts. Don't assume they know what you know. Always reread and revise if necessary. It's not a surprise that people will judge you on grammatical usage. "We are not going to take action now" is very different than saying, "we are now going to take action." I've caught that mistake a time or two. The main thing to keep in mind: don't wave the red flag at the letter stage. You just want them to know your position. Don't say, "it appears" if you really mean you've "concluded," and always leave the door open for discussion.

▶ How to keep your computer secure

Deep Medhi, Ph.D., Computer Science and Engineering professor



First of all, don't even have a computer. Second of all, if you do have one, don't turn it on. OK, let's get to it: to keep your computer safe, there are a couple of important things you can do. Buy some antivirus software, such as Viruscan, Norton or Spy Sweeper. None of them can take care of every problem, but if you use two or more, then you've got a good amount of coverage. Second, update as often as you can. You'll often get automatic update messages on your desktop when a new update is available. Use it. That's how your software company is outwitting any potential problems that could come creeping in. You might also want to rent space on a server. This is great if you have a

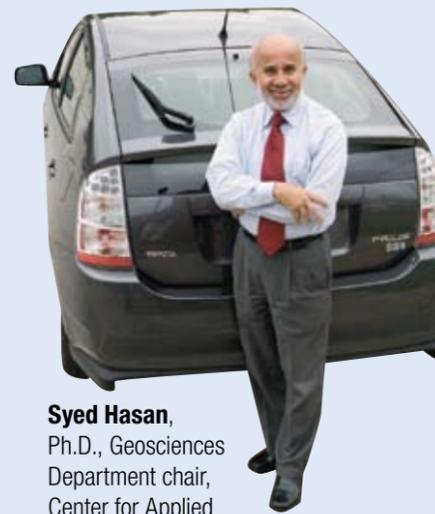
large, important work project. I used Filesanywhere.com while writing my last book. You can upload and download, and you pay the company a very inexpensive fee, \$3 to \$4 a month, to keep your projects secure. Computers are not very expensive these days. What one must realize is that the real "value" of the computer is not the machine itself, but rather it is what is stored on your computer. For me, that's my son's poetry project, but it might be photos, letters or business plans. Spending \$100 to protect those things is definitely worth it.

▶ How to help the environment

Human-induced pollution has been the start of many major recent environmental problems, including global warming. Sometimes these problems seem too big, and individuals tend to think there's nothing they can do to help. People need to rethink this.

Here's what you can do:

- Cut down on the amount of energy you use. Turn off the TV when you're not watching it.
- Turn off the water when you are not really using it. It saves on your bill and saves the energy it takes to heat water.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs. They have a longer life, require less energy and are more efficient.
- Learn how to use, reuse and recycle. Try to get out of the mindset of "use and throw away."
- Don't drink bottled water. The plastic is difficult to dispose of. Besides, tap water meets the same quality standards as bottled water in all major U.S. cities.
- If you can walk, don't drive. Or at least carpool when you can.



Syed Hasan, Ph.D., Geosciences Department chair, Center for Applied Environmental Research director



Richard Gibson

ON A MISSION

Endangered peacemakers

By Kara Petrovic

At age 7, Richard Gibson wandered into an Army surplus store while vacationing with his parents in Cape Cod, Mass. Surrounded by military fatigues, duffle bags and service gear, his mind began racing.

Then he stumbled across something he'd never seen before: a midnight blue coat, sky blue trousers and a white belt.



Gulf War veteran Russ Little says the transition from military to civilian life took years.

"I saw it and knew that's what I wanted to be when I grew up – a Marine," says the 26-year-old sophomore vocal performance major, who followed his dreams of military service 12 years after first spotting the uniform. "The Marine Corps dress blues is the sexiest uniform alive."

It's now been four years since he's worn his blues. Four years since the sounds of artillery pierced his ears. Four years since his flesh felt the sun's 120-degree rays, and four years since he dug a hole to sleep in as his only protection from mortar fire.

He no longer exhibits the manicured look of a U.S. Marine. His dark hair, that's no longer cut to military standards, hides behind his tattered baseball cap. His polished black shoes have been replaced with flip-flops. But now, as he sips a cup of black coffee, those memories start to resurface.

Drudging up his experiences and talking about his service is easy, but forgetting them long enough to fall asleep tonight may be a different story. Because for Gibson, the reality of combat – even though it was four years ago – sometimes feels like yesterday.

Back home

As young veterans return from the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, a new wave of enrollment is increasing at universities across the country, and UMKC is no exception.

Vets are eager to trade in their uniforms and days of 12-hour patrols for backpacks and books. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs, 331,557 veterans and active-duty students received educational benefits at campuses around the country in 2006.

Gibson enrolled at UMKC in fall 2005 and is one of 198 students attending school on the GI Bill. He says he believes his work ethic is stronger than non-veteran students, but that discipline can only stretch so far.



Alumnus Russ Little (middle), spent seven months deployed in the desert of Saudi Arabia. Little kept his military service private throughout college because other students wouldn't understand, he says.

For some veterans, the transition back to civilian life can at times feel harder than going to war.

"No one has the understanding, the know-how, or knows what to do when they see someone like myself trying to make this type of transition," says Gibson, who served in Iraq. "It's extremely difficult, especially coming from that extreme to the extreme I'm in at the Conservatory [of Music and Dance]. It's going from one polar end to another with no middle ground."

A corporal E-4, Gibson was one of the first to deploy to Kuwait in February 2003 in the quest to oust Saddam Hussein before the war officially began in March. It also was Gibson's unit that called in the medevac after it witnessed the first suicide car bombing at a checkpoint in central Iraq that March.

At 22, Gibson had experienced the extremes of life and war, and witnessed images that most his age couldn't fathom.

The Marine Corps dress blues is the sexiest uniform alive."

Richard Gibson

He wasn't even supposed to set foot in Iraq. A rugby knee injury originally halted Gibson's deployment orders.

"I told them, 'either take me with you or I'll see you in Baghdad.' I didn't join the Marines for a backseat in things," he says. "I realized and accepted the fact that I was

going to die. But I always knew my buddy was going to make it home alive whether it took my life or not. I went because it was my job, but more so because freedom is worth fighting for."

He lost friends – "brothers" – and says he returned home in May 2003 physically healthy but mentally scarred. The transition from war to civilian life is difficult, Gibson says.

"At first it's easy because you are in this euphoric state thinking, 'I'm back home. Everything is wonderful, party for me.' But then reality hits, and you don't know where the hell you are," he says.

In the midst of rollercoaster emotions, Gibson turned to his passion – music. Before deployment, he always thought he'd attend chiropractic school after his stint with the Marines ended. However, as Gibson says, plans change, life changes.

"My military experience gave me time to sit back and realize that opera vocal performance is what I really want to do with my life," he says. "The discipline factor in the Marine Corps helped in the studying, and the confidence factor helps on the stage."

Yet attending college meant readjusting. He's learned to study subjects again, not people. He's broken the jargon language barrier, because the definition of terrorism verbatim is no longer needed. And he's learned to shrug off comments that hit too close to home.

Gibson says he spends a lot of free time alone, because making friends has been a challenge as well.

"I'll never have the type of friendships I had in the Marine Corps, because those bonds of brotherhood are absolutely unbreakable," he says. "College has been good for me though. It's taught me that the world's not going to change for me, but that I'm going to have to change for it."



Iraq veteran Richard Gibson, a vocal performance major at the Conservatory of Music and Dance, sings opera at Californos restaurant in Kansas City. Gibson says his love for opera began overseas.

Similar feelings grip generations

Law School alumnus and 1991 Gulf War veteran Russ Little (J.D. '05) knows the meaning of "change." On Aug. 11, 1990, Little celebrated his 21st birthday. Barely old enough to purchase a case of beer, he arrived in the desert of Saudi Arabia nine days later.

A lance corporal, Little's life changed dramatically during his seven-month deployment. A member of Task Force Grizzly, Little was part of one of the first foot patrols to penetrate an Iraqi minefield and to engage enemy fire during the four-day ground war.

"I still don't know how to convey to anyone what it feels like to be a 21-year-old guy in war, and what kind of profound effect war has on your life and outlook," Little says. "What words do you use to tell someone about your experience? These are things the average person doesn't deal with, especially at 18, 19, 20 years old."

Although he returned to the states in March 1991, Little says it took years to transition from military to civilian life.

Honorably discharged in 1993, Little bounced around the country working odd jobs and taking junior college classes at night, while trying to figure out the next phase of his life. He enrolled full time at Arizona State University in 1998.

Despite his age, the adjustment to college still proved challenging with the amount of free-thinking that took place, he says.

"There were times at school when I felt completely alone," he says. "I always felt so different when discussions in my history class were brought up about military actions or combats. I never wanted to hear someone who hadn't been there talk to me about what it's like. I always wanted to tell them, 'go strap on some boots, go over there and then come back and then tell me about it.'"

Classroom encounters and pointed

comments taught Little that classmates and future coworkers would never understand his past life. Even while attending UMKC's School of Law, he kept his military experience private.

"You quickly come to the realization that you're in a small club, and you just can't expect people to understand the membership criteria," he says. "You just learn to deal, because that's life."

I realized and accepted the fact that I was going to die."
Richard Gibson

Not looking forward

Alumna Maj. Stacia Spridgen doesn't talk much about the 10 months she recently served in Iraq. She'll quickly point out that she's not ashamed to talk about it, but instead feels drawn to share her current responsibilities and challenges.

Spridgen was 19 years old when she enlisted with the Army Reserve.

A 1989 UMKC pharmacy graduate, Spridgen says she never felt ridiculed or unwanted during her time at UMKC.

"I think a lot of my UMKC classes have guided me in the military, because I expected a group of close-knit people like I had in my classes," she says. "We were all going to class trying to be the best pharmacists we could be, and it was nice that we were all working toward the same goal. The same holds true in my day-to-day life with the military."



In February 2003, Richard Gibson deployed to Iraq to help oust Saddam Hussein. He enrolled at UMKC in 2005 and is one of 198 students attending UMKC on the GI Bill.

Today, Spridgen works as the deputy pharmacy consultant for the Office of the Surgeon General. She's responsible for making sure the flow of policy information reaches medical treatment facilities in a timely manner.

Since returning from Iraq, Spridgen says her biggest challenge has been making sure service men and women receive their prescribed medications. Although the job is stressful at times, she wouldn't change a thing.

"I can safely say that joining the Reserve and now being on active duty was one of the best things I ever did, and I've never regretted it," she said. "If I'm called up again, I'm willing to go. And to be honest, I hope I get that opportunity."

Little won't have to face war again, but feels he continues to give back through his work, serving as the prosecuting attorney for Cass County in Missouri. Gibson has two years to go toward his degree but insists that no matter where life takes him, he'll never regret the sacrifices he's made for others. The same holds true for Spridgen and Little.

All three say they wish more people would separate their opinions on the war from the men and women serving overseas, and give those returning a sense of peace.

"People sometimes get policies of the U.S. government and the policies of the military confused with service members on the ground," Spridgen says. "We've got to remember that those soldiers are there to serve and to protect the rights and freedoms we have. You've got to learn to separate the policies from the soldiers over there serving, regardless of your opinion on the war." ■



Maggie Finefrock

ON A MISSION

Unarmed soldiers

By Marjie Knust

Maggie Finefrock has never heard the whine of an incoming missile. She's never held the weight of an M-16 in her hands. She's never felt the pain of embedded shrapnel.

But, on Veterans Day, Finefrock stands proudly among those who have served in World War II, Vietnam and the Gulf wars.



I've walked from one end of Nepal to another. It's the size of Texas, and there is always the danger of tigers or falling off cliffs.
- Maggie

She does this because she has walked hundreds of miles across the Nepali countryside with the threat of tigers and landslides, to serve her country. To make the lives of others better, for two years, she slept on a mud floor with no electricity or indoor plumbing.

Finefrock (M.A. '87) served as a volunteer teacher in the Peace Corps, and she says she feels that makes her as much of a veteran as anyone else.

"I asked a Vietnam vet once 'if I go up and stand with you as a returned Peace Corps volunteer, does it honor you if I stand with you or do you find it disrespectful?'" Finefrock says. "He said 'you always stand with us. You served your country. People like you have died for your country. Always stand with us.'"

The dangers of serving in the Peace Corps are not as obvious as those of serving in the U.S. military, but they do exist. Finefrock served in a remote village of Nepal, a two-day walk from the nearest airport. Every six months, she was required to make the two-week walk to Kathmandu, the capital, for a physical. Parasites and amoebas waged constant battle on her health, a battle her immune system is still fighting 20 years later. A fellow volunteer was murdered during his service. Another disappeared; no one ever found her. A villager was mauled by a tiger, and someone else she knew fell off a cliff.

It was scary.

"When I arrived at the village, and I realized that medical care was two days away, it hit me how long two years was," Finefrock says. "That's a long time to be away from your family and friends."

To serve and protect

Volunteers in the Peace Corps make a two-year commitment to live and work in communities that need their help. Although they can request a region, there's no guarantee where they'll serve. Volunteers are typically placed in a region alone. Like Finefrock, they may have to sleep in mud huts for two years, or they could enjoy running water and electricity in an apartment in a capital city.

No matter the living conditions, the mission is the same: to help.

Tim Sweeny's (M.P.A. '06) work in El Salvador gave him a new perspective on what he had already been doing at home.

When I arrived at the village, and I realized that medical care was two days away, it hit me how long two years was."

Maggie Finefrock

"I've always worked in the nonprofit sector doing mission-oriented work, but I'd never had the experience of being so connected to

the people we were helping," he says. "Living in the same community as the people I was serving, I was really living it day to day. It was a positive experience and one that I miss."

Sweeny worked with the mayor's office in a village in El Salvador to improve municipal development. He also worked with youth in the village through leadership training. Although his experience was vastly different from Finefrock's, all volunteers must adjust to life in a culture foreign to them.

Peace Corps provides three months of training that includes language classes, youth development training and lessons about the culture volunteers will face. There is also training in volunteers' areas of expertise, which could be education, business development, technology, environment, agriculture, health or HIV/AIDS.

The training helps but doesn't necessarily inoculate against culture shock.

"The first three months are the most difficult," says Liana Riesinger, a UMKC staff member who spent two years in Namibia, Africa. "It's surreal, really. It's such a dramatically different environment. You feel very isolated. There's no one around of the same culture. The only way to get through that is to connect with the people around you, to become part of the community."

Adjusting to America

Most volunteers become such a part of the community that acclimating to life back in America is difficult.

Riesinger, who works as a research associate for UMKC's Cookingham Institute for Public Affairs, spent most of her afternoons in Africa on a reed mat, gossiping with the locals, because it was too hot to do anything else. Adjusting to the breakneck pace of American life again was a challenge.

But it was a moment in the grocery store a few days after she returned had the most impact on her.

"I was going down the cereal aisle, and I was so overwhelmed by how many choices of cereal I had, I left empty-handed," she says. "I just turned around and left and didn't get anything."

Finefrock attended UMKC soon after she returned from Nepal. She says it took her more than a year to adjust to life in Kansas City.

"I was overwhelmed by the consumerism in this society," she says. "I mean, I had to walk two days for an orange, and it was worth the 50-mile walk, and here there are aisles and aisles of cat and dog food. When you've had a hard time getting an egg, that's

I realized that I needed very few material things to be happy or survive."

Maggie Finefrock

hard to adjust to."

It wasn't until she was late for a meeting with the chancellor a year after she returned that Finefrock bought a car. She had been walking five miles a day to her classes.

"I wasn't very Americanized," she says. "One professor bought me a pair of socks, because I didn't have a pair that matched, and I didn't care. I'd forgotten that socks were even supposed to match."

If it's that hard for Americans to adjust to American life, think about foreigners entering the country for the first time. That's what Emmanuel Ngomsi (Ed.S. '94, IPh.D. '97) faced. He was adopted from Africa by a Peace Corps volunteer and worked as an instructor for the Corps for nine years.

In Africa, Ngomsi taught Peace Corps volunteers about the language and how to adjust to African culture. But he received no such training when he was hired by the Kansas City School District to teach French. Ngomsi transferred schools several times because of social faux pas.

One came when a fellow teacher announced to Ngomsi that she was expecting a baby.

"I thought she was accusing me," Ngomsi says. "I started yelling, 'what are you telling me for? I didn't do it.'"

Ngomsi told his principal that a teacher accused him of fathering her child. He ended up filing a complaint with the teachers' union, all because of miscommunication.

"In my culture, pregnancy is a taboo event," Ngomsi says. "You only tell the person who is responsible. But how did I know? No one trained me to survive in an urban school system."

Continuing the calling

Today, Ngomsi has dedicated his work to teaching others to make it in this country. His company, Universal Highways, provides cultural and diversity training and language instruction. It's a field he wouldn't have considered if it hadn't been for the Peace Corps.

Riesinger's work is also a direct result of her time in the Peace Corps. She and Sweeny worked with others for a year to develop a Peace Corps Fellowship program at UMKC that began last academic year. It offers stipends to returning Peace Corps volunteers who wish to pursue a master of public administration degree.

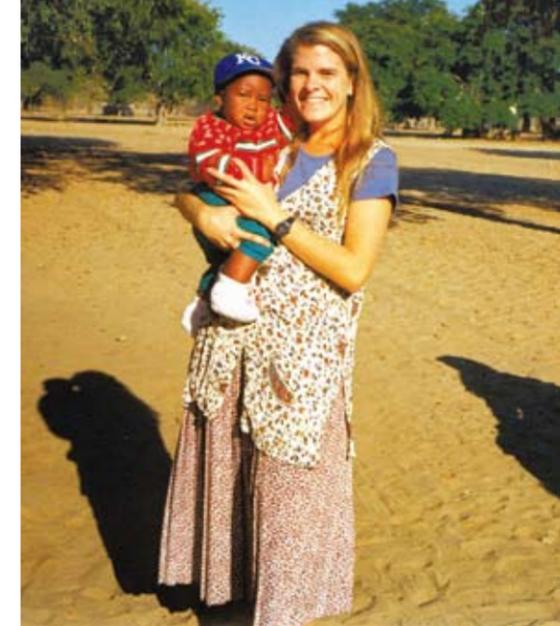
Peace Corps service tends to change more than just volunteers' careers. Most live their lives differently outside of work as well.

"I realized that I needed very few material things to be happy or survive," says Finefrock. "My closest friends are from the Peace Corps, and everyone has talked about how we have to work hard not to fall back into the pattern of taking things for granted and using things without thinking about it."

Riesinger takes more time to connect with people around her.

"Here, you don't have time on a daily basis to walk over to your neighbor's house and sit outside and talk," she says. "We have to be more intentional about it. We have to work to create those connections. They're not automatic and built into the culture like over there. I crave that."

Every Peace Corps volunteer's story is different. Most are inspiring. All had a once-in-a-lifetime experience that is hard to describe to outsiders.



At night we gather around the campfire and talk. It's great. There's a real sense of community here that makes me feel like I'm a part of something.

- Liana

"Nobody can understand the camaraderie and the things we go through," Finefrock says. "You go through some stuff and see some stuff that you don't want to talk about again. And there are things that no one can understand unless they've been through it too. I think we have that in common with military vets." ■



I cut myself with my Leatherman knife and passed out after seeing the blood. At the clinic, the nurse wanted me to clean my own finger and I didn't know the word for faint. I told her that I was going to do what was between to die and to sleep. She had no idea what I meant.

- Tim



SEEKING HOME FINDING HOME

By Lindsey V. Corey

For refugee women, a new life comes into focus





Anab Aden sat outside the hospital where three days earlier doctors cut the tiny baby from her belly. All day she waited. She held her newborn, and she cried.

“That’s why I never say no,” she says.

Fifteen years ago, five-months pregnant and alone, she was one of the first to flee Somalia and arrive in the Midwest. Today, Aden is often the ride home she waited for. She is an advocate for refugee women through the Empowerment Program.

She’s proud of what that means. And it means so much. To the elderly neighbor facing her first laundry machine, to the mother who’s never seen a hospital and is afraid they’ll make her birth her seventh from a bed rather than a bush like before, to the wife whose ugly bruises hide just beneath the layers of colorful cloth.

Aden understands. It’s hard to adjust to a new country with a new language. For seven days she ate nothing but pork and beans and loved every can until she learned that pork was pig, a violation of her Islamic beliefs. It’s strange to be homesick for a home that no longer exists. And how do you handle the waiting – sometimes for years – for your mother, husband, children?

A new home

Now there’s a support system of women who’ve been there and graduate counseling students trained to help. Aden and other foreign-born women founded the Empowerment Program with UMKC Associate Professor Johanna Nilsson, Ph.D., who has served as director since its inception in 2001. It provides acculturation and mental health support to Kansas City area women from Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, Mexico and other countries, including free counseling and educational workshops like the latest on raising bicultural children.

The program is funded annually with a \$25,000 grant from the Jackson County (Mo.) Mental Health Levy in association with Rose Brooks Center. Nilsson receives no financial support for her role. Most of the money is divided between advocates and interpreters.

There are six advocates, all refugee and immigrant women themselves, and more calls in a day than they can count. Aden recruited her friend Quman Jama, who was already helping family and friends assimilate.

“If there’s a problem, they call us first, morning and night,” Aden says as her cell phone rings and emphasizes her point. “They need us.”

At first, for everything.

“We start with small things, like bus routes and forms,” she says. “They have to trust us before they’ll connect. They keep calling for things, and once they see us do everything effortlessly to help, then she can tell.”

Oftentimes, the women who’ve escaped wars in their homelands find a new kind of violence in their American homes.

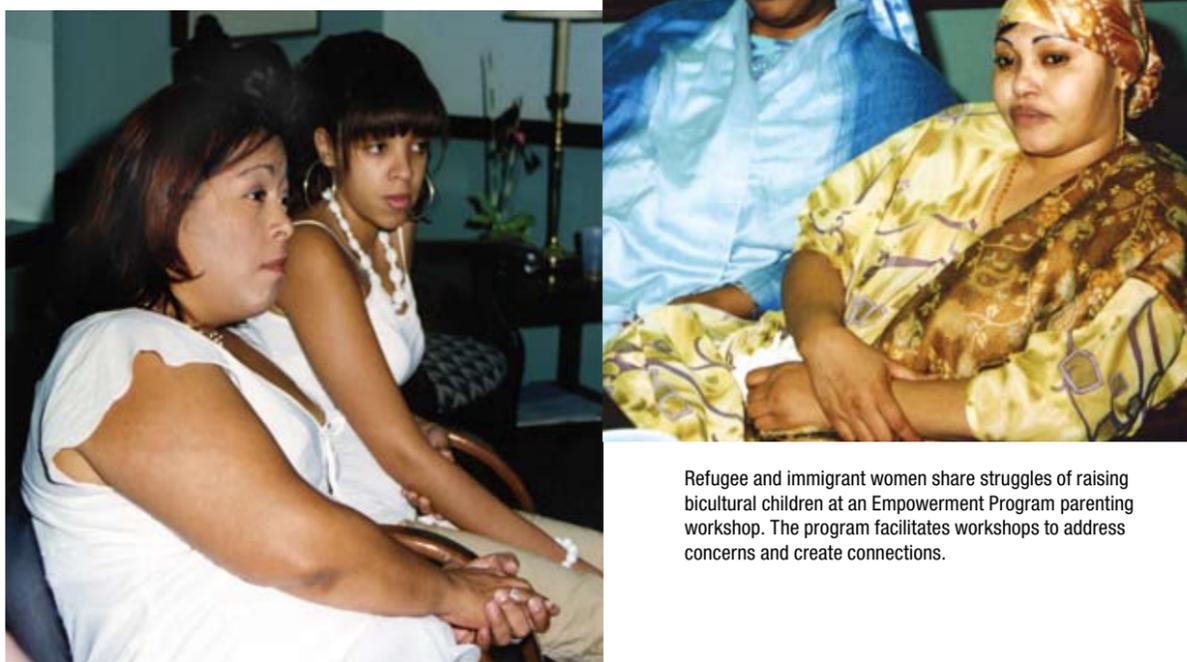
“Some of these women may not have known they were being abused or didn’t know what to do about it,” Aden says. “We don’t use the words ‘domestic violence’ or ‘abuse.’ And we certainly can’t talk about it around her husband. We just change the subject to food stamps if he comes home.”

Then, they get them help. They take them to a local shelter or call Nilsson to arrange for counseling.

“The advocates provide the inroads to the close-knit communities so we can get these women and children the support they need and would never know existed,” says Rachel Linnemeyer, a doctoral student volunteer. “Women’s rights and views are so different in these countries that they may not realize things can be different.”

Cycle of hope

When she counseled an Afghani domestic violence victim, Linnemeyer was



Refugee and immigrant women share struggles of raising bicultural children at an Empowerment Program parenting workshop. The program facilitates workshops to address concerns and create connections.

careful not to impose her cultural perspective, and she had to be direct because they used an interpreter.

“I had to be very mindful of how I discussed it and be accepting of her worldview,” she says. “I just explained the differences, that there are laws here – and help. I let her know I was supporting her safety.”

Linnemeyer learned that her refugee clients weren’t like most Americans she’d counseled. Immigrants often have a stigma associated with mental health services, and their problems overlap and intersect.

“It’s not only domestic violence. This woman lived through war,” she says. “She had nightmares, post-traumatic stress. She needed a job and transportation, basic survival things. It’s hard to talk about emotions when there’s an immediate crisis at hand.

“I’d hear her pain and sit there with her in it, encourage her strengths and remind her of what a survivor she is and what she has in front of her to build on.”

That’s the goal of the Empowerment Program, to provide a cycle of hope. When one woman is helped, she tells another.

“The first thing we women do when we come together is become stronger,” Panama-born Iberty Gedeon (M.A. ’00), a Mattie Rhodes Center bilingual family therapist, says of the parenting workshop she led. “We have a lot of tight communities that we need to break in so we can really understand each other, because our children are growing together.”

Her message to the mothers was translated in four languages.

“As immigrant women, we have so much in common,” Gedeon said. “We all have to go through a journey of mourning, a grieving of where we came from. We don’t fully belong there anymore, and we don’t fully belong here in Kansas or Missouri. We left a lot, but we’re still here. We all have the same fear of losing ourselves, but we know this system is better. We have to hug it. We must laugh and cry together for ourselves and for our children.”

Surrounded by need

It has to start with women, Nilsson says, for reasons that are cultural and for those that are instinctual.

“Some cultures are still very patriarchal so it’s harder for women to get the help they need,” she says. “Women serve an important role for children so if you help the woman, you help the whole family.”

And stronger families make stronger communities, Jama says. She sees the proof from her apartment window as children play and elders keep watch.

Her building is mostly Somali. Jama stops home after her other job to find neighbors waiting. The woman downstairs needs milk. Another needs translation. She’s given a ride to a young mother and her two sons, who follow her in, kick off their shoes and make their way to a bedroom as Jama collapses on the couch simultaneously speaking Somali into her phone and telling the mother where to find formula. She is surrounded by need.

“It doesn’t matter if we don’t have time, we always find time to try to help,” Jama says, tossing the girl a blanket for her baby. “I just got a call from one woman asking to take her to a doctor’s appointment at 1. I already have to go with another woman at 1:30 but culturally, I can’t say no because in the morning, she’d say to the community I couldn’t help, and that’s not good for our community.”

So she answers the phone at 3 a.m. and goes where she’s needed. She’s shown a woman where to shop 10 times until she got it right. She wants what’s best for her people.

“If you don’t get help, you get stressed and depressed, and it makes America hard,” she says.

And life has been hard enough for these women, Jama says. “We don’t have a country to go back to,” she says. “Our people are killing each other. We’re all the same here because at home, everything was destroyed. If you were wealthy and I was poor, when the civil war happened, we were all refugees.

“My community needs me,” she says scooping up the crying baby. ■

The first thing we women do when we come together is become stronger.”

Iberty Gedeon

My community needs me.”

Quman Jama

Around the clock

Making UMKC Commencement tick

By Donna Mennona Dilks

Graduation day is an unforgettable milestone. The UMKC Special Events division works all year to plan every detail and puts in 18-hour days to ensure the Unified Commencement at Theis Park runs smoothly. Join us as we take a behind-the-scenes look at how they orchestrate this ceremony for 6,000 guests.



Six weeks prior Director of Special Events Joan Bubacz (center) meets with her team to finalize details such as volunteer staffing, bus transportation, arrangements with vendors and blocking off street traffic. Like a good improv cast, each person on this crew is required to play multiple roles, including those of supporting actor, cattle herder, social etiquette expert, squadron leader, scriptwriter and air traffic controller. *From left:* Laura Rupp, Kathryn Young, Bubacz, Heather Swanson, Jill DauBresse.



Day before, 4 p.m. It's a real juggling act at Theis Park, as Vernon Greene, All Seasons Party and Tent Rental event coordinator, sets thousands of chairs in precise rows. In the background a forklift truck rolls up to deliver pallets of stage and audio equipment.



5 p.m. Handle with care: Sharon Sanders, Special Events assistant, polishes the UMKC mace, which will be carried by the provost during the ceremony. The mace represents the flame of knowledge and is made of ebonized mahogany and silver fashioned into native Missouri flora. It was a gift from the Alumni Association.



11:30 p.m. UMKC Police Officer Kevin Mueller keeps watch over the set-up site at Theis Park. His presence ensured everything was in perfect order on the big day. At 2:49 a.m., some skateboarding revelers attempted to wreck the scene, but were surprised and foiled by Mueller's speedy response.



Commencement day, 5:30 a.m. Donuts in the dawn... Early bird workers unload 300 boxes of honey-glazed for the hospitality tents.



8:45 a.m. A bagpiper from the Tullintrain West Pipe Band gets ready before leading the procession of graduates down Oak Street toward Theis Park. Their drums and pipes resounded powerfully, providing a spectacular start to the event.



9 a.m. Volunteers and student ambassadors go over the game plan as they prepare to provide assistance to guests and graduates.



9:45 a.m. In a UMKC Administrative Center conference room, U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill receives the crowning touch to her regalia as she prepares to deliver the commencement address.



9:55 a.m. Thirteen buses continuously arrive at and depart Theis Park, transporting several thousand proud family members and friends of the soon-to-be graduates.



10:15 a.m. Showtime: An ocean of blue-and-gold pageantry flows into Theis Park as the ceremony begins.

The Special Events team orchestrates every moment of the day so that each newly minted grad can reflect with joy and pride on their time as students and embrace the next chapter of their lives.

Commencement count

4,300 programs printed

3,800 chairs set up for audience members

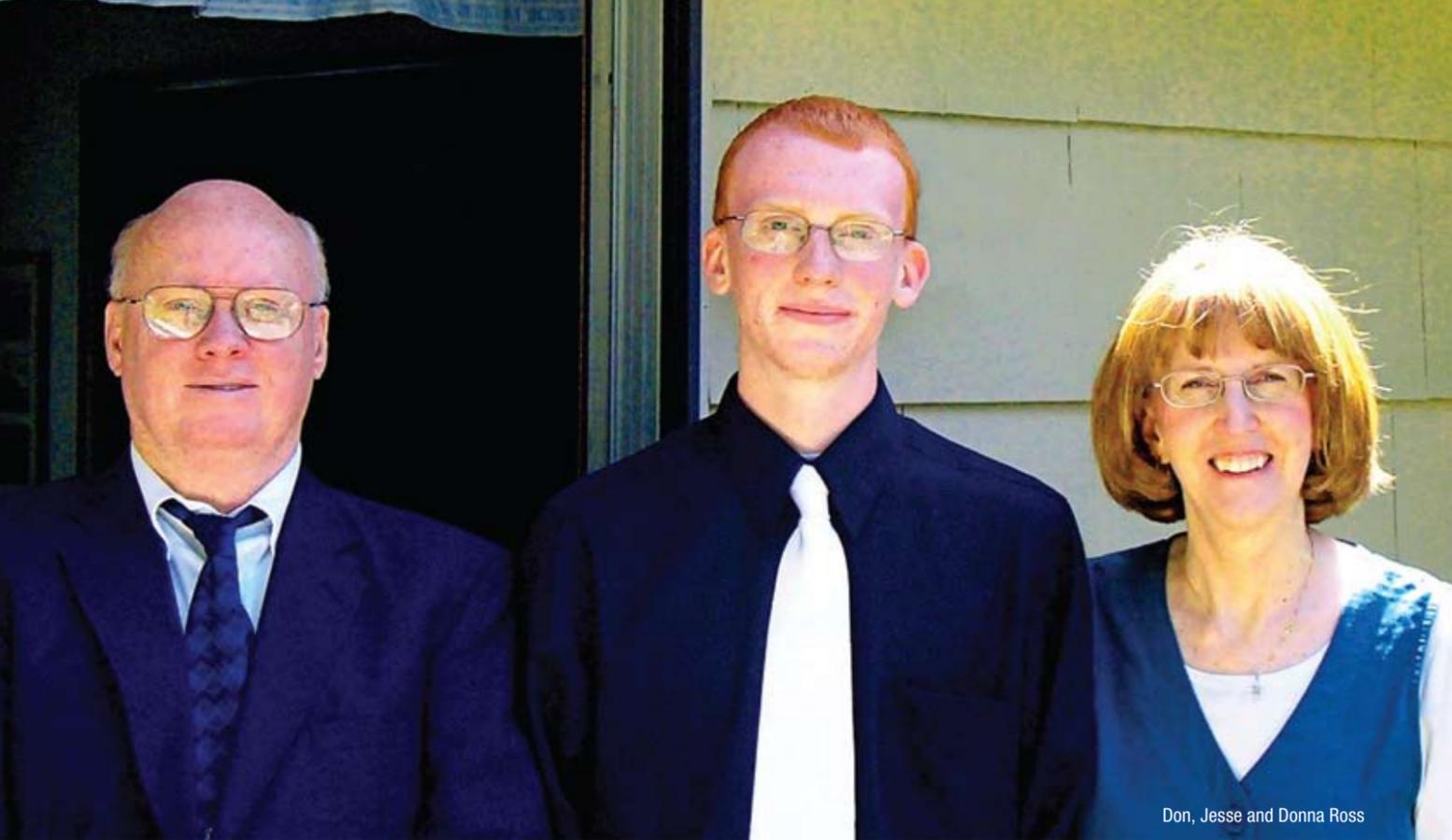
3,500 Krispy Kreme donuts delivered to Theis Park

150 faculty, staff, student and alumni volunteers on graduation day

22.2 total weight, in pounds, of Joan Bubacz's four notebooks, which contain planning details for the event

15 Port-a-Potties on site

1,547 newly minted graduates



Don, Jesse and Donna Ross

WAITING STILL

By Lindsey V. Corey

Ralph Parker has done a lot of second guessing.

“Being the last person who knew him to see him, that’s hard,” the UMKC senior says. “What if I would’ve said something when he was walking out?”

There were 30 students in the midst of a meeting at the conference room of the Sheraton Chicago.

“But I’m the one,” Parker says. “I should’ve paid attention.”

UMKC student Jesse Ross was last seen at about 3 a.m. Nov. 21. He and Parker were taking part in a simulated emergency meeting during a model United Nations conference when Jesse left through a side door.

It wasn’t until almost 12 hours later, Parker and the other 11 UMKC students on the trip realized there was a real emergency.

Parker had assumed Jesse had left to go to the restroom or to their hotel, a 10-minute, well-lit walk away, to sleep. He walked back alone to their room at the Four Points Sheraton when the meeting concluded at

about 5:30 a.m. Parker turned on the hall light so he wouldn’t disturb his roommate.

“There was a big mess on the bed and he’s so skinny, I figured he was under the mess somewhere,” Parker says of Jesse.

But when he woke up at 10 a.m., he realized Jesse had never returned. No reason to panic, he probably just crashed in someone else’s room, Parker thought.

“So I just packed up his stuff thinking he should be thanking me,” he says.

Adviser Derek Moorehead and UMKC Model UN President Joe Goodding (M.S.W. ’07) picked him up and headed to the conference hotel, where they expected Ross would turn up.

“By mid-afternoon I was concerned,” Goodding says. “My attention gradually shifted from what was going on in the meeting to worrying about Jesse.”

He and Parker skipped the final session. Goodding alerted conference organizers and hotel security. Parker wandered around the high rise.

“I opened a few obscure doors, checked the parking garage, asked people if they’d seen my red-headed friend,” he says. “I probably wasn’t expecting to just come across him, but you never know.”

The UMKC contingency met in the lobby at the close of the conference as planned. Most of the 1,200 students who had participated were leaving.

“I thought he would’ve made an appearance by then,” Parker says. “By 4 o’clock it was pretty obvious Jesse was missing, something bad had happened.”

Moorehead went to the police station to make a report. A couple students were crying, but Goodding says most were in shock. They didn’t want to leave. They stuck around for a few more hours, kept calling Jesse’s cell phone, but together they decided there was nothing they could do so they loaded up the vans and headed for home with his suitcase.

For awhile, no one said anything. “We were afraid to,” Parker says. “We were

thinking the worst, but no one was saying it. There were a lot of what-ifs and speculation for most of the trip home. It was just so weird to be coming back without him.”

They were tired, but unlike the drive up, no one really slept. Because of the early morning meeting, Parker had gotten the least sleep the night before, but he volunteered to drive.

“Eventually, we were talking about anything just to avoid it,” he says.

It was dawn the day before Thanksgiving when they arrived in Kansas City. Goodding took Ross’ luggage. He doesn’t remember it being a discussion.

“I’m much older than the other students so I just decided it was my responsibility,” he says. “I wanted his parents to have everything that was his with them as soon as possible.”

He was so upset he called a friend and had to pull over on the drive to the Ross house in Belton, Mo.

“That was sort of a reality check,” says Don Ross, Jesse’s father, who wears one of Jesse’s cell phones, which Goodding returned, on his hip.

They used to hold their breath when it rang, when any phone did. Not anymore.

“Even now it’s unreal,” Donna Ross, his mother, says. “How can this have happened? How do you lose one kid? He sticks out like a sore thumb. If you panned a room of 1,000 kids, you’d spot Jesse.”

Chicago police interviewed hundreds of students. They searched the downtown area with dogs, looked in dumpsters, checked surveillance footage and found no sign of the then-19-year-old in the Chicago River or along the Lake Michigan shoreline. There’s been no activity on the cell phone Jesse probably had with him; his credit card hasn’t been used either.

“It’s been a great effort, but we’re no closer today,” Don says. “It’s a mystery, but we don’t want it to be a mystery 20 years from now.”

There’s no evidence of foul play, but his family and friends don’t believe Jesse vanished on his own. Parker, who has known Jesse since high school, says he was his typical joking self on the trip, that he left no clues.

When he called his mother the day before he went missing, Jesse was “on-top-of-the-world excited,” she says. He was a popular radio personality on a Kansas City morning show about to graduate from intern to paid employee.

“Anything is possible,” Don says. “Your

mind goes to terrible places. It’s so frustrating. We don’t want to imagine all these horrible things. We feel helpless.”

It’s hard being so far from where their son was last known to be. They’ve made several trips to Chicago, met with police and thanked the stranger who passed out his picture to homeless people. Goodding gave them a map of the area. They know it by heart now.

On one visit a detective called while Don, Jesse’s older brother Andy and a friend were leaving their room in that same Sheraton. A body had been found. They needed to go back and wait. It was someone else’s relative.

“We know God’s with Jesse, wherever he is,” his mother says calmly. “If he has a new home in heaven, we’d like a sign. Being in limbo is hard. People who lose a loved one have closure, they grieve and move on. We’re left with an open wound. It festers. There’s no moving forward, just in circles really.”

They believe their son is alive.

“We believe in miracles,” Donna says. “We choose to believe he’s out there. We have to.” Sometimes she senses it.

“You walk the streets there and you have to wonder,” Donna says. “It’s eerie and at the same time somehow comfortable to be where he was last seen. You can’t help but know he’s been there. You can kind of feel it.”



The first time, I thought I’d see him right there.”

They didn’t worry about him going to Chicago; he’d been there for the same four-day conference the year before.

“As a parent, it’s a balance between protecting and preparing,” Don says. “You want them to feel secure in this world even if there are no guarantees. We have friends whose kids went to Iraq and, thank God, came home safe. Jesse goes up the road to Chicago and doesn’t come home. It doesn’t make sense.”

So he tries to make sense of it, to find the problem and fix it like dads do. Spare moments are spent searching the Internet in Jesse’s room, the one they’d just framed for him in the basement so his music didn’t keep Don and Donna up at night. Now, it’s the constant quiet that’s disturbing, his mother says.

“There are days you’re paralyzed, but I know I have to pull it together,” Don says. “We’re not going to give up on Jesse and let him down. As far as we know Jesse can’t save himself so we need to be diligent.”

They have their faith, and they have each other. When Donna has a bad day, Don is there to lift her up whether it’s looking at family photos, watching an old movie that somehow transports them back in time or sharing the story of someone he met online whose child did make it home again.

When he cries, she’s ready with a story about their “little firecracker.” “When you’re raising a boy like Jesse, it’s half panic, half joy,” she says. “But the creativity is wonderful.”

Andy moved home shortly after the disappearance. He doesn’t fight the extra hugs, and that helps.

UMKC counselors met with the Model UN team several times. Goodding continues the therapy.

“What’s so difficult is that it still sounds like he just walked through some doors and disappeared,” he says. “It’s mostly grief that he’s missing and it’s unexplained.”

Parker says coming back to finals just around the corner was especially hard.

“I just wanted a distraction, but it was hard to focus on anything else,” he says. “I didn’t want it in my mind all the time.”

Sometimes Jesse shows up in Parker’s dreams like nothing ever happened, like all this was the dream.

Sure he thinks about him everyday, but the guilt, he’s let that go.

“I have to tell myself I had no idea what would happen,” Parker says. “If I knew, I would’ve tied him to that chair.”

At press time, Jesse Ross was still missing. ■

Jesse Ross was last seen leaving a downtown Chicago hotel Nov. 21. He is 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighs 140 pounds. Jesse has red hair, blue eyes, freckles and wears glasses. He was thought to be wearing a green warm-up jacket, white T-shirt, blue jeans and black gym shoes.

His family is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to his return.

Contact the Chicago police at 312-744-8266.

METAL MOUTHS



THE METAL CHAPTER

By Marjie Knust

At the end of a long day cleaning teeth, filling cavities and fitting crowns, Eric Johnson wants nothing more than to go home, change out of his comfy blue scrubs and into his ripped up jeans, leather vest and black bandana.

The 2007 UMKC dental school graduate lives a life different from a stereotypical dentist. Founder of the cover band The Metal Chapter, Johnson lives for a killer guitar riff, a heart-thumping bass line and a roaring crowd.

"My dad was a dentist, so I grew up thinking all dentists wore topsiders and polo shirts," Johnson says. "Leather feels like a nice change."

The six other members of his hard rock band are also dental students with an edge. 2007 graduate and lead singer Toby Lee gets a feeling before going on stage that gets him so amped he can't even describe it. Third-year keyboardist Chuck Abbick was a classically trained pianist who now rocks out to Guns N' Roses. 2007 graduate and lead guitarist Jeff Smith has vowed to never stop playing. Both back-up vocalists, fourth-year dental students Jacquee Kolbeck and Laurel Sparks, have the hot rocker chick look going on when they step out of their scrubs.

Only orthodontics student and bass guitarist Michael Barlow doesn't seem completely at ease with the leather armbands, loud amps and hard rock attitude. "We had to twist Michael's arm to get him to join the band," Johnson says, as Barlow interjects.

"No, you didn't," Barlow says. "You had to talk me into dressing up."

A fan of indie artist Ryan Adams, Barlow is one half of an acoustic duo on the side and typically prefers singer/songwriters, with one exception.

"Def Leppard was the reason I joined," he says.

The rest of the band came together a little haphazardly.

Abbick was added after hearing Guns N' Roses blasting from Johnson's car.

"I was at a Royals game for an alumni event, and Eric had GNR blasting and was waving his arms like he was playing the drums," Abbick says. "I asked if he was a drummer and told him I played keyboards, and he said 'we should jam sometime.' So we did."

Johnson was looking for female vocalists to round out the sound of the band. He'd heard Sparks perform in a school talent show and asked her to join.

"Jacquee was in the cubicle next door and

said 'hey, I was in a band,'" Johnson says.

"I was kind of joking," Kolbeck adds.

With the addition of Barlow, the band was complete.

"It's cool, because if we need keys, we got it," Johnson says. "We need back-up vocals, we got it. If there's a gnarly bass line, we can do it. If there's ohhhing and ahhhhing, we can do it."

The Metal Chapter takes their cues from bands like Aerosmith, Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe, Tom Petty, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Ozzy Osbourne. The name of the band takes its cue from the members.

"It's a collision of two passions and the refusal to give up on either one," Johnson says. "Metal is something you have to have in dentistry and something we have to have in life to get through dental school."

It's a collision of two passions and the refusal to give up on either one."

Eric Johnson

And they live up to their name. "People think because we're dental students and academics that we're bookworms," says Sparks. "They think we don't know how to let loose and rock."

Sparks had to convince her own husband that the band was good. He didn't believe her until he saw their first show.

"We're really unexpected," Kolbeck says.

But the life of a dental student doesn't leave much time for rocking out. The band is lucky to practice once a month. When it does, The Metal Chapter takes over Johnson's parents' house in Topeka, Kan.

"The house shakes when we play, we're so loud," Johnson says. "It's weird for my mom to hear 'Mama, I'm Coming Home' by Ozzy Osbourne while she's ironing, and my dad's now whistling 'Welcome to the Jungle', but they like it. They're big supporters."

So far the band has only played a few gigs, including a concert for charity at the Uptown Theater last January. But the size of the band limits venues in which they can play. Seven members plus guitars and keyboards means you won't be seeing The Metal Chapter headline your local pub.

And now that the founding members,

Johnson, Smith and Lee, have graduated, finding time to jam is even harder. But no one wants to give up on their passion.

"You always find time for things you want to do," Abbick says. "There's not a lot of opportunities to do things like this, so you take it."

The band members still practice as much as they can and hope to play concerts for charity.

"If there's a future for the band, it'll be for a good cause," Johnson says. "If there's a reason to rock and roll, that's it. Besides, it's like we're charging people to watch us have fun. It should go to a good cause."

Proceeds from the Uptown gig went to the Ronald McDonald House, and the band would like to repeat the concert this year. Even if it's just for a chance to perform.

"There's nothing like the feeling right before you go on stage," Lee says. "It's a good nervous. It gets you excited, just enough to get you up."

For the concert, the band perfected a 30-song set list in just five or six rehearsals.

"It was basically 'here's lyrics, here's a recording, go learn it,'" Kolbeck says.

Although the graduation of the three founding members makes rocking a little harder, rocking hard is what the band is all about.

"Dentistry just pays the bills," Barlow says. "This is what we do." ■

Clockwise from left: back-up vocalist Laurel Sparks, lead singer Toby Lee, back-up vocalist Jacquee Kolbeck, lead guitarist Jeff Smith, keyboardist Chuck Abbick, guitarist Eric Johnson and bass guitarist Michael Barlow.

UMKC has a fungus (warehouse)

It seems fungi are more popular than ever. Curator Kevin McCluskey, Ph.D., and his team at UMKC's Fungal Genetics Stock Center are working at an unprecedented pace to fill orders as part of the National Institutes of Health functional genomics program with labs at other universities including Yale, Dartmouth and UCLA. UMKC's fungal warehouse with its unassuming freezers lined up in Spencer Chemistry Building is also the National Science Foundation's and Department of Energy's source for seven different organisms. But half of the requests come from researchers outside the United States, where McCluskey says people are less "fungal phobic."

"I come to my humble office in Kansas City and interact with people from South Africa to Iceland," he says. "Our job is to make thousands of mutants available. This year we may distribute 10 times as many strains as in the 1990s."

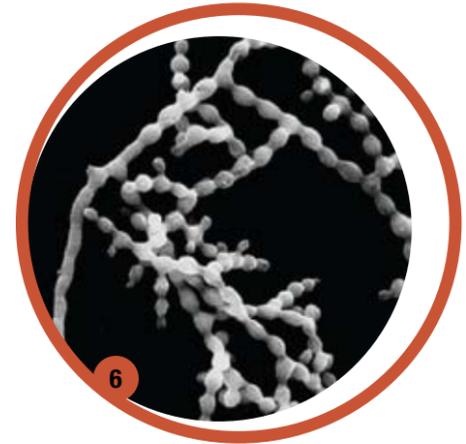
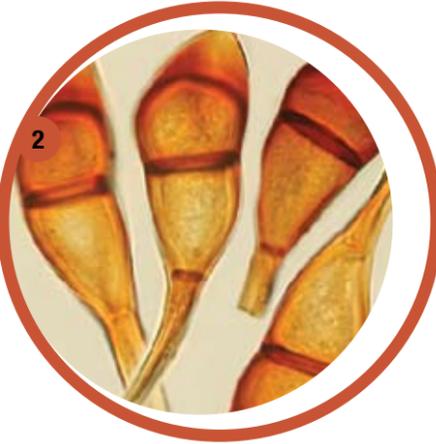
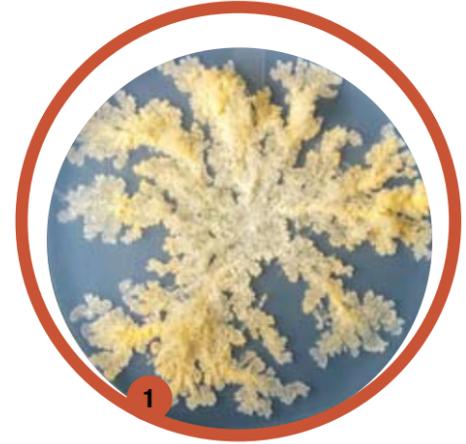
"Mutants" aren't as scary as they sound, McCluskey says. Stone-washed jeans (which could cause flashbacks but aren't particularly dangerous) were treated with enzymes produced in fungi, and laundry detergents make brights brighter thanks to fungal proteins.

"Fungi rarely cause disease in healthy humans," he says. "The truth of the matter is that there is more on my jacket from walking outside than from spending the day in the lab. People get upset about finding mold in their household, but the truth is it is usually harmless. Other than being unsightly and sometimes smelly, they don't pose the risks companies use as scare tactics."

"If we had to get rid of every flower because some people have allergies, it'd be a drab world."

—Lindsey V. Corey

Fungus among us



- 6 *Neurospora crassa*
- 7 *Phycomyces blakesleeianus*
- 8 *Neurospora crassa* mutant (fluffy)
- 9 *Coprinus cinereus*
- 10 *Phanerochaete chrysosporium*
- 11 *Neurospora crassa* mutant (ragged)
- 12 *Aspergillus nidulans*
- 13 *Neurospora tetrasperma* mutant (col 119)

- 1 *Neurospora crassa* mutant (frost)
- 2 *Puccinia graminis*
- 3 *Neurospora crassa* mutant (tangerine)
- 4 *Aspergillus niger*
- 5 *Neurospora crassa* mutant (spreading colonial five)

Curiosity leads to discovery

UMKC researcher's interest in the unknown develops into new findings about staph infection



Brian Geisbrecht

The unknown motivates him. The independence drives him. But it's the experimental side of science that continues to amaze UMKC researcher and assistant professor Brian Geisbrecht, Ph.D.

"I love the chance to find something that you didn't expect," he says. "The lure of the unexpected is really cool. If something always worked out the way that you thought it would, we'd be cooking and not doing science. We'd be following recipes, and there's nothing interesting about that."

Last winter, Geisbrecht gained national recognition after discovering how staph infection disables the human immune system. Staph, most commonly associated with hospital-related infections, is regarded as a growing threat to public health.

For five years, Geisbrecht worked with fellow researcher John D. Lambris, Ph.D., from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, to discover the Efb protein that suppresses activation of the complement response.

"For me, studying staph was something important and medically relevant to work," he says. "It's not something that's purely

scientific in nature. I wanted to do research in an area that might be clinically useful."

Geisbrecht says staph is one, if not the leading, type of bacteria that can cause various types of infections in humans. Because one-third of all people are already colonized with the bacteria, he and Lambris

If something always worked out the way that you thought it would, we'd be cooking and not doing science."

Brian Geisbrecht

—Kara Petrovic

spent countless hours trying to understand how pathogenic organisms circumvent the immune system in healthy individuals.

"For years we've always looked at the problem as being 'what is your immune system not doing right when you get sick?'" Geisbrecht says. "And really, it's become more clear that the question is what is the bacteria doing to keep your immune system from functioning?"

As he explains, individuals develop staph infections because they are being treated in ways that compromise the normal defense of their body, or are in areas where bacteria live, including gyms and locker rooms, and people don't have to be violently ill to carry the infection.

"It's not something like plague or anthrax," he said. "But two things make it very dangerous: the fact that humans are primary reservoirs for the infection and because there's always the chance of it becoming a 'super bug' [drug resistant strain] if new drugs aren't developed."

At 32, Geisbrecht is one of the youngest science researchers at UMKC. He earned his Ph.D. in structural biology from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore in 2000 and joined the UMKC faculty in 2004.

School of Biological Sciences coworkers say they are lucky to have Geisbrecht on their research team and think his findings are major steps for science.

"Brian is one of our truly talented young scientists at the School of Biological Sciences," says Dean Lawrence Dreyfus, Ph.D. "Brian is asking the right kinds of questions in his work, and with his training and background he brings a really well-rounded perspective to address these difficult and important questions."

Yet before settling his future on research science, he considered medical school but quickly realized medicine wasn't his calling.

"Having the freedom and privilege to do self-directed study is something I would never trade," he says. "I can imagine doing other things, but I wouldn't like it. Otherwise it would feel like a job."

New technology opens doors for patient involvement

For John Spertus, it's not just about saving a life. It's about how and why the life is saved.

Spertus, M.D., is the director of cardiovascular education and outcomes research at Saint Luke's Health System's Mid America Heart Institute, a cardiology professor at the UMKC School of Medicine and an adjunct professor at Washington University in St. Louis.

He is also a researcher who is finding innovative ways for doctors to better treat their patients. Spertus, along with collaborator Gabe Soto, M.D., Ph.D., a cardiac researcher at Washington University, has developed a high-tech way to treat patients.

They created ePrism (Personalized Risk Information Services Module), a software that bridges the gap between patient health records, medical research and health care providers.

Currently used in a device similar to a Blackberry, ePrism allows both providers and patients to take a virtual walk through different scenarios when discussing treatment options.

Want to know how your body may respond to an angioplasty? By plugging in various clinical data, such as a patient's health history or symptoms, ePrism can let you know.

Through ePrism, physicians are able to include patients in the medical care process. By using such evidence-based models, patients can better understand and exert more control over their treatment.

"ePrism provides an important first step in improving the patient-physician dialog that will help clinicians to better address their patients' questions and expectations regarding their treatment program," says David Cohen, M.D., St. Luke's Mid America Heart Institute director of cardiovascular research and Missouri Endowed Chair at the UMKC School of Medicine. "Ultimately, this should lead to improved satisfaction with their care on the part of both patients and health care providers."

Currently, the system is operational in Kansas City at the Mid America Heart Institute and other Saint Luke's Health System cardiac treatment facilities.

"This is really something that distinguishes Kansas City from anywhere else in the world," Spertus says.

Plans are in the works for the software to be adapted for other areas of medicine, like orthopedics, as well as for the expansion of ePrism to other medical institutions outside Kansas City.

Despite its successes, ePrism isn't the only iron in Spertus' fire.

In March, Spertus and other members of his research team produced findings that show financially strapped patients who suffer heart attacks are susceptible to additional health problems.

The study, published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, highlighted the plight of patients who claimed financial concerns in paying for costs incurred as part of their medical treatment, despite having medical insurance.

"In the United States, 61 percent of adults with health insurance currently report difficulty paying their medical bills," the study's authors wrote. "Patients who are challenged by the cost of health care may have an increased risk for adverse health outcomes."

This is really something that distinguishes Kansas City from anywhere else in the world."

John Spertus

Much of Spertus' work is accomplished in partnership with both his research team in Kansas City and a collaboration of scientists and physicians throughout the world.

"Most of our projects involve a consortium of 19 to 25 institutions," Spertus says.



John Spertus

His richest collaborations are with those at Washington University, with which he shares millions of dollars in National Institutes of Health research grants.

As an example of their productive collaborations, Spertus and his colleagues published a study in *JAMA* in April that failed to validate previous research identifying 85 gene variations as increasing a person's risk for heart disease. The study highlights the need for more work to be done in understanding genetic risk factors of heart disease.

Cohen says he's impressed with Spertus' focus on patient input and outcomes.

"Although we often know how patients should be treated, in the real world there are always gaps in knowledge and challenges in implementation," says Cohen. "Dr. Spertus' research is helping to narrow these important gaps, and in particular, to develop approaches that will ensure all patients get the care that we know is appropriate."

—Nicholas Barron

in the classroom

From classroom to card shop



New Venture Challenge students Kevin Zeller, Mike Wilson, Michael Zimmerman, Daniel Dasari and Guy Fish

Next year, when you send one of those musical Hallmark cards to a friend, you'll be sending a little bit of UMKC.

That's because a team of Bloch School of Business and Public Administration students helped Hallmark determine how they would extend their line of musical greeting cards during a class and competition sponsored by the Bloch School Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

The New Venture Challenge Competition, now in its third year, is one way the Bloch School is partnering with local industry leaders to encourage and teach students through creative problem-solving, direct dialogue and partnership with real-world businesses.

"Hallmark was interested in looking at ways to evaluate the musical greeting card as a marketing opportunity and look at ways to expand their initial concept using

new technology to improve the quality of the product," says Walt Rychlewski, Ph.D., visiting professor of entrepreneurship.

"One of the student teams successfully worked on this product to look at marketing and technology alternatives and put together a 'best possible' business plan. Hallmark took that back to the organization and decided what to use from the student recommendations."

During the competition, students from both undergraduate- and graduate-level classes evaluate new and emerging technologies and work with inventors and community resources to build business plans.

Judging guidelines reflect the assessment criteria of potential investors, including venture capitalists, private backers, banks, universities or public institutions. The guiding principle is whether someone would invest in this idea.

The UMKC students' work will be reflected on the shelves in early 2008.

—Donna Mennona Dilks

EOY event to honor Kate and Andy Spade



Kate Spade

Andy Spade

Awards Dinner Oct. 8 at the Westin Crown Center Hotel in Kansas City.

Andy and Kate Spade will be honored as the International Entrepreneurs of the Year for their fashion merchandizing company.

Kate Spade, a Kansas City native, is famous for her classic and high-quality approach to accessories and design. Her husband, Andy Spade, president and creative director of the company, is noted for his keen vision and business acumen.

The pair grew the Kate Spade label from six simple nylon tote bags in 1993 into the \$70 million dollar brand it is today.

L. William Zahner, of the A. Zahner

Company, will be awarded the Regional Entrepreneur of the Year, and the Byron G. Thompson Family Foundation will receive the Marion and John Kreamer Award for Volunteer Community Service.

Beth and Bill Zollars and Christine and Sandy Kemper will co-host the event.

Visit www.bloch.umkc.edu/eoy for ticket information.



Michael Song and Mark Parry

Bloch faculty on top of the world

Bloch Professor Michael Song, Ph.D., has been ranked as the world's top scholar in innovation management.

The *Journal of Product Innovation Management* named Song the world's best in a study published in its spring 2007 issue. Bloch Professor Mark Parry, Ph.D., was ranked No. 13 in innovation management in the same study.

"Kansas City has a lot of entrepreneurial activity – more so than anywhere else," Song says. "Our vision at the Institute is to make the Bloch School, UMKC and Kansas City a renowned international hub for entrepreneurial research and education."

Song is the executive director of the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Bloch School and holds the Charles Kimball, MRI/Missouri Chair in Management of Technology. His research interests include technology entrepreneurship, new ventures and emerging technologies, risk assessment and technology portfolio management.

Parry is the Ewing Kauffman/Missouri Endowed Chair in Entrepreneurial Leadership. He has written three books and numerous research publications on innovation management, branding and product development.

New Letters honored in New York

New Letters literary journal, published by UMKC, was named a finalist in the American Society of Magazine Editors' 42nd annual National Magazine Awards ceremony at Lincoln Center in New York in May.

The journal was honored in the category of essay for "The Beautiful City of Tirzah" by Harrison Fletcher, published in its Volume 72, No. 2 issue.

The awards honor print and online magazines for "editorial excellence, innovation, journalistic enterprise, and visual imagination and vigor." Other magazines recognized included *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, *National Geographic* and *Esquire*.

Robert Stewart, English Department assistant research professor, is editor in chief of *New Letters*, which has been based on campus since 1934. The journal seeks to promote the best and most interesting new writing, from both established and undiscovered sources. *New Letters* has published writing from such notable authors as Amiri Baraka, Jimmy Carter, Annie Dillard, Tess Gallagher, William Gass and John Updike.



Memorial planting

The Rev. Nathan Sr. and Lavonda Buie plant a tree just north of the UMKC track in honor of their son. The late UMKC track and field student-athlete Nathan Buie Jr., 20, was killed last July after getting caught in the crossfire of a shooting outside a Kansas City party. More than 100 people attended the April tree dedication, which also included the track and field team's presentation of Buie's framed letter jacket to his parents. Buie's fraternity, the Lambda Alpha chapter of Phi Beta Sigma, has started a scholarship at UMKC in his memory.

Dream builders

Campus crew gets to work on creating scholarships



Members of UMKC's Campus Facilities Management team. Back row, left to right: Leo Crook, Chris Hickman, John Cawthon, John Heldstab, Buddy Self, Shane Musick and Jim Havner. Middle row: Dramises Gatapia, Janet Stebbins, Yolanda Pisen, Gerri Leamon and Billy Drake. Front: Scott Duck.

People expect the campus to have well manicured lawns and tidy halls of learning.

But those who excel at making UMKC property look good have another talent: creating and raising funds for scholarships whether through hawking biscuits or promoting rooftop parties.

Over the last year and half, Campus Facilities Management (CFM) has raised more than \$67,000 to establish several new scholarships.

"You've got to get up pretty early in the morning to make biscuits and gravy for 100 people," says John Heldstab, CFM manager of engineering and construction. "But we have a lot of fun."

It all started when former Chancellor Martha Gilliland, Ph.D., inspired the facilities team. Heldstab says his division really connected with UMKC's mission of being "a community of learners making the world a better place."

Some of our people never had the benefit of completing their own high school education, but they have a passion to help others pursue higher education."

John Heldstab

When CFM staffers raised the idea of endowing a scholarship fund, former Vice Chancellor for Finance Larry Gates proposed a challenge: if they could raise \$10,000, he would match it with University funds.

CFM's kick-off picnic, featuring a performance by Bobby Watson, William and Mary Grant/Missouri Professor of Jazz, raised \$2,500. Through other homegrown fundraisers such as raffles and bake sales, they reached \$10,000 in six months.

The CFM Scholarship is awarded to members of facilities management who would like to attend classes or seminars.

Soon after establishing the first fund, CFM members were struck by the need to aid Kansas City's public school students.

"Some of our people never had the benefit of completing their own high school education, but they have a passion to help others pursue higher education," Heldstab says.

They again partnered with Bobby Watson and raised enough to create and endow the CFM Bobby Watson Scholarship, which will be awarded this fall to a graduate of a Kansas City public high school attending UMKC.

Also this fall, the CFM division's third scholarship will be awarded to a graduate of Lincoln College Preparatory Academy to study engineering at UMKC.

Last summer, CFM's fundraising efforts took them off campus as they hosted "Raise the Roof," a successful fundraising party, on the downtown rooftop of McCownGordon Construction. They have more events planned throughout greater Kansas City. And another scholarship endowment will be named publicly this fall.

Though it all started through humble efforts like bake sales and breakfasts, CFM is actively building academic opportunities for Kansas City's urban students.

—Donna Mennona Dilks

Athletics plans for new teams



Track and Field

Both the UMKC men's and women's track and field teams finished in fourth place at the Mid-Continent Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships, which were at the UMKC Swinney Track Complex. The Kangaroos had three individual champions in the competition, and the team earned all-conference honors in 13 events. Seven of those all-conference nods came on the women's side, while six were in men's events.

Men's Basketball

UMKC men's basketball player senior Dee Ayuba was named to the five-player all-tournament team for his performance at the 2007 Mid-Continent Conference Championships. The forward averaged 23.5 points and 7.5 rebounds in the two tournament games, as he helped UMKC advance to the semifinals for the fifth time in school history. Ayuba was also a second team all-conference selection, while senior Quinton Day garnered first team honors for the second straight season.

Women's Basketball

Freshman Chazny Morris was named the 2007 Mid-Continent Conference Newcomer of the Year, in addition to being an all-newcomer team selection. Junior Alysa Klein was a first team all-conference selection and senior Stephanie Brown was an honorable mention honoree.

Men's Tennis

UMKC finished third in the regular season in the Mid-Continent Conference standings, which earned them a No. 3 seed for the Mid-Continent Conference Championships. Senior Richard Harrison earned first team all-conference honors for the third straight season, while freshman Dennis Schwarz was a second team honoree.

Change is in store for UMKC athletics.

New Athletic Director Tim Hall plans to add women's soccer in 2009-10 and baseball in 2011-12. The additions will allow the program to have an increased partnership with the community, as both sports are sponsored by a large number of high schools in the greater Kansas City area.

Since his arrival, the department also announced it will no longer sponsor the school's coed rifle program because the sport does not fit into the University's mission, and it is not among the sports sponsored within UMKC's league.

The Mid-Continent Conference is no more. The conference was renamed the Summit League as of June 1. A conference-wide committee developed the league name over an eight-month period.

"The Summit League provides a mental image to reach for the top, both academically and athletically," says Commissioner Tom Douple. "The new name fits perfectly with the vision for the continued improvement and growth of our league."

Men's Golf

The UMKC men's golf team concluded its season by placing fourth at the Mid-Continent Conference Championships. Two UMKC players, junior Stephen Clark and sophomore Michael Schnegelberger, earned all-conference recognition for their individual performances.

Women's Golf

The UMKC women's golf team wrapped up its season with a fourth-place finish at the Mid-Continent Conference Championships. Senior Danielle Zejdlik closed out her career by earning second team all-conference accolades.



Spelling Bee

Reaneeaua White, a fourth-grader at Sanford B. Ladd School, participated in the second annual Kansas City Missouri School District Fourth Grade Spelling Bee, coordinated by UMKC's Education and Law schools and hosted at the E.E. "Tom" Thompson Courtroom at the School of Law. All participants received a \$1,000 voucher toward tuition to the UMKC Law School.

UMKC gears up for 75th anniversary

This 'new sun' will never set over Kansas City." 1936 University of Kansas City yearbook, *Crataegus*

"A New Sun Rises" read the headline of the Kansas City newspaper on opening day at the University of Kansas City in 1933. Kansas City's civic community had come together to establish a university that would provide a liberal arts education in the serene setting of a mansion on a grassy knoll.

In 2008, UMKC will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding. Plans are underway for a kick-off event followed by special events throughout the year to mark the occasion.

The early days began with courses taught to a student body of 250 in the Dickey Mansion (now Scofield Hall). Ernest Newcomb, for whom Newcomb Hall is named, served as the chief administrator for the campus in its first three years. An early champion for a higher education institution in Kansas City, Newcomb wrote the University's charter, recruited faculty, raised funds and helped the campus gain

accreditation. The University of Kansas City expanded quickly. Between 1938 and 1953, the campus added 12 academic buildings, more than 3,000 students and four professional schools. In 1963, the University became part of the University of Missouri system, changing its name to the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Clarence Decker, who served as the University's president beginning in 1938, co-wrote a memoir about his experience with his wife, Mary Bell Decker. The Deckers wrote about the spirit in which the University was founded: "...it is a story of joy and pain, success and stalemate, triumph and trial, work and play – in short, a story of human beings engaged in a dynamic venture."

UMKC will celebrate that spirit in 2008 through a number of 75th anniversary activities. Watch future publications and the UMKC Web site for more details.



Faculty, trustees and students gather to celebrate opening day at the University of Kansas City on Oct. 1, 1933.

Passings

Patrick D. Kelly, 83, former School of Law dean and professor emeritus, died April 25. He was a lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve and a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa and Drake University Law School. He was active in law and the Law School until his death.

Gerald E. Kemner, Ph.D., 74, former professor at the Conservatory of Music and Dance, died Jan. 26. Kemner attended the University of Kansas City (now UMKC),

Yale University and went on to earn his doctorate from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. He taught music at the Conservatory until his retirement.

Robert Popper, 74, died Feb. 9. Popper joined the Law School faculty in 1969, specializing in criminal law, criminal procedure and constitutional law. He was appointed dean of the Law School in 1984, serving until 1993. In 2006, the Law School established a scholarship in his honor.

William T. Sirridge, M.D., 86, died April 14. He is survived by wife Marjorie Sirridge, M.D. In 1971, Sirridge left private practice to join the faculty of the newly established UMKC School of Medicine, where he and his wife became two of the school's founding docents. The couple also established the School of Medicine's Sirridge Office of Medical Humanities.

Appointments

Rick Anderson was appointed interim vice chancellor for administrative services. He previously served as assistant vice chancellor for administration and finance, where he was responsible for capital project planning, campus facility improvements, environmental health and safety updates and parking structure initiatives. Anderson has also served as interim director of intercollegiate athletics.

Matt Brown is the new men's basketball coach. Most recently, Brown worked as an assistant coach at the University of West Virginia, where he helped lead his team to the Elite Eight in the NCAA Tournament in 2005 and to win the NIT Championship last season. He also served as an assistant coach at the University of Richmond.

Ghulam M. Chaudhry, Ph.D., was promoted to full professor at the School of Computing and Engineering and is serving as the associate chair of the Computer Science Electrical Engineering Department. His research interests include computer architecture, digital system design, verilog HDL and VLSI design.

Betty M. Drees, M.D., has been appointed interim provost. Drees came to the School of Medicine in 1998 and was named interim dean in 2001 before her appointment as the school's dean in 2003. Under her leadership, research funding for the school has increased more than 250 percent. She will continue in her role as dean of the School of Medicine.

Jack E. Fincham, Ph.D., has joined the School of Pharmacy as professor in the Division of Pharmacy Practice. He came to UMKC from the University of Georgia, where he was Albert J. Jowdy Professor and full research member of the Biomedical and Health Sciences Institute. He previously served for 10 years as dean of the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy.

Timothy W. Hall is the new director of intercollegiate athletics. The former associate athletics director for development at Kent State University is known for substantially increasing the school's athletic budget with capital fundraising and scholarship programs.

Colin Picker, J.D., was promoted to full professor at the School of Law. Picker has published widely in the areas of international trade/economic law, and international and comparative law. He is a member of the *American Journal of Comparative Law* Board of Editors and also is a Salzburg Seminar Fellow.

Mel Tyler has been appointed vice chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Tyler previously worked several years at Missouri Western State University before coming to UMKC in 1993. He has since served various roles within Student Affairs including director of admissions, assistant vice chancellor and associate vice chancellor for enrollment management and most recently as interim vice chancellor.

Campaign to conclude with unprecedented success

UMKC will increase its worth by more than \$200 million, thanks to its recent capital campaign.

Your UMKC is the University's most ambitious fundraising effort. Chaired by Terry Dunn (M.B.A. '73), Peggy Dunn (B.A. '72), and honorary chairs Henry Bloch and Jeannette Nichols, the campaign raised money for four categories: students, faculty, facilities and overall excellence.

The campaign has raised more than \$35 million in gifts and pledges to provide financial support for students via

scholarships, fellowships and stipends for every unit.

Ten endowed chairs and professorships were also created and funded.

"The campaign's success is attributed to our exceptional volunteer leadership, loyal alumni, partners, and faculty and staff who generously invested in UMKC," says John Amato, vice chancellor for University Advancement. "The result of these extraordinary contributions will be felt by our students and the community for many generations."

Some of the capital projects the campaign brought to bear include phase one of the Miller Nichols Library expansion, the Law School's courtroom/classroom project, the Oak Street Residence Hall and the Health Sciences Building.

More than \$40 million was raised for overall excellence, which includes program endowments, lectures and symposia, seed money for innovative research, library materials and creative and performing arts initiatives.

The campaign's final total will be announced this fall.

YouRUMKC
The Campaign for Kansas City's University



Kim Carlos at Café Nordstrom

Dessert first

Young cancer survivor learns to appreciate life's gifts

Kim Carlos settles into the booth at Café Nordstrom like a child finding her very own spot in mom's lap.

Pride and comfort accompany the sense of belonging there, in the corner booth, where they always sat and where Patti always enjoyed chocolate mousse cake and made her case for eating dessert first.

They own this booth.

It fit them just right: four boisterous women – Kim Carlos (J.D. '97), Patti Balwanz, Jennifer Johnson and Jana Peters – and their bags of retail therapy.

For three years of Tuesdays, they met in the Overland Park, Kan., restaurant to share their hopes and fears as only young women with breast cancer could.

“One day we just decided to write a book because we were so frustrated with the lack of information for women our ages with

breast cancer,” Carlos says. “We had each other, but we knew a lot of people were alone.”

So the next month, Balwanz brought her laptop to lunch, and *Nordie's at Noon* began.

They started at the beginning. Balwanz was 24 years old and still boy crazy when she felt a lump. Peters' diagnosis came in the midst of wedding plans when she was 27. Johnson, also 27, was five months pregnant, facing motherhood and chemotherapy. And Carlos found her golf ball-sized lump while planning her son's second birthday party. She was 30.

“Everyone told us not to worry,” Carlos says. “We were too young for cancer.”

Too young for mammograms and definitely too young for menopause. And despite her legal career, before her diagnosis, Carlos thought she was too young to write a will.

“Turns out I wasn't invincible,” she says. “But I still had a say in how I was going to deal with this, and I was going to fight it with all I had.”

Their book chronicles each woman's journey, the wills and the wigs, from mastectomies to chemotherapy. They wrote about the stuff they talked about over dessert and the things that kept them up at night, real stuff, intimate things, even intimacy.

“I was the open one, especially in that chapter,” Carlos says. “Lots of books seem guarded and safe. We weren't going to waste those feelings – and we were going to talk about the things doctors don't. This was going to be no hold's barred, but it did pass the grandma test. She said it was hard to read, but helped her understand. You just don't give much thought to your breasts, until you have to lose one.”

Cancer impacted everything, but *Nordie's at Noon* is as much about life as it is about the disease.

“It's a journey with a high admission price,” Carlos says. “No one would've asked to join this club, but I now know in a way it was a blessing.”

Life is still good. That's what the last chapter is called. It starts by describing their toast from the booth to Balwanz enjoying cake in heaven. She passed away in 2003 at the age of 29.

“We wanted to continue to provide a message of hope,” Carlos says. “Patti saved my life so we had to finish it for her and for all the women who don't have their own Nordie's girls.”

The women fulfilled their promise to their little sister. They self-published the book in 2005, rented a local storage unit, and their husbands delivered 5,000 copies in just a few months. *Nordie's* was released nationally in 2006, and the paperback will be available in October.

More than 20,000 books have been sold. Carlos' son is now 7, and she travels at least a couple times a month to share the Nordie's experience. Most mornings, she puts on her pink ribbon pin.

“Because of my advocacy work and the book, I do talk about it a lot, but I don't want any of it to become routine,” Carlos says. “I

want to pay attention to every person and their story. It's hard to look into the eyes of a stage-four patient who knows it's her time. But



Left to right: *Nordie's at Noon* authors Jana Peters, Patti Balwanz, Kim Carlos and Jennifer Johnson at the Ribbons of Pink Gala in 2002. Carlos and Johnson accepted a National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship writing award presented by Elizabeth Edwards at the Rays of Hope Gala in May.

I'm working toward a cure.”

And just imagine how that would free up her schedule.

“It's difficult to balance family, work, advocacy,” she says. “But I've learned to make more time for fun. All this taught me so much. I learned that I love the smell of fresh-cut grass – maybe because I've never mowed a day in my life, but I do. So I make time to enjoy those little things and appreciate this perspective I gained at such a young age. You know, try to eat dessert first like Patti.”

No one would've asked to join this club, but I now know in a way it was a blessing.”

Kim Carlos

Carlos and Johnson continue to meet monthly in their corner booth. Peters passed away last year.

It still feels like coming home to Carlos. She's sampled and memorized the menu; she recommends the asparagus and chicken pasta. But it's the memories that matter here.

—Lindsay V. Corey

Breast cancer facts

- One in every 229 women between the ages of 30 and 39 will be diagnosed with breast cancer within the next 10 years.
- It is the leading cause of cancer death in women ages 15 to 54.
- More than 11,100 women under age 40 will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and more than 1,100 will die.
- At least 250,000 women under age 40 are currently living with breast cancer in the United States.
- The five-year survival rate for young women with breast cancer is 82 percent, lower than that of post-menopausal patients.
- Breast cancer is newly diagnosed every three minutes.
- A woman dies from breast cancer every 13 minutes.

Source: American Cancer Society

noteworthy **Malissa Wood**

Queen of hearts



Malissa Wood

Heart disease seems to be in the cards for many women.

It's a little-known fact that it's the leading cause of death in female Americans. But Malissa Wood (B.A./M.D. '87), is working to change that fate. She's betting that education and awareness are the best strategies for cheating this killer.

Wood spends her busy days (and some nights) at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she is a cardiologist and echocardiogram specialist. She works with a diverse patient population and publishes many research articles about the latest findings in cardiology. She also serves as a research professor at Harvard Medical School.

This past year, Wood participated in the first educational seminar for the Boston celebration of Go Red for Women month, a national awareness campaign sponsored by the American Heart Association.

Wood got involved with Go Red because she says the media's focus on cancer has left the subject of women's heart disease dangerously neglected. Heart attack and stroke are numbers one and three, respectively, on the list of causes of women's mortality.

"This past February, the Boston Go Red campaign not only raised awareness, but also raised about \$2.5 million to aid the American Heart Association's efforts in research and education," Wood says. "There is a high burden of heart disease among this community and a strong need for education."

The single most important thing a woman can do to prevent heart disease is stop smoking, advises Wood.

"If she is not a smoker, then adhering to a healthy approach to life is critical," she says.

According to Wood, this includes maintenance of ideal body weight, controlling blood pressure and cholesterol (with medications, if necessary), exercising at least 30 minutes a day, managing stress and paying attention to any new symptoms that develop.

As a wife and working mother of four, Wood relates to the balancing act that many women perform on a routine basis.

"Women take care of everything: their children, their elderly parents, their husbands... all the while working and trying to keep everything going for so many people. They put themselves last on the list," she says.

"The people that I work with often have been neglecting themselves for a long time. They have no easy way, or even the ability, to 'get it together.' Their habits are bad; their nutrition is bad," she says. "Some are low-income people. Oftentimes they get depressed, lose hope and are unable to plan health care for themselves."

Her empathy is genuine and was cultivated during her days as a UMKC student while on rotations at Truman Medical Center.

"It was there that I got the chance to work directly with underserved patients, and I

really felt a great connection to them," she says. "It was a privilege to work with people."

Wood credits the rigorous training she received at the UMKC School of Medicine for her success in a demanding field. She says the school's founder, E. Grey Dimond, M.D., himself a cardiologist, instilled in her the core values of listening to patients and developing practical clinical approaches.

There is a high burden of heart disease among this community [women] and a strong need for education."

Malissa Wood

"When I went to Boston to do my residency at Beth Israel Hospital, I realized that I had excellent clinical skills compared to my Ivy League colleagues, who had just not gotten the chance to work directly with patients," Wood says. "I was just about the only person who was not from an Ivy League school, but my skills were far above everyone else's. It made me proud. And I thank the School of Med for that. Dr. Dimond's concept to train us to listen to patients really made a difference."

—Donna Mennona Dilks

noteworthy **Ed King**

Alumnus uncorks new career



Ed King

When Ed King graduated from UMKC's School of Law in 1976, he was looking for something different.

"Law school kind of ties you down for three years," King says. "I'd worked in some Kansas City law firms before, and I was looking for something new."

King went to work in the consumer protection division of the attorney general's office in Alaska.

"It was an adventure," King says of his Alaskan experience. "I built a log cabin and

lived in the woods and everything."

From Alaska, King moved to Oregon where he earned an M.B.A. and stumbled into his current job: CEO of King Estate Winery.

Before co-founding the winery with his father in 1991, King acquired a few small vineyards in a real estate transaction and began to learn about the wine industry.

"I've always been interested in wine, but when I got the vineyards, I began to learn more and more about it and became more and more interested in it," King says.

After years of research, the family realized that making wine was not as simple as it appears.

"I think people imagine that you pick fruit and squash fruit and wine comes out of it, but it's more complex than that," King says.

The certified organic winery not only grows grapes for its wine, but also grows organic fruit and vegetables to serve in its restaurant.

King Estate ships its wines around the world and across the country, including to Kansas City restaurants Plaza III and American Restaurant.

"The majority of our business is done in restaurants," King says. "That's the preferred venue for wine. Wine is often presented with foods that match the wine. It's a desirable environment to introduce your product."

Although it doesn't take a law degree to make wine, King says his UMKC education has served him well.

"In any given year, we do a tremendous amount of contracting," King says. "We're always buying barrels or grapes. We deal in trademark law, tax-related matters. There's an extensive amount of law I end up using."

As CEO, King has his hand in several areas of the winery, but his favorite part is watching the process of winemaking unfold.

"I really like working with the land," he says. "Our product starts with dirt and vines and ends up on tables in the nicest restaurants in the country."

—Marjie Knust



King Estate Winery

All the world's his stage, and he'll teach at UMKC



Vinson Cole

Music enthusiasts the world over have thrilled at the sound of Vinson Cole's tenor for the past three decades.

Now, voice students at the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance will train with this world-renowned master. This fall, Cole (B.M. '72) returns to his alma mater for a starring role in the classroom, where he will act as mentor and teacher.

The Conservatory welcomes him as the inaugural Kauffman Artist-in-Residence, a position underwritten by the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation. In addition to his applied teaching load, Cole will present monthly seminars to the public and give one local performance each year.

Cole has performed in most major opera houses, including La Scala, the Metropolitan, Opéra National de Paris, Sydney and Vienna.

"I've been very fortunate, and I've gotten to work with so many wonderful and talented conductors and orchestras," he says. "At UMKC, I'll share my vocal techniques, but I also hope that what I have to say will

help young singers understand the business aspect of managing a vocal career."

Cole says it's important that he guide his students.

"Sometimes you have to try to guide a student into a different aspect of the profession because they might have talent, but they won't be able to make it to the Met," he says. "I'd like to help them understand that it's not the amount of success you achieve, but the amount of happiness singing gives you that is valuable."

Although he's been center-stage in many demanding roles, Cole says he has never suffered from stage fright.

"In fact, I find it easier to sing for 3,000 than to attend a cocktail party for 20," he says.

Among other reasons, he is pleased to make Kansas City his home again because he'll be close to the barbecue he loves.

"About five years ago, at the Aspen Music Festival, I had Jack Stack Barbecue flown in," he laughs. "I've done it every year since, and now my party has gotten to be 'the party' to be invited to."

KCUR celebrates 50 years

Fifty years ago, KCUR broadcast its first program from the third floor of Scofield Hall with a signal range of only four miles and one full-time staff member.

Since then, the station has grown to 100,000 watts of power, 160,000 listeners and 22 full-time employees.

"Technology has changed significantly," says station manager Patty Cahill. "When I started at the station in 1987, we recorded our interviews on cassette machines, then transferred them to reel-to-reel tape."

With all the digital capabilities available today, KCUR-FM 89.3 is not only found on the radio. Its Web site, www.kcur.org, also houses live audio and podcasts of its programs that are available to download onto iPods or MP3 players so listeners can catch up on programs at their convenience.

UMKC's National Public Radio affiliate also recently received a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to begin broadcasting on a second, high definition radio channel. Although not widely popular yet, high definition radio requires a special receiver and offers higher quality sound than regular radio. Cahill compares it to the difference between listening to an LP and a CD.

"There aren't a lot of listeners yet for an HD signal," Cahill says. "Receivers cost about \$150 right now. Once they start putting them in cars, it will really take off."

Cahill says she guesses it will be about a year before KCUR begins high definition broadcasts.

Each of the station's programs will celebrate the 50th anniversary in its own way, and the station is planning a birthday weekend Oct. 19 and 20 with special music and broadcasts of listeners' memories. Visit the KCUR Web site for more information.



KC Repertory Theatre's *Love, Janis* breaks box office record

The Kansas City Repertory Theatre set a new box office record.

Love, Janis broke the theater's record for number of tickets sold for a regular season production.

The show was the first to be performed on the Rep's new downtown Copaken Stage, which was designed to provide an intimate theatrical experience. It contains about half as many seats as the Rep's other stage, the Spencer Theatre located on UMKC's Volker campus.

"For a smaller space, it really shattered records, which is all the more reason that it was such a surprising hit," says Bill Prenevost, managing director of the Rep, the professional theater in residence at UMKC.

The show was extended for three weeks beyond its original run to meet the demand.

"It was absolutely a first-rate production. The creator, Randal Myler, really wanted to produce the ultimate *Love, Janis* – he wanted to start from scratch and do it right," Prenevost says. "There was also the excitement of the opening of the new theater. Those two things really came together and sent the show up the charts."



Copaken Stage

Kacey Clanton as Janis Joplin

Association leads support for new Alumni Fund

UMKC Alumni Association membership is automatic.

The Alumni Association Board voted to eliminate dues to encourage alumni to give to the Alumni Fund.

The new fund raises money to support students through scholarships, programming and other enhancements.

"The Alumni Association is proud to lead the effort to increase alumni participation at the University as part of our mission to support UMKC and its students," says Association President Duana Dralus (B.A. '63, M.A. '69).

Many of UMKC's students rely on financial support, and the Alumni Fund aims to meet that growing need.

"Focusing on schoolwork is so much easier when you do not have to worry about financial burdens," says Kassie Adams, a College of Arts and Sciences scholarship student.

For more information or to give online, visit www.umkc.edu/alumnifund.



UMKC scholarship recipients gather to help launch the Alumni Fund, which raises money for student support.

class notes

Let us know about your accomplishments. Send your news to the UMKC Alumni and Constituent Relations office via e-mail at alumni@umkc.edu, via fax to 816-235-5189 or via mail to Attn: Class Notes, 300B Administrative Center, 5100 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Mo., 64110.

30s

Frank K. Kelly (UKC '38), of Santa Barbara, Calif., has published an oral history, *Kissing Joy As It Flies – Living in Eternity's Sunrise*, as part of the oral history program at the University of California-Santa Barbara. Kelly is senior vice president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.



The UMKC College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association joined Durwin Rice (B.A. '78), founder of Tulips on Troost, to plant 70,000 bulbs along this historic Kansas City urban corridor.

60s

George W. Karr (D.D.S. '60, School of Dentistry), of Rolla, Mo., has pulled or repaired teeth in 20 countries. Rotary International honored him with its Service Above Self Award.

70s

Barbara Jaekel (B.A. '70, College of Arts and Sciences), of Kansas City, Mo., has been named internal communications manager with HNTB Companies. She is responsible for internal communications programs for HNTB Companies as well as HNTB Corporation.

Tom Holcom (B.B.A. '72, Bloch School of Business and Public Administration), of Kansas City, Mo., president of the Kansas City-based company Pioneer Financial Services, Inc., was honored with the Air Care Alliance Teamwork Award from the National Aeronautic Association during its Public Benefit Flying Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., in 2006. A volunteer pilot and past president of Angel Flight Central, Holcom was honored for coordinating flights between different charitable aviation organizations.

Linda Hood Talbott (Ph.D. '73, School of Education), of Kansas City, Mo., was invited to represent the United States at the inaugural World Forum of the American Biographical Institute and the International Biographical Center at Oxford University, Great Britain. Talbott was chair of the technology symposium. She is president of Talbott & Associates, a philanthropic management consulting firm. Talbott was also honored with the 2007 Kansas City Spirit Award.

Ellen E. Baumler (M.A. '77, College of Arts and Sciences), of Helena, Mont., was recognized by the American Association for State and Local History for her book *Beyond Spirit Tailings: Montana's Mysteries, Ghosts, and Haunted Places*, winner of the association's Award of Merit. The award encourages standards of excellence in the collection, preservation and interpretation of state and local history.



He'll teach them a thing or two. That's newly elected Kansas City Mayor Mark Funkhouser (Ph.D. '00) conducting his Performance Auditing class at the Bloch School last semester. The mayor liked to prep for his classes at Muddy's, a nearby coffee shop.

80s

Kirte Kinser (B.B.A. '81, Bloch School of Business and Public Administration), of Rockwall, Texas, a partner in the Dallas offices of Locke Liddell & Sapp, has been selected as a member of the Million Dollar Advocates Forum, recognized as one of the most prestigious group of trial lawyers in the United States. Kinser is a partner practicing in the areas of franchise, commercial, first amendment, intellectual property and general civil litigation.

Lois M. Krueger (M.A. '81, School of Education), of Blue Springs, Mo., was named Citizen of the Year at the Truman Heartland Community Foundation annual gala celebrating volunteerism, philanthropy, hard work and determination. Krueger has chaired the Public Art Commission since it was formed in 2000 and volunteers at St. Mary's Hospital, the Blue Springs Art League and Blue Springs PTA and PTSA.

Cy Tenn (D.D.S. '86, School of Dentistry), of Honolulu, is president of the Council of Representatives for Delta Sigma Delta Supreme Chapter, the international dental fraternity.

Rebekah Presson Mosby (M.A. '87, College of Arts and Sciences), of Hamilton, N.Y., received a Grammy nomination for *Poetry on Record: 98 Poets Read Their Work (1888-2006)* of which she was the producer/editor. The collection competed in the category of Best Historical Collection.

90s

Kurt Uyehara (D.D.S. '90, School of Dentistry), of Honolulu, is a fellow of the American Academy of Craniofacial Pain and associate fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry.

Rodney J. Vergotine (D.D.S. graduate certificate '93, School of Dentistry), of Oak Park, Ill., was appointed to the faculty of the University of Illinois at the Chicago College of Dentistry.

David P. Thomas (M.B.A. '97, Bloch School of Business and Public Administration) has been named group senior vice president and head of diversity and inclusion for LaSalle Bank Corporation and all other ABN AMRO Bank N.V. entities within North America. Thomas received the Chairman's Award from the Kansas City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the President's Award from the Southern Christian Leadership Council.

Teri Ann Drake (M.B.A. '99, Bloch School of Business and Public Administration), of Liberty, Mo., was promoted to senior vice president of creative functions by Hallmark Cards and is now a corporate officer for the company. Drake is responsible for linking the strategic needs of the business with creative product and merchandising development and execution.



Kenneth and Sarajane Aber celebrate the UMKC Women's Council 40th anniversary with Graduate Assistance Fund award recipient Aruna Rajagopalan at the annual luncheon. Rajagopalan is one of 55 female graduate and professional students who received GAF fellowships totaling \$61,200.

Kenneth R. Farmer Sr. (M.B.A. '99, Bloch School of Business and Public Administration) is vice president for academic affairs at God's Bible School and College in Cincinnati, a private institution that specializes in training for ministry.

Bryan Harbison (M.B.A. '99, Bloch School of Business and Public Administration), of Kansas City, Mo., was promoted to chief financial officer for *The Kansas City Star*. Prior to this appointment, Harbison worked as the newspaper's circulation finance manager.

00s

Jill Ulrich (J.D. '00, School of Law), of South Bend, Ind., was named to the Richard G. Lugar Excellence in Public Service Series Class of 2006-07, a national leadership program.

Mark Laverty (D.M.A. '02, Conservatory of Music and Dance), of St. Louis, Mo., released his debut CD, *Music of Bach*, in February. The pianist recorded the album at the Tanglewood Music Center, and it was produced by renowned classical music producer David Frost.

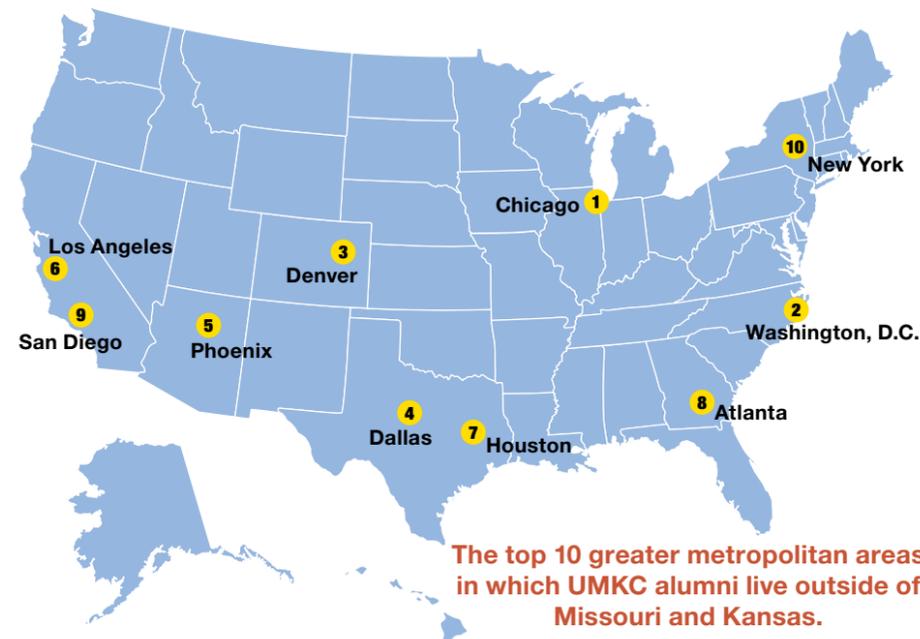
Fran Otto (M.S.N. '02, School of Nursing), of Kansas City, Mo., was named Caregiver of the Year by the Missouri Home Care Alliance.

Adam Rehm (J.D. '03, School of Law), of Alexandria, Va., was appointed to the board of directors of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Federal Credit Union.

Jason T. White (Ph.D. '03, School of Graduate Studies), of Maryville, Mo., assistant professor of accounting, economics and finance at Northwest Missouri State University, was a recipient of the 2006 Northwest Alumni Association Mortar Board Teaching Excellence Award.

Scott Harlan Brownlee (M.A. '04, School of Education), of Kansas City, Mo., has been named executive director for Kansas City Young Audiences. Brownlee is also the vice chair for the Missouri Alliance of Arts Education and serves as a consultant on the Fine Arts Task Force for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Michael J. Mastio (M.S., Ph.D. '05, School of Computing and Engineering), of Crystal Lake, Ill., was named director of engineering for Pepsi's Quaker Tropicana and Gatorade division in Chicago.



The top 10 greater metropolitan areas in which UMKC alumni live outside of Missouri and Kansas.

High profile alumni offer industry insight

Pulitzer Prize winner and Hollywood screenwriter visit with students about their challenges and successes

When a Pulitzer Prize winner sits in front of your classroom, you take good notes.

Two previous alumni award recipients visited with UMKC students in April to share their professional struggles and achievements.

Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner James B. Steele (B.A. '67) and novelist John Scott Shepherd (B.A. '84) were two of 60 past honorees who came back to UMKC for the annual alumni awards dinner on April 19.

Steele visited two journalism classes and Shepherd conversed with students in the American Society of Film class that afternoon.

"This is a real treat," journalism faculty member Fred Wickman told his students. "Today you get to hear from not only a professional, but an alum who has written and reported on extraordinary things. It's not only my honor, but a privilege to introduce someone I truly admire."

Steele proceeded to the front of the class, briefcase in tow. He quickly sat down and began removing folders from his briefcase, stacking them neatly in front of him.

Reaching into one folder, he removed a crinkled piece of notepad paper. Padding his coat pocket, he fished out his spectacles, placed them atop the bridge of his nose and smiled.

"I'm just going to give a general summary of how I got started and how what I do evolved, and this is how long it is," Steele chuckled referring to the piece of paper. "I'm just kidding. But even as a writer, I still find myself having to organize sentences."

Steele shared highlights of his journalism career with the class, from his time as a copy boy at the *Kansas City Times* to meeting Donald L. Bartlett and forming their investigative reporting team, first at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* from 1971 to 1977

and later as editors at *Time Inc.* from 1997 to 2006.

Do what you love and just do it, and be willing to say, 'I'd rather serve coffee.'"

John Scott Shepherd

Today, Steele and Bartlett work as contributing editors for *Vanity Fair* magazine. The duo has also written five books,

including the 1992 best seller *America: What Went Wrong?*

"Don and I've been working together for about 35 years," Steele says. "Someone introduced us recently as working together longer than most people stay married."

He explained that the best stories lie in documents and court records, and that reporters should never assume.

"The best piece of advice I always share is something I once heard that goes, 'If your mother says she loves you, check it out,'" he says.

UMKC student Emily Iorg, former editor in chief of *University News*, UMKC's student newspaper, says listening to Steele speak weeks before her own graduation was a great opportunity.

"I'll definitely take what he said with me," she says. "It's one thing to just hear a speaker talk about working in journalism, but when there's a connection with someone who went here, it puts the whole discussion into a different element."

Film lovers also had a chance to hear and speak with John Scott Shepherd at the Tivoli Theatre in Westport.

Sitting on a rickety bar stool in the center of the theater, Shepherd spoke of the challenges it took to get where he is today.

Working small jobs to try and make ends meet, Shepherd shared that he was on the verge of bankruptcy while writing his first novel, *Henry's List of Wrongs*.

"Everyone thought I was crazy for not getting a real job," he says. "I'd given up sleep. I worked all day and came home and



John Scott Shepherd, left, speaks with a student.

wrote from 9 p.m. until 2 in the morning. Just when I thought it was time to run off into the sunset or die, my life was turned upside down."

His book sold for \$1.4 million, which bought him the privilege to do what he loves best – writing. Today, Shepherd works as a screenplay writer from home where he says his best work is done in his pajamas. His screenplay *Joe Somebody* turned into a 2001 feature film starring Tim Allen.

"Years ago I was in the same boat as these students, and I know firsthand that you can't just write yourself into this business," he says. "The people in L.A. right now are only looking for the golden ticket, the next great piece. They don't care where you came from. They only care if the piece is good enough."

Shepherd says he wants students to be inspired by his story, but stressed that writing is a gift and not something that can be learned. He also insists that a writer has to follow his own voice.



James B. Steele presents to a class.

"Don't chase what you believe people want if it's not doing what you love and not following your passion," he says. "I've learned in life that having the privilege to say 'no' is a great feeling. Do what you love and just do it, and be willing to say 'I'd rather serve coffee.'"

—Kara Petrovic

2008 Alumni Award recipients

Alumnus of the Year

Robert M. Arnold (B.A. '83, M.D. '83)

Bill French Alumni Service Award

Freda Mendez Smith (B.A. '80)

Defying the Odds Award

Stanley Banks (B.A. '79, M.A. '91)

Spotlight Award

Cmdr. David Bates (B.S.P. '93)

Legacy Award

The Neff Family

ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

College of Arts and Sciences

Karen Foss (B.A. '76)

Biological Sciences

Pinghui Feng (Ph.D. '01)

Bloch School of Business

Alan Weber (M.B.A. '93)

Computing and Engineering

Ravi Chandra (M.S. '93)

Conservatory of Music and Dance

Mary Louise Jones (M.M.E. '85, D.M.A. '92)

School of Dentistry

Lynn Mouden (D.D.S. '75)

Division of Dental Hygiene

Karen Williams (M.S. '85)

School of Education

David Donovan (B.A. '78, M.A. '82, Ph.D. '89)

School of Law

Keith Cutler (J.D. '89)

School of Medicine

Wendell Clarkston (A.B. '82, M.D. '84)

School of Nursing

Peggy Ward Smith (Ph.D. '98)

School of Pharmacy

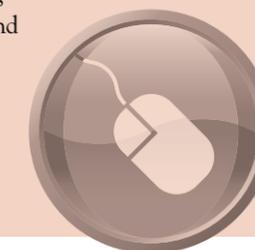
Matt Hartwig (B.S.P. '92)

Winners will be profiled in the *Perspectives* spring issue and honored April 17.

Advancing UMKC one click at a time

University Advancement has a new look. Its Web site has been overhauled with rotating video clips, donor services and alumni links.

Visitors can now register for an event, update their information and make a donation all with just a few clicks. Short videos on the home page at advancing.umkc.edu are changed regularly to keep alumni and friends updated on UMKC projects.





Law School students enjoy a banana split break.

Life at **UMKC**

Imagine YOURSELF AT THE REP'S 2007/08 SEASON!

All plays and dates subject to change.

SPENCER THEATER
UMKC Performing Arts Center
4949 Cherry St., Kansas City

Doubt
Oct. 19 - Nov. 11, 2007

This spellbinding winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play will leave you questioning your convictions.

To Kill A Mockingbird
Jan. 18 - Feb. 10, 2008

Voted "best novel of the century" by *Library Journal*, this classic novel comes to life on the Rep's stage. Co-production with Arizona Theatre Company.

A Marvelous Party
Feb. 29 - March 23, 2008

A dazzling evening of ravishing melodies and sparkling dance in this award winning revue blended with Coward's razor-edged British wit.

To Be Announced
May 9 - June 1, 2008

COPAKEN STAGE
H&R Block Center
13th & Walnut streets, Kansas City

Bad Dates
Sept. 21 - Oct. 21, 2007

A delightful off-the-wall comedy about a 40-something single mom who is about to re-enter the dating scene.

Gee's Bend
March 28 - April 27, 2008

This charming new play is the true story of Sadie Pettway of Gee's Bend, Alabama, who learns to quilt at her mother's side and grows to become a talented, respected American artist.

SPECIAL EVENTS!

A Christmas Carol
SPENCER THEATER
Nov. 17 - Dec. 24, 2007

Kansas City's favorite holiday tradition returns to the Rep for a 27th season!

A John Denver Holiday Concert
COPAKEN STAGE
Nov. 24 - Dec. 2, 2007

Begin your holiday season with the perfect family entertainment from the creator and director of *It Ain't Nothin' But The Blues*, *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* and *Love, Janis!*

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Pictured is the "three piece desk set" available on umkcbookstore.com



You're in our calling circle. Pick up the phone.

Students will be calling you this fall with campus updates and to request donations for the Alumni Fund, which raises much-needed support for students.



www.umkc.edu/alumnifund