As panic over the pandemic recedes, the climate change crisis is reclaiming the headlines. Kent State academics, advocates and activists are taking action to address global warming now.

See the special section on climate change beginning on page 12.
On the cover: We’re already experiencing the deleterious effects of global warming—and time is running out to prevent further damage to people and the planet. See the special section on climate change, starting on page 12.

COVER ART BY JASON ZEHNER, BS ’04, BA ’11

FEATURES

12 Climate Change Special Section
Kent State academics, advocates and activists reflect on the challenges we face and take action to address climate change now.

12 Kent Campus Sustainability Tour
15 Kent State Expands Solar Installations
16 Survival of the Trees
17 Coming Together to Communicate Climate Change
18 Taking Action to Protect the Planet
20 On Land and At Sea
24 Global Challenge
38 Alumni Advocates

44 Shining a Light on Unsolved Crimes
Investigative journalist and author James Renner, BA ’00, founded the Porchlight Project to fund new DNA testing and genetic genealogy for Ohio cold cases.

46 The Borowitz Collection: Centuries of True Crime
This extensive collection has become an international source for anyone interested in the history of true crime incidents—from ancient times to the present day—and their influence on the arts, literature, culture and society.

47 Crime Stories of Cultural Significance
With its True Crime History Series, The Kent State University Press has become known for publishing true crime stories that have important context in cultural, psychological, sociological, political or legal areas.

DEPARTMENTS

2 Readers Respond
3 President’s Perspective
4 Flash Forward
48 Alumni Life

59 In Memory
61 Tributes
64 Flashback
65 Giving Voice
I met my former husband, Fredrick “RICK” Wilson, BA ‘64, MA ‘70, when I was a freshman in 1962. I worked and went to classes part time, as I supported him through graduate school. During our years on campus, I had several jobs, which included working as a secretary for Dr. Linnea Henderson, the College of Arts & Sciences and The Kent State University Press. I considered the campus our home, and our life continued there through my husband’s graduate studies and until my graduation in 1970.

The fateful day of the May 4 massacre, I was in Spanish class when we heard the shots ring out. We laughed, assuming it was a car breakin. After class, I walked toward the Commons, planning to join the demonstration, when I was stopped by an officer who said the area was shut off. As I walked back from campus, listening to the radio, my heart stopped. For the first time in my life, the news was real and personal. And I grew up that day.

After graduation, my husband and I moved to Virginia for his first job after he earned a master’s degree in history. He got an offer to teach in a community college in the area. It was on the Vietnam War and related events. I earned a master’s degree in history. We deepened as I reflect on the profound shaping that historical events have upon one’s life.

I matriculated at Kent State in 1973 and majored in psychology. (Truth be told, I needed prompting at the onset of my junior year to declare a major as graduation was fast approaching. I was bored, I decided to pursue a major I felt I would enjoy—psychology.) Life makes decisions for you sometimes.

In my volunteer role as a counselor at the Townhall II Crisis Center in Kent, I witnessed the full palette of emotions still reverberating in people’s lives three years after the May 4 shootings. And I came to appreciate the depth and complexity of the impact that the tragedy had on so many lives and the multiple supports needed for those still reeling from it. Now, in my 60s and a retired mental health professional, that appreciation has only deepened as I reflect on the profound shaping that historical events have upon one’s life.

MICHAEL SCHONBERG, BA ’77
East Longmeadow, MA

GOLDEN DREAM TEAM

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the 2001-2002 Kent State men’s basketball team’s great run to the NCAA Tournament Elite Eight, which put Kent State on the college basketball map. I’ve written a book about that run, The Golden Dream: The Story of the 2001-2002 Kent State Men’s Basketball Elite Eight Season (available on Amazon). It captures that magical season, 20 years later, and goes behind the scenes to show how this team was built, how it rallied after a bump in the season, how it came together for one of the greatest runs in college basketball history, and how it brought the entire community together.

I am a former marketing director and play-by-play announcer for Kent State’s men’s basketball and football from the mid 1990s to early 2000s. In my career, I broadcast over 1,000 basketball and football games, including the 2001-2002 men’s basketball “golden dream” season. A native of Northeast Ohio and an avid sports fan, I am on the board of directors for my local chamber of commerce.

STEVE SEFNER
Columbus, OH

Focusing on a Sustainable Future

One of the best parts of my job as president of Kent State University is sharing all the remarkable accomplishments of our students, faculty and staff—and this semester has exceeded all expectations.

I am proud to share the news that during the 2022 Spring Semester, Kent State was awarded the esteemed R1 designation for research from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. As the highest recognition that doctoral universities can receive, it affirms Kent State’s place as a prestigious research institution, in the company of Yale, Harvard and other top-tier research universities in the United States. Only 146 universities in the nation have achieved this designation, and Kent State is proud to be among just five universities in Ohio to receive this award.

This recognition underscores the excellence and breadth of research and scholarship at Kent State. This is an amazing accomplishment and a testament to the hard work of our faculty, staff and university leadership. It is, along with attaining a record-high graduation rate on our Kent Campus and the growing diversification of our student body, one of three signature achievements of the last decade.

Kent State’s well-established research institutes continue to spark innovation, produce groundbreaking discoveries and attract federal funding to support their efforts. Perhaps most important, our institutes provide fertile training grounds where our undergraduate students can learn and our graduate students, postdoctoral researchers and faculty can pursue their investigations and scholarly inquiry.

In this issue’s special section on climate change, numerous faculty members—many of whom collaborate with our Environmental Science and Design Research Institute—reflect on how their research relates to global warming. Climate change is impacting areas such as weather patterns and water quality, but its effects also extend to mental health and social inequality, too.

As we marked Earth Month and Arbor Day in the spring semester, I was reminded of how the issues of climate change and environmental sustainability are intrinsically intertwined with life on our campuses, including faculty research, student activism and the efforts of our facilities staff to make operations at Kent State more “green.”

This semester, we began the process of formulating a sustainability strategic plan. We are looking ahead 10, 20 or 30 years to determine what the best practices will be that sustain and support our university’s mission in the future and what steps we can take now to ensure that we are ready to implement the changes needed to achieve carbon-neutral status on our campuses.

Achieving this level of efficiency is an ambitious goal, but one we believe is required to protect our earthly resources and our most precious resource of all—our people. Moreover, our sustainability efforts will guarantee a future where Kent State remains a vital research institution, where we continue to seek solutions to the ongoing challenges of climate change and where we are solving tomorrow’s problems today.

Todd A. Diacon
President
Email: president@kent.edu
Instagram: @ksupresdiacon
Jerry M. Lewis, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Sociology since 1996, speaks during the inaugural lecture series, which was created to honor his legacy and advance the scholarship of May 4, 1970, and the Vietnam War era. Lewis taught at Kent State University from 1966 until 2013. Serving as a faculty marshal in 1970, he witnessed the May 4, 1970, shootings firsthand, and has since devoted time to researching, memorializing and lecturing on the events of May 4. He remains an active leader and voice for the legacy and study of May 4, 1970.

The luncheon included a special recognition of the faculty marshals and all faculty members whose heroic efforts prevented more bloodshed on May 4, 1970, and enabled students to complete their studies.

Tammy Clewell, professor of English at the Kent Campus, was the honoree for this year’s lecture. Her talk, “Remembering the Contested May 4 Memorializing Process,” focused on the controversial and protracted efforts to build Kent State’s May 4 Memorial, which was dedicated in 1990.

The lecture series honoring Lewis was made possible through a generous donation from Michael Solomon, BBA’74.
In October 1975, the May 4 Task Force (M4TF) was founded by M. Lewis, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, with the help of MLS ‘89, James Russell, BFA ‘79, and Robert Stamps, BA ‘72, MA ‘96, MA ‘99, are deceased.

In 1975, the Kent State University administration stopped sponsoring and supporting the annual commemoration program. In October 1975, the May 4 Task Force (M4TF) was founded by Kent State students and victims of the May 4 shootings to raise awareness, continue the search for truth and ensure that the lessons to be learned from the tragedy would be part of a continuous and living history. In the years since, the M4TF student organization has planned events for commemorations and conducted the annual candlelight walk and vigil.

On March 6, 2019, Kent State’s Board of Trustees passed a resolution that committed the university to assume responsibility for the annual May 4 commemoration and ongoing educational events through the Office of the President, beginning with the 50th commemoration in 2019-2020 and continuing from that time forward.

President Todd Diacon poses with five of the wounded survivors from the May 4, 1970, shootings. (L-R) Back row: Donald Scott Mackenzie, BBA ‘71, John Cleary, BArch ‘74, Thomas Grace, BA ‘72, Diacon, Joseph Lewis. Front row: Dean Kahler, BS ’77

The nine students who were wounded on May 4, 1970, were honored during a dedication ceremony for the markers placed at each spot near Taylor Hall where the students were shot 52 years ago. Each marker features the name of the person wounded, along with the distance in feet they were from the National Guard at the time of the shootings.

Five of the nine survivors attended the ceremony (named above). Douglas Wentmore did not attend and Alan Canfora, BA ‘72, MLS ‘89, James Russell, BFA ‘79, and Robert Stamps, BA ‘72, MA ‘96, MA ‘99, are deceased.

“Having a visual reminder of where those students were when they were shot is so powerful,” President Diacon says. “You realize how quickly violence gets out of control.”

Planning for the new markers began four years ago—called for by Alan Canfora; Rod Flauhaus, BS ’86, May 4 commemoration project manager; and other wounded students—so they would be in place for the 50th commemoration. The markers join the memorials for the four students killed on the Prentice Hall parking lot, which were dedicated in 1999.
Ohio. The competition among the NBA’s 2022—and an enormous win for Kent State’s I Promise Scholars, a program that provides higher education opportunities for underserved students in Northeast Ohio. The competition among the NBA’s top players raised $450,000 for the I Promise Scholars program, which will help support current and future Kent State University I Promise students.

The funds raised by Team LeBron will help with important educational expenses such as books, supplies, and room and board that are critical to the success of I Promise students residing on the Kent Campus. In 2020, Kent State University provided the opportunity for a college education to all eligible students in the LeBron James Family Foundation’s oldest I Promise School, University I Promise students. The gift will help create an endowed directorship to accelerate BHR’s effort to recruit and retain top leadership and support an undergraduate fellows program for first- and second-year students interested in pursuing careers in neuroscience research, education, healthcare or related areas.

Miller, who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Kent State in 2020, was the keynote presenter during the Brain Health Research Institute grand opening lecture in November 2021.

Kent State University at Geauga also received a $2,500 grant from the Geauga Campus Hunger Task Force as part of a new partnership to help local students in need. This grant complements a Geauga Campus-sponsored fundraiser that generated more than $780 for students. More than 80% of its 2,200+ students receive Pell grants or some form of scholarship or grant aid. The new grant funds have been used to purchase gift cards to ALDI grocery stores.

Team LeBron had a big win in the NBA All-Star Game in February 2022—and an enormous win for Kent State’s I Promise Scholars, a program that provides higher education opportunities for underserved students in Northeast Ohio. The competition among the NBA’s top players raised $450,000 for the I Promise Scholars program, which will help support current and future Kent State University I Promise students.

The funds raised by Team LeBron will help with important educational expenses such as books, supplies, and room and board that are critical to the success of I Promise students residing on the Kent Campus. In 2020, Kent State University provided the opportunity for a college education to all eligible students in the LeBron James Family Foundation’s oldest I Promise School, University I Promise students. The gift will help create an endowed directorship to accelerate BHR’s effort to recruit and retain top leadership and support an undergraduate fellows program for first- and second-year students interested in pursuing careers in neuroscience research, education, healthcare or related areas.

Miller, who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Kent State in 2020, was the keynote presenter during the Brain Health Research Institute grand opening lecture in November 2021.

Kent State University at Geauga also received a $2,500 grant from the Geauga Campus Hunger Task Force as part of a new partnership to help local students in need. This grant complements a Geauga Campus-sponsored fundraiser that generated more than $780 for students. More than 80% of its 2,200+ students receive Pell grants or some form of scholarship or grant aid. The new grant funds have been used to purchase gift cards to ALDI grocery stores.

The highest recognition that doctoral universities can receive, the prestigious designation affirms Kent State's place as an elite research institution and puts the university in the company of universities such as Yale, Harvard and the University of California-Berkeley. Kent State became one of five universities in Ohio to be designated R1, joining The Ohio State University, the University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University and Ohio University. Institutions with the R1 designation are considered to have “very high research activity.” Only 146 universities in the nation have R1 status. Kent State, Ohio University and the University at Buffalo are the only Mid-American Conference schools to carry this esteemed designation.

The university’s commitment to internationalization is embedded in its mission and strategic plan and is entrenched in the university’s identity through competitive research, comprehensive education-abroad programs, international curriculum and workforce development. The university is entrenched in the university’s mission and strategic plan and is entrenched in the university’s identity through competitive research, comprehensive education-abroad programs, international student and scholar programs. Kent State was the only US university to receive this award in 2022.

Neuroscientist Earl K. Miller, BA ’85, PhD, and his wife, Marlene M. Wickerski, have pledged $5 million to support research programs and students in Kent State University’s Brain Health Research Institute. The BHR focuses on cross-disciplinary research and education to understand the influences that impact brain health across the lifespan, using the knowledge gained as a window into the prevention and treatment of brain disease. The gift will help create an endowed directorship to accelerate BHR’s effort to recruit and retain top leadership and support an undergraduate fellows program for first- and second-year students interested in pursuing careers in neuroscience research, education, healthcare or related areas.

Miller, who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Kent State in 2020, was the keynote presenter during the Brain Health Research Institute grand opening lecture in November 2021.

Kent State University at Geauga also received a $2,500 grant from the Geauga Campus Hunger Task Force as part of a new partnership to help local students in need. This grant complements a Geauga Campus-sponsored fundraiser that generated more than $780 for students. More than 80% of its 2,200+ students receive Pell grants or some form of scholarship or grant aid. The new grant funds have been used to purchase gift cards to ALDI grocery stores.

Mary Ann Raghanti, PhD, professor of biological anthropology and chair of Kent State’s Department of Anthropology, has been elected a 2021 Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world’s largest general scientific society and publisher of the journal Science. Raghanti also serves as a faculty member in Kent State’s School of Biomedical Sciences and a member of the executive committee of the Brain Health Research Institute. She was recognized for her unique and distinguished contributions to biological anthropology and the knowledge and understanding of the origin and evolution of human and primate behavior.

Kent State University received the 2022 Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization from NAFSA: Association of International Educators (formerly called National Association of Foreign Student Advisers). Named after the late Sen. Paul Simon of Illinois, the honor recognizes Kent State for overall excellence in integrating international education throughout all facets of the university and its campuses. Kent State’s global reach has been expansive, with educational centers in Florence, Italy, and Curitiba, Brazil, and outreach centers in China and India. It also boasts more than 500 education-abroad programs.

The university’s commitment to internationalization is embedded in its mission and strategic plan and is entrenched in the university’s identity through competitive research, comprehensive education-abroad programs, international student and scholar programs. Kent State was the only US university to receive this award in 2022.

Kent State University received the 2022 Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization from NAFSA: Association of International Educators (formerly called National Association of Foreign Student Advisers). Named after the late Sen. Paul Simon of Illinois, the honor recognizes Kent State for overall excellence in integrating international education throughout all facets of the university and its campuses. Kent State’s global reach has been expansive, with educational centers in Florence, Italy, and Curitiba, Brazil, and outreach centers in China and India. It also boasts more than 500 education-abroad programs.

The university’s commitment to internationalization is embedded in its mission and strategic plan and is entrenched in the university’s identity through competitive research, comprehensive education-abroad programs, international student and scholar programs. Kent State was the only US university to receive this award in 2022.
Brain Health Research Institute Grand Opening

The Brain Health Research Institute celebrated the grand opening of its new lab spaces in November 2021 with an afternoon of activities that included a keynote presentation by cognitive neuroscientist Earl Miller, BA ’85, PhD, a dedication of the space, tours and student research demonstrations.

Located on the lower level of the Integrated Sciences Building on the Kent Campus, the new space features interdisciplinary research facilities called “collaboratories.” With state-of-the-art equipment and flexible lab space, the institute’s collaboratories enable researchers from diverse disciplines to bring their collective talents to bear on important unresolved questions about the brain and brain diseases.

The institute is a nationally recognized effort that taps passionate faculty and staff from across the university—not just in science-based departments—to work together as they solve brain-related challenges. Research topics include how hearing and listening change across childhood, reprogramming the brain with exercise, recovery from chronic spinal cord injury, new treatments for common forms of infertility, the effects of poetry on brain health and many more.

Crawford Hall Groundbreaking

Kent State officially broke ground on Crawford Hall, the future home of the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship, on March 8, 2022, in a ceremony attended by more than 400 people, including university officials, donors, alumni, students, elected officials and special guests. Construction on this state-of-the-art building is expected to be completed in 2024. Crawford Hall will support innovative instruction, leading research and student support services for thousands of business majors, minors and others taking business courses across the Kent State system.

The Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship and Crawford Hall have been named in honor of Ambassador Edward F. Crawford and his family, who provided the largest single philanthropic gift in Kent State history to enable the construction of this building.

Doctoral Student in Computer Science Receives AAUW International Fellowship Award

The American Association of University Women has awarded a 2021-22 International Fellowship to Racheal Mukisa, a Ugandan native who is currently pursuing a PhD in computer science at Kent State’s College of Arts and Sciences.

With an aim to tackle barriers women face in education, the International Fellowship is for women who are pursuing full-time graduate or postdoctoral study in the United States, but who are not U.S. citizens. For the 2021-22 academic year, the AAUW awarded a total of $5 million through fellowships and grant programs to 260 scholars, as well as to community projects and programs that promote education and equity for women and girls.

“The 21st century brought enormous advancements in computing and technology, yet women are still underrepresented in this field,” Mukisa says. “One of the reasons for undertaking an advanced career in computing is to build a sustainable pipeline for empowering more women into technology.”

Through this fellowship, Mukisa plans to leverage cutting-edge computational techniques to address prevailing challenges in developing countries. Prior to pursuing a PhD in computer science, she worked for a decade in information technology-related functions, including building spatiotemporal models for biosurveillance (using smartphones) of crop transmittable diseases in Uganda while earning her Master of Science in data communications and software engineering at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

Her current research is geared towards managing cardiovascular diseases by building machine intelligence in echocardiography (EKG), a field where sound waves are used to capture heart images for diagnosing cardiac conditions.

“Recent advancements in EKG have led to the generation of complex multidimensional echo data, which exceeds the capabilities of current statistical tools,” Mukisa says. “Applying machine learning is useful to analyze heart ultrasound data using signal processing, and such algorithms provide opportunities for developing automated echo analysis and interpretation systems. The automated approach can significantly assist in decreasing the variability and burden associated with manual image measurements.”

“We’re proud to support the work of these outstanding scholars,” says Gloria Blackwell, executive vice president and chief programs officer at AAUW. “This year’s recipients are making valuable contributions in a wide range of fields, but with a common goal of improving life for all of us. We’re impressed by what these scholars are doing and excited about the great things they’ll accomplish throughout their research and careers.”

—By Jim Maxwell, BS ’00, MS ’11

Learn more about the Department of Computer Science at www.kent.edu/cs.
CLIMATE CHANGE

KENT CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY TOUR

Follow along as Melanie Knowles, manager of sustainability, shares some recent Earth-friendly initiatives on the Kent Campus.

BY JAN SENN

O n a warm but windy April day, about 40 faculty and staff gather at the squirrel statue near the Kent State University Library for a noon-time “Wellness Walk & Talk” tour organized by the Employee Wellness office and led this day by Melanie Knowles, Kent State’s manager of sustainability. We expect to get some exercise and learn about recent sustainability initiatives on the Kent Campus.

“A couple locations are going to require you to use your imagination, because some things don’t always happen on schedule and other things are inside buildings,” Knowles says, as she sets out at a brisk pace.

Providing Alternative Transportation

Heading past Risman Plaza along the Lefton Esplanade, Knowles points out a stand for eBikes and eScooters—although there’s only one bike left at this spot as the rest have been checked out. They are part of the Department of Recreational Services’ new partnership with SPIN, a leading micromobility company that operates dockless electric scooters and bikes on campuses and in cities across North America and Europe.

The program launched in March with 100 eBikes and 100 eScooters on the Kent Campus and within the city of Kent for use by students, faculty, staff and the community. The goal is to reduce traffic volume, connect riders to local businesses and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The scooters and bikes provide a convenient way for users to get to class and run errands—and they’re a fun recreational activity for the community. Participants can download the SPIN app, view the safety videos and take a safety quiz to earn a $5 ride credit and a free helmet.

“We’re always working to make the campus more bike friendly so people can get where they need to go without having to own or use a car all the time,” Knowles says. “I’m not taking anyone’s parking pass away, but we want to make it easy and convenient to use alternative transportation as much as possible.”

So far, one month after the launch, she says there have been “20,900 trips on bikes and scooters, more than 3,000 individual users, 23,345 miles traveled—and 75% of the checkouts are for the scooters.”

Charging Electric Vehicles

Kent State currently has five electric vehicle charging stations for electric cars and trucks on the Kent Campus, located in the parking lots of Harbourt Hall, Heer Hall, the Center for Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement, the DI Hub and the Kent Student Center visitor lot.

“We received a grant from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to add six more charging stations, but thanks to COVID-19 and supply chain issues they don’t have the computer chips that go into the stations,” Knowles says. “The new charging stations are already roughed in, so we are hoping to have them in operation by the end of the calendar year. The new locations will be here [she points to a spot near Bowman Hall], behind the Liquid Crystal Institute and by the Center for the Performing Arts.”

Turning Food Waste Into Renewable Energy and Fertilizer

Knowles stops outside the DI Hub for another “use your imagination” talk. “One of the things we have at the DI Hub is the Grind2Energy system,” she says. “For years we’ve been looking at how to divert food waste on the Kent Campus away from the landfill. I’m not talking about unused food that can be eaten; if we can feed people, that is our first priority. I’m talking about kitchen scraps and leftovers from people’s plates.

“For the Grind2Energy system, all those food scraps go into bins,” she adds. “Throughout the day, staff members take the organic material in the bins to a processing table, which is basically an industrial size garbage disposal made by InSinkErator. It grinds up the food waste, mixes it with a little water and that slurry goes directly into a holding tank inside the building. It’s contained so there is no odor. When that tank is full, a liquid waste hauler from Quasar Energy Group transports the slurry to a local anaerobic digestion facility in Collinswood.

Anaerobic digestion—a process in which bacteria break down organic matter in the absence of oxygen—creates two main products. One is natural gas that can be converted into electricity by a turbine or used for vehicle fueling stations—so the truck that picks up the waste is fueled by the waste. The other product is a nitrogen-rich fertilizer—so the nutrients from the food waste restore nutrients in the soil to grow more food. The Grind2Energy system recently was added to the Eastway Dining Facility through a grant from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. “Between these two facilities, so far we have diverted more than 80 tons of food waste from the landfill,” Knowles says. “That translates into reducing our carbon impact in a way that’s equivalent to 134,000 miles not driven in a vehicle and it produces 4.6 tons of fertilizer.”
Connecting with Farmers

Before leaving the DI Hub, Knowles adds, “I will plug the Kent State Farmers’ Market that’s being held in the DI Hub this semester. You should definitely check it out.”

Kent State University has partnered with Haymaker Farmers’ Market to provide students with opportunities to learn about local farmers, select fresh produce and connect with the broader Kent community. In addition to food, the market includes crafts, educational workshops related to food, and performances (music, dance, theater).

Relocating Trees to Maintain the Tree Canopy

Pausing at the Crawford Hall construction site, Knowles acknowledges that the view has dramatically changed with the removal of Terrace Hall. “But don’t worry, 22 trees in that area were relocated around the campus,” she says. “Kent State has been designated a Tree Campus USA by the Arbor Day Foundation every year the designation has existed [since 2000]. Our Tree Advisory Board, which includes people on campus and off, is always looking at how to maintain and expand our tree canopy.

“Moving trees is a big part of that because we don’t want to stop progress. But if you cut down a mature tree and plant a tiny tree, the canopy takes a big hit. So it’s important to us that we maintain the existing trees as much as we can.”

“The company we work with, Busy Bee Services in Novely, Ohio, uses a special tool called an air spade that uses high pressured air to remove soil from around the roots without damaging root tissue. That allows the tree to keep its tiny roots, which helps trees have more success when they’re transplanted elsewhere.”

Knowles heads behind Dunbar Hall to show the group two of the transplanted trees. “The one closest to me is an Amur maackia, which is a member of the pea family that uses high pressured air to remove soil from around the roots without damaging root tissue. That allows the tree to keep its tiny roots, which helps trees have more success when they’re transplanted elsewhere.”

Knowles heads behind Dunbar Hall to show the group two of the transplanted trees. “The one closest to me is an Amur maackia, which is a member of the pea family that uses high pressured air to remove soil from around the roots without damaging root tissue. That allows the tree to keep its tiny roots, which helps trees have more success when they’re transplanted elsewhere.”

The Planning Partnership is a tree sponsorship program offered by University Facilities Management that gives donors the opportunity to dedicate a tree as a gift or memorial. They can choose from a wide variety of trees and ornamentals that have been selected according to guidelines of the Kent Campus Landscape Master Plan. A $2,500 donation pays for the cost of purchasing, planting and maintaining the tree—as well as replacing it if it should die.

Aiming for Zero Waste

Stopping at Eastway Center, home of the other Grind2Energy system on campus, Knowles takes the opportunity to talk about Campus Race to Zero Waste, which used to be called Recyclemania. “The competition, in partnership with the National Wildlife Foundation, is a tool to help colleges and universities across the United States and Canada advance campus recycling and waste reduction efforts.

“We just finished the competition, so I don’t have the results yet for this year, but last year Kent State won in two categories,” she says. “One was the ‘most electronics recycled’ category. This year we collected 33,904 pounds of electronics for recycling in 30 days. The other category we won last year is called a ‘zero waste’ category. It’s not the whole campus; we picked three buildings and measured all the waste coming from them to see which had the smallest waste per square foot. It was exciting to see Kent State recognized for the work we’re doing in those areas.”

Planning for the Future

Looping around Manchester Field and returning to where we started, Knowles says, “There’s always so much more to talk about than we have time for.” And she reminds the group that in January Kent State embarking on its first comprehensive campus sustainability plan. “There have been a couple opportunities for the general campus community to provide feedback, but there will be more,” she says. “So please keep an eye out; I’m trying to make sure they’re always in FlashLine Alerts. We also have a great advisory group of experts on campus contributing to that effort as well.

“Thanks again everyone for coming out and walking with me. Have a great day!”

Learn more about Kent State’s sustainability initiatives at www.kent.edu/sustainability/initiatives.

Learn about upcoming “Wellness Walk and Talk” tours at www.kent.edu/hr/wellness/current-wellness-offerings.

KENT STATE EXPANDS SOLAR INSTALLATIONS

Kent State continues to establish itself as a leader in sustainability and environmental stewardship with solar installations—to attract students in environmental studies and research, to help our planet and to save money.

The university’s first solar array was installed through a power purchase agreement on the roof of the Field House on the Kent Campus. A third-party developer owned the solar array but sold the power to Kent State. Upon completion in summer 2012 it was the largest roof-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panel electrical system within the university’s system of Ohio. Kent State now owns the solar panel system. Electricity from the panels provides about one-third of the power required for the combined Field House and Dix Stadium facilities.

With renewed interest in solar energy by Kent State’s leadership, in 2020-21 Kent State added solar arrays at six of its regional campuses (Ashland, East Liverpool, Geauga, Salem, Stark and Trumbull) as well as at the College of Podiatric Medicine in independence, Ohio. The new arrays increased the university’s solar energy capacity to 4.24 megawatts-DC and produce about 5,281,000 kWh of electricity. This is enough electricity to power 445 homes each year. While contributing the environmental benefits of solar power, these arrays also are projected to save the university over $3 million in electric cost over 25 years.

Native perennials attractive to pollinators are planted near the ground-mounted systems to help preserve and promote beneficial bees and insects, slow down rainwater runoff and reduce mowing and its associated air pollution.

Every year, the solar PV arrays are projected to reduce Kent State’s carbon footprint by 4,250 tons of CO2, the equivalent to removing 806 cars from the roads or not burning 491,127 gallons of gasoline, says Bob Misbrenner, project manager of sustainability and environmental stewardship with solar energy conservation and commissioning in the Office of the University Architect. He and Melanie Knowles, manager of sustainability at Kent State, recently published an article about Kent State’s new solar arrays in Facilities Manager magazine.

Misbrenner points out that the cost of solar energy has dropped by nearly 70% in the past decade. “Solar panel efficiency is also always improving, along with battery storage,” he says. However, there are current demand, supply chain and federal regulatory issues that are causing difficulty obtaining panels and batteries, delaying projects and eroding some of the prior cost reductions.

Solar energy dashboards are also active for many of the solar arrays (Ashland, East Liverpool, Geauga, Salem and Trumbull). Check out the dashboards linked under their sections on the National Solar Tour page of the Kent State Sustainability website. (Kent State was part of the American Solar Energy Society’s National Solar Tour and the society’s local “Ohio Wish You Were Here” tour in fall 2021.)

The university plans to have up to an additional 3.5 megawatts of ground-mounted solar PV panels installed on a vacant site just east of the Kent Campus. This system, which will include a 1.54 MWh battery storage system, is currently planned to be operational by late fall 2023.

Learn more at www.kent.edu/magazine/kent-state-expands-solar-installations.
Survival of the Trees

Volunteers from the tree advisory board, the grounds department and the Herrick student organization meet to maintain the Climate Change Grove during an Arbor Day/Earth Day event on April 22, 2022.

Imagine a day when Ohio's environment is unable to sustain native trees like the sugar maple, which produces the sap distilled into Ohio maple syrup—or the Ohio buckeye, our state tree.

Research under way at the Climate Change Grove on the Kent Campus is shedding light on what may happen to native tree species if we don't address the carbon emissions that are causing global warming.

The tree grove, which sits on a parcel of land behind the Warren Recreation and Wellness Center, was established in 2018 through a partnership between University Facilities Management and the Department of Biological Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences. The grove serves as a living laboratory for teaching biological sciences and conducting climate change research, as well as a reforestation effort.

Melissa Davis, BS '04, MS '10, horticultural facilitator for biological sciences, says she came up with the idea for the grove after attending a US Forest Service presentation on climate change. "The idea was that, as the climate changes, the flora would either have to be able to adapt or would perish," says Davis, who immediately thought of trees. "Trees are so special in our world. They clean the air we breathe, they're a source of food (fruits and nuts) and shelter (building materials). They provide shade, help cool our homes and reduce our energy costs."

Davis thought the open space behind the recreation center would be the perfect spot for planting a variety of trees to see which could adapt as the climate warms.

"Rebekkah Berryhill, BS '02, grounds manager for facilities management, says the grove represents a win for the university on several levels. "We're always looking for partnerships to help students learn and to grow our campus canopy," she says, noting that previously the land was wasting resources. "We were using fuel to mow the area and treating it with herbicides and pesticides. It's a beautiful stretch of land, the idea was maybe we could try to reforest it."

Davis is researching which tree species could best survive climate change in partnership with the biological sciences department, the Kent State University Tree Advisory Board and facilities management. The research also will help Berryhill's groundskeeping team maintain the landscape of the Kent Campus, which has received repeated "Tree Campus USA" designations from the Arbor Day Foundation in recognition of the university's tree planting and conservation efforts.

The grove was planted by students from biological sciences, many of whom are members of the Herrick Consoratory and Sustainability Club, which Davis advises, as well as faculty, staff, alumni and volunteers. Davis says little work was done during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, so a joint Arbor Day/Earth Day event took place on April 22, 2022, when members of the tree advisory board, the grounds department and volunteers from the Herrick student organization cleaned up the grove and assessed how the trees are faring.

"The grove holds species native to Northeast Ohio, as well as others that typically require warmer climates to thrive. "Climates have been changing throughout geological time frames," Davis says. "The problem now is climates are changing so fast, species cannot adapt quickly enough—and that is when we will lose species."

Climate change models are as dynamic as climate change itself, Davis adds. "That's why I thought it would be interesting to test the models in a real-world application." Research from the US Forest Service already suggests some startling examples of what trees will be winners and losers as Ohio's climate changes. While earlier models for the sugar maple predicted substantial habitat decline in southern Ohio under harsh climate change, recent models rate the sugar maple as highly adaptable—although under persistent drought or other stresses, it could still decline.

"Among the losers would be two native species: black cherry and the Ohio buckeye. Davis says often people don't understand what is at stake. It's not too late, though, for the global community to take steps to reverse climate change and save species from extinction," she says. "A place like Kent State University that fosters education can do this outreach and become a part of this effort."

"Climates are changing so fast, species cannot adapt quickly enough—and that is when we will lose species."

—Melissa Davis

Climate360 news site, posts the Climate360 at Kent State.

Concerned about the dire crisis facing their generation, Kent State students are drawing attention to the causes of climate change and demanding action.

In spring 2021, several students from the College of Communication and Information helped founded Project Citizen: Climate360, a collaboration of students from Kent State University, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and Morgan State University in Baltimore. The group brings together student communicators, journalists, filmmakers, researchers and others to report on climate change, foster civil conversations about global warming and seek solutions.

Grace Springer, a second-year student majoring in journalism, is the lead reporter for Climate360. She reports and writes stories about climate change for the Climate360 news site, posts the online work of other student creators and manages the organization's social media.

"We are dealing with an issue that is going to define a generation," says Springer, who has been involved with Climate360 since its founding. "There's a responsibility for journalists to cover climate change in a way that fosters discussion and action so that we can bring about a better future. Practically every news story has a climate angle, and it can feel very scary at times to face the harsh realities of climate change. But as journalists, we have to be the ones to find hope and turn that hope into solutions that could lead to real change."

In collaboration with LMU content creators, Springer worked on a documentary for Climate360, "Planet Based: Fighting Climate Change One Plate at a Time," which is expected to be released at the end of spring semester. Micah Beck, a freelance videographer and Kent State first-year student majoring in digital media production, helped with the film.

"Our upcoming documentary is about defining what a climate-friendly diet means," Springer says. "We will be taking a closer look at what we eat and seeing what impact different diets have on the planet."

In addition to contributing to the Climate360 news site, Springer is a member of Sunrise Movement Kent State. It is one of more than 400 chapters of the Sunrise Movement, a national group of young people and allies who, since 2017, have advocated for the Green New Deal and other climate justice initiatives.

In November 2021, the group led a demonstration and march around the Kent Campus to bring awareness to climate change and to support environmental policies. The protesters carried signs displaying the age each would be in the year 2046, the year global warming is projected to have increased by 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which means irreversible climate change, Springer says. The protest was timed to coincide with the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (aka COP26, the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties), which brought world leaders and diplomats together in Glasgow, Scotland, to address climate policy.

Springer says the Sunrise Movement has been on hiatus at Kent State recently, but the group intends to reconvene for the 2022-2023 school year. The plan is to continue climate activism with protests, marches and demonstrations, as well as calling and writing legislators to encourage them to support progressive climate policies.

"Climate360 is one of more than 400 chapters of the Sunrise Movement, a national group of young people and allies who, since 2017, have advocated for the Green New Deal and other climate justice initiatives.

Grace Springer, a second-year journalism student, collaborates with students from other universities to cover climate change issues.

—Candace Goforth DeSantis, BS '94

"The problem now is climates are changing so fast, species cannot adapt quickly enough—and that is when we will lose species."

—Melissa Davis

"We're always looking for partnerships to help students learn and to grow our campus canopy," says Davis, noting that previously the land was wasting resources. "We were using fuel to mow the
Environmental activist Justin Thompson is working to make the world a better place for future generations.

BY JAN SENN

"Let Our Powers Combine!" If you’re a millennial—or watched children’s TV shows in the early 1990s—that expression may ring a bell. It’s a catchphrase from Captain Planet and the Planeteers (also known as The New Adventures of Captain Planet). The animated series featuring an environmentalist superhero ran for 113 episodes from 1990 to 1996.

The brainchild of entertainment mogul and environmental philanthropist Ted Turner, the series was created as a way to teach children about real-world environmental crises like deforestation, oil spills, pollution, global warming and nuclear waste. It features five teens from across the globe who unite their powers to summon Captain Planet and defend the Earth from environmental devastation. The popular cartoon influenced a generation of millennials to care about environmental causes.

One of those millennials is 31-year-old Justin Thompson, AS ‘20, a first-generation, nontraditional student who earned an associate degree at Kent State Ashtabula and is now at the Kent Campus doing a double major in environmental studies and political science with a concentration in public policy and triple minors in geology, geography and urban studies. He recently was accepted into the McNair Scholars Program, which prepares first-generation and underrepresented students for doctoral study.

“Ted Turner saw a need to educate youth on the environment and to fight pollution and polluters—and it worked,” says Thompson, who credits the cartoon series and a childhood struggle with seasonal allergies with sparking his interest in air and water quality, as well as other environmental issues.

Involved in many community organizations and programs related to the environment, Thompson is president of Kent State’s Future Environmental Professionals Club. It aims to create a better understanding of environmental consulting and its role in protecting the environment and community. The club recently invited Carolyn Harding—host of the GrassRoot Ohio radio/podcast and a progressive candidate for the Ohio House of Representatives—to speak on Zoom about environmental and civic podcasting and why it’s important to elect officials who stand up for the environment.

“I wanted students to see that podcasting, films and other forms of media are also areas they could go into as an environmental professional,” Thompson says. “And we need more people who care about the environment to run for office.”

However, Thompson—who is graduating in December with Departmental Honors from the Honors College—isn’t interested in running for office himself. “I don’t want to be on stage, that’s not me,” he says. “But I have no problem helping others get elected and helping them work on policies to enact.”

In addition to his classes at Kent State, on weekends he’s recently completed a two-month Campaign Staff Academy through LEAD Ohio, a comprehensive training program for current and future campaign managers and staff. He also participated in a 10-month Environmental Justice Academy in the Miami Valley through the US Environmental Protection Agency, which helps participants cultivate skills and access to local environmental concerns.

Thompson, who is the environmental climate justice chair for the NAACP in Ashtabula, has been working with the organization on legislation for Ohio regarding the regulation of fracking. He addressed the topic in his senior honors thesis—“Is Ohio Violating the Great Lakes Compact?” which investigated the water depletion that results from oil and gas exploration throughout the Great Lakes Basin. His research suggests there may be evidence to support civil litigation and/or the proposal of new regulations to protect this source of fresh water, which provides drinking water to more than 40 million people in the US and Canada.

This summer, in an internship through Kent State, Thompson will work with the NAACP to identify Ohio legislators who may be receptive to sponsoring legislation that would regulate fracking. They will also consider when best to introduce it. “Fracking is not the best topic to introduce just before an election because it’s so polarizing,” Thompson says. “We recognize that with the makeup of Ohio’s Legislature, we’re never going to be able to ban fracking. So that’s not what we’re trying to do. We’re trying to make it safer—to protect the water, to protect the people.”

Through his years of volunteering for environmental organizations, Thompson says he’s realized that it is the larger state actors that effect real change. “If you want to make a difference in the world on a large scale, it’s the policies that need to be changed,” he says. “You can incentivize people to do things individually, but the individual contribution in terms of pollution and climate change is fairly small in comparison to the systemic polluters. And once you do something on a large scale, it affects the individual as well.”

“TAKING ACTION to Protect the Planet”

If you want to make a difference in the world on a large scale, it’s the policies that need to be changed.”

So Thompson—who also is on the executive committee of the Ashtabula County Democratic Party—encourages people who are concerned about climate change to vote for officials who prioritize the environment and to vote with their dollars when it comes to making consumer and investment decisions. “For example, we should be looking at the supply chains to see if companies are following sustainable practices,” he says. “We could negotiate with our energy providers to purchase energy from renewable resources as opposed to coal and natural gas. And if we’re investing in the stock market, we should see if those companies get their energy from fossil fuels or through wind and solar.

“Recently Gen Zs and millennials are calling for institutions to divest from companies that are invested in fossil fuels,” he adds. “Instead of just looking at the bottom line of profit, we want institutions to look at the triple bottom line: people, planet, profit. That’s something we could do at Kent State, too. Students can advocate for that change to happen. But it’s not going to happen if nobody calls for it.”

No doubt, Captain Planet would agree.
How two Kent State researchers are trying to understand climate change.

CHALLENGING TRADITION

In their shared Biogeochemical Oceanography and Soil Science (or BOSS) laboratory at McGilvrey Hall, married couple Timothy Gallagher, PhD, and Allyson “Allie” Tessin, PhD, both assistant professors of geology, are studying environments have responded to climate change. He’s cataloging what human intervention has done and might continue to do to the Earth’s soil. And climate change. On a research vessel that’s been drilling and at the bottom of the sea—to better understand climate change. Gallagher, a biogeochemist and sedimentary geologist, digs into the land, quite literally, to study how terrestrial environments have responded to climate change. He’s cataloging what human intervention has done and might continue to do to the Earth’s soil.

By studying soil carbonate, researchers can “provide both context and test-case scenarios” for climate modelers, says Gallagher. “I started looking at modern soils to try to understand things like how and when does soil carbonate form in the soil to improve the accuracy of our past reconstructions,” he says. But by going back into the geologic past, researchers can provide both context and test-case scenarios for climate modelers, he says, which can help them understand how the Earth behaved millions of years ago, when it was hotter and had more carbon dioxide.

In one experiment, Gallagher adds sugar to bottles of soil and water from the soil to improve mineral formation. “We’re working on similar questions with similar motivations—but in slightly different ways,” says Gallagher. But working side by side, communicating on various projects, “helps give us a slightly wider perspective—a diverse way of thinking about some of the problems we’re thinking about,” he says, which can help them understand things like how and when does soil carbonate form in the soil to improve the accuracy of our past reconstructions, Gallagher says.

In other words, studying soil carbonate can create a “really useful archive of past clues about Earth’s climate system, going back millions of years,” Gallagher says. And that archive of Earth’s past can help scientists better predict Earth’s future as the climate changes.

How? Climate change is dominated by rising temperatures and increasing amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Scientists often rely on physics-driven computer models to predict how the climate will respond to higher temperatures and more carbon dioxide, Gallagher says. But by going back into the geologic past, researchers can provide both context and test-case scenarios for climate modelers, says Gallagher. “I started looking at modern soils to try to understand things like how and when does soil carbonate form in the soil to improve the accuracy of our past reconstructions,” he says. But by going back into the geologic past, researchers can provide both context and test-case scenarios for climate modelers, says Gallagher. “I started looking at modern soils to try to understand things like how and when does soil carbonate form in the soil to improve the accuracy of our past reconstructions,” he says.

In one experiment, Gallagher adds sugar to bottles of soil and water from the soil to improve mineral formation. “We’re working on similar questions with similar motivations—but in slightly different ways,” says Gallagher. But working side by side, communicating on various projects, “helps give us a slightly wider perspective—a diverse way of thinking about some of the problems we’re thinking about,” he says, which can help them understand things like how and when does soil carbonate form in the soil to improve the accuracy of our past reconstructions, Gallagher says. But by going back into the geologic past, researchers can provide both context and test-case scenarios for climate modelers, he says, which can help them understand how the Earth behaved millions of years ago, when it was hotter and had more carbon dioxide.

In one experiment, Gallagher adds sugar to bottles of soil and water from the soil to improve mineral formation. “We’re working on similar questions with similar motivations—but in slightly different ways,” says Gallagher. But working side by side, communicating on various projects, “helps give us a slightly wider perspective—a diverse way of thinking about some of the problems we’re thinking about,” he says, which can help them understand things like how and when does soil carbonate form in the soil to improve the accuracy of our past reconstructions, Gallagher says.
“Then I watch how the organisms respond,” he says, “and how quickly and at what sort of rates and ratios they breathe.” The experiments help Gallagher build a fundamental understanding of what controls “soil respiration,” or the measure of the carbon dioxide the soil releases.

“We can explore things like: How does temperature affect that respiration rate in the lab?” he says. Those laboratory readings act as a guide for scientists in the field, who are trying to understand in real time how soil respiration is responding to climate change.

Gallagher also plans to place monitoring equipment in Ohio soil, mimicking a setup he first established at UT Austin’s Stengl Lost Pines Biological Station, which he still monitors. Over spring break Gallagher and Kent State doctoral student Kyle Smart, MS ’21, traveled to the Texas site to repair and install the monitoring station.

“From the depth of sediment the drill reached, Tessin is able to look back as many as 100 million years—to a time when dinosaurs roamed the Earth, the oceans were a lot hotter and there was a lot more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, she says. “It’s a way to see how the oceans reorganized, and what changed in response to big inputs of carbon dioxide.”

“In other words, Tessin says she is “trying to reconstruct what happened in past climate events—past carbon addition events—to see what happened to ocean chemistry.”

Reaching into the bag she would cut the core down until what remained was only the part that had not been in contact with modern seawater or oxygen on deck. Then she placed that little nugget in a hydraulic press that pushed down on the core with 30,000 pounds of force, until the water came out of the rock, and she could slurp it up with a syringe. That way, she says, she could study the sediment and the water, too.

Left: Dr. Gallagher with a monitor at the long-term soil monitoring station.

Below: The long-term soil monitoring station at the University of Texas at Austin’s Stengl Lost Pines Biological Station.

Above: Dr. Tessin prepares a water sample to measure alkalinity, which provides information about carbon cycling within sediment water.

Above: Doctoral student Kyle Smart, MS ’21, works on repairs and installs new features at the long-term soil monitoring station.

Below: The science party from Expedition 392 on the JOIDES Resolution.

Above: Sunrise over the JOIDES Resolution derrick in the south Indian Ocean.

“In a way to see how the oceans reorganized, and what changed in response to big inputs of carbon dioxide.”
Climate change is a complex problem with no easy answers—and everything at stake. As global temperatures continue to rise, Kent State faculty reflect on our ability to mitigate and adapt to a changing planet.

When the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest report in April 2022, IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee described it as “powerful evidence that we have the potential to mitigate climate change. We are at a crossroads. ... Climate promises and plans must be turned into reality and action, now. It is time to stop burning our planet and start investing in the abundant renewable energy all around us.”

The Working Group III report, prepared by 278 scientists from 65 countries, is the third installment of the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which will be completed this year. “It’s now or never if we want to limit global warming to 1.5°C (2.7°F), says IPCC Working Group III Co-Chair Jim Skea. “Without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, it will be impossible.” But there are options in all sectors to at least halve emissions by 2030.

The Working Group II report, released in February 2022, warned that global warming exceeding 1.5°C will lead to “additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible” and “would cause unavoidable increases in multiple climate hazards and present multiple risks to ecosystems and humans.”

“Inclusive and green economies, prosperity, cleaner air and better health are possible for all, if we respond to this crisis with solidarity and courage.”

While mitigating actions would substantially reduce projected losses and damages, it’s impossible to eliminate them all. Even to slow climate change, the world is running out of time.

In the IPCC’s first AR6 installment, released in August 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres characterized the situation as “a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable.” Human influence has warmed the climate at a rate unprecedented in at least the last 2,000 years. However, Guterres also noted that “Inclusive and green economies, prosperity, cleaner air and better health are possible for all, if we respond to this crisis with solidarity and courage.”

Despite the dire warnings and the daunting statistics, faculty at Kent State—designated an R1 research university in February—remain hopeful about opportunities to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate in the coming years. To better understand and address the climate crisis, we asked several faculty members, most of whom participate in Kent State’s Environmental Science and Design Research Institute, for their perspective on this existential challenge.

“A GLOBAL CHALLENGE”

“Inclusive and green economies, prosperity, cleaner air and better health are possible for all, if we respond to this crisis with solidarity and courage.”

UN Secretary-General
António Guterres

“Just about every single person in the world already has the values they need to care about a changing climate. They just haven’t connected the dots. And that’s what we can do through our conversation with them.”—Katharine Hayhoe, climate scientist
ANOMALOUS WEATHER PATTERNS

Terms describing severe weather patterns like “El Niño” and “polar vortex” get bandied about on the nightly news without much context or definition. Understanding climate and how extreme weather and climate variability manifest and affect life on Earth helps put rising temperatures and mild winters in perspective. “We are seeing fewer really extreme cold days,” says Scott Sheridan, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Geography, who published a study of abnormal weather patterns in the Journal of Geophysical Research in 2019. “Winter weather has gotten more irregular across the hemisphere but even in a warmed, world, that doesn’t mean cold weather is going away.”

Although the term polar vortex was popularized in recent years, the winter weather condition is nothing new. In stable polar vortex conditions, the cold air forms a dome that circulates in the Arctic. When changes in the jet stream disrupt the polar vortex, it forces unusually cold weather south from the pole. As the Arctic continues to warm, it leads to more chaos in the atmosphere and more wild weather.

The extreme cold wave that swept through Texas in February 2021 brought record-low temperatures, overloading the power grid and bursting pipes. The temperatures were severe, but cold weather in winter is expected. What interests Sheridan are the weather events that are unusual relative to the season. “In the spring of 2012, we had the warmest outbreak in the history of the Eastern United States for the month of March,” he says. “We think nothing of highs in the 80s in summer, but a week of highs in the 80s in March is unusual. This false spring caused trees to bloom early. When normal weather returned a few weeks later, the frost killed all the tree buds.”

This kind of mismatch, where the weather pattern doesn’t align with the season, can lead to widespread losses, particularly for tree fruits. Less fruit to harvest results in higher prices at the grocery store. Unusual weather can also trigger birds and insects to migrate before food sources are sufficient in their destinations.

“There are a lot of ways in which our lives can be impacted by weather,” Sheridan says. “You only need to look at places like California or the Southwest United States to see what happens to water resources when you have anomalous conditions year after year. There’s a pattern that doesn’t align with the season, can be very severe, and can have impacts on places we might not expect.”

“WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PREPARE FOR CHALLENGES TO THE WAY WE LIVE IF IT'S WEATHER DEPENDENT.”

Other climate-related research from Kent State geographers includes:

Weather Whiplash: Cameron Lee, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Geography, received research funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Program office to explore long-term changes in shorter-term climate variability. He published a paper in the International Journal of Climatology in 2021 examining trends in rapid temperature changes—sometimes within 24 hours—and how they relate to the warming climate.

Ecosystem Disturbances: Timothy Assal, PhD, also an assistant professor in the Department of Geography, studies the effects of disturbance (e.g., drought, fire, and insects) on forest and shrubland ecosystems, typically by measuring the rate and pattern of environmental change. Of his most recent collaborative project, funded by the Northwest Climate Adaption Science Center, he says, “Our primary goal is to provide sound science to both resource managers and policy makers to help shape ecosystem management and conservation as we move into an uncertain future.”

WATER QUALITY

“IF CLIMATE CHANGE IS GOING TO MAKE THE ENVIRONMENT WETTER, WE CAN EXPECT THAT ONE OF THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN OUR AREA WILL BE WORSE HARMFUL ALGAE BLOOMS.”

The Great Lakes hold 20% of the world’s surface fresh water and supply drinking water for more than 48 million people. This vital resource is threatened by harmful algae blooms that damage the freshwater ecosystem. Not all algae are harmful and identifying toxic ones (such as cyanobacteria) apart from other algae can be challenging. Joseph D. Ortiz, PhD, professor in the Department of Geology (soon to be the Department of Earth Sciences), developed a methodology using satellite remote sensing to identify different strains of algae in Lake Erie. “The blooms in Lake Erie are predominantly driven by cyanobacteria,” Ortiz says. “Cyanobacteria are among the most ancient of living organisms on the planet. They date back billions of years and thrive in warm waters that have a high nutrient content.”

Those conditions exist in the western basin of Lake Erie. High amounts of nutrient runoff from agricultural fields result in perennual algae blooms. Differentiating among the potentially toxic algae provides essential information for public health decisions regarding water safety. “In the Midwest, we’re seeing future predictions for wetter conditions for our environment,” Ortiz says. “More rain will carry more nutrients, more fertilizer from farms into streams and creeks and eventually the rivers that feed into the lake. If climate change is going to make the environment wetter, we can expect that one of the potential consequences of climate change in our area will be worse harmful algae blooms.”

Graduate student Isreal Olajoe modeled the impacts of urbanization and climate change on the area’s water quality in a study at Old Woman Creek, which is west of Cleveland. Although only a modest increase in urbanization is predicted for the region through 2100—about 4%—the projected climate-related increase in precipitation would result in much higher nutrient runoff.

“Our best estimates tell us that we need to drop the amount of nutrients getting into the lake by about 40% in order to get these harmful algae blooms to a point where they’re manageable,” Ortiz says. “And that’s with the current precipitation. If we go a few decades into the future, with more CO2 in the atmosphere and higher precipitation rates, the amount of nutrients flowing into the basin is going to increase.”

Mitigation efforts to reduce nutrient runoff include planting vegetation along the riverbanks rather than farming up to the water’s edge. The forest strips that develop along the banks also help stabilize the soil and reduce erosion.

“One of the climate change issues we’re facing are having increasingly negative impacts not only on the environment but on society, particularly among the most vulnerable populations such as indigenous communities or subsistence farming,” Ortiz says. “That’s a real challenge because we’re seeing negative impacts occurring faster than previously anticipated. But there’s also opportunity. Every bit of emissions we reduce is one less tenth of a degree of global warning that will help mitigate potential problems coming down the pipeline.”
SCIENCE EDUCATION

Bridget Mulvey, PhD, associate professor of science education at the School of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies, can relate to a natural disaster’s effect on education. In September 2020, during her first weeks of teaching Earth science at a K-12 school in Williamsburg, Virginia, Hurricane Isaias slammed into the community. Many people were evacuated and school was canceled for about a week. When classes restarted, students asked her if assignments were due that day. “I said, ‘No, this is a natural disaster; first we’re going to make sure we’re all okay,’” Mulvey recalls. “We shifted that year’s curriculum to start with hurricanes—and we didn’t just look at them through a science perspective. We also created newspapers in collaboration with the English teacher to share our stories and those of others in the community.”

“Giving students the space and support to process the varied perspectives on that event and what it means for science and for their lives was essential,” she says. “I listened to their stories, their questions, their fears—and I applied the text and what that means for our own decision making.”

During the pandemic, Mulvey worked with the Wick Poetry Center and its director, David Hassler, to have students in teacher training programs reflect on their stories and what that means for our own decision making. “I use this book when asking teachers about the implications of pandemics and global climate change. It’s a way for almost any age group to think about the perspectives of others and how our background knowledge and experiences impact our perceptions and actions,” Mulvey says. “Teachers can use it to discuss what it means to have empathy and to consider the complexity of who has power, whose perspectives are being valued, and what that means for our own decision making.”

Mulvey recommends using this book to set the stage for critical considerations of issues that involve science and society.

**Old Enough to Save the Planet**, written by Loll Kirby and illustrated by Adelina Linus (Harry N. Abrams, 2021)

This book shares real accounts of children taking action to protect the planet. “It aims to foster people’s respect for themselves, others and the world—and to empower people to take informed action to positively impact the local and global,” Mulvey says. “The real-world examples can inspire children to develop their own action plans.” As with the other books, Mulvey recommends critical examination of the text and pairing it with more in-depth texts that examine varied perspectives and evidence.

**We Are Water Protectors**, written by Carole Lindstrom and illustrated by Michaela Goade (Roaring Brook Press, 2020), 2021 Caldecott Medal

Written in response to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, the book tells the story of an Ojibwe girl who fights against an oil pipeline to protect the water supply of her people. “Children’s voices can be powerful agents of change. They move people in a way that data often doesn’t,” Mulvey says. Besides helping students and the teachers who work with them understand the science behind the complex issues we’re facing, we also need to help them communicate with others about science in ways that aren’t judgmental. Generously caring about the other person’s perspective—asking questions to learn more about why they believe the way they do—can be a powerful way to empathize with others and perhaps spark a discussion.”

Mulvey recommends three picture books to help children (and adults) consider varied perspectives:

**Children’s Voices Can Be Powerful Agents of Change. They Move People in a Way That Data Often Doesn’t.”**

**A Round 56% of the global population lives in cities. In North America, the number jumps to 84%. With increased urbanization comes a focus on environmentally friendly building design. Performance-based design, such as the US Green Building Council’s LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system, provides a means of measuring a building’s performance standards and energy usage. Kent State has 16 LEED-certified buildings on its campuses. The John Elliot Center for Architecture and Environmental Design on the Kent Campus received the university’s first LEED Platinum recognition in 2018. It features a green roof, an element of living architecture—using ecosystems and biology to inform building design—that offers benefits for both the structure and the environment. Although the installation costs are higher than a traditional roof, green roofs prove to be an excellent investment over time.**

“A green roof will double or triple the life of the building’s waterproofing membrane,” says Reid Coffman, PhD, professor in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, who is a leading figure in the area of living architecture. His research and publications have helped establish the global understanding of green roofs as constructed urban ecosystems.

“Right now, the US roofing industry generates around $14 billion annually just to tear off roofs and replace them with the same traditional roofing materials that come from the carbon petroleum industry,” he says. “When the roofing membrane is extended from 20 years to 60 years, that changes the carbon footprint and the economy of the industry quite a bit.”

Green roofs absorb peak precipitation and help dissipate runoff, provide insulation for the building and help keep energy costs down. Both large urban structures and small residential properties can benefit from green roofs. The theory of biophilic design posits that building occupants are healthier and happier when they connect with the natural environment. “The cities we build are destroying habitats and other living organisms,” Coffman says. “We can design buildings that cooperate with their environment and give life to other organisms besides people.”

While people have been slow to adopt green roofs on a massive scale, it may be due to the limitations of our imaginations. For most, a green roof means an array of plants. Instead, Coffman advocates for the concept of roof greening. A project could encompass different applications depending on the needs of the occupants and the environment.

“Habitat roofs can be used to reintroduce endangered or threatened plants,” Coffman says. “But we can also have recreation roofs or agricultural roofs, such as community gardens. There are roofs being developed that incorporate vegetation and photovoltaics, called biosolar roofs. Hospitals could be building roofs that are oriented toward health and wellness. There are so many roof greening opportunities, things we haven’t conceptualized yet.”

**ROOF GREENING**

**“We Can Design Buildings that Cooperate With Their Environment and Give Life to Other Organisms Besides People.”**
**SUSTAINABLE ENERGY**

The typical passenger vehicle emits 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide every year, with the number varying based on the vehicle’s fuel, fuel economy and the number of miles driven per year. And that doesn’t include the carbon dioxide produced by the vehicle’s manufacture, upkeep and eventual disposal. Carbon dioxide is one of the main greenhouse gases (along with methane and nitrous oxide) that trap energy in the atmosphere and result in widespread temperature increase. So we need to drastically reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions to keep global warming from rising further.

If you’ve been on the Kent Campus over the past six years, you may have seen the ZEV (Zero Emission Vehicle) driven along the Esplanade or parked on Risman Plaza on Earth Day, as it was this year. The ZEV is a repurposed golf cart with an electric engine powered by three sources: a fuel cell, solar panel and batteries. The experimental vehicle converts solar energy to electricity (to directly charge the battery) and to hydrogen (for energy storage).

“We demonstrated that UAVs integrated with our onboard hybrid fuel cell battery/capacitor could do much more than just carry and deliver a small camera or a pizza.”

Gases today, these gases can remain in the atmosphere for different amounts of time, ranging from a few years to thousands of years after being released. Their warming effects on the climate persist over a long time and will affect both present and future generations. That’s why it’s important to develop new technologies to help bring global temperatures back to safer levels.

And that’s why Du, an expert on the solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC), continues to work toward enabling the fuel cell industry to replace conventional power sources. He believes that fuel cells are uniquely positioned among power generation systems to effectively provide clean, reliable, quiet power.

He is just wrapping up a project to develop a hybrid fuel cell battery/capacitor that may extend flight time and load capacity for drones, aka unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Kent State University led a team that included several other universities, federal agencies and a company that designs and manufactures drones. Funded through the Ohio Federal Research Network, the project ran from January 2020 to May 2022.

“We demonstrated that UAVs integrated with our onboard hybrid fuel cell battery/capacitor could do much more than just carry and deliver a small camera or a pizza,” Du says. “With our technology, UAVs could carry much heavier weight and fly in a continuous operation in a lab setting for 12 hours. That’s a long duration for a drone.”

The 12-hour flight time also offers huge benefits for military and commercial users. “For example, Amazon and other commercial drones can fly for 20-30 minutes in a single flight. Normally, they deliver a package, then go back to their base to pick up the next package and then deliver it to another customer,” Du says. “If we create power cells that enable the drones to fly for far higher, as well as carry several packages at a time, it could be more efficient and effective. So, our focus with this project is to increase flight time/distance and the weight that UAVs can carry.”

Other potential uses for the technology include surveillance, inspections and emergency response. “The Department of Homeland Security could watch the US Border (S47) by using two drones that can fly for 12 hours each. This can make the task efficient without having to use helicopters and personnel,” Du says. “On the commercial side, a lot of inspectors use drones to do housing and bridge inspections. In California, inspectors might use drones for wildfire inspection. This new technology could potentially be used to deliver medical supplies and other emergency needs after disasters.”

Having met most of its goals for the project, Du’s team is preparing for a flight demonstration and applying for additional federal and state funding to advance the hybrid fuel cell battery/capacitor technology. They’re also looking forward to bringing new products or services to market based on this technology.

In addition, Du is working with the Ohio Clean Hydrogen Hub Alliance to establish a national hydrogen energy hub in Ohio. “Hydrogen can store more electricity than conventional batteries,” he says. “And it holds that energy in a more efficient way.”

**SOCIAL VULNERABILITY**

Although climate change affects everyone regardless of socioeconomic status, a recent report by the US Environmental Protection Agency shows that its highest impacts will affect communities that are least able to anticipate, cope with and recover from adverse climate events like air pollution, extreme temperatures and flooding. Those at highest risk in the United States include individuals in one or more of the following categories: low income, minority, no high school diploma or equivalent, and ages 65 and older.

“Those themes are similar whether you’re talking about global communities or strictly within the United States, says Kathryn Wilson, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Economics. Her research focuses on poverty, inequality and social mobility. “Climate change happens to all of us, but that doesn’t mean it affects all of us equally. Climate change affects the most vulnerable much harder. They’re more exposed to it, they’re more susceptible to damages from it and they don’t have sufficient resources to be able to cope with and recover from those damages.”

Wilson says she would be hard pressed to find any economist who thinks that markets are going to work well given climate change. “Basic economic theory recognizes that there are times when markets won’t give us the outcome that’s best for society,” she says. “One of those times is when something called an externality happens. It basically means that there’s an impact outside of the people involved in the transaction.”

“For example, if a company pollutes, if I pollute when driving my car, that pollution is felt by everybody, particularly those who are low income and living in dense urban areas. But the company and I don’t have to pay the cost for that, so we end up with more pollution than is socially efficient. For economists, the solution to an externality is to get the parties involved in the transaction to internalize that cost—perhaps to take that cost into consideration through things like government regulations or imposing a carbon tax.”

“Climate change happens to all of us, but that doesn’t mean it affects all of us equally. Climate change affects the most vulnerable much harder.”

Another aspect of climate change is related to social mobility. “How much does the family you were born into influence where you end up? We have this idea of the American dream, but research into social mobility has found that Americans don’t have much social mobility,” Wilson says. “If you’re born into a wealthy family in the United States, you’re much more likely to be wealthy when you grow up. If you’re born into a low-income family in the United States, you’re much more likely to be low income when you grow up. That’s true to some extent in other countries, but it is truer in the United States than in other developed countries we compare ourselves to.”

“From society’s perspective, that understanding comes with a greater social responsibility to help alter the trajectory for children who are from low-income families. For example, if you look at asthma rates in children and tie that back to climate, as we see more extreme climate events I expect that we will see higher rates of asthma, especially in areas of high population density. That helps me understand that sense of social responsibility.”

“So what can we do to become socially responsible? When Wilson teaches an intro class in principles of microeconomics, she talks about externalities, efficient outcomes and various theorems on ideal economic conditions. And then she throws in the Ruth Anne Principle. (Ruth Anne is her mother.)

“Maybe when we make decisions, we think about other people as well, because that’s certainly what Ruth Anne taught me that I should do,” Wilson says. “She always was aware of what others were feeling. So maybe on an airplane I look to see who’s sitting behind me before I decide whether to put my seat back or not. It is a little child with plenty of leg room or someone who’s going to be uncomfortable? What I’m ultimately doing, in economic language, is internalizing that externality. I am thinking about the impact on somebody else when making decisions.”

“When it comes to climate change, we can still do that. In thinking about what we’re driving or how much food we’re wasting, we can think about how our decisions may impact others. My individual decisions aren’t ultimately going to change the climate, but collectively a lot of those individual decisions potentially can. Internalizing the impact of our decisions is something all of us could do.”
CLIMATE-POSITIVE AGRICULTURE

Individuals can adopt many sustainable practices that add up to make a big difference in mitigating climate change, but those efforts need to be done in concert with policy changes at the institutional level. Sarah E. Eichler, BS ’00, PhD assistant professor in the Department of Biological Sciences and the horticulture program, based at Kent State University at Salem, develops policy recommendations for sustainability efforts in agriculture/horticulture, food systems and climate mitigation.

“Looking at broad-scale solutions, we have to pull in many different seemingly unrelated aspects of our life, our work and our community to make progress toward sustainability,” Eichler says. “We’re not just talking about planting an environmentally friendly vegetable garden, we’re talking about planting an environmentally sustainable,” Eichler says. “We’re not just talking with local farmers, Eichler tries to convey how climate-positive practices can benefit the environment and farmers alike. Reduced tillage is one example of a climate-positive farming practice that’s been widely adopted over the past 30 years. US Department of Agriculture incentive programs have helped encourage farmers and ranchers to implement such newer methods to minimize impacts on the environment.

By tilling the ground less frequently, farmers allow the soil to stay in place, carbon stays in the soil and provides better absorption and fewer nutrients wash away. The carbon in the soil also dissipated more easily. And, because less fuel is used, it saves energy and money. Some farmers use cover crops to help control erosion and improve soil fertility while reducing the leaching of nutrients—and this means better water quality in rivers and lakes, including major drinking-water sources.

“We’ve known for years that carefully managing nutrient inputs can be a huge climate positive,” Eichler says. “But with recent increases in the price of nitrogen fertilizer and some of the chemical pesticides controls, it now has much larger economic benefits for farmers, too.”

In her current research, Eichler is looking at how managing agricultural fields could affect pests, a surface’s ability to reflect solar radiation back into the atmosphere. Increasing the amount of reflected energy helps to counterbalance global warming because the Earth absorbs less heat.

“We’re exploring whether practices like reduced tillage and winter cover cropping might increase the amount of energy reflected back,” she says. “We don’t know enough about it yet to know if it could be a significant climate impact or perhaps an opportunity for farmers to earn better global warming mitigation credits in some future carbon market.”

Eichler emphasizes that when it comes to mitigating climate change, personal choices and individual actions can combine to influence business practices. For example, Ohio dairy producers did not readily convert to offer organic milk initially. But when more consumers started buying organic products, farmers realized there was a market and organic dairy products grew from a niche offering to a grocery-store staple. Some climate-forward producers face additional challenges in getting their distinctive product to market. Our purchasing decisions—even the brand of milk we buy—have a real impact on many of the family farmers in our region.

“In terms of policy, it matters who we vote for not just on a national level but on a local level, too,” Eichler says. “We can also be thoughtful about the foods we consume. What impact would it have if we purchased more local foods directly from growers? If we consumed one less serving of meat per week and made sure to use those left-over meals? Educating ourselves on the impact of our purchasing decisions is one step towards more sustainable habits.”

SUSTAINABILITY IN FASHION

When Noel Palomo-Lovinski, MFA ’09, professor and associate director of the School of Fashion, began designing clothes in the 1990s, few in the industry were talking about sustainable fashion. Now, she teaches a course on sustainable concepts and practices in the fashion industry, which is often cited as the second largest polluter after fossil fuels.

“Once you start thinking about the connections between fashion and the environment, you realize how much of an influence designers have on the industry and all the various connected aspects,” Palomo-Lovinski says. “And you begin to see that designers need to design differently. As an industry, we are so atrociously unsustainable there’s not a single part of the supply chain right now that does not contribute to climate change.”

Some consumers focus on the type of material, thinking that buying only natural fabrics and avoiding synthetics is more environmentally friendly. But there are pros and cons to every choice. It’s not just the difference between polyester or cotton, which are the two most popular fibers. “If we did it right, you could indefinitely recycle a synthetic fiber,” Palomo-Lovinski says. “Plastic bottles could become sweathirts, which could become packaging and then perhaps turned back into plastic bottles. We need to think about how we can extend the life of a material so that we no longer rely on digging up fossil fuels.”

“Relying too heavily on natural fibers, we run the risk of exacerbating the problems inherent in producing those textiles. The cotton plant leaches nutrients out of the soil, which then requires more nitrogen and chemicals to be applied. That pollutes the water. Cotton is also a monocrop, which means it excludes other plants from growing easily. Many natural fabrics are coated with finishes that are essentially plastic. There are just a lot of different problems.”

Water is used throughout the textile production process—spinning, dyeing, printing and finishing fabrics. But some of the most intensive water and energy use occurs once a consumer brings a garment home. Many laundry soaps contain pollutants. Laundering synthetic fibers releases microplastics into the water. Modern washing machines and detergents

“WE’VE PUT THIS [CLOTHING] OUT INTO THE WORLD, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE WE KNOW WHAT BECOMES OF IT.”

Be Fashions “Smart” Emissions from textile manufacturing alone are projected to rise 60% by 2030. Through UN Climate Change’s Fashion Charter, more and more businesses (everyone from Adidas to Chanel) are committing to reducing their emissions with the aim of producing net-zero emissions by 2050. As consumers, you can buy fewer clothes and make them last longer, choose local manufacturers who engage in sustainable practices and recycle (and upcycle) your existing clothes.

—Excerpted from “8 Ways You Can Take Climate Action Right Now”

“Do not give up hope. And remember that political will is itself a renewable resource.”—Al Gore

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”—Abraham Lincoln
MANAGING ANXIETY

For many, the uncertainty surrounding climate change can be summed up with the looming questions of “How bad? How soon?” It’s easy to feel overwhelmed in the face of such daunting issues, especially when it feels like individual actions won’t have much impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale. Anxiety can manifest when faced with uncertainty in the context of elevated stress. The key is not to let anxiety become so pervasive that it gets in the way of daily living.

“Emotions help us navigate the demands of life,” says Karin Coifman, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences. “Emotions have very clear functions: fear when we encounter something threatening; sadness when there’s a loss; joy in moments we share with others.” Emotion processing refers to our ability to flexibly change our emotions depending on the circumstances and our needs.

Emotion-related disorders such as depression and anxiety commonly feature a tendency toward rigidity or an inability to regulate emotions relative to circumstances. A person with an anxiety disorder might exhibit a fear response even when there isn’t an explicit threat. When a threat is ambiguous, a fear response can be very costly and have negative physiological and psychological consequences.

“Fear responses trigger changes to the cardiovascular system that increase your heart rate, changing blood flow,” Coifman says. “Fear also shifts your focus, narrowing your attention to improve your ability to respond. Your body and mind are poised and ready. This is very functional in the short-term, in response to a real threat. But if you remain at this level of constant activation it starts to wear on your system. Your body is not designed to be in that state of readiness all the time.”

Physiological symptoms of anxiety include muscle tension, headaches, difficulty sleeping and digestive issues. A sustained state of readiness makes it difficult to concentrate and focus on anything other than all-consuming worry. The American Psychology Association defines eco-anxiety as “the chronic fear of environmental cataclysm that comes from observing the seemingly irrevocable impact of climate change and the associated concern for one’s future and that of next generations.”

Younger generations are more prone to experience eco-anxiety, partly because they’ve been raised within the context of environmental concerns. There is also a demonstrated psychological phenomenon that as people age and gain greater perspective, they tend to be less reactive to negative circumstances. Regardless of whether people are worried about experiencing the effects of climate change during their lifetime, they have concerns about what future generations will face. Ongoing anxiety over the unknown can be distressing.

“When it comes to climate change, that is a legitimate worry,” Coifman says. “The threat to humanity is explicit. The ambiguous part is not knowing how quickly it will impact our lives. Worry on some level is appropriate when faced with a real threat. It’s better to actively manage that worry than to try to deny it or suppress it because that often leads to backlash.”

When faced with an enormous problem that feels out of control, finding little things we can control can help manage anxiety. Activities such as composting, growing your own produce, planting native species or installing rain barrels may offer comfort and reassurance that you are doing your part to mitigate climate change.

“Sometimes you can feel overwhelmed by negative information or a feeling that things aren’t changing fast enough,” Coifman says. “It may help to pivot toward focusing on your own behavior and your own actions, the things you can control, because you can’t control the bigger picture.”

Students’ advice on how to cope with climate anxiety:

- Recognize your feelings. It’s OK to feel bad about climate change.
- Write down your anxieties in a list. Cross off any you can’t control.
- Find things that calm you down when you are distressed. It could be a song, exercise or meditation.
- Try to find something—small or big—that you can control. Commit yourself to it.

Act Now

Everyone can help limit climate change. From the way we travel, to the electricity we use and the food we eat, we can make a difference. The United Nations suggests we start with these 10 actions to help tackle the climate crisis.

Save energy at home

Much of our electricity and heat are powered by coal, oil and gas. Use less energy by lowering your heating and cooling, switching to LED light bulbs and energy-efficient electric appliances, washing your laundry with cold water or hang things to dry instead of using a dryer.

Walk, bike or take public transport

The world’s roadways are clogged with vehicles, most of them burning diesel fuel or gasoline. Walking or riding a bike instead of driving will reduce greenhouse gas emissions—and help your health and fitness. For longer distances, consider taking a train or bus. And carpool whenever possible.

Consider your travel

Airplanes burn large amounts of fossil fuels, producing significant greenhouse gas emissions. That makes taking fewer flights one of the fastest ways to reduce your environmental impact. When you can, meet virtually, take a train or skip that long-distance trip altogether.

Choose eco-friendly products

Everything we spend money on affects the planet. You have the power to choose which goods and services you support. To reduce your environmental impact, buy local and seasonal foods, and choose products from companies which use resources responsibly and are committed to cutting their gas emissions and waste.

Change your home’s energy source

Ask your utility company if your home energy comes from oil, coal or gas. If possible, see if you can switch to renewable sources such as wind or solar. Or install solar panels on your roof to generate energy for your home.
The Cuyahoga River has played a significant role in the history of ecological understanding in the United States. It is famous for having been so polluted that it caught fire in 1969, setting off a movement that eventually led to the founding of the Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Water Act. While the Cuyahoga River is in much better health ecologically today than in the 1960s or ‘70s, it remains a significant point of interaction between humans and the environment.

Taryn McMahon, MFA, associate professor and co-area head of print media and photography in the School of Art, explores the interactions between the human and nonhuman via Northeast Ohio’s waterways in her recent print series, A Series of Entanglements.

“I began by walking along the shores collecting objects such as consumer plastics and abandoned fishing supplies, in addition to naturally occurring objects such as algae and stones,” McMahon says. “The silhouette of each object is translated into a stencil and then printed and layered in different highly transparent colors to create unique prints that weave together the manmade and natural. This results in visual environments that reiterate the entanglement of the current state of ecology, a state in which the human and nonhuman cannot be separated and are conflated and intertwined in the face of unprecedented ecological change.”

McMahon is inspired by artists such as Anna Atkins, a British botanist and photographer in the 1800s who used cyanotype—an early photographic process that is both printmaking and photography—to record the ecology of her time. “My works on paper capitalize on the unique potential of print to record objects faithfully while also allowing for artistic license in choice of color, layering and material exploration,” says McMahon, who received a New Faculty Outstanding Research and Scholarship Award from the University Research Council in 2020.

Within Western art, most depictions and understandings of nature include untouched landscapes or animals or plants and exclude humans or human-generated objects,” McMahon says. “That is because we do not see ourselves as fundamentally a part of, and dependent upon, the natural world. This worldview leads us to interact with the world in a dominating and often destructive way.

“My recent artworks—which intermingle plastic water bottles, netting and chunks of Styrofoam with native plants, rocks and bark—forgo a romantic view of “nature” and “landscape” as things separate from ourselves, in order to visually reimagine ourselves as interdependent and reliant upon our surroundings.”

Climate Change Resources

If you’d like to learn more, here are some resources to explore.
climate change affects food systems around the world. Rising temperatures, increasing rain, droughts, fires and more extreme weather events often harm crops and livestock.

Chris Vogliano, MS ’12, PhD, RDN, saw how devastating climate change can be to a food system when he conducted research a few years ago as part of a PhD program at Massey University in New Zealand. Traveling to the Solomon Islands, he saw people facing challenges to grow food as stronger cyclones and rising sea levels impact their country. At the same time Indigenous Solomon Islanders are relying more on ultra-processed foods imported from the West that are low in nutrients, including white rice, instant noodles, biscuits and sugary drinks.

Working with the community to identify and scale up local foods that contain essential nutrients missing from their diets—such as a bright orange banana that contains 100 times more vitamin A than a typical banana—Vogliano says simple solutions could help protect the villagers from chronic disease and climate change.

That trip informed his philosophy on how we should produce and eat food. For a 2021 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on Indigenous Peoples’ food systems: Insights on sustainability and resilience from the front line of climate change, Vogliano co-authored a case study on the food system of the Solomon Islands. The study advocated for agrobiodiversity (the biodiversity found within food systems) and preservation of indigenous and traditional knowledge about food.

Today, as a technical advisor of food systems at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID Advancing Nutrition), Vogliano helps people in both low- and middle-income countries better understand how to improve their local food systems and, ultimately, their health.

About 60% of our global calories come from just three staple crops: rice, corn and wheat. It’s not smart—from a nutritional or climate-change perspective—to rely mainly on just three crops, he says. Instead, he encourages people to embrace more diverse regional foods, as was done in the past. “I don’t want to idealize the past and say it was perfect,” he says, “but there is an opportunity for us to diversify our food systems based on regionally available foods.”

For example, while wheat dominates many diets, other grains—such as farro, millet and sorghum—are more nutritious and climate-friendly, Vogliano says. He notes that millet can be grown in “very drought-ridden areas” and is extremely nutrient dense.

And the more diverse foods we eat, the better protected we’ll be from climate change, as well as from the escalating problems of obesity and malnutrition, Vogliano says. He encourages people to make more diverse dietary choices—for instance, occasionally swapping out white pasta for millet or farro.

“There’s an illusion right now that we’re eating a diverse diet because there are so many types of foods in our grocery stores,” he says. “But most of them are packaged and most of them are made from the same few ingredients. I want to see our diets become much more diverse.”

To help promote that diversity, Vogliano has co-founded Food + Planet, a 501c3 nonprofit with a mission to empower 1 million health professionals to advance sustainable food systems by 2025. We asked Vogliano what we can do to make our diet healthier and more sustainable.

Prioritize plants. Plants are the missing ingredient in the majority of the world’s diet pattern. Eating more fruits and vegetables are better for us and the planet. Research indicates that eating more whole plant foods can improve our wellbeing, from our mental health to our gut microbiome.

Waste less food. It may seem harmless on an individual level, but collectively (7.4 billion people) food waste is a leading driver of greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and water overuse. Luckily, there are simple ways we can reduce our food-waste footprint.

Eat a climate-friendly diet. Climate-friendly eating doesn’t mean you have to give up your favorite foods. People who follow climate-friendly diets consume meat responsibly, opt for more plant-based foods and aim for ingredients that are sourced responsibly.

“There is an opportunity for us to diversify our food systems based on regionally available foods.”

Learn more at foodandplanet.org.
Last September, Davis received a Great Lakes Leadership Award from the Great Lakes Protection Fund for her efforts to raise awareness of environmentalism for the people who rely on Lake Erie for drinking water. The award recognized her focus on fair and equitable access to the benefits that come with clean drinking water and the removal of toxins from the lakes and surrounding waterways.

The Alliance for the Great Lakes and its partners embarked on a listening tour in 2017 to hear from people of color in some of Northeast Ohio's most economically and politically marginalized areas. Davis led the development of the 2018 report, Shut Up and Listen, which shares what they learned from those conversations. It also serves as a guide for others who want to listen to community concerns and tailor programs to meet those needs.

“The power to solve complex water challenges lies at the intersection of authentic community engagement and public policymaking,” Davis says. In 2020 Gov. Mike DeWine appointed Davis to a three-year term on the Ohio Lake Erie Commission. Davis and the Alliance for the Great Lakes also partnered with environmentalists of color in Ohio to discuss inequities in environmental policy during a virtual forum held in November 2020. The forum developed a first-of-its-kind statewide environmental justice policy platform that lays out policy recommendations in the areas of water, land, air and energy to address Ohio’s environmental justice issues.

And she has led a study about water affordability in Ohio. But she doesn’t want to stop there; Davis wants climate justice for all people: “I’m hoping to reorient environmentalism so it’s not only for one segment of the population.”

Learn more at greatlakes.org.
A Clean Start in the Solar Field

Solar is the future, says Emilie Oxel O’Leary, BS ’93. That’s why in 2016 the Marietta, Georgia, resident started Sunshine Solar, which has become one of the largest mechanical solar companies in the United States. The company has installed solar-powered systems for some of the world’s best-known brands—including Amazon, L’Oréal, Target, Perry Ellis and Blue Cross Blue Shield—to help support their goals of being sustainable companies.

But as the business grew, Oxel O’Leary watched something else grow: the trash the company was contributing to landfills. “We were building these massive, beautiful, energy-efficient systems,” she says. “But on the back end, we were accumulating tons of cardboard, metal, broken solar panels—and we didn’t know what to do with any of it. So, we were putting it in containers and hauling it to landfills. And I just thought, ‘This is crazy.’”

So Oxel O’Leary, who had sold Sunshine Solar in January 2020 but remained CEO until January 2022, stepped away from the company. In February 2022, she launched another woman-owned company, Green Clean Solar. It specializes in the removal and disposal of waste and recyclable materials accumulated during the construction phase of commercial solar sites in the Southeast and East Coast regions.

With just a few months under its belt, Green Clean Solar and Oxel O’Leary have already done big things. In her third project, she worked with a client to haul and recycle more than 2,500 broken or leftover solar panels from a large-scale utility project. The panels weighed a total of 157,500 pounds. That’s 79 tons that would have ended up in a landfill, she says, but instead was recycled to be reused around the world.

“It’s great to empower future generations of solar enthusiasts. I feel like I can influence the younger generation to say, ‘Hey, we can really focus on recycling. We just have to put the pieces of the puzzle together.’”

Better Body, Better Earth

Ryan Andrews, MS ’05, MA ’05, had been a nationally competitive bodybuilder for five years before he earned graduate degrees from Kent State in nutrition and exercise physiology. After completing his training to become a registered dietitian at Johns Hopkins Medicine, he worked as a dietitian, movement/exercise coach and yoga instructor—and he wrote his first book, Drop the Fat Act and Live Lean, focused on weight loss and healthy nutrition.

During that time, however, he also became increasingly concerned about the harmful treatment of animals and farm workers, the poor health outcomes people experience from eating fewer nutrient-dense foods and the way the planet suffers from how Americans produce food. “I felt I needed to spend more time on bigger food system issues,” Andrews says. He pivoted his career toward educating people about sustainable food systems, teaching classes at SUNY Purchase and volunteering at sustainable farms and nonprofit food recovery organizations. In 2021, he wrote and self-published an e-book, Swole Planet: Building a Better Body and Building a Better Earth (wrote being an informal adjective for having a physique enhanced by bodybuilding exercises).

We asked Andrews what we can do to benefit our bodies and the planet.

Walk with a purpose. We spend a lot of time at gyms walking on treadmills, riding bikes and things like that. And I think that’s great. I’ve done it. I’ve recommended it. But what if we could incorporate more walking and biking that’s purposeful? So, walking or biking to get around—to get to work, to get to the store, to go grocery shopping, to go to the movies. That would benefit our health. And that would require less fuel for transportation. That’s a win-win.

“I’m a big believer that if people can make a small change in their own life, those changes matter.”

Eat more beans. The average adult in the United States eats nearly 180 pounds of meat each year, compared to 10 pounds of beans. And the majority of farm animals are raised in conditions that are catastrophic for their health, farmworkers and surrounding communities. If we collectively increase our bean intake while at the same time decreasing our meat intake, it would have a ripple effect helping animals, ecosystems and our own health.

Volunteer for an environmental cause. Volunteerism can have a big impact on your health and the Earth. What if you could spend one day a week—or even one day a month—helping at a farm? You’d be getting some physical activity, because you’re moving your body in ways that it’s not used to: You’re lunging, you’re twisting, you’re pushing, you’re pulling, you’re getting outside, getting fresh air, getting in the dirt, getting around people who are like-minded. All these different things are good for our overall health and positively impact the planet.

It’s OK to start small. I’m a big believer that if people can make a small change in their own life, those changes matter. For anybody who can give a little more thought or energy or time to these things, any small change matters and adds up. I’m not confident that we’re going to see a lot of big, top-down legislation to make things better. I think it has to start with people and communities making small changes, and hopefully it spreads and becomes the social norm over time.

Learn more at ryandandrews.com.
T

he case of Barbara Blatnik had always stuck in James Renner’s mind. A pretty high school senior from a suburban of Cleveland, Blatnik had gone out partying a few days before Christmas in 1987. The next morning, she was found, naked and strangled, in a wooded ditch a half-hour outside Cuyahoga Falls. Police identified her body by an inscription in Blatnik’s class ring, but they never had a suspect. “It was such a weird case,” says Renner. “She went out partying with her friends, and then the next morning she’s found naked and murdered in the country. How could that happen?”

As a true crime writer, Renner has been asking similar questions for almost two decades to get to the bottom of some of Ohio’s most intractable cold cases. In fall 2019, however, Renner decided to try a different tack. Contacting the Cuyahoga Falls Police Department, he told them about Blatnik’s case and offered his assistance. The Kent Stater student had recently launched a nonprofit called the Porchlight Project. It uses the new tool of genetic genealogy, matching DNA evidence to massive databases to help identify suspects and victims. The previous year, it had been used in California to catch the notorious Golden State Killer. Now, Renner proposed they use the technique to identify Blatnik’s body and find out who killed her.

“Like it was this moment I realized that we live in a dangerous world,” Renner says. “It’s a battle of wits—are you smarter than the killer or is he going to get away with it?”

In all his reporting, however, he’d never succeeded in identifying a murderer. By the time he was investigating the disappearance of Maura Murray in 2011, he had written articles about more than a dozen unsolved crimes. “I’ve done so much research and investigation that I’ve come up with theories and possible leads, but I could never make that one crucial connection,” Renner says. “I’ve felt this weight inside me, wondering if I could ever solve these cases.”

Despite the technology’s potential, testing is prohibitively expensive for most police departments. Renner put out a message on Facebook asking for help; it was answered by Alexa Doult, a director of advancement at Kent State. The two met at a coffee shop in West Akron—and the idea of the Porchlight Project was born.

“I was always a fan of James’s work, and this was a way for me to make a difference,” says Doult, who handled the back-end legal work of setting up the nonprofit and beginning to raise money. “We assembled a board, which includes graphic designer Dan Marks, BA ’99, a friend from Renner’s Kent State days, and Phil Trexler, BS ’90, a 3News investigative producer whom Renner knew from his days at The Kent Stater. He rode his bike to the malls and scoped out crowds, looking for people who might fit the composite sketch created by police. “It was this moment I realized that we live in a dangerous world,” Renner says. “If this could happen to somebody that I could go to school with, it could happen to anybody.”

Police found Blatnik’s body in a field a few months later, but her killing remained a mystery that Renner never stopped wanting to solve. At Kent State, he majored in English and began writing for The Kent Stater student newspaper, deciding by graduation that journalism was his calling. He soon got a job as a staff writer at the alternative weekly Cleveland Scene, where his first major story was an investigation into Mihaljevic’s killing.

“It was very surreal,” he says. “Suddenly I had permission to ask questions and meet the detectives involved and Amy’s family.” His investigation grew into a book about the case, Amy: My Search for Her Killer, published in 2006; by that time, he had written articles about more than a dozen unsolved crimes.

“It’s a drive to solve a complicated puzzle that nobody has solved before,” he says of his fascination. “The only person who sees the whole puzzle is the killer who did it. It’s a battle of wits—are you smarter than the killer or is he going to get away with it?”

R

ound the same time, however, he first heard about the new tool of genetic genealogy when the Golden State Killer was arrested in 2018. In it, he saw a potential means to overcome his frustrations about solving cold cases. “I realized right away this was going to change everything,” Renner says. Unlike previous forms of DNA testing, in which police could only compare samples with the thousands of convicted criminals in state offender databases, the advent of widespread genetic testing has created commercial databases with millions of records. Even a near match can lead investigators to a family member of the perpetrator, who may then be identified by family tree research. “It works like a genetic fingerprint,” Renner says.

Shining a Light on Unsolved Crimes

With the Porchlight Project, true crime author James Renner, BA ’00, has turned from writing about murders to helping solve them.

BY MICHAEL BLANDING

Recently, the Porchlight Project received a major gift of $25,000 from Ashley Flowers, host of the Crime Junkie podcast, which has allowed it to launch an endowment to fund its work. Renner figures it has the funding to take on another two cases right away. He also hopes it might soon be able to take on higher-profile cases, such as that of the infamous Cleveland Torso Murderer from the 1930s—and perhaps even the Amy Mihaljevic case, which recently has seen some new developments. “I think genetic genealogy could solve the Mihaljevic case and hopefully one day the Porchlight Project can help,” Renner says. “It’s a matter of time before we can solve any case in the world, it’s this one.”

Ultimately, Renner hopes the project can serve as a model, shining a light to illuminate long-dark cases and laying mysteries to rest at last. “There are so many cases in Ohio, we don’t need to branch out,” he says. “But there is a need for nonprofits like the Porchlight Project in every state.”

Such an army of investigators could truly be a game changer in solving cold cases nationwide, bringing long- awaited closure to victims’ families. “The technology is so good that if you left DNA at a crime scene, you might as well turn yourself in,” Renner says. “It’s only a matter of time before you will be caught.”

Learn more about the Porchlight Project at https://porchlightonline.org/ and read about James Renner’s podcasts and other projects at https://jamesrenner.com/.

Just as importantly, the outcome showed that the Porchlight Project’s model worked.

For its second case, the Porchlight Project took on the identification of 72 human bones found wrapped in newspaper in a barn in New London, Ohio. Renner was particularly excited since it was located near the home of one of the suspects in the Amy Mihaljevic murder. What the project found when it tested them, however, was more bizarre.

A genetic genealogist traced them to a schoolteacher named Hallie Armstrong, who died in 1881. While Armstrong was ostensibly buried more than 130 miles away in Clinton County, research by genealogist Val Bogaer revealed that the house was once the residence of a prominent physician; Armstrong may have been a victim of an epidemic of grave robbing to obtain bones for medical research. While in this case the project may not have solved a murder, it did solve a mystery. “We were able to give [Hallie Armstrong] her name back,” Doult says. “She can be laid to rest as she was meant to be.”

Fresh off this success, the project is currently at work on identifying victims in two other cold cases. In one, a man’s body was found inside a barrel in Cleveland in 1969. He had been shot and dismembered. In another, a young woman’s body was found partially decomposed on the shores of Lake Erie in Sandusky in 1980.

In both cases, Renner is hopeful that the identity of the victim can generate leads. “There are a lot of John and Jane Does in Ohio that need to be identified, and to me that’s just as exciting as catching a killer,” he says. “We have to identify the victim before we can even figure out where to start with potential suspects.”

Recently, the Porchlight Project received a major gift of $25,000 from Ashley Flowers, host of the Crime Junkie podcast, which has allowed it to launch an endowment to fund its work. Renner figures it has the funding to take on another two cases right away. He also hopes it might soon be able to take on higher-profile cases, such as that of the infamous Cleveland Torso Murderer from the 1930s—and perhaps even the Amy Mihaljevic case, which recently has seen some new developments. “I think genetic genealogy could solve the Mihaljevic case and hopefully one day the Porchlight Project can help,” Renner says. “If I could choose to solve any case in the world, it’s this one.”

Ultimately, Renner hopes the project can serve as a model, shining a light to illuminate long-dark cases and laying mysteries to rest at last. “There are so many cases in Ohio, we don’t need to branch out,” he says. “But there is a need for nonprofits like the Porchlight Project in every state.”

Such an army of investigators could truly be a game changer in solving cold cases nationwide, bringing long- awaited closure to victims’ families. “The technology is so good that if you left DNA at a crime scene, you might as well turn yourself in,” Renner says. “It’s only a matter of time before you will be caught.”

Learn more about the Porchlight Project at https://porchlightonline.org/ and read about James Renner’s podcasts and other projects at https://jamesrenner.com/.

Learn more about the Porchlight Project at https://porchlightonline.org/ and read about James Renner’s podcasts and other projects at https://jamesrenner.com/.
The Borowitz Collection: Centuries of True Crime

The Kent State University Press, which publishes two journals as well as 20-30 books each year, is known for a variety of fields including history, literature and regional studies—and a series of current books about true crime history for both a general and scholarly audience.

The spark for developing the True Crime History Series was Albert Borowitz’s Blood and Ink: An International Guide to Fact-Based Crime Literature, which The Kent State University Press published in 2002. His 586-page annotated bibliography provides a broad selection of true crime accounts from the 17th through 20th centuries, as well as literary works based on true crime incidents. It includes books from his extensive personal library, which he and his wife, Helen Osterman Borowitz, began donating to Kent State in 1989.

In 2003, the Press engaged Albert Borowitz as its true crime history editor, and the first books in the series were published in 2005.

Susan Wadsworth-Booth, director of The Kent State University Press, says the Press has a reputation for publishing books that are highly researched and well documented, including those devoted to true crime. That reputation and a surge in the general public’s interest have raised the publisher’s profile among fans of the genre.

Books in the True Crime History Series often are featured on the popular literary website CrimeReads. They also have been featured on true crime podcasts, and a few have been licensed for film or TV rights. One of the series’ authors, James Badal, has appeared on Court TV to discuss cases in his books.

Wadsworth-Booth says the Press has become known among writers for publishing books on intriguing and thought-provoking crime cases. That has resulted in an increase in book proposals, not all of which meet the publisher’s standards. “We don’t want to publish books that are just sensational or ripped from the headlines,” she says. “We are committed to publishing books that are genuinely significant in historical terms—that have important content in cultural, psychological, sociological, political or legal areas. “I believe that these stories, in part, show us both the best and worst of human nature, and we can all identify with that in some way,” she adds. “I also think we all want to understand mystery. What are the cultural and sociological factors that fed into this act of violence, or what factors led to someone being accused or prosecuted? What can we learn about our systems of justice, of checks and balances, that can help explain our current culture?” And, of course, are there people in these stories with whom we empathize? That’s the part that most captures my imagination.”

—Candace Goforth DeSantis, BS ’94

Two recent publications from the True Crime History Series:

Queen of the Con: From a Spiritualist to the Carnegie Imposter by Thomas Crowl (The Kent State University Press, Oct. 26, 2021) tells the true story of Cassie Chadwick, a successful swindler and “one of the top 10 imposters of all time,” according to Time magazine. Poising as the illegitimate daughter of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, she borrowed $2 million (approximately $50 million today) throughout northern Ohio, Pittsburgh, New York and Boston. When the fraud scheme collapsed in 1904, it was a nationwide sensation. The book leads readers to consider aspects of gender stereotypes, social and economic class structures, and the ways in which we humans can so often be fooled.

The Potato Masher Murder: Death at the Hands of a Jealous Husband by Gary Sosniecki (The Kent State University Press, June 30, 2020) is the true story of a murder that took place in 1906 and was front-page news throughout northern Indiana for much of a year—but was never spoken of by the family for several generations. It was written by the murdered wife’s great-grandson, an award-winning journalist who uncovered the family’s dark secret. As he discovered, wife beating was commonplace in the early 20th century, and his book unravels the full story of two immigrant families united by love and torn apart by domestic violence.

Awards

The Kent State Press engaged Albert Borowitz as its true crime history editor in 2003.

“On the whole, we are very pleased,” says Borowitz, “especially because of the opportunity it provides to work with great authors and for the support we receive from the Press.”

The Borowitz Collection’s books, artifacts and ephemera (things meant for short-term use such as pamphlets and postcards) document the history of crime from ancient times to the present day, mostly in the United States, England, France and Germany. Donated by Albert Borowitz and Helen Osterman Borowitz, the collection features materials related to some of the most notorious criminals and their crimes, including the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and murder, outlaws of the American West and Jack the Ripper.

“One of the highlights (of the collection) is a ‘penny dreadful’ publication called The Whitechapel Murders or The Mysteries of the East End, which was published in 1888 while the Ripper murders were still occurring,” says Cara Gilgenbach, head of Special Collections and Archives, acting university archivist and associate professor. “It’s described in the collection’s inaugural catalog as a ‘mixture of fact and fantasy.’ But I find it fascinating to see something that was printed and sold during the time of which would become one of the most infamous unsolved serial murder cases in history.”

Albert Borowitz and Helen Osterman Borowitz, of Cleveland, spent decades accumulating their collection. He had started at age 12 when he asked his father, a business executive and book collector, to buy him an edition of the complete Sherlock Holmes stories. Albert Borowitz went on to Harvard University, where he earned a BA in classics, an MA in Chinese regional studies and a JD. Although he practiced corporate (not criminal) law as a partner in an international firm, in his personal time Borowitz studied true crime incidents and their influence on the arts, literature, culture and society.

By the time he retired, he and his wife, a Radcliffe-educated art historian with literary interests, had amassed a complete Sherlock Holmes stories. Albert Borowitz went on to Harvard University, where he earned a BA in classics, an MA in Chinese regional studies and a JD. Although he practiced corporate (not criminal) law as a partner in an international firm, in his personal time Borowitz studied true crime incidents and their influence on the arts, literature, culture and society.

By the time he retired, he and his wife, a Radcliffe-educated art historian with literary interests, had amassed a complete collection of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Albert Borowitz went on to Harvard University, where he earned a BA in classics, an MA in Chinese regional studies and a JD. Although he practiced corporate (not criminal) law as a partner in an international firm, in his personal time Borowitz studied true crime incidents and their influence on the arts, literature, culture and society.

By the time he retired, he and his wife, a Radcliffe-educated art historian with literary interests, had amassed a complete collection of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Albert Borowitz went on to Harvard University, where he earned a BA in classics, an MA in Chinese regional studies and a JD. Although he practiced corporate (not criminal) law as a partner in an international firm, in his personal time Borowitz studied true crime incidents and their influence on the arts, literature, culture and society.

By the time he retired, he and his wife, a Radcliffe-educated art historian with literary interests, had amassed a complete collection of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Albert Borowitz went on to Harvard University, where he earned a BA in classics, an MA in Chinese regional studies and a JD. Although he practiced corporate (not criminal) law as a partner in an international firm, in his personal time Borowitz studied true crime incidents and their influence on the arts, literature, culture and society.
94

Jersey presentation: (left to right) Sean Lewis, Lou Holtz, BS ’59, Honorary Doctor of Law, Kent State’s head football coach, and Randale Richmond, MS ’06, Kent State’s athletic director, presented Holtz with a Kent State jersey. The next day, the Wyoming Cowboys beat the Kent State Golden Flashs 52 to 38.

James Eller, BS ’73, McGrory, TX, arrived at Kent in fall 1972. During his time at Kent State, he initiated the McGrory/Shoals Rehabilitation Group and served in the University Year for Action and Volunteers in Service to America (now AmeriCorps VISTA). He went on to McCormick Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago to become both a social worker and Presbyterian minister. He earned a DMin and PhD while working at the University of Chicago to bridge religious and spiritual concerns of older adults.

He taught at National Louis University for 21 years and at Baylor University for 17 years, recently retiring from Baylor as the Dorothy Garlock Krosher Endowed Professor Emeritus in Family Studies at the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Asbury Theological Seminary. He has written 10 books, more than 150 juried articles and an internationally known speaker on topics such as the senior years, slavery and African American religious traditions.

Ellor has been the general editor of the journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging for the past 23 years. He is currently the co-general editor of the new Encyclopedia of Death and Dying (Rowman & Littlefield Press).

His work with the local community in Ravenna, Ohio, started him on a 50-year career to serve people in communities and churches, training students on these topics and filling gaps in the literature. In his retirement, he continues to offer counseling for first responders and to support churches with ministries for older adults.

M. Scott McBride, BM ’76, MM ’78, DuBois, PA, retired as chancellor of Penn State DuBois, effective July 1, 2021. He received a Nashville music degree from the Baldwin Educacional Foundation board members in recognition and appreciation of his service. Under his direction, Penn State DuBois raised more than $3 million, mostly in support of student scholarships. The funds also helped establish the North Central PA. Lauchlin, one of 21 entrepreneurial centers the university has founded across the state to promote economic growth in the region.

Before coming to Penn State DuBois in March 2017, McBride was dean of the Caudill College of Arts, Education and Social Sciences at Morehead State University in Kentucky, beginning in 2008. Prior to that he was chair of the department of music and a professor of music at Morehead State. In 1990, he earned a doctorate in philosophy of music education from the University of Oklahoma.

He eventually found his way to comic writing while working at The Plain Dealer in Cleveland. His industry connections led him to an opportunity at Marvel, one of the biggest comic book publishers. He got his first writing for some of Marvel’s most renowned characters including Spider-Man, Ghost Rider, Moon Knight, the Avengers, Daredevil, the Fantastic Four, Black Goliath and Luke Cage.

Isabella later moved to DC Comics where he created the character of Black Lightning, who has been an icon in Black history and pop culture since his debut in 1977. Isabella chose Kent State as his character’s alma mater because he wanted Pierce to be from Cleveland, Ohio, and he thought Kent State was an Ohio school everyone would recognize. However, his character’s lightning symbol and powers had no connection to Kent State’s Golden Flash.

He wrote Black Lightning’s short-lived 1970s and 1980s series and returned to the character in 2017 with the publication of the limited series Black Lightning: Cold Dead Hands. A Black Lightning TV series ran for four seasons on the CW Network, from 2018–2021. Isabella and artist Trevor Von Eeden received creator credit on each episode.

While Isabella has written for characters in many comics, he says Black Lightning holds a special place in his heart. “There are very few comics I’ve written where I haven’t liked the character. But Black Lightning is always my favorite.”

Read more about Black Lightning and creator Tony Isabella at www.kent.edu/today/ new/kent-states-superhero-alumnus-black-lightning.

Black Lightning, Vol. 1, Issue 6 (1976), featured the panel that revealed Jefferson Pierce was a Golden Flash.
Debra Low Harden, BS ’85, Gladewater, PA, was appointed the new host of the Metropolitan Opera’s live radio broadcasts, the longest-running musical program in American radio history. A pianist and former practicing physician, she is just the fifth of the 91-year-old broadcast series. While attending medical school at NEOMED, Lew Harden was mentored by Tung Kwong-Kwong, who taught piano at the Kent State University School of Music, along with her husband, Ma Si-Hon, a professor of violin. Read her full story on blog post about Mrs. Ma, “A Life Worth Living,” at https://debralawahermusic.com/blog/tag/0/.

Rick Haines, BBA ’77, MBA ’89, North Canton, OH, was named a 2022 Artist-in-Residence in poetry and visual art by Akron Street Gallery. Part of the residency includes an artist-led community engagement program. Learn more at www.akronstreet.org.

Bard Fulton, BS ’85, MBA ’97, Cleveland, OH, has been promoted to vice president of Fortney & Wynnart Inc., as of Feb. 1, 2022. He will be responsible for continuing to drive the growth of this company’s general contracting services nationwide. In his new role, Fulton will focus on project development, operational efficiencies and streamlining internal business processes. He will continue with his active role in multi-site project management and project estimating.

Fulton began his career at Fortney & Wynnart in 2001 as a project manager overseeing multiple multi-site rollout programs and soon began leading the department. He has worked with retail, restaurant and commercial clients on national projects with varied scopes, and he looks forward to getting involved with more projects and managing from a corporate level.

Danielle Dixon, BA ’85, Cleveland, OH, was named a 2022 Artist-in-Residence in poetry and visual art at Akron Street Gallery. Part of the residency includes an artist-led community engagement program. Learn more at www.akronstreet.org.

Jan Jumet, BBA ’95, Darlington, PA, founder and chief investment officer of Jumet Financial, announced the opening of its national headquarters in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, in August 2021.

Lori Sabatose, MA ’93, Brookpark, PA, and her family were named the 2019/2020 Allegheny Mountain District Family of the Year by the United States Tennis Association. The designation honors the family’s contribution to tennis, on a local and/or sectional basis.

The Sabatose family has been honored by the United States Tennis Association. The Sabatose family was honored at the USATF Middle States Awards Ceremony on Oct. 16, 2015, at Mount Lebanon Tennis Center in Pittsburgh. Sabatose, who taught tennis at Kent State as a graduate student from 1996-1998, has coached at high school, college, schools and international teams. She is certified by the Professional Tennis Registry and serves on the leadership council for the United States Tennis Association in 2000 she started a nonprofit, Dubois Regional Tennis Association, which offers free clinics for the community. To help support tennis, contact duboscard@gmail.com.

Brett Cunningham, BS ’12, MA ’14, PhD ’17, announced the formation of Cunningham and Associates, Inc., a nonprofit multi-language research company. Cunningham, a graduate of the University of Akron and the Kent State School of Journalism and Mass Communication, has been involved with more projects and managing from a corporate level.
Three generations tenured at Kent State. Left, Byron Dressler, director of the university’s first Computer Center, pictured sitting at one of the computers in Kent State University, Summer Haven, Aug. 12, 1965. Right, Jana Dressler, Professor Emerita of Voice, and Ginnette Dressler, digital projects librarian and associate professor at Kent State University Libraries.

Virginia “Ginnie” Dressler, BA ’01, MLS ’05, Kent, OH, digital projects librarian and associate professor at Kent State University Libraries, received tenure in summer 2001. Dressler, who began working at the Kent Campus in April 2014, is the third generation in her family to be tenured at Kent State.

Her mother, Jana Dressler, DMA, Professor Emerita of Voice, was tenured in the Glaufer School of Music, where she taught voice ( sopranos) and music theory from August 1987 to June 2000. She served as interim director of the school from August 2007 through June 2009 and retired as a full professor in 2010.

Her grandmother, Byron Dressler, taught in the mathematics department from fall 1948 to January 1978 and earned tenured in 1954. He also directed the university’s first Computer Center, which was established in 1962 and 1963 and located in Merritt Hall.

“He died in 1981, when I was a year old, so I don’t really remember him,” Ginnette Dressler says. “But I have often wondered what he would have thought about my career path. It was a joke in our immediate family that there has been a Dressler on the books at Kent State since the late 1940s.”

ADVENTURES IN HISTORY AND LIFE

During the pandemic, Tierra Haynes, BA ’06, wrote The Adventures of Us: Getting to Know Guion Bluford Jr., a 2001 self-published children’s book about the first African American person in space. In the book, three brothers (modeled after Haynes’ three young sons) use their imaginations to take a trip to space. There they meet Bluford, a NASA astronaut whose first mission was on the crew of the space shuttle Challenger in 1983. On their journey, the boys also learn the importance of brotherhood, perseverance and imagination.

Haynes says her sons, who were interested in space at the time, helped create their characters. And she brought in Illustrator Morgan Jennings to immortalize them and Bluford on the book’s cover and pages.

The idea for the book came to Haynes when her younger children were repeatedly watching a movie about a boy and his dog who travel back in time to visit historical figures. Haynes wondered: Why do these characters rarely meet anybody who is Black? Then her eldest son, Dre Jr., felt uncomfortable when his third grade classmates looked to him during discussions about Black History Month. Haynes thought about writing a children’s book so kids could learn more about prominent Black people in American history.

However, a busy life and frequent moves left her little time to bring her idea to life. Her husband, DeAndre Haynes, BBA ’06, whom she met at Kent State, is a college basketball coach whose career has moved their family from Ohio to Illinois, Michigan, Maryland and Wisconsin in the span of 10 years. When COVID-19 hit and things slowed down, she was able to pursue her book project.

While her sons (Dre Jr., Devon and Dallas) come from a sports family and are surrounded by basketball players, Haynes wants to expand their worldview and help them discover careers that focus on their interests, whatever those may be. She hopes to publish a series of books to highlight the achievements of Black people.

During her family’s travels, Haynes also began an online community for mothers to support each other as they navigate life and motherhood. She increased her social media presence, changed her Instagram handle to @Mommyonthemove, and began a blog by the same name, as well as a podcast. The community she created has blossomed, but her goal for the community remain simple: to empower busy moms and help them find their inner strengths.

The Adventures of Us: Getting to Know Guion Bluford Jr. is available at mommyonthemove.info and on Amazon.

Kent State awarded Dr. Bluford (who compiled more than 688 hours in space before his retirement in 1993) on honorary Doctor of Sciences degree in 1994. Two scholarships have been created in his name: the “Dr. Guion S. Bluford, Jr. Minority Aeronautics Scholarship,” established by Friends of Kent State University at Tumbull, and the “Dr. Guion S. Bluford, Jr. Minority Aeronautics Scholarship,” established by Friends of the College of Applied Engineering, Sustainability and Technology. Both were established to support Dr. Bluford’s interest in assisting minority students to pursue a degree in a STEM discipline.
Jonathan Junker, BS ’04, MSc ’05, Bainbridge Island, WA. designs upscale homes in the Seattle, Washington, area since moving there after graduating from Kent State. He also branched out into custom lighting for hotels, museums and office buildings around the world as the co-owner of Graypants, a company with offices in Seattle and Amsterdam. Junker and a former partner established the company in 2007 to produce laser-cut lamps from corrugated cardboard.

While at Graypants, he collaborated on transforming an old, abandoned garage on vashon island into a glowing lakeside cabin, which earned him the American Institute of Architects Honor Award for Washington state. He also won the Millennium Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2016 from the US Small Business Administration, in recognition of his achievements at Graypants and its partnership with the Dutch government for product distribution.

In 2019, he sold his share in the lighting studio and now works in his own creative office on Bainbridge Island in Puget Sound. Ryan D. Andrews, MS ’05, MA ’05, Harwich, MA, is an advocate for sustainable food systems, a dietitian, yoga instructor, and strength and conditioning specialist. He self-published a new e-book, Sweis Planet: Building a Better Body and a Better Earth. It is a guide to help people build a body that’s functional and fit, while building a planet that’s more sustainable and equitable.

Andrews was a competitive body builder from 1996-2003. His graduate degrees from Kent State are in nutrition and exercise physiology, and he completed his training to become a registered dietician at Johns Hopkins Medicine. He studied sustainable food systems at Columbia University and volunteers on sustainable farms and with nonprofit food recovery organizations. He’s been teaching at SUNY’s Purchase College since 2019. For details, see www.ryanandrews.com. Discounts on the book are available for farmers, teachers, dietitians or those in the nonprofit sector.

James M. Hill, MUS ’05, Chillicothe, OH, director of the Chillicothe and Ross County Library, has been named the 2021 librarian of the Year by the Ohio Library Council. This prestigious award honors a librarian whose recent accomplishments have impacted the library profession and library service to the community. During the pandemic and under Hill’s leadership, the library developed a check-in program to monitor elderly and isolated individuals. He added Chromebooks for patron checkout, extended Wi-Fi access and created a telehealth room at the Main Library. He and his staff also developed an expansion of the outreach department and a new bike-lending program, among other projects.

In response to the drug epidemic in Ross County, Hill forged a partnership with other county agencies to bring a peer recovery supporter to the library. This person provides an essential service to the county, helping people navigate treatment options and finding resources to help.

In addition, Hill has assisted six staff members in obtaining their Master of Library and Information Science degrees and/or professional certifications.

Stephanie Sweany, BS ’05, Canton, OH, was appointed executive director at Stark County Hunger Task Force. She has been with the organization since 2017, most recently as assistant director. Founded in 1981, the nonprofit serves 34,000 Stark County residents each month through a network of about 40 food pantries and 12 Backpack for Kids programs. Sweany Engages in community activities, including the Canton Kindness Coalition, which she founded in 2018. She is the vice president of Kent State’s Stark County Alumni chapter, and she received the Kent State University Alumni Association’s Advocacy Award in 2020.

Kate (Leishman) Yancho, BFA ’05, Kalamazoo, MI, was appointed to a three-year term at the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in September 2021. The Michigan Arts Council is a key agency for arts and cultural planning, grant funding and more. Yancho continues to serve as the executive director of WellSpring/City Terry & Dancers, a 501c3 nonprofit professional modern dance company celebrating its 40th anniversary in Kalamazoo.

Darrin Byler, BA ’06, New Westminster, British Columbia, published Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City (Duke University Press, February 2022). Byler, a sociocultural anthropologist and assistant professor at Simon Fraser University’s School for International Studies, based his book on two years of ethnographic fieldwork among Uyghur and Han internal migrants in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. He uses his findings to argue that the contemporary Chinese colonization of the Uyghur Muslim minority group in the northeastern autonomous region of Xinjiang, showing how it has led to what he calls “terror capitalism”—a configuration of ethnocide, racialization and surveillance and mass-detention that in this case promotes settler colonialism. He focuses on the experiences of young Uyghur men—who are the primary target of state violence—and how they develop masculinities and homosocial friendships to protect themselves against gendered, ethnically charged forms of violence.

Theodore Ferringer Jr., MAs ’06, MUD ’06, Cleveland, OH, was promoted to senior associate at Balbasy Cleveland in 2020. A member of Cuyahoga County Bar Association Young Lawyers Committee, Ferringer is a licensed architect and recognized community leader. In addition to advocating for equitable design excellence through numerous...
Sarah Shandy, BA ’06, Cuyahoga Falls, OH, was nominated as a Top Cop in recognition of her dedication as a Copley police officer to Cuyahoga Valley National Park and surrounding areas. The police department has partnered with the park to provide police officers as park rangers and has helped to organize events to promote the park.

Patricia Lovell, MLS ’07, presented a short film, “Miles to Go,” on YouTube. The film, which she wrote, directed, and produced, explores the journey of a woman who overcomes obstacles to achieve her goal of running a marathon.

In January, she announced her candidacy for Ohio’s 13th Congressional District, writing on www.emiliasykesforcongress.com. She has presented on the topics of equity and inclusion, and is a frequent juror of student work at her alma mater, Kent State University.

They met at Brewhouse Pub in January 2009, and were married on June 19, 2021, in Sandusky, Ohio. Their wedding photos! Marcee Maurer

Damnshawa Shustana Ash, BA ‘15, BFA ’16, Cleveland, OH, played a character referred to as “The Journey” in a workshop production of India Nicole Bartoo’s play Panther Woman: An Army for the Liberation, which was held outdoors at Cleveland Public Theatre in July 2021. Her character comes to a sacred place to seek her ancestors to show her the meaning of being a Black woman.

John Hickman, BFA ‘09, MArch ‘16, Cleveland, OH, has been promoted to associate at Bialosky Cleveland, a leading architecture and planning firm. He is a WELL accredited professional with a specialty in sustainability. His current projects include Library Lofts, Progressive Insurance Alpha North and the Physician Assistant Building at Ursuline College. He is registered as an architect with the Ohio State Board of Architecture.

John Hickman, BFA ‘09, MArch ‘16, Cleveland, OH, has been promoted to associate at Bialosky Cleveland, a leading architecture and planning firm. He is a WELL accredited professional with a specialty in sustainability. His current projects include Library Lofts, Progressive Insurance Alpha North and the Physician Assistant Building at Ursuline College. He is registered as an architect with the Ohio State Board of Architecture.

Christopher Persons, BS ‘15, MArch ’16, Cleveland, OH, has been promoted to associate at Bialosky Cleveland. He joined Bialosky in 2015 and earned a merit award in 2016 from AIA Cleveland for his student graduate project, Drydock No. 2. Other notable projects include Library Lofts, Progressive Insurance Alpha North Annex and the Physician Assistant Building at Ursuline College. He is registered as an architect with the American Institute of Architects. Ethan Rothermel, BS ’15, MArch ’16, Canton, OH, joined Bialosky Cleveland as an architectural designer in 2021. During his studies at Kent State, he participated in a study-abroad program in Florence, Italy. He came to the firm with a strong interest in digital fabrication and parametric/computational design and a portfolio that placed architectural projects, studio work and CNC furniture design. His current projects include Library Lofts, The Pearl, Cleveland Public Library’s Walz Branch and Karam Senior Housing.

Katelyn Walker, BA ’16, Cleveland, OH, was promoted to associate at Bialosky Cleveland in 2020. She is an accredited interior designer and WELL accredited professional with a specialty in healthy building materials. She joined the firm in 2016. Her projects include Kent State University’s Visual Communication Design, The City Mission and Lorain County Public Health. She has participated in and led firm initiatives to support strategic planning, wellness, and equity, diversity and inclusion.

SEND US YOUR CLASS NOTE! Fill out the form at www.kent.edu/classnotes or write Kent State University Alumni Center, Center for Philanthropy & Engagement, 310 Rose St., Kent, OH 44242. Try to limit your notes to 150 words or less, and include your degree(s), class year(s), and city/state of residence. High resolution photos may be included. Notes may be edited for length or clarity and published as space allows.

Deadline for submissions: Spring/Summer—January 1; Fall/Winter—June 30
Spring Ashmore, BA ‘20, University, OH, an operations technology professional (OTP) for locally owned Tomtreyco McDonald’s, headquartered in Uniontown, won the Marty Ruby Award for OTP Pro of the Year. This award recognizes one McDonald’s employee annually for executing operational excellence and driving growth through technology.

Ashmore joined McDonald’s in 2007 as a crew member at the Hartville, OH, restaurant, and since 2017 has managed an operations technology professional team that oversees all regional computer, headsets, music, telephone, internet and camera systems. He is an active member of the local chapters of AIA Cleveland, and is an active member of the local chapters of American Institute of Architects and the National Organization for Minority Architects.

2020s

Brianna Gordon, BA ‘20, Cleveland, OH, is a Centennial Plaza programming assistant and hospitality facilitator at the Pro Football Hall of Fame, as well as a Ross xpression and Blaze operator. Recently, the president of the hall of fame asked her to update the video archives so they have individual videos of every Hall of Fame’s football career, including speeches and pictures from their playing days. Gordon graduated with a degree in digital media production and a concentration in television from the School of Media and Journalism.

Kemet Floyd, BS ‘19, Youngstown, OH, joined Balislawy Cleveland as an architectural designer in 2020. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in architecture and a minor in sustainability. He is pursuing a master’s degree in architecture at Kent State after starting the program at Boston Architectural College. His work is exhibited through the national online catalogue, SAY IT LOUD, accompanied by a physical traveling exhibition of prominent designers. He has designed brand identities for several small businesses during his emerging career. He is an active member of the local chapters of the American Institute of Architects and the National Organization for Minority Architects.

The Marty Ruby Award was created in remembrance of California McDonald’s operator, Marty Ruby, who passed away in 2019. Ruby was passionate about the OTP program and worked tirelessly to improve it.

Kelly Deal, BS ‘20, Cleveland Heights, OH, joined Balislawy Cleveland as an architectural designer in 2020. She is pursuing a certification as a green roof professional. She has volunteered for the ACE Mentorship program, which exposes high school students to the fields of architecture, construction and engineering. With an affinity for sustainability, she aims to create architecture that acts as a working system with the environment, rather than against it. Her conceptual works have appeared in digital architectural publications, including those of the BUCKERINVACH and The Architect: Notable projects include FairFax Market mixed use and space planning for the Westlake Porter Public Library.

Sarah Contos-Holden, BA ‘21, Lakewood, OH, joined Balislawy Cleveland as an interior designer in 2021, after her semester-long internship with the firm. She brings value to both design projects and social media/marketing efforts at the firm. She volunteers for the ACE Mentorship program, which supports students with a focus on the fields of architecture, construction, and engineering. She is the design team leader for the James A. Thomas and Thomas W. L. Ashley US Courthouse in Toledo, Ohio.

Save the Date

Mark your calendars! Homecoming 2022 is Oct. 1.

We are looking forward to having alumni join us on the Kent Campus for one of our biggest blue and gold celebrations! Make memories and reminisce with fellow Golden Flashes, check out the exciting changes on campus and enjoy many favorite Homecoming traditions this fall.

Stay tuned for details! Information will be provided at www.kent.edu/homecoming/alumni as plans are finalized. Be sure to follow us on social media to stay up to date on #KentHC plans.

KENT STATE HOMECOMING OCTOBER 1, 2022

Note: An * before a name means the alumnus was a faculty or staff member, too. So they are also listed under Faculty/Staff on the next page.

Michael A. Carroll, BA ‘73, December 11, 2021
Stephen R. Shill, MBA ‘73, September 3, 2021
William Buttermore, MEd ‘74, June 2, 2021
James R. Erwin, AAS ‘74, April 8, 2021
Linda Thompson, BA ‘75, June 30, 2020
Barbara Commings, MH ‘77, February 13, 2020
Ruby G. Donatelli, BS ‘77, January 9, 2020
Robert L. Allbright, PhB ‘78, September 14, 2019
Roy E. Allen, BBA ‘78, July 17, 2019
Shirly R. Terrass, MEd ‘78, PhB ‘83, June 25, 2019
Nancy Birk, BA ‘79, MEd ‘22, October 16, 2016
Michaela “Mike” Cox, AA ‘79, February 19, 2019
Allan Macdonald, MS ‘79, May 28, 2016

Karen Franklin, BA ‘81, August 35, 2020
Janice R. Niespert, MLS ‘81, August 1, 2020
John C. Decker, BBA ‘82, May 9, 2019
Judson C. “Judd” Logan, BA ‘82, January 3, 2019
Michael Comto, DPM ‘83, July 13, 2018
Louis J. Rodgers, BBA ‘86, August 14, 2018
Paula Sheets, AA ‘86, May 8, 2018
Thomas E. May, BA ’88, March 19, 2018

Malinda Gavins, MEd ‘93, December 25, 2020
Craig A. Rice, BBA ‘93, December 6, 2020
Joy Kimpel, AAB ‘94, October 9, 2020
Amy Christine Franjesick, BA ‘95, December 1, 2020
Geoff L. Dombart, BA ‘96, August 21, 2020
Christina McDonald Smith, BSN ‘96, February 10, 2021
Edison A. Knight Sr., MEd ‘97, June 19, 2021
Shawnina L. Harmon, AA ‘98, May 4, 2021
Randy L. Epplinger, BS ‘99, July 31, 2021
Amy L. Mchberta York, AAS ‘99, September 14, 2021

Richard Harden, BA ‘00, February 34, 2021
Carmelle J. Kozieh, AAS ‘00, October 2, 2020
Bonnie L. Chapman, AAS ‘02, June 10, 2020
William “Bill” Ebert, MA ‘03, August 28, 2020
Terrance J. Bond, AAS ‘04, May 20, 2021
James A. “Jim” Baumann, AAB ‘07, OS ‘09, October 16, 2020
Sean Conroy, BBA ‘07, December 26, 2020

Michael F. Boland, BBA ‘10, August 13, 2021
Adrienne Halley, BSN ‘12, September 8, 2020
Hannah Baldwin-May, BSN ‘13, October 5, 2019
Vincent J. Salpino, BBA ‘16, February 17, 2020
Dovante M. Strickland, BS ‘15, July 36, 2020
Robby Daniel Winter, BA ‘17, December 10, 2019
Luke Grandjean, BS ‘18, April 10, 2021
Brian W. Wessels, BBA ‘18, November 13, 2021

See page 60 for Faculty/Staff listings.
In Memory of William F. Dollard III

FACULTY/STAFF

LIFE

ROBERT “BOB” WICK, BFA ’57
March 27, 1935 – January 13, 2022

Transferring Grief into Gift

I t never took long, once you were pulled into a conversation with Bob Wick, to feel changed—felt inspired by his creativity and care, touched by his generosity of spirit. Bob Wick had that effect on people, especially on every student and young poet he met.

Out of the unspeakable loss of his son, Stanley, and his brother Walter’s son, Tom— who died in a separate car accident—Bob and Walter created the Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Scholarship for Kent State students in 1994. Over time, the seed of that initial generosity grew through passionate engagement and financial contributions, transforming their grief into the gifts of the Wick Poetry Center.

I first met Bob and Walter Wick in 1994 at the Wick Poetry Center’s tenth anniversary celebration. I had just won Wick’s Ohio Chapbook Prize for a collection of poems that gave voice to my childhood grief over my mother’s death. Maggie Anderson, the center’s founding director, seated me between Bob and Walter during a celebratory lunch. I was immediately struck by the knowledge and energy both men showed for their different passions. Walter was a bibliophile who loved language and to play with words. Bob pulled out a paper napkin and started sketching a house.

He said he was often at a loss for words and instead thought visually. And he told me about a woman, Maggie Anderson, the center’s founding director, who had inspired his passion for sculpture. Bob loved to talk with students. He would share his passion for creating what he called “living bronze sculptures”—and then would listen to them, drawing out their interests in any form of creative expression. Each summer he and his wife, Estellean, opened their beautiful home in Wick Poetry Park (including the stunning “Seated Earth” in the Wick Poetry Center Park) remain a creative expression of his belief in the interconnectedness of all things. One summer he showed a group of students at his home how he planted cactus and desert trees in the pockets of soil he placed in his sculptures: “until you can grow a tree from your own heart,” he told them. “You’ll never understand the oneness of all things.”

Bob’s heart was large, his spirit limitless—he always opened to the curious and questioning student, always open to new growth. He never stopped his own exploration.

Thanks to Bob and Walter’s vision and generosity, the Wick Poetry Center remains deeply rooted in our community and continues to be nourished by the passionate engagement of their children and by so many others. As a vital, living program, our outreach keeps their gift in motion, transforming the lives of students and community members, welcoming all into the ever-expanding Wick family of poets.

—David Hassler, director of the Wick Poetry Center

“Seated Earth,” a living bronze sculpture by Bob Wick, is a focal point of the Wick Poetry Park on the Kent Campus.
JUDSON “JUD” LOGAN, BA ’82

| JUDSON “JUD” LOGAN, BA ’82 |

JUDSON “JUD” LOGAN, BA ’82

Olena Riabushenko (Galushko) and husband, Alex Riabushenko.

**Happiness is to love silence”… I have always tried to abide by this principle… because I was very comfortable and safe with my husband.**

**Now my happiness is gone. I don’t want to and I can’t believe it, let alone accept this fact!**

**I was strong and calm because of him … thanks to the understanding that he has given me … My entire universe is just destroyed by this war right now!!**

**Do you know what my 8th grade son is looking for on the internet — does his soul die after he dies????? How scary is this!!!**

**Sixteen years we built our family and happiness … now I just don’t understand where and how to move next????**

My heart is torn out and they say hold on, you can make it!!!!

I look at people going on with their usual lives and I just don’t understand why!!! I think this is some higher God’s plan, I don’t understand it at all now!!!

Our children were left without a father for whom they were the meaning of life … he helped them to be born and held them first … tried all of my free time when even I got tired of doing it, he always wanted them to do something and grow!!!

I have a feeling that he left … and he must come back … his smile “stands” (in my eyes … I can’t even say “rest in peace” right now)!!! I wish this was a dream so I can wake up … and near was he … how hard this all is.

—Olena Riabushenko (Galushko)

**People need to see that this war is against all Ukrainians … against our children and our future … it’s a war for our existence.”**

—Olena Riabushenko (Galushko)

Olena and Tonya (who resides in southern Ukraine near the Black Sea), both started emailing us after Russia invaded Ukraine last month. I felt guilty telling them about normal life in America because of what they are enduring with Putin’s totally unprovoked war. Both replied that reading about normal life in America was reassuring. Both asked for America’s help.

**Light Giver**

J Jud Logan, four-time Olympic and Varsity “J” Hall of Famer, left a legacy when he passed away from COVID-19 related pneumonia in January 2020. He came to Kent State on a divided athletic scholarship, part football, part track. A four-year letter winner in track and field (1978-79) and one-year letter winner in football (1978). Logan qualified for the NCAA Track and Field Championships in 1980 after being selected as a Mid-American Conference Outstanding Athlete. He also captured three individual MAC titles, winning the hammer throw in 1979 and 1980 and the discus throw in 1990. He had trained in the hammer throw with Kent State’s track coach, Al Schoterman, BS ’73, who was a five-time All-American in the hammer throw for the Golden Flashes and had competed in the 1976 Olympic Games in Munich. At the end of his senior year, when Logan went to Schoterman’s home to thank him, Schoterman asked if he wanted to be in the upcoming 1984 Olympics. He promised to help turn Logan into an Olympian over the next two years. Instead of an ending, says Nathan Fanger, Kent State track and field and associate head coach. “I will miss his energy, his passion and the way he could command a room wherever he went. He will forever have a place in my heart, and he will forever be part of the Kent State track and field family."

Logan stayed connected to Kent State and returned to the Field House for track and field meets each season. His voice could be heard loud and clear, especially during the final home indoor meet, which was previously named the Kent State Tune Up. Every year at that meet, Logan coached his own student-athletes and offered encouragement to throwers from other schools who were aiming for a big mark to qualify for the national meet.

In February 2022, Kent State renamed this final meet the “Jud Logan Memorial Tune Up.” This name will be used for the final meet each season from now on.

In addition, family and friends have established the Jud Logan-Al Schoterman KENT GIVER Scholarship endowment, in memory of Jud Logan and in honor of Al Schoterman. This gift enables Kent State to award scholarships to student-athletes who compete in throwing events.

At the time of his passing, Logan (who was treated for leukemia for two years prior to his death) was in his 17th season as head track and field coach at Ashland University where, among other accomplishments, he led the men’s team to three consecutive NCAA Division II national championships and was a five-time US Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association National Coach of the Year. A 1990 inductee into the Kent State Varsity “J” Hall of Fame, he also was a 2002 inductee of the Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches Hall of Fame and a 2015 inductee of the National Throes Coaches Association Throwing’s Hall of Fame.

“Al will be remembered for far more than just coaching, trophies and All-Americans; he was my friend, a mentor and an inspiration to many,” says Nathan Fanger, Kent State track and field and associate head coach. "He was always there for me as a young coach when I needed direction or advice. I will miss his energy, his passion and the way he could command a room wherever he went. He will forever have a place in my heart, and he will forever be part of the Kent State track and field family.”

Logan was a three-time conference champion, a three-time All-American and a five-time US Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association National Coach of the Year. A 1990 inductee into the Kent State Varsity “J” Hall of Fame, he also was a 2002 inductee of the Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches Hall of Fame and a 2015 inductee of the National Throes Coaches Association Throwing’s Hall of Fame.

“Al Schoterman changed the course of Jud's life,” says Logan’s youngest brother, Andy. “Al saw more light in him than Jud saw for himself. We see more in you and help light the path that you may have never seen or understood.”

Logan’s legacy continues today with his contribution to the Kent State track and field family with the Schoterman LIGHT GIVER Scholarship endowment, in memory of Jud Logan and in honor of Al Schoterman. This gift enables Kent State to award scholarships to student-athletes who compete in throwing events.

Our children were left without a loving father for whom they were the meaning of life … he helped them to be born and held them first … tried all of my free time when even I got tired of doing it, he always wanted them to do something and grow!!!

I have a feeling that he left … and he must come back … his smile “stands” (in my eyes … I can’t even say “rest in peace” right now)!!! I wish this was a dream so I can wake up … and near was he … how hard this all is.

—Olena Riabushenko

*TRIBUTE*
For the Birds

A silhouette of a bird soars above the sunburst on the Kent State University seal—but it’s not just any bird, it’s a chimney swift (Chaetura pelagica). Once a common sight in Kent, chimney swifts were the subject of decades of research by Ralph W. Dexter, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Biological Sciences, a well-known authority on the chimney swift during his tenure at Kent State. (He taught from 1937 to 1982 and died in 1991.)

Dexter, a native of Massachusetts, focused his research on the ecology of marine communities, including mollusks, crustaceans and birds. Coming to Kent State, he also studied the chimney swifts that nested and roosted in the chimneys and air shafts of older buildings on the Kent Campus. He banded and compiled data on thousands of swifts to understand their habits.

Chimney swifts spend most of their time in the air and can eat up to 12,000 flying insects a day. Only landing to nest and rest, they use their spit to “glue” the nests to the walls of chimneys and shafts. Among the many papers Dexter wrote is one of decades of research by Ralph W. Dexter, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Biological Sciences, a well-known authority on the chimney swift during his tenure at Kent State. (He taught from 1937 to 1982 and died in 1991.)

Dexter, a native of Massachusetts, focused his research on the ecology of marine communities, including mollusks, crustaceans and birds. Coming to Kent State, he also studied the chimney swifts that nested and roosted in the chimneys and air shafts of older buildings on the Kent Campus. He banded and compiled data on thousands of swifts to understand their habits.

Chimney swifts usually arrive in Ohio in April and leave by October, congregating in the hundreds as they migrate to the Amazon Basin of Peru for the winter. They used to nest and roost in hollow trees but began losing their natural habitat to deforestation and development. The swifts adapted by moving into building chimneys and expanding their range, protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. However, as old buildings with brick chimneys are torn down, the swifts once again face habitat loss—and their population is steadily declining.

When Rhonda Boyd, a senior engineer for the city of Kent, learned that the demolition of Kent’s old police station would displace a large colony of chimney swifts residing in its brick chimney, she became their champion. Spearheading a campaign to build the birds a home of their own, she secured funding through grants, community outreach and donations from local citizens.

Two years later, a 50-foot chimney swift tower, designed by Metis Construction, stands between the new Kent Police station and the Lefton Esplanade extension, across Haymaker Parkway from the Kent State University Hotel and Conference Center. At its base is a garden of native plants that attract pollinators. The brick tower also features handmade ceramic tiles depicting chimney swifts, pollinators and native plants by local artist Emily Ulm.

“We’re also looking to add more houses,” says Boyd, who received the 2021 Portage Park District Foundation Award for Environmental Activism. “They won’t be as fancy as this, but you can make them out of wood.” She’s looking for volunteers to help build the additional nesting structures, which the city plans to place throughout the parks and along the river.

Learn more about chimney swifts and how to construct a tower at www.chimneyswifts.org.