

# Alumni Echoes



UPPER  
COLUMBIA  
ACADEMY

*a place to grow*



July 2020



# Principal's Message

**W**e are living in very uncertain times! These last three months have shown me how quickly our world can be turned upside down. This has caused my staff and I to spend some considerable time reflecting on what God is truly calling us to do and to be here at UCA. Through these conversations, one thing has clearly risen to the top. We must continually evaluate everything we do on this campus through the lens of “Is this leading our students closer to Jesus Christ?” We have to be unafraid to let go of things that may be good in and of themselves, but if they are detracting from that purpose, they don’t belong on our campus.

This crisis that we are going through has also shown me what an amazing and supportive family UCA has. We sent out an urgent appeal to our alumni and friends the first part of April. We were staring at the real possibility of ending this year with

a significant deficit. We prayed as a staff and sent out an appeal to raise \$250,000 before the end of June. On a human level, this seemed like a lofty goal. However, how easy it is for us to quickly forget the God we serve! With His blessing, we have raised \$284,000 in less than three months! God indeed has His hand over Upper Columbia Academy. We will finish the year in the black and are actively working to start in-person classes again in August. Thank you so very much for remembering UCA during this time of need.

Please continue to uplift us daily in your prayers. Yes, these are challenging times, but they are also exciting times to be alive. Please pray that we will be ever faithful to share Jesus Christ in absolutely everything we do here on our campus.

Blessings,

Eric Johnson

## A Message to our Alumni and Friends:

**I**n light of current events, and after prayerful consideration, we regret to share with you that the Alumni Homecoming that was scheduled for September 25-26, 2020, will be postponed until the fall of 2021. At that time, we will celebrate our honor classes from both years.

While we would love to see each of you on campus this fall, your safety and well-being is of utmost importance to us, and we feel it is in everyone’s best interest to delay this in-person gathering. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the virus, we are making this decision now in hopes that it will give all of you the advance notice you need to cancel any travel plans and reservations.

We look forward to seeing all of you in September, 2021. Until then, know that you are in our prayers and we would love to hear from you.

### Alumni Echoes

Editor

Krista Phillips

Contributing Editor

Stephen Lacey

Photographers

Laura Pierce

Lorelei Harbour

Contributing Writers

Michelle Melendy

Lorelei Harbour

Alumni Office

Krista Phillips

Alumni Director

Alumni@ucaa.org

Layout & Design

Action Printers





Team Waldo, from Summit Northwest Ministries, at the 2019 tournament

UCA to host

## Bob Larrabee Memorial Golf Tournament

The Bob Larrabee Memorial Golf Tournament will be held this year on September 25. While we have decided to postpone our alumni celebration until next year, we are still planning to move forward with the golf tournament. The tournament will be held at Circling Raven Golf Course, which was voted the #1 public course in Idaho!

This year, UCA will host the tournament. We are deeply grateful to FoundationONE for their work to grow and build the tournament over the past several years. The proceeds from this year's tournament will benefit UCA's music and athletic programs.

The tournament will be limited to the first 120 golfers, so sign up early. To register, simply visit our website at [www.ucaa.org](http://www.ucaa.org) and click on the alumni tab. For more information, please contact Krista Phillips at [krista.phillips@ucaa.org](mailto:krista.phillips@ucaa.org).







## Senior Class Overcomes Challenges

The UCA Alumni Association is proud to welcome the members of the class of 2020! This amazing class pulled together to weather the challenges of distance learning during the last quarter of their senior year, and we are grateful for their positive leadership and great attitudes.

Principal Eric Johnson worked tirelessly with the senior class sponsors and the rest of the staff to plan an in-person graduation on our Idaho satellite campus at Lake City Academy. Though the weather was chilly, the rain held off until after the ceremony was finished and the seniors were on their way to a mini version of their senior class trip.





Class of 2020, please let us know when your contact information changes so we can keep in touch. We'd also like to hear about college graduations, career accomplishments, weddings, births, and other milestones in your lives. Visit our webpage at [uca.org/alumni](http://uca.org/alumni) to update your information.

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*We wish you all the best as you step into your futures. May God bless you as you follow His leading! Congratulations!*



# Artisan Bakery

## Brings Bagels and Blessings



When things in my life get stressful, I bake,” says Sheila Allison (’84). “I believe God has brought me back to it repeatedly.” Sheila’s sourdough starter and her openness to God’s leading have taken her on a journey with many unexpected turns, but when times got tough for UCA this spring, it was clear she was in the right place at the right time.

Sheila joined the staff at UCA as the cafeteria director last fall, and before long, she won everyone’s hearts with her sweet spirit. In addition,

she is appreciated for her competent management of the kitchen, as well as the delicious meals she and her team serve each day. Quiet and

hard-working, Sheila is also fun-loving and creative. She and her husband, Dennis, have two grown children, Kelsey and Sidney.

Baking is not a new interest for Sheila. “It’s this thing with me—I can’t stop baking.” It was while working at Enterprise Academy in Kansas 20 years ago that she decided

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*When things in my life get stressful, I bake,” says Sheila Allison (’84).*

*“I believe God has brought me back to it repeatedly.*

to try baking with wild yeast. So she did her research and grew her first sourdough starter. To begin with, family and friends were the only ones to enjoy the results of her experiments. But before too long, word spread, and she began taking orders from others in the community each week. “I had a feeling this skill would come in handy someday, for something,” she says. And she was right—everywhere the family moved, it didn’t take long before she was baking again.

The sourdough starter she grew in Kansas survived throughout the years, miraculously even through a car accident! When their children were approaching their teenage years,

Sheila and Dennis wanted to give them an opportunity to learn the value of work, so together, their family opened The Baker’s Stone in Republic, Washington. During the next six years, this successful bakery provided many hours of hands-on experience for their own children and a number of their friends, as well.



One of the first things Sheila did when she arrived at UCA was bake bagels for the staff pre-session meetings. “They were the best bagels I had ever tasted,” said Principal Eric Johnson. “I was blown away when I discovered that they were baked fresh that morning in our own cafeteria!” Sheila’s sourdough bread, bagels, cinnamon rolls, and dinner rolls started appearing on the weekly menu, and were an instant hit.

In January of this year, Sheila mentioned the idea of starting a bakery at UCA to administrators. They talked through some of the possibilities, but the time just didn’t seem right to move forward. However, several months later, when it became necessary for UCA to transition to distance learning because of coronavirus concerns, she felt a strong impression that she would be baking again soon. She was not even the least bit surprised when Eric asked her to begin baking in the now empty cafeteria.

Since the dorms were closed, the girls’ deans volunteered to help, and several other staff members also stepped forward. To start with, an email went to staff, informing them that baked goods would be available. The response was very positive, and in the next couple of weeks, items were offered to the community. To say that the bakery was a success would be an understatement. By the time the school year ended, orders were pouring in each week for hundreds of sourdough loaves, as well as dozens of cinnamon rolls and, of course, the beloved bagels. Other popular items were focaccia bread and dinner rolls.

The success of the bakery was truly a blessing to all who were involved. It not only provided a job for some of the support staff whose responsibilities drastically changed

when the students left, but it was a financial blessing to the school, as well. And it was definitely something positive for everyone to look forward to each week during the “stay home, stay healthy” orders. Laura Pierce, who teaches Dual Credit History at UCA, says it was always a fight at her house for the last cheddar jalapeno bagel. “We loved everything we tried from the bakery! The bagels were definitely our family favorites, however. On bakery pick-up days, I barely made it through the door before someone would grab the bags of fresh bagels. All of the flavors of those chewy treats are so delicious.”

Sheila has especially appreciated the opportunities she has had to interact with people through baking. “I keep in contact with many of my former employees and customers, and I’m thankful for the relationships I’ve developed and the chances I’ve had to share my faith,” she says. “The last several months have been an awesome time to form strong connections with some of my fellow staff members, too.” Already, there are several students who have expressed interest in baking next school year, and Sheila is looking forward to mentoring them and sharing her expertise.

God’s timing in leading Sheila and her family to UCA is amazing! And who knew that bagels could be such a blessing? “We don’t yet know the exact future of the bakery at UCA, but I am excited to see what God has planned,” says Sheila. The bakery is closed for the summer, but beginning in September, baked goods will be sold through the farm stand at UCA. Weekly ordering will again be available to the local community as soon as possible after school starts.







From left to right Andrew McCary, Joe Urbin, and Jeremy McCombs.



# Alumni Team Meets Challenge

**Y**ou never know what a day will bring, and this is especially true as the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold. For alumnus Jeremy McCombs ('95) and Andrew McCrary ('87), events took an unusual turn when they were tasked with storing and managing shipments of over 10 million pieces of personal protective equipment that arrived in Spokane in early April.

Andrew is currently serving as the Director of Trust Services for the Upper Columbia Corporation, and Jeremy is the Church Ministries and Discipleship Director for the Upper Columbia Conference. The two men were joined by Joe Urbin, a local computer and communications expert and the father of two UCA alumni, who donated vacation time to volunteer at the warehouse. Between the three of them, they managed shipments, processed orders, and packaged and helped distribute supplies to area organizations.

“This was a tremendous opportunity to interface with community leaders and other volunteers,” says McCombs. “I found the part I enjoyed the most was relating to the people I came in contact with.” He also admits that brushing up on his forklift driving skills from college days was a lot of fun. “It was a little like riding a bike—I was able to remember how to drive it and I never spilled a pallet.”

The story actually began over 12 years ago when Patty Marsh (UCA Registrar from 1994-2000) took over the leadership of the Adventist Community Services for the Upper Columbia Conference. Patty started working right away to form relationships with leaders in the Spokane community and to recruit a team of disaster response volunteers. ACS specializes in warehouse management, and Patty’s team is highly trained with specialized software and management practices.

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*I found the part I enjoyed the most was relating to the people I came in contact with.*

As concern over the virus continued to grow, state and local organizations began donating needed supplies to be used for area hospitals, clinics, police and fire departments. Shipments of masks, gloves, gowns, hand sanitizer, and other items began to come in and a secure storage area was needed, as well as volunteers to manage and distribute the supplies.

Patty and her team were ready and willing, but there was one problem. Most of the available trained volunteers were retirees, which means they were at heightened risk from the virus and were mandated to “stay home and stay safe.” “People were needed that could step in quickly,” states Patty. “We were looking for volunteers that had solid computer skills and could quickly learn the warehouse management software.” This is where McCombs, McCrary, and Urbin came in. When contacted about the need, all three men were ready and willing to help.

“It was an honor to be able to serve my community in this way,” states McCrary. “It was a great opportunity to raise awareness about my church and what we stand for. Patty has done an awesome job of connecting with the community in preparation for disasters, and it was great to see how all the various organizations came together in response to this crisis.”

Though the supplies are now being managed and distributed by other area organizations, Patty continues to receive positive comments and thanks from community officials for the way ACS stepped up and served during the worst of the crisis. We are proud of our UCA family and thankful for the countless ways they continue to live out the values we are working to instill in young people—service and love for others.







## Farm Grows at UCA

Over the past three years, those of you who live nearby might have noticed a small farm beginning to take shape on campus. Beginning with our greenhouse in 2017, the farm has grown to encompass a shipping container that has been converted to a growing environment, along with a small you-pick garden beginning to grow to the west of the greenhouse. As part of our project-based learning environment at UCA, students in the Home Renovation class, taught by Jesse Melendy, also designed and constructed a produce stand which will eventually be open for selling produce to the public.

This spring, Bryce Reading took over the management

of the farm and, along with Ted McConnachie ('82), began the transition from hydroponics to soil in the greenhouse. The decision to change the growing method stemmed from a desire to teach students how to grow things in the ground instead of hydroponically. Reading is excited to help students understand best practices in agriculture, and soil based gardening is more readily achievable for most people. When school starts, Reading plans to employ at least five students to help around the farm.

In March, after our students started distance learning, several staff members expressed interest in contributing to the growth of the farm. Ted McConnachie built



all of the raised beds inside the greenhouse. Curtis Anderson, UCA's choral director, has a passion for growing flowers. He designed and built the beautiful flowerbed surrounding the farm sign in front of the greenhouse. Jesse Melendy, industrial arts teacher, took the lead in finishing the produce stand. Rob Knipple, UCA's band director, pitched in wherever he was needed. Their combined efforts are noticeable to everyone who drives by.

Throughout this summer, Reading and his team of student workers have managed the planting, weeding, and watering in the greenhouse and the outdoor garden area. Caring for the growing plants is no easy task, as many different types of fruits and vegetables are being cultivated in and around the greenhouse. In the U-pick patch, rows of tomatoes, raspberries, and pumpkins have been planted. Inside the greenhouse, many more vegetables can be seen growing, including lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, beets, cucumbers, kale, melon, parsley, beans, radishes, potatoes, peppers, a variety of herbs, and even some giant marigolds.

In the months to come, as the fruits and vegetables are ready to be harvested, plans for selling them to the public are underway. Currently, the beginning harvests of lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, and beets are being purchased and enjoyed by the staff. As fall approaches, produce will be available for purchase from the farm stand, along with items from the UCA Bakery. "It's a matter of trial and error, and learning what grows best in the greenhouse," says Reading. "I look forward to working with our students to continue building the farm program." Reading hopes to add some cherry trees to the U-pick patch, and also expand the outdoor garden area.

By Lorelei Harbour  
UCA Senior (Class of 2021)





# Welcome to UCA...



## Ryan Irwin

We are pleased to welcome Ryan Irwin to our staff. He will be stepping in to the position of Athletic Director and Physical Education teacher. Ryan comes to us from the UCA Elementary School, where he served as Head Teacher last school year. Ryan and his wife, Benjawan, have two daughters; Evelyn is 6 and Erica is 2.

## Rachel (Blake) Riffel

Rachel (Blake) Riffel is our new Spanish and Honors English teacher. She and her husband, Derek, are both 2010 graduates of UCA, and although they didn't begin dating until they were attending Walla Walla University, their first meeting was at the Handshake at UCA. We are thrilled to welcome them back to our campus. Rachel and Derek have been living and working in Modesto, California. In her free time, Rachel enjoys quilting and spending time with her dogs, Finn and Izzy.

## Matt Maniscalco

In March of this past school year, Matt Maniscalco joined the team in the Business Office as Assistant Treasurer. Matt graduated from UCA in 2005, and previously worked in public accounting. Matt and his wife, Sara, enjoy sailing, rock climbing, mountain biking, and spending time with their extended family. They have two children; Aaron is 3 and Leah is 6 months. Welcome, Matt and Sara!



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*Congratulations are in order for our Extension Campus teacher, Amanda Birney, who married Trent Larsen in June. They will be living in Coeur d'Alene, and we extend a warm UCA welcome to Trent!*





## Karla Whitmore

Karla Whitmore joined our team in December of 2019. She and her family are from Grand Prairie, Alberta. Her cheery voice is the one you hear when you call UCA, and she is doing a fantastic job of running the front office as the Administrative Assistant. Karla and her husband, Curtis, have two children who attend UCA; Chloe will be a sophomore and Russell a junior this coming year.

## Leaving us. . .

**Carol Ochoa**, our former Assistant Treasurer, retired in March of this year. She and her husband, Adolfo, moved to Florida to be near their children. Carol has blessed UCA by her ministry in several capacities over the years, in the position of Administrative Assistant first, then later transitioning to the Business Office. We are deeply grateful for the time she spent on our campus, and for her godly influence and example. Carol and Adolfo are missed, but word has it that they are enjoying the sunshine and thriving on many happy hours with their grandchildren.

Our Head Dean of Women, **Stephanie Gladding**, will be stepping away from deaning to focus on being a mom to daughter Evelyn. Stephanie has been a dean at UCA for 10 years, and we will greatly miss her leadership in the dorm. We are blessed that Kyle and Stephanie will not be leaving our UCA family, as Kyle will continue teaching mathematics. Stephanie has impacted countless girls through the years, and she continues to be a second mom to many! We are so grateful for her ministry, and happy that she will still be nearby.

**Rhonda Dungan**, our Library Assistant, retired at the end of last school year, and we are appreciative of the countless hours she spent supervising the library and interacting with our students. Her sweet spirit will be missed, and we wish her God's blessings as she enjoys retirement.

We are grateful for the blessing of Taskforce Volunteers each year. Though it is always hard to see them go, it is with appreciation, and we wish the best to **Mike Schmeltz**, **Ryan Dieter**, and **Catalina Torres** as they conclude their volunteer time with us. Their contribution to UCA has been invaluable, and they will be missed! God bless you as you continue to serve Him.





Stephanie Gladding



Michelle Melendy

## UCA Receives Wellness Center Grant

UCA was blessed during the past year to receive a grant for \$130,000 to transform the Olin Peach Power House into a Wellness Center. The goal of the Wellness Center is to provide accessible and affordable mental health services to our students without the need to transport them off campus. Part of the grant has been designated to provide counseling scholarships to uninsured or underinsured students. Plans have already been drawn up and bids secured, and as soon as the contractors are available, the renovation will begin. “This is going to be such a positive change, because it will free up a lot of resources, especially in the dorms,” says Dani Rivera, the head girls’ dean. The time and expense previously used for transportation will be reallocated to other important needs, and students will be able to get to and from their appointments quickly, minimizing missed classes and work appointments.

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*Statistics indicate 50% of students will struggle with mental health issues during adolescence*

Michelle Melendy, currently the school counselor, will serve as the clinical director for the center. “Statistics indicate 50% of students will struggle with mental health issues during adolescence,” states Melendy, citing a study published in the National Institute of Mental

Health. “We are thrilled to have this opportunity to meet that growing need.” In addition to providing counseling, the center will also offer college and career guidance free to all students.

Plans for the space include three individual counseling rooms and a telehealth space where students can connect with off-site counselors. There will also be a gathering area to be used for group therapy sessions, and it will be supervised during much of the day for

students who need a quiet place to engage in relaxing activities such as coloring.

Stephanie Gladding will serve as the Program Director, providing mental health screening and information, facilitating

communication with parents, and making referrals for mental health concerns. The UCA Church pastor will also maintain an office in the power house, underscoring the connection between spiritual and emotional wholeness.

By Krista Phillips and Michelle Melendy



# ANNUAL REPORT OF DONOR SUPPORT

The staff and students at UCA sincerely appreciate the generosity of those who have sacrificed to give to our worthy student fund and the other needs of the school. We are overwhelmed by the blessing of God and the outpouring of your support during our Bridge the Gap campaign this spring. Thank you, and may God continue to richly bless you!

**Your gifts totaled \$1,190,570.00 from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.**

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## Our Apologies

If we accidentally omitted your name or business, please contact the Alumni Office at [alumni@uca.org](mailto:alumni@uca.org) so we can correct our mistake in the next Annual Report. Thank you for your patience with us.



# Remember When...

1970



1980



1990



2000



2010



## Do you remember?

Who's in the photo? When was it taken? What is happening? Test your knowledge! Email the Alumni Office and let us know. [alumni@ucca.org](mailto:alumni@ucca.org)





# A Note from The Alumni Director

*“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT*

Friends,

UCA is so much more than just another school. It is a special place where lifelong friendships are formed, and where young people are equipped for a life of service. As you leaf through the pages of this newsletter, I pray you’ll be inspired by the stories of your friends who are stepping forward and serving with creativity and passion.

As I process the events of the past few months and the uncertainty we face in the future, I can’t think of a better time to reach out to the people in my life that I haven’t connected with recently. We talk a lot about social distancing and self-quarantine, and while these things may be important for our health and safety, the resulting isolation and loneliness is devastating. Take a moment today and pick up the phone for a good talk or arrange to take a walk together—I know you’ll be blessed!

I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities I’ve had to renew friendships and get acquainted with so many of you during the few months that I’ve been in my new role as Alumni Director. And even though we will not be meeting in person this fall for our Alumni Homecoming weekend, I would love to hear from you, so please don’t hesitate to contact me.

All the Best,

Krista Phillips

## Class of 1960



Jewell (Rasmussen) Putz ('60), and Jeanne (Dutro) Peters ('60), attended school together at UCA for 10 years, beginning their friendship in the third grade at the UCA Elementary School. Here, they are joined by Jeanne’s brother, Glenn Dutro ('59), Dixie (Biggar) Plata ('59) and Jewell’s sister, Lou Ellen (Rasmussen) Sample ('59). This photo was taken at the UCA Alumni Homecoming weekend in 2019.



## Alumni Information

Contact Krista Phillips  
(509) 245-3650  
alumni@ucca.org

- Discuss a gift you are inspired to give
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- Recommend someone for an Alumni story
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- Request combined family mailing
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### Need to update your Alumni info?

[www.ucaa.org/alumni](http://www.ucaa.org/alumni)  
alumni@ucca.org

## UCA Recruiting Office

Your son, daughter, grandchild, neighbor, or church youth might thrive at Upper Columbia Academy. Encourage them to visit our website at [ucca.org](http://ucca.org)



Call Donovan Andregg, Vice Principal for Admissions at (509) 245-3680 for more information, to schedule a campus tour, or to apply now.