



WINTER 2025

VITERBO MAGAZINE

# LIFE OF IMPACT

## *RA with a Purpose*

Bella Brunton knows, “You’re not just a statistic or number at Viterbo, you’re a human being.”



### Also inside

One Million Dollar Gift  
Nancy Poehling Haggerty

Passion for People  
Nik Yudin

Building a Legacy  
Dan and Michelle Pixley

CONTEMPLATION

HOSPITALITY

INTEGRITY

STEWARDSHIP

SERVICE



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# From the President

## Telling Our Story With Purpose

At Viterbo University, storytelling is more than a communications strategy. It is an expression of who we are and how we live our mission. As part of our RISE Strategic Plan, we have made the commitment to strengthen how we share the Viterbo story with the world. Storytelling helps us highlight students transformed through education, alumni leading with faith and purpose, and a campus community inspired by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration to live with integrity, service, and compassion.

This past year brought exciting progress. Dr. Erin Edlund joined Viterbo as vice president for marketing, communications, and enrollment, bringing energy and expertise that have shaped a renewed vision for telling our story. Under her leadership, the marketing and communications team led a thoughtful brand refresh that introduced a new color palette, typography, and refined logo, along with authentic messaging that captures the heart of who we are. These updates now appear across admissions



materials, social media, and publications, and will continue to roll out as opportunities arise to refresh other pieces with care and fiscal responsibility.

Our website also received a light redesign in preparation for a full rebuild next year, and our social media presence has found new vitality. These efforts are helping us tell our story with greater clarity, warmth, and purpose. This issue of our alumni magazine is no exception.

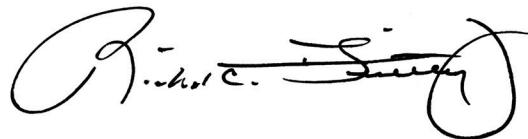
You'll notice that the magazine's layout reflects our new visual direction, and you'll see a significant change in its name. After years as *Strides*, this publication is now simply *Viterbo Magazine*. The change came through a collaboration between Dr. Edlund and her team, Adjunct Faculty Corrine Yohann, and Dr. Jessica Welsh, whose graduate marketing students studied ways to elevate our institutional storytelling. The students noted that while *Strides* conveyed progress, it didn't fully express our Catholic and Franciscan identity or the deep sense of community and pride that defines Viterbo. Their recommendation was both simple and profound: call it what it is—Viterbo.

This change, while small in appearance, reflects something much greater. We are embracing our name, our history, and

our sacred story. Each update, from logo to layout, advances our mission of preparing students for lives of faithful service and ethical leadership.

Thank you for being part of that story and for living the Viterbo mission in your homes, workplaces, and communities. Together, we are writing the next chapter in a legacy of faith, learning, and service that continues to shape the world for the better.

*Pace e Bene*  
Peace and All Good,



Richard C. Trietley, Ed.D.  
President



# Life Insurance Policies

## Are a Simple and Impactful Form of Charitable Giving

Dan and Michelle (Pixley) '86 Reichert designated Viterbo as the beneficiary on one of their policies. In the future, Viterbo will apply the policy proceeds to university purposes designated by the Reicherts. With a paid policy, the Reicherts receive gift credit and an income tax reduction based on the policy's value. If the policy is not yet paid, cash contributions cover future premium payments, and an income tax reduction can be claimed for each of those payments.

Their generous gift comes at a comparatively low cost, while providing support for the university and strengthening Viterbo's mission of preparing students for faithful service and ethical leadership.





If you would like to learn more about how to support Viterbo with a gift of life insurance or other charitable giving opportunities, contact Josh Gates, assistant vice president of advancement, at **608-796-3077** or **jrgates@viterbo.edu**.

# WHERE STUDENTS **BELONG**

At Viterbo University, each student is a valued member of a community that cares deeply about their education and personal wellbeing. From move-in day to graduation and landing that first job, students receive the support, guidance, and encouragement they need to thrive on each step of their educational journey. No matter their major, extracurricular activities in school, or path in life, Viterbo is a place students know they truly belong.

## RA with a Purpose

During her first semester at Viterbo in fall 2022, biology major Bella Brunton from Monroe found herself struggling. She hadn't yet found "her people," and despite being a science whiz growing up, her chemistry class was proving challenging.

Feeling like an outsider and unsure what to do, Brunton reached out to her Resident Assistant (RA) in Bonaventure Hall, Lauren Bergquist.

Bergquist offered study tips, connected her with a tutor and the Academic Resource Center, and most importantly reminded her she was there to help. "She gave me her phone number, and we texted often about any questions or concerns I had," Brunton said.

That small act of kindness made all the difference. Brunton passed chemistry and, by spring semester, was thriving—making friends and getting to know her professors.

**Research opportunities had first drawn Brunton to Viterbo, but what she discovered on campus was even better. "You're not just a statistic or number at Viterbo, you're a human being," she said.**

Now a senior, Brunton serves as president of the STEM Club, treasurer of the Tri-Beta biology honors society, and member of the Student Government Association. She will graduate in May with a degree in biology and plans to attend medical school or pursue a graduate degree in microbiology. She's also in her third year as an RA, striving to make the same difference for her residents that Bergquist made for her.

"Like Lauren, I try to be as present as I can," Brunton said. "My residents know they can knock on my door, email, or text and I'll do my best to help."



Working as an RA has helped future medical professional Bella Brunton build skills in handling tough situations and caring for people—tools that will serve her well in her future career.

"I love cheering them on in athletics and the performing arts," she added. "I hope I've made a difference. Many of my old residents still say hi, and I'm grateful they trusted me."

# Residence Life

The mission of residence life director Joann Stacey and her staff is both straightforward and profound.

“We’re here to help make a community that is welcoming, safe, and supportive for our students to live and learn on campus,” Stacey said.

That mission comes to life each fall on move-in day, when teams of volunteers greet students and families as they pull up to the curb, ready to carry boxes and bags in a much-appreciated gesture of Franciscan hospitality.

Twenty-three Resident Assistants (RAs)—one per floor—live in the residence halls. Viterbo RAs complete an intensive interview process and two weeks of training covering everything from policy enforcement and community-building to responding to serious campus issues.

**“There are many great reasons to live in the Viterbo residence halls and apartments,” Stacey said. “There are numerous support systems in place, and studies show students are more engaged, get better grades, and graduate faster when they live on campus.”**

That support system begins with the community fostered by Stacey, her professional staff, and the RAs, but it extends far beyond. From the cafeteria worker who notices a change in a student’s behavior to the CARE team, campus security, and Village Community Connectors (faculty and staff volunteers paired with first-year floors) Viterbo students are well cared for by staff and by one another.

**“One of the things that makes Viterbo so special is the genuine care our employees have for students,” Stacey said. “So many go above and beyond.”**

Stacey’s duties are many, but one of the most important is ensuring students feel they belong. “For students to feel comfortable sharing deeper concerns or issues, I need to be more than a name on an office door or email,” said Stacey, who walks her dog on campus and attends games and events to stay visible and approachable. “Sometimes it’s just my saying ‘hi’ first.”



# Mental Health Counseling

The need for mental health counseling among college students has risen sharply over the past decade, driven by social media and other modern pressures. Justin McKnight and his staff are there to meet it.

“We offer mental health counseling that’s different from what happens at most universities,” said McKnight, director of counseling and health services at Viterbo University. “We don’t have session limits, and students meet one-on-one with a counselor right away. They don’t get triaged.”

Viterbo’s counseling center includes three licensed therapists—McKnight among them—and a graduate intern helping students through a range of services. In addition to traditional counseling, offerings include therapy dog visits, specialty groups, transition-to-college sessions, and grief support. The busy staff sees about 200 unique individuals each semester, totaling 800–900 visits.

“Viterbo has been fortunate to have good therapists with whom students feel comfortable,” McKnight said. “We do a lot of collaborative work with classes and want all students to feel more comfortable using counseling.”

While academics, relationships, and finances have always caused stress, today’s students face the added pressure and scrutiny of the digital age—often intensifying anxiety and depression.

“Things have changed in the way many students look at themselves and what they share with others,” McKnight said. “There is an increased vulnerability to negative and unkind comments from people they don’t even know.”

Despite rising utilization of counseling services, McKnight said some students still hesitate to seek help. Attitudes have improved as more people recognize that “it’s okay not to be okay,” but awareness and outreach remain ongoing priorities.

He urges students not to wait until things feel overwhelming. “Come in

early and start to develop strategies to work through problems before they become more complicated,” he said. “Even if you’ve never been to counseling or don’t think therapy is for you, come in. We’ve helped many people make positive changes.”

McKnight also offered some simple, practical advice for improving mental health:

**“Take a break from your phone. Touch grass. Focus on authentic relationships, building real friendships, and getting to know people deeply.”**

# Campus Ministry

The sound of friendly conversation and the delicious smell of food fill the Sr. Thea Bowman Center each Thursday morning as more than 100 students and employees gather for breakfast and community during campus ministry’s weekly MUG (Mingle—Unwind—Gather) event.

“Our mission is to be the loving presence of Christ in the world,” said Emilio Alvarez, Viterbo’s director of campus ministry. “That can take form in a variety of ways, but our core values are to be the hands and feet of Christ in the manner that St. Francis and St. Clare were.”

That presence comes to life through the hospitality of programs like MUG, the weekly Table of Plenty meal and fellowship, retreats, service projects, celebrations such as St. Francis Week, the St. Francis Choir, spiritual and grief counseling, conferences, and mission trips to Casa Hogar in Peru.

“As a Catholic, Franciscan university, Viterbo offers students daily Mass and the sacraments through Fr. Conrad Targonski and Fr. Michael Weldon. Fr. Weldon also teaches, and their presence on campus is invaluable,” Alvarez said.

Campus ministry also maintains a close partnership with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

“Fr. Conrad likes to say that we provide for our own, facilitate for others, and care for all,” Alvarez said. “It’s all about relationships and letting students know they belong.”



Participation in campus ministry has grown significantly in recent years, as has the congregation at San Damiano Chapel. Alvarez said he's hopeful the ministry will soon outgrow its current space.

"Campus ministry is for everyone," he said. "All students can find a sense of belonging, even those who don't have faith. Our door is always open to students and employees—we meet people where they are."

For students discerning which college to attend, Alvarez offered this advice: "Find a place committed to your wellbeing and sense of belonging, but also understand how you are called to serve the world," he said. "Viterbo provides a transformative education and a faith community where everyone is treated like brothers and sisters."

## The HUB for Student Success

Bringing together a wide range of academic, career, and student services, the HUB for Student Success truly lives up to its name as Viterbo's central location for student support.

Director Alyssa Gostonczik and her team of eight staff members and six student workers provide general and course-specific tutoring, writing and math assistance, testing, accommodations for students with disabilities, and career development resources such as internships and job preparation.

"We're never bored," laughed Gostonczik, whose office is on the third floor of Murphy Center. "Each of our staff brings a wide variety of academic backgrounds and perspectives. We're a team of connectors and problem solvers."

During the 2024–25 academic year alone, the HUB team logged more than 3,000 academic advising interactions, 806 instances of academic support, 474 career development sessions, administered 1,816 tests, and

arranged 140 academic accommodations. They also assist about a dozen alumni each week with résumés, interview skills, and other career topics.

Viterbo's unique dual advising system gives each undergraduate both a faculty advisor and an academic advisor, a model that fosters deeper relationships and trust between staff and students.

"That can make the hard conversations—like when it's time to change majors or retake a class—a little easier," Gostonczik said.

Facilitating education-enhancing internship experiences is another major focus for the HUB. Many programs require internships to graduate, and all business students are guaranteed a paid internship.

**A project especially close to Gostonczik's heart is Threads to Thrive, a campus clothes closet offering students free professional attire for interviews, presentations, and career events.**

"Threads to Thrive was a collaborative effort among several campus departments," she said. "It's really grown—and it's connected us with the surrounding community because we rely on donations."



# Campus Recreation, Engagement, and Wellbeing (CREW)

There are plenty of benefits to participating in Campus Recreation, Engagement, and Wellbeing (CREW) activities—fitness, friendship, stress relief, and fun among them. Just ask the students who made 22,000 visits to the Mathy Center last year to work out, attend fitness classes, or play intramural sports.

“Participating in rec sports provides students with improved physical and mental health, social skills, and leadership abilities,” said Jonny Solma, director of CREW. “It allows them to build connections and community with other students across campus. But our mission is broader—we also offer self-defense classes, pet therapy, and Weekends at VU programming.”

Solma oversees Viterbo’s recreational sports and wellness programs, manages the Amie L. Mathy Center for Recreation and Education, and leads a staff that includes up to 30 student workers. Working with students, he said, is one of the most rewarding aspects of his role.

“The students are our ‘why,’” Solma said. “Our student staff is a significant part of my job, and the career competencies and transferable skills they learn will set them up for success at Viterbo and beyond.”



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Gathering for delicious Latin American food and the lively sounds of a nationally acclaimed Mariachi band, Viterbo students and La Crosse community members came together in October to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. It was just one of many events hosted by the university’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) division—each designed to highlight diversity and make everyone feel welcome.

“Through our programs and support services, we are dedicated to promoting inclusion and a sense of belonging on campus,” said Marlene De La Cruz-Guzmán, vice president for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. “We treasure every member of our community and their contributions, so we create programs that allow all participants to feel welcomed, learn, and socialize. The best way to honor the dignity of every person is to learn about each other, engage in conversation, and build relationships.”

DEI programming includes guest speakers, visiting artists, film screenings, student club support, and community partnerships. The division also coordinates study abroad opportunities, supports international students attending Viterbo, and provides English as a Second Language (ESL) resources.

“We want every student to know that they belong here at Viterbo,” said De La Cruz-Guzmán.

# A Labor of Love

## Barry Fried Leads V-Hawk Athletics

When Barry Fried was hired as an assistant men's basketball coach for the Viterbo V-Hawks in 1994, he never thought he'd still be at the university 31 years later. Then a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Fried's plans were to get a few years of coaching experience at the college level and then climb the coaching ladder and eventually end up at a larger university.

More than three decades later, four Athletic Director of the Year Awards, and tremendous growth and success in the athletics department, Fried is very happy he stayed at Viterbo.

"I didn't know it at the time, but Viterbo was the perfect fit for me," said Fried, who has served as Viterbo's director of athletics since 1999. "It allowed me to turn my passion of sports into a career and do it at a place that feels like family. The longer I stayed, the more I realized that it's not about

the level you're at, it's about the right fit and helping our student-athletes accomplish their goals and become better people. Big picture, that's what's important."

Passionate about sports his entire life, Fried earned 13 varsity letters in five different sports at Cochrane-Fountain City High School. He credits his high school coaches for developing his love for sports and inspiring him to turn it into a career.

"Growing up in a small town, I played sports year-round and had some great coaches and role models," Fried said. "No doubt they had a positive influence on me, and I'll always be grateful for that."

Fried went on to be a student-athlete at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where he walked on to the men's basketball team and was part of the program for two years. He jokes that instead of playing basketball, he mainly got to "practice and sit" basketball. Realizing he probably wasn't good enough to ever play on a UWEC's perennial powerhouse team, he decided to join the track and field team his last couple years so he could again fulfill his love of competition.

Wanting to coach, but not to become a physical education teacher, Fried earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a minor in coaching.

"That business degree has really helped with the administrative side of my job, such as planning, marketing, budgeting, and





communicating,” he said. “And I’ve coached kids at every level—college, high school, and youth—so I feel like that has helped me relate to some of the challenges our Viterbo coaches face.”

Other than attending a play in the Fine Arts Center as an elementary school student, Fried was unfamiliar with Viterbo when he was hired as an assistant men’s basketball coach. When then head coach Mike Murphy offered him job, he was humorously forthcoming about the position’s compensation.

“Here’s the deal, I can give you \$1,600 for the season but our first trip is to Florida,” Murphy told Fried. “We’re going to Daytona, and I can give you a bunch of gear.” Fried replied, “I’m in” and his Viterbo career began.

After finishing his Master of Exercise and Sport Science degree from UW-L, Fried was hired as Viterbo’s assistant director of annual giving in 1996. Three years later, then Viterbo President Bill Medland offered Fried the university’s new director of athletics position, citing his

coaching and business experience, plus his relationships across campus.

“The old saying is that luck is preparation meeting opportunity,” Fried said. “Back in those days, the more experienced coaches didn’t want to give up coaching. I was 29 years old and didn’t know if I was ready, but Dr. Medland told me, ‘I think you’d do a good job.’ I replied, ‘no one will work harder.’”

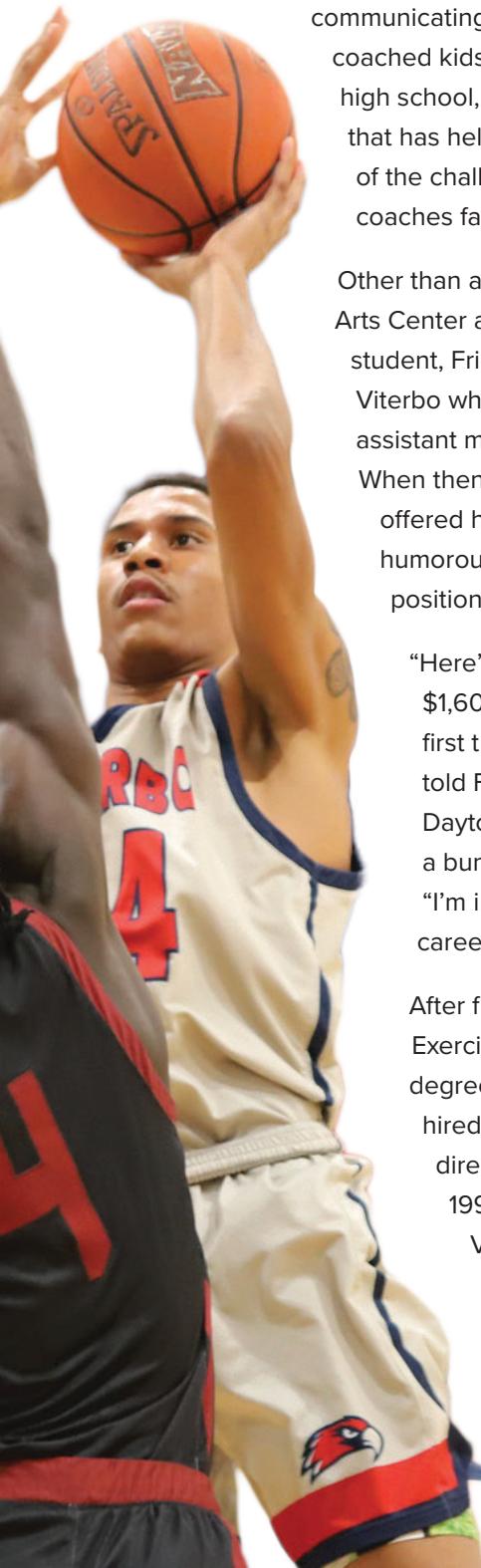
There were seven athletics programs at Viterbo in 1999. There are 17 today. It’s that growth Fried considers one of his greatest accomplishments.

“I’m proud I’ve stayed the course because it wasn’t always easy,” said Fried citing regular 60-hour weeks with the events and administrative work that comes with job. “But it’s been a labor of love. I believe in Viterbo and I’ve been committed. And I’ve been really fortunate to have great work and family teams around me, including my wife and kids, who have always been supportive.”

While conference championships, national tournaments, and individual athlete awards are exciting and celebrated, there is always something bigger and more important for Fried.

“At Viterbo, it’s about the people first,” he said. “The people care deeply about the place and are passionate about what they do, and that is reflected in the experience of our student-athletes.

When you see a young man or woman come in as a freshman and just blossom here and be transformed, not just in athletics, but in things like communications skills, confidence, maturity, and values, that’s incredibly rewarding.”



## Rod Popp Inducted into WBCA Hall of Fame

Former Viterbo Men's Basketball coach and Athletics Director Rod Popp was one of five collegiate coaches inducted into the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame class of 2025.

**"Viterbo will always hold a special place in my heart," said Popp.**

"I will always be grateful for the support of Viterbo and La Crosse. Most importantly, I will be eternally grateful and appreciative of the young men I had the privilege to recruit and coach during my tenure there. Those teams were really good and opened the V-Hawk era of athletics with an outstanding caliber of basketball."

Popp came to Viterbo in 1986 and spent six years with the university. During his tenure, the V-Hawks earned back-to-back National Catholic Basketball Tournament titles in 1990 and 1991. He also coached five conference championship teams in six years and achieved four seasons with

more than 20 wins, garnering a 139-56 record during his career. Popp also served as Viterbo's Director of Athletics while coaching. He is a member of the Viterbo Athletics Wall of Fame.



## Campus Filled with Franciscan Spirit as Viterbo Hosts AFCU Symposium

More than 155 people from across the U.S. attended the 2025 Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU) Symposium at Viterbo this summer.

The theme of the symposium was a celebration of the 800th anniversary of *The Canticle of the Creatures*, a hymn of praise written by St. Francis of Assisi that recounts his journey to God through the beauty and wonder of

creation. The symposium explored related topics such as stewardship, service, and peacemaking in relationship to the care of the environment, its creatures, and each other.

"Viterbo University was honored to serve as the host institution for the 2025 AFCU Symposium and demonstrate the amazing hospitality and beauty of La Crosse and the Coulee Region," said Viterbo President Rick Trietley. "The opportunities to celebrate Viterbo's Catholic, Franciscan identity and academic excellence while serving as an economic driver to the local area is exciting."

Symposium participants came from most of the 22 Franciscan colleges and universities in the country, Franciscan religious orders, and the public. Sixteen U.S. states were represented, including from the East and West Coasts and the South. Viterbo had last hosted the national AFCU Symposium in 2012.



## Three Honored with Saint John XXIII Award for Distinguished Service

Sue Graf '82, Dan Gelatt, and Susan Gelatt were honored with the Viterbo University Saint John XXIII Award for Distinguished Service. Established in 1975, the Saint John XXIII Award for Distinguished Service is the highest non-academic award bestowed by Viterbo University. Read more about the recipients and the tremendous difference each has made in the lives of others on the Viterbo website.



## Congratulations Miss La Crosse Oktoberfest

Viterbo student Vivian Stephenson was named Miss La Crosse Oktoberfest. A nursing major and dance minor, Stephenson's professional goal is to become a registered nurse

midwife and own a dance studio. Her community service initiative is Harmony in Motion: Dance for Youth Well-being, which centers on using dance to support physical, mental, and emotional health of young people through movement while battling health concerns such as childhood obesity.



## Monstrously Funny

The Conservatory for the Performing Arts gave four hilarious performances of The Mel Brooks Musical *Young Frankenstein* in October.



## Dancing the Night Away

Members of the V-Hawks Dance Team lit up the La Crosse Oktoberfest Torchlight Parade.

# Emma Blackdeer

## Named First Dr. Joan Gennrich Medical School Scholarship Recipient

When she was a child, Emma Blackdeer liked to play surgeon. Willing friends and family members would lie down while Blackdeer pretended to make an incision and perform the necessary procedure to heal her patient.

The interest in the medical field never went away. By the time she was in high school, Blackdeer knew she wanted to be a physician and enrolled at Viterbo University as a neuroscience major with dreams of medical school. Accomplishing that lofty goal came a big step closer when

she was selected as the first recipient of the Dr. Joan Gennrich '60 Endowed Medical School Scholarship.

The scholarship will provide Blackdeer and future recipients with almost \$60,000 to pursue their goal of becoming a physician. Blackdeer will receive \$8,000 for her senior year at Viterbo and an estimated \$12,500 for each of four years of medical school, depending on the scholarship fund's annual earnings. She will also receive \$1,000 to apply toward any future admission exam-related costs.

"I am very honored and grateful to receive this scholarship," said Blackdeer, who would now like a career in family medicine or neurology. "It means so much to me that my professors believe in my potential to make a difference in the medical field. It continues to inspire me to keep working hard and striving toward my goals."

The Dr. Joan Gennrich '60 Endowed Medical School Scholarship at Viterbo University was created with a \$1,267 million gift from the estate of Dr. Gennrich, who passed away in 2020. She had designated the gift for the scholarship "in appreciation of excellent education I received at Viterbo University."



## Blessed are All Creatures

Viterbo University teamed up with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and Franciscan Spirituality Center to hold a pet supply drive benefiting the Coulee Region Humane Society. The drive concluded with Viterbo's annual pet blessing, which has been a beloved tradition for more than 30 years. The supply drive was held in honor of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's *The Canticle of the Creatures*.

**"St. Francis' love for animals and creation is at the heart of this celebration," said Fr. Conrad Targonski, Viterbo University chaplain.**

"Our annual pet blessing is a joyful way to live out our Catholic and Franciscan identity and honor the creatures who share our lives."

# Viterbo University Announces Largest-Ever Merit Awards, Expanding Access for Students and Families

Earlier this fall, Viterbo launched GO VITERBO (Granting Opportunities), the single largest investment in student support in the institution's history. Beginning in the 2026–2027 academic year, every first-time, full-time student

accepted to Viterbo will automatically receive a GO VITERBO Merit Award starting at \$18,000, which represents an 80% increase in merit dollars over the previous year. Students with a higher GPA and/or who submit optional ACT/SAT test scores may qualify for levels at \$20,000, \$22,000, \$24,000, and \$26,000 based on academic achievement. The awards are renewable each year for up to four years so long as the student remains in good academic standing.

GO VITERBO reflects the mission and vision of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), who founded Viterbo in 1890 with a commitment to making education accessible to all.

**“From the very beginning, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration sought to extend opportunity through education,”**

said Viterbo University President Rick Trietley. “GO VITERBO is a bold initiative that honors that legacy by ensuring that today's students, regardless of their background, can access an education rooted in faith, service, and purpose. It is our responsibility to continue their tradition of granting opportunities to future leaders who will serve and inspire others.”

For more information about GO VITERBO, visit [viterbo.edu](http://viterbo.edu) or contact [admission@viterbo.edu](mailto:admission@viterbo.edu).



## Servant Leadership on the Banks of the Mississippi

The 22nd annual Conference on Servant Leadership brought together professionals from across sectors to explore the power of purpose-driven leadership at the Weber Center for the Performing Arts in downtown La Crosse.

This year's conference was themed Passion and Purpose and focused on how leaders can align personal inspiration with organizational vision to build cultures of trust, collaboration, and growth.

Viterbo University has been a national leader in advancing servant leadership for more than two decades. Throughout the two-day event, attendees engaged with renowned thought leaders, scholars, and practitioners from nonprofit organizations, business,

health care, education, ministry, and government. Sessions featured the latest research, practical strategies, and compelling stories of servant leadership in action.

“This gathering was an opportunity for people to reflect deeply on what truly matters in their work,” said Tom Thibodeau, Distinguished Professor of Servant Leadership at Viterbo. “When leaders serve with passion and align it with a higher purpose, they build organizations where people flourish—and that's where transformation begins.”



## European Visitors

Viterbo hosted a group of exchange students and delegates from Luxembourg during their extended visit to La Crosse.



## A Great Community Partnership

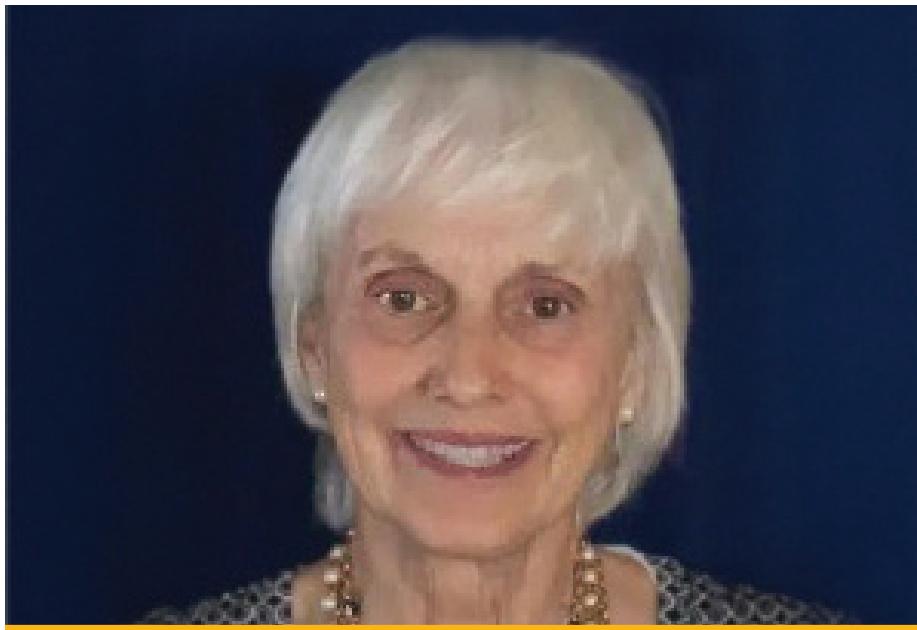
Officials with Viterbo University and the Weber Center for the Performing Arts met to sign a Memorandum of

Understanding that continues the organizations' mutually beneficial partnership that provides performances spaces and opportunities for students in the Viterbo Conservatory for the Performing Arts.



## Service Saturday

New Viterbo students put their energy to good use during Orientation Weekend Service Saturday.



## \$1 Million Gift

### Creates Nancy Poehling Haggerty Memorial Nursing Scholarship

They met at a dance the summer before high school started. It was not long before Tim Haggerty was lingering near Nancy Poehling's '74 locker in the halls of Aquinas High School, much to the Sisters' dismay.

Tim and Nancy Haggerty enjoyed nearly 63 years together before she passed away in August 2024. "She was my best friend," he said.

**Tim and his family chose to honor their wife and mother, her profound compassion as a nurse, and her dedication to the profession with a \$1 million endowed scholarship in her name.**

The Nancy Poehling Haggerty Memorial Nursing Scholarship will provide a total of \$50,000 a year to students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Viterbo University.

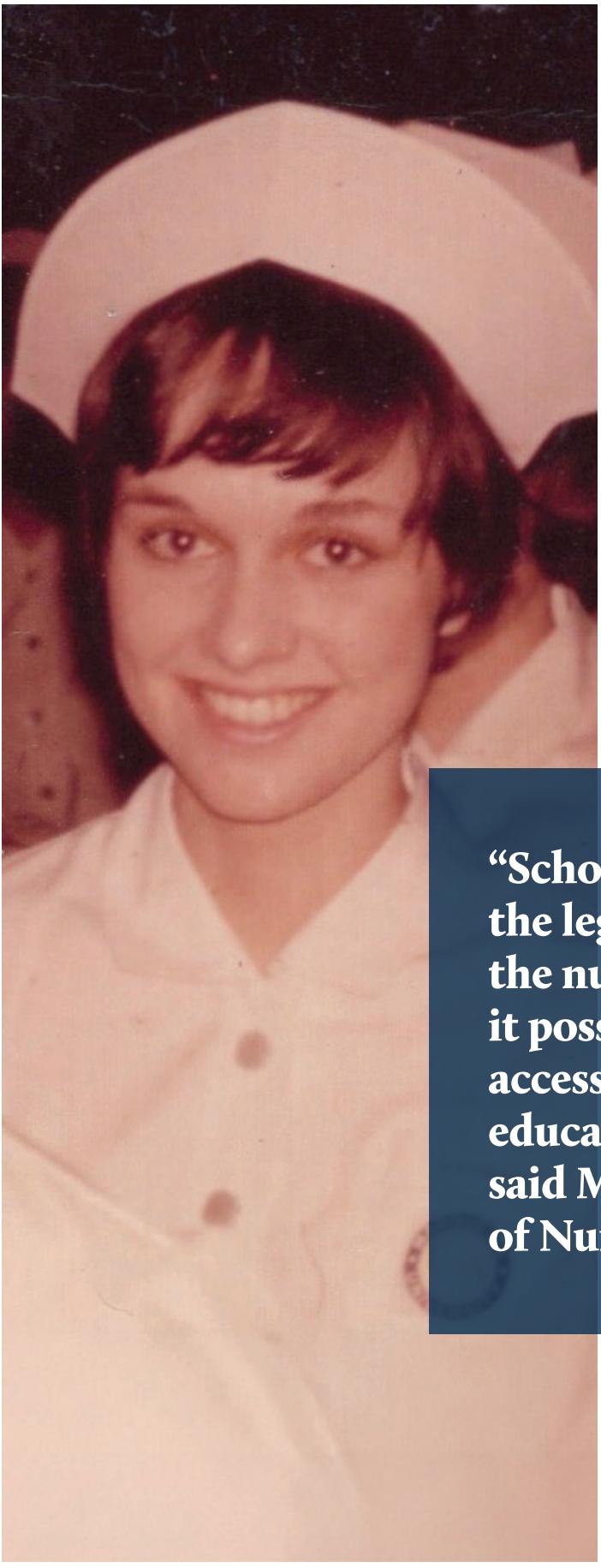
The generous scholarship honors Nancy and the ways in which she reflected Viterbo's core values while offering financial support to Viterbo nursing students so they can focus on their calling to provide outstanding care for others.

Tim shared how nursing was always the perfect career for Nancy. "She loved people, and she wanted to help them," he said. She went above and beyond, including the time when she was working as a public health nurse and brought her patient's dog home to care for while its owner was hospitalized. "That's just how she was," Tim shared.

## A Family Profession

Nancy understood that a skilled, compassionate nurse was so important in caring for the whole person. She struggled with health issues throughout her life, a result of having rheumatic fever as a child, which damaged her heart valves. "Nancy knew what it was like to suffer," Tim said. "She did not want others to suffer." Tim shared that Nancy did not let her health struggles get in her way. She remained focused and determined, kind and helpful.

Careers in health care and teaching and serving others are familiar themes in the Poehling and the Haggerty families. Nancy's brother, Dr. Gary Poehling, is an orthopedic surgeon, professor, and researcher, and her sister Mary was a nurse. Tim's sisters Kathy and Susan were both nurses, and Tim and Nancy's daughter Mollie is a physician's assistant. Their daughter Maureen pursued a career in elementary education.



## Scholarship Honors Legacy, Provides Financial Assistance

Nancy started her nursing education at Marquette University in Milwaukee, where she earned her diploma as a licensed practical nurse (LPN). When she decided to continue her nursing education at Viterbo, Tim and Nancy juggled jobs, college schedules, and the needs of their young child. "We found a way," Tim said. "We alternated schedules. I worked nights as a switch man while I was going to UW-La Crosse," he said.

Nancy attained her bachelor's of science in nursing from Viterbo in 1974, then a master's in public health from UW-La Crosse in 1977.

Throughout her career, Nancy worked in operating rooms, ICU facilities, public health, and student health clinics. She volunteered her services at the St. Clare Health Mission in La Crosse when she retired.

**"Scholarships like this not only honor the legacy of those who have shaped the nursing profession but also make it possible for dedicated students to access the outstanding nursing education that Viterbo is known for," said Megan Smith, dean of the College of Nursing and Health.**

Tim knows that Viterbo University nursing students will be thankful for financial support that inspires them to move closer to their calling, and he believes that Nancy would agree.

# Passion for People

## Makes Nursing the Right Career Fit

Nik Yudin, MSN '25 approaches his role as ICU nurse with confidence and clarity. He's well prepared to care for patients with fragile health status at one of the world's leading hospitals—Rochester's Mayo Clinic.

There, Yudin works on the thoracic vascular intensive care unit, which also operates as a multi-specialty ICU. His nearly 13-hour shifts are fast-paced and full, but Yudin is up for the job. He's worked as a firefighter EMT and for Mayo Clinic Ambulance.

His nursing job can be physically and emotionally draining, yet Yudin finds the bright side. "It brought me so much joy when a recent patient improved and moved from ICU to a

progressive care unit (PCU) to general patient care status, all in one of my work shifts," he said.

Yudin earned his BS in health sciences from the University of Minnesota-Rochester. For a while, he worked as a clinical research coordinator. "I enjoy research," he said, "but I really enjoy clinical care."

After a gap year in his studies, he started Viterbo's Direct Entry Master of Science in Nursing (DEMSN) program—and found that Viterbo's mission and values align well with those of Mayo Clinic. He knew he found the right fit professionally and academically.

"I love helping people. I am meeting patients on one of the worst days of their life, and it's a joy to see them improve."

Nik Yudin to students in the Direct Entry Master of Science in Nursing program: "Keep an open mind and put in the work. Don't let past experiences determine your future."



**Nik Yudin**, MSN was selected by Viterbo nursing faculty to present his research project at the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing's 48th Biennial Convention in Indianapolis, in November. He will present his findings on the effect that in-home, daily care has on patients within the rural Medicare population.

# CLASS NOTES

## 1970

**Catherine Miller-Temme '73–'76** received a Lifetime Achievement Award for the Medford, Wisconsin area.

## 1980

**Michael Ranscht '85** started as the executive director at A Center for the Arts in Fergus Falls, Minnesota in May 2025.

## 1990

Bruce Hemmersbach and **Kimberly (Scholze) Phillips '92** were married Feb. 1, 2025.

## 2000

**Patrick Boyer '00** received the Nurse in Excellence award from Regions Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, May 2025.

## 2010

James and **Mary Kay (Krupa) Kinnally '10, '11** welcomed a son, Tim Zigmund, June 15, 2025.

**Mike Wolter '10** has been selected as the new superintendent of Fort Madison Community School District, Fort Madison, Iowa.

**Mechele Lukwitz-Mihalovic '12, '16** started as the program director for Citizen Advocacy of La Crosse where she will match individuals with developmental disabilities with an advocate.

Andy and **Alycia (Gabrielson) Larson '13, '17** welcomed a son, Atley David, March 17, 2025. Atley joins siblings Aiden and Amery.

**Meggie Moyer '15** earned her Master of Arts in English and is starting her PhD in musicology at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati.

Peter and **Courtney (Stilwell) Sinnott '15** welcomed a daughter, Eloise Mae, June 14, 2025. Eloise joins siblings Oscar and Edwin.

Delaney and **Josiah Brown '16** welcomed a daughter, Brooke Elizabeth, Dec. 20, 2024. Josiah was promoted to Captain with the U.S. Marine Corp, April 1, 2025.

Zachary and **Taylor (Lewis) Corbett '16** welcomed a boy, Wesley James, April 1, 2025. Wesley joins siblings Jackson and Ellie.

**Josh Lichty '17** is the Director of Financial Education with Marine Credit Union, La Crosse.

**Hunter Evenson '18** accepted a position as an elementary music teacher with the Owatonna School District, Owatonna, Minnesota.

Eric and **Cassie (Schultz) Larson '18** welcomed a daughter, Ila Lynn, March 20, 2025. Ila joins sibling Amelia.

**April Ledebahr-Kerrigan '18** was presented by Minnesota State College Southeast with an Outstanding Alumni Award for the Winona Campus in recognition of personal and professional achievement for service to others at their May 2025 commencement ceremony.

**Stacey Wanner '18** graduated from the University of Connecticut MS-NNP program and started a position as a neonatal nurse practitioner at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 2025.

**Noah Bouley '19** and **Tessa Estock '20**, were married May 24, 2025.

**Mitchell and Caitlyn (Kozik) Hong '19, '20** welcomed a son, Oliver Mitchell, July 12, 2025.

**Cole Molland** and **Erin Murphy '19** were married July 25, 2025.

**Evan and Katelyn (Stelzer) Wick '19** welcomed a daughter, Lucy James, March 1, 2025.

## 2020

**Ben Gibson '20, '21** and **Zoe De Boer '21, '24** were married May 24, 2025.

**Abby (Giese) Henderson '20** earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice from the College of Saint Scholastica in May 2025.

Brent and **Abby (Giese) Henderson '20** welcomed a daughter, Emilia Anne, July 20, 2025. Emilia joins sibling Eleanor.

**Mason Meddaugh** and **Macy Mancl '20** welcomed a daughter, Payton Jane, April 3, 2025.

**Kelly Richardson '20** started as the Manager of Clinical Research and Nutrition with WeightWatchers International in May 2025.

**Bryan Sengbusch '20** and **Jessie Benson '20** were married June 28, 2025.

**Benjamin Barksdale** and **Lara Boyum '21** were married March 14, 2025.

**Ryan Ellingson '21** and **Mikayla Michalke '21** were married June 18, 2025.

**Katie Frohmader '21** started a new position with The Great Plains Athletic Conference as the GPAC Assistant Commissioner for Operations in July 2025.

**Kolin Huth '21, '22** and **Samantha Hillesheim, '20, '21, '22** welcomed a son, Krew David, June 9, 2025.

**Garrett Hohn** and **Madisyn Irwin '21** were married June 12, 2025.

**Davi Ann Mueller '21** was awarded a 2025 Golden Apple Award. She is a high school teacher with the Achwaubenon School District.

**Thomas Robson '21** and **Katie Frohmader '21** were married July 11, 2025.

**AJ Flowers** and **Johanna Parker '22** were married June 20, 2025.

**Luke Spink '24** and **Kacie (Gross) Spink '22** were married July 26, 2025.

**Cole Walters '24** and Brianna Anderson were married June 28, 2025.

# IN MEMORIAM

## 1950

**Coleen (Vogel) Deck, SFSN '52**, May 18, 2025

**Georgine (Novak) Worthington, SFSN '54**,  
June 16, 2025

**Wilfrieda (McCormick) O'Donoghue, SFSN '56**, sister-in-law of **Janet (Tiller) McCormick, SFSN '59**, Oct. 23, 2024

**Shirley Wagner, FSPA '56**, April 1, 2025

**Patricia Gordon, FSPA '57**, July 11, 2025

**Marie (Salus) Orcutt, SFSN '58**, July 13, 2025

Robert Eide, spouse of **Charlene (Bissen) Eide, SFSN '59**, March 20, 2025

## 1960

**Patricia (Hokland) Jones, SFSN '64**,  
April 11, 2025

**Bonnie (Filkowski) Meyers, SFSN '64**,  
March 9, 2025

**Laverne Wilichowski, FSPA '64**, Aug. 6, 2025

Dick Beggs, spouse of **Linda (Lyon) Beggs, SFSN '66**, June 10, 2025

**Marguerite (Delhotal) Bloch '66**, Nov. 10, 2024

Edward Faas, spouse of **Ruth (Burand) Faas '66**, Feb. 28, 2025

Laverne Massman, brother of **Marian Massman, FSPA '66**, July 22, 2025

**Shirley Cunningham '67**, March 30, 2025

## 1970

Paul Cuta, spouse of **Donna (Gerke) Cuta '70**, brother-in-law of **Mary Lu Gerke '74** and **Malinda Gerke, FSPA '60** and uncle of **Jeffery Gerke '95** and **Mark Roth '96**, June 30, 2025

**Judith Gebelein, FSE '72**, March 4, 2025

**Suzann (Kane) Balduzzi '76**, March 15, 2025

## 1980

David Dregne, spouse of **Rosemary (Marshall) Dregne '80** and father of **Dustin Dregne '08 '10**, June 11, 2025

**Harry Helfrich '82**, May 8, 2025

Norma Piper, mother of **James Piper '82**, May 24, 2025

**Kathryn (Melby) Bandell '83**, April 1, 2025

Albert Keller, father of **Brenda (Keller) Burmeister '84**, July 15, 2025

Raymond Deakin, father of **Terry Norman '84** and grandfather of **Tira (Norman) Moilanen '17**, Feb. 17, 2025

Vincent Statz, father of **Diane (Statz) Brostrom '85** and father-in-law of **Jeffrey Brostrom '85**, July 21, 2025

**Jane (Kocon) Klein, '87**, June 13, 2025

Don Curti, father of **Jayne (Curti) Coster '89, Carmen (Curti) Kolstad '91, Rebekka Curti '92** and father-in-law of **Reyne (Fischer) Curti '99**, May 29, 2025

# 1990

**Mary Catherine McNeil '91**, April 12, 2025

**Jane Osborne '92**, April 19, 2025

Paul Conrad, father of **Christine (Conrad) Ott '92 '13**,  
March 5, 2025

**Mark Reigel '94**, Feb. 28, 2025

**William Cairns '95**, June 5, 2025

Jacqueline Holmes, mother of **Dawn Holmes-Schalow '95**,  
Aug. 15, 2025

Kenneth Sidie, father of **Steve Sidie '97**, April 8, 2025

**Kathy (Emerson) Anderson '98**, May 29, 2025

Robert Czapiewski, father of **Susan (Czapiewski) Hoke '99**,  
April 12, 2025

Stephen Czapiewski, brother of **Susan (Czapiewski) Hoke '99**,  
April 22, 2025

Chuck Chihak, spouse of **Regina Chihak '09**,  
March 22, 2025

Carter Klinkner, son of **Christine Myers '09**, May 22, 2025

# 2010

George Kerckhove, father of **James Kerckhove '10, '14**,  
June 12, 2025

Thomas Eddy, father of **Catie (Eddy) O'Keefe '10**,  
March 3, 2025

John Popp, father of **Amy (Popp) Topel '10**, July 10, 2025

Yvonne McGavock, mother of **Melissa (McGavock) Klein '11**, July 4, 2025

Christine Metzler, mother of **Alex Metzler '11** and **Tim Metzler '13**, March 4, 2025

**Mark Gustafson '12**, March 9, 2025

Timothy Kappauf, father of **Isaac Kasten '12**, June 24, 2025

Theresa Schuttenhelm, mother of **Franz Schuttenhelm '12** and mother-in-law of **Tara Schuttenhelm '04**, April 18, 2025

Mary Mormann, mother of **Katie (Mormann) Wales '16** and **Allison (Mormann) Miller '22**, April 23, 2025

Jo Marie Lenarz-Hoppens, mother of **Katelyn (Hoppens) Walmsley '13**, April 16, 2025

**Elise Walleser '18**, May 4, 2025

David Breyer, father of **Nicole Breyer '19**, March 2, 2025

# 2020

Robert Verdick, grandfather of **Tyler Verdick '21**,  
Feb. 26, 2025

# 2000

**Tom Hill '00**, Aug. 7, 2025

Steven Kallenbach, brother-in-law of **Shelley (Molzahn) Kallenbach '01**, June 12, 2025

Philip Kress, father of **Christine Kress '01**, April 13, 2025

Robert Hoffland, father-in-law of **Hollie (Swiggum) Hoffland '02, '20, '22**, Feb. 26, 2025

Kay Strittmater, mother of **Scott Strittmater '02**,  
April 21, 2025

**Joel Varrientos '02**, June 12, 2025

Jaxx Michael Henry, nephew of **Nichole Henry '03**,  
Feb. 21, 2025

Paul Robinson, spouse of **Mary Robinson '03**, July 10, 2025

Robert Spacek, father of **Lisa (Spacek) Hengstl '04**,  
April 2, 2025

# UP CLOSE WITH KIRSTEN GABRIEL

Perhaps best known for her kindness and ever-cheerful demeanor, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Kirsten Gabriel has been taking care of students in one way or another since she arrived on campus in 2010.

*Kirsten and her biking friends*



*What advice would you give to students who want to make the most of their Viterbo experience?*

Step out of your comfort zone and do things that challenge you—academically, co-curricularly, and personally. I've yet to meet a student who regrets getting involved and trying new things, but I've known many who regret not doing so. College is all about exploration and opportunity. Do all the things and make the most of it.

## *What is a unique fact about you?*

One of my most meaningful moments happened when I was wrapping up working at Glacier National Park in Montana. Any summer park staff who hiked 100 miles during a single summer joined the “100 Mile Club,” and I hit that mark two days before I was scheduled to leave. Two retired ladies who worked at the park ice cream shop surprised me with a special t-shirt with the 100-mile insignia on the sleeve as a going away present. That thoughtful kindness from co-working acquaintances still ranks one of the most memorable gifts of my life.

## *What have students taught you over the years?*

The same thing they give me—joy. There is so much joy in learning, meeting new people, building relationships, trying new things, discovering a new talent or passion, growing in faith, etc. I love that each year I get a fuller conception of joy because of the students I have the privilege of getting to know.



***The Gabriel family:***

*Back row: Isaac, 17, and Scott*

*Middle: Asher, 14, and Kirsten*

*Front: Eve, 11*

## *Why is your family cabin such a special place?*

My grandparents and their siblings built our family cabin in northern Minnesota when my dad was a kid. I spent every summer at that lake, spending time with family and soaking in our proud Swedish heritage (my grandpa always said “it’s hard to be humble when you’re Swedish.”). My husband, Scott, and I are committed to creating similarly meaningful experiences for our kids and the people with whom we get to do life. Our eldest son has celebrated every one of his 17 August birthdays at the cabin and we bring 28–37 of our closest family friends up to our cabin for a week every summer. I can absolutely feel my grandparents smiling down at all those kids splashing in the water, playing on the beach, eating copious amounts of s’mores, and watching the sun slip behind the pine trees on a pontoon sunset cruise. I’ve traveled to over 20 countries, but our cabin is my favorite place in the world.

## *The welfare of students is an awesome responsibility. What keeps you up at night?*

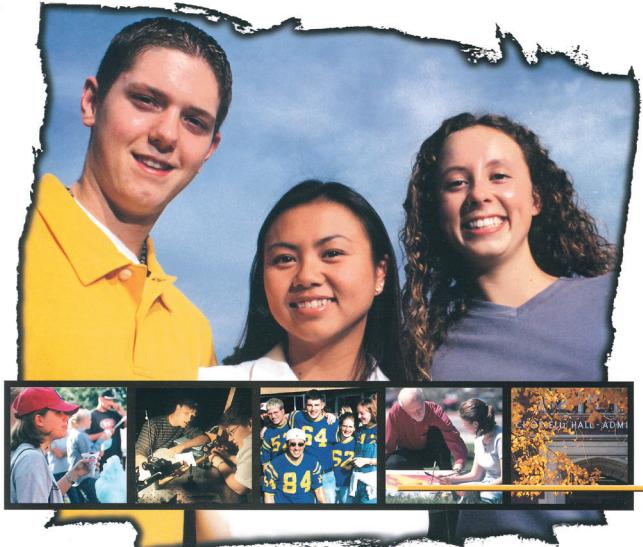
The knowledge that mental illness, active threat, family tragedy, or a drug or alcohol choice could disrupt a students’ trajectory of success in an instant. Conversely, what allows me to sleep at night is the knowledge we do absolutely everything within our power to help our students stay on track for success. It’s hard to fall through the cracks at Viterbo because we are so intentional about getting to know students deeply and building structures of care that lead to proactive and real-time student support. If ever there’s a thought that we could do more, our team is quick to turn that thought into action. I have three children of my own, and another 1,903 for whom I feel profoundly responsible.



*Fun at the family cabin in northern Minnesota*



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire



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The cover of the 2001 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Viewbook featured student Kirsten Gabriel. She earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from UWEC and a Master of Arts in Educational Policy, Higher Education and Student Affairs from The Ohio State University. She spent five years working at Cornell University before coming to Viterbo.

## ***What is your favorite Viterbo tradition or event?***

One of the first traditions I experienced was the FSPA singing their blessing over all the new staff and faculty. It gave me goosebumps. Whenever I hear it, I'm reminded that we are "blessed to be a blessing." We translate the gift of a blessing into action by blessing the next person—it's beautiful, and it's by far my favorite Viterbo tradition.

## ***What is it about your game that makes you so feared on the pickleball court?***

Without a doubt, it's my choice of partners (shout outs to colleagues Joann Stacey and my Viterbo tourney co-champion Jonny Solma.) My primary, and favorite, pickleball partner is my 17-year-old son, Isaac, so I guess I'm well-acquainted with the uphill battle that is trying to keep up with Gen Z!

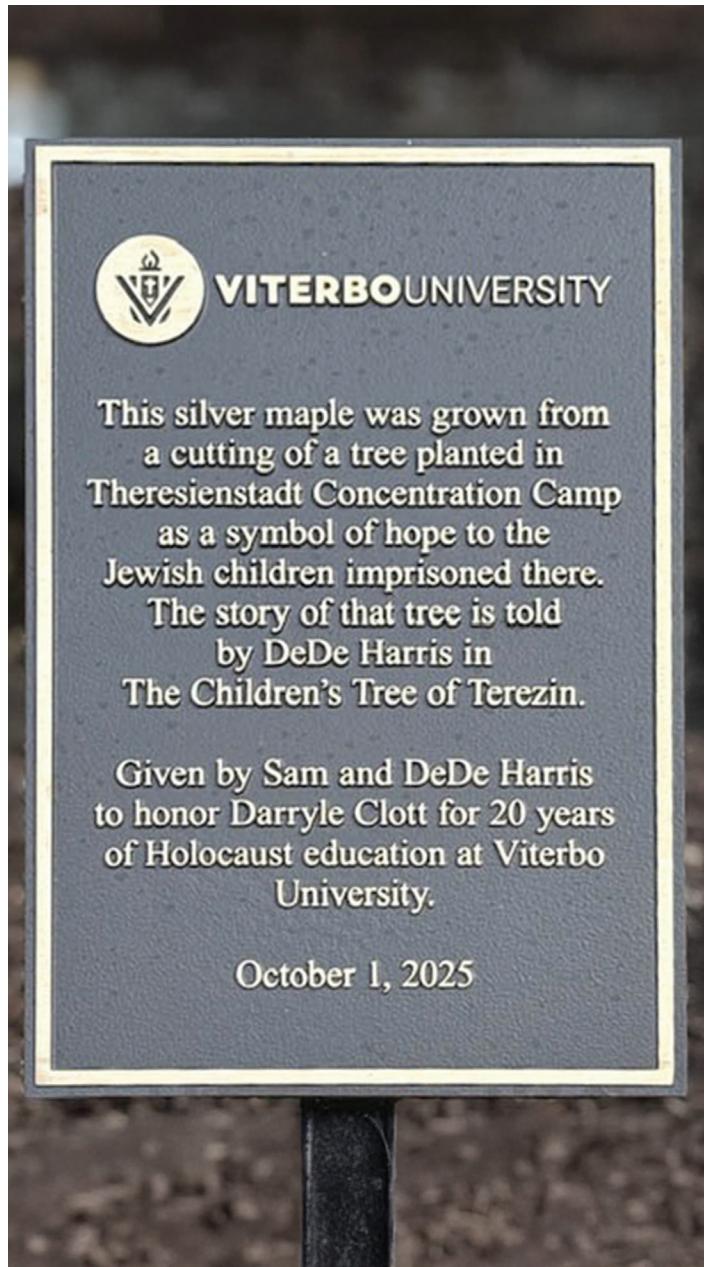
## ***Did working as a camp counselor help prepare you for working with students?***

I think camp counseling is a bit like being a resident assistant—it prepares you for just about anything. I loved being a college camp counselor for many of the same reasons I love working in college student affairs, you get to accompany young people at critical periods in their lives when big questions arise and they really begin to question and figure out who they are, what they value, and how they want to exist in the world. To be on that journey with them—supporting them when it's hard, challenging them when they need a push, and celebrating them when they succeed—it's an incredible privilege that never gets old.

IN REMEMBRANCE



# A Tremendous **HONOR**



A very special tree was gifted to Viterbo in honor of Darryle Clott's 20 years of Holocaust education. A silver maple, grown from a cutting from a tree originally planted by Jewish children in Theresienstadt Concentration Camp in 1943, was placed in Assisi Courtyard during a ceremony in October.

Thanks to Clott's efforts, more than 50,000 people have come to the Fine Arts Center to hear direct testimony from Holocaust survivors since 2005, and 850 educators have participated in Viterbo's Teaching the Holocaust Workshop.

"We need to understand what happens if we don't treat people equally," Clott said. "The Holocaust could never have happened without the bystanders. We all need to be upstanders. When we see injustice occur, we all need to step up and do something to stop it."

Fewer than 200 of the 15,000 children imprisoned in Theresienstadt survived. The tree was donated by Holocaust survivor Sam Harris and his wife DeDe. Dede Harris is the author of the book *The Children's Tree of Terezin*.



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*La Crosse Symphony Orchestra*

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