

Spring 2021 **OAKLAND UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE**



COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH SERVICE



Spring 2021

CONTENTS

04. Community Engagement

Overcoming the Odds 14–17

OU alumna finds his way after bleak academic start

18. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Big Picture 18–19

OU programs use holistic approach to advance academic accomplishments in the community

22. Student Success

Prevailing Through a Pandemic 24–25

How nursing professors, students and alumni are handling COVID-19

26. Research Endeavors

Formation and Fracture 26–29

Researching community movements and the forces that break them



ON THE COVER

Jonathan Ivar Weyhrauch, CAS '15, is devoted to teaching communities about the environment with a unique hands-on approach.

Photo by Robert Hall

OU Magazine reflects the University's goals, revealing articles that explore the fostering of student success and value of an OU degree, the discovery and utilization of knowledge through research, the efforts in expanding community relationships, and the advancement in diversity, equity and inclusion. Each issue will focus on one of these vital initiatives and the strides being made as the university of choice.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Vice President, University Communications and Marketing
John Young

Director, Communications | Laura Phillips

Editor | Kelli M. Warshewski

Content Coordinator | Michael Downes

Photographers | Chuck Cloud, Robert Hall, Jose Juarez,
Garrett MacLean, Andrew Potter

Director of Production Services | Shelby Kramer

Production Coordinator | Nancy Potton

Proofreader | Rebecca Steketee

Web Development | Gregg Phelps, Lauryn Roycraft

Contributors | Kathy Angel, Arina Bokas, Andrew Dietrich,
Sarah Griffith, Kristina Lindberg, James Silvestri, Lily Stotz,
Catherine Ticer, Trevor Tyle

Creative Director | Debra Lashbrook

CONNECT WITH US oumag@oakland.edu

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [OaklandU](#) [in](#) [Oakland-University](#)

Editorial Offices | Anibal House, Oakland University,
630 Pioneer Drive, Rochester, Michigan 48309-4482

Phone (248) 370-3184 | Fax (248) 370-3182

Oakland University Magazine is a biannual publication
distributed free to alumni, staff and friends. See current and
past articles on oakland.edu/oumagazine.

Reproduction without permission is prohibited.

UCM-22857_5.21 | 17270 | ISSN: 1054-6480

Issue No. 108

Address changes, call (248) 364-6133 or
email ouaa@oakland.edu.

Oakland University is an equal opportunity and affirmative
action institution.

MISSION

Oakland University cultivates the full potential of a diverse
and inclusive community. As a public doctoral institution,
we impact Michigan and the world through education,
research, scholarship and creative activity.

VISION

Oakland University will unlock the potential of individuals
and leave a lasting impact on the world through the
transformative power of education and research.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chair | Tonya Allen

Vice Chair | Robert Schostak

Brian Calley

Joseph Jones

Dennis Muchmore

Trina Scott

Melissa Stolicker

W. David Tull

Oakland University is
a nationally recognized
public, doctoral
research university
located on 1,443 acres
of scenic land in the
cities of Rochester Hills
and Auburn Hills in
Oakland County,
Michigan. The
University enrolls more
than 19,000 students
and offers more than
275 bachelor's and
graduate degree and
certificate programs.

 Garrett MacLean



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

To adapt the often-quoted phrase by the
17th-century British poet John Donne about
the fundamental connection among all
individuals: No university is an island.

That sentiment is at the heart of the many lessons
learned from the past year of profound challenges and
uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Fostering and deepening a sense of connectedness with
each other and our communities is the purpose of
community engagement, and why it is among Oakland's
highest priorities and guiding principles.

In the current issue of OU Magazine, you'll learn how
community engagement plays out every day, and how
the tradition of making vital connections with our
communities began with our founders, Alfred and
Matilda Dodge Wilson.

Inside these pages, you'll also learn about how research
at OU has led to developing robots that socialize with
autistic children; how our nursing alumna is inspiring role
models of strength, courage and altruism; and how OU
alumni are promoting sustainability in our communities.

Community engagement is not only an essential part of
our history, it is a key to our success as we evolve as a
university, and aim to enhance the education, public
health, neighborhoods, culture, economy and overall
quality of life in our communities.

Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
Oakland University, President

University student group OU United 2 Health volunteer at World Medical Relief, Inc. every Saturday. Here, OU United 2 Health president Mark Karmash and vice president Doria Morante pack up boxes of medical supplies.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE PUBLIC GOOD

Oakland University makes community engagement a priority. So much so, that it has been written into the university strategic plan that Oakland University will strive to “become a leader in serving the needs and aspirations of our communities and region through expanded community relationships, institutional reputation and visibility, and engagement.”

“Since first coming to Oakland University in the ‘90s, I’ve seen it’s approach to community engagement become more structured and aligned with grassroots community organizations, as well as business, civic, and elected officials,” says Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer Glenn McIntosh. “Additionally, there is greater involvement of faculty and students engaged in service learning and volunteer initiatives.”

OU’s founders, Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson, were champions of philanthropic endeavors. Matilda dedicated much of her time and energy to serving the community through a number of charitable organizations, including the Women’s Society and the Women’s Auxiliary. This passion spilled over into the foundation of Oakland University, and has been a key component in the institution’s goals.

In its early years, OU devoted resources to providing continuing education to the surrounding community. Particularly successful was the Continuum Center, a department within the Division of Continuing Education that offered counseling services to women in southeast Michigan, helping them find a more creative and satisfying place in the contemporary home and community. As stated in Oakland University Annual Report for 1965–66:

“The launching of the Continuum Center and the expansion of the Alumni Education project, both made possible through generous grants by the Kellogg Foundation, introduced new dimensions into the program. These phases of the division’s total offering also gained national interest and attention as members of the staff were invited to make presentations before audiences across the country.”

Additionally, the University initiated a number of other community-based programming, including Community School Programs, nurturing partnerships with 23 local schools; Oakland Forums, assembling local leaders to work on community problems; and Cultural Enrichment Programs, providing performances easily accessible to community members.

Since then, Oakland has increasingly expanded its outreach. Today, OU works with more than 375 organizations throughout Oakland, Wayne, Macomb and other Michigan counties. From OU Cares programs for teachers, individuals and families helping those on the autism spectrum, to the OU-Pontiac Initiative partnering to advance Pontiac while creating learning opportunities for students, OU is making a lasting impact.

“We work arm-in-arm with our neighbors in Pontiac to build a collaborative effort that will enhance the educational experience of our students; provide wonderful opportunities for faculty research, teaching and service; and enhance the educational experience of our students while also enhancing the quality of life of residents of the Pontiac community,” says Kevin Corcoran, Ph.D., chief community engagement officer and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “It is a true point of pride that we have built a strong relationship based on mutual respect.”

The university also reaches beyond Michigan to connect students to research and study away programs throughout the United States, as well as study abroad opportunities throughout the world. Additionally, OU offers services to international students, scholars and their dependents from more than 60 countries. With global partnerships, OU works in collaboration with universities and institutions to advance education, scholarship and creative activity for students and faculty.

Even today, the university is continuing to evolve its role in surrounding cities. This is most evident with the COVID-19 pandemic when OU answered a call-to-action to provide novel support in a number of ways. These efforts included working with state, county and local agencies to donate and deliver food; connecting the OU community with campus experts through social media; offering tutoring, daycare and mental health support; and providing housing for health care workers; to name a few.

As times continue to change, so do the needs of the community. And Oakland University will continue to be there, working together, offering resources and relief to the community and beyond. “Universities do not simply ‘train’ individuals for jobs or careers, we prepare students for life, for work in their communities, for making contributions to their communities, for full participation as informed citizens,” says Dr. Corcoran. “We exist as institutions to contribute to the public good, and we use our talents and expertise in service of that public good to serve our community.”



The FUTURE of CARE

By Laura Phillips Garrett McLean

In an era of increasing isolation, how can people learn, grow or even take care of one another? The surprising solution might sit in the field of social robots. And at Oakland University, researchers are figuring out just how to take this technology into the most important areas of life.

Wing-Yue Geoffrey Louie, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering at Oakland University's School of Engineering and Computer Science. He started his work with robots helping elderly dementia patients in a long-term care facility. "There were older adults who haven't even used email," Dr. Louie says. "But they enjoyed interacting with the robot."

According to Dr. Louie, social robots can assist the elderly with chores like laundry and dishes, plus remind them to take medicine at the proper times. More astonishingly, these robots can be

programmed to look for signs of increasing dementia or declining health and report concerns back to health care workers.

After coming to Oakland University, Dr. Louie learned of work being done within the School of Education and Human Services on using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) techniques for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). After meeting with ABA clinic director, Associate Professor Jessica Korneder, Ph.D., the idea to marry OU's ABA work with Dr. Louie's social robots was born.

Dr. Louie and his students have been developing social robots to teach children with ASD and help them learn a variety of skills. He has 7-10 robots in development at any given time and modifies the experience based on his research on children's interactions.

"There are a lot of factors to consider," Dr. Louie explains. "I'll go in thinking a robot is scary and people will love it. Or I think children will love a robot and they don't. But then you change the voice and all of a sudden you have engagement. There are little things like the intonation changes or length of speech that modify how people interact with it. You just have to test it to see what happens."

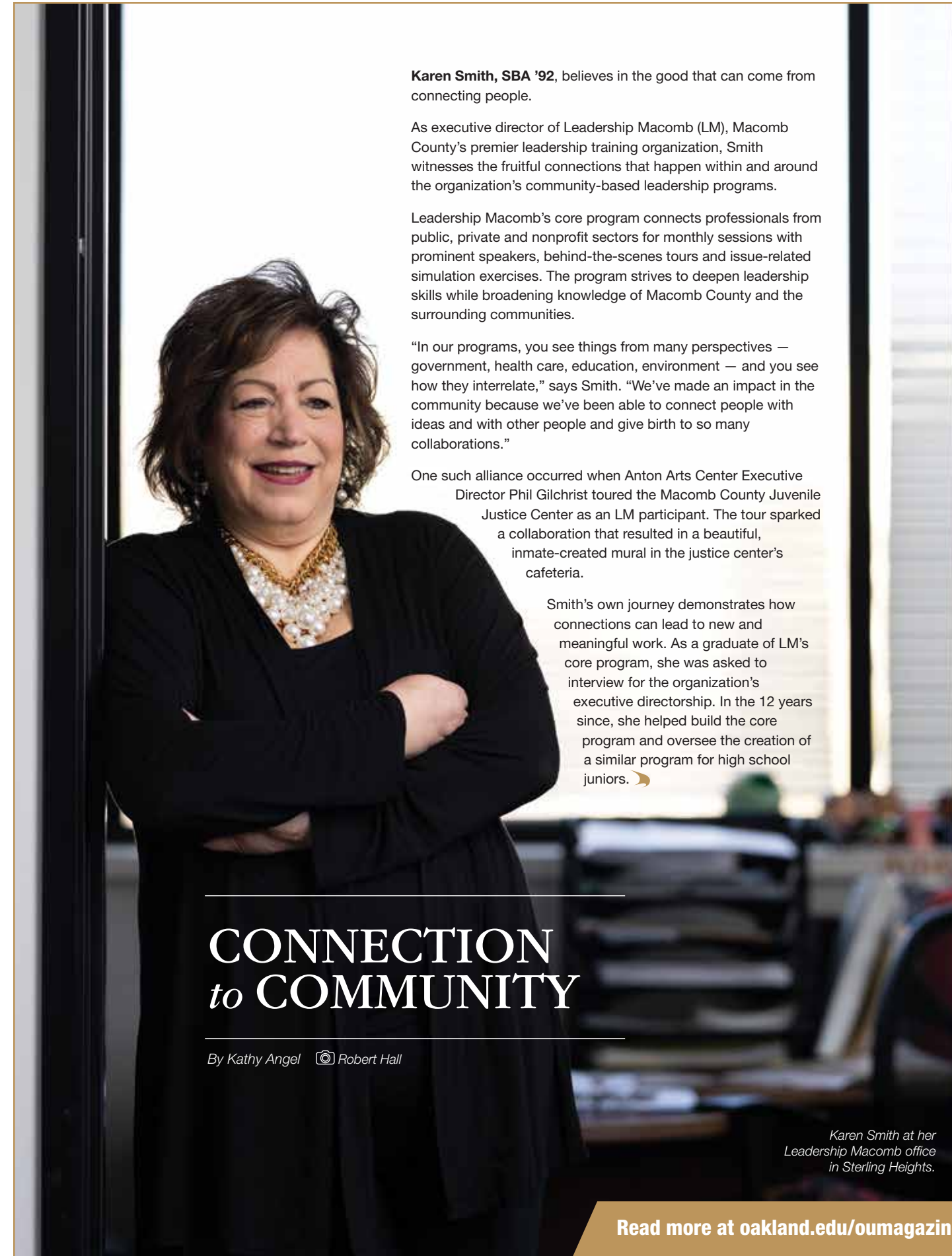
For Dr. Louie's OU graduate and undergraduate students, the social robot work is an experience beyond just the nuts and bolts of engineering. He says social robot development sits at the intersection of engineering, psychology, sociology, computer science, health care, teaching, artificial intelligence, and more. But the aim is always the same: improving the lives of people.

"I want to find the areas that they will help," Dr. Louie says. "Robots don't get tired and they don't get upset. They continue to do things that can be more challenging for humans ... And you don't receive judgment from a robot — it's just the robot doing its robot thing." 🐼

Discover more of Dr. Louie's social robots at geoffrey-louie.com.



Wing-Yue Geoffrey Louie



Karen Smith, SBA '92, believes in the good that can come from connecting people.

As executive director of Leadership Macomb (LM), Macomb County's premier leadership training organization, Smith witnesses the fruitful connections that happen within and around the organization's community-based leadership programs.

Leadership Macomb's core program connects professionals from public, private and nonprofit sectors for monthly sessions with prominent speakers, behind-the-scenes tours and issue-related simulation exercises. The program strives to deepen leadership skills while broadening knowledge of Macomb County and the surrounding communities.

"In our programs, you see things from many perspectives — government, health care, education, environment — and you see how they interrelate," says Smith. "We've made an impact in the community because we've been able to connect people with ideas and with other people and give birth to so many collaborations."

One such alliance occurred when Anton Arts Center Executive Director Phil Gilchrist toured the Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center as an LM participant. The tour sparked a collaboration that resulted in a beautiful, inmate-created mural in the justice center's cafeteria.

Smith's own journey demonstrates how connections can lead to new and meaningful work. As a graduate of LM's core program, she was asked to interview for the organization's executive directorship. In the 12 years since, she helped build the core program and oversee the creation of a similar program for high school juniors. 🐼

CONNECTION to COMMUNITY

By Kathy Angel Robert Hall

Karen Smith at her Leadership Macomb office in Sterling Heights.

Read more at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

A COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Oakland University named anchor institution of the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership

By Catherine Ticer 📷 Andrew Potter

Ballmer Group Advances Employment Opportunities for Young Adults in Pontiac

A \$300,000 grant from the Ballmer Group to the Talent Development Council (TDC) Construction Pre-Apprentice Program will help Pontiac school graduates and young-adult residents prepare for successful careers in the construction trade.

Created by OU Professor David Strubler, Ph.D., in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, Pontiac Michigan Works! and Pontiac Promise Zone, the training program is part of the Oakland University Pontiac Initiative. During the 12-week program, participants receive a much-needed stipend as they learn valuable construction skills in a hands-on environment. The program acts as a bridge into the construction trades for employment and further apprentice training.

Oakland University was named the anchor institution

— fiscal and administrative hub —

of the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership.

The cross-sector Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership group is working with StriveTogether, a consultant firm that has led similar efforts in 70 cities. The collective impact process brings leaders together around common goals to solve complex community challenges by identifying shared outcomes, measuring change and using data to inform decisions.

The Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership operates as a coordinating body to ensure Pontiac community members have the access, opportunities and resources needed to thrive. The work of the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership is funded by the Pontiac Funders Collaborative, a group of committed regional philanthropic organizations that awarded an operating grant to Oakland University to serve as fiscal sponsor for the partnership. Members of the Pontiac Funders Collaborative include the Ballmer Group, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Flagstar Bank Foundation, General Motors, New Economy Initiative, The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, Tauber Family Foundation, The William Davidson Foundation, and Vera and Joseph Dresner Foundation.

A group of 40 dedicated Pontiac community stakeholders have been meeting regularly during the last year to establish the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership. The group is in the process of identifying a set of outcomes and finalizing a formal structure in which community members across all sectors will have a voice in how the partnership will operate and make decisions to solve community challenges.

Central to the partnership's community-driven purpose are three major goals: change regional perceptions about the city, uplift every voice through the collective impact process, and implement shared community-wide goals that lead to positive outcomes for Pontiac citizens. Pontiac residents and business leaders are encouraged to learn more, get involved and lend their voices to guide this process.

The Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership is currently working on identifying needs in education, economic development and prosperity, and quality of life.

Samino Scott, Ph.D., serves as the inaugural executive director of the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership. Scott was selected in November 2020 through a competitive process by Pontiac community stakeholders. A Pontiac native, proud graduate of the Pontiac school district and alumnus of Oakland University and

Eastern Michigan University, he most recently served as community affairs director for the United Way of Southeastern Michigan.

"I'm thrilled to be a part of this initiative that builds on the excitement and renewed energy community residents, business and civic leaders have toward a stronger and more thriving City of Pontiac," says Dr. Scott. "As executive director, I'm not making decisions in isolation. In this new role, I will work with our partners to build consensus and drive results in shared community goals."

OU-Pontiac Initiative

Oakland University and the community of Pontiac have a longstanding relationship. In 2014, they co-created the OU-Pontiac Initiative to build and sustain mutually beneficial programming with special focus in six areas of need identified in collaboration with the community: PK-16 education, civic engagement, economic and workforce development, healthcare and wellness, arts and culture, and building capacity for non-profits and neighborhoods.

Teresa Rodges, OU senior director of community service and pre-college programs, is a member of the OU-Pontiac Initiative. Born and raised in the City of Pontiac and a graduate of OU, Rodges says the University has always had an important role in the community.

"Oakland University is the perfect partner to be named the anchor institution of the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership because the University is already engaged with efforts to move the city forward," says Rodges. She explains that the two organizations, the collective impact partnership and the OU-Pontiac Initiative, operate on the same premise. "We don't tell citizens what they need, we ask them. When you engage in the community, you get to find out what people need and work together toward a common goal."

Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D., looks forward to further deepening OU's relationship with the Pontiac community. "Oakland University is proud to be part of the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership and we look forward to continuing to serve the Pontiac community in this new role as anchor institution," she says. ➤

Learn more about the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership at pontiaccollectiveimpact.org.

Thank you!

for the success of
OU's first-ever
Day of Giving:
FEBRUARY 2, 2021



\$455,945 raised



703 donors contributed

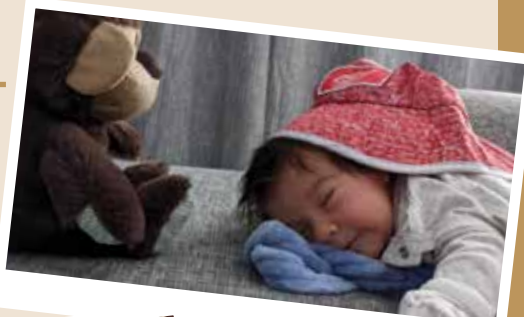


TOP FUND:
Men's Swimming Fund
with 108 donors



Countless OU
students benefited

**The Bill Murray
look-alike
contest ended in
a tied win.**



Marcella

**Grizz didn't see
his shadow...
early spring was
predicted.**



**Mark your calendar for
OU's next Day of Giving!**

*Even more excitement,
Even more fun*

FEBRUARY 2, 2022
(Groundhog Day all over again)

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT
oakland.edu/giving

Congratulations to
Dema Reyes featuring
Marcella PLUS
Christine Moss
and Beth Talbert
featuring Colin.



Colin

Honorable mention
to Keith Tack from the
Honors College
Board of Visitors.



Administering RELIEF

By Andrew Dietderich Robert Hall

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine's (OUWB) partnership with World Medical Relief Inc. is proof of just how important commitment to community is at OUWB.

World Medical Relief Inc., a Southfield-based nonprofit established in 1953, aims to help the poor, sick, and elderly on a local, national, and international basis. Its mission is to collect and distribute excess medical supplies, medicines, and recycled medical equipment for the betterment of mankind. In 2020, the nonprofit provided nearly \$31 million in medical supplies to 17 countries, including the U.S.

World Medical Relief Inc. is one of more than 60 community partners that OUWB works with in metro Detroit and beyond. These opportunities allow the OUWB family to positively impact the health and well-being of others.

At World Medical Relief Inc., OUWB volunteers often spend Saturday mornings sorting and preparing much-needed supplies for shipment around the world.

"World Medical Relief has been such an excellent partner because not only is it an avenue for really meaningful service for our students, faculty, and staff, but it's also an excellent educational opportunity."

— Jean Szura, Ph.D., director of service learning, OUWB.

Szura says that education is a result of the breadth of knowledge World Medical Relief Inc. staff and volunteers have about the needs of overseas health care providers. "Our students gain a view of the disparities in resources across the globe and how important it is that organizations work together to help meet the needs of the overseas clinics," says Szura.

George Samson, Ph.D., president and CEO, World Medical Relief Inc., says volunteers from OUWB provide an invaluable service to the organization and help carry on the spirit of World Medical Relief Inc. Founder Irene M. Auberlin.

In 2020, for example, World Medical Relief Inc. went beyond its traditional relationship with OUWB and worked with OUWB student Majd Faraj on a project to send more than \$2 million worth of medical supplies to Lebanon following the massive explosion in Beirut.

"OUWB volunteers are professional and respect the mission," says Samson. "They value the knowledge they get from this organization and understand that one day they will be using some of what they learn here in another setting."

"The beauty is that because of the partnership, they become like family," Samson adds. "The medical students eventually become doctors and when they hear of World Medical Relief, can say, 'I used to go there. I belong to that organization.' That's something that will never go away." 🌟

Explore OUWB's commitment to community at oakland.edu/medicine.

Igniting PASSION

By Rebecca Steketee 📷 Robert Hall



Olivia Schwager at the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority house.

Making an impact in the community is important to **Olivia Schwager, SHS '15**, who has been committed to outreach since her first days on Oakland University's campus.

When Schwager started at OU, she became involved in the campus community through her sorority, Phi Sigma Sigma. Initially, she helped with formal recruitment of new members but as her talents and positive energy became realized, she found herself in more important leadership positions. "Our sisterhood is extremely special because everyone is always looking out for each other and wanting to help each other succeed," Schwager says.

It was through her sorority sisters that Schwager first heard about the Global Medical Brigades (GMB) and the impactful work they do. GMB is an international group that coordinates student volunteers and medical professionals to travel to remote, rural and under-resourced communities endeavoring to implement sustainable health care systems and to educate the community on preventative care. In her senior year,

Schwager traveled with a group to Panama where they assisted medical professionals and provided clinical care in health education, dentistry, pharmacy and family medicine. Schwager counts her time teaching the children about dental hygiene as some of her fondest memories. "I would say working with this organization helped me become more passionate about health education because so much can be prevented if people just knew the 'why' or 'how,'" she explains.

Today, Schwager works as a well-being consultant at Health Alliance Plan (HAP) where she plans, implements and evaluates health and well-being programs for corporate clients and their employees. In this role, Schwager continues to help people achieve health and wellness on a daily basis. Additionally, she is now the owner of Stretch-n-Grow of Macomb County where she continues to pursue her passion for promoting and teaching health education to children. ➤

Discover more community health programs at oakland.edu/shs.



Skip Townsend



Nicole Leigh

FAMILY Ties

By Michael Downes



Trey with parents



Trey Townsend



Jose Juarez



Share your legacy story with us at oakland.edu/alumni/

Oakland University freshman Trey Townsend hasn't selected a major yet, but knows he wants to be involved in the health field, specifically in a role related to sports.

"There's that physical therapy and chiropractic aspect of the health field," explains Trey, "I want to be around athletes in any way, shape or form."

Trey's an athlete himself, and can't remember a time that basketball didn't play a part in his life. He played throughout his childhood and was a star at Oxford High School, driven by his main goal: play college basketball. His dream school? Oakland University. "Growing up, I've always been around the campus," says Trey, "and fell in love with the culture. I wanted to play in the O'rena and wear the black and gold."

Trey's parents, Skip Townsend and Nicole Leigh, both played basketball at Oakland University. OU kept its eye on Trey throughout high school, but it wasn't until his senior year that an official offer was made. Trey graciously accepted the opportunity. ➤

Read more at oakland.edu/oumagazine.



Jonathan Ivar Weyhrauch, CAS '15, didn't always have a clear path. But the once high school drop-out has developed a nonprofit organization, certificate training program, and is teaching at Oakland University ... all while simultaneously pursuing a Ph.D.

"I usually do things the hard way," Weyhrauch confesses. "This makes me a very nontraditional individual and led to me being kicked out of high school at 16 and traveling some less than positive paths."

Weyhrauch eventually returned to alternative education and found he had a keen interest in the sciences. While spending a few years traveling the country with the Renaissance Festival, he worked and lived in underserved, diverse communities — an experience that ignited a passion to help others. "I learned about how to give yourself more freely," Weyhrauch says. "It was an awesome community. I was amazed at how respectful everyone was of each other and yet how largely unconventional (they were)."

OVERCOMING THE ODDS

OU alumna finds
his way after bleak
academic start

By Kelli M. Warshefski  Robert Hall

Jon Weyhrauch standing on just one of the many Reroot-owned lots in Pontiac. This lot is designated to the dozen or so chickens that provide fresh eggs to locals.



Weyhrauch shows marketing student intern Michelle Kaljaj and fellow workers how to install framing for a hoop house.

Weyhrauch would eventually find work as an engineer technician making thin-film solar cells with Unisolar (United Solar Ovanics), but the company began outsourcing the panel manufacturing portion of the plant, leading him on a new journey. “All eliminated workers would receive retraining and financial support during their training, so I chose to volunteer for a layoff in order to pursue higher education,” he says.

Weyhrauch came to Oakland University and followed his passion in the sciences, double majoring in biology with a minor in chemistry and environmental science with a concentration in resource management and environmental sustainability. His path became clear during Professor Fay Hansen’s permaculture class, when he realized that “this was what I am going to do with my life.”

However, Weyhrauch also knew that without real world experience, the job market would be bleak for an environmentalist. He accepted an offer for a scholarship and research assistantship from Wayne State University, continuing to build on his environmental interests in geology while independently studying mycology with some friends from OU.

“During this time, I was getting disheartened by how little all these fields interacted and how they were taught separately while so intimately intertwining,” Weyhrauch recalls. “So, I brainstormed until I thought of a way to repurpose vacant urban properties in a way that makes these complex environmental interactions intuitive and understandable.”

In 2016, Weyhrauch took these dreams and transformed them into Reroot Pontiac, a nonprofit organization that converts blighted properties in Pontiac to sustainable, environmental

spaces used to introduce local communities to ecological systems. The organization owns 14 acres of land in Pontiac that have been repurposed for environmental education. But the Reroot network reaches beyond Pontiac, aiming to create a Sustainability Center that will house disadvantaged students from Oakland and Wayne State University for little to no cost. Students, in return, will work on projects — performing lab studies, installing systems and gaining valuable skills for the future.

“The Reroot Environmental network was created to identify and educate people around the metro Detroit region on environmental issues, science and the importance of the STEM field,” Weyhrauch explains. “We are teaching people parallels between the development of the ecological community and the social community by showing them cool stuff about the things they pass by everyday . People can understand the world better when they experience things firsthand and are able to get their hands dirty in the process.”

“We have been involved in projects ranging from building stormwater bioinfiltration systems, to planting over 5,000

trees and native plants,” Weyhrauch continues. “Reroot Environmental is one of two certifying organizations in the state of Michigan for the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP). Partnering with the NGICP allows us to be involved in training local residents in installing and maintaining green infrastructure systems.”

Through Reroot Pontiac, Weyhrauch and a team of local partners research green stormwater infrastructure (GI), particularly the flow of microplastic into the environment. The project is funded through a grant from the Great Lakes Protection Fund. The research is proving how bio infiltration cells and other GI can remove debris, especially plastics, that enter the stormwater system. Through plastic debris collections and the use of a newly developed sensor, Weyhrauch’s team can quantify the plastics removed from the system, while also detecting the types and concentrations of microplastics entering the water system. “Overcoming barriers to GI implementation requires ongoing data collection to prove that proper training eliminates the uncertainty of maintenance and functionality,” says Weyhrauch.

But Weyhrauch didn’t stop there. In order to reach a wider region and make a greater impact, Weyhrauch also created Reroot Environmental, a National Green Infrastructure Certification training organization. The program aims to show community members “cool things” to grow interest in economic advancement and environmental advocacy. Weyhrauch is currently in a Ph.D. program at Wayne State University studying civil and environmental engineering. In his spare time, he teaches chemistry and environmental science at Oakland University.

Through persistence, perseverance and trusting his journey, Weyhrauch found his path. “The harder something is to do, the more important it is,” he says. “People shouldn’t shy away from something because it’s hard or complicated. Creating these programs and projects wasn’t easy, but they have the potential to save the world in a real way — educating people about climate and biodiversity.” ➤

Learn more about sustainability and the sciences at oakland.edu/cas.



Reroot Pontiac volunteers and interns



EDITOR'S NOTE

In early April, I brought a team out to Reroot Pontiac to capture photos and video of Jon and the multiple plots around Pontiac that Reroot uses for gardens, fruit trees, willow grove, chicken coop, and student housing. For this shoot, Jon made a call out for volunteers — who are predominantly OU students and alumni — and they came in throngs! The magazine team was overwhelmingly inspired by the story of Reroot, the impact it has with the surrounding neighborhood, and it’s strong bonds with the OU community. In fact, we were so moved that we’ve decided to continue to cover it over the next few issues, deciding that the importance of the work Reroot is doing is too great to be contained within one article in one issue. You can get involved at rerootpontiac.org. Keep an eye out for future issues about Reroot. ➤

- Kelli M. Warshefski, OU Magazine Editor

THE BIG PICTURE

OU programs use holistic approach to advance academic accomplishments in the community

By Kristina Lindberg

When it comes to fostering PK-16 student success, the OU-Pontiac Initiative and Project Upward Bound take a holistic approach.

“We are looking at the entire student, not just in academics,” says Teresa Rodges, senior director for community service and pre-college programs. “We are looking at the whole picture.” For Rodges, the whole picture means not only awarding scholarships to Pontiac school students for future college careers, it also means making sure students have the necessary tools for their education, are able to pass their SATs, getting their parents involved and understanding students’ circumstances.

PK-16 education is one of the focus areas of the OU-Pontiac Initiative, which centers



Teresa Rodges

© Chuck Cloud



© Robert Hall

Geri Graham

on advancing the vitality of the city while enhancing learning opportunities for OU.

“That’s my passion: making sure that students have an opportunity to go to college and to eliminate a lot of the barriers.”

– **Teresa Rodges**, senior director for community service and pre-college programs

“You can offer scholarships all day long but if students are not ready to take advantage of them, you need to do something about it.”

Tutoring and mentoring play a big role in getting the middle and high school students prepared for graduation. To support the tutoring program, OU students serve as tutors and mentors — in the classroom before the pandemic, and now virtually.

During tutoring sessions, OU mentors work closely with Pontiac students, unveiling that standard lesson plans are not working for every student in the classroom. Now, they focus on meeting the students where they are academically. But the tutoring program does not only help Pontiac students, Rodges says. It also benefits OU students who gain experience in the classroom and establish relationships with their mentees. Through the continued close collaboration with

Pontiac schools, the initiative is also able to better identify students who qualify for scholarships. Last year, 43 Wade McCree scholarships were given out and 25 of the recipients came from Pontiac schools.

The college preparatory academy Project Upward Bound (PUB), impacts the broader community but also focuses on students in the Pontiac area. Since its implementation 55 years ago, PUB has aided low-income, first generation high school students to achieve success through enhancing academic skills (including classes and tutoring), awarding scholarships, broadening social and cultural exposures, and providing career exploration.

“We serve a community where about 80 percent of students graduate from high school, whereas 100 percent of PUB scholars graduate from high school, regardless of the length of time they were in PUB.”

– **Geri Graham**, director of Project Upward Bound.

To create a successful student path to high school graduation, college and a career, the project focuses on education

43

Wade McCree scholarships granted

25 of the recipients came from Pontiac schools

enhancement along with cultural activities, such as travel, that are designed to motivate scholars. “In addition, our Ambassador’s Council provides advanced leadership development training to select scholars who have demonstrated the potential to become leaders in college and in their chosen career fields,” says Graham.

PUB scholars are trained to seek out the resources they need and, therefore, are more college-ready once they graduate from high school. “For example, a lot of students are afraid or embarrassed to seek out tutoring, but we help PUB scholars understand that there is no shame in it and tell them how to do it,” Graham says.

“In PUB, we use a holistic approach that includes family,” Graham continues. “We work closely with parents to get them involved in the process, providing activities such as mini college orientations, FAFSA workshops, and financial literacy facilitated by such institutions as the OU Credit Union. For parents, it takes away the mystery of higher education and empowers them to better support their first-time college students,” she says. 🐾

Learn about OU's impact in Pontiac at oakland.edu/community/pontiac-initiative.

VIRTUES and VALUES

By Trevor Tyle  James Silvestri



Brent Fragnoli

Over the past 20 years, the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has *increased by 178 percent*,* and with it comes a heightening demand for individuals to work with those impacted by ASD. For **Brent Fragnoli, SEHS '18**, that need was crucial in his decision to pursue both a Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership (MAHEL) and a Graduate Certificate in ASD Multiple Disciplines.

"The goals and visions of the university and School of Education and Human Services resonated with what I wanted to achieve in my career," Fragnoli says. "OU simply just made sense."

Like many college students, though, Fragnoli's intended career path was not so cut-and-dry. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in philosophy and religious studies from Albion College and interning in pastoral care at a nursing home, Fragnoli had plans to enroll in seminary and become a military chaplain.

However, Fragnoli ultimately had a change of heart, applying to OU's MAHEL program and pursuing a career that focused on working with individuals impacted by ASD. "The simplest answer to describing my vocational calling to my 'job area' is that it is built on the premise of continuing to build upon my experiences to better serve others," he says.

Upon being accepted, he was hired by Chaturi Edrisinha, Ph.D., as a graduate assistant in the Center for Autism Research Division, which he calls "the single most impactful event in my career so far."

During Fragnoli's time at OU, he and Dr. Edrisinha developed a curriculum for OU's proposed Ph.D. program in ASD education and completed a research study measuring the effectiveness of recreational activities on children with ASD.

"When Brent interviewed, I knew immediately that it would be a successful working relationship, mostly because he truly embodies OU's call — '*Seguir Virtue e Canoscenza*,' or 'seek virtue and knowledge,'" Dr. Edrisinha says. "When you work with people with disabilities — a vulnerable population — if you don't have virtue, then I believe no amount of knowledge can recompense. Brent already had virtue, but it was my privilege to help him acquire knowledge." ➤

Interested in additional stories about the School of Education and Human Services? Check out SEHS's online magazine at oakland.edu/connect.

*tacanow.org/autism-statistics

HONORING STUDENT DREAMERS

The Keeper of the Dream scholarship was created in 1993 by the Center for Multicultural Initiatives at Oakland University. The scholarships go to students who honor Martin Luther King's mission and work toward making a more inclusive and equitable world. This year, nine recipients were awarded the scholarship for their hard work, compassion and for encapsulating King's life work.

Adriana Colin-Diaz | Sophomore
History Major with Secondary Education
and a Social Studies Concentration

Maryam Nissan | Senior
Human Resource Development Major

LaCaya Smith | Senior
Elementary Education-Early Childhood
Development Major

Teyler Thompkins | Senior
Communication Major with a Minor in Music

Mariama Toure | Senior
Industrial and Systems Engineering Major

Alaya Freeman | Sophomore
Marketing Major with a Minor in
Entrepreneurship

Rachel Jackson | Junior
Integrative Studies-Higher Education
Administration Major with a
Minor in Applied Leadership Skills

Ja'Laaiyah Gordon | Senior
Marketing Major with a Minor in Dance

Niajah Hood | Junior
Linguistics and Teaching English as
a Second Language Minor

Find out more about
Keeper of the Dream
recipients at oakland.edu/cmi.



By Kelli M. Warshefski ✍️ Lily Stotz

Clink, clink, clink. A trowel digs into the red, dry earth as Shaina Browning wipes sweat from her brow. It's been a long day, kneeling and digging in the Israeli soil. A task both challenging and rewarding for this double major in anthropology and history.

"The blood, sweat and tears that go into these operations is something we only see staged glimpses of in documentaries or read in articles," Browning, CAS '19, recalls. "Until you are on the ground with a shovel in your hand do you really understand the weight of being able to unearth the vast history that surrounds us. You feel a sense of responsibility to respect the history beneath your feet."

Browning traveled to Israel in 2018 and 2019 with a study abroad course led by OU faculty Michael Pytlík, Ph.D. The class takes students to conduct excavations near Jerusalem, Israel, as well as excursions to historical and cultural sites.

The Israel Archaeological Field School and Tour course is just one of a handful of faculty-led study abroad programs found in Oakland University's College of Arts and Sciences. The gamut of programs range from immersing into British culture and literature in Oxford, to studying geological formations in Ontario, to exploring the art and architecture of Italy.

"A study abroad course offers students immeasurable opportunities for personal growth as well as an important credential to include on a resume or graduate school application," explains Donna Voronovich, special lecturer for Summer in Volterra, Italy. "Study abroad is one of the smartest investments a student can make in their future. With a variety of scholarships and other financial assistance available, these opportunities are within reach for every student." ➤

Read more at oakland.edu/oumagazine.

IN THE GOLD SEAT with Amanda Silvestri

MAJOR: Communication with minors in Advertising and Applied Leadership Skills, 2020
Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership, 2022

BEST BUILDING TO HAVE CLASSES IN:

Pawley Hall - the chairs are nice and I could grab a bagel and hot tea before class

FAVORITE STUDY SPOT: Fourth floor of Kresge Library

FAVORITE EVENT ON CAMPUS:

The Nick Jonas concert at Meadow Brook Amphitheatre

FAVORITE PLACE TO EAT ON CAMPUS:

Plum Market - they have the best mashed potatoes, and Zingerman's coffee has the best chai lattes

BEST CLASS: Group/Team Development and Leadership - my group put together donations for a project and delivered them to children in the hospital; it was a rewarding experience for me and I enjoyed working with the individuals in my group

FAVORITE PROFESSOR: Beth Talbert - she's extremely personable and helped me figure out if graduate school was the right fit for me

➤ Submit your favorite OU memories at oumag@oakland.edu.



© Sarah Griffith

How nursing professors, students and alumni are handling COVID-19

By Michael Downes  Robert Hall

Tyler Sirut, SON '19, a nurse in the emergency department at Detroit Medical Center, remembers hearing about COVID-19 early on, but he, like many others, never thought it would reach the states.

"I was in Florida with my grandparents watching the news and seeing China building the specialized hospitals," says Sirut. "I immediately thought, 'this is never going to make it to America, but I feel terrible for them.' Little did I know that two months later we'd be in a full-blown pandemic."

In an instant, the world was flipped on its head. Overnight, Michigan was put in lockdown, shelves at the grocery store were barren, while toilet paper and paper towels became valuable commodities.

Working in downtown Detroit, Sirut found himself in a hotspot. He saw COVID-19 patients daily, donning a gown, cap, N95 mask, surgical mask over top and a face shield, for his entire 12-hour shift. Tyler lives with his family, worried that he'd bring COVID-19 home, he created a routine.

"I'd strip down to my boxers in the garage," explains Sirut, "throw my clothes into the washer and walk immediately up to the shower before I had any interaction with anyone in the house. That was my

biggest fear, passing it along to my family."

At the university level, students were sent home, in-person classes were suspended and Zoom was now the most used application to reach students. Curriculums were tossed out and professors and instructors, like Kristen Munyan, assistant professor and interim undergraduate program director for the School of Nursing, had to adapt.

"After the initial, utter shock," says Munyan, "I was developing the curriculum on the fly, managing a team, that initially had a big group think over the phone to develop a plan, and being as responsive as I could because the students were in crisis."

Munyan's team did a great job meeting with students, making sure they were doing okay academically, physically and mentally, as well as getting the students acclimated to the new class structure.

"Lectures have been the easiest thing to transition," says Morgan McDonald, a nursing student in her last semester before graduation. "Going from in-person to virtual clinical has been hard."

Munyan and her fellow instructors were able to find virtual simulations to allow students to get that in-person experience. "The virtual assessments allowed us to do assessments by clicking through prompts," explains McDonald. "We still had to do everything we would in person, but virtually. The only difference was, if you messed up you got a chance to do it again."

While virtual clinicals can't replace the experience gained with in-person clinicals, it has benefits. "Being able to control what students saw has been a huge benefit," says Munyan. "I can introduce students to patients with diabetes, a child with cystic fibrosis, someone who's been abused and burn victims. I can show the whole spectrum of diagnoses creating an equitable experience."

COVID-19 will have long lasting effects on hospital and nursing curriculum, but most will be positive, helping students and practicing professionals. One of the issues that has Munyan worried is a great flight from the profession post-pandemic.

"I am confident," says Munyan, "that we will see PTSD at an increased rate in our workforce and my concern is whether that will impact our retention. However, nurses are resilient, they have a calling to this profession. They don't get into it for the money; we're inherently driven to help people."

While retention may be a concern, some found vindication during these trying times.

"The pandemic increased my passion for my work," says Sirut. "The days are long and tough, but I want to help people. I see people at their darkest hours and at the worst time in their lives. It's an honor to be able to have a positive impact in the most trying times." 🌟

Explore OU's School of Nursing at oakland.edu/nursing.



PREVAILING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

Tyler Sirut



FORMATION AND FRACTURE

Researching community movements and the forces that break them

By Kelli M. Warshefski 📷 Robert Hall

Communities create connections. From neighborhood book clubs to ideological movements, communities offer like-minded people an opportunity to unite over a common thread. But while this can connect some, it can also become a barrier for others.

“The complexity of building community is that as you unify you also run into the things that divide you,” says Jo Reger, Ph.D., Oakland University faculty and scholar of grassroots activism. “In my current research, what I’m really interested in is how a group of

people try to build a utopian community in which they are valued, but in the course of doing so they also begin to run into the ways in which they are fracturing the community with some of their beliefs and ideas.”

As a feminist researcher, sociology professor and the chair of OU’s Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work and Criminal Justice, Dr. Reger’s research explores community formation, development and fracture, primarily in social movements and gender. She spent her early research years answering “What is the state of U.S. feminism?” and addressed this question in her book “Everywhere and Nowhere: Contemporary Feminism in the United States.” In this research, she conducted an ethnographic analysis of three communities of young feminists, examining the movement’s continuity, intergenerational conflict, struggles with

oppression and privilege, identities around sex, sexuality and gender, and strategy and tactics.

“I found that feminists in hostile environments sought alliances with older feminists and were moderate in their strategies and tactics in an attempt to survive,” says Dr. Reger. “In contrast, feminists in supportive environments often turned against older generations of feminists, seeing them as ‘out of touch’ and linked their feminism to a variety of causes, submerging it within other movements. I return to these issues of place, community and activism in my current project.”

In this new project — “Singing to Utopia: Lesbians, Feminists and Music, 1968–1998” — Dr. Reger explores the U.S. women’s music community and the formations and fractures within this culture.

She found that some women were being excluded from the mainstream music scene, among other groups, which indirectly gave rise to a vibrant women’s music community.

“Lesbians in mainstream feminist organizations, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), found themselves marginalized and were declared a distraction from women’s liberation. At the same time, white lesbians, along with lesbians and gay men of color, found themselves shut out of white gay male organizations. The pop music scene of the 1970s, like the decades that preceded it, largely featured male musicians with few women achieving similar levels of success,” Dr. Reger explains.

Drawing from archival research, Dr. Reger analyzes written documents, news articles, meeting notes and vinyl records to tell

the story of the women’s music community that was “forged out of prejudice and discrimination, but ultimately failed to create a space of equality for all,” she says. One such type of archival research is the content analysis of vinyl records associated with this underground women’s movement. Working with OU undergraduate student, Sam Heinz, Dr. Reger studies and codes the lyrics line by line, looking for issues of pride, resistance, utopia and community, among other themes. Additionally, Heinz also listens to the music to get a sense of the emotion behind the lyrics — a notion Dr. Reger also shares.

“Some of this music I know, so it brings back memories,” Dr. Reger says. “But other music makes me think about what it felt like to hear these songs and play these albums at a time when claiming a lesbian identity was taboo. I try to put myself in that time period for the women that bought the albums. Also, some of the albums have written notes on them and names which adds an extra layer of connection.”

The conception of this new feminist/lesbian music culture grew into a nationwide community that was anchored by ongoing music festivals, including the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival — a feminist event held in Oceana County, Michigan that ran annually from 1976–2015. The festival offered more than musical performances, but a space of camaraderie with workshops, art shows, dance and camping. This community of women provided a space of inclusivity for feminists and lesbians that otherwise didn’t exist, and participants built strong boundaries between themselves and the rest of society. “The result was a community of thousands of women that were largely invisible to mainstream culture,” Dr. Reger says.

By creating this culture, however, the women’s music community also developed barriers that excluded other marginalized groups. The community held a woman-born-woman philosophy that privileged cisgender women while rejecting trans women and men from festivals and events. “The community, particularly at festivals, that adopted this philosophy were labeled as transphobic and out of touch with the times,” says Dr. Reger. “While remnants of the community remain today, it has largely disappeared.”

“I find that the women’s music community of the late 1960s until the 1990s was an attempt to build a utopian community that provided safety and acceptance for a marginalized population,” she continues. “Yet within the safe space, there were forces that fractured that sense of utopia with some members privileged over others. I think this is key to thinking about the world we currently live in. At its core, my current project explores how the forces that unite some can become barriers to others. This dynamic is particularly relevant in these polarized, political times.” 🍷

Explore more unique research projects at oakland.edu/research.

Jo Reger listening to records in the Gaylor Collection room at the Kresge Library.



BE MARRIED AT

Meadow Brook



TIMELESS | UNIQUE | PERFECT

Join us for our monthly open houses to learn how we can plan your dream wedding



Meadow Brook

MEADOWBROOKHALL.ORG/WEDDINGS

— MEADOW BROOK HALL IS LOCATED ON THE CAMPUS OF OAKLAND UNIVERSITY —

Nourishing INNOVATION

By Arina Bokas 📷 Robert Hall

Solving impending global problems is a challenging task, but Jonathan Maisonneuve, Ph.D., assistant professor of mechanical engineering, is up to the challenge. As an ongoing increase in food production necessitates innovation in agriculture, the researcher investigates ways of using fertilizer to generate useful mechanical work via pressure retarded osmosis (PRO).

Food sustainability is an important concern. By mid-century, the Earth's population is projected to reach ten billion people. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization forecasts that global food production will need to increase by 70%; yet, 40% of ice-free land and 70% of withdrawn freshwater are already in use for farming, leaving virtually no room for expansion. To intensify production and improve food quality, there is a need for controlled plant environments, which often require a considerable supply of energy.

"Currently, there is an important resource that is largely wasted — the energy that is released whenever concentrated fertilizers are diluted in water," Dr. Maisonneuve says. "The prospective for concentrated fertilizer to drive water treatment, nutrient recovery and/or power generation is rather attractive."

Over the last two years, Dr. Maisonneuve has developed and described the novel concept of using fertilizer to drive PRO for conversion to mechanical work. This is the process, in which concentrated fertilizer is used to drive osmosis across a semipermeable membrane from a low-concentration feed source. "When this occurs against some applied pressure or load, the expanding volume of fertilizer solution represents a mechanical energy, which can be used to do work," Dr. Maisonneuve adds.

The potential of this energy source to support meaningful farm loads, however, remains uncertain due to the fact that the limits of power from fertilizer osmosis have not yet been established. Thus, Dr. Maisonneuve's most recent efforts have been focused on establishing the thermodynamic and process limits of fertilizer energy conversion via PRO.

"As with any batch process, the high potential of initially super-concentrated fertilizer rapidly drops, imposing a practical limit to energy recovery and taking it below viable levels," Dr. Maisonneuve states. ➤

Interested in reading stories about the School of Engineering and Computer Science? Check out SECS's online magazine at oakland.edu/oaklandengineer.



© provided by Meadow Brook Hall

OU MOMENT

Oakland University co-founder Matilda Dodge Wilson (president of the Women's Auxiliary of the Salvation Army) works with volunteers in the Salvation Army Red Shield Club, gathering items in Detroit, c. 1942, to be sent to troops in Alaska. Matilda devoted her talents, time and wealth to bettering the lives of others, and the Salvation Army served as a catalyst in many of her ventures. Matilda's service with the Salvation Army began after her marriage to auto-pioneer John Dodge in 1907. Together, they contributed to a 1916 campaign to build a home for women and children; in 1919, John and Matilda donated \$137,400 to the Salvation Army. After John's death, Matilda built Denby Children's Home, hosted fundraising events, and was president of the Auxiliary of the Salvation Army for a total of 24 years. She received the Distinguished Service Cross from the Salvation Army and in 1965, the high honor of the William Booth award. ➤



SHEILA CLAY | Personal Training Certificate

"As a Nurse Practitioner, I work in a school-based health center providing services for children, many of which are overweight or obese. The knowledge that I have acquired with this certificate will help offer these students techniques that they can use to lead a healthy lifestyle."

FOSTER GROWTH

It's never too late to advance your skill set. At Oakland University, you can choose from a variety of credit and non-credit programs, designed to fit the learning needs and schedules of working professionals.

Start today at oakland.edu/pace.

OAKLAND
UNIVERSITY™

Anibal House
630 Pioneer Dr.
Rochester, MI 48309-4482

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO. 17
ROCHESTER, MI

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

17270

WELCOME BACK TO

HOMECOMING

AND REUNION WEEKEND

OCT. 8–9, 2021