

ADVANCEMENTS

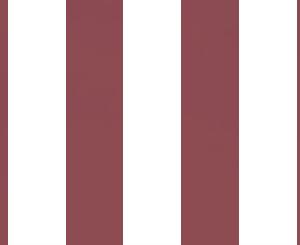
A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION | SPRING 2024

New **space**. New **legacy**.



A new place for all Bears to gather

The Missouri State University Office of Advancement team is moving! Our new building will give you a “living room” on campus. It will be your place to come home and celebrate being a Bear at every stage, from student to alumni to donor and friend.



JOIN FELLOW BEARS FOR HOMECOMING 2024



Paint the town maroon and white with football, the parade, reunions and many other festivities!

OCT. 18-19

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MissouriState.edu/Homecoming

ADVANCEMENTS

SPRING 2024

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We're moving to a new building

We are building a University Advancement Center in the heart of campus. Our current home, the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni Center, was sold to a nonprofit that serves the region. We're excited to create a space that makes you feel like you're coming home!



COVER ILLUSTRATION BY RYLEE WILLIAMS



New president of Missouri State University named 6

Dr. Richard "Biff" Williams will become the 12th president of Missouri State University on July 1. President Clif Smart will retire this summer after 13 years on the job.



BearsWIN (Women's Impact Network) holds official kickoff 8

Danica Patrick, a barrier-breaking professional race car driver, spoke at the event for BearsWIN and GrizzliesWIN.



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Bill '71 and Merrill Drummond — who walk on campus almost every day — established academic and athletic scholarships. Students with financial need will be given preference for the awards.

BRENT'S CORNER



From our move to a new building, to a new university president, to the progress yet to come:

WE THANK YOU AS WE EMBRACE CHANGE AND BUILD ON OUR SUCCESSSES

I am writing to you today with a grateful heart.

Your commitment to Missouri State plays an integral role in the university's ability to advance its mission and provide transformative experiences to students.

You make an impact, and I am deeply thankful for your support of excellence in education.

Whether through scholarships, faculty support, program funding or infrastructure enhancements, your generosity has opened doors of opportunity for countless students. You have empowered them to pursue academic and professional aspirations.

I know I've said it before, but there has never been a more exciting time to be a Bear.

I am excited about the future of Missouri State and the Missouri State University Foundation. So many new opportunities lie ahead.

As you read the pages to follow, you will learn about exciting things in store for the University Advancement division, which houses the Missouri State University Foundation, the Alumni Association and the important departments that bring everything together.

We can't wait to move to a new building on campus

The rumors are true, and the announcement was real: University Advancement is getting a new home.

We cannot wait to be ON campus. We want to be part of each student's journey, from their first campus visit to the first time they return as an alum. We want to share the importance of private support and engagement with them from day one.

The entire University Advancement division is excited about the opportunity to share your impact with students and our campus community daily.

With your continued support, we are confident we will embark on a new chapter marked by growth, innovation and sustained impact.

Together, we will chart a course toward even greater achievements.

We will ensure that Kenneth E. Meyer's legacy will never be forgotten

As we move to a new home on campus, I'd like to take a moment to thank Ken Meyer. He is the namesake of our current building, the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni Center.

Mr. Meyer believed in the future of the foundation in its early years. His belief and support allowed the foundation to live and flourish at 300 South Jefferson Avenue. It took the foundation to a new level and allowed growth and change. Mr. Meyer will be honored in the new facility. His legacy is a cherished part of our story.

As Clif steps down, we thank him for his exceptional leadership as president

This is my last letter in Advancements magazine before the retirement of President Clif Smart. Under Clif's guidance, our university has achieved remarkable milestones.

Clif's commitment to academic excellence, student success and community engagement has inspired us all and set a standard of excellence that will endure for years to come.

Clif, as your time as president closes, please know that your legacy will continue to inspire and guide us in our endeavors.

Your leadership has not only transformed our institution but has also touched the lives of countless students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends who have had the privilege of being part of this extraordinary journey.

Dr. Richard "Biff" Williams will become our president this summer

While we will miss Clif's presence dearly, we are also excited about the future and the opportunities that lie ahead.

With new president Dr. Richard "Biff" Williams on the horizon, we eagerly anticipate the fresh perspectives, innovative ideas and renewed energy that will propel our university to even greater heights. We look forward to working with Dr. Williams on advancement projects. You can learn more about him on page 6.

We will continue to embrace change, foster growth and advance our shared mission of excellence in education and public affairs.

Once again, thank you for your unwavering dedication to Missouri State University. Your generosity inspires us daily, and we are honored to have you as a valued member of our family.

We look forward to the journey ahead and the remarkable accomplishments we will achieve together. Go Bears!

With sincere appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brent Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive.

W. Brent Dunn, executive director of the Missouri State University Foundation and vice president for university advancement

MY TOP 5 MEMORABLE MOMENTS IN MSU FOUNDATION FACILITIES

The transformation when we moved from Burgess House to the Meyer Alumni Center

The Missouri State University Foundation was started in 1981, and I joined the staff in 1985.

The first offices were in Carrington Hall, next to the president's office.

Next, we moved to the Burgess House, a three-bedroom home.

People were working in the kitchen, breakfast nook and living room.

Julie Ebersold, former executive director of alumni relations, worked in the master bedroom full of closets. We teased her that she had the best room in the house!

My first office was upstairs in a former kid's room, then I was in the dining room, then another bedroom.

It was a great place for us, but we kept growing and growing. I think we had 16 staffers in that house at one point.

In 1988-89 we decided to move. With the purchase of the Kenneth E. Meyer

Alumni Center, our staff gained access to an 86,000-square-foot building.

When we first moved in, there was a beauty shop inside the doors off the parking garage. Vending machines were added there, until vending was moved to the basement.

Later, with private support, we put in the Gallery of Memories that is still here today.

The MSU phone campaign also eventually

moved from the Plaster Student Union to the Alumni Center basement.

The space for offices and community gatherings led to a total transformation. It allowed us to do so much more with our campus and external constituents than we ever could have imagined during our days in the Burgess House. This has been a wonderful home for decades.



Burgess House in 1989

PHOTO FROM MSU ARCHIVES

The night we all moved into the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni Center

We moved from the Burgess House until late in the night. Our staff was the packing crew and the moving crew, and we stayed up putting together the furniture.

We were so excited: We finally had space and a place to work where we were not crammed next to each other!



The Alumni Center in 1989

PHOTO FROM MSU ARCHIVE

The day the MSU Foundation paid off the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni Center

Buying the building was a huge and scary step for the MSU Foundation.

It was a bold move for us — an organization just 8 years old, and you're going to take out a loan to buy this large downtown building?!

And this was when downtown was not as revitalized and bustling as it is now.

But the vision Greg Onstot, then the executive director, and others had, along with belief and support from Ken Meyer, was a boon. Paying it off was the stuff of dreams.

The time I lived in Burgess House for a week during an ice storm

Not only did I live there, I brought my cocker spaniel, Boomer. I bought Boomer at the MSU athletics auction, and he and I lived on the couch in my office for a week during that ice storm. This was before I was even married to Jennifer!

The good thing about Burgess House was it had all the amenities of home, so I was able to shower, use the kitchen and sleep on the couch until I had power at home.

The day we held the press conference about the sale of the building and our future

This is a game-changer for Missouri State University, the MSU Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

We are all excited about this. It's more than a real-estate transaction and a relocation. It's a reflection of the missions of our organizations to make this region better and change lives in a positive way.

We'll have more information on the new Advancement Center for you soon.

At the MSU Foundation, we have been talking about having a home on campus for quite some time. I want to thank our Board of Trustees, Clif Smart, the CFO and everyone else who helped us get here.

We can't wait to build the future with you!



Feb. 15 press conference

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

MISSOURI STATE ANNOUNCES NEW PRESIDENT

Dr. Richard “Biff” Williams will take the helm this summer.

Dr. Richard “Biff” Williams will become the 12th president of Missouri State University on July 1.

The university’s Board of Governors announced the selection March 4.

“We’re confident Dr. Williams is the right person to lead MSU into the future,” said board Chair Lynn Parman.

“He is very student focused. He also has proven success in strategic planning, community engagement, legislative advocacy and fundraising. Dr. Williams possesses the qualifications and experience necessary to ensure the university continues to thrive and build on its strong foundation.”

MSU launched a nationwide search for a new president last fall after MSU President Clif Smart announced that he will retire this summer after 13 years on the job.

“I’m humbled by the honor and excited by the opportunity to lead Missouri State University toward a future where innovation, collaboration and excellence define our educational journey,” Williams said. “I’m inspired by the rich history and look forward to leading us to even greater achievements.”

Williams’ bio and accomplishments

Williams has 25 years of leadership experience in higher education. He has served as a faculty member, dean, provost and, most recently, president.

Williams was president of Utah Tech



Williams spoke at an open forum on campus. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



University (previously Dixie State University) from 2014 through early 2024.

During his tenure, he expanded the university’s footprint — increasing enrollment by more than 40% and adding more than 200 academic programs. He also guided the university through a name rebranding and a move to Division I athletics.

Previously, he served as provost and vice president for academic affairs and founding dean of the College of Nursing, Health and Human Services at Indiana State University. Prior to Indiana State, Williams served as an associate dean of the College of Education at the University of Northern Iowa, where he was a faculty member; executive associate director of the School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services; and athletic training division chair.

Williams has a PhD in curriculum and instruction from New Mexico State University, a master’s degree in athletic training from Indiana State University and a bachelor’s degree in lifestyle management from Weber State University.

Search process involved campus

The process was led by a presidential search committee that included members of Missouri State’s Board of Governors, community members, alumni, faculty, staff and students.

The on-campus visits included interviews with faculty, staff and student leaders, forums for community leaders and campus, and a presentation to and interview with the board.

The board noted campus input played a key role in its decision process. ▼

Thank you for supporting GIVING DAY 2024

The 36-hour event, held March 5-6, will strengthen Missouri State for years to come.



2,102 DONORS contributed **\$1,573,602**



36%

of gifts were from
first-time donors

9%

of gifts were
from students

Gifts touch every corner of campus

Some of our most generous donors offered gift-matching challenges.

EXAMPLES OF AREAS ASSISTED BY CHALLENGES

All academic colleges, and departments in those colleges: College of Business, College of Education, College of Natural and Applied Sciences, Darr College of Agriculture, McQueary College of Health and Human Services, Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Graduate College

BearsWIN: BearsWIN and GrizzliesWIN (Women's Impact Network) priorities of mental wellness and degree completion

Athletics: Cross country/track, men's and women's swimming and diving, softball, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's golf, beach volleyball, men's and women's soccer, football, tennis, baseball

Student life: Cheer squads, Sugar Bears, Pride Marching Band, Chorale, Bear Battalion, Biz Bears student-managed investment fund, fraternity-specific scholarships, education-abroad scholarships, Ursa Experience

Campus facilities and amenities:

MSU Libraries, nursing simulation lab, Juanita K. Hammons Hall

General support: Financial aid, student affairs, community engagement, inclusive engagement, Missouri State Fund for Excellence

Ambassadors around the U.S.

helped spread the word about Giving Day and encouraged fellow Bears to join in.

GIFTS CAME FROM 47 STATES, 11 COUNTRIES

Top 5 states with Giving Day supporters:

1. **Missouri**
2. **Kansas**
3. **Illinois**
4. **Texas**
5. **Virginia**



400
verified ambassadors
accounted for
more than



60%
of gifts



Thank you
MSU-West Plains donors!



\$19,236

was raised from



77 DONORS

MISSED GIVING DAY?

You can still give to MSU! Learn more about Giving Day 2024 or make your plan for the 2025 event, which will be held March 25-26.

GivingDay.MissouriState.edu

BEARSWIN WOMEN'S IMPACT NETWORK

New group is racing toward fulfilling its goals for students

The Women's Impact Network official kickoff event in February featured famed female race-car driver Danica Patrick.

Tiny, checkered flags used as decorations for the Feb. 28 event titled An Evening With Danica Patrick symbolized the evening's theme in more than one way.

In racing, the black and white flags fly for the first person to cross the finish line — a winner reaching their big goal.

The evening was an official kickoff for BearsWIN and GrizzliesWIN (Women's Impact

Network), an initiative well on its way to meeting goals of its own.

Trailblazing speaker told the audience: Tap into your special gifts to be your best

Danica Patrick, a barrier-breaking professional race-car driver, helped kick off the women-led event.

Patrick set records during her racing career and is now finding success as a serial

entrepreneur who never stops pushing herself to reach new heights.

University staff, students and community members from Springfield, West Plains and surrounding communities gathered for the VIP event and Patrick's keynote Q and A. She emphasized the importance of having dreams, setting goals and pushing boundaries, and talked about why anyone — especially women — should strive to be their personal best.



Danica Patrick speaking at the event. PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



“If being with other women gives you the motivation to reach a new level for yourself, great,” Patrick said. “But I think it’s more about tapping into some of your special gifts like your intuition, your gut instincts, your creativity, the ability to work with people and to communicate.”

BearsWIN is helping Missouri State students in three main target areas

BearsWIN brings awareness and funding to some of the most pressing needs of Missouri State students.

The network has 22 committee members led by three co-chairs: Amy Counts '94, Marla Elliot '89 and Jennifer Fitzmaurice '96.

“The people we’ve brought in to be part of this committee all have such different talents. They highlight that we can kick off an initiative that’s focused on women,

empowers women and urges women to come along on this journey collectively together,” Fitzmaurice said.

The network is focused on supporting three target areas for students:

- **Mental wellness:** Students seeking counseling and psychiatric services at Magers Health and Wellness Center on the Springfield campus.
- **Degree completion:** Students who have exhausted other types of financial assistance and still need support.
- **Neurodiversity and mental wellness in West Plains:** Support of the TJ Swift House ASCEND program and other services at MSU-West Plains.

Elliot said her personal connection to the initiative is through a family member who struggled with depression as a college student and was unable to graduate as a result.

“She told me it would have changed everything for her had these services existed when she was in school.”

The new network has already made progress on its fundraising goals

The initial fundraising goal of BearsWIN was to raise \$500,000 by 2026. Before the public kickoff event, the network had already reached about 27% of that goal.

BearsWIN and GrizzliesWIN encourages anyone interested in joining the initiative, regardless of gender, to offer their time, talent or treasure.

“It doesn’t matter what level of contribution or whether it’s a little bit or a lot,” Counts said. “It really is to incorporate all women or all men that want to give at whatever level works for them.”

Story by Taylor Ladd

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Danica Patrick’s visit was made possible thanks to:

Presenting sponsor:



MARY AND JEFF SCHRAG

VIP experience sponsor:



Additional support from:



THE STORY BEHIND A GIFT

Couple established scholarships to show their

LOVE FOR THE BEARS

Bill and Merrill Drummond cheer for their teams at Missouri State games and visit his alma mater regularly. They set up an estate gift to benefit “people who might not be able to go to school without some help.”

If you're at Missouri State University often, you may have seen Bill and Merrill Drummond.

Most days, they walk across campus after Bill's morning run.

They stop to say hello to people they've come to know over the years, from teachers and students to cafeteria staff and groundskeepers.

“I'm still a runner, and we're still on campus pretty much every day,” said Bill, who graduated from MSU in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in sociology.

Yet for the couple, Missouri State is more than part of their morning route.

The university has been an important part of Bill's life since the 1960s — and part of Merrill's since the two got married more than 52 years ago, even though she attended Drury University a few miles away.

That's why the Drummonds recently chose to establish academic and athletic scholarships to benefit future MSU students through an estate gift.

They are promoting the MSU experience

Bill and Merrill visited Plaster Student Union the first week of the fall 2023 semester.

While there, he said of the college experience at Missouri State: “This has been

so positive for so many people. I'd like for it to stay that way.”

An annual academic scholarship in their name will go to a full-time undergraduate student pursuing a degree in sociology, social work, history, psychology, philosophy, political science, criminology, mathematics or English.

Meanwhile, four athletic scholarships will be distributed each year equally between men's and women's teams to student-athletes who meet both NCAA and university eligibility requirements.

For both scholarships, the office of financial aid will give preference to students with demonstrated financial need.

Merrill (left) and Bill Drummond





Merrill and Bill Drummond walk on campus almost every day. Bill is a 1971 graduate.

“It’ll hopefully be people who might not be able to go to school without some help,” Bill said, remembering when part-time jobs covered his MSU tuition and noting the higher cost of college today.

Merrill agreed. “We just felt scholarships would be a good place to leave our money.”

It’s not the first time they have given back to the university.

“They truly love Missouri State, and they attend about every function there is on campus,” Brent Dunn, vice president for university advancement, said. “They’re good people who have been long-time supporters, and this is something they wanted to do to make a lasting impact.”

Their support of athletes is steadfast

Endowments like these make a difference, said MSU Athletic Director Kyle Moats.

Of 400 student-athletes last year, 350 relied on some kind of aid to help cover college expenses.

“Well, we can’t have enough, let’s put it that way,” Moats said of endowments. “We do have quite a few academic athletic scholarships, but really, until we can endow all of them — and that’s a tremendous task — we could always use more.”

Moats has gotten acquainted with the Drummonds through their loyal attendance

at MSU athletic events. He said they’re establishing endowments to help students, not to earn recognition.

“They love athletics, and they are very involved in terms of participation and attending our events,” Moats said. “They know our students; they know our coaches.”

Early last fall, the couple’s calendar was already full of games to attend. While the Drummonds make a point to attend a few home football and baseball games every year, MSU men’s and women’s basketball games claim most of their schedule.

During the season, they go to home games several nights a week — and even travel to tournaments as far away as Florida and South Carolina.

“We enjoy it,” Bill said. “It’s good, healthy fun. These kids who come here to play Division 1 sports, they’ve worked hard for that opportunity. They’re just really neat kids.”

They’ve had MSU ties for decades

The Drummonds have gotten to know many student-athletes since they put down roots here more than 50 years ago.

Both Bill and Merrill first came to Springfield to go to college: Bill, from Ferguson, Missouri, and Merrill, from Winfield, Kansas.

Later, after Bill began a career in real

estate and Merrill had begun hers in 3M’s transportation department, mutual friends introduced them.

“When I was finished with school and we were married, we didn’t want to leave,” said Bill.

He even went on to teach beginning real estate classes at MSU in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

“We’ve enjoyed Springfield, and it’s been good to us.”

The couple continue to enjoy an active lifestyle here.

Bill, 76, is a former Boston Marathoner who completed an Ironman competition at age 60.

In recent years, he took an eight-day bicycle ride on gravel paths between Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

Merrill, 80, is also a cyclist who has accompanied her husband on more than a few “century rides” of 100 and “two hundreds” of 200 miles.

For Bill, at least, the lifestyle they enjoy began during those college years.

“College has been a positive influence in my life,” he said, “and I think it’s a really important part of Springfield.”

*Story by Susan Atteberry Smith
Photos by Jesse Scheve*

Community support helps students diagnosed with autism

ASCEND TO NEW ACADEMIC HEIGHTS

at Missouri State University-West Plains

Gifts to the ASCEND (Autism Support Can Empower New Directions) program on the West Plains campus have increased resources for students with autism.

ASCEND is the first program of its kind in southern Missouri. It launched in August 2022. Now, the program has a new name thanks to a dedicated supporter. There will also be a new building — The Center for Autism and Neurodiversity — accompanied by a sensory garden.

“Program has opened a door” for students

A gift from TJ Swift House, Inc. — an agency contracted with the Missouri Department of Mental Health — led to a renaming in November 2023. The program is now the TJ Swift House ASCEND Program.

Tracey Hollis-Cooper, her children, Dr. Nate Swift and Keely Swift-Gale, and their spouses, Erin Swift and Dylan Gale, made it possible to name the program.

“Many (people with autism) who complete high school have the intellectual capability to continue their education, but not the support system they need to go to college,” Hollis-Cooper said. “Attending college is a goal of theirs, and this program has opened a door for them that before wasn’t even a possibility to consider.”

That education can lead to career paths.

The new facility will be tailored to the needs of those on the autism spectrum. It will include:

- **Indirect lighting.**
- **Soothing textures on surfaces.**
- **Sound-absorbing materials.**
- **Break-out rooms uniquely designed to calm overstimulation.**
- **A classroom space.**

The facility will also be used for a new degree program that emphasizes autism. University students enrolled in the class will learn how to best support people on the spectrum and help them find success in a classroom setting.

New sensory garden is “above and beyond”

An important gift from a group led by former MSU Board of Governors member Carol Silvey supported the Philanthropic Friends Giving Circle Sensory Garden.

People on the autism spectrum tend to have heightened senses, said Mikala King, director of the autism transition program.

“The sensory garden will give our students a calming outdoor space,” King said. “Having the sensory garden goes above and beyond by providing multiple ways for our students to feel less distracted and able to focus on their goals in college.”

“Lives will be changed” due to ASCEND

Supporters hope the ASCEND program highlights that people on the autism spectrum can embark on a traditional college degree path and contribute to the community.

“A person with a diagnosis still has many talents and gifts they can bring to a workplace or a volunteer program. They can be a viable resource,” Hollis-Cooper said.

Rachel Peterson, director of development and annual giving at MSU-West Plains, said the community support has been invaluable in growing ASCEND.

“The program wouldn’t exist without Tracey and her family. The Philanthropic Friends Giving Circle Sensory Garden would not exist without Carol and her friends,” Peterson said.

MSU staff and faculty have contributed to the growth of the academic side, and there has been support from city, county and state officials, she said.

“I can’t wait to see how many lives will be changed because of the TJ Swift House ASCEND Program.”

ABOUT THE TJ SWIFT HOUSE ASCEND PROGRAM

[WP.MissouriState.edu/ASCEND](https://www.MissouriState.edu/ASCEND)



More than 150 people turned out Nov. 7 to celebrate the TJ Swift House ASCEND Program and break ground on the new Center for Autism and Neurodiversity. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



MEET
Teri Trickey

Director of catering for Missouri State University

Grew up in: Springfield, Missouri

Education: Bachelor's in hospitality management, 1999, University of Central Missouri

Career: Has worked in higher education since 1986. Was the director of catering for Missouri State from 2000-11. Then, left Springfield and was director of catering and retail operations at the University of Denver for two years. Returned to Missouri State in 2013 as the director of catering.

Family: "I'm the oldest of four. Both of my parents are still living. Don and Kay Trickey live in Kimberling City, Missouri." She has three grown daughters — Alicia, Amanda and Amber — as well as four grandchildren and a 2-year-old pug, Buckley Bear.

What do you do for Missouri State?

We cater almost 3,000 events a year. I can't be at every one, but my job is making sure we provide great customer service — that hot food's hot, cold food's cold, everything is set up on time and things are pleasing to the eye as well as the palate.

Favorite aspect of your job?

When we get to be creative and do fun events, especially if there's a theme. Anytime we can decorate or pull together a vision a client has, that makes it even more special, especially when you see guests walk in the room and their eyes light up or you hear them say "Oh wow."

Favorite MSU moment or memory?

Any time I have the opportunity to work with alumni and development staff on the Founders events, which are usually themed.

My favorite time was when Stephanie Smith said, "I just want everything to be round." And that's where I started. So the decor and the food, everything was round, and it turned out to be really fun. We laughed a lot about it.

Fun fact or little-known fact about you?

I play the piano. I was also the first girl born in seven generations in my family.

Favorite quote or saying?

The most beautiful thing you can wear every day is a smile.

Earliest influence in your life?

My parents. They've been a huge influence on me over the years, always reminding me to not judge others until I've walked a mile in their shoes and to be kind.

Best part about working for MSU?

The people and the friendships I've made in the last 23 years in my department and with the student employees. It's always fun to see them go on and do great things. I hear from people from 15 years ago, and they'll say, "You were the first boss I ever had," and talk about their experience working for us.

If you could go back in time for one hour, who would you spend it with and what would you do?

It would be with my stepdaughter, Megan Harris. She passed away from breast cancer about five years ago. So, if I had one hour to go back in time, it would be to be with her and just sit with her and visit.

Three activities that make a perfect weekend for you:

Great food. A trip to the movies. Spending time with family.

Favorite season? Fall.

Read the book or watch the movie?

Watch the movie.

Pick only one form of entertainment: Movies, TV, gaming or live music?

Live music.

Are you counting down the days until retirement or more likely to work 10 years past retirement?

It depends on the day (laughs). Probably work past retirement.

Best meal ever?

My daughter's 21st birthday. We were in Colorado, and my catering manager at the time prepared her a meal. It was beef tenderloin, but it was cooked to perfection. The sauces were perfect, all the sides, everything. He was a very talented chef.

Coffee, tea or other? Coffee.

Sweet or savory? Sweet.

Favorite food on campus?

Southwest egg rolls from the catering department.

Fill in the blank. Missouri State is: Home. ▾

A NEW PLACE TO CALL HOME

We are building a University Advancement Center in the heart of campus. Our current home, the Meyer Alumni Center, was sold to a nonprofit that serves the region. We're excited to create a space just for alumni and friends like you!

When you're a Bear, you're a Bear for life.

Whether you're an alumnus or alumna, a friend, parent, current student, faculty member or staff member, you'll always have a place at Missouri State.

And soon, University Advancement will have a place in the heart of campus waiting to greet you.

Now that it has been officially announced, we can tell you: We have been dreaming of a new space to welcome you home.

Our goal is to create a University Advancement Center that can be a "living room" for those who visit. This place will evoke Bear pride, showcase private support and celebrate the rich tradition of Missouri State.

It will also allow us to change what we do and increase our programming to showcase the incredible university we represent — which will now be literally right outside our door.

This facility is expected to open in 2026, and all Advancement staff members will move from the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni



A rendering of how the entrance of the center could look.
DAKE WELLS ARCHITECTURE

An aerial rendering of how the center could be positioned on campus.

DAKE WELLS ARCHITECTURE



Center to this building. These are the people who work in:

- **Development**
- **Alumni engagement and relations**
- **Donor relations and special events**
- **Advancement services**
- **Athletics development**

This facility will give the university and its friends more space for events, collaborations and meetings.

“We’ll be able to better tell the story of the university, as well as the value of engagement and philanthropy and how that is a key to the future of the university,” said Brent Dunn, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the Missouri State University Foundation.

Selling the Meyer Alumni Center to a philanthropic powerhouse

At a press conference held Feb. 15, Dunn announced the sale of the Meyer Center to the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, or CFO — a local nonprofit. CFO provides philanthropic leadership in several ways:

- **Helps donors achieve their goals** by professionally investing and administering charitable funds.
- **Helps nonprofits fulfill their missions** by administering funds and making grants.
- **Helps local students** by administering more than 400 scholarships.

CFO’s goal is to serve the people of the Ozarks and enhance quality of life in the region. This approach is called “place-based philanthropy.” Examples of CFO initiatives related to this goal include:

- **The Rural Schools Partnership.**
- **The Youth Empowerment Project.**
- **The annual Humanitarian Award.**

The CFO is governed by a board of volunteers and run by a professional staff. The organization’s current downtown building on Trafficway Street was built just for them, and they moved there in 2006.

“The (CFO) foundation has surpassed its capacity, both in terms of staff — we’ve got people tucked in nooks and crannies and places that aren’t really offices — as well as hosting community meetings and activities,” said Winter Kinne, CFO president and CEO.

They were committed to staying downtown, and started to explore options for new spaces.

In spring 2023, Dunn had a conversation with CFO President Emeritus Brian Fogle.

“They were busting at the seams,” Dunn said.

First, the CFO considered moving operations to one floor of the Meyer Center. Eventually, Dunn asked: “Hey, what if the CFO buys this building?”

It was a win for both teams.

“It’s a good deal for us because we have had dreams for years to build on campus,” Dunn said. “When you look at major universities — and we’ve toured several of them recently — the alumni and development operations are front and center. They are at the front door.”

Dean Thompson, a 2001 Missouri State alumnus, is the current chair of the CFO Board of Directors.

“This project represents a significant lift. I like it because, quite frankly, it’s a stretch goal. It’s not just bigger (than CFO’s current home) — it’s about six times bigger,” Thompson said at the press conference announcing the sale.

“What excites me about that is what we can do with the space in the future and how that will have an impact on our region.”

This also means a downtown building will have new caretakers.

“It seems right and fitting that an anchor institution like the Community Foundation would be the next steward of this landmark building,” said architect Tim Rosenbury, director of quality of place initiatives for the City of Springfield.

The Springfield-based staff of the CFO plans to move into the currently unoccupied fourth floor in late 2024 or early 2025.

The MSU Foundation will lease back its current offices until its new building is done.

As university staff members complete their move, Kinne said, “we will then re-envision what the space can be.”



Winter Kinne, president and CEO of Community Foundation of the Ozarks, spoke about how the building purchase will help the nonprofit. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE



A rendering of a potential look for the new outdoor space. DAKE WELLS ARCHITECTURE

A Bear's journey: From the Welcome Center to the Advancement Center

In the highly competitive world of higher education, first impressions are critical.

Before 2015, potential students and their guests had no place just for them at Missouri State. They would have to walk onto campus to find Carrington Hall, which has no parking in front, and then go to the second floor.

"Many of them end up sitting in the hallway or getting their initial briefing standing in a group because there is no gathering space," President Clif Smart said in the 2010s when advocating for a new facility.

Since 2015, those visitors have been greeted at what has become our "front door": the Davis-Harrington Welcome Center. It's the starting point for campus tours, and has a 100-seat auditorium. The center created a warmer atmosphere for visitors.

While that took care of the recruitment side, we don't have a similar place on the main campus for alumni, donors and friends.

That's where the University Advancement Center will come in. It will be located at the corner of National Avenue and Bear Boulevard, close to the Welcome Center.

"We want everyone to know being a Bear is a lifelong journey from the start of their

time here," said Stephanie Smith, senior director of donor relations and special events for the MSU Foundation. "That journey will start at the Welcome Center and end at the Advancement Center."

When alumni and friends visit, she said, it's a space that should make them "feel like they're coming home."

Dunn said the dream of a new building is a bold move, but a beneficial one. His team has been creating special plans that will be revealed shortly.

"I guarantee you, this will benefit the campus," he said. "This is a great, historic day." ▾

WANT TO SUPPORT THE CENTER?

There will be many private-giving opportunities, including naming gifts. To discuss all possibilities, contact the Missouri State University Foundation.

 Foundation@MissouriState.edu

 417-836-4143

**Missouri State University
Foundation**

WHAT WILL BE PART OF THE UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT CENTER?



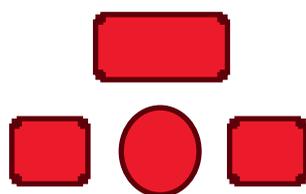
INDOOR EVENT SPACE AND A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

This will be a place to gather for university and community events, and to stop by any time you are visiting campus.



OUTDOOR SPACE

This will likely open up to the indoor event space. When it's not in use for gatherings, we hope it will be a hangout with seating for students and anyone on campus.



GALLERY OF MEMORIES

This area will showcase the history of Missouri State University and the impact of private support and engagement through the years.



OFFICES

The University Advancement team and the Missouri State University Foundation will all be housed in the new center.

HONORING LATE ALUMNUS KENNETH E. MEYER

The Advancement team has worked in the Kenneth E. Meyer Alumni Center in downtown Springfield since 1989.

It was named in honor of a significant gift from Meyer, an alumnus who built a radio empire.

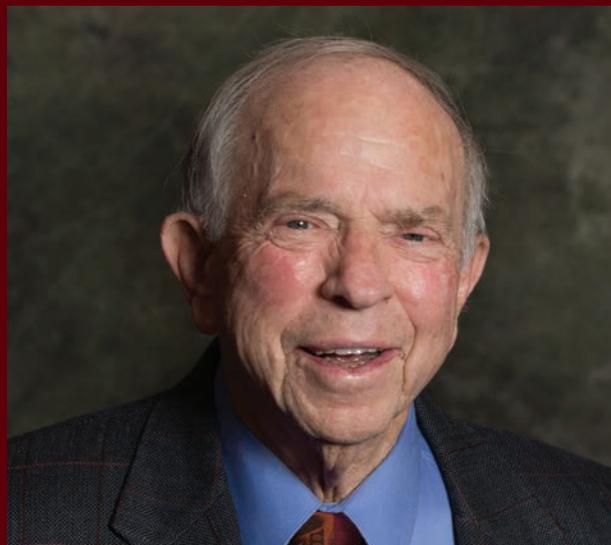
Ken Meyer graduated from Missouri State in 1950 with a bachelor's degree in business education. He was the founder and CEO of Meyer Communications, which operated several radio stations in the region.

One station, KTXR, is the flagship station for Missouri State University athletics and was the first to broadcast MSU women's college basketball.

Ken and his wife, Jane, were longtime supporters of higher education and Missouri State. Another building on campus also bears their names: The Jane A. Meyer Carillon at Meyer Library.

Meyer passed away in summer 2022 at the age of 94.

Now that the team will move to campus, the Missouri State Foundation is working with the Meyer Foundation to continue to honor and recognize Ken and Jane.



"We'll never forget the impact Ken Meyer made in this building," said Brent Dunn, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the Missouri State University Foundation. "We are going to have the appropriate recognition for Ken and Jane. They were very special to this institution."

HISTORY OF THE MEYER ALUMNI CENTER

1975

The building opened as the Bank of Springfield. It was designed by renowned Springfield architect Richard Stahl.

1982

The building's name changed to Centerre Bank of Springfield.

1988

Centerre Bancorporation Inc. was acquired by Boatmen's Bancshares Inc., and the building became available for purchase due to the merger.

1989

The then-SMSU Foundation purchased the building with support from private gifts. "I am confident that when we look back 10, 20 or 30 years from now, we will point to the purchase of this building as one of the most significant moves in the foundation's history," Marshall Gordon, then president of the university, said in summer 1989. "When you provide good people with excellent facilities, the end result is usually phenomenal success."

1989-present

The building's tenants other than MSU staff members have included Butler, Rosenbury and Partners architects, Woolsey Fisher law firm, the FBI and the Secret Service.

2003

The building was named for Kenneth E. Meyer '50 in recognition of a significant gift.



An article in an SMSU newsletter in summer 1989 discusses the purchase of the building. It features comments from Ken Meyer. MSU ARCHIVE



The purchase of the Alumni Center building took place in 1989. Back row, from left: Greg Onstot, then-president of the SMSU Foundation; Tom Allen, SMSU official on the foundation's Board of Directors; Jerry Patton, then the vice president for administrative services; Dan Wiser, SMSU official on the foundation's Board of Directors; and Gene Edwards, university bursar. Front row, from left: Jay Burchfield, president and CEO of Boatmen's National Bank from 1987 to 1996; Ken Meyer, then on the Board of Directors for the SMSU Foundation; and then-SMSU President Marshall Gordon. "We will forever be indebted to Jay since he provided us an opportunity to buy the Centerre Bank building," Onstot said in 2024. MSU ARCHIVE PHOTO

HISTORY OF THE MSU FOUNDATION'S FACILITIES



The Burgess House in 1989. It's now the home of MSU's office of planning, design and construction. MSU ARCHIVE PHOTO



Floy T. Burgess in 1953.
MSU ARCHIVE PHOTO



The Burgess House sign in 1989.
MSU ARCHIVE PHOTO



The then-new alumni building in 1989. MSU ARCHIVE PHOTO



The Meyer Alumni Center as it appeared in 2018.
PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

1961

The university bought the house at 736 S. National Ave. as a home for the institution's president. Both Leland E. Traywick and Arthur L. Mallory lived in the house.

1969-70

Mallory moved out of the house, and the home economics department moved in.

1975

The building was named Burgess House in honor of Floy T. Burgess. She started the home management/home economics program at MSU in the early 1950s.

Fall 1980

The Southwest Missouri State University Foundation was established.

Jan. 13, 1981

The SMSU Foundation holds its first day of operations. The offices were in Carrington Hall for a brief time.

1981

The small staff — led by first Director of the Foundation Greg Onstot — moved in to Burgess House as the home economics department, which needed more room, moved out.

1989

There were now 15+ development and alumni staff members. The university purchased the former Boatmen's Bank building, and the team moved there.

2024

The Advancement team is making plans to move into the first facility built just for them, with attention to the needs of alumni, donors and friends.

SIGHTS AND SCENES: FALL AND WINTER 2023-24





1. “Shakespeare in Love” was the first show of the season from the theatre and dance department. It was also the first academic show in the John Goodman Amphitheatre. The show, based on the Oscar-winning film, had romance, fights, music and even a dog. Don't miss the shows this spring, including a dark comedy based on “The Simpsons” and a murder mystery musical!

PHOTO BY ARDEN DICKSON

 [MissouriState.edu/
TheatreAndDanceProductions](https://MissouriState.edu/TheatreAndDanceProductions)



2. Bears growled at the competition before the Homecoming football game.

PHOTO BY ARDEN DICKSON

3. Recipients of the Judith Enyeart

Reynolds Scholarship gathered Nov. 6 for their annual reception.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

4. MSU set multiple enrollment records in fall 2023. Freshmen had the biggest fall-to-fall increase in history: Enrollment was 2,782, up 22.1%. The university also set a record for graduate students.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



5. Nearly 800 potential new Bears were introduced to MSU at Showcase, held Nov. 11.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

6. The new Global Education Lab opened Nov. 13 in Hill Hall. It's part of the College of Education, and is a space dedicated to international collaborations and partnerships.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



7. The men's soccer team defeated Omaha on Nov. 16 to advance to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. The season ended Nov. 20 with a loss in that round to Stanford.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

8. More than 1,400 new graduates joined MarooNation at fall 2023 commencement.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

9. Legendary NFL quarterback Joe Montana was part of the 2023 Public Affairs Conference on campus. He gave a presentation titled “Lessons of Preparation, Teamwork and Performance Under Pressure.”

PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

FOUNDATION EVENTS

MAROONATION BALL RETURNED IN 2023

Alumni and friends anteed up and took their chances with Lady Luck on Oct. 6, 2023, at the Springfield MarooNation Ball Casino Night. Attendees at the sold-out event in Spring-Vegas put on their poker faces and enjoyed live entertainment while raising scholarship support for students.



Why do we hold these events? To help students!

Meet two MarooNation scholarship recipients:

“Living in Springfield all my life led me to choose Missouri State over many other schools. I feel Springfield and Missouri State helps ensure my quality of life as a student, balancing the hard work as a student and ROTC officer candidate. Paying for school is always a struggle, and your generosity proves I made the right choice!”

— **Jackson Baskins**, pre-biomedical sciences/ cell and molecular biology major, chemistry minor



A video of Jackson:

“I am beyond grateful for the great opportunity you have provided me through this scholarship. I will do my best to honor what this scholarship stands for as well as what the university stands for. Thank you again for supporting students like me as we strive to become well-rounded individuals and enter the workforce to provide what we can for our community.”

— **Kamila Sanchez Mercado**, animal science (pre vet) major



A video of Kamila:



PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH PHILLIPS



PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

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Missouri State University Foundation



Students and donors share the message:

SCHOLARSHIPS BRING DREAMS TO LIFE

Donors say: We're investing in deserving Bears

"I pray that this small token of support continues to light the path for you on the days when it seems dark or difficult. Nothing in life worth having comes without some measure of effort or sacrifice. Oh, the places you'll go!"

"We are proud to be a small part of your success in completing your commendable ambitions."

"It is my honor and joy to be able to assist students in the pursuit of a degree at MSU. I appreciate hearing from them, learning about their backgrounds and their hopes and dreams for the future. I wish them all the best. My only request of them is that, some day in the future, when they have the means to do so, that they remember to help others."

"We both feel the scholarship awards are the best way we can invest in the future and we are happy to help deserving students such as yourself."

Students say: Thank you for believing in me

"Receiving this scholarship made me realize that while it may be difficult, it is doable. That feeling has pushed me to practice more and more. Now, I am 10 times the musician I was when I auditioned and received the award. For that, I thank you."

— **Lyndon**, music performance as a percussionist major
Horatio and Lynne Farrar Memorial Scholarship

"When COVID entered everyone's world, my dad's industry was decimated. We all had to adjust to a new reality that humbled all of us. Thanks to your generosity, the financial burden of my senior year has been eased."

— **Abby**, gerontology major
Louis Henry and Seryl Ethel Fisher Community Service Scholarship

"This scholarship has contributed financially, but it also goes a long way in making me feel I have a support system here at Missouri State that wants to encourage students to be the best version of themselves. Thank you so much for believing in me and the potential of what I can accomplish in the future."

— **Katie**, marketing advertising/promotion major
Dr. Robert W. and Charlotte K. Bitter Endowed Scholarship Fund

"Due to this generous scholarship, I will be able to have the education necessary for my future career. I will be able to go into that career with the intention of loving what I do, rather than worrying about whether or not this path will be financially viable for paying off student loans. The last four years have been an amazing experience and I thank you again for this opportunity."

— **Taylor**, communication studies major
Judith Enyeart Reynolds Scholarship

"I am from a low-income family and honestly do not know how I would go about paying for my school necessities without your scholarship."

— **Howard**, mathematics major
CNAS Scholarship for STEM Secondary Education Students

"When I was a senior in high school, I spent hours worrying about how I was going to pay for college and if I can even support myself through it. Because of your scholarship and constant support, I have been able to get a degree and set myself up for a solid future."

— **Emma**, entertainment management major
Central High School Academic Scholarship

THEN AND NOW

MAY DAY: AN END-OF-SEMESTER TRADITION

These annual spring festivities on campus have been a way for students to relax, socialize and celebrate for more than 100 years.

THEN: What was probably the first May Day celebration on campus, Wonderland festival, was held in 1913.

From then, Wonderland transformed into what the 1938 Ozarko yearbook described as “a pageant of beauty and color.”

May Day celebrations of the '30s included music and dance performances by the Bruin Boosters and other student groups, the crowning of the “May Queen” and the winding of the May poles — around 60 large wooden poles wrapped in hundreds of colorful streamers.

The student bodies of both Greenwood Training School and what was then Southwest Missouri State Teachers College could participate in the festivities that welcomed the first hints of summer.



The Ozarko yearbook of 1938 highlighted the May poles.



The Bruin Boosters were part of the festivities covered by the 1939 Ozarko.

PHOTOS FROM MSU ARCHIVE MATERIALS



Greenwood Laboratory School materials from 1932-33 showed May Day.

MAY DAY FESTIVAL AT THE NORMAL

CAST OF MORE THAN 300 SELECTED



From left to right—Top row: Miss Forrestine Thurmond, Miss Esther Henicke and Miss Mary Harris. Bottom row: Miss Emilee Bishop and Jean Morris

An issue of the Southwest Standard from the 1917-18 school year.



NOW: May Day is still going strong! It's organized by Student Activities Council, or SAC.

The event includes carnival-style activities on the North Mall, such as games, rides, live music and food vendors. Inside the Plaster Student Union, there's entertainment including performances and movie screenings in the PSU theatre. The activities center around a theme each year, such as Under the Sea and NASA/space.

Alumni and friends are welcome to attend and can participate in most activities that don't require a current student pass.

**WANT TO CHECK OUT MAY DAY
FESTIVITIES THIS YEAR?
Be on campus May 1!**



PHOTOS BY KEVIN WHITE

FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP

FOUR NEW MEMBERS JOIN THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees, the volunteer-based board that governs the Missouri State University Foundation, welcomed new members in early 2024. The board advises on gift planning, seeking private gifts and investing private funds. Alumni and friends who have demonstrated dedication or contributed to the university's development are eligible to become trustees.

Meet the new members



Amy Counts, alumna, class of 1994

Amelia (Amy) Counts, of Ballwin, Missouri, is a regional vice president, sales for Wise F&I, an automotive finance and insurance company. She was recently appointed to the board of directors for Great Southern Bank, headquartered in Springfield. She also served on the MSU Board of Governors from 2017-23, and was co-chair of Missouri State's presidential search committee. She is a board member of St. Louis Artworks and is on the alumni advisory board for Delta Zeta sorority for the MSU chapter. Counts has a bachelor's degree in hospitality leadership from Missouri State.



Carol Silvey, alumna, class of 1964

Carol Silvey is retired, and was previously the senior associate for advancement at the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. Silvey is also a recent past member of the MSU Board of Governors. She worked at Missouri State University-West Plains for 38 years, first as a history instructor from 1968 to 1991 and then as a director of development from 1991 to 2006. She is involved on the MSU-WP campus, serving on the Friends of the Garnett Library's executive committee and as a development ambassador. Silvey has a bachelor's degree in education from Missouri State University and a master's degree in education from the University of Missouri.



Jennifer Fitzmaurice, alumna, class of 1996

Jennifer Fitzmaurice is the vice president of innovation and IT operations for Varsity Brands apparel company. She is a technology industry leader and one of 12 professionals in 2015 to be named a "Game Changer" in the ICT Industry by OSP Magazine, a publication for information and communication technology professionals. Fitzmaurice earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Missouri State and an MBA from Saint Louis University.



Russ Gant, friend of the university

Russ Gant is the co-owner of Mega Motorsports, southern Missouri's largest power sports dealership. Russ and his wife, Laura, previously owned and operated Burton Creek Pharmacy and Clinic in West Plains, Missouri. He has served as a member on multiple boards in that town, including the West Plains Library, the West Plains Chamber of Commerce, West Plains Rotary Club and MSU-WP's Grizzly Club.

TWO LONG-TIME FOUNDATION STAFF MEMBERS RETIRE

Two of the longest-serving staff members of the Missouri State University Foundation retired in late 2023 and early 2024. A reception was held in December to honor Cindy Busby, and one in January for Kathy Miller.



Kathy Miller at her retirement reception.
PHOTO BY JESSE SCHEVE

KATHY MILLER

Foundation's longest-serving employee found a family at work

Alumna Kathy Miller '82 has worked with the Missouri State University Foundation since she was a student.

She got her start in 1981, during her senior year of college at Missouri State. It was also the first year of operations for the foundation.

Over winter break that year, the alumni office converted its records from a card file system to a computer system. Miller was a math major and computer science minor. She was in a group of students who worked on the project during their holiday break.

Come spring, she was asked to come back as a student worker.

In 1983, Greg Onstot, the first vice president for university advancement and first executive director of the Missouri State University Foundation, hired her full time.

She retired as the gift records supervisor.

"I just feel so fortunate I never had to look for a job," Miller said. "It's pretty neat that I never had to leave."



Cindy Busby and her husband Chuck on her last day in the office. PHOTO BY KEVIN WHITE

CINDY BUSBY

Employee of 30+ years saw importance of giving back

Cindy Busby first joined MSU in 1985. Her first positions were in two dean's offices before she transferred to advancement in 1992.

She retired as the executive assistant to the vice president for University Advancement and the secretary to the MSU Foundation.

She is married to a Bear: Her husband, Chuck Busby, received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Missouri State in 1984 and '87. He has been an MSU employee since 1989 and works in the office of web strategy and development.

Busby believes in the importance of private giving to scholarships, programs and capital projects. She helped start the Genevieve Roy Memorial Scholarship in memory of her mom, who received a teaching certificate from Southwest Missouri State College (now MSU) in the early 1950s and taught in one-room schoolhouses.

"Whether it's contributing time, money or something else, our alumni, donors and friends make a difference in the lives of students and that is very rewarding," Busby said. "Thank you for making me happy to show up every day for more than three decades. What an amazing career this has been."

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Members of the Board of Trustees are some of the most exceptional supporters of Missouri State University. Trustees advise us in gift-planning, seeking private gifts and investing private funds given for university projects and programs.



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MissouriStateFoundation.org/Trustees

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Judy A. Breeding



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RACHEL PETERSON

**DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND ANNUAL GIVING,
MISSOURI STATE-WEST PLAINS**

MSU ALUMNA

Associate degree in general studies, 2003 (Missouri State-West Plains), bachelor's degree in general studies, 2020 (Missouri State)

HOMETOWN

Bolivar, Missouri

CAREER

Peterson got her start at Missouri State as an administrative assistant in 2000. Since then, she has held six different positions during a 23-year career at Missouri State-West Plains.



Tell me about your current role.

I'm the director of development and annual giving for Missouri State-West Plains. We are part of the bigger advancement team in Springfield. I've been in this role for a couple of years. I really love the community of West Plains. My favorite aspect of the role is being able to interact with the community and connect donors to students to help with what the students are needing right now.

Tell me about your connection to Missouri State-West Plains.

I came to the West Plains campus as an athlete and had such a great experience that I never wanted to leave. And I think that says a lot about our campus and about the Missouri State University system. This place is so much a part of my identity and who I am. I'm a Grizzly and I bleed Grizzly blue!

I had been a cheerleader for the Grizzlies in the '90s, so when the opportunity to work for Missouri State-West Plains became available, I jumped on it.

Tell me about your family — any Bears?

My husband and both of my children attended MSU-West Plains. My daughter, son and I all transferred to Missouri State. My son's girlfriend is getting ready to graduate from MSU-West Plains with her second degree. All of us, except my son-in-law, have been a Grizzly

and/or a Bear. I also have three grandchildren — a 4-year-old granddaughter, a 2-year-old grandson and a 1-year-old grandson. I hope they're future Grizzlies and Bears.

How do you spend your free time?

Either at a Grizzly athletics event or a community event.

When none of that's going on, I like to spend time with my family. We spend every Sunday afternoon together — we'll go to church and then have lunch, all nine of us.

We also love spending the summers at the lake. We spend a lot of time on our pontoon boat as a family. Even the little babies love the water.

I also like to read and go to the movies.

You used to work as a radio personality before coming to Missouri State. Any fun stories?

I worked as a radio personality in Springfield as well as in Thayer, Missouri, and I really liked the profession. It was pretty low stress, and I like talking, so that wasn't an issue for me.

Probably the craziest thing that happened to me in radio was I left the mic on during a song, and I sang to 150,000 listeners, not realizing I'd left the microphone on. It was embarrassing, but I got some calls saying that they enjoyed it.

What would you share about the Missouri State-West Plains campus?

I think there's a lot of people who see us as a branch campus rather than an independently accredited two-year institution that grants certificates and associate degrees.

We have students who start with us because we are an open-admission campus, we have students who need some prerequisite courses and additional assistance to be successful in college, and we have students who may have a 34 on the ACT but want to start in a smaller town on a smaller campus.

We are proud to be part of the Missouri State system, but we do have a separate identity as Grizzlies, and we get the best of both worlds.

What do you want Missouri State supporters to know?

They can never fully grasp the impact they're making on our students, our campuses and our communities.

I've seen students who thought college was not something they could afford or achieve, and our friends who have supported our campuses have made that possible. I would invite everyone to go to commencement because I think it is just extremely special to see the difference you've made in students' lives. ▾

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