

# Concordian

THE MAGAZINE OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN

## ALL IN

When it comes to athletics, history proves Concordia isn't afraid to put a new play in motion

# Concordian contents

SPRING/SUMMER 2019



12



10



18

## FEATURED STORIES

### **10 The independent scholar**

A gifted young alumnus passed on the Ivy League for Concordia's customizable programs and personalized approach.

### **12 Bench strength**

Thanks to a boom in new athletic programs, more students than ever have been able to come to Concordia and emerge as ready leaders for the Church and world.

### **18 From cold to light**

A Concordia alumnus' storied journey full of tragic loss and unimaginable sorrow leads him to ordination at the age of 72.

## IN EVERY ISSUE

**Social scene 4**

**On the bluff 6**

**Notable 20**

**Purposeful growth 26**

# Concordian

**CONCORDIAN** is the official magazine of Concordia University Wisconsin. It shares the stories of the exciting advancements on campus; the notable accomplishments of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni; and the life-changing service Concordians undertake for Christ in the Church and world. The biannual publication is sent to tens of thousands of alumni, parents, and stakeholders each fall and spring.

The Office of Strategy and University Affairs is responsible for production of the *Concordian*. The magazine's editorial team welcomes your feedback. Please send comments or queries to [Concordian@cuw.edu](mailto:Concordian@cuw.edu).

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For a free subscription, call 262-243-4333. All current faculty, staff, and students are invited to pick up their magazine copy on campus.

**Go green!** If you would like to subscribe to our email edition instead of receiving a copy in the mail, please email [Concordian@cuw.edu](mailto:Concordian@cuw.edu).

## ON THE COVER:

**Micaela Brunnuell ('21)** is a midfielder on the Concordia women's soccer team.



The 2019 Concordia Invitational Tournament brought together students from both the Mequon and Ann Arbor campuses.  
Photo by Ashley Kilgas

This summer marks the sixth anniversary of the merger of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA). The blessings of this outstanding collaboration are abundant and evident across our institution. While each campus maintains its own distinct personality, Concordia's remarkable faculty, staff, and more than 7,300 students walk together in mission as we "live uncommon" lives for the good of Christ's Gospel in the Church and throughout the world.

Today, across two residential campuses, online, and at nine extension campuses, Concordia University's six schools of study offer 87 undergraduate majors and programs, 33 graduate/master's degrees and programs, five doctoral/professional programs, and six associate degrees. Our graduates go forth well prepared in mind, body, and spirit to lead lives of service and impact in an array of vocations. This issue of the *Concordian* connects you to some of their stories.

In the "On the bluff" section, read about one of our dedicated board leaders who has faithfully served our institution for nine years, providing remarkable leadership through some of our boldest moves, including the launch of our School of Pharmacy and the decision to merge with Ann Arbor.

Our cover story, "Bench strength," details Concordia's historic and uncommon approach to developing student-athletes both in and out of the game. Highlighted in the article are three remarkable students, and many dedicated coaches and leaders who help define what it means to be a Falcon.

Throughout this issue, we lift students, faculty, and alumni who use their gifts to serve Christ for the betterment not only of self but of society, as well. It is my great privilege to work alongside these men and women each and every day at Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor.

To God be the Glory,

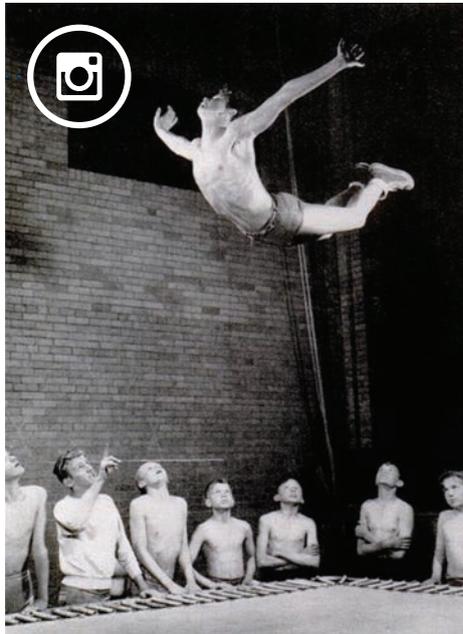
**REV. PATRICK T. FERRY, PHD**  
President



# social scene

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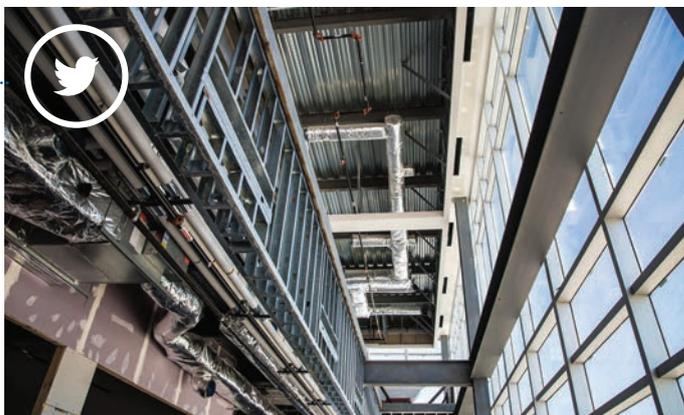
### SPRING INTO ACTION

Did you know that in 1941 Concordia was featured in *LIFE* magazine? Get the details about this story on page 15, and check out more **#FalconFlashback** on Facebook and Instagram.

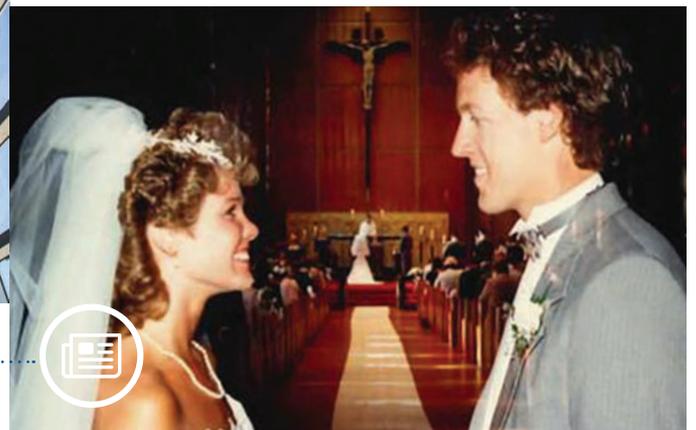


### A SNEAK PEEK

An inside look at the progress on The Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center. The building will be ready for classes by the fall 2019 semester.



**A SLAMMIN' GOOD TIME** Words can hurt, but CUW encouraged words of healing with a semester-long anti-bullying initiative geared toward Milwaukee-area grade schools. The effort included school visits and a Story Slam on campus in April. Read the full story at [blog.cuw.edu/story-slam](http://blog.cuw.edu/story-slam).



**COUPLED UP** Many emerge from Concordia with not only a degree but a spouse, as well. Read about how a few of our alumni met at [blog.cuw.edu/meet-cutes](http://blog.cuw.edu/meet-cutes). Stay tuned for details on an inaugural CUW Couples Celebration to be held in summer 2020.

### A WEEK OF WISCONSIN WEATHER

What a difference a week can make, especially in Wisconsin! November 2, 2018 vs. November 9, 2018.



**This is to those who champion Concordia through social media.**

Every tweet, every post, every “like,” every comment, and every share—we notice you, and we appreciate you!



**ALL-STAR “LIKER”**

**SYLWESTER PARTYKA**

Sylwester has caught our eye by giving every one of CUW’s posts a “like.” He says, “I’m a Lutheran from Poland, and I just support LCMS and the whole Concordia University System.” Thanks for the support, Sylwester!

### #LiveUncommon

At Concordia University Wisconsin, it’s our mission to help you stand apart from the crowd and Live Uncommon. Watch the video at [facebook.com/CUWisconsin](https://facebook.com/CUWisconsin).



### GENERATIONS CONNECTED

Everyone knows that social media is a great way to stay connected. At Concordia, we embrace an audience of all ages and find joy in bringing generations together in one place. Here’s a taste of who follows our Facebook page based on age!

AGE/PERCENTAGE OF FOLLOWERS

13–24	<b>21%</b>
25–34	<b>28%</b>
35–44	<b>20%</b>
45–54	<b>20%</b>
55–64	<b>7%</b>
65+	<b>4%</b>

## The latest in new programs

Concordia University continues to grow and respond to the needs of learners in the 21st century. Within the past academic year, the university has taken steps to launch several academic offerings for all levels of learners.

Classes for some of the programs listed below are already underway, while others are scheduled to start as late as fall 2019. All are currently accepting applicants.

- Accelerated Bachelor of Arts in construction and trade management**  
Offered at Appleton, Kenosha, and Madison centers
- Bachelor of Arts in photography**  
(Revised undergraduate program)  
Offered at Concordia University Wisconsin
- Bachelor of Science in strategic human resource leadership**  
Offered at Concordia University Wisconsin
- Doctorate of Education in Leadership in innovation and continuous improvement**  
Offered online with two residency requirements
- Master of Science in child life**  
Offered at Concordia University Ann Arbor
- Master of Science in speech-language pathology**  
Offered at Concordia University Wisconsin
- Professional Master's in Business Administration**  
Offered online or at Concordia University Ann Arbor
- Visually impaired teaching license concentration for the Master of Science in special education**  
Offered online with summer residency requirement

Learn more about the latest in new programs at Concordia by visiting [blog.cuw.edu/2019-new-programs](http://blog.cuw.edu/2019-new-programs).



Concordia Chair of Pharmacy Practice  
Andrew Traynor, PharmD, BCPS

## Pharmacy collaboration spurs better health outcomes

By **Kali Thiel**, *Strategic Communications*

For the past two years, Andrew Traynor, PharmD, BCPS, has been on a mission to create a happier and healthier Wisconsin.

Spurred by the knowledge that illness and death that result from non-optimized medication therapy costs the nation an estimated \$528.4 billion annually, the chair of pharmacy practice for Concordia's School of Pharmacy knew that if he could bring Wisconsin's health care community together they could work to create better patient outcomes at a lower cost.

The result: the Concordia Medication Management Accelerator (CMMA), an 18-month collaborative that offered participants business development and implementation coaching. Nearly a dozen teams participated in CMMA, which concluded November 2018.

Four teams—three of them from CMMA—have continued on in their quest to improve patient outcomes. Concordia is sponsoring the teams as they participate in a national learning and action collaborative called A3. The yearlong A3 experience aims to help health care providers succeed in the era of value-based payment programs by offering coaching and encouraging action.

Daniel Wilk ('17), PharmD, a clinical pharmacotherapist at Monroe Clinic, was

among the individuals who participated in CMMA, and now Monroe Clinic is choosing to stay on with A3.

"The whole format and structure of both programs lend themselves to collaboration among the organizations involved," said Wilk. "It virtually becomes like a huge think tank."

Monroe's success story involves a program where pharmacists collaboratively manage conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol. As a result, within the first year Monroe Clinic was able to reduce the time it took patients to get in to see their physicians from four to six weeks to one to two weeks.

"Having a pharmacist integrated into the care team has changed how we practice at Monroe Clinic," Wilk said, "and our patients are the true beneficiaries through better health outcomes."

Traynor said it has been rewarding to nurture professionals, like Wilk, for the benefit of Wisconsin residents' health.

"I'm so proud of the work of all our teams," Traynor said. "Convening initiatives like this not only fulfills our mission to develop pharmacists dedicated to providing value-based, patient-centered care that improves the health of our communities, it helps to fulfill our promise to our students, graduates, and partners to be a contributor to their efforts long-term."

Learn more about Concordia's School of Pharmacy at [cuw.edu/pharmacy](http://cuw.edu/pharmacy).



**\$528.4 billion**

SPENT ANNUALLY IN THE U.S. DUE TO ILLNESS AND DEATH FROM NON-OPTIMIZED MEDICATION THERAPY

# Retired Concordia board member honored for lifetime of leadership

By Lisa Liljegren, *Strategic Communications*

The secret to a meaningful life, according to Bob Schjerven, is to be still and to trust in the Lord. Coming from a man who has relocated his family 10 times for advancing career opportunities, that may seem like counterintuitive advice, but for the retired CEO of Lennox International and his wife, Anita, of over 50 years, being still and open has led the Schjervens on a remarkable and gratifying life journey.

In recognition of his guiding leadership at Concordia University Wisconsin and his significant contribution to Lutheran higher education, CUW recently honored Schjerven with the *Christo et Ecclesiae* Award, the university's highest honor, which is awarded by the president of the university during commencement. The award recognizes the lifetime generosity of a member of the Board of Regents or the Foundation Board. The latter also recognized his leadership with a lifetime designation of *Director Primarius*.

Schjerven served on CUW's Foundation Board and the Board of Regents for nine years in multiple roles, including chairperson. Several of the university's boldest moves happened during his tenure, including the creation of the School of Pharmacy; the acquisition of Concordia University Ann Arbor; the acquisition of the North Building in Ann Arbor; and the decision to move forward with The Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center, which is scheduled to open in August.

In the midst of big university changes, Schjerven was known for being particularly steady and deliberately decisive. As with all big decisions, he allowed himself time to listen to where the Lord was guiding him, a practice instilled from a young age.

Schjerven was born in 1943 in Chicago. His father was a machinist, and his mother made their small one-bedroom apartment

a solid home for him and his older brother. Despite their modest upbringing, Schjerven's description of his childhood is abundant: "We had each other; the love of the Lord; and strong values, which made for an extremely positive family life."

Hard work was valued in their household. Young Schjerven was expected to get good grades in school and to always exceed to the best of his abilities. Like his father, Schjerven had a proclivity toward math and studied mechanical engineering at Purdue University. As a student in a work-study program, Schjerven learned about the role that people play in making any kind of enterprise effective. This understanding would guide him as a leader throughout his entire career.

His first job, upon graduation, was at a manufacturing company in La Crosse, Wisconsin. That job launched his career path in heating and cooling and, more importantly, led him to his future bride, who lived just miles away from the corporate headquarters.

The couple and their two children would relocate many times before settling in Texas, where Schjerven could be near his work home at Lennox International, the international provider of climate control products for heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration markets. Schjerven retired as CEO of Lennox in 2007.

While the Schjervens were a family on the move, their commitment to each other, their involvement with the Church, and their love of the Lord kept them grounded wherever they called home. The couple is now members of Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Flower Mound, Texas. In addition, Bob was chairman of Vision 2010 and has served as a member of the National Cabinet's For the

Sake of the Church campaign. Through that position he was introduced to the Concordia University System and became heavily involved in both Concordia University Texas and CUW.

"There's something so different about Concordia students," Schjerven explains. "Once we met them and witnessed their focus on the Christian worldview, love for Christ, and seriousness about preparing themselves as Christian leaders for a world desperately in need of Christian leadership, we were compelled to do whatever we could to support that mission and vision."

Schjerven notes fondly that students from both the CUW and CUAA campuses share a sincerity and passion for serving a greater mission than their own self-interests. He has little doubt that they will go out and make the world a better place. His prayer for students is that they remember to take the time to be still and listen. In his experience, with the Lord by one's side life can be a truly remarkable ride.

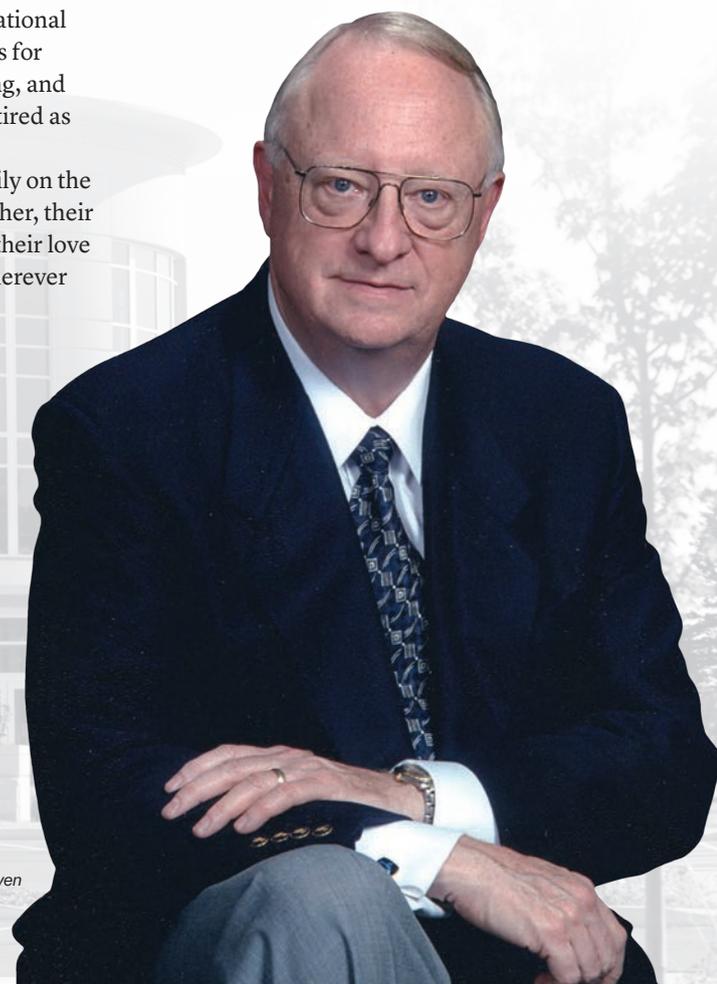


Photo courtesy of Bob Schjerven

# Primetime for online

By **Lisa Liljegren**, *Strategic Communications*

Whether online or in person, Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor provide a rich educational experience that is rooted in faith and transformative in practice. Busy online students from all over the world are fitting school work into their routines and at a pace that suits their lifestyle. Here's a peek into the lives of a few online students "caught in the act" of studying.

**William W. Wemegah**

SPRINGFIELD, MA  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



**Jane Goff**

PLYMOUTH, MI  
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION



**Bethel Ubochi**

ROSEBURG, OR  
ADULT GERONTOLOGY NURSE PRACTITIONER



**Kathie Pereira**

YPSILANTI, MI  
NURSE EDUCATOR



**Jennifer Ellis**

SUSSEX, WI  
LITERACY



**John Holeton**

SIoux FALLS, SD  
THEOLOGICAL STUDIES



## Concordia online by the numbers:

**1,208**

TOTAL ENROLLED STUDENTS

**60+**

PROGRAMS, CERTIFICATES, AND CONCENTRATIONS

**#1**

LARGEST MBA PROGRAM IN WISCONSIN

**41**

STATES REPRESENTED



## Rain or shine rider

For beloved theology professor, nothing beats the open road

By **Kali Thiel**, *Strategic Communications*

Christmas came early for Dan Paavola on Nov. 27, 1970, when his father took a break from the endless work on the family's 200-acre dairy farm in Minnesota and drove the young Paavola into town to buy an early gift: his first motorcycle, a Yamaha 305.

Paavola was still two years shy of the legal driving age at the time, but he'd already had years of experience with his father's farming equipment. Paavola was only 7 when he first began to operate tractors, and by age 9 he had graduated to trucks.

Even though the elder Paavola never rode motorcycles recreationally himself, he served as an Army mechanic during World War II. A man of few words, Edwin Paavola showed his love to his son through their mutual love of machinery.

As soon as the pair returned home, young Paavola fired up his Christmas present, and from then on he was hooked.

That was week one, and rarely a week has gone by without a ride. In fact, Paavola can guarantee that for the past 23 years not a seven-day stretch has escaped him without at least one ride (and oftentimes many more). The Concordia University Wisconsin

theology chair began to keep logs when he joined the university's faculty in 1996 and knows down to the detail the temperature, distance, and weather conditions of his most interesting rides.

Thus far, his record low temperature on a ride to work was 0 F, which he notched on Feb. 19, 2019. He rode his 2013 Yamaha Super Ténéré that day, one of three bikes currently in his possession and among the 12 he's owned over his lifetime.

Paavola says his rides are largely to credit for his trademark sunny disposition. No matter the chill in the weather, once he's on a bike his troubles inevitably melt away.

"I tell my students, 'You want me to ride. I'm a happier person when I ride,'" Paavola says with a grin. "If you have some issues or stress, a 60-mile round-trip commute to work will take it right out of you."

Weather permitting (his only deterrent typically is snow), Paavola will ride seven days a week, either from his home in Cedar Grove to Concordia's Mequon campus or on his weekend travels to guest-preach at churches throughout Wisconsin. Each summer, he's also certain to book two one-day trips to northern Wisconsin, and he tries



Rev. Dr. Daniel Paavola on Feb. 19, 2019, when he set a personal record (0 F) for the coldest commute to work.

## RIDING *Tenure*

**49 years**

## *Longest*

UNINTERRUPTED  
ROAD TRIP

**1,109 miles**

completed in 16 hours, 45 minutes

## *Coldest*

COMMUTE TO WORK

**0°<sub>F</sub>**

Feb. 19, 2019

to include at least one out-of-state excursion a year. Last summer, he rode the 1,109 miles home from Denver in one day. He left at 3 a.m. and made it home in 16 hours and 45 minutes, stopping only for restroom breaks.

In all his years of riding, Paavola has never had a wreck that caused serious injury. The closest he came was on Aug. 13, 2014, when he hit a cement block on I-43 going 70 miles per hour. The car in front of him was able to straddle the block, but by the time it came into Paavola's vision the collision was unavoidable. Paavola and his Super Ténéré launched into the air. When they landed, hard, on the road, the impact completely obliterated the air from his front tire and mangled the rim, but Paavola managed to keep the bike upright and ride it to a wobbly stop.

"It took four weeks to repair, which is why you always have to have two motorcycles—or three in my case," Paavola says. "If one goes down, you can't possibly stop riding."

As if his driving skills weren't impressive enough, Paavola has mastered the art of multitasking while on the road. The much-loved Concordia professor and noted LCMS theologian knows Scriptures so well that he's able to draft his weekly sermons in his head while he rides. He also uses his travel time to mentally rehearse his homilies.

Paavola prefers to ride solo; although occasionally his wife, Holly—whom he praises for selflessly supporting his hobby—will ride with him on the back of his 2016 Yamaha

NUMBER OF

## *Bike Miles*

LOGGED IN A YEAR

**19,000–20,000**

NUMBER OF

## *Bikes*

OWNED THROUGHOUT  
LIFETIME

**12**

FJR1300ES. A mutual love of riding, however, is something Paavola eagerly shares with others. He even uses it as an icebreaker on the first day of classes.

"I'll draw a circle on the board and list a handful of my interests on it, and then ask students to identify where they connect with me on the circle," Paavola explains. "'Dogs' is always the No. 1 commonality, by the way, but then 'motorcycles' usually rolls in as second."

## Upcoming events

For more events and full information, visit [cuw.edu/events](http://cuw.edu/events).

### April

- 27—School of Pharmacy Visit Day
- 26–28—Concordia Players Production of "Steel Magnolias"
- 28—Chapel Ringers and Civic Chorale Concert

### May

- 02—Alumni Networking and Welcoming New Graduates at SafeHouse/Newsroom Pub
- 04—Saturday at Concordia Visit Day
- 04—Selah and Chapel Choir Concert
- 05—Alleluia Ringers Concert
- 17—Graduate Commencement
- 17–18—Class of 1969 50th Reunion
- 18—Baccalaureate and Undergraduate Commencement

### June

- 10, 14, 21, 28—Undergraduate Orientation Day
- 28–29—Pharmacy Genesis Class' Five-Year Reunion

### July

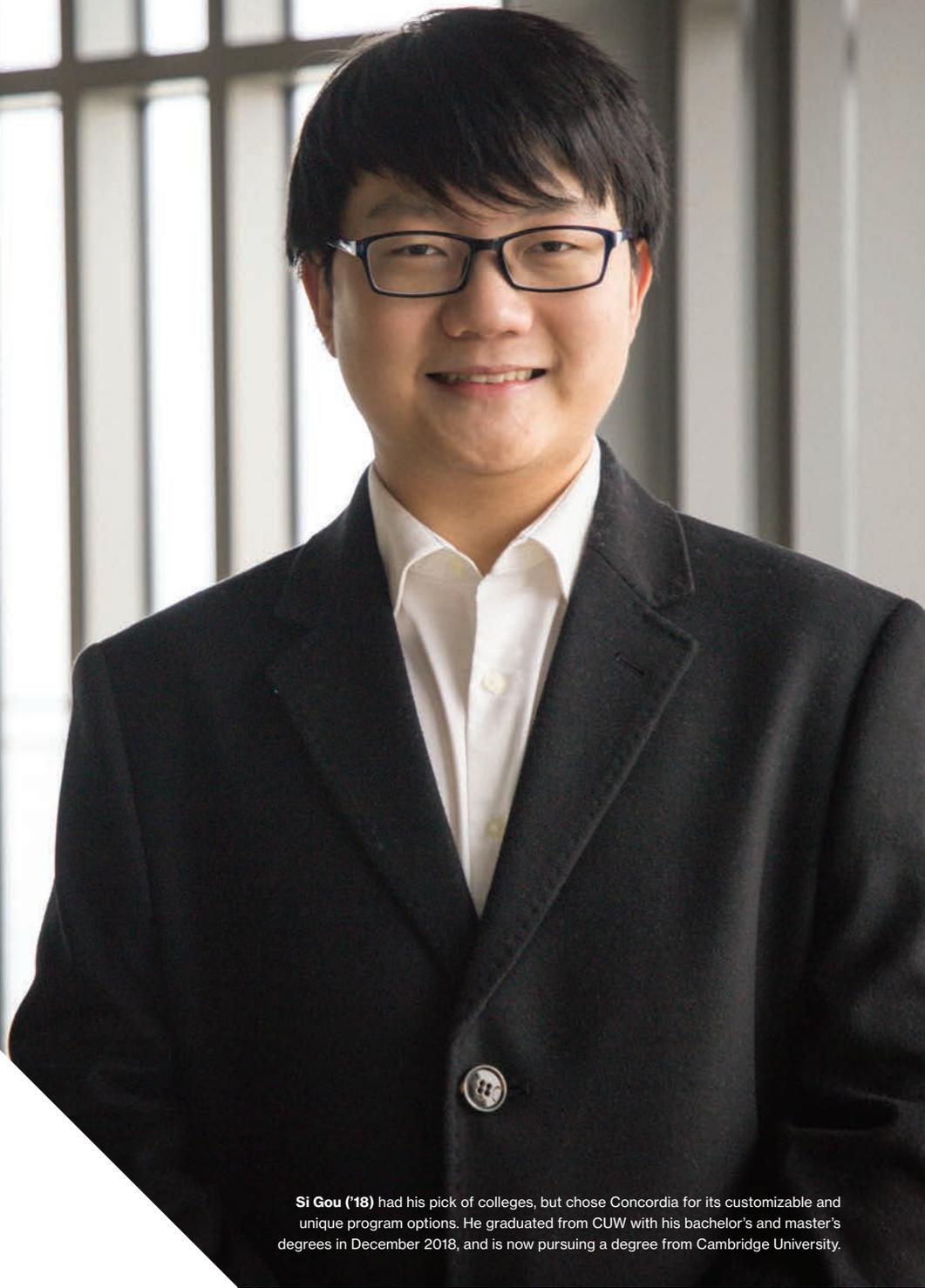
- 08–13—Taste of Concordia/Wisconsin Private College Week
- 14—LCMS National Youth Gathering Alumni and Friends Reception
- 19—Alumni Outing at Madison Mallards Baseball Game
- 23—LCMS National Convention and Tampa All-Concordia Alumni and Friends Reception
- 25—Alumni and Friends Reunion at the Whitecaps Baseball Game

### August

- 01—The Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center Dedication
- 09—Undergraduate Orientation Day
- 22–25—Fall Welcome Weekend
- 25—Opening Service
- 26—First Day of Traditional Classes

### September

- 16—President's Golf Classic at West Bend Country Club



**Si Gou ('18)** had his pick of colleges, but chose Concordia for its customizable and unique program options. He graduated from CUW with his bachelor's and master's degrees in December 2018, and is now pursuing a degree from Cambridge University.

# THE INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

CONCORDIA'S INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES PATHWAY  
PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO  
CUSTOMIZE THEIR OWN MAJORS

By **Lisa Liljegren**, *Strategic Communications*

**C**oncordia University Wisconsin alumnus Si Gou ('18) is an anomaly. At the age of 18, with just one collegiate year under his belt, he became one of only a handful of students in the U.S. to pass his first actuary exam on the first try. The pass rate for the first actuarial exam is 40 percent, and the statistical odds of someone passing it at such a young age only increase from there. Gou went on to graduate from Concordia in just 2.5 years and was one of the rare individuals to take advantage of a unique Concordia offering that allows students to design their own degrees.

As Gou prepares for his next academic feat—a graduate degree in philosophy at Cambridge University—he reflects on how CUW was the perfect school to help him pursue his true calling.

“Concordia was great for me,” says Gou. “There’s a misperception out there that students with high GPAs and test scores should only look at big state or Ivy League schools. But at Concordia, I got to work directly with professors, not teaching assistants, and they actually cared about me and my goals.”

"I LOOK FORWARD TO GIVING BACK TO CONCORDIA  
SOMEDAY AND TO HELPING STUDENTS LIKE ME CARVE  
THEIR OWN PATH IN THE WORLD."

### —Si Gou ('18)

Gou has always operated on an accelerated personal plan. As a high school student, Gou, who is bilingual in Mandarin and Chinese, earned college credits by enrolling in the dual credit program through CUW. He also passed several advanced placement exams, which enabled him to bypass the typical freshman course load.

Gou could have gone anywhere, but he chose Concordia because of the unique programs and opportunities that the small school offered for serious students like him.

One of those programs is the business scholars program, a one-of-a-kind offering in the Batterman School of Business that allows high-achieving students an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree and an MBA at the same time for the same cost in just four years.

Gou was accepted as a business scholar and initially started out as an actuarial science major. While he was certainly equipped for the rigorous academic program, Gou had plans for the gifted student beyond mathematics.

Yet again, Concordia proved to be the perfect fit for Gou. The university's interdisciplinary studies major allowed Gou to customize his academic experience to better fit his passions. Concordia's interdisciplinary studies major

or minor combines two or more academic disciplines, often from two different schools, into one degree.

Students who wish to pursue interdisciplinary studies must be prepared to take on extra work to make it a viable program. The first step is to write a plan that includes the desired courses and the reasons for paving a different path. Then, they must recruit a professor who is willing to advise them throughout their student career. Once these things are in place, they submit a proposal to the deans of the schools and the university provost for approval.

Inspired by Concordia's mission to serve, Gou wanted to use what he was learning as an actuarial major to make the world a better place. He worked with his professors to create an interdisciplinary study in social sciences with an emphasis on mathematics and economics. With this individualized study program, Gou could transfer the quantitative and analytic skills that he learned through actuarial studies and apply them to help solve urgent world problems.

He was paired with Dr. Joseph Jacobsen, a CUW economics professor who specializes in nonlinear dynamics.

"It's really admirable that Si Gou cares about issues like world hunger and social justice," Jacobsen says. "He wants to use his intellect and learning to help solve the world's problems."

Jacobsen and Gou both presented at an international conference, Sustainability Summit, last year and contributed to each other's research and publications.

Gou credits Jacobsen for helping him reach his full potential. Gou, who was here on scholarship, is also grateful for the alumni and Concordia community for supporting students like him.

"I look forward to giving back to Concordia someday and to helping students like me carve their own path in the world," says Gou.

Jacobsen says Gou has helped set a new standard for his peers at Concordia—one that the university is ready and eager to help even more students meet.

"Si Gou is an anomaly not just at Concordia but at any university," Jacobsen says. "He has incredible choices in front of him. Thanks to him, I can push other students a little harder because they now have an example of what hard work and dedication can bring."



LEARN MORE ABOUT CONCORDIA'S BUSINESS SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT [CUW.EDU/BUSINESS-SCHOLARS](https://www.cuw.edu/business-scholars), AND TALK TO YOUR ADMISSIONS OR ACADEMIC COUNSELOR TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES.



Si Gou and Dr. Joseph Jacobsen contributed to each other's research and publications during Gou's time at Concordia.

# BENCH STRENGTH

When it comes to athletics, Concordia's bench strength runs deep and not just in the physical fortitude that CUW athletes display. Dedicated coaches and staff put in the time to see that players walk away from their Concordia experience intellectually adept, physically sound, and strong in Christian character. Thanks to a pattern of ahead-of-the-game athletic programs launched within the past 12 years, **more students than ever have been able to come to CUW and emerge as ready leaders for the Church and world.** It's one of the many perks of Concordia's stacked athletic repertoire.

By Kali Thiel, *Strategic Communications*

Photography by BVK and Andrea Adams, *Strategic Communications*



**Phillip Johnson ('21)** is a defensive lineman on the football team who's majoring in sport and entertainment business. He's one of the many "uncommon" student-athletes cultivated at Concordia.



Senior **Irene Bolis** competes on CUW's track and field team. She holds the school record in the 55-meter hurdles with a time of 9.23.

**A**t age 7, Andrew Gordon watched his first professional hockey game, and the young Maryland native was mesmerized. The sport's fast pace combined with the skill and technique of its athletes immediately had Gordon hooked.

He went home that day and begged to take lessons, but his parents, worried about the expense they'd incur for a passing phase, said no. Gordon persisted, and four years later he wore his parents down. In borrowed skates and hand-me-down pads, Gordon made his hockey debut at the age of 13, about eight years later than most athletes typically begin.

Due to his delayed start, hockey wasn't initially on Gordon's radar when he began his college search. Instead, he was drawn to Concordia for its pre-seminary major and was then thrilled to learn from his admissions counselor that Concordia offered not only an NCAA Division III hockey team but an American Club Hockey Association D-II team on par with his talents.

For a future LCMS pastor with a love of hockey, Concordia was the perfect fit. Along with its Ann Arbor campus, CUW is the only school in the Concordia University System to offer hockey programs.

It's one of the many perks of attending a mid-sized Lutheran university that offers a stacked athletic repertoire. With 32 athletic programs, Concordia boasts more organized sports than some people even knew existed. The university's broad selection of athletic offerings, when paired with the close-knit community afforded by Concordia's size and Christian atmosphere, is a combination few other universities throughout the nation can claim.

For that reason, there are hundreds of Concordians with variations of Gordon's story—students who have traveled from near and far for the chance to pursue a rigorous academic experience, participate in an oftentimes niche athletic program, and grow in Christian character and faith during their time on campus.

## BUILDING A WINNING CULTURE

Concordia has added 11 programs to its roster since the arrival of Athletic Director Dr. Robert Barnhill in 2001. Within that time, the university's student-athlete count has doubled, thanks in part to the new additions. When Barnhill first began, Concordia claimed about 300 student-athletes compared to the more than 600 traditional undergraduate students who learn, compete, and grow in Christian faith at Concordia University today.

"When I came to Concordia, I took it as my charge to develop new programs that would bring more students to a campus where they could simultaneously learn, grow in their faith, and compete at a high level," says Barnhill. "We have a unique opportunity to live out our mission at Concordia through athletics, and we are purposeful and proud of what we stand for."

This purposeful approach involves hiring coaches who are the right mission fit for Concordia, as well as ensuring that student-athletes have ample opportunities to hear God's Word, especially within the context of their sport. In his role as director of faith integration for athletics, CUW Hall of Fame inductee Dr. Jim Juergensen, Jr. ('93, '95) works as part of Concordia's Campus Ministry team and reaches students through pre-game devotions and prayers. He also organizes student leaders for the weekly Conditioning Our Run Eternally (C.O.R.E.) Bible study that's geared toward athletes, and he keeps an open door for those organic moments when athletes might need a discerning ear.

"A lot of my role entails getting out there and making connections and planting the seeds," Juergensen says. "Whether it's through chapel, devotions, prayers, or Bible study, my goal is to make sure our athletes at Concordia are hearing that Gospel message consistently and are being exposed to the Word."

# AHEAD OF THE GAME

The spirit of athletic excellence and innovation runs strong at Concordia. Here are a few of the times within the past decade alone that CUW has set the pace among peer institutions.



## MEN'S AND WOMEN'S LACROSSE

**Start year:** 2011

**Claim to fame:** Among the first collegiate teams in Wisconsin.



## FIELD HOCKEY

**Start year:** 2016

**Claim to fame:** Furthest state west to have a DIII collegiate-level team.



## MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SHOOTING

**Start year:** 2017-18

**Claim to fame:** Only NCAA DIII school with a team.



## ACROBATICS AND TUMBLING

**Start year:** 2015

**Claim to fame:** Only team in Wisconsin and currently one of only 27 nationwide. Of those 27, Concordia is one of two at the NCAA DIII level.



## WOMEN'S TRIATHLON

**Start year:** 2016

**Claim to fame:** First in Wisconsin and among the first in the nation.

Fox6 News recently featured Concordia's triathlon and acrobatics and tumbling teams. Find links to the segments at [blog.cuw.edu/bench-strength](http://blog.cuw.edu/bench-strength).

## ON BARNHILL'S WISH LIST



CURLING



ROLLER HOCKEY

# INNOVATION FROM THE START

This holistic approach to athletics has persisted throughout the university's existence. Concordia's inaugural athletic director, William C. Ackmann, set the standard for what the caliber, character, and conduct of a Concordia athlete should be.

The namesake of Concordia's Athletic Hall of Fame served as athletic director from 1928 to 1955 and then dean of students until 1977. He came to Concordia on a gentleman's agreement and without a stipulated salary—just room and board, and a job. Ackmann's trust in Concordia's mission and his passion for leveraging athletics as a means to cultivate the whole person was immediately evident. A 1948 yearbook articulated Ackmann's philosophy well: "According to Bill, his job is to build men not only physically, but primarily mentally. All recognize in him the spirit he strives to instill in others—a dedication and zeal for physical fitness, coupled with a strong desire to build Christian sportsmen and future servants of God."

Like Barnhill, Concordia's pioneer athletic director saw the value in offering a range of opportunities for students. It took Ackmann only a few weeks on campus to set up a long-range plan to develop and improve programs and facilities at Concordia for the benefit of all students. He's well-known, for example, for championing the construction of a state-of-the-art swimming pool on the Milwaukee campus in the mid-1950s because he believed so firmly in the value it would bring to all varieties of Concordians.

Ackmann's spirit of innovation and industriousness also famously prompted him to purchase a trampoline when the apparatus was still a virtual unknown. The modern-day trampoline is said to have been



This image, shot by renowned photographer Frank Scherschel, ran in the June 30, 1941 issue of LIFE magazine. In it, Victor Mennicke floats through the air above the trampoline as his Concordia College schoolmates look on with critical eyes for form. Photo used with permission from Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

FIND A LINK TO THE FULL JUNE 30, 1941 LIFE MAGAZINE ISSUE AT [BLOG.CUW.EDU/BENCH-STRENGTH](http://BLOG.CUW.EDU/BENCH-STRENGTH).



# UNCOMMON ATHLETES

At Concordia, being a Falcon is about developing as an individual, both in and out of the game, and countless CUW athletes are a testament to that fact. Here are just a few of Concordia's "uncommon" athletes.



## SHE'S GOT SKILLS

Jordan Ireland could have competed at a DI school. The acrobatics and tumbling coaches at Baylor University pursued her hard her junior year of high school, and she might have gone there if not for her visit to Concordia.

The Colorado native hadn't even heard of Concordia until her mom, in pursuit of the best opportunity for her daughter, sent out letters to every collegiate acro-tumbling team (there are only 27 nationwide).

"When I came to Concordia, I just felt really close with the team immediately," says Ireland. "I liked how small Concordia was, and I started to form relationships before I even officially started."

The chance to compete against DI schools while enjoying the close-knit feel of a DIII campus is something few other universities can offer. Last season, Concordia's acro team made it to nationals, and competed against Baylor and the University of Oregon. The team's competitive schedule annually takes athletes all over the United States.

For Ireland, who has been tumbling since she was 3 and who participated in cheerleading in high school, acro-tumbling has been the perfect fit.

"I considered doing gymnastics in college, but I liked the idea of being part of a sport that was still growing," Ireland says. "There's a team aspect to acro that's really special, too. To have my teammates there constantly supporting me for the past four years has been huge."

Read Ireland's full story at [blog.cuw.edu/acro-skills](http://blog.cuw.edu/acro-skills).



## HOME COURT ADVANTAGE

Emily Hafemann didn't decide on a college until a week before her high school graduation.

It wasn't that the Falcons women's basketball player—now a sophomore studying nursing at CUW—was lackadaisical about the decision. Rather, she spent months diligently poring over admissions materials to help her make up her mind.

All along, Emily says she felt pulled to Concordia but was hesitant to commit because both her mother, Sue (Duchow) Hafemann ('92, '08), and sister, Liz Hafemann ('17), played basketball for Concordia and graduated with their nursing degrees before her.

"I was determined at first to not just automatically follow in my mom's and sister's footsteps," Emily says. "But with every college I toured I always just compared it back to Concordia. Nothing else measured up."

As a result, the three Hafemann women have more than ever in common. If they're not talking game strategy, they're trading tips on hospital bedside manner—and always playing each others' biggest fans.

"It's special that we share this connection with our careers, basketball, and Concordia," says Sue. "I think what attracted me to Concordia is what ultimately attracted them. Having a Christian education, and quality programs and people around you, that's the stuff that will never go away."

Read the Hafemann ladies' full story at [blog.cuw.edu/home-court](http://blog.cuw.edu/home-court).

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CONCORDIA ATHLETE OR YOU WANT TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO ROOT ON THE HOME TEAM LEARN MORE AT [CUWFALCONS.COM](http://CUWFALCONS.COM).



## STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

Matt Olig has come a long way since his first weeks at Concordia.

The C UW senior and starting pitcher was recruited to C UW for baseball, but a necessary elbow surgery the summer before his freshman year meant he needed to sit out his entire first season. Olig knew this going in, but when he got onto the field for fall practices the situation started to take a toll.

“Going to practice every day and not being able to play started to drag me down,” Olig says. “I got into some trouble early on and realized I wasn’t where I wanted to be.”

That trouble involved a misguided decision involving alcohol less than a month into school. Olig says he hit a turning point thanks in part to two of his fellow student-athletes, Chris Kornowski ('18) and Kaitlyn Saugstad ('18), who extended Christian love to him and “took him under their wings.”

From then on, Olig’s faith blossomed through regular Bible study attendance, frequent heart-to-hearts with Director of Faith Integration for Athletics Dr. Jim Juergensen, and a solid friend group of fellow Christians.

Today, anyone who knows him will say he’s a model of faith.

“I don’t know that my story would have ended up the same at another school,” Olig says. “I’m just very grateful that I had the resources and people at Concordia to help me get from where I was to where I am today.”

Read Olig’s full story at [blog.cuw.edu/stepping-up](http://blog.cuw.edu/stepping-up).

invented in 1930 by George Nissen, but it wasn’t until 1942—at least a year after Ackmann introduced one to Concordians—that Nissen and his collegiate gymnastics coach formed a company to mass-market their product.

Thanks to Ackmann’s purchase, several Concordia students bounced their way into the June 30, 1941 issue of *LIFE* in the midst of the now-defunct magazine’s Golden Age. The spread, titled “Concordia College Boys Try Some New Exercises on a Circus Trampoline,” delivered an instructional approach for using the cutting-edge contraption and credited Ackmann for purchasing the equipment after seeing it in a circus act.

## ADVANCING THE PLAY

Concordia’s Field House no longer features a trampoline, and the ultramodern swimming pool was left behind with the old campus. Today in their place are four competition-grade athletic fields—including Kapco Park, a state-of-the-art \$3.4-million facility that’s shared by Concordia’s baseball team and the Lakeshore Chinooks—the 2,000-person capacity R. John Buuck Field House, six recently constructed tennis courts, a widely used fitness center, a cross country trail that boasts scenic views of Lake Michigan, and, the most recent addition, the 6,000-square-foot multipurpose Catalyst Sports Training Center. In addition to its on-campus facilities, the university partners with community groups to offer its triathlon, shooting, tennis, golf, and hockey players practice spaces within minutes of the campus.

It’s all part of the appeal for the 600-plus students who, like seminary-bound hockey enthusiast Andrew Gordon, have found their place as a student-athlete at Concordia.

## CUW ATHLETICS AT A GLANCE

Numbers are based on traditional undergraduate individual student-athlete counts from the 2017-18 academic year.

**32**

Number of varsity-level athletics

**623**

Total number of student-athletes

**31**

Number of states and countries represented

**25**

Percentage of students who are athletes

**247**

Number of scholar-athletes

**350+**

Average attendance at non-mandatory athlete chapels

**55**

Number of conference titles over the past decade

**1928**

Year first full-time athletic director was hired

**11**

Number of athletic programs added since 2007



## DID YOU KNOW? *Concordia operated as a combination high school and junior college from 1887–1974.*

These brothers in Christ remained with Chuck through his enduring struggles: alcoholism, divorce, a decades-long separation from his firstborn daughter, and the 2011 exhumation of Maria's body when the "oldest cold case in U.S. history" went to trial 55 years after it was opened.

The case resurfaced after a neighbor of the Ridulphs' implicated her son, John Tessier (who later changed his name to Jack McCullough). In September 2012, McCullough was tried and sentenced to life in prison. Three and a half years later, however, a judge overturned the conviction and McCullough went free.

When McCullough was granted a certificate of innocence in 2017, it cleared the way for him to seek compensation for the years he was imprisoned—which he did, to the tune of \$350,000 in a lawsuit against the city of Sycamore that was settled in November 2017. And the nightmarish saga continues to this day, with a federal lawsuit out against other agencies involved with the arrest. Just last summer, Chuck once again had to relive the ordeal of Maria's disappearance when he was called in for a federal deposition that lasted a grueling seven hours.

Beyond all human reason, however, Chuck's story isn't a story of despair. It's a story of hope and of the fortitude of friendships forged in Christian love.

"I didn't search out any of these stations in my life," Chuck said, "but through it all, I've seen how the Lord has not only walked with me through my struggles but picked me up and carried me above and beyond them."

### *The ties that bind*

In 1987, after decades of alcohol abuse and a near-fatal aneurysm burst, Chuck was warned by his doctor that if he continued his drinking he would die. Chuck chose sobriety and reached out to his Concordia classmates for support. Every year since he's joined the annual reunions of a group of about 14 men from the high school classes of 1963 and 1964. This year's reunion, or *koinonia*, as group member Jim Seegers likes to call it, will take place in September. (*Koinonia* is a Greek word, meaning communion with fellow Christians.)

Chuck's bond with his classmates extends far beyond once-a-year meetings. The friends have a habit of showing up, oftentimes without needing to be asked, for some of the more significant life events of their members—from weddings and milestone birthdays to hospital stays and funerals.

Chuck's Concordia schoolmates were there, for example, when Maria's body was reburied. His friend, Rev. Paul Koester, officiated the burial service. It was also Koester who at one point lent a compassionate ear as Chuck unburdened his soul with his inability to forgive Maria's killer.

And it was Koester, along with Jim Bauman, Jim Kroemer, Bill Wendland, Dennis Sampolinski, Mark Kretzmann, and Tom Simon, who made a surprise visit to Chuck's childhood church on Jan. 20, 2019, for yet another milestone of the group. Altogether, the seven Concordians traveled thousands of miles (one even braved a snowstorm) to be present when Chuck—long since transformed from his old self by the renewal of God's Word and grace—was ordained as a pastor at the age of 72. On Jan. 27, Chuck was installed as pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hampshire, Illinois—the first called minister in 20 years for the 136-year-old rural LCMS congregation.

### *Ministry out of suffering*

Chuck's road to the parish was preceded by years serving as a called deacon. Not long after he gave up alcohol in 1985, he learned about Concordia's lay ministry program and decided to pursue a degree. For two decades, he served as a lay minister at his hometown congregation of St. John Lutheran Church, and in 2000 he began to also serve as director of what eventually became Christian Senior Ministries, a registered service organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that serves those who reside in senior living facilities.

During his time working with the senior community, Chuck also preached at multiple churches with long-term pastor vacancies, including Trinity in Hampshire, Illinois. Following the 2016 LCMS National Convention, Chuck felt called to pursue the route to ordination.

"I figured, I'm still healthy and there is a real need. One of my classmates who attended my ordination joked that it only took me 65 years," Chuck said with a laugh.

Chuck has also ministered to countless people through the national coverage Maria's case has received over the years, including segments done by Dr. Phil, 48 Hours, and the Lifetime Movie Network. He's used his recognition as a platform to give encouragement to others who have faced loss.

In 2016, Chuck wrote a book titled *The Impact: Upon Secondary Victims*, which depicts moments from his life growing up, his recollection of Maria's disappearance, his struggles following her abduction, and his eventual return to his Christian roots. Woven throughout are prayers written by Chuck that rival the depths of woes, supplications, and praises recorded by the psalmists.

Even though his journey is storied, the overarching lesson of his book can be summed up into a few simple words.

"God's light shines in the darkness," Chuck said of the message of his book. "With Him, tragedy does not need to prevail."

In place of its lay ministry program, Concordia now offers a Director of Church Ministries program with specializations in parish teaching and more. Learn more at [blog.cuw.edu/dcm](http://blog.cuw.edu/dcm).



Chuck's Concordia High School classmates surprised him by showing up to his ordination. Back row from left, Jim Baumann, Jim Kroemer, Bill Wendland; front row from left, Dennis Sampolinski, Mark Kretzman, Chuck Ridulph, Tom Simon, Paul Koester. Photo courtesy of Chuck Ridulph

# take five

Get to know one of our “uncommon” Concordians.

**Stacey Brunner-Jones, head coach of the women’s basketball program**

By Lisa Liljegren, *Strategic Communications*

For a university with a strong athletics game, one could figure that the winningest coach in women’s basketball history and highest winning percentage in the department would have a bit of swagger. Stacey Brunner-Jones, women’s basketball head coach for 15 seasons, is a visible presence on the sidelines of every game, especially in her trademark two-inch heels. Her boss-ness doesn’t stop there. Brunner-Jones is as known off the court as on for her hard work, genuine personality, nurturing leadership style, and competitive spirit.

**1 How does it feel to have 284 wins under your belt—the most in program history?**

My most influential role model growing up besides my parents was my high school basketball coach. He taught me the value and rewards of hard work, and invested in me as a whole person. While winning is certainly important, I hope that my colleagues and players recognize me as a leader who puts in the work, and who takes the time to get to know the strengths and uniqueness of others.

**2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of coaching within NCAA Division III?**

The advantage is that every player here is a true student-athlete. They come to practice and play hard because they want to be here. They aren’t bound to the team because of a scholarship. The disadvantage is that because we’re DIII I only get to be with my players in-season.

I would love an opportunity to work with them year-round.

**3 Is there a sorority of Falcons basketball alumnae?**

I’m so glad you asked. Definitely. My relationships with former players are so important to me. They come to games, give me and our players support, keep our spirits high after a loss, and celebrate with us when we win. My players and I develop such strong bonds that even when they’ve moved on from Concordia I’m still often the first call they make, after family, of course, when they have big life announcements like getting a job, getting engaged, and having children.

**4 While you’ve certainly made winning a habit, how do you get your team through the inevitable slumps?**

Basketball is the longest sport because we play in both semesters, and have the holiday break and winterim in the middle. It’s crucial for us to create a strong family-like culture so that we can help each other through some of the difficult stretches. In a Christian community like Concordia it is quite natural for us to act like a family because we attend chapel together when we can and pray as a team for His continued guidance and protection. I’m so fortunate to receive the love and support I do from the players and the assistant coaches. I’m a mother of two young children, and could not get through the long days and unconventional schedule of being a head coach without all of their support.

**5 You’re well known for coaching in high heels. What’s the story?**

That’s funny! I love shoes, all kinds of shoes. When I wear heels I just feel taller, tougher, and more confident. When I’m on the sideline I apparently stomp my foot, and allegedly if you look closely on the field house floor you’ll notice thousands of tiny little dots from my stomping.



# alumni notes

**'10s** **Moira (Kilgas) Hasselbrook ('18)** married **Silas Hasselbrook ('18)** in 2018 at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Tabitha Schicker ('18)** plans to use her rehab degree from Concordia and a respiratory therapy degree she's currently working toward at Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) to work in cardiac rehab. ▼



**Allison (Demerath) Gensrick ('17)** and **Jason Gensrick ('14)** recently welcomed Everly into the world. Everly also has a grandma and grandpa who are alumni, and her great-grandma worked at CUW for 29 years. ▼



**Timothy Koehler ('17)** and **Jennifer (Schendel) Koehler ('16)** met freshman year at CUW in 2012. They were married on Sept. 22, 2018 at Hales Corners Lutheran Church. ▼



**Tracy (Marsh) Augustine ('17)** married **Joe Augustine ('14)** on Sept. 29, 2018. ▼



**Danika Tramburg ('17)** reigns as Miss Wisconsin USA 2019 and will represent the state at the upcoming Miss USA 2019. ▼



**Katie Wollum ('17)** was married on Sept. 23, 2017. They moved to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where she started her career as a pharmacist at an independent pharmacy. ▼



**Michael Bekx ('16)** is a vicar in Highland, Indiana, preparing for pastoral ministry.

**Chrysteena (Fay) Saehler ('16)** married Dan Saehler on Oct. 27, 2018 in Medford, Minnesota. ▼



**Nicholas Gonzales ('15)** married Lauren Strubbe on Dec. 29, 2018. They live in St. Louis, where Nicholas is in his 4th year at Concordia Seminary and are awaiting "Call Day." ▼



**Kelly (Wollmer) Papke ('15)** and **Erik Papke ('14)** were married on Aug. 11, 2018. ▼



**Justin Frisque ('13)** and **Brittany Frisque ('10, '15)** recently became the proud parents of a new baby boy, Noah William Frisque. ▼



**Zachary Neumann ('13)** and **Amber (Barrett) Neumann ('12, '15)** welcomed son Lincoln Fredrick on Oct. 28, 2018. He joins big sister, Adaline, who was 1 when he was born. ▼



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Batter up!

Join Concordia for a fun-filled night of baseball. Catch the Lakeshore Chinooks at CUW and enjoy special alumni ticketing on these dates:

- June 29**—School of Pharmacy
- July 11**—Nursing/Health Professions
- July 23**—Batterman School of Business
- July 26**—School of Education
- July 31**—School of Arts & Sciences

Reserve your tickets at [cuw.edu/alumnichinooks](http://cuw.edu/alumnichinooks).

Alumni are also invited to a joint CUW/ CUAA alumni baseball night in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The West Michigan Whitecaps will take on the Lansing Lugnuts at Fifth Third Ballpark on July 25.

Special ticket packages are available. Contact John Richert at [John.Richert@cuaa.edu](mailto:John.Richert@cuaa.edu) or 734-995-7374 to learn more.

### The CUW alumni advantage

When you stay connected with Concordia, you open yourself up to countless opportunities. Keep informed of your alumni benefits and news by taking a moment to update your preferred email address, current address, and phone number(s) at [cuw.edu/alumniupdates](http://cuw.edu/alumniupdates). You may also share additional milestones on this form and indicate if you want them posted on the alumni updates page.

### Let's keep in touch

Stay connected and be a resource to alumni, faculty, and students through **CUWConnect.com**. This private platform was designed especially for our alumni to connect with Concordians. Create or update your profile today to build professional connections, reach out to former classmates, or be a mentor. Our monthly alumni e-newsletter will also keep you informed of these opportunities and more.



# mission minded

For her excellence in teaching, **Sarah Crowder ('00)** received the Master Educator Award at CUW's December commencement in 2018.

By **Rachel Thoms**, *Strategic Communications*

**A**s a theology teacher at Faith Lutheran Middle School and High School in Las Vegas, Sarah (Porisch) Crowder desires for her freshmen students to experience the joy and peace that comes from knowing the Lord and reading His Word—even in the midst of tragedy and grief.

Crowder, a 2000 lay ministry graduate, has even designed her classroom to model the security that can be found in Christ. Strategic mood lighting and comfortable seating lets the students who enter know that they are in a safe space, and a large, backlit cross hung prominently on her classroom wall serves as a constant reminder of students' true source of peace.

Security became a commodity for the Faith Lutheran community on Oct. 1, 2017 when a gunman opened fire on a crowd of concertgoers on the Las Vegas Strip, killing 58 people and leaving 851 injured. Ten students from Faith were in attendance at the concert. Two sustained serious injuries but survived. The incident sent the Faith community reeling, recalled Crowder.

“What do you do to help students feel safe again when that sense of security has been ripped away from them? The best thing we can do when truly traumatic events like these happen in our lives is to turn to the Lord.”

So Crowder set to work to help remind students of their firm foundation in the midst of trouble. A couple of students, in particular, would call on Crowder when they were having a particularly difficult time.

Using her prep period for one-on-one time, Crowder was able to walk with these students, literally, in the midst of their grief, engaging in conversation, reconnecting them with their surroundings,

and providing a place of peace when the post-traumatic stress was otherwise overwhelming.

Crowder also rallied the community of believers from across the nation to share messages of support and hope with students. Crowder sent out appeals through social media and email to LCMS schools and organizations nationwide in the days after the tragedy, and asked fellow believers to consider recording a video message that would be played in chapel at Faith. Concordia University Ann Arbor and Wisconsin joined in the effort, along with several dozen others.

“It was amazing to witness the outpouring of support from our fellow Lutheran schools and communities near and far,” Crowder said. “It was a teachable moment to be there with the Faith community and share with them the power of the physical presence of the Body of Christ.”



**Lisa Kowal ('12)** was married on Oct. 21, 2017 at the Basilica of Saint Josaphat in downtown Milwaukee. She and her husband moved to Michigan, and they bought their first home in 2018. ▼



**Benjamin Schmidt ('12)** completed five years with the United States Air Force Reserve and recently enlisted for six years with the United States Air Force Air National Guard. His wife, **Rachel (Beethe) Schmidt ('07)**, started a new career as a medical social worker at Haven Healthcare in Ozark, Missouri. ▼



**Stacy (Burmeister) Ondov ('11)** was married on May 26, 2018 to Daniel Ondov, an alumnus of Concordia St. Paul. They met during Daniel's vicarage year at Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin. ▼



**AJ Amling ('10)** and **Christa (Meinzen) Amling ('09)** are in ministry at Immanuel Lutheran in Brookfield, Wisconsin. AJ is the assistant principal and Christa is a kindergarten teacher. They welcomed their third child, Hailey, in November 2018. Their other children are Natalie (4) and James (2). ▼



**Andrew Ryan ('10)** earned his Master's degree in student personnel and administration, and launched a YouTube channel, Drew's Corner, dedicated to "geek news and reviews." ▼



Assistant Professor of Theology Rev. Dr. Brian German (left) engages with **Rev. Dan Torkelson ('92)** during the inaugural Clergy on Campus event on Sept. 18, 2018. Pastors are invited to mark their calendars for the next Clergy on Campus event, which will be held Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2019. Learn more at [cuw.edu/clergy-on-campus](http://cuw.edu/clergy-on-campus).



Campus ministry staffer Darcy Paape (left) along with students, from left, Andrea Ledvina, Emily Gnan, and Bekah Moran attend the 2019 March for Life. Photo courtesy of Darcy Paape

"We are the pro-life generation." So reads a sign in my office received during one of the annual March for Life rallies in Washington, D.C., that I attended as a chaperone for Concordia. As a 56-year-old pastor, I smile at the irony; high school and college students are meant to carry the free signs.

Studies show that Millennials are more pro-life than a lot of their parents. Because these young people have grown up in a country that has within their lifetimes always allowed legal abortions, the topic is something many of them consider very thoughtfully. They ask good questions.

We've had the Students for Life group at Concordia since before I came here 17 years ago. The progression of leaders has been among the most faithful and passionate of our ministries. It's not the biggest or splashiest group on campus, but rather one with a message some don't want to hear or vehemently disagree with. For that reason, the group aspires to embody one of my favorite words in the way they carry out their ministry: winsome. I love the idea of trying to be so positive and patient that others can't help but be compelled by the love of the Gospel that stands up for life.

Our Students for Life group does more than go to the March each January on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. It's a group that's very active with a local ministry called A Place of Refuge, as well as the national organization Lutherans for Life. It's a group that's not naïve or Pollyannaish in looking at the harsh realities and complexity of the issue, but instead embodies dogged determination as we gently but firmly stand—or march—for life.

Being part of the March is something I think that everyone who sees life as a gift from God should experience. Many students who have attended have said that it is life changing. The first time I went—as a middle-aged pastor—I was deeply moved. Maybe it's something to put on your bucket list—since you're one who has been blessed with life and been given buckets full of blessing to overflowing from God.

What generation are you a part of? As one of God's children—one who has been known by Him since before you were born—you, too, are part of the pro-life generation.

**STEVE SMITH**  
Campus Pastor



Class of 2008 graduates, from left, Micah Rabe, James Saleska, and Gabe Kasper reunite for a Gathering planning meeting. Photo courtesy of James Saleska

By **Rachel Thoms**, *Strategic Communications*

Concordia University Wisconsin alumni Micah Rabe, James Saleska, and Gabe Kasper may be hard to spot this summer among the 25,000 youth who will flood the U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis for the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering, but the impact of their work will be impossible to miss.

The three have lead roles in the planning and implementation of key elements of the Gathering, from helping to create and deliver the morning Bible study messages to leading the video team and creating the designs that participants will see throughout the city.

Rabe, Saleska, and Kasper—all graduates from the class of 2008—were friends throughout college but didn't become roommates until their senior year.

"We wanted to live together so that we could get one of those sweet rooms at the end of Regents Hall, you know, the five-person suites," said Rabe. "I guess in college I didn't realize I was meeting people that I would later be working with on a professional level, or for an event as awesome and uplifting as the Gathering."

The trio describes its college-old comradery as eclectic and joyful, with dozens of stories to share about their time together at CUW.

Since graduation, the three friends split off toward various pursuits as they launched their careers, moved around, and started families. They dwell many miles away from each other instead of just a few steps, but the trio doesn't miss a beat when their paths do cross.

Now, a little more frequently—thanks to the Gathering. "I feel like true friends can reconnect like nothing

ever changed," said Saleska. "It's pretty awesome to work on such a meaningful event together, and it's a little surreal. I don't think any of us would have predicted it."

Rabe currently lives in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and is a media producer for Inspirmedia Productions. He studied multimedia and mass communications with a minor in marketing and has worked with the Gathering since 2007. His first gig in a leadership role, though, didn't come until 2016 when he took charge of the video team.

Saleska, a graphic design major and marketing minor, launched his own design company in 2013. In 2016, Saleska's design bid for the 2019 Gathering was selected by the LCMS Youth Ministry Office, which allowed him the opportunity to take the lead for all of the visual elements, including the identity mark "Real. Present. God." that has been widely spread in anticipation of this summer's event.

Kasper serves as a pastor at University Lutheran Chapel in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and will be taking the stage each morning as a session leader. Kasper has had a hand in the creation and direction of this year's Bible studies that will reach tens of thousands of students and their youth leaders at the Gathering.

"It's really cool to see God use the different ways he's gifted each one of us to serve him and advance his Word in the world," said Kasper. "Plus working with these guys just makes the work so much more fun."

Will we see you in Minneapolis this summer? Be sure to swing by the Concordia University booth on the interactive floor to say hello or register for our alumni event on July 14 at [cuua.edu/events](http://cuua.edu/events).

**Marissa (Purdoff) Strehlow ('10)** and **Chris Strehlow ('10)** welcomed their first son, Oliver, on Aug. 3, 2018. ▼



**'00s Colleen Feldhausen ('09)** went to Macau, China, to support her daughter and team competing in the MGM Lion Dance Championship—Macau International Invitational in November 2018. ▼



**Tina Fennig ('09)** was married in 2011 and purchased a home with her husband in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, in 2012. The couple had a baby boy, Noah, in September 2015 and a baby girl, Emma, in April 2018. ▼



**Tera Lewandowski ('09)** and her husband, James, welcomed a baby girl, Anna, on July 24, 2018. ▼



**Ben Rozewicz ('09)** recently graduated from an eight-week leadership development training for law enforcement professionals. He is a sergeant with the Washington County Sheriff's Office in West Bend, Wisconsin. ▼



**Jessica (Thompson) Mohr ('08)** married Tom Mohr on Oct. 1, 2016, and they welcomed their first child, Hannah, on July 11, 2018. ▼



**Steven Morrill ('08)** was married in June 2018 and recently earned his Master's degree in natural science from the University of Arizona. ▼



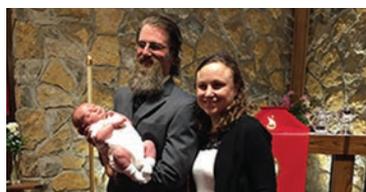
**Jaime (Strickert) Bacon ('07)** married Neil Christopher Robin Bacon on Oct. 6, 2018 in Janesville Wisconsin. They live in Tempe, Arizona. ▼



**Sheldon Cuffie ('08)** recently accepted the position of vice president and chief information security officer with Dell Technologies. **Celeste Cuffie ('06, '07, '12)** is the owner of Life Empowered Consulting Services and has served on the CUW Alumni Association Council from 2015-18. The couple will be relocating from Milwaukee to Austin, Texas. ▼



**Sharon (Mantheufel) Manley ('07)** and **Michael Manley ('05)** have been married for 12 years and had their first child, Michael "Whit" Manley III, on April 25, 2018. ▼



**Tina (Jones) Jacoby ('04, '18)** and Gary Jacoby welcomed their first child, Sophia June, in October 2018. Tina works as an administrative assistant at Concordia in the theology department, supporting both the director of church ministries program and the Concordia Bible Institute. ▼



**Jedidiah Maschke ('00)** was elected vice president of the Nevada Region of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District (LCMS) in May 2018.



Jacob "Jake" Fynn ('10) is the new COO of Wisconsin International University College-Ghana.

By Kali Thiel, *Strategic Communications*

Jacob Fynn values his Concordia education so much he's working to bring a piece of it to the Ghanaian institution where he works.

The recently promoted chief operating officer of Wisconsin International University College-Ghana (WIUC-G) graduated from Concordia in 2010 with his MBA. During a return trip to CUW in 2015, he was connected with Assistant Vice President of International Affairs Dr. David Birner and began to discuss options for the growing Ghanaian institution.

WIUC-G was on the cusp of starting a nursing program at the time, Fynn recalls. His hope was to simply gain insights into a model program. What resulted was something far more promising: a cross-continental connection that has paved the way for the development of curriculum and programs for WIUC-Gh and Concordia students alike.

The formation of this international "highway," as Concordia's Office of International Affairs calls it, complements a strategic effort of Concordia to expand the university's global reach and open up even more partnerships of this kind throughout the world.

To Fynn, who completed his undergraduate degree in Ghana, the partnership makes perfect sense.

"I received really good training from Ghana, and then I came to Concordia and received equally good training but in a different manner that opened my eyes to things I wouldn't have been able to experience in my home country," he says. "My diverse educational experiences have molded me perfectly for the position I have now, and I'm excited to one day offer the same to other students."

Read Jake's full story at [blog.cuw.edu/New-Heights-Jake-Fynn](http://blog.cuw.edu/New-Heights-Jake-Fynn).

**'90s** **John Marrs** ('97) released a recording titled "There Is Hope" on CD Baby, iTunes, and Spotify. The project is a collection of contemporary hymn arrangements and original songs from his time as a worship leader in Houston, Texas. ▼



**Keri Edwards** ('94) completed her dissertation, "Communication Between Home and School for Parents of Children with Chronic Illness," and received her doctorate in special education from Illinois State University in December 2018. She is the director of the Child Life Graduate Program at Illinois State University, where she has taught since 2008.

**Kaethe Grabenhofer** ('93) recently achieved National Board Certified Teachers status, and is an active member of the Greater Milwaukee Orff Dimensions and the Milwaukee Handbell Ensemble. She has completed additional course work with the American Orff-Schulwerk Association, a professional organization of educators dedicated to the creative music and movement approach. ▼



**'80s** **Jeff Meyer** ('88), lead pastor at Christ Memorial Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin, recently published a book titled "Fear Not, Dream Big, & Execute: Tools to Spark Your Dream and Ignite Your Follow-Through." It is available in Kindle and print formats through Amazon.

**'70s** **Wayne** ('78, '80) and **Linda Braun** ('78, '80) have seven grandchildren. Wayne is the pastor of Fishers of Men in Sugar Land, Texas. Linda is director of Little Fishers Preschool.

**Pete Monfre** ('77) attained his goal of being a TV station general manager by running the Milwaukee stations CW18 and My24. Previously he worked 24 years for WISN-TV 12, including as VP of sales.

**'60s** The **Rev. Arthur Baisch** ('61) and wife **Evelyn (Netz) Baisch** ('67) celebrated their 50th anniversary in August 2018, in Door County, Wisconsin, at her bi-annual Zerbe family reunion. They have moved from Central Arkansas, where Art served as pastor at Faith Lutheran Church, Fairfield Bay, until full retirement in December 2016, to near Youngstown, Ohio.

**'50s** **Lee Bergelin** ('56) is enjoying retirement in Arizona with Diane, his wife of 58 years after retiring from Shorewest Realtors. They belong to Risen Savior Lutheran in Chandler. He has been busy with ministry there, including choir and working on a big capital campaign for more additions.

## Advancing the mission



There is a story I have heard throughout my time in ministry that has been told many times in many different ways. In all cases, though, the key message remains the same: a seemingly small and simple act can make a big difference in the life of another.

The story goes something like this: Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions.

Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often, and as he grew closer the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea.

The boy came closer still, and the man called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young boy paused, looked up, and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach, and they can't return to the sea by themselves. When the sun gets high, they will die unless I throw them back into the water."

The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference."

The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled, and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

Many times, this is how it is with giving.

Donors to Concordia University have sometimes asked me if their gift really makes a difference. As in the story of the starfish, all gifts, large and small, have an impact in every single case. Many of the gifts received provide scholarship support that makes a Concordia education possible for another student. Some gifts help provide facilities or technology that allow our students to be the best prepared in their chosen vocation. And in all cases, these gifts matter in the lives of students who are blessed through them.

Thank you for making a difference and for the impact you make every time you support Concordia.

**REV. DR. ROY PETERSON**  
Senior Vice President of Advancement

Story adapted from *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley (1907-1977).

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"I look forward to giving back to Concordia someday and to helping students like me carve their own path in the world."

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