KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Spring 2023 ARBE **BAREIS-MOYYAD** Creating an Environment of Excellence and Support is Key to Helping Students A PUBLICATION OF THE Kirkwood FOUNDATION

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You're only a Kirkwood student for a couple years, but you're a Kirkwood alumna or alumnus forever.

5 DECADES3 GENERATIONS200,000+ ALUMNI

Gifts at every level have a direct impact on Kirkwood students and enable us the opportunity to provide an exceptional learning experience.

MAKE A GIFT



Visit www.kirkwood.edu/foundation/give to make a positive impact on the next generation of Kirkwood alumni.



Dear friends,

My time at Kirkwood Community College has been eventful, to say the least. I began my term as the head of this institution in the fall of 2018. As the fifth president in Kirkwood's storied history, as well as the first woman to lead the college, I had high expectations to meet. I knew I was up to the task, but nothing could have prepared me for what was to come.

With the onset of the pandemic just under two years into my tenure, followed by the devastating August 2020 derecho, much of my time has been spent trying to navigate

the college through unprecedented circumstances. Despite these incredible challenges, we've had several significant accomplishments over the last few years. From academic initiatives such as the Cedar Rapids College Career Connection and Guided Pathways to the opening of multiple new facilities like our Automotive Technology building and a state-of-the-art student center, we've instituted changes that will have lasting impacts on our region for years to come.

After five incredible years and many amazing milestones, I have notified the board of my intent to retire this fall. The search for my successor is underway and the next president of Kirkwood will be announced in the coming months. However, before I leave this great institution, I have much more I want to accomplish.

One of my passions has always been making a college education as accessible as possible for everyone. This was one of the goals of the Cedar Rapids College Career Connection, which provides scholarships to residents of Linn County who qualify and want to pursue a degree in an indemand field. But while the cost of an education has always been a major impediment for many, it is not the only roadblock people face that prevents them from going to college. From time commitment to academics to many other obstacles, any number of things can make it extremely difficult for someone to better themselves through education.

In the near future, I will be sitting down with area community leader Anthony Arrington, who is also on our Foundation board, to discuss this topic on his podcast, "Breaking Barriers." It is my sincere hope that the conversation will create more awareness about this pressing issue.

Kirkwood has been in the business of eliminating barriers to getting an education for over 50 years. One way we have been able to accomplish this task is through gifts to the Kirkwood Foundation from people just like you. Because of the generosity of our donors, thousands of our students have been able to reduce or even eliminate the cost of an education due to our more than \$3 million in available scholarships on an annual basis. With your continued support, we will be able to do the same for many, many more.

Please enjoy this latest issue of Currents, and thank you for all you do for our students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lori Sundberg President, Kirkwood Community College

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HAS YOUR EAGLE FLOWN THE NEST?

Update alumni contact information to ensure your family stays in the know on the latest Kirkwood news and events:

www.kirkwood.edu/



STUDENT FEATURE

DEVIN-JAMES BECKERT

TEACHERS, KIRKWOOD INSPIRE STUDENT TOWARD MUSIC



In the aftermath of COVID-19's extreme impact on education, the appeal of becoming a teacher has diminished significantly.

Until, that is, you meet Kirkwood student Devin-James Beckert, whose eyes light up when he talks about becoming a high school choir teacher.

His optimism and love of music radiate.

Devin caught his music bug through show choir, jazz band, and marching band at Fort Madison High School in southeast Iowa. His high school years included a remarkable trip to Hawaii in 2016 to be part of the 75th National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day commemoration, performing in concert band and choir with students from all over the country.

Band director Tracy Madsen inspired Devin.

"I loved how he taught," Devin recalls. "He cared about us. You could tell. And a lot of kids went on to school to become music directors because of him."

His second mentor, choir director Taylor Stoddard, arrived at Fort Madison High School Devin's senior year and brought a new, creative style for the entire music program.

"He inspired me to pursue music," Devin says. "This guy was fun. He was driven, pushed us to be our best, and knew what he was doing. I knew I wanted to be a high school choir teacher and give students the same hope to follow their passions that he gave me."

But after high school graduation in 2018, despite his love of music, Devin doubted a future in it. Instead, he chose Kirkwood's Culinary Arts program and worked for two years at Popoli, a Cedar Rapids restaurant. Then COVID-19 hit, Popoli closed, and Devin finished the Kirkwood program in March 2020. He had discovered that he did not have a passion for working in a kitchen and needed a change. He returned to Kirkwood to major in Music and, as he notes, "I began working toward my dream."

Devin took Liberal Arts classes for a year and got involved in Kirkwood's jazz band and choir programs. By 2021, live performances were returning. Devin's passion for music flourished.

Spring 2023 is Devin's final semester at Kirkwood. He has an internship through his Applied Arts program and hopes to connect with an area music director. After Kirkwood, he'll pursue music at either Coe College or the University of Iowa; he looks forward to auditioning as a singer.

Ironically, Devin's culinary experience has served him well; he's a supervisor at the Marion Starbucks, which he enjoys.

The two Kirkwood music scholarships he's received "have made a real difference. It really helped very much to keep taking more classes; I feel very prepared," says Devin.

He has new confidence.

"I know that I can do this,"
Devin says with a smile. "I
know that once I do, I can start
helping students and showing
them that even if you take an
unconventional path, as long as
you work toward what you want,
you will never be wrong."





Ahna Soenksen Fiora is happiest when she's focused on her art.

Her success as a graphic designer rests squarely on a solid base of Kirkwood training to hone her craft. A 2013 Kirkwood graduate, Ahna now designs T-shirts for the Kansas City Chiefs football team.

The 30-year-old Cedar Rapidian says she always knew she would go to Kirkwood; her mom, Ruth Main Soenksen, worked in Kirkwood's financial aid department for 41 years. Ahna also always knew that working with art was her destiny.

"I knew I wanted to work with art since about fourth grade," she says. "I chose drawing over watching TV."

Ahna recalls being intrigued by computer graphics as a child, with new programs coming out annually. While at Kirkwood from 2011 to 2013, Ahna took an art class each semester as she finished her prerequisite classes to graduate. Her graphic design courses were

AHNA SOENKSEN FIORA

GRAPHIC DESIGN ARTIST CREDITS KIRKWOOD WITH GREAT TRAINING

especially challenging.

"It was pretty intense stuff," she recalls. "The professors were demanding with their expectations. We had a lot of creative freedom in our projects; they knew if you hadn't put your due diligence in. It was a taste of the real world."

She especially relished the small classes. After two years of Kennedy High School's larger class sizes, Ahna transferred to Marion Independent School District, which offered smaller classes.

"It was just more comfortable in a smaller setting," she explains. "And that's just what Kirkwood gave me as well."

While at Kirkwood, Ahna also had a graphic design internship at the University of Iowa (UI). From Kirkwood, Ahna transferred to MidAmerica Nazarene University (MNU) in metro Kansas City, which had an excellent art program. She graduated in one year because of the extra classes she had taken at Kirkwood.

"That helped immensely," she says.

From MNU, she transferred to UI to complete her master's degree in Graphic Design. She worked on computer programming, designing websites, posters — anything new to broaden her skills.

"I'm a very well-rounded designer, which gives me more opportunities," Ahna adds.

Her Kansas City connection from MNU and top standing in her design classes ultimately led her to an interview with the Kansas City Chiefs and a one-year internship in 2014.

In 2015, she began her master's studies at UI, finishing in 2018. She then went to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, to pursue a doctorate. Her thesis was "Designing with All Five Senses and How that Shapes the Workplace." She graduated in 2019.

Simultaneously, Ahna had been doing contract work for the Chiefs; she went full time in 2019.

"It was a lot of commitment," she says. "But they're a wonderful organization to work for. They take really good care of you."

From 2019 through May 2022, Ahna lived in Kansas City. But her priorities changed when she got married and wanted to return to Cedar Rapids. The Chiefs revised her contract so she works 30 hours a week while living in Cedar Rapids.

Today she loves her work designing team T-shirts.

"I really enjoy it. They keep me busy," Ahna says. "They're doing well this year so we're working on designs for [the] Super Bowl." (Ahna was interviewed before the Kansas City Chiefs went on to win Super Bowl LVII.)

Outside work, Ahna draws and paints "to get back into why I enjoy what I do."

She has established her own design firm — Fiora Designs — and has an office in Marion. She hasn't forgotten the good start she got at Kirkwood.

"Kirkwood started me off right," she says. "Their skilled professors and smaller classes were key. They made a huge difference for me."



BOARD FEATURE

ARBE BAREIS-MOYYAD

FACULTY MEMBER PRAISES KIRKWOOD'S MISSION OF EXCELLENCE



motto of education at Kirkwood is excellence."

The Ottumwa, Iowa, native was a professional painter, spent 20 years in New York City as a teacher, and had his own business selling old books, manuscripts, and photos. After 9/11 in 2001, he returned to lowa, completing his graduate degrees in Painting and Drawing at the University of Iowa. In 2005, he joined Kirkwood as an adjunct art teacher on the Iowa City campus until 2006, when Kirkwood hired him as a fine and performing arts specialist. In 2012 he became a fulltime professor. He has also been the curator for all art on Kirkwood's campus since 2006.

"Working at Kirkwood has been the greatest joy," he says. He praises the steady support he's had from Kirkwood's administration and Foundation leadership for his curating. But beyond that, Arbe is passionate about Kirkwood's across-the-board commitment and vision.

"We are a leader, and one of the country's best community colleges," Arbe stresses.

Even the near-crippling impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education ultimately prompted beneficial changes in Kirkwood's curriculum, he notes.

"The future of higher education since COVID has gone in a different direction," Arbe points out. "Kirkwood has taken it in the right direction. It forced us to use online platforms and I've continued to use those. We're experimenting more with hybrid learning."

In his teaching, Arbe encourages his students to believe in themselves, to take risks to challenge themselves. Many of his former students are now artists: tattoo artists locally, or teachers, professors, professional ceramic or mural artists, and more nationwide.

"I tell my students that it's the work and excellence you put into your work that will get you on the right path. It's about accountability and perseverance," he says. "I'm seeing their potential. And this is what the Foundation does: looks at their potential and finds ways to help them."

From The Hotel at Kirkwood
Center, giving real work experience
to culinary and hospitality arts
students, to its diverse student
population, stellar international
program, and embrace of ecofriendly, clean energy technology
such as its utility-scale wind
turbine, Kirkwood is progressive,
Arbe says, and decisions and
choices are based on extensive
studies and research. His faith
in that deep commitment to
excellence is strong.

"Kirkwood thinks big," Arbe adds. "It has been the first to do many things, and will be in the future, among community colleges."

Commitment is important to Arbe Bareis-Moyyad. It is an integral part of his teaching at Kirkwood and his connection with Kirkwood's mission of excellence.

As the first Kirkwood faculty member on the Kirkwood Foundation Board of Directors, the Arts and Humanities professor is right at home: the Foundation's purpose, after all, is enabling Kirkwood students to find their path.

Creating an environment of excellence and support is key to helping students find that path and achieve their best, Arbe says. His personal and professional experiences speak to that goal. As a teacher of painting, drawing, and art history, his students get his full attention because, Arbe stresses, whether or not they continue on at a 4-year institution, "it's the 2-year institution that really sets them on the path of success. And the



HONORING OUR KIRKWOOD RETIREES

We offer our sincere congratulations to the 2022 – '23 academic year retirees. Their life's work has made a profound and lasting impact. Students, faculty, and colleagues will have wonderful memories of them as their role models, mentors, and friends.

The Kirkwood Foundation's "Honoring Kirkwood Retirees by Extending their Legacy" initiative celebrates retirees while helping those who are so dear to their heart — Kirkwood students.

The Kirkwood Foundation will make a donation in the retiree's honor to the fund of their choice. We then offer their colleagues and the greater Kirkwood community the opportunity to honor their service to Kirkwood by making additional donations in their name.

If you have fond memories of a
Kirkwood retiree as your teacher,
role model, mentor, or friend, we
encourage you to consider a donation
in their honor at www.kirkwood.edu/
foundation/give.

27 YEARS Jill Scott, Math and Science 25 YEARS Mary Gesing, Dean of Students Office 25 YEARS Christine Thompson, Secondary Programs 23 YEARS Lisa Hebl, Allied Health 22 YEARS Arron Wings, Library Services 21 YEARS Jim Thompson, Business and IT 20 YEARS Steve Owen, Social Sciences 19 YEARS Christopher Patterson, Linn County Regional Center 18 YEARS Mike Scallon, Learning Services 17 YEARS Tim Gilbertson, Facilities 17 YEARS David Polum, Facilities 18 YEARS Jim Choate, Finance 19 YEARS Scott Ermer, Agriculture Science 10 YEARS Maria Moore, Global Learning 12 YEARS Sue Robinson, Agriculture Science 10 YEARS Amy Kelly, Finance 10 YEARS Roy Pettibone, Business and IT 10 YEARS Mary Schneekloth, Business and IT			
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FEATURE

ALUMNI-OWNED BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Many Kirkwood Community College alumni have followed their passions into the workforce and founded their own businesses. Kirkwood Alumni & Friends is excited to launch a directory of alumni-owned businesses so the Kirkwood community can better connect with and support these organizations. Browse the growing directory or nominate your business for inclusion!

www.kirkwood.edu/alumni/alumni-directory





IN YOUR WILL?

The Samuel J. Kirkwood Society recognizes individuals who have either created a planned gift or endowed their gift to Kirkwood, KCCK-FM, or the Older Iowans Fund.

By including language in your estate plan specifying a gift to the Kirkwood Foundation, your legacy continues and supports students for generations to come. What legacy will you leave?



For more information, contact: Eric Weiler, CFRE, Major Gifts Officer | 319-398-1281 | eric.weiler@kirkwood.edu

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