Mona T. Gunn ’74
First African-American President
American Gold Star Mothers Inc. 2019-2020
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Mona Gunn ’74

American Gold Star Mothers Inc. 2019-2020

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2

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Photo by Lateef Gibson
In this issue of BEHOLD, the experiences of the individuals featured in our articles are crucial to who they are, what they have become and what is important to them. Through their experiences, we are able to draw lessons from how each experience sparked an initiative, helped them learn new insights and skills or find a way to push beyond what they previously achieved.

So often, life presents harsh and difficult realities that can keep us down if we let them. Yet many have triumphed over events that could have crushed them. One such person is Mona Gunn ’74. She loved through the pain of a horrible tragedy that allowed her to encourage and lift up others (page 16). By opening her heart to those who also lost a child, she has been encouraged and uplifted. In June 2019, Gunn will make history as the national president of the Gold Star Mothers...the first African-American to do so.

We also highlight five Norfolk State students who embarked on summer internships. The experiences and lessons they learned will undoubtedly shape their careers and professional lives. Read about where they worked, what they learned and the advice that they are offering to others (page 10). Sometimes, we tackle experiences that challenge and seem to push us beyond our limits...only to discover that perseverance brings gratification, which can serve as inspiration for others. That was the impetus that found Jermaine Jackson ’97 battling frigid temperatures and the threat of bears in the Tennessee wilderness (page 24). Jackson wanted to mitigate old stereotypes while also honoring his father who taught him to hunt, fish and live off the land.

Then there’s the desire to pass on traditions that have shaped us and nurtured our growth. That is the goal of the university-wide initiative launched by Dr. Carl W. Haywood ’70 (page 20). He fondly remembers what it was like to be a student at Norfolk State, the attention he received from his professors, the vibrant and energy across campus and with our community partners. That is the goal of the university-wide initiative launched by Dr. Carl W. Haywood ’70 (page 20).

It has been an outstanding year for Norfolk State University. Happy Holidays and may 2019 be your best year yet!

Melvin E. Stith Sr., Ph.D. Interim President

From the Desk of the Vice President for University Advancement

The word “behold” is often used by those who love Norfolk State. It sums up the excellence of what is happening at Norfolk State. It is why it came to naming the magazine featuring the accomplishments and progress taking place at Norfolk State, “Behold” easily came to mind.

Dr. Byron L. Cherry Sr. COL (Ret)
Dr. Carl W. Haywood ’70
Dr. Michelle A. Shackelford
Dr. David P. Williams ’80
Dr. Regina L. Lightfoot
Dr. Devon M. Henry
Dr. Michelle D. Hill ’96
Dr. Lateef Gibson
Dr. Donald Spencer
Dr. Anita Pearson
Dr. Donald A. Taylor
Dr. Steve Nottingham
Dr. Deborah C. Fontaine
Dr. Deborah M. DiCroce
Dr. Astra Armstrong
Deborah C. Fontaine
Regina L. Lightfoot
Michelle D. Hill ’76
Christopher Setzer ’97
Sharon Haggard
Matt Michaels
Anita Pearson
Lafayette Gibson
Von Soley
Steve Nottingham
A ffordable health care remains in the forefront of political dialogue today, eight years after the Affordable Care Act was signed into law (August 3, 2010). In 2014, the bulk of the legislation went into effect and the health insurance exchanges opened, providing eligible consumers the opportunity to shop, compare and buy health insurance directly. Established in the midst of the debate about health and access to health care, Norfolk State University’s Center for Excellence in Minority Health Disparities has been strategically working to promote health equity and eliminate health disparities for about three years. The Center’s work in the Healthy Churches 2020 initiative is being recognized for its impact on the health of African-Americans.

Health disparities refer to the differences in health outcomes that are closely linked with social, economic and environmental disadvantages. Or, the differences between populations when it comes to access to and use of care and quality of care. According to Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, African-Americans experience significant health disparities when compared to other populations including experiencing chronic conditions, having access to care, and getting preventive screenings. Here are a few health disparities that exist for African-Americans in comparison to Caucasians:

- **Health Disparities**

Higher rates of adult obesity (48 percent of adults) 80 percent more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes 2.4 times more likely to begin treatment for end-stage renal disease
1.7 times more likely to be hospitalized
Men are 30 percent and women 60 percent more likely to have hypertension
Less likely to keep their blood pressure under control
Women are 40 percent more likely to die of breast cancer
20 percent more likely to report psychological distress
50 percent less likely to receive counselling or mental health treatment

The NSU Center for Excellence in Minority Health Disparities’ mission is to develop and provide research expertise, increase education and research opportunities for faculty and students, leadership and community support in reducing health disparities in critical areas that affect minority communities, noted Dr. Cynthia Burwell, who serves as the director for the Center. “We field calls from people in the community who have questions about health issues or scheduling a speaker for an event. We have an interdisciplinary steering committee that meets monthly to discuss ways the Center can increase its presence in the community as well as scheduling health related events on campus for students, faculty and community,” added Burwell.

The Balm in Gilead, a Richmond-based nonprofit, is recognizing NSU’s Center for Excellence in Minority Health Disparities for engaging African-American church congregations in addressing health disparities. “The Balm in Gilead’s mission is to prevent diseases and to improve the health status of individuals who are disproportionately affected by high rates of health disparities especially HIV, hepatitis C, cervical cancer and sexual violence,” Burwell said. She further explained about the Balm in Gilead group. “During its annual Healthy Churches 2020 initiative, they recognize an organization that has done exceptional work in the community around the area of health disparities. The Center works with about 25 health ministry leaders, training them on pertinent health issues that they can then use to educate their congregations.”

Based on the Center’s research, the Healthy Churches project has had a significant impact on participants. Interviews were conducted with the health ministers in the participating churches and congregants were surveyed.

“The most interesting thing I have found about the health ministry leaders, is that they are really interested in helping to educate the members of their congregations so that they can live healthy long lives. We found that all groups, except 18 through 44 year olds, had a significant before and after increase in their overall health status and satisfaction with their social activities and relationships,” exclaimed Burwell. The Center’s director also noted that the participants were quite receptive to the fact that NSU was willing to help them reach their goals in keeping their congregations healthy. Additional findings included:

**Increases in the quality and status of daily activities**

- Decreases in emotional problems
- Decreases in fatigue and pain

**Health care organizations including the health insurance industry recognize the importance of addressing health disparities that are affecting the African-American population and other communities. It will take a concerted effort to close the gaps in access to quality health care and the disparity in health outcomes.**

It will take continued education, clinical intervention, diversity and inclusion activities, cultural competency training and resources as well as community outreach like that being done by NSU’s Center for Excellence in Minority Health Disparities.
Faculty News

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded new Partnerships for Research and Education in Materials (PREM) grants to support eight collaborations across the United States aimed at fostering cutting-edge materials research while increasing diversity. Each award is expected to total nearly $4 million and will support a materials research partnership between a minority-serving institution (MSI) and a large-scale research facility supported by NSF’s Division of Materials Research (DMR). Norfolk State is expected to receive $1,450,000.

Dr. Doyle Temple, professor of physics and faculty member in the Center for Materials Research, is a co-principal investigator for The Fort Lewis College and Norfolk State University STROBE Science and Technology Center. The project will focus on advanced imaging and characterization of functional nanomaterials. The PREM framework elements of this project will provide undergraduate students access to research mentors, guided research experiences, professional development activities, a peer support network and leadership opportunities.

Prof. Gregory Gardner, a member of the music department, conducted a workshop on preparing high school students for college voice auditions for Norfolk Public Schools high school music educators. He also was the baritone soloist in Beethoven’s Ode to Joy from Symphony No. 9 performed by the Virginia Symphony Orchestra as part of its Community Play-In and Sing-Along at the Scope Arena presented by the City of Norfolk and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute has awarded Norfolk State University a $1 million grant as part of its Inclusive Excellence initiative. NSU is one of 33 colleges and universities selected nationwide for the 2018 grant. The Inclusive Excellence initiative aims to help institutions build their capacity to effectively engage all students in science throughout their undergraduate years, especially those who come to college via nontraditional pathways. As part of its grant, Norfolk State plans to create community-focused, collaborative course-based research experiences (C3URE) and integrate them throughout the four-year curriculum.

Dr. Ashley Haines, associate professor of biology, is the program director.

Working In and Out of the Classroom

The faculty at Norfolk State University work throughout the year conducting research, attending conferences, contributing articles to professional journals and continuing their studies in other countries — all in an effort to improve best practices in the classroom and to keep up with the latest trends in higher education. Here is a brief compilation of faculty highlights and accomplishments:

The C3 Cluster (Norfolk State, Morgan State and Tennessee State) received an award during the closing ceremony of the UNCF Career Pathways Initiative for its forward-thinking collaboration. The initiative seeks to strengthen career outcomes and increase professional development for four-year HBCUs and PBIs.

Dr. Cheryl Hinds, computer science graduate coordinator for cybersecurity and associate professor of computer science, was awarded a new grant from the Department of Defense for $54.4K.

Dr. Harrison B. Wilson, second President of Norfolk State University, received the Trailblazer award from Men of Hope Inc. for his contributions to the Hampton Roads community. Dr. Wilson led Norfolk State from 1975 to 1997. It was under his leadership that Norfolk State received its designation as a university in 1979. He is pictured with his daughter April Woodard.

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Stepping Outside COMFORT ZONE Leads To White House Internship

By CARMEN CASH (M.A. ’19)
Communications and Marketing Intern

Ramal Johnson (M.A. ’13) took a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in January 2018. Johnson, a master of media and communications graduate, took a four-month internship in the Office of Presidential Correspondence as a White House intern. “I applied on a whim,” says Johnson, “I didn’t think I’d get it.”

Yet, Johnson was not only accepted into the program, but was the only African-American among the roughly 90 interns who were selected. Over the course of the internship, Johnson realized that many of the individuals he worked with had never worked with African-Americans before, let alone a Democrat, and knew little about African-American culture.

“He is very open minded, and he can place himself in a position not to focus on one issue,” says Pamela Rodgers, Johnson’s mother. “He doesn’t have tunnel vision. He can see a situation from all different sides and aspects.”

As a White House intern, Johnson’s main job was to serve as a liaison between President Donald J. Trump, and the American people, addressing concerns, and issues. However, he didn’t learn about his assignment until he arrived at the White House the first day. “Everything is confidential, so they didn’t tell us much. We didn’t even know what department we were working in, or what we were doing.”

Recently, Johnson was on campus as part of the Mass Communications and Journalism Department’s News Engagement Day and spoke to students about his time as a White House intern and allowed them to ask him questions about his journey and experiences while stressing the importance of internships and extracurricular activities. He chuckled a little when speaking about how surprised the students were to find out that although he was not in support of President Trump, his White House colleagues are not, as Johnson stated, the “monsters” that they are portrayed to be in the media. “We disagree politically, but they aren’t monsters.”

He pointed out to students what he believes to be current issues in media, which include the depiction of minorities.

“A lot of times whenever a person of color, let’s say an African-American, is depicted in the media, he or she is depicted stereotypically, and that’s because a lot of the writers, producers, and directors have little to no contact with African-Americans so they rely on stereotypes to portray them because that’s the only way they think of us,” says Johnson.

“The excuse is well: we don’t know any African-Americans who qualify to be writers or producers—which is not true.”

Johnson believes that in order to control the narrative, African-Americans must create the narrative. “We need to have more people of color behind the camera instead of in front of the camera, so we need to be the ones who are making the decisions.”

In the meantime, Johnson stands in front of a class as a professor at Northern Virginia Community College. Johnson credits the lessons he learned during his time at Norfolk State University as the foundation for the expectations he sets for his students.

“I had professors who were very strict as far as guidelines are concerned,” says Johnson. “In media, especially in journalism, there are standards you have to meet, and they held us to those standards,” says Johnson as he reflects on his years as a Spartan.

From his experience as a White House intern, Johnson offers a piece of advice to students.

“Go outside your comfort zone. I applied to the White House thinking I was not going to get it at all. I kind of did it just to do it.”

University News
NSU Interns Gain ‘REAL-WORLD’ EXPERIENCE Through Exciting Internships

IMAIA JOHNSON ’18, JOURNALISM MAJOR, HAMPTON VIRGINIA. Johnson was immersed in the high-powered, high-luxury world of the Hamptons as she interned for Hampton Magazine in Southampton, New York. “Ever since I was a child, I’ve dreamed about being a part of the magazine in some way, shape, or form,” Johnson said. To make the internship a reality, it took moxie. There wasn’t an announcement of the internship, or a posting on the website. “This internship was more of a ‘who you know’ situation, or you had to have been a resident of the area. So, I decided to go old school and send a copy of my resume and a cover letter to the office, and a few months later I was given an offer to be an intern.”

She worked from May-August and arrived at the magazine during an important milestone. The publication was celebrating its 40th Anniversary. Johnson’s duties included maintaining the magazine’s website calendar and assisting at events and with photography. She also attended magazine photo shoots, parties and socials, meeting celebrities and socialites. “The internship taught me about business and life. Being an intern at a magazine can be fun and glamorous, but there will be business and life. Being an intern at a magazine during summer 2018, and they unapologetically say their experiences were valuable steps in their education and future career plans.

JALEN MASK ’18, SOCIOLOGY MAJOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE MINOR, FROM RICHMOND. The numerous university meetings Jalen Mask sat in on during his internship helped him get his foot wet for the day he plans to become a university administrator or president. Mask spent his 10-week internship/fellowship in the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Virginia in Richmond. One of his main projects was modernizing the Virginia Bluebook, a document that lists all the boards and commissions appointed by the governor, as well as all departments in the executive branch of state government. Mask put the Bluebook online in a searchable web format.

Another of his responsibilities was visiting inmates in state and juvenile facilities to educate them about restoration of voting rights. His third task was helping to move the University of Virginia, including those at NSU, out of the capital, and work late when necessary.”

He also said he learned about the inner workings of government, “It was amazing to see firsthand how the Virginia General Assembly worked.”

But the most important lesson was personal. As the only HBCU student out of seven interns, Mask says he learned “never to doubt myself or where I’m from, but to always look for how I push myself to be the determining factor for whatever I want to happen in my life.”

EMANUEL PEREZ ’20, COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR, EMPHASIS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, FROM VIRGINIA BEACH. Perez completed his internship at the Port of Virginia in Norfolk where he worked with systems administration, network administrators and field technicians on a fiber optic network upgrade for his eight-week project.

He found the work even more advanced than the classes he has taken so far at NSU, so he says he will be ready for his senior year because of the applied skills he’s already learned. But that doesn’t mean he doesn’t have important takeaways for him from his internship experience was time management. “I learned how to prioritize projects from my manager,” Perez said and you can only concentrate on three things each day, and he emphasized the importance of scheduling and staying up-to-date.”

The contact Perez made at the Port of Virginia have proven invaluable. In fact, he continues to follow up with a Norfolk State alumnus from the organization and does freelance work for him company from time to time.

Perez praised Career Services, particularly Aksha Bazemore, for criticizing his resume, preparing him for his internship interviews and assisting with key communication skills. He recommends that all students seek out internships and to “get comfortable being uncomfortable. Internships are designed to challenge you to draw out your critical thinking skills, so I recommend everyone to step up to the plate when the opportunity presents itself.”

ALIEYA BABIL ’20, COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR, MATHEMATICS MINOR WITH EMPHASIS IN CYBERSECURITY, FROM CHARLOTTE. Babil learned a lot about herself in her internship at the Naval Research Lab in Washington, D.C. She reached her ultimate goal of building her own affordable electronics board or becoming the CEO of such a company.

While working at the lab during the two months, she researched the deterioration of metals. She used electrochemistry to test the pitting potential of steel, where the corrosion begins to occur on the surface.

Andrews, a transfer student, says the internship helped her build her professional profile. “I learned how to deal with people more on a professional level both in-person and via email. Just being able to interact with the engineers face-to-face was good.”

She says working with mentors in the program built her leadership skills. “I learned what skills I need to improve on. To be the CEO of a company or to own a company, you have to have good leadership skills. I can honestly say that something I lacked. The internship program tested our leadership skills, because the mentors assumed that we knew more than we did, so we had to look up some things and figure them out on our own.”

Andrews says meeting interns from other schools and other majors was invaluable. “I was able to see how technology can be combined with chemistry and make a project. These students were very, very smart and had a great work ethic. I also enjoyed meeting the other mentors and research engineers because they gave helpful advice.”

Norfolk State prepared her for the experience in several ways. “I’m not a big talker, so before I came here, I would just go to class and to my room. Norfolk State is big on preparing students for the world socially and academically, and I can say that my social skills have improved by going to events on campus.”

Bibil also helped her improve her troubleshooting skills.

Andrews plans to move to the Washington, D.C., area following graduation and go to graduate school.

AIGNER ANDREWS ’19, ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY MAJOR, FROM PHILADELPHIA, PA. Andrews’ internship at the Naval Research Lab in Washington, D.C., will help her reach her ultimate goal of building her own affordable electronics board or becoming the CEO of such a company.

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WNSB RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION
as Host of #ChangeMakers Town Hall, Looks to the Future

If you tune in to Norfolk State University’s on-campus radio station, WNSB Hot 91.1, it wouldn’t be easy to notice some of the big changes and innovations the station has experienced in the last few years just by listening. Some adjustments noticeable to the ear have been format and content-related. Other shifts have been technical, and some, geographical. But during the fall 2018 semester, the hard work of the WNSB leadership, staff and student interns was put on display for the university community to witness.

The station recently hosted #ChangeMakers, a nationally syndicated town hall meeting that was broadcast live, featuring a millennial discussion about race, politics and issues important to young and new voters—a demographic the station is working to grow. The session, held in front of an audience of students, administrators and faculty, featured keynote speaker Marc Lamont Hill, Ph.D., a political commentator and former CNN correspondent. The special program was held in J. Hugo Madison Hall, the station’s original home, on Nov. 4, 2018, and was broadcast on HBCU public radio stations throughout the country.

The Madison Hall auditorium was filled with nearly 100 attendees made up of Norfolk State students, faculty and other invited guests. NSF Interim President Melvin T. Smith, Sr., Ph.D. (B.A. ‘68), and his wife, Patricia Lynch Smith, Ph.D. (B.A. ’68), were in attendance at the community forum along with millions of listeners who tuned in to the program online and on stations in cities such as Las Vegas, Houston, Minneapolis, Atlanta and Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

WNSB General Manager Edith Thorpe described the special panel as a “highlight moment in her three years since arriving to campus. Thorpe and the WNSB staff believe #ChangeMakers, along with other changes at the station, will position WNSB as one of the most innovative college radio stations in the country. The station reaches 103,900 listeners on a weekly basis, according to Nielsen Market Research from October 2018.

In addition to the new content, the station was recently part of a group of public radio stations across the country awarded $500,000, of a total $1.3 million grant by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to assist in restructuring their formats, to the new “Urban Alternative” radio format. WNSB received one of the funding packages and will be fully transformed by the fall semester of 2019.

“From a statistical background, we are heading in the right direction,” Perry said. “Once we have a full staff, we will be able to implement more positive changes that will allow WNSB to grow.”

The campus radio station has also entered a partnership with the HBCU Network, a group of 14 public stations from across the country that will share live content from events or station programming. The programs will be available on traditional radio, satellite radio and on social media platforms such as Facebook Live.

A ROBUST HISTORY
Founded in 1980, the station was the vision of Drs. Wilbert Edgerton, Georgia Ryder, Melvin Smith (all deceased) and Stanley Tickton, who still teaches on campus, and provided instructional programming. Through the years, WNSB developed more programming and introduced several music genres as part of its broadcasts. Currently, it has three full-time staff, four part-time staffers and nearly 30 student interns with more staff to come, Thorpe said.

The general manager said her vision for the station is to build a larger pool of student interns and to help develop the next generation of media professionals.

NSU Student Marvin L. Fowlkes, a senior computer science major, said he has learned a lot about the radio industry from having worked at the station.

“Technology has advanced tremendously over the years and the days of using certain forms of technology to broadcast over a radio station are gone,” Fowlkes said. “My experiences as a deejay, guest on Hampton Road Fresh and working and learning from the WNSB staff will assist me after graduation.”

In addition to new content and technical changes, the station will move from its current location in Spartan Station back to its original home inside of J. Hugo Madison Hall. The move is expected to be completed in time for the spring 2019 semester. Through an additional grant, WNSB will also add more studios and offices to accommodate training and space for incoming staffers, Thorpe said.

“Returning to our original location not only is nostalgic, but brings us closer to the middle of campus and will provide easier access for faculty, guests and students,” Thorpe said.
The Campaign to Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment

By SHARON RIDDICK HOGGARD (M.A. ’04)

S

ince its founding 400 years ago, Virginia has played an important part in the nation's history. Now it's poised to make history once more as the 38th and final state needed to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). It has been nearly half a century since the U.S. Congress approved the amendment and sent it to the states for ratification. Discrimination based on sex is not currently guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. The ERA is an explicit prohibition against discrimination based on gender. Passage of the amendment would cover all 50 states under one law versus a mishmash of differing state laws, and would give discrimination victims a stronger legal stance when seeking redress.

In January 2019 when the Virginia General Assembly convenes, Senator Glen H. Sturtevant Jr. (D-Dist. 10) and Delegate Jennifer Carroll Foy (D-Dist. 2) are expected to introduce legislation to ratify the ERA. “Since the 2016 election, there has been a heightened awareness of and involvement in the political and legislative process especially among women,” says Senator Jennifer McClellan (D-Dist. 9), who is currently a co-sponsor of the legislation. “Since the 2016 election, there has been a heightened awareness of and involvement in the political and legislative process especially among women.” Over the past two years, women have increasingly been letting their voices be heard from the record-breaking Women’s March in January 2017 to the #MeToo and #TimesUp social movements to the recent Supreme Court Justice confirmation hearings. During this year’s midterm election cycle, more women than ever ran for and won local, state and federal offices. Even with this surge of women’s political awareness, ratification is still a huge undertaking. Many people, even women, do not appear very knowledgeable about the amendment. A small, random survey among people aged 25 to 65, three-quarters of respondents were aware that the ERA was poised to become a part of the U.S. Constitution — if Virginia ratifies it. Unsurprisingly, the remaining one-quarter of respondents, were completely unaware that Congress had passed the ERA and that only one more state is needed for ratification. ERA proponents launched an awareness and ratification campaign that kicked off in August — during Women’s Equality Day. “The Virginia to Have this Honor supports Virginians' campaign for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment,” says Senator McClellan. “It’s the right time for the state to ratify the ERA. All eyes are on Virginia to be the last, historic state to ratify the amendment during the next General Assembly session.” As 2019 will be the 400th year of the legislative session in Virginia, it’s perfect timing for ratification. We want Virginia to have this honor and we’re working hard to make that happen.”
Turning Grief Into Giving

MOTHERS OF THE FALLEN FIND PEACE AND HEALING THROUGH SERVICE.

By DORIS D. SHADOLIH

CONTINUED ON PG. 18
It’s a day she will never forget.

“He was so excited to join the military and to follow his dad’s footsteps,” says Gunn whose late husband, Lou Gunn, proudly served 21 years in the Navy. He was also an NSU Alumnus ’97 and ’01.

Her son had only been in the Navy for nine months before his life was taken. After suffering this earth-shattering loss, Gunn somehow mustered up the strength to return to work. It wasn’t easy.

“I did what I had to do to get through my job, but it never leaves you. Losing a child puts a hole in your heart; a child whose life was cut way too short at age 22. It impacted my whole family,” says Gunn.

She says she received an outpouring of support from the military as well as the community. But all of the comforting words and prayers could not fix her broken heart.

“I was presented with a Gold Star Lapel pin and it meant absolutely nothing to me within the two weeks of the loss of my child. I wanted my child back,” admits Gunn. “I had no idea what Gold Star meant.”

At that time, she had no idea that the Gold Star would mean another life change for her—one that would allow her the chance to heal and to lead.

Gunn said she first learned about the Gold Star Mothers organization when it was having an annual convention in 2004. She read the article about it and realized they had something in common.

“I said, ‘Wow, I’m a Gold Star Mom,’” says Gunn.

She bonded with the other mothers and joined the organization, but that was just the beginning. Not only did she become a member, she has been working to expand their presence in Virginia.

In 2009, she connected with Gold Star Mothers in the Tidewater area, and together they charted their own chapter. Another chapter was started in Richmond two years afterward.

“We are moms on a mission. We’re a powerful force,” says Gunn.

And over the years, she has been quite a force locally and on the national level. Gunn has traveled around the country with the organization to bond with other mothers, support veterans, active-duty members and their families.

The other Gold Star Mothers recognized her leadership abilities and elected her as their vice president. Next year, she will move into the top spot as the president.

Once she is installed as the group’s new national president in June of 2019, she will be the first African-American woman to hold that position.

On the local level, Gunn has been working on a special initiative to find Vietnamese-era Veterans who served from 1955-1975. The Hampton Roads chapter has partnered with the Department of Defense’s 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War.

“We’re being asked to properly thank those Vietnam Veterans because it was a very divisive war,” says Gunn.

Now she is working to fix that one hero at a time.

Once she is installed as the group’s new national president in June of 2019, she hopes to expand the organization even more to include other Gold Star Mothers who have not yet joined.

She has ambitions to include more members from other areas across the nation and more women of color.

Through every stage of her amazing journey, Gunn has never been one to shy away when called to lead; even in the face of one of the most horrible tragedies of her life, she has still found a way to lead others to a better future.

Now 18 years after her son’s death, she continues to honor his legacy by

“I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO TO GET THROUGH MY JOB, BUT IT NEVER LEAVES YOU. LOSING A CHILD PUTS A HOLE IN YOUR HEART. —MONA T. GUNN
When Carl W. Haywood (B.MUS. ’71) became chief of staff to interim president Melvin T. Stith Sr., (B.A. ’68), the two distinguished alumni reminisced about their Norfolk State days on campus. There was something that they felt—something ‘intangible’ about their student experience. Out of that conversation came a burning desire to strengthen and rekindle that feeling and those abstract qualities that made Norfolk State, Norfolk State — to somehow capture its essence.

“When I considered how pride, appreciation, respect, and unity are achieved, I recognized that they are intangibles that cannot be measured, but can be felt,” says Dr. Haywood. “How we feel about something hinges on a culture of caring, sharing and receiving.”

Subsequently, Haywood considered the intangibles, which to him, promote and enhance NSU. He distilled those qualities and characteristics into the following, which became the four pillars of the initiative:

- **A Smile is Healthy for the Soul** — Emphasizing Good Customer Service
- **Good Teaching Creates Good Students** — Emphasizing Excellent Teaching
- **Spartan Nation: Forever United** — Emphasizing Unity and NSU Family Connections
- **NSU in Your Community** — Renewing Ties and Traditions with the Community

“Ultimately, I subscribed that these tenets: good customer service, good teaching, unity and activism in the community would enhance the perception of NSU and the community’s perception of us,” Dr. Haywood says.

Subcommittees of dedicated faculty, staff, administrators and students organized around the themes and went to work. Last August, in a rousing introduction to the University community, the NSU band, choir, cheerleaders and NSU Theatre Co., brought the initiative to life under the theme, **NSU: Valuing People, Minds and Traditions.**

“I continue to receive positive feedback from the campus community regarding the wave of energy, enthusiasm, goodwill, and the positive working environment that has invaded the campus,” Dr. Haywood says. Now when you walk across campus at the end of each day, the sound of the Spartan Legion playing the **Alma Mater** fills the air — the work of Spartan Nation: Forever United subcommittee — and a smile comes across your face. Indeed, a smile is healthy for the soul!
My NSU Story

By DORIS D. SHADOUH

For 83 years, Norfolk State University has built an incredible legacy that has transformed the lives of scholars for generations. The strength in our collective story comes from the amazing individual stories of every Spartan whose pathway to their passions started at NSU. Several students and alumni shared their personal trials and triumphs on camera through our new social media video series. My NSU Story. Read their testimonials below:

JENEE WILLIAMS | SOCIAL WORK AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Jenee Williams knew when she first stepped onto the campus of Norfolk State University that this is where she wanted to be. It was that warm feeling of community, the incredibly rich culture combined with the beauty of a rapidly growing campus that attracted Williams to NSU. Originally from California, Williams traveled over 2,000 miles across the country to pursue her dreams. She wanted to invest her time in a field that allowed her to help people, so she decided to major in social work and political science.

Williams also wanted to be a part of an institution that had deep roots in African-American culture, which is why she preferred an HBCU. Not only has Jenee excelled academically, she has also been working on leaving a legacy of her own. She started a group called West Coast Connect, which is designed to help other out-of-state students adjust to the campus much easier.

Williams, along with other members of the organization, is helping to tell the story of Norfolk State University to students all across the United States.

MICHAEL LAMBERT ’09 | COMPUTER SCIENCE

Anyone who meets Michael Lambert will quickly learn two important things about him. He has more energy than an average person and he has an undeniable passion for fitness and helping others.

He is the owner of The Fitness Junkie Gym in Norfolk, and he has successfully turned some of the most sedentary individuals into absolute fitness buffus. Some of them have even gone on to become personal trainers as well.

Although Lambert has always loved fitness, his journey at NSU was focused on technology. He studied computer science at Norfolk State University and he was also a football player. Like many of our successful student athletes, Lambert learned how to manage his time well while juggling his academic and athletic responsibilities.

“If it wasn’t for Norfolk State University, there wouldn’t be a Fitness Junkie,” says Lambert.

He credits the University for giving him the skills he needed to open and run a business. Although he worked as an IT Specialist for several years, he made the decision to give it all up to follow his dreams.

He is encouraging other students who have a dream to do the same—follow your passion and it will take you far.

MONA J. ’03 | CHEMISTRY, PRE-MED

Tamona “Mona J.” Williams started out shaping young minds in the classroom and now she’s on stage winning hearts.

For several years, she was a chemistry teacher at a high school in Portsmouth. She enjoyed helping students and she was even honored as teacher of the year during her tenure there.

But something was missing for her. “Although I liked what I was doing, I didn’t love it,” says Williams. She wanted to do more with her first love—music.

This award-winning educator is also a talented singer. She has performed at several venues in the Tidewater area and beyond. Her talent almost landed her a spot on the popular television show, The Voice.

She traveled all the way to Utah to audition for the judges and they were impressed. Williams was one of the few people who received a red card during the first round. She then moved on several more steps until the show ultimately decided to choose other participants. This was just the beginning for Williams.

She says this was not a disappointment for her; this was the ultimate motivation. This opportunity allowed her to see how capable she was to achieve anything she wanted to do in her life.

Williams now runs her own graphic and design business and she has helped other small business owners promote their products and services.

She says thanks to her time at Norfolk State University, she has the courage to pursue any dreams.

See more MyNSU stories at https://www.youtube.com/user/NSUMarketing.
Wilderness Challenge Puts Survival Skills To The Test

In 2017, Jermaine Jackson ’97 found himself naked and shivering in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee as rain fell on the foliage around him. Jackson, an avid outdoorsman, had signed up for a 21-day challenge of survival against the elements as part of the Discovery Channel program Naked and Afraid.

As soon as we got to Tennessee, it started raining,” says Jackson. “The forest acted as a canopy so the temperature dropped to very cold conditions if you’re not wearing clothing. Being naked in 40-degree weather is no joke, and we both ended up getting hypothermia. It was so cold, that we both ruptured our skin capillaries. Why did Jackson want to appear on the show? One reason was to showcase his outdoor skills, but there was a reason that held a deeper meaning.

“I wanted to defy the stereotypes out there about black men and the outdoors,” Jackson says. “If you watch television, you don’t see us out there much camping, fishing — living off of the land. I wanted to honor my father too, but to also prove to everyone out there that African-Americans can do it and excel at it.”

Originally from Triangle, Virginia, Jackson grew up in a family home where the outdoors were always around him. When he was a child, it wasn’t an unusual or gross sight when he would watch James Jackson, his late father, slaughter a deer, clean it and then put it inside the refrigerator.

James Jackson was also a member of the Seafarers’Yacht Club, one of the oldest African-American yacht clubs in the United States, and taught Jermaine Jackson about aquatics and how to be comfortable on land and sea. His love for not only nature, but how to survive in it, continued as Jackson later moved to Stafford County, Virginia, and entered the Cub and Boy Scouts, later achieving the rank of Eagle Scout — the highest rank offered to a scout — when he was 17.

“My father always thought it was important for me to learn how to live off the land,” says Jackson. “Academics were very important in our household, but my parents also wanted us to know how to fend for ourselves if we ever were in a jam.”

At Norfolk State, Jackson found a love for radio and joined WNSB Hot 91.1, the campus radio station, and eventually hosted a radio program. “I forget the name of the show, but I do remember that I would play obscure records that no one would expect on the station. The great thing about Norfolk State, and this still holds true today, is that it’s a place where you can express who you are. Everybody has their own thing and that is okay, you’re still a Spartan no matter what.”

Today, Jackson works as a wound care specialist and executive sales representative at MiMedx, a biopharmaceutical company that develops regenerative tissues for individuals afflicted with ailments such as diabetes, cancer or joint issues, who are at risk of potentially losing limbs.

“I am very far removed from secondary education, but I have been very blessed,” Jackson says. “I give the credit to Norfolk State because had I not went there, I would not have the opportunities I have right now.”

I WANTED TO HONOR MY FATHER TOO, BUT TO ALSO PROVE TO EVERYONE OUT THERE THAT AFRICAN-AMERICANS CAN DO IT AND EXCEL AT IT. — JERMAINE JACKSON

FROM THE WILDERNESS TO CELEBRITY LIFE

Since Jackson’s appearance on Naked and Afraid, he has become a celebrity in his California town and become popular with the Norfolk State University community. “I get approached at the grocery store, when I pick the kids up from school, pretty much everywhere. I never expected this much attention.”

As far as upcoming television appearances, Jackson remained mum, but he did say he is open to showcasing his outdoor talents to a mass audience. Jackson says eventually, he would like to organize survivalist camps for disadvantaged youth in California.

As the dog days of summer approached in August, Jackson mulled over two options about how he would spend his final summer vacation: meet up with other Norfolk State University alumni in Las Vegas for a weekend or go tuna fishing off the coast of Tijuana, Mexico. The decision was easy. He hitched up a boat to the back of his pick-up truck and headed south.

Love for Norfolk State

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From the Wilderness to Celebrity Life

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Throughout their lives, the Long siblings – Alex and Alexys – have been inseparable. They try to hang out every day and do as many things as possible together. But when it came to choosing colleges, the brother and sister faced the reality of being apart – or so they thought.

During Alexys’ senior year at Largo High School, located in Clinton, Maryland, Norfolk State offered her a basketball scholarship. She was shocked. Alexys did not expect to receive the offer because she admitted her purpose for playing at the time was solely for the fun of it.

“I wasn’t planning on playing in college, but I got the offer and so did Alex,” said Alexys, “and we kind of looked at each other like, ‘You gonna go? You brother’s decision prior to making her own.

“I like it here and the vibe I got being here. But, with her coming, it was icing on the cake.”

The pair decided NSU was where they wanted to continue their journey and luckily, they got to do it together. Unlike Alex, Alexys really weighed her brother’s decision prior to making her own.

“I can’t speak for him, but my decision was based on his,” said Alex. “My freshman year I was 17 and it was my first time being away from home. He was always here so it didn’t feel like I was far from home.”

Once, arriving on campus and adjusting to college, the pair had the added responsibility of adjusting to college athletics. And like most young student-athletes, Alex quickly realized the intensity difference between high school and college.

“There is a lot of pressure, for sure,” said Alex.

“Honestly, if I came in with the right mental state, I might have done better early. I didn’t know what to expect and I thought it would be like high school,” said Alex. “I soon realized everybody was just as good and I couldn’t get away with just natural talent. It took a while to grasp that.”

Their own learning curves and talent already on the roster meant fewer minutes and less early production than each might have expected. In addition to basketball, they still had academics and the social aspect of college to master, so everything wasn’t perfect early on.

“We have always been close, but when one of us is down or struggling, we go to each other for stuff like that. Honestly, our relationship has helped us through a lot of the stuff we have gone through,” said Alex.

Trust is also a key component to the sibling relationship.

“I have no doubt he wants the best for me, so I don’t hesitate to tell him stuff or when I need someone to tell me it’s time to buckle down, he does that for me too,” said Alexys.

After playing minimal roles their first two seasons, the Long siblings saw their numbers increase last year. Alexys averaged 10.3 points, mostly shooting from deep. Her 3-point shooting percentage was a conference-leading 43.1 percent, and she ranked fourth in three-point per game, with 1.6. She also averaged 4.1 rebounds and 1.0 assist a game.

“My sister is easily one of the best shot blockers in the country,” said Alex. Alexys’ game is more reliant on playing good defense and offense efficiency around the basket. He averaged 10.5 points and 5.8 rebounds per game last season. In conference play, his rebound average increased to 7.0, including a team-high 27 blocks on the year.

“We’re both versatile, but at the same time we have our distinguishing features like rebounding, passing and scoring in different ways,” said Alex. “Both of our mid-range games are good. I’m better around the basket and she’s better from 3, so I could say our games complement one another.”

Although neither sibling compares their games to the other or necessarily sees many comparable traits, the pair often watches each other’s practices, games, and film to give each other advice.

“I usually just tell him things about just shooting more because he’s a better shooter than he thinks and I tell him more technical things about shooting,” said Alex. “After his games, I’ll wait for him to come out the locker room, even though he takes the longest, and I’ll talk more.”

This goes on for as long as the time they spend together because finding time throughout their days as upperclassmen can be difficult.

“We try to hang out as much as we can, but right now our schedules aren’t matching up. That’s rare for us, too, because we’re usually together all the time at home, but I’m in my senior year and she’s in an honors program so I probably say we only hang out once a week right now,” said Alex.

Always agreed with her brother’s statement, but menstruated that all their busy schedules do make finding time to spend together a more creative endeavor.

“As upperclassmen, it’s not as often that we hang out, but in the past we would spend the night in the gym and eat pizza, play NBA 2K with his friends, and shoot all night because our workloads were light,” said Alexys. “Now it’s harder, so we create time to go eat or shoot when we can, and we do things like talk after each other’s games.”

Both players were picked to the preseason All-MEAC teams, Alex to the men’s second team and Alexys to the women’s third team. Individual accolades aside, the siblings are more focused on ever leaving a mark on the NSU basketball program before their departure.

“Every team’s goal is to win a championship, so I want to do everything in my power to help my team do that,” said Alex. “Whether I am asked to rebound more, score, assist, whatever I’m asked to do, I will do it and help lead my team.”

As you could guess, Alex’s answer is not too far off from his sister’s.

“I want to play professionally, but first I want to help our team win a championship,” said Alexys. “I’ve learned so much about myself since being here. The coaches have helped me develop into becoming a better player so I want to do it before my time here runs out.”

This season marks their final opportunity to showcase what those late night shoot-arounds and determination displayed since arriving on campus have produced. Plus, being able to conclude their collegiate careers together just seems right.

2019 WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

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2019 MEN’S BASKETBALL

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All Times Eastern/Home games in bold played at Joseph Echols Hall

Christmas City Classic

2019 MEAC Conference games

* MEAC Tournament
Alumni activities at the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College (VSC) began on November 28, 1949 when the Norfolk Division of Virginia State College Alumni Association was formally organized. At that time, one game during football season was designated as Homecoming. This family reunion has become a celebration that has fostered a long legacy of fellowship, entertainment and Spartan pride.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Seven School, College and Department-based alumni receptions.
- Sold-out musical presentation by the NSU Theatre Company: A musical tribute to Whitney and Aretha.
- Journey to Wakanda: Sparta Forever Alumni Celebration.
- Spartan SpiritFest: a Homecoming marketplace and festival.
- Steven Washington ‘86 was crowned as Mr. Alumni 2018-19.

The Sparta Forever homecoming week ended with a sold-out benefit concert featuring renowned gospel artist Richard Smallwood, sponsored by the Department of Visual and Performing Arts.
MOVERS AND SHAKERS

NSU Alumni

• VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1 •

Brianeisha Eure ’10 recently received the Department of the Navy (DON) Information Management/Information Technology Excellence Award. She was presented with the IT Rising Star of the Year Award. As the award recipient, Eure was recognized for displaying visionary thinking, innovation and superior leadership skills in delivering IT to support the DON’s mission. Eure earned her bachelor’s and her master’s degrees in computer science at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. Eure began her career with the DON as a software engineer in 2010. In her current role, Eure supports the DON’s mission to develop and deliver information technology (IT) systems, services and resources. Eure is the lead software engineer for the DON’s Information Technology (IT) Department. She is responsible for leading a team of software engineers in developing and maintaining IT systems and services for the DON. Eure is a member of the DON Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Executive Board. She is also a member of the DON Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Leadership Council. Eure is a member of the DON Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Executive Board. She is also a member of the DON Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Leadership Council. Eure is a member of the DON Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Executive Board. She is also a member of the DON Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Leadership Council.

Bianca X. Lascano ’13 graduated with a PharmD from Virginia Commonwealth University. She will be continuing her studies by completing a postgraduate community pharmacy residency with SanfordMemory University at the Christ Health Center in Birmingham, Alabama. Bianca states, “she could not have made it this far without her strong chemistry foundation she received from Norfolk State University.”

Stephanie (Fuller) Harry ’90, ’95 was selected as a 2018-2019 Albert Einstein Fellow by the Department of Energy. Harry, who teaches in the Hampton City School district, was among 14 educators chosen from across the country. The Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program provides a unique opportunity for accomplished K-12 STEM educators to apply their extensive classroom knowledge and experiences at a federal agency or a U.S. Congressional office in Washington, D.C., engaged in the national STEM education arena.

Rev. Dr. Jonathan A. Mason Sr. (B.S. ’95, M.A. ’15) through his company, JAM Media Solutions, has purchased six radio stations in the Outer Banks. Mason began JAM after 20 years in media sales and management. Since his graduation from NSU, Mason has served as the 34th International President of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., been presented with an NSU Distinguished Alumni Award and has served as the University’s commencement speaker where he was conferred with the honorary doctorate of Humane Letters. Mason has established an endowment for NSU Mass Communications students, and he currently serves as pastor of Northeast Baptist Church.

Frankie Pollock Jr. ’02 was named principal of Creekside High School in Fulton County, Georgia. A veteran educator, Pollock has served as Creekside High’s assistant principal for two years. He began his career 17 years ago as a teacher in Norfolk and has worked in the school districts of New Hanover County, Wilmington, N.C., Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Charlotte, N.C., and Harrisburg Schools in Pennsylvania.

Tiffany Williams ’04 was selected by Coastal Virginia Business Magazine with 20 other professionals as a Millennium on the Move. Williams appeared in its June/July 2018 issue. Additionally, she is president of the Junior League of Norfolk/Virginia Beach — the second African American to serve in that capacity since the organization was established in this area in 1925.

The Lawrenceville Town Council launched a program encouraging people who have ties to Brunswick County to display flags from educational institutions at Peebles Park. Norfolk State was recently recognized. Pictured left to right are Councilman H. B. “Buck” Breckwell Jr., Rhonda R. Parham and Donnell C. Parham ’90, who are about to raise the Norfolk State University (home of the Spartans) flag. —Photo by Sylvia Allen/Bruneck Times-Gazette

Dr. Aurizia T. Williams (B.S. ’94), director of the Cybersecurity Complex, was interviewed by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund about the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) field. The article, “HBCUs and PBIs usher in a new era of cybersecurity, appears in TMCF’s digital newsletter.

Dr. George Parker III (B.S. ’89, M.A. ’97) was selected as the new superintendent of Newport News Public Schools as of July 1, 2018. Dr. Parker previously served as the superintendent for Caroline County schools. He earned his bachelor’s in computer science and his master’s in educational leadership from Norfolk State.

Frances Eure ’10 was recently awarded a Foundation for Excellence in Leadership and Management (LEAD) fellowship by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). The fellowship is a one-year, part-time program designed to provide opportunities for K-12 educators to apply their extensive classroom knowledge and experiences at a federal agency or a U.S. Congressional office in Washington, D.C., engaged in the national STEM education arena.

The Lawrenceville Town Council launched a program encouraging people who have ties to Brunswick County to display flags from educational institutions at Peebles Park. Norfolk State was recently recognized. Pictured left to right are Councilman H. B. “Buck” Breckwell Jr., Rhonda R. Parham and Donnell C. Parham ’90, who are about to raise the Norfolk State University (home of the Spartans) flag. —Photo by Sylvia Allen/Bruneck Times-Gazette

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On Thursday, October 18, the NSU Alumni Association Inc. publicly recognized and honored members and chapters of the alumni association who have supported its mission and goals. Malinda G. Thompson ’87 received the NSUAA’s Alumnus of the Year Award. Padreus Pratter ’06, Sante’ Smith ’91 and Millard “Pete” Stith, Sr. ’71 each received the Chapter Service Award.

The final recognition of the evening was the Chapter of the Year Award. Two chapters received the award based on their total financial membership at the time of submission. The recipients have consistently supported the mission and goals of the alumni association and donated their time and treasure to Norfolk State University. The Alumni Cheerleader Chapter received the 2018 Chapter of the Year Award for the 35 and under membership category, while the Military Alumni Chapter received the award for the 36+ membership category.

Members of the Divine Nine lines who crossed in 1983 held their 35th Anniversary during Homecoming 2018. Forty alumni representing the 1983 spring and fall lines of Alpha Phi Alpha, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Kappa Alpha Psi and Omega Psi Phi were present. This group of dedicated alumni presented the University President with a check for $10,500.
The style, musicality and presence of the Spartan Legion is personified and set to electronic music in a video produced by the Grammy award-winning electronic music duo Justice. See the video at [www.nsu.edu](http://www.nsu.edu).