

February/March 2025

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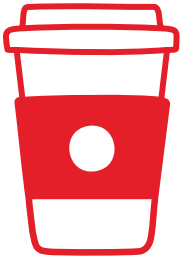
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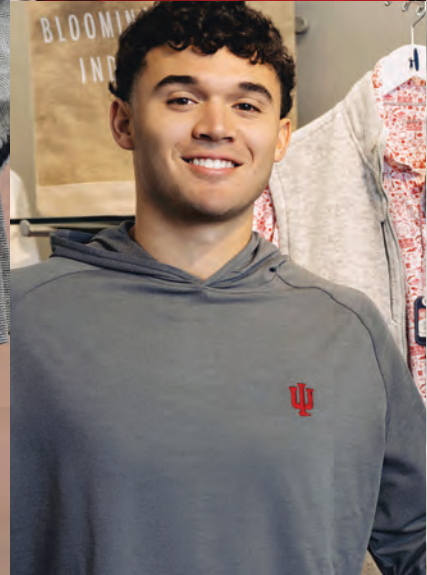
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Bloomington's two largest high schools have produced a number of notable graduates—professional athletes, musicians, writers, and more. Check out these stellar former students.

By Brittany Marshall

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Get to know three young superstars in emerging technologies and cybersecurity, DEI, and global philanthropy, each of whom is making their mark in Bloomington and the world.

By Rodney Margison, Elizabeth Ellis & Greg Siering;  
photography by Rodney Margison



Photo by Rodney Margison

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Three Bloomingtonians left one successful career for a completely new one, and are doing well.



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# Black History Month

February is Black History Month in America and Bloomington has plenty of Black history to celebrate. The contributions of African Americans to our community far outweigh their numbers, estimated today to be roughly 3,700—less than 5% of our population.

Over the years, there have been many heralded activists and community leaders like Elizabeth Eagleson Bridgwaters (see *Bloom*, February/March 2013), Rev. Earnest D. Butler (see *Bloom*, February/March 2014), and Clarence W. Gilliam, who drafted the City's first fair housing ordinance in 1968. Architect Bill Haynes, independently and as an Indiana University staff architect, designed many of the buildings in and around our city.

LaVerta Terry was the first Black teacher in the Monroe County school system and co-founder of the IU Groups Scholars Program. Jim Holland was a celebrated IU zoology professor and mentor; the Hudson and Holland Scholarship Program was created to honor his contributions to educating minority students. Herman C. Hudson was a conduit between the university and the larger community and founder of the Department of Afro-American Studies. Charlie Nelms, still active, was the first African American chancellor of an IU campus. And over at Tri-North Middle School, Joe Boddie is such a respected and beloved teacher and basketball coach that the Joe Boddie Gymnasium was named in his honor.

The contributions of George and Viola Taliaferro are monumental, and I hope someday the City will get around to honoring them (like maybe renaming Switchyard Park in their memory). George, the greatest athlete in IU history, helped desegregate Bloomington. Vi was a Monroe County Circuit Court judge specializing in juvenile justice—the first African American

judge south of Indianapolis. The Indiana State Bar Association has an Honorable Viola J. Taliaferro Award.

Today, Bloomington has many remarkable Black citizens making important contributions to our lives. To name just a few: Markay Winston is the new superintendent of Monroe County Consolidated School Corporation (see Page 30); Denzil Ross is president of IU Health South Central Region (see *Bloom*, April/May 2024); writer, activist, and actor Gladys DeVane and African American historian Liz Mitchell teach us important history we were never taught in school through their Resilience Productions (see *Bloom*, February/March 2023); Jim Sims is a former City Council president and current president of the Monroe County NAACP, and his wife, Doris, led the City's Housing and Neighborhood Development Department; and this year's recipient of the City's Legacy Award at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration, Beverly Calender-Anderson, recently retired as head of the City's Department of Community and Family Resources. Oh, and there's Brother William Morris, that cat whose Soul Kitchen program entertains us Friday afternoons on WFIU-FM.

I could go on and on and on naming citizens of color who enrich our lives. I invite readers to email me with names I've left out. I am forever appreciative of the diversity of Bloomington and the way our Black, Latino, Muslim, Jewish, and LGBTQ+ communities cooperate and support one another. We are in a good place.

**Malcolm Abrams**  
**editor@magbloom.com**

# Bloomington

INDIANA

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by Audrey Thomas McCluskey, Ph.D.  
Emerita Professor, African American & African Diaspora Studies  
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*The opinions expressed by Guest Columnists are those of the author(s)  
and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Bloom Magazine.*

# White Identity Politics in the 2024 Election

Dr. Maya Angelou's famous quote is timely: "If a person shows you who they are, believe them the first time!" While important strides have been made in addressing America's original sin—centuries of chattel slavery and its legacy—progress has zigzagged for Black Americans.

Today, some want to excise the inglorious parts of our nation's history out of school curricula for being "uncomfortable" subjects. America has shown us, once again, who it is. It chose a convicted felon found liable for sexual assault, a Bible imposter, a misogynistic, race-baiting white man, over an experienced, faith-filled, qualified Black and Asian woman for the presidency of this likely teetering democracy. It is an awful, threatening feeling for many of us. What did we not understand about America that led to this outcome?

Consider an analogy from writer James Baldwin: Imagine looking up in the sky every night and seeing the same star, fixed in place. It is reassuring of one's place in the universe. For many white Americans, Black Americans are that fixed star—expected to be in a certain place. It is unnerving, then, to look up and find that the star has moved. It is not where they expected it to be. That is disorienting to white America's sense of place in a world/universe that they claim as theirs. A multiracial democracy is a threat to their sense of self and place. One star that moved became a two-term Black president. A Black woman president? That's a star moved w-a-y too far for some stargazers!

Pundits claim that the lack of support among minority groups, including Black and Latino men—less than 6% of the electorate—cost Kamala Harris the election. Actually, the only minority group that overwhelmingly voted for Donald Trump was Cuban Americans. Meanwhile, white voters upped their share of the electorate to 71%; with 57% voting for Trump, outpacing all other groups. In white Christian denominations, the majority voted for Trump. Among those, only college-educated white women favored Harris; while 92% of all Black women and 79% of Jewish voters chose Harris. This election brought identity politics out into the open—white identity politics. The Republican Party is their party. This coalition unites white workers and their billionaire bosses, showing that white workers prioritize their race over their pensions.

Historically, high promise and crushing defeat happened before to Black Americans. An example was in the aftermath of the Civil War that the North won, at least on the battlefield—not so much in the minds of many white Americans. (Note the proliferation of

Confederate flags at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020.) Black men helped win the war and were promised land. Some received it, but following President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, the Southerner vice president, Andrew Johnson, ascended and returned the land to former enslavers. Additionally, the Freedman's Savings Bank, set up in 1865 with hope-filled deposits from freed people, was mismanaged by its white directors, failing in 1874. Losing everything, many Blacks were forced to work for "shares" on former slaveowners' land.

Did they give up? No! Emancipated people built schools (the first public schools in the South), churches, Masonic lodges, and civic organizations. This was true even as Jim Crow segregation took hold in the South and "up North," where many fled, seeking better lives while being ushered into ghettos.

They pressed on—leaning into the 1960s' Civil Rights Movement that legally ended Jim Crow.

In the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s last book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), he answered by making "hope" his central theme. He chastised whites for holding on to their false sense of racial superiority. Black Americans, King urged, must keep fighting for justice! That recurring message was echoed by Black writers, including Harlem Renaissance poet Sterling A. Brown, whose 1931 excerpted poem, "Strong Men" echoes that message (women added):

*What, from the slums  
Where they have hemmed you.  
...  
They could not keep from you  
What reaches them  
Making them ill at ease, fearful?  
... One thing they cannot prohibit—  
The strong men gittin'  
Stronger.  
Strong men ...  
Stronger ...*

We live in contentious times in which people have strong opinions. Bloom invites readers of all sentiments to submit guest columns. Opinions must be based on facts, writers must sign their full names, provide contact information, and there must be no advocacy of violence. Submit to [editor@magbloom.com](mailto:editor@magbloom.com).

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# contributors



**Elizabeth Ellis** WRITER: YOUNG SUPERSTARS Elizabeth is a content developer for the Indiana University School of Public Health and freelancer with 15 years of experience writing and editing for a variety of publications—from medical journals to nationwide boating magazines. A mom and Hoosier at heart, she likes a good underdog story and spotlighting people making a difference in their communities. When Elizabeth isn't writing, she enjoys amateur photography with her trusty Canon Rebel, listening to audiobooks and vinyl records, traveling with her family, and a good Upland craft brew.



**Greg Siering** WRITER: YOUNG SUPERSTARS Greg has written for Bloom since 2016, starting out as the beer columnist and moving on to other stories. His day job is directing the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning at Indiana University—Bloomington, where he promotes inclusive and equitable education. He has recently been focusing that work on the challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence within higher education. He has lived in Bloomington with his wife, Carmen, since 2010.



**Brittany Marshall** WRITER: CELEBRATING BLOOMINGTON'S HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI Brittany is a Bloomington native who lives here with her husband and three children. After earning a bachelor's degree in communication and culture at Indiana University, she worked as a corporate public relations specialist before starting her own business as a freelance writer and communications professional. She enjoys interviewing people and writing about their passions. See her work at [brittanymarshallcreative.com](http://brittanymarshallcreative.com).



**Rodney Margison** WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER: YOUNG SUPERSTARS Prior to joining the staff at Bloom, where he's now the managing editor, Rodney had a robust career as a newspaper photojournalist and reporter before expanding into editorial and artistic portraiture. In addition to photography and writing, he enjoys reading, running, kayaking, traveling, and being a husband, father, and cat dad.

# corrections

On page 30 of our October/November 2024 issue, we incorrectly explained why photographer Alexandra McNichols-Torroledo left Columbia. She left due to the cocaine war and the ongoing violence there. In addition, her work on ESX/COCA was also exhibited at the FAR Center for Contemporary Art.

In photo captions on Page 36 of our December 2024/January 2025 issue, we misidentified two artists in the in "The State of Democracy" exhibition curated by Nicole Jacquard at the John Waldron Arts Center (right).



Vote, please ... by Andrew Kuebeck

Thou Shalt Not by Angela Caldwell



# Bloom

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Responses to the December 2024/January 2025 Editor's Message, "Kamala Never Had a Chance"

Yep, but you forgot abortion is healthcare, gun nuts, pro-family, anti-trans, anti-gay, and anti-immigrants.

The truth was nothing you posted. You are out of touch and just don't grasp the average person was sick of the crap over the last four years.

The only thing you accomplished is to give me a list of people to call on why they are not getting my business.

**MIKE SEIWERT AKA MIKE STEWART**

*Good letter, Mike. It speaks to your intelligence and character. (Note: True to his word, Mike phoned many of our advertisers and threatened to withhold his business.)—the editor*

I'm a Democrat. In my 74 years, I've observed tremendous improvement in the understanding and acceptance of a wide range of social issues. Race relations have figured prominently in this renaissance. If the Democratic Party genuinely believed racism and misogyny would hamper their efforts to end Trump's political career, why then run Kamala? We lost because we had a bad candidate who was afraid or ill-advised to answer policy questions. Race and gender had little to do with it. When asked on *The View* what would you (Kamala) do differently than President Biden? She replied, "Nothing comes to mind."

**SCOTT THOMPSON**

I agree totally with your take on why Harris did not win. I liked her and felt she was highly qualified, but sadly, that holds little weight in a country full of racists and misogynists.

**DEBBIE FISH**

Editorial was pitch perfect, and I always support your advertisers.

**MARY KILEY LADD**

Yes! Harris and her campaign are not to blame. The editorial sums it up well. I fear I underestimated the depth and breadth of misogyny and racism in our country. Sadly (or tragically, as I perceive it) Trump's win, including the popular vote, shattered those illusions.

**PAULETTE BERMAN FAGEN**

I read the editorial. It is spot on.

**PAMELA BRETSCH BESSLER**

Excellent summary of how so many of us are feeling.

**SUSAN WELSAND**

Loved your editorial.

**JAN BULLA-BAKER**

I guess Mikey doesn't like the truth or facts.

**JULIA CONLIN**

The editorial is right on the mark. Time to remove the rose-colored glasses.

**JANET STAVROPOULOS**

The Editorial Page is my favorite page in *Bloom* and the first thing I read.

**DIANN MAY LOCK**

Thanks for this editorial. The only way we can get better is if we are honest with each other. This absolutely nails it.

**DON GRIFFIN**

I appreciated your Editor's Message this edition.

**JOHN WHIKEHART**

From up here in Canada it looks pretty much like you're on the money! Always has. There's so much that is wonderful about America, but, unfortunately, there's also a very dark side.

**TOBI GORDON**

As one who hopes her life has stood for human/civil rights, I'm so saddened to have to admit that I agree with this editorial. But we must not be discouraged, bitter, or defeated—carry on!!

**SHERRY WATKINS**

I read your editorial with disappointment. I agree Kamala Harris' campaign managers are not to blame for her loss. They ran a good campaign in the time they were given.

I strongly disagree with putting the blame of her loss on her gender, race, and her Jewish husband, as I feel you have done. The implication in your message is that Gavin Newsom was a better choice as a white man simply because he was a white man.

How will Gavin Newsome and other straight, Christian, white men (your descriptors) elected to the presidency (instead of haters' dream ticket candidates) make racist and sexist Americans accept the idea of a woman handling foreign policy disputes with China? What does another white male president do to connect them to black female candidates?

We've had a female Speaker of the House and a black female Vice President. We've had a gay Secretary of Transportation. We have our first out transgender congresswoman. They have faced/are facing tremendous pushback because of who they are but they are still here.

Why is the goal winning the presidency instead of fighting racism, fighting misogyny, and standing up to fascism?

**CLAIRE WHITE**

# The 2024 Bloom Magazine Community Award Winners

During the *Bloom* Holiday Party at One World at Woolery Mill on December 19, *Bloom* Editor and Publisher Malcolm Abrams presented the 2024 *Bloom* Community Awards.

*Bloom Magazine* has four missions: to support local businesses, local charities, the arts, and diversity. The *Bloom* Community Awards were created to honor individuals and organizations who advance these missions in Bloomington. The crystal awards have four pillars, each representing one of the *Bloom* missions.

This year, two new awards were presented for support of local journalism.



The *Bloom* Community Awards recognize outstanding individuals and groups who support *Bloom*'s four missions. The 2024 winners are (front row, l-r) Nicole Griffin, for Support of Diversity; Melinda Seader and Aubrey Seader, Off-Night Productions, for Support of the Arts; (back row, l-r) Don Griffin, for Support of Diversity; the Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Beacon Inc., for Support of Charities; John Whikehart, for Support of Local Businesses; Dave Askins, *B Square Bulletin*, for Support of Local Journalism; and Jeremy Hogan, *The Bloomingtonian*, for Support of Local Journalism. Photo by Rodney Margison

## THE 2024 AWARD WINNERS ARE:

### Don and Nicole Griffin

*Support of Diversity*

Nicole and Donald Griffin Jr. grew up in Bloomington, then decided to return after college. Nicole is the director of the Indiana University Visitor Information Center, and Donald is the broker/owner of Griffin Realty. Nicole and Donald believe in Bloomington and have given back to this community by creating the City of Bloomington Black History Month Living Legend Award and by co-founding the Monroe County Black Democratic Caucus and the Heritage Project Summer Camp. By serving on boards and commissions both on the IU campus and in the community, the Griffins affirm their commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.

### Aubrey and Melinda Seader, Co-Founders, Off-Night Productions

*Support of the Arts*

Aubrey Seader, daughter, and Melinda Seader, mother, are co-founders of Off Night Productions, a female-led theater company producing contemporary theater and music on off-nights of the traditional performance week. Off Night Productions aims to tackle issues and limitations seen in the theater industry locally and globally by extending the traditional performance week, prioritizing female and non-binary artistic leadership, and practicing sustainability from the planning stages through set tear down. Aubrey and Melinda offer a collective 40 years of experience in theater, including performance, design, production, and administration. They and their board are excited to help grow and shape Bloomington's thriving arts ecosystem through Off Night Productions.

### John Whikehart

*Support of Local Businesses*

John Whikehart is formerly the chancellor of Ivy Tech Bloomington and Bloomington's Deputy Mayor. He has been involved in advisory boards for the Monroe Convention Center—leading two of them—since 2017. Since 2023, he has been president of the Monroe County Capital Improvements Board (CIB) where he created the Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District advisory committee to assist the CIB in both the integration of the arts into the design and later the marketing for the upcoming Convention Center expansion project, which will support all the nearby businesses and attractions with an estimated \$9 million annual impact on direct revenue generated for the local arts and restaurant scene, and as much as an \$18 million annual impact in support of new food and beverage, innkeepers, and property tax revenues.

### The Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director, Beacon Inc.

*Support of Charities*

The Rev. Forrest Gilmore has led Beacon Inc. as its executive director for nearly 15 years. In his tenure, the organization has grown 10 times its original size to a \$3.5 million annual budget with a staff of over 30. During that time, Beacon has expanded to include three Housing First Permanent Supportive Housing programs for disabled, chronically homeless individuals and families, a rapid re-housing program for working homeless families, and an overnight shelter. Beacon is now the largest nonprofit provider of housing for people struggling with poverty in Monroe County. ►

## Jeremy Hogan, Founder, 'The Bloomingtonian'

Support of Local Journalism

Jeremy Hogan is a world-class news photographer and journalist. For 22 years he covered local news working at *The Herald-Times*. In 2019, he founded his website, *The Bloomingtonian*. His editorial video work, distributed globally through Getty Images, and his photography, featured by agencies like Getty and The Associated Press, appear in national and international news outlets. The Bloomingtonian provides independent coverage of local events, breaking news, and features, crime and fire reporting, with a focus on visual journalism. Jeremy's award-winning photography is featured in every issue of *Bloom* in our two-page Big Picture.

## David Askins, Founder, 'B Square Bulletin'

Support of Local Journalism

More than a half decade ago, Dave Askins launched the *B Square Bulletin*, a one-man, online-only news outlet focused on local government. He wrote a couple thousand articles in that time, starting with the idea that the workings of local government are important—covering boards, commissions, and councils that many did not even know existed. Askins added a mountain of useful facts to the local news commons during his tenure operating the publication, and contributed a regular column, "Dave Askins at City Hall," to *Bloom*. ✨



The Bloom Magazine Community Awards. Photo by Lisa Spencer



(l-r) Academy students Bryson Montgomery, Elwyn Vegerler, and Lucas Wiatrowski with instructor Joann Novak. Courtesy photo

## MCCSC Academy Students Place in Statewide Competition

A team of three students from The Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship placed fifth out of 59 projects in the statewide computer science competition CSforGood held December 4 at the Indiana Statehouse in

Indianapolis. The team developed an app prototype called Hoolio that allows teams to post job reviews to help other teens make informed employment decisions. Students presented their work to judges, legislators, policy leaders, influencers, and the tech community.

I think the most rewarding part of the whole thing for me was actually getting the opportunity to go to the Statehouse," says Academy student Lucas Wiatrowski. "I'm incredibly proud of the work we accomplished and am infinitely grateful for the opportunity to be there in the first place."



Charles Pearce. Courtesy photo

## Arts Alliance Gets Exec Director, Acquires By Hand Gallery

In the span of less than a month, Arts Alliance of Greater Bloomington (AAGB) announced a staff addition and a gallery acquisition. In December, Charles R. Pearce was named as the organization's first executive director. Pearce, a seasoned creative director and arts advocate, will focus on strategic growth, community engagement, and expanding opportunities for artists to showcase

their work. "[Pearce's] passion and expertise will undoubtedly help us celebrate and elevate the incredible talent and creativity that make Bloomington a hub for the arts," says AAGB President Henry Leck.

In January, AAGB announced it was acquiring By Hand Gallery in Fountain Square Mall—known for its curated selection of hand-crafted artwork by local and regional artists—on the retirement of its owners. "The addition of By Hand Gallery complements our existing initiatives and underscores our commitment to the cultural landscape of Bloomington," Pearce says.



Beverly Calender-Anderson. Courtesy photo

## Beverly Calender-Anderson Named 2025 Legacy Award Recipient

Longtime City of Bloomington Safe and Civil City Director and most recently Director of Community and Family Resources Beverly Calender-Anderson was selected by the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission to receive the City's 2025 Legacy Award. "Calendar-Anderson demonstrated a profound commitment to advancing race relations, justice, and human rights," Michelle

Moss, City of Bloomington Volunteer Network Coordinator, says in a press release announcing the award. "She worked collaboratively with a diverse array of organizations, individuals, and institutions to champion equity and inclusivity."

The award was presented to Calender-Anderson at the City's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration, held January 20 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. "Beverly's legacy of promoting unity and understanding continues to inspire and uplift our community," Moss says. ✨

# Bloom's 18th Annual Holiday Party



Photography by Rodney Margison

One World at Woolery Mill was the site of *Bloom Magazine's* 18th annual Holiday Party. More than 250 of Bloomington's civic and business leaders, educators, and members of the charitable and arts communities attended the gala. The fabulous array of food included beef bourguignon, grilled salmon, crab cakes, an Asian noodle bar, mashed potato bar, a vast charcuterie spread, and a mouth-watering selection of desserts. A merry time was had by all. ✨



1



2



3

1. Malcolm Abrams, founder, editor, and publisher of *Bloom*, visits with Monroe County Community School Corporation Superintendent Markay Winston.
2. The dessert selection prepared by One World Catering was over the top.
3. Taking a break for a photo op are (l-r) husband and wife Jeromi Quade and Betsy Greene with Green & Schultz, J.T. Forbes with Indiana University Foundation, former IU President Michael McRobbie, Martha Shedd, and former IU first lady Laurie McRobbie.



4. (l-r) Jonathan and Gretchen Nall with Bloomington Rentals and Realty, actor Kate Braun, and Mirth's Kelly Forgas and Quinn Wilson strike a pose for the camera.
5. (l-r) Martha and David Moore, owners of the FAR Center for Contemporary Art and The Elm restaurant, chat with entertainment attorney Robert Meitus and his singer/songwriter wife, Carrie Newcomer.



4



5



6. (l-r) Bloomington's Grande Dame Charlotte Zietlow, a Bloom party regular, and Jillian Kinzie, associate director of the IU Center for Postsecondary Research and the National Survey of Student Engagement Institute.

7. Representing Morgenstern Books are (l-r) Ben Strawn and his wife, Jenn Cristy, and Jenna Bowman with her husband, Steve Bowman.



7



8

8. (l-r) Screenwriter and filmmaker Angelo Pizzo and filmmaker Bobbi Bowden talk shop with director and friend David Anspaugh.  
9. (l-r) Ken Keffer and Heather Ray, husband-and-wife co-owners of Wild Birds Unlimited, take a moment for a quick portrait.



9

10. Talisha Coppock (right), executive director of Downtown Bloomington Inc., chats with Steve Versaw, executive director of the Buskirk-Chumley Theater, and his wife, Amy Waechter-Versaw.

11. The grazing table, filled with a selection of fine charcuterie, was the centerpiece of the party.



10



11





# The Big Picture

## White Out

Photo by Jeremy Hogan of *The Bloomingtonian*

Sledders display their derring-do down a steep slope at Tri-North Middle School, 1000 W. 15th St., the evening after a major winter storm on January 6 in Bloomington. According to the National Weather Service office in Indianapolis, Bloomington received 9 1/2 inches of snow from the two-day storm, the first significant snowfall of the season. (See more pictures on Pages 26–27.)

# Snowmageddon 2025

Photos by Jeremy Hogan of *The Bloomingtonian*



Nine and a half inches of snow fell on Bloomington during the first major winter storm of the season on January 5 and 6, according to the National Weather Service office in Indianapolis. Snowmageddon 2025 closed schools and created hazardous road conditions across the city, county, and state. Monroe County Community School Corporation was closed completely on January 6, moved to asynchronous eLearning on January 7, and had a two-hour delay on January 8, and between midnight and 9 a.m. on January 6, Indiana State Police responded to 228 slide offs, 210 property damage crashes, and 34 personal injury crashes, according to Indiana Public Media.





Despite being buried under a white blanket, Bloomington residents made the most of their snow days by bundling up to go sledding, to trek down the snowy streets, or to shovel their way out.



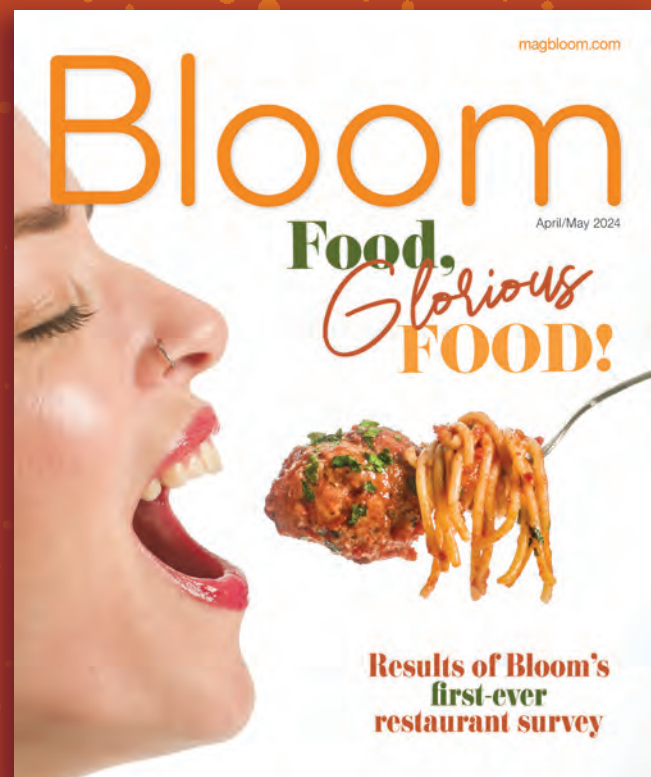
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"In our town, **we like to know** the facts about everybody." —Thornton Wilder, *Our Town*

## Markay Winston New MCCSC Superintendent

by Janet Mandelstam

Markay Winston says she's an excellent listener.

And listening is what the new superintendent of Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) has been doing. Winston has held more than 200 meetings with parents, teachers, students, community members and organizations, business leaders, and others—beginning even before she was appointed to the position by the MCCSC Board of Trustees in January.

"I wanted to be approachable and accessible," says Winston, who had been serving as interim superintendent since July

2024. "I didn't want to assume that I knew everything I needed to know to lead" MCCSC, which includes 23 schools and more than 10,000 students. So, she began a "listening journey."

"Families, teachers, principals, community members—they all want an opportunity to be heard, to share their needs and ideas, to tell us what we are getting right, what we are not getting right."

While Winston says it is important to get out into the community, she has held many of her meetings at school sites. These have included a chili supper at Fairview Elementary and several "Muffins with Markay" sessions, which she says offer families "an opportunity for casual chit-chat about their children." They are also about building relationships with parents and with other educators.

### Health and safety come first

"Our families from every walk of life have told me that the health and safety—physical and emotional—of their children is of the utmost importance. Our job is to make sure students feel emotionally safe and to keep them physically safe."

In response, she has put "strengthening our health and safety efforts" at the top of her list of strategic priorities as superintendent. Other priorities include "keeping students at the center of all our decision-making," expanding early learning programs, ensuring that all sites have "state-of-the-art academic, performing arts, and athletic facilities," strengthening the fiscal and operational health of the corporation, and establishing a five-year strategic plan.

For Winston, listening is just one half of the "authentic" two-way communication she envisions. "I think what we do every day in



Markay Winston, the new superintendent of MCCSC, is focused on listening to her community, inclusivity, health and safety, and students' mental health. Photo by Rodney Margison

our schools is amazing, but we don't always do a good job of telling our stories," she says. "I'm excited about telling more stories about our students—success stories. It's my vision for the community to know even more about how well our students are doing."

Though new to her position, Winston is no stranger to MCCSC. She arrived in Bloomington in 2017 as director of curriculum and instruction and served as assistant superintendent and then deputy superintendent before assuming the interim title last summer. Her resume reflects a doctorate in school psychology and counseling from the University of Cincinnati and high-level positions in the Cincinnati, Dayton, and Chicago public school systems, including as chief diverse learner officer for the latter.

### Advocate for those who learn differently

But her commitment to education began much earlier. Winston grew up on an Iowa farm in a family with six siblings. Education, ▶

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she says, was very important to her parents, and all seven children were expected to attend college. “We always played school,” she recalls, “and I was always the teacher.” She tells the story of a cousin who was “a neurodivergent learner. He and I did everything in the community together; we rode the school bus together; we got off the school bus together, but then we went different ways”—her cousin to a special education classroom, she to a general education classroom. That experience, she says, first awakened in her “the desire to be an educator and to be an advocate for children who learn differently.”

So instead of becoming a teacher, she became a school psychologist who has focused on curriculum and instruction. “I’ve always recognized that the way we present our curriculum influences how people learn and creates barriers or opportunities for students,” she says. Throughout her career she has emphasized inclusive classrooms that “focus on the unique needs of every learner and that identify and eliminate opportunity gaps.”

### COVID-19 and valuing education

Her new job is not without challenges. “The state of the mental health of our children is of utmost priority,” Winston says. “Since COVID, social media has had an impact on their sense of self and self-esteem. Our job is to respond, provide support, and counseling.

“And we need to make sure that students are valuing education,” she says. “During remote learning some families and students began to devalue education, and attendance was down. We will continually focus on attendance, which is now going up.”

But the overall goal remains constant: “To make sure that our students are happy, that they feel safe and secure, and that they have the quality learning experiences that are preparing them to have a significant role in our community. Our job is to make sure they have a choice, that they are able to decide what they want to do when they leave us, and that we have prepared them for that.

“My vision is for MCCSC to become the number one school corporation in southern Indiana.” ✨



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# Spyridon “Strats” Stratigos Legendary Bloomingtonian

by Peter Dorfman

Food and film have been recurrent themes in the life of Spyridon Stratigos—“Strats” to his many friends.

Arriving at Indiana University as a freshman in 1967, Strats lived in a fraternity house for a year, but quickly became disillusioned with the Greek life. However, he formed lifelong bonds with frat brothers destined to become some of Bloomington’s most notable, including future Hollywood filmmakers Angelo Pizzo and David Anspaugh.

Strats was a founder of the vegetarian restaurant called the Tao, a Bloomington institution in the 1970s. In 1973, he joined



From founding a restaurant to choreographing basketball scenes for the film *Hoosiers*, Spyridon “Strats” Stratigos has been a mainstay in the Bloomington food and film scenes for decades. Photo by Martin Boling

the Y

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Pete Poolitsan, whose family owned the popular Gables Restaurant. The pair ran the Gables until it closed in 1978. Strats was also a partner with Michael Cassady in The Uptown Cafe for 15 years.

Along the way, he found a voice onstage. “I was involved in the Bloomington Playwrights Project for years,” he notes. “I acted in two or three shows a year in the ‘80s and ‘90s.”

And he’s been in several of Pizzo’s and Anspaugh’s films. Drawing on his years of experience playing high school basketball, he choreographed basketball scenes in *Hoosiers*. “I wrote Gene Hackman’s little coaching exhortations—‘Call ‘em both ways, ref!’ ‘Cover the baseline!’” Strats says. “I advised him how to move like a coach.”

Hackman, the lead actor in *Hoosiers* and a famous perfectionist, is said to have been difficult. “We were shooting a scene where I was a ref and I kicked Gene out of one of the games, and I kept missing my mark. Dennis Hopper kept kidding me about it. He would

come out and put a bigger mark on the floor. Gene just got irritated. But after it was all over, Gene told me I’d been a big help.”

Strats, now 75, plays a middle school football coach in Pizzo’s new film, *Someone Saved My Life*, shot in Bloomington in the fall of 2024. It’s a comeback for Strats, who lost his wife, Niki Gerschoffer, to ALS in 2022. He’d been her primary caregiver, an experience he remembers as the hardest but most rewarding of his life. These days he nurtures the organic farm he and Gerschoffer shared in Owen County, and he’s been restoring a duplex house in Prospect Hill.

“I’d like to do more theater,” he says, “I’m starting to rebuild a life.”

He’ll be onscreen again, in an upcoming documentary by filmmaker Andrew Cohen that focuses on the long, sometimes fraught working relationship between Pizzo and Anspaugh. “It turns out I’m the storyteller in it,” Strats says. “Cohen recorded 25 or 30 hours of material at my house.” ✱

# Lisa Robbin Young

## Radio Program Creator

by Linda Margison

Long before she started ushering WFIU-FM listeners into their days, local *Morning Edition* host and producer Lisa Robbin Young wanted to create a radio show. Now she has succeeded by airing the station's first multimedia, cross-platform program, *The Influencers*, which debuted in January.

*The Influencers* combines short-form video for YouTube, audio podcasts, and an hour-long radio show to bridge the gap between the station's current audience, who listens to classical and jazz, and a younger audience that listens to pop and

Lisa Robbin Young created WFIU-FM's first multimedia, cross-platform program, *The Influencers*, to bridge the gap between young and old listeners. Photo by Jim Krause



contemporary music. Young combines internet searching, interviewing, researching, and input from educators, historians, journalists, and fans to dig back hundreds of years to find the earliest influences that have paved the way for popular music artists of the last 50 years.

"I wanted to create something that shows us how—in this big old world—we're all connected in interesting and surprising ways, especially when it comes to music," Young says, explaining that the multimedia approach will reach listeners on platforms they already use instead of trying to pull everyone into broadcast radio. "This show allows us to connect the dots across the ages."

The idea came about because Young, 50, wanted to work on a project that combined all her talents and tapped into her experience—30 years as a business consultant, primarily coaching micro-business owners and entrepreneurs—and educational background, including a degree in music history and music theory with a minor in vocal performance from the University of Michigan-Flint. She also pulls from her experience of writing two books—*The Secret Watch* (CreateSpace, 2012), a business parable, and *Creative Freedom: How to Own Your Dreams Without Selling Your Soul* (CreateSpace, 2017)—and producing the *Creative Freedom* video show and podcast.

"This was the perfect opportunity to create something that could really leave a lasting legacy for the station," Young says, hinting at cruising into her retirement age. "I can build it, but I don't have to stay attached to it forever. I can get it off the ground and set it up so anybody can step in and carry on the tradition of telling these stories and making these connections."

Learn more at [wfiu.org/theinfluencers](http://wfiu.org/theinfluencers) and at [lisarobbinyoung.com](http://lisarobbinyoung.com). \*

An advertisement for Dale Steffey Books. The background is a photograph of a man, Dale Steffey, sitting in a room filled with bookshelves. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, it says "DALE STEFFEY BOOKS" in large, white, serif font. Below that, in smaller white text, it says "Member: Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America" and "International League of Antiquarian Booksellers". There is a small logo for the Antiquarian Booksellers Association (ABA). The main text lists the types of books sold: "Academic &amp; Scholarly", "Rare &amp; Collectible", "Literature", "Mystery", "Fine Bindings", and "Ephemera". At the bottom, it says "Purchasing single items to collections", "steffeyadams@yahoo.com", and "812-333-2903h, 812-345-1768c".

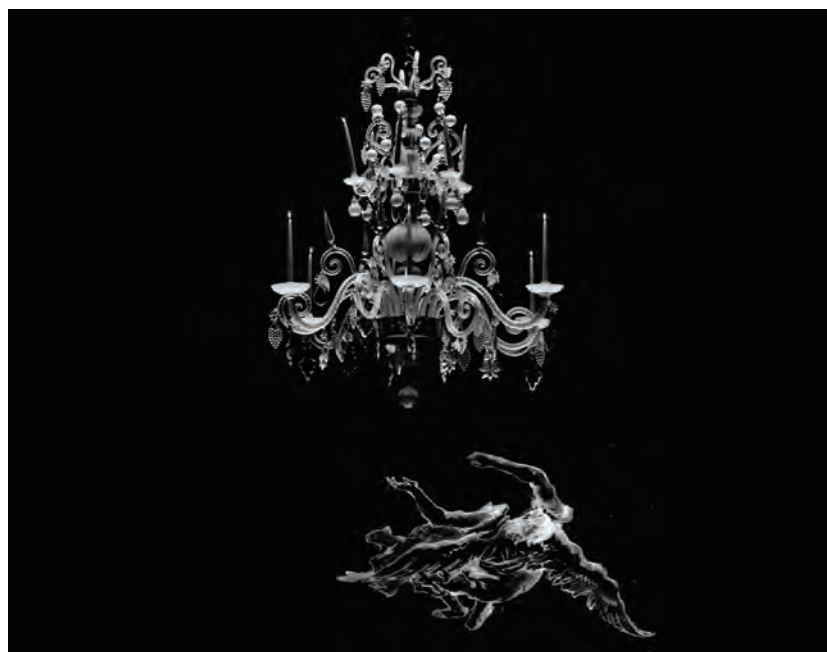
# ‘Beyond the Tipping Point’ The Art of Edward Bernstein



Local artist Edward Bernstein’s upcoming exhibition, “Beyond the Tipping Point,” at the John Waldron Arts Center, February 7–March 2, will be his first solo show in Bloomington since his retrospective at Indiana University’s Grunwald Gallery in 2013.

The exhibition features 30 works created after 2021, including prints, drawings, mixed media work, and one sculpture. Many of the pieces are one-of-a-kind inkjet prints with extensive hand-drawing. Some expand on Bernstein’s favorite imagery, such as glass chandeliers, while others explore new themes. Historical references—particularly to the Italian masters, such as Tintoretto, Tiepolo, and Dante—have long appeared in his work, influenced by his years of study and teaching in Italy, France, and England.

One constant in Bernstein’s work and life is his devotion to political causes. ▶



(this page and opposite page) Examples of Edward Bernstein’s work. (top) *Dante’s Eyes*; (above) *Stone Girl*; (right) *Tiepolo’s Angel*. Courtesy images



(above) *Armageddon*; (right) *The New World Order*.



(right) Artist Edward Bernstein's work often includes sociopolitical commentary hidden in subtle symbolic imagery.  
Photo by James Kellar



His images often address serious issues like war, climate change, xenophobia, and the housing crisis. His work can sometimes be dark, he jokes: "I don't do couch art."

Viewers may not, however, immediately detect his sociopolitical commentary as his imagery often includes subtle symbolism imbedded in rich, textural surfaces. Bernstein believes, "Some political art is like getting hit with a mallet. I want stuff that people say is really beautiful and interesting ... and oh, yeah, there's some content behind it."

Prior to retiring in 2013 as a professor in the IU Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture & Design, where he served as co-head of the printmaking program for 22 years, Bernstein purchased and renovated a 1,200-square foot former home/church/workshop on South Rogers Street, adding an acid room, reinforcing the floor for his one-ton etching press and opened Chiaroscuro Press & Studio.

Learn more at [ecbernstein.com](http://ecbernstein.com).

—Nanette Esseck Brewer

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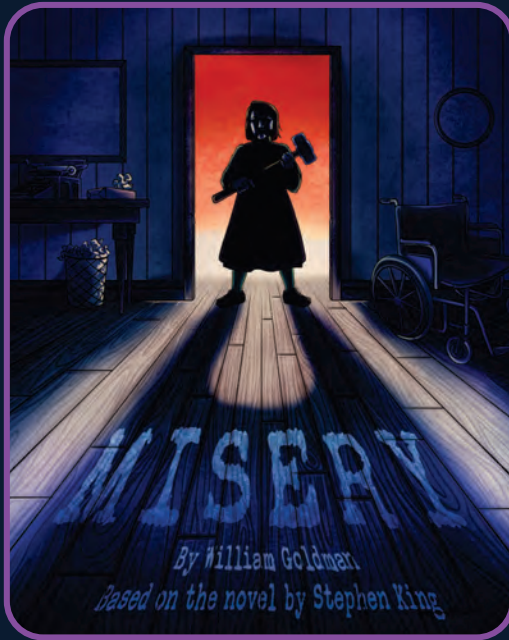
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# December Bestsellers at Morgenstern Books

## Fiction Bestsellers

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2. *James* by Percival Everett
3. *The Women* by Kristen Hannah
4. *Shady Hollow* by Juneau Black
5. *Funny Story* by Emily Henry
6. *Bride* by Ali Hazelwood
7. *Intermezzo A Novel* by Sally Rooney
8. *Throne of Glass* by Sarah J. Maas
9. *Dune (Dune Chronicles, Book 1)* by Frank Herbert
10. *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros



## Non-Fiction Bestsellers

1. *College Girl, Missing* by Shawn Cohen
2. *Murdle: Volume 1* by G.T. Karber
3. *The Book of Delights* by Ross Gay (Bloomingtonian)
4. *The Creative Act* by Rick Rubin
5. *The Demon of Unrest* by Erik Larson
6. *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* by David Grann
7. *Everything I Know About Love: A Memoir* by Dolly Alderton
8. *The Serviceberry* by Robin Wall Kimmerer
9. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.
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# Photographer Megan Snook Making New Tintype Portraits



Embracing the adage “everything old is new again,” portrait photographer Megan Snook turned her attention to historical photographic processes. She had explored 35mm black-and-white documentary photography as a journalism and anthropology student before taking a tintype (or ferrotype) workshop during the pandemic.

Snook says she loved the intrinsically slow nature of the process during which sitters hold a pose for 3–5 seconds, the high resolution, glistening brownish-gray tone, and “ghosties”—or hazy artifacts—that sometime appear in the images.

She also relished the technique’s connection to the past. Tintypes, invented in 1853, became a popular means of inexpensively capturing a likeness around the American Civil War. Because of its democratic origins, Snook calls her business The People’s Portraiture.

Unlike touristy “old time” photo shops that use sepia-colored digital

photography, Snook utilizes a wet plate collodion process that requires painting black enamel and light-sensitive emulsion onto a thin sheet of metal, and then exposing, developing, and fixing it in under 10 minutes. She says she prefers to work in natural light to capture an authentic appearance.

While some of Snook’s sitters dress in period costumes, others wear modern clothes; she advises simple colors and natural fabrics to embrace the traditional experience. Snook likewise lets her clients see the “magic” of the image coming to life.

Splitting her time between rural Monroe County and a ranch in Colorado, Snook operates out of her home; in pop-up studios in stores, bars, and restaurants; and through private two-hour sessions by appointment. Her images come in two sizes: half plate (4-by-5-inches) or whole plate (6 1/2-by-8-inches). ▶



(this page and opposite page) Examples of photographer Megan Snook’s work; (top, left) *Alexander*, Persimmon Ridge, Indiana, 2022; (top) *Skylar and Logan*, Indiana, 2023; (above) *Vera Lee*, Golden, Colorado, 2024. Photos by Megan Snook



*Kassi*, Persimmon Ridge, Indiana, 2024.

Snook cites 19th century English photographer Julia Margaret Cameron and contemporary tintypist Lisa Elmaleh as influences. As a single mother, Snook says she delights in discovering that some early tintype practitioners were unmarried or widowed women.

Visit [thepeoplesportraiture.com](http://thepeoplesportraiture.com) to learn more. —*Nanette Esseck Brewer*

*Self Portrait*, Elliot County, Kentucky, 2024.



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# Edgewood H.S. Marching Mustangs Are Champs for 3rd Year in a Row

by Barb Berggoetz

Aaron Wells expects a great deal from his Edgewood High School Marching Mustangs.

“I don’t shy away from telling parents and kids what they sign up for is hard and very demanding, both physically and mentally,” said Wells, Edgewood bands director. “I teach my 8th graders just as hard as my seniors. I expect them to know their music, to be at all practices on time, to be good people, and to work hard.”

For the third consecutive year, those expectations have paid off.

The Marching Mustangs won the Indiana State School Music Association’s Class C state championship for the third year in a row at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on November 9. The school, which has made the finals for 17 consecutive years, also placed first in 2018. Class C includes schools with 550 to 950 students. Edgewood, located in Ellettsville, Indiana, has about 750 students.



With a performance rearranged from the Beatles, Billie Eilish, and Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky, Edgewood High School’s Marching Mustangs won the ISSMA Class C state championship for the third year in a row.

Photo by Seth Baugh/Creekbend Media

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“To win one is pretty impressive. To win three in a row is a rarity,” says Wells, a former marching band member who wanted to direct bands since he was 13.

The band program’s success is a team effort, he stresses. He credits the talented 107 band members, hard-working Edgewood Band Boosters, and his team of 20 staffers, some working during summer and fall, and others full-time, including junior high band director Curt Koehler.

“We really enjoy giving them an environment where they succeed in something,” says Wells, who also teaches music.

For this year’s competition, the band performed a 7 1/2-minute show with music rearranged from the Beatles’ “Eleanor Rigby,” pop singer-songwriter Billie Eilish, and Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky. Six judges scored performances based on visual and music effects, students’ individual playing and marching, and overall music performance and marching as a team.

Candy Owens, Edgewood Band Boosters president, attributes the program’s accomplishments to Wells, Koehler, and the staff. “They put together a beautiful show for the kids to execute. They continue to mentor them and push them out of their comfort zone,” says Owens, whose three children have been band members.

But she stresses winning is just part of the success. “He instills in them pride, ownership of their responsibilities and the team as a whole, hard work, dedication, and teamwork. What he does for them is life-changing.” ✨

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# Process Gallery and the Grand Hall 2 Display Spaces at IU's Cook Center

**EIGHTH** IN THE BLOOMINGTON ART GALLERY SERIES

When Maxwell Hall—an 1890 Romanesque Revival building on the Indiana University campus—was renovated in 2021 to house the Gayle Karch Cook Center for Public Arts & Humanities, two gallery spaces were included: the Process Gallery and the Grand Hall.

The larger Process Gallery occupies the northwest corner on the first floor. Natalia Almanza, program and operations coordinator, notes that the name reflects its exploratory nature: “We wanted it to be a place that would show a gallery in process, essentially whether that be research focused or a group of people coming together to produce an exhibition. We wanted it to be flexible in that folks could launch ideas and pilot ideas in that space.”

As part of the IU Arts & Humanities Council, the Cook Center encourages interdisciplinary exhibitions that highlight the research and creative activities



(l-r) Natalia Almanza, program operations coordinator, and Bethany Habegger, exhibit coordinator. *Photo by James Kellar*

of various academic fields. One such project—“Unmasked,” an exhibition on lynching in the U.S. and Indiana—originated with two IU American Studies professors.

Other partners have included The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction; IU’s Center for Religion & the Human; the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center at IU; Traditional Arts Indiana; and the Indiana Arts Commission. The Process Gallery also serves as a venue for the Cook Center’s two annual Engaged Artists in Residence, including Samuel Levi Jones’ upcoming show “Deaccession.”

The Grand Hall and adjoining hallway provide wall space and some display cases. Since the space is also



(above) The Process Gallery was named to reflect its exploratory nature, as the Center encourages interdisciplinary exhibitions that highlight the research and creative activities of various academic fields; (below) the Gayle Karch Cook Center has been housed in IU’s Maxwell Hall since 2021.

*Photos by Rodney Margison*

used for lectures, performances, and receptions, these exhibitions have focused primarily on photography, literature, and history.

The Cook Center schedules approximately five exhibitions in each gallery annually, selected from online applications by Almanza, Exhibit Coordinator Bethany Habegger, and the Council’s executive director, and curated by IU faculty, students, artists, and community members.

Almanza says her exhibition programming attempts “to make sure that we have as many voices at the table as we feel is appropriate to amplify whatever goal of that specific gallery.”

Meanwhile, Habegger explains that the center encourages a connection with the community by participating in Gallery Walk Bloomington, held from 5–8 p.m. on the first Friday of every month, and the annual Granfalloon festival.

Regular exhibition hours are noon–4 p.m. Monday through Friday and by appointment. Learn more at [artsandhumanities.indiana.edu/cook-center](https://artsandhumanities.indiana.edu/cook-center).

—*Nanette Esseck Brewer*



# Bloomington Jazz Orchestra Swinging for Ten Years Now

*Editor's note: On Monday, December 23, Janis Stockhouse, director of the Bloomington Jazz Orchestra, died. We elected to continue with publication of the story as a tribute to her life's work and the impact she had on the Bloomington music community.*

by Paul Bickley

The Bloomington Jazz Orchestra (BJO) is celebrating its 10th year in 2025. As part of its anniversary year, it's planning a joint concert with the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra—perhaps during the Canopy of Lights or a summer park performance, says director Janis Stockhouse.

Originally named the Swing Time Big Band, BJO was formed as an offshoot of the Bloomington Community Band. Stockhouse took



To celebrate their 10th anniversary this year, the Bloomington Jazz Orchestra will play a joint concert with the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra. *Courtesy photo*

over the band's direction in 2019, two days before retiring after 38 years of directing Bloomington High School North's bands. "I was cleaning and arranging the music rooms when I got the call," she says. "I thought, 'Why not? I have the time and the experience, and I still have the passion.'"

Stockhouse first had to recruit musicians, then she expanded the band's repertoire and changed its name. Five of her former North students, who went on to the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, are BJO members. "The band is good," she says, "because we've attracted good players—great players attract great players."

An 18-piece band, including a vocalist, BJO performs be-bop, cool, fusion, current, and, of course, big-band swing jazz. Songs include "Woodchopper's Ball," "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Malaga," "Begin the Beguine," "Sing, Sing, Sing (With a Swing)," and "In the Mood." This year, Stockhouse plans to add a number by seven-time Grammy-winning pianist, composer, and jazz-band leader Maria Schneider—whom Stockhouse interviewed for her co-authored book *JAZZWOMEN: 21 Conversations with Musicians* (Indiana University Press, 2004).

BJO has performed at the Waldron, Hill and Buskirk Park, Switchyard Park, 4th Street Festival of the Arts and Crafts, the Mitchell Opera House, and Mitchell's Persimmon Festival. "It's pretty much a summer group," Stockhouse says. The band plans to return to those venues in 2025. "And I'd really like to add a holiday concert this year."

"Community feedback has been very enthusiastic," Stockhouse says. "How can you not like this music? It's infectious. We play a variety of music that's listenable and danceable. I feature soloists a lot and try to throw a spotlight on as many of the musicians as possible. It's easy to do because they're all so good." ✨

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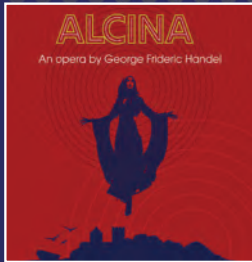
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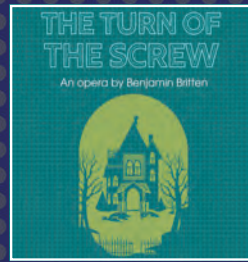
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**Margaret Fette, Owner**

# Celebrate Local Foods Saturday Mornings at Winter Farmers' Market

Most Saturday mornings, from November through March, a thriving farmers' market is held at the Switchyard Park Pavilion on South Rogers Street. Organized and operated by Bloomington Winter Farmers' Market Inc. (BWFMI), the market offers vendors and customers a place to gather and celebrate local foods.

When founded in 2005, the market lasted a mere four weeks. It has since moved locations as well as changed its organizational structure several times before settling in at Switchyard Park and creating BWFMI Inc., a not-for-profit organization run by a board of directors. As the oldest winter farmers' market in Indiana, BWFMI strives to build connections between growers and producers and consumers, says Sarah Milward, board president.

The market currently has 50 members, though not all vendors are present at the market every week, Milward explains. There has been a large increase in vendor



The Bloomington Winter Farmers' Market, hosted weekly at the Switchyard Park Pavilion, is the oldest winter farmers' market in Indiana. Photo by Rodney Margison

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numbers from both growers and prepared food producers over the years, expanding the variety of foods available. From several bread companies to a variety of apple and pear vendors, the market offers shoppers a wide selection of fresh goods.

Recent additions to the vendor ranks are Lost in the Woods Meadery and The Pierogi Place. They join many other non-produce vendors. Some longtime vendors include Heartland Family Farm and Olde Lane Orchard, offering a selection of beans, root vegetables, and varietal apples.

The BWFMI also accepts SNAP/EBT cards to purchase market tokens at the information table, and the market will double up to \$27 of the benefits each week, providing families with up to \$54 to buy local, healthy food.

The Bloomington Winter Farmers' Market is held every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free parking is available on site. Visit [bloomingtonwinterfarmersmarket.com](http://bloomingtonwinterfarmersmarket.com) for more. —Lynn Schwartzberg

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# bloomington & vine

BY JACK BAKER



## Art and Wine Go Together Like a Horse and Chariot



A museum is a place of wonder and imagination. But wouldn't our experience there be improved by a glass of wine? What would we drink as we view our favorite works of art?

Let's start big with one of my favorites, Michelangelo's *David* in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, Italy. My jaw drops each time I'm privileged to see him. At 17 feet tall, he is commanding and majestic. He's been battered by hammers and struck by lightning, his ankles are weak with age—he is magnificent. What wine would I pair with a viewing—assuming of course that all of those pesky tourists were disappeared? I think a big, burly Piedmontese Barolo would have enough muscle.

What would be the perfect wine to drink while viewing the artwork of Pompeii, Italy? According to Baker, a rough and tumble wine—an Aglianico del Vulture. *Photo by Rodney Margison*

A short distance away, Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation* hangs in the Uffizi Gallery. In the foreground, the kneeling angel tells Mary of her new condition. Their features show the blurred edges and soft smoky transitions of the sfumato technique da Vinci developed. Behind, the colorful scene dims and becomes diffuse with distance, another first in painting. So, what would I pair with this gem of a painting? First, a chair (this will take some time), and a wine to fit the theme of the painting—a holy wine, a Tuscan vin santo.

Claude Monet's eight panels of water lilies in the oval rooms of the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, France, are a wonder to behold. They immediately pull you in to the tranquility and peace of Monet's sense of nature. I would be perfectly content to spend a lazy afternoon exploring them with a Pouilly-Fuisse in hand. Its smooth, polished flavors would complement the quietness of the woodland ponds.

There are places outside the museums where it is actually possible to have wine with art. Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* (*Fountain of the Four Rivers*) flows mightily with cold mountain water in the Piazza Navona in Rome, Italy. Adding to the pleasure of watching the fountain and its progression of tourists is sitting in an adjacent cafe and sipping a Prosecco, limoncello, or even a grappa.

Pompeii and Herculaneum offer closeup and personal views into the lives of those who lived and died there. Every day it seems, a new work of art is uncovered, exposing the vibrant color, design, and original graffiti that was part of everyday life. Only about 20% has been uncovered; imagine what waits! The walking is rough, the sites are hot and stuffy. It's a hard day of viewing that demands a rough and tumble wine with big tannins and firm structure—an Aglianico del Vulture from the volcanic soil of Campania.

Is your imagination piqued? I hope so, and I will drink to that. ✨





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# 'Earth Eats' Program on WFIU-FM Presents 9-Part Series on Foraging

*Earth Eats*, the weekly food program on WFIU-FM, has created a nine-part series called *Earth Eats: Eats Wild*. Hosted and produced by Kayte Young, the show about foraging will be aired in three groups of three episodes each, corresponding with the seasons. The three spring episodes will air March 29, April 5, and April 12.

Young explains that foraging is a way to “connect to our surroundings and to learn to pay attention to what’s around you through the season.” She says the joy of finding out what’s edible was motivating during the creation of the program, citing spruce tips as something she was surprised to learn could be foraged and prepared in so many different ways.

One of Young’s main sources on the show is Monique Philpot, a local foraging expert who instructs at Indiana University’s Collins Living Learning Center. The two will discuss foraging in out-of-the-way places, as well as those in plain sight.

The program will offer foraging advice, lore, and recipes about wild mushrooms, edible herbs, and all types of greens and flowers. Many wild foods, such as ramps, have been over-foraged, meaning wild crops will likely need time before they can re-grow with abundance. “When we get well acquainted with spaces through the seasons, maybe we’ll want to protect them,” Young says.

Along with other experts, several notable foragers who have played a part in bringing foraging to the forefront of current food trends will be interviewed, including The Forager Chef, Black Forager, and Nick Dietrich.

Earth Eats will also be creating Field Guide cards, available free on request. These cards will include foraging notes as well as recipes and helpful information about the foraged plant.


Discussing foraging and its value to us as a way of learning about our surroundings is important to Young and a big focus of the program, she says, adding that silliness, joy, and fun have a place as well. She says finding out about something you can eat is “pure joy! Good to know-we can eat this.” —Lynn Schwartzberg



Kayte Young, host and producer of *Earth Eats: Eats Wild* on WFIU-FM, offers foraging advice, lore, and recipes from foraged foods on the show. Photo by Jim Krause

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# TAPPED

## Into Bloomington

BY GREG SIERING



Bloom's beer columnist says cheers one last time in his 45th and final column. *Photo by Rodney Margison*

## So Long, Farewell, Adieu Adios, Auf Wiedersehen

Since 2016, this column has provided me the privilege of combining my love of writing with my enjoyment of beer. It's been a fun gig filled with a lot of interesting "research" at local breweries, but this 45th column is my last call. I just don't get out to brewpubs as much as I used to, so I will leave this work to someone who can keep better track of what's on tap in Bloomington.

I've enjoyed watching the Bloomington brewing community evolve over the past several years. I was excited to see Switchyard

Brewing bring new energy and community spirit to town back in 2018, and I was sad to see it close five years later. I have the same bittersweet memories of Function Brewing, with its line of malty ales with quirky mathematical names. And I have been happy to recently see Heartwork Brewing bring several classic European styles to our local taps. I've watched two of our Bloomington standards continue to grow, with Bloomington Brewing Company both celebrating its 25th anniversary and getting a

new owner, and Upland Brewing Company building out its sour beer line and expanding its brewpubs to several locations around the state.

This mix of new growth and sad losses reminds us that our local beer scene needs our support to thrive. Running a small brewery is an expensive endeavor, but we can make a difference by supporting these local businesses while getting a delicious payback for ourselves. So, as I wrap up my time with you, I ask you to do a few things for your local brewers:

Stop by a local brewery for a pint. Sneak out of work early some afternoon for a round with colleagues or catch up with a friend for lunch and a beer. When a new beer arrives on tap, go sample it together and talk about your tasting experience. Or bring a visiting friend or relative to sample our local flavors. If you go to a local restaurant other than a brewpub, choose a Bloomington beer to keep your dollars—and our taps—local.

If you want beer at home, pick up a growler of a seasonal or experimental beer. Some of our bigger breweries are expanding their bottle and can offerings, but don't forget about fresh-from-the-tap options that will expose you to new styles. Next time you have a cookout or dinner party, a few growlers from local breweries will make you a popular host.

Finally, try something new. Every time you visit a brewery. Embrace sampler flights and smaller glasses. Even those styles that you may not normally enjoy will bring new flavors to appreciate, and that can expand your palate and knowledge of beer.

I'll miss writing about beer for *Bloom Magazine*, and I will miss sharing with you the delight I find in trying a new ale or lager. So, let me raise my literary glass one more time to our local brewers—and to you, the beer lovers of Bloomington. Cheers! ✨

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# Art Remains: Nonprofit Second-Hand Art Store

Artists, crafters, and eco-conscious creators are finding a go-to resource in Bloomington's new second-hand art supply shop.

The nonprofit Art Remains opened on West 6th Street in May and by October had moved into an expanded space at 115 N. College on the downtown Square. The store's goals are threefold: build a creative community, keep art supplies affordable, and reduce waste, says founder Sue McCracken.

Art Remains is the realization of McCracken's goal to make art more accessible while keeping quality materials out of landfills. The retired teacher, downsizer, and artist is an avid fan of upcycled materials and for years sourced her supplies from thrift stores and art reuse shops throughout the Midwest.

Fellow artist Jean Haley had nonprofit startup experience and immediately joined the project. "People are coming from far and wide to find us because there aren't many of these stores in Indiana," says McCracken, now board president. The new location gives the all-volunteer staff four times more space to better display supplies.

Donations to the store commonly include fabric, yarn, and painting supplies, while donors also share materials for making other crafts like



Founder Sue McCracken opened Art Remains to build a creative community, keep art supplies affordable, and reduce waste. Photo by Kathryn Coers Rossman

candles and stained glass. Every material donated is weighed and tracked to eventually measure the pounds diverted from landfills.

But the real fun, McCracken says, is watching artists find unexpected items and "just stand and stare—waiting for inspiration" to repurpose costume jewelry, hose spigot parts, world globes, and more. "Donors have lovely collections of supplies they treasure but are ready to part with. And artists love finding materials they might not see elsewhere," she says.

Local artists have begun leading make-and-take drop-in workshops that allow participants to create a project from the store's upcycled materials. Expanded class offerings and collaborations with local organizations are coming, McCracken says.

The store is open 3–6 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, with plans to eventually expand hours and hire paid staff.

"We are loving seeing so many young people coming in who are really committed to not contributing to the landfills," she says. "Walking through the store, whether you're hearing customers' stories or seeing the magical looks on their faces when they find something unique, there is just so much in this store to be inspired by."

Learn more at [artremains.org](http://artremains.org).

—Chrissy Alspaugh

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# How The Tailored Fit Morphed Into the University of Sewing

by Rosie Piga Pizzo

From making more than 1,000 quilts in her 20s to doing costume work on Broadway in her 30s, sewing has always been a part of Margaret Fette's life. In Bloomington, her talent as a seamstress was embraced by the local community when she opened The Tailored Fit in 2006.

The Tailored Fit evolved to include the University of Sewing in 2018, offering classes and selling fabric at its West 11th Street location. "I always wanted to teach sewing," says Fette, "plus my customers were always asking me to help with their projects."

But, the COVID-19 pandemic found Fette rethinking her business. She had difficulty finding staff that could work at a high level once alterations picked back up, and there "wasn't enough of me to go around." Fette decided to close The Tailored Fit in 2023 and focus on teaching and selling fabrics and Bernina sewing machines.



In 2023, Margaret Fette closed The Tailored Fit to concentrate solely on the University of Sewing, where Fette teaches classes and sells fabrics and sewing machines. Photo by Martin Bolling

A promotional poster for the Women + Technology Summit. The text reads: "WOMEN + TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT MARCH 7-8, 2025 WOMENANDTECH.INDIANA.EDU". It features two circular portraits of speakers: Erika Cheung, Keynote Speaker, and Tara Aggarwal, Plenary Speaker. Below the portraits are their names and titles: Erika Cheung, Theranos Whistleblower, Co-founder of Ethics in Entrepreneurship; and Tara Aggarwal, Responsible AI Leader at Microsoft. At the bottom, it says: "The Women &amp; Technology Summit unites and empowers women, offering a multi-day event dedicated to nurturing personal and professional growth." There is a QR code and the logo for the Indiana University Center of Excellence for Women &amp; Technology.

University of Sewing became a Bernina dealer in 2020. Fette wanted to offer the highest-quality machines for sewing, embroidery, and quilting that were easy to use. Bernina is a fifth-generation family business, and the machines are handmade in Steckborn, Switzerland. "We sell all types of Bernina models and keep a good amount of stock all the time," she says.

Quality fabrics from all over the world are also a staple of University of Sewing. "No one carries as much apparel fabric as we do," Fette boasts, citing STOF cotton knits from Denmark and Ungaro silks from Italy.

Additionally, they sell sewing cabinets and provide free delivery in the local area as well as set-up. "We try to make our business a one-stop shop." University of Sewing also offers in-house servicing of all sewing machines.

"Our customers are our friends," Fette says. "I get to know them and will order what they want. No place is going to offer service at that level." Products can also be bought online and shipped almost everywhere, including all 50 states.

Classes that cover all skill levels and projects are also offered, as well as special events to strengthen the community. One such event is an open house from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on March 6—the first day of the Indiana Heritage Quilt Show at the Monroe Convention Center.

For more information about other events, classes, and products, visit [universityofsewing.com](http://universityofsewing.com). ✨

# Vinyl Records Are Back Big Time!

## Where to Find Them in B-town



Will Bewley, owner of Walkover Sounds and Stones, peruses the store's collection of 2,500 used and 500 new records in all rpms. Photo by Rodney Margison

**Walkover Sounds and Stones** (formerly TD's CDs and LPs), 122 N. Walnut, has 2,500 used and 500 new records in all rpms. Owner Will Bewley says that Walkover focuses on global music, especially African and Latin American, but has good collections of funk, soul, local music, rock, and metal. Vinyl and CD sales split 50-50. Bewley sold a 1973 album by the Indianapolis psychedelic-rock band Zervas (whom *MOJO* magazine praised) for \$900. Walkover hosts DJ nights and live shows. "This is a sonic kitchen," Bewley says, "where listeners can congregate." ✨

by Paul Bickley

The vinyl records revival is thriving. The Recording Industry Association of America says that vinyl albums outsold CDs in 2022 for the first time since 1987—and last year, 49 million vinyl albums sold. In fact, vinyl sales have increased each year since 2006, just two years after the advent of music streaming.

Bloomington has seen its own vinyl revival.

**Tracks on Kirkwood**, 415 E. Kirkwood, has 7,000 new and 10,000 used LP records. "Vinyl sales have been up for the past five years," says owner Andy Walter. Vinyl and CD sales split equally now. Tracks' catalogue goes back 50 years, filled mostly with rock, hip-hop, metal, and indie—and "essential music" within those genres: "How many Rolling Stones albums are there? Seventy-two. You need to carry the six essential ones," he says.

**Landlocked Music**, 115 S. Walnut, owns 6,000 new and 20,000 used vinyl records in all rpms. Vinyl outsells CDs 3 to 2, co-owner Heath Byers says. "We pride ourselves on our extensive jazz collection, and we've recently taken a deep dive into classical." Byers cites rock, country, reggae, local, and international as other strengths. In storage: a "butcher cover" version of The Beatles' 1966 *Yesterday and Today* album, with a value that could exceed \$10,000.

In business for only two months at the time of this writing, with some of its collection still in boxes, **Gold Dust Vintage and Vinyl**, 216 N. Rogers St., is nonetheless already establishing its niche, says owner Jade Linton. "I focus on punk, metal, and underground, in all rpms, that you can't find elsewhere in town." Sales have been 90% vinyl. In storage: a first pressing of Black Flag's 1979 single "Nervous Breakdown" that could be worth \$500.

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*\* Please do not submit homes for sale.*



**Bloom**  
MAGAZINE

# Eclaras: A New Pre-Owned Clothing Store on South Walnut



Schyler Marolf opened Eclaras, a second-hand clothing store, to give residents a chance to sell their unwanted items and to prevent them from ending up in landfills. *Photo by James Kellar*

to work for myself,” she says, “and when I was brainstorming what I was going to call my store, I first thought of what I wanted the store to represent. I came up with a handful of descriptions that were important to me and then scrambled them up until I got my name: Equity, Community, Loyalty, Accessibility, Responsibility, Affordability, Support.”

“Everyone has so many clothes,” she says. “Once a week the sellers bring in clothes to donate rather than sell.” The store, she says, then becomes “a hub where the homeless can find clothing.” —*Janet Mandelstam*

Schyler Marolf thinks the world has enough clothing, “and we don’t need to create any more.” So she started Eclaras, a store where, she says, local residents can sell the clothes they no longer need instead of just tossing them.

Eclaras opened last fall and currently has 14 sellers who rent space in the store at 340 S. Walnut. The clothing for sale is vintage or second-hand, Marolf says. “We have sweaters, dresses, pants, NASCAR jackets, and lots of t-shirts,” including some with Indiana University or Indianapolis Colts logos. “The sellers curate their own collections.”

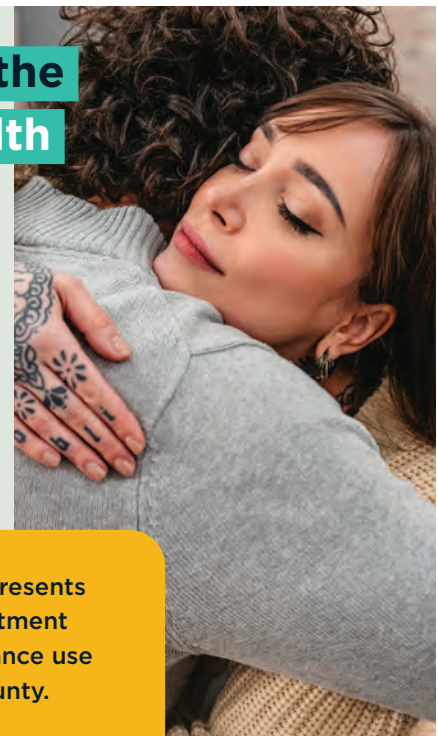
While some of the sellers are in their 40s, Marolf says, most are IU students. Because the students may not always be in town, their merchandise also is available online at [eclaras.com](http://eclaras.com). The sellers can choose to sell in the store or exclusively online. Either way, the clothes will be reused rather than ending up in a landfill. The sellers share a percentage of their sales with Eclaras.

The name Eclaras holds special meaning for Marolf, a 22-year-old native of Greenwood, Indiana. “I knew I wanted

## It’s time to change the state of mental health and substance use.

**#41** Indiana ranks 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation for the state of mental health in adults, based on prevalence of mental illness and access to care.

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Join the fight for change

# Old People Riding Bicycles It's a Club!

by Aaron B. Cohen

Those 70-somethings you may see swigging Champagne in a local parking lot aren't just tipping geezers. They're "Old Farts"—members of the eponymous Bloomington cycling group.

"At 72, rather than trying to get stronger, my goal is to slow the rate at which I'm getting weaker," says retired Indiana University professor Pete Kloosterman. He's not the only academic in the group, which also includes artists, musicians, businesspeople, health care professionals, and folks whose livelihood is a mystery.

Whatever their vocation, age, gender, religion, or ethnicity, members of the Old Farts Bike Club live by the creed of group leader and spiritual guide Mark Taubensee: "Never grow up!"

"Cycling keeps me in shape, grounds me, makes me smile, and makes me feel strong. And I get to hang out with some amazing people," says Michele Brentano. A seasoned biker, Brentano started riding when she was 5 years old and has participated in almost every Hilly Hundred event since 1985.

Bob Kissel, a competitive runner for more than 50 years, was one of the original Old Farts when the club formed early this century. "My knees could handle biking without causing further damage and pain," he explains.

Now the group's impetus is to have a group of supportive friends. "It's especially important at a time of life when family and close friends pass away," says Kissel, a clinical psychologist. "The need to

move actively is never greater. Neglecting physical and social activity leads to a faster and more certain path to earlier death."

Other than a health issue, being hit by a car is the most feared end to cycling for journalism professor Jim Kelly. "The threat

20-something informatics graduate student from Taiwan who is young enough to be any Old Fart's granddaughter. Jeanne Smith, bike retailer and founder of the Bloomington Bike Project, invited Hsu to ride with her on her tandem bicycle two years ago.



The cycling club is made up of members from different vocations, ages, genders, religions, and ethnicities, but they all live by the creed of their group leader and spiritual guide, Mark Taubensee: "Never grow up!"

Photo by Aaron B. Cohen

is rising, but it won't keep me off my bike, until it does." In 60 years of riding, he's never hit the ground except when a driver got too close or hit him with a side mirror, he reports.

"I'm just an old man riding a child's toy in what is essentially my underwear," Kelly says. "Be kind to cyclists!"

One exception to the unwritten age rule of the Old Farts: Long-Jing (Claire) Hsu is a

Hsu says riding with the group gives her joy.

"I love how diverse and inclusive the group is. Despite age and ethnicity differences, I feel welcomed and like I belong," Hsu says. "It's like home away from home." ✨

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# Riley Children's Hospital: 100 Years of Pediatric Care in Indiana

Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis first opened its doors 100 years ago on October 7, 1924, supporting children and their families through routine health and wellness and specialty care for acute or complex conditions. Now, as part of the Indiana University Health network, Riley Children's Health serves families from all 92 Indiana counties, providing services and support more than 300,000 times per year.

Riley—created in memory of famed Hoosier poet and writer James Whitcomb Riley—is the only children's hospital in Indiana ranked among the best in the nation, rated in all 10 pediatric specialties by *U.S. News and World Report* and ninth in the nation for National Institutes of Health research funding with more than \$38.5 million in 2023.

## Riley patient experience

Caroline Pattillo from Bloomington experienced a life-threatening injury at 10 years old in a 2016 sailboating accident on Lake Monroe. She underwent two successful surgeries under Riley care.

"Riley is an extremely important place for me and my family," Pattillo says. "I had a child life specialist who was there to support and distract from any pain. They go the extra mile for every one of their patients, and once you've stayed at Riley, you join their entire support system."

Riley Children's Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the health system, grants roughly \$35 million annually, fundraising for initiatives and departments ranging from clinical care, family support, kids' mental health services, cancer care, pediatric research and drug development, heart research, and barrier-free events like Camp Riley, powered by donor dollars.



(top) The IU Dance Marathon takes place each fall and includes more than 4,000 IU students who stay awake and on their feet for 36 hours; (above) since 1991, the event has raised more than \$56 million for Riley Children's Foundation. Photos by Bobby Goddin



## Community support

Bloomington native Ron Remak joined the Riley Children's Foundation Board of Governors in November 2011 and has led local campaigns like the Bloomington Red Wagon Brigade, spreading awareness in the downtown community and visiting local businesses. The campaign to increase support, donations, and volunteerism was inspired by year-round fundraising events that supplement the Indiana University ►

(left) Caroline Pattillo underwent two successful surgeries under Riley care after she experienced a life threatening injury at 10 years old in a sailboating accident. Photo by Martin Boling (right) Ron Remak, a member of the Riley Children's Foundation Board of Governors, has led local fundraising campaigns for Riley. Photo by Rodney Margison



Dance Marathon (IUDM) and the Bloomington High School South (BHSS) Riley Dance Marathon.

Since 1991, IUDM has raised more than \$56 million for Riley Foundation. Involving more than 1,200 committee members who work throughout the year fundraising and planning events, IUDM is the second-largest student-run philanthropy in the world. The Marathon itself takes place each fall and includes more than 4,000 IU students who stay awake and on their feet for 36 hours.

Bloomington High School South (BHSS) Riley Dance Marathon began in 2004 and has raised more than \$1.7 million. "Our focus has always been to raise awareness, generate community involvement and bring students together to support a common purpose," says Joe Doyle, BHSS Dance Marathon club sponsor and co-initiator of the program. The 2025 event will be held April 12 at the school.

#### Future growth

"What started as the beacon on the hill is now truly one of the best hospitals in the nation," Remak says of Riley. "It's the people and their daily commitment and compassion from the top down that makes such an impact. Now, a big part of our plans moving forward is to increase footprint to rural areas to extend the outstanding pediatric care they can provide."

In 2023, Riley Children's Foundation focused on bringing awareness to mental and behavioral health, raising money to develop new therapies in pediatric health care. Adding to the search for a statewide model, is their goal of enhancing equitable and convenient access across the state by providing more Riley Children's clinics.

"In celebration of the 100th anniversary, the goal is to increase research and behavioral health, an accelerated need post-COVID," says Michelle Turchan, major gift officer and manager for Riley Children's Foundation. "We want to continue recruiting the best and brightest pediatric researchers because we don't want any child to have to leave the state of Indiana for health care."

Visit [rileykids.org/get-involved/events](http://rileykids.org/get-involved/events) or email [mturchan@rileykids.org](mailto:mturchan@rileykids.org) to get involved. —Brittany Marshall

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## Why an Adult Autism Diagnosis Changed My Life for the Better

When I speak to audiences about my experiences with autism and developmental disability, two of the more common questions I get are: “How did you feel when you were diagnosed with autism? Did it help you in any way?”

People also like to ask how old I was when I was diagnosed. When they find out I was 20 years old and had just finished my freshman year of college (2006), some are a bit shocked. The public is primarily familiar with autism as a neurodevelopmental

disorder diagnosed in early childhood. However, in some cases, individuals may also be diagnosed in adulthood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that as many as one in 45 U.S. adults are currently diagnosed with autism.

When I received a diagnosis of autism, it came as a huge relief. Throughout my teen years, I couldn’t understand why, if I was doing so well academically, I could never form successful, lasting relationships with other kids and was rarely invited to

do things after school or to hang out on weekends. Furthermore, I have always been driven to achieve and have high expectations, so I kept wondering what the other kids had that I didn’t, and how much harder and longer I would have to try until I finally cracked the code on fitting in.

Now I know it was not what they had, but rather what they didn’t that kept me and my peers apart. I felt such a sense of peace when I received a diagnosis because I realized my difficulties were not due to lack of effort, but a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that would need support and services. I realized none of this was my fault and that I could stop trying to measure up to my peers.

Getting a formal diagnosis of autism—even as late as it was—did a lot in terms of helping me understand myself and why I behave the way I do. Things that I had previously attributed to “just Adria” began to make a lot more sense. The way all the kids at school were always on me to talk like Harry Potter and were amazed when I could quote the various film lines verbatim and sound exactly like the characters. Or the way I had always struggled with disruption to schedule and routine. Or the way I had never quite understood how to have a conversation even among family. It also helped me understand my areas of difficulty and work on learning how to cope better with these challenges.

I think if I had not gotten a formal diagnosis of autism, I would have continued to wonder why I was different, probably well into adulthood, and continued to try to form social and professional relationships with little success. This could have had a very negative affect on my mental health.

Parents and adults themselves sometimes wonder if it would even be worth pursuing a clinical evaluation for anyone age 18 to 45, for example. Pediatric autism can encompass a very different set of issues than those faced by adults with autism. Both groups warrant support and should have access to services to ensure the highest quality of life. However, a clinical diagnosis is required to access those services. It may also be worth pursuing a diagnosis in adulthood simply for the sake of self-growth and self-understanding. ✨



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# Referendum Funding Increases Access To MCCSC Early Learning



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When the Bloomington community voted to approve the Monroe County Community School Corporation's (MCCSC) Family-Centered, Community-Focused referendum in 2023, it solidified thousands of dollars in annual benefits for local school-age children and their families, says MCCSC Superintendent Dr. Markay Winston.

Among these benefits is increased access to free or reduced-cost early learning opportunities for 3- and 4-year-olds, which has allowed MCCSC to build upon its solid foundation of high-quality early learning programming to offer more preschool and Pre-K classrooms to Bloomington's youngest learners.

With the first installment of these referendum dollars in June 2024, MCCSC established Pre-K classrooms for 4-year-old students in all elementary schools and partnered with six other providers, including Indiana University, Bloomington Developmental Learning Center, Bloomington Center for Global Children, Compass Early Learning Center, Penny Lane Child Care, and New Hope for Families.

All MCCSC-districted families, regardless of income, qualify for at least \$4,000 in assistance toward Pre-K programs for 4-year-olds through MCCSC or partner providers. Winston says this assistance is a significant benefit to families that could otherwise face early learning expenses of

\$9,000 per year or more. For many families, these expenses are cost-prohibitive and may prevent young learners from being able to attend school.

"This is one of the signature accomplishments of our community. To pass the 2023 referendum is truly an investment not just in the future of our children and our youngest learners, but in the future of our city," says Winston. "This is a community that shows day in and day out how much it values education."

In coming years, the Family-Centered, Community-Focused initiative, which raised the MCCSC referendum rate by 8.5 cents for an estimated annual cost of about \$50 per household, is expected to set students up for long-term academic success, increase district-wide graduation rates, and strengthen the Bloomington workforce and economy.

Tim Dowling, director of early learning and enrollment at MCCSC, says this initiative has resulted in a **97% increase in community-wide Pre-K enrollment since June 2024.**

Before the referendum, less than half of 3- and 4-year-old children in the MCCSC district were enrolled in early learning.

"These opportunities for families wouldn't exist without the support of our community, without the support of the 2023 referendum," says Dowling. "These programs that we have, whether it's our own programs or our partner programs, are wonderful places for children."

Studies show that early learning programs increase kindergarten preparedness, cultivate literacy and numeracy skills, increase high school graduation rates, and help young students develop social and emotional intelligence.



(top)The MCCSC Family-Centered, Community-Focused initiative has resulted in a 97% increase in community-wide Pre-K enrollment since June 2024; (above) MCCSC Superintendent Dr. Markay Winston calls the 2023 referendum "one of the signature accomplishments of our community." *Courtesy photos*



“We know that children who participate in early learning experiences are **40% less likely to drop out of high school**. That’s significant,” says Winston. “Children’s brains are most ready to learn between 3, 4, and 5, so we want to be able to get them at that young age, while they’re ready and eager to learn.”

For the 2025–2026 school year, MCCSC will also expand its preschool programs for 3-year-olds. Income-eligible families can attend MCCSC’s preschool program for free or receive a stipend toward partner provider programs. With more spots opening up for both preschool and Pre-K students, Winston is confident that parents of young children will also have increased opportunities to work more hours, seek new employment, return to school themselves, or otherwise improve the financial circumstances and futures of their families.

“Because of the early learning programs we’re offering, we have seen that **more than 50% of our families are able to increase the number of hours that they can work**,” she says. “We recognize that if they can work longer hours, that **increases the household income** for that family.”

Bloomingtonian Eli Konwest, who has two children in the district, enrolled her daughter, Mae, in an MCCSC Pre-K classroom last year.

“Child care costs are a big factor in choosing to have kids, and then once you have kids, in the opportunities you can pursue as parents,” says Konwest. “To have a high-quality option that’s affordable is really priceless.”

In her Pre-K classroom, Mae has been learning her letters and numbers; attending music, art, and physical education classes; and being exposed to important elements of attending school, like riding the bus, eating in the cafeteria, and playing on the playground.

“Mae is in our local district in school, so that is where she will continue on for kindergarten,” says Konwest. “Her



(this page and opposite page) “We know that children who participate in early learning experiences are 40% less likely to drop out of high school,” says Winston. “Children’s brains are most ready to learn between 3, 4, and 5, so we want to be able to get them at that young age, while they’re ready and eager to learn.”



teachers, Miss Amanda and Miss Emma, pretty much spent the whole first nine weeks with the students talking about classroom expectations, being respectful, being kind, and basically just what it is to be a good person and a good classmate at school.”

Winston says that essential life skills like communication, decision making, and tolerance are taught organically through participation in early learning classrooms.

“Our teachers do an amazing job of creating play-based learning experiences that really are preparing our students for when they matriculate up through the years,” she explains. “They’re learning so much about themselves, about each other, about differences, and all of that is going to matter for our children.”

**Preschool registration for the 2025–2026 school year opened on February 3, and registration for Pre-K opens March 10.** Dowling encourages parents with any questions about the enrollment process to reach out to the early learning office at 812-330-7702.

“We are very proud of our programs,” he says. “We want to make sure that parents are able to make an informed choice, and we’re happy to talk with you about both our programs and our partner programs.”

Learn more at [earlylearning.mccsc.edu](http://earlylearning.mccsc.edu). —Sophie Bird Murphy

# African American Arts Institute Celebrates Half Century at IU

by Greg Siering

This year, Indiana University celebrates the 50th anniversary of its beloved African American Arts Institute (AAAI), which continues its important work of showcasing African American performing arts and their influence on American culture.

Founded in 1974 by Herman Hudson, IU vice-chancellor for Afro-American Affairs, the Institute both supports its three performance ensembles and acts as a cultural home for their students and faculty. The IU Soul Revue, the first ensemble, emerged in 1971, offering a venue for performances of R&B, soul, funk, and contemporary Black popular music. In 1974, the African American Dance Company started performing a variety of dance styles from the African diaspora and African American culture. In 1975, the African American Choral Ensemble began showcasing spirituals, traditional and contemporary gospel, and works by African American composers.



AAAI musicians perform during the 2021 Potpourri of the Arts. The Institute is celebrating its 50th anniversary this school year. Photo by Jeremy Hogan

The Institute was groundbreaking in the 1970s, offering these ensembles as credit-bearing classes for students rather than as extracurricular activities. According to AAAI Executive Director Raymond Wise, this move offered legitimacy to these arts, validating them through the mechanisms and scholarly authority of the university. They could do the work of the arts—performing and engaging in the creative and scholarly activities of musical composition and choreography—rather than continually justifying their existence.

The ensembles' performing students are diverse, coming from various ethnic, racial, educational, and artistic backgrounds. Wise says, "There is a wonderful kind of diversity that permeates our programs. You just look on stage and say, 'Whoa, wow, everybody's here.'" This diversity—in both performers and audiences—helps these African American cultural experiences to be valued within broader communities as essential components of shared American culture, says Wise.

The Institute has been celebrating its heritage and contributions throughout the school year, including a gala in November that honored the ensembles' founding directors. The celebration will continue as each ensemble performs its annual spring concerts, including an April 11–13 event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Dance Company.

Wise sees the Institute's true legacy to be its students, as they carry the vitality and value of African American performing arts into their lives and the world. But what the Institute offers audiences in Bloomington and beyond is central to its mission, too. Wise says, "What we do inspires, it uplifts, and it encourages," offering audiences hope, joy, and community.

Learn more at [aai.indiana.edu](http://aai.indiana.edu). ✨



Raymond Wise, AAAI Executive Director, says the Institute's true legacy is its students, who carry the vitality and value of African American performing arts into their lives and the world. Photo by Jim Krause

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# Citizen Scientist

BY SUSAN M. BRACKNEY



## Join a Seed Trial or Start Your Own This Growing Season

It might be a little early to start gardening, but it's not too soon to join an upcoming seed trial or to plan a seed trial of your own. Besides homegrown veggies, you'd be producing valuable citizen science data which could be used to help broaden and preserve genetic biodiversity in agriculture.

Over the last several decades, testing the performance of different flower and vegetable varieties primarily has fallen to horticulturalists at academic institutions and large agricultural companies. "The current system is focused on homogeneity in fewer and large markets for high margins," explains Nicolas Enjalbert, co-founder and CEO of SeedLinked, an online and app-based seed-trialing platform.

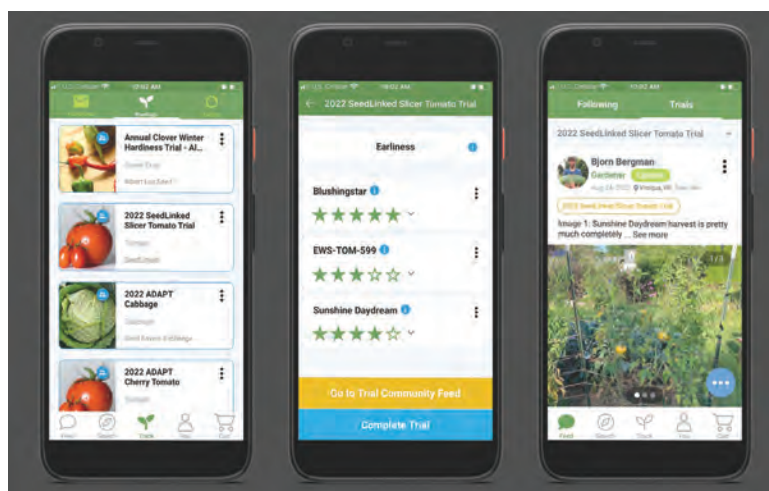
When coupled with climate change, our current seed-trialing paradigm may be putting us all at risk. For example, increased incidences of certain pathogens and insect pests—not to mention prolonged periods of drought, flooding, and more extreme weather—have been shown to impact the nutritional value and yields of historically "reliable" crops like soybeans, corn, and wheat.

Through crowdsourced seed trials, researchers can study many more plants and may be in a better position to find climate-resilient varieties. One such crowdsourced trial is the Community-Powered Seed Discovery Project operated by SeedLinked with support from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) seed banks and the USDA Agricultural Research Service. Participants will receive three different seed varieties to plant and report on via the SeedLinked platform.

### GETTING STARTED

To sign up, visit [seedlinked.com](https://seedlinked.com) and click on the "Join a Trial" link. If you happen to miss the Community-Powered Seed Discovery Project onboarding deadline, don't worry. "Oftentimes we have trials coming every month or every other month," Enjalbert says. "About 80% of them are vegetables or flowers [to trial]. So, sooner or later you will be invited to participate."

If you'd prefer, you can grow your own way, entering data for whatever you sow in this year's garden. "It's collaborative as well as individual, so, if you download the SeedLinked app and create



(above) Nutritional value and yields of historically "reliable" crops can be impacted by pathogens, insect pests, drought, and flooding; (right) through crowdsourced seed trials, researchers can study many more plants and may be in a better position to find climate-resilient varieties.

Courtesy photos



a profile, you can track all of your own varieties," he says. "You can create your own self-trial—enter your planting date, transplanting date, pictures, and pick whatever traits you want to track."

You can also enter comments, make your findings about specific varieties publicly available, and view others' public trial results. (You'll find early sprouting broccoli, heat-tolerant lettuce, and much more.) The data contributions you make do matter. "We have more than 300 researchers using SeedLinked either to trial or to make [seed variety] decisions," Enjalbert says. "It's also starting to be used more globally. Maybe we will be able to see that there is a certain variety in Italy that would do really well in New Mexico. With climate change, it's very interesting to get that information globally." ❄️

# Discover the Transformative Power of Biking in B-town

Meet Sue, a dedicated Indiana University employee and an active member of the City of Bloomington's Commission on Aging. Sue has discovered a refreshing way to start her day—by commuting on her e-bike from Bloomington's east side to the IU campus. Her motivation? A desire to be more active.

If you're wondering whether using an e-bike is really being active, the answer is a resounding yes! Studies have shown that e-bike riders often take longer or more frequent trips than those on regular pedal bikes, reaping similar benefits.

Sue's typical bike commute is a pleasant 2 1/2-mile route through the Park Ridge neighborhood, including a tunnel under the Ind. 45/46 Bypass on the 7th/Longview Greenway. "I enjoy the bike paths and the quieter streets through the neighborhoods. It's a bit longer than the car route, but it's much safer and more enjoyable with minimal vehicle traffic," she says.

Initially, Sue had concerns about navigating busy roads, particularly East 3rd Street. However, she discovered adjacent, well-marked bike paths and routes that kept her away from heavy traffic areas. "Finding these bike paths was a game changer. They're mostly in low-traffic areas and provide a safe, enjoyable ride."

Sue's e-bike has been instrumental in making biking a viable option for her. "The throttle on my e-bike is fantastic. It provides an extra boost when needed, especially on hills," she explains. E-bikes, like the one Sue uses, are helping more people stay active, offering an accessible option that supports physical activity without the strain of regular biking.



(above) Each morning, Sue, an Indiana University employee, takes a pleasant 2 1/2-mile bike route to work; (below, left) Sue believes biking offers many benefits, including good exercise, reduced vehicle congestion, and an energized start to the day. Photos by Peyton Conner © 2024 The Trustees of Indiana University



On campus and around Bloomington, Sue appreciates the biking infrastructure, such as the scenic paths near the IU Auditorium and through campus by the Showalter Fountain and The Old Crescent. Sue believes biking offers significant benefits for the Bloomington community. "It's excellent exercise, reduces the need for parking, and helps cut down on vehicle congestion. I feel productive and energized when I bike to work. It's like a jump start to my day."

Sue's story highlights the transformative power of biking, not just as a mode of transportation but as a path to a healthier, more active lifestyle. If you're inspired by Sue's experience and want to learn more about how biking can benefit you, check out the IU Transportation Demand Management's free online course, "Ride Smart: Bicycle and E-Scooter Traffic Skills." This course offers valuable tips and skills to help you navigate traffic safely and confidently.

For more information on biking resources, to enroll in the course, and learn about the work of the Transportation Demand Management department at Indiana University, visit [go.iu.edu/biking](http://go.iu.edu/biking). Join the biking community and discover how two wheels can make a positive impact on your everyday trips. ✨

# \$500,000 Grant to Make 100-Year-Old Theater Energy Efficient

by Sophie Bird Murphy

With a \$500,000 grant from the Indiana Office of Energy Development, Bloomington's historic Buskirk-Chumley Theater (BCT) will undergo comprehensive renovations to increase energy efficiency and climate resiliency, says Shawn Miya, assistant director of sustainability for the City of Bloomington's Economic and Sustainable Development Department.

The Empowering Energy Partnerships in Indiana Communities (EPIC) grant, along with a 30% match from the City of Bloomington, will fund a new HVAC system, a rooftop solar photovoltaic system, and a state-of-the-art solar "battery," which will allow the theater to use solar energy at nighttime and during power outages.

"We really felt like the Buskirk-Chumley Theater was the best place for this project," says Miya. "It was opened in 1922, so it has a lot of capital improvement needs."

The upgrades are expected to take place before September 2025 with minimal, if any, disruptions to BCT programming. Once completed, these improvements will reduce CO2 emissions by 25.6 tons, improve energy efficiency by 211 million British thermal units (Btu), save the City of Bloomington \$6,000 in annual operating costs, and produce 30 megawatt hours of solar energy each year.

"That's essentially the equivalent to powering three homes for an entire year," says Miya.

With these new systems in place, the



The grant, along with a 30% match from the City of Bloomington, will fund a new HVAC system, a rooftop solar photovoltaic system, and a state-of-the-art solar "battery." Photo by Rodney Margison

BCT will serve as a refuge for vulnerable Bloomingtonians during extreme heat events by providing free City-funded movie screenings in an air-conditioned environment.

"Climate change is here," says Miya. "We were selected for this award because we're not only focusing on climate mitigation, which is reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but we're also increasing climate resilience, which is our ability to prepare or respond to and recover from the impacts of climate change."

In 2026, the Economic and Sustainable Development Department will host tours of the upgraded space, along with a climate action speaker series that will provide context on the importance of decarbonization, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate resiliency while teaching attendees how to incorporate sustainable practices into their daily lives.

Renovations to the BCT are taking place as part of the City of Bloomington's Climate Action Plan, which aims to improve the energy efficiency of 33 municipal buildings, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below 2018 levels, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, among other goals.

Visit [bloomington.in.gov/sustainability](https://bloomington.in.gov/sustainability). ✖

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# What Does the Future Hold For Refugees in Bloomington?



(l-r) Lubna Qazi, resettlement director for Exodus, and Jerono Rotich, IU professor of kinesiology, at Exodus' annual fundraising gala in August. *Courtesy photo*

by Susan M. Brackney

Even as the new Trump administration works to roll up and hide America's welcome mat, Bloomington continues to make way for asylum seekers—most recently from the Middle East, Africa, and Central America.

“Our largest population in Bloomington is currently from Afghanistan,” says Lubna Qazi, resettlement director for Exodus Refugee Bloomington. “Then we have Congo and Syria, and Somalians have started coming in.” Exodus, a nonprofit group, resettles refugees in Bloomington and other Indiana cities.

Asylum seekers and refugees flee their home countries for a slew of humanitarian reasons, including religious, ethnic, and political persecution. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “122.6 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of June 2024 as the result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order.” Of these, there were 43.7 million refugees and 8 million asylum seekers, not yet granted refugee status.

## Safe Haven?

For decades, the U.S. has been a haven for refugees; however, the numbers of refugees accepted fluctuates. “Presidents can set that

number to whatever they want, but they cannot just go to zero, because it's U.S. policy—it's the way the Constitution has set this thing up that we welcome refugees,” Qazi says.

But, there are ways to subvert that policy. A flurry of refugees made it to Indiana during November, December, and the first part of January, but on January 27 the Trump administration suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) until further notice, including Welcome Corps, a private sponsorship program under USRAP. The move was foreshadowed in a November 6 Facebook video post in which Exodus Refugee Immigration CEO Cole Varga stated, “Knowing that President Trump will once again be taking office ... is naturally leading to fear among our clients, supporters, and community.”

During Trump's first presidency, among other restrictive policies, he implemented travel bans on people from Muslim-majority nations like Syria, effectively kiboshing U.S. acceptance of refugees and asylum seekers from many countries. A Trump second-term directive has already established the groundwork for another such ban.

## Finding Their Way

As a federally monitored resettlement agency, Exodus Refugee Immigration receives some federal funding to help secure housing and necessities for the refugees it serves. “Depending on the presidential determination of the number of refugees, we are provided a dollar amount per capita,” Qazi explains. “So, let's say one person gets \$1,225 for 90 days. You have to get your groceries. You have to have a lease. You have to have phones. You have to have furniture. How would you do that with \$1,225?”

Besides helping to secure food and shelter, Exodus Refugee Bloomington is newly providing refugees with in-house mental health services. “Our former director, Erin Aquino, is a licensed therapist, so she is working in her mental wellness role as a therapist,” Qazi says. “All of these refugees come with PTSD, and then there's ongoing anxiety about living in a new country and learning a new language.”

Exodus Refugee Bloomington also offers refugees language and literacy training, cultural orientation, and job-hunting help. “There are a couple of different programs that have very limited funding sources that we utilize while people are looking for employment and they're getting ready to be out working,” she adds. The organization also relies heavily on private donations and volunteer support.

Refugees are encouraged to take the first available jobs they can find. Often these are custodial or food service positions. “There are very few refugee families that are self-sufficient in four or six or eight months,” Qazi says. It can take one to two years—and sometimes longer—before refugees can stand on their own.

But stand on their own they do. Case in point, Mohamed Osman Mohamed was an orphan from war-torn Somalia who spent six years in a Kenyan refugee camp before being admitted into the U.S. Based in Indianapolis, he worked a warehouse job while learning English. Eventually, he earned a public financial management degree from IU-Bloomington. He's now an American citizen working as an investor relations analyst.

## How to Help

“Even if President Trump cuts down the funding, even if he lowers the refugee numbers for this year, we still have all of these [current refugees] to work with,” Qazi says. “We cannot just tell them, ‘OK, we welcomed you. Here's your house. Go find your ways to survive.’”

Want to help? “We are reaching out to people to become monthly donors to help these refugees,” Qazi says. The group also needs volunteers for assisting with resumes, cleaning, setting up new households, and more. “Even if you can just sit down with someone for two hours a week and become their conversational partner, so they can become confident in speaking the language—just someone to practice casual English with,” Qazi says.

Visit [exodusrefugee.org](http://exodusrefugee.org) to donate or to get started as an Exodus Refugee Bloomington volunteer. ✨



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# Emma's Annual Coat Drive Nets 300-plus Donations

by Elizabeth Ellis

More than 300 people in the Bloomington community are warmer this winter season, thanks to the warm heart of 13-year-old Emma Booher.

Last fall, the Jackson Creek Middle School student and her family celebrated eight years of “Emma’s Annual Coat Drive”, a neighborhood effort that began when she was only in kindergarten. With the help of family friend Ann St. John, what started with only 75 coats and two local charity partnerships has blossomed into 300-plus yearly donations of cold weather clothing distributed by need to eight area groups that include Monroe County Community School Corporation, Richland Bean Blossom Community School Corporation, Boys & Girls Clubs of Bloomington, Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County, Middle Way House, New Hope for Families, Spencer-Owen Community Schools, and North Lawrence Community Schools.

“Every year, my mom [Sarah Booher] emails the participating charities asking them what they need,” says Emma. “This year we had a lot more hats.”



13-year-old Emma Booher started “Emma’s Annual Coat Drive” when she was in kindergarten. Photo by James Kellar

Emma then helps her parents create a registry at Target of items needed based on the feedback from the participating organizations. Clothing needs typically range from coats and fleece-lined sweatshirts to hats, gloves, and scarves for babies, children, and adults.

“We ask for brand-new items, rather than hand-me-downs, so kids can experience the joy of having a new coat,” says Emma. “It’s always really fun to hear the doorbell ring and see 15 new boxes on our porch.”

The drive typically runs for about a week to give the Booher family time to unbox, sort, and deliver the donations to their appropriate locations before Thanksgiving. Emma says over the years the drive has become a bonding experience with her neighbors, many of them dropping off their donations in person. “I love inviting my local friends over to help me sort all the coats by size.”

Emma is inspired by the cards she receives at the end of the year from each charity, often detailing the ages of the children whose lives they have impacted.

“My goal for 2025 is to be able to work forward and get even more donations—there’s not really a stopping point for us,” says Emma. ✨

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# BFFIndy: A Place for Women To Make New Friends



“We’re mainly based in Indianapolis and the surrounding areas, but who doesn’t want to go to a winery—especially a really good one?” Loughead says. “I’m hoping to do more events in Bloomington and get to know more of the businesses there.”

Aspiring members are invited to join the free BFFIndy Facebook group, which features spaces for women in all phases of life, including students, parents, and retirees.

To learn more or suggest a Bloomington-based event, email [bff.indianapolis@gmail.com](mailto:bff.indianapolis@gmail.com) or visit [bffindianapolis.com](http://bffindianapolis.com). ✨

by *Sophie Bird Murphy*

When FrancesMary Loughead moved to Indianapolis from downtown Chicago with her husband in 2021, she learned firsthand how difficult it can be to start over in a new community, especially when it comes to making friends. A remote worker, Loughead faced the challenge of forging new relationships without daily in-person opportunities for connection—and was surprised to learn she wasn’t alone.

“The more I talked to people, I found that there was an interest in making friends, and that making friends was really hard for everybody, especially out of college,” says Loughead, 26.

Inspired by these experiences, she saw the need for a local organization dedicated to bringing women together around accessible, affordable activities. What started as a small

group of friends meeting up to watch a show or grab dinner officially became BFFIndy in December 2023.

In just a single year, BFFIndy has grown to a community of more than 18,000 women, all of them searching for meaningful connection and friendship in their adult lives. By partnering with businesses in Indianapolis and beyond, BFFIndy hosts between seven and 10 events each month for women of all ages, including happy hours, book clubs, craft classes, workshops, spa nights, and more.

“It’s definitely hard to wrap my brain around the fact that there are so many people who were in the same spot, but also very rewarding that there are so many people who find comfort in BFFIndy,” says Loughead.

This autumn, BFFIndy made its first foray into Bloomington with a wine tasting at Oliver Winery, which welcomed nearly 40 women from both Bloomington and Indianapolis.

(above) BFFIndy is a community of more than 18,000 women who are searching for meaningful connection and friendship in their adult lives; (left) FrancesMary Loughead created BFFIndy after realizing how many women are looking for and struggling to make new friends. *Courtesy photos*



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# Changing Careers in Mid-Life

## 3 Bloomington Success Stories

by Kristen Senz

According to a study by the American Institute for Economic Research, in any given year, between 1 and 2 million people changed careers in mid-life. Many were already successful but were seeking new challenges. Here are three Bloomingtonians who were succeeding in one career but chose to make the jump to another completely unrelated field—and found success again.

### LEE ROSSER

After channeling his energy into the ring as a professional wrestler, Chef Lee Rosser turned his talents and showmanship to hosting intimate dining events. “Wrestling helped me find my way,” says Rosser, who grew up in Hobart, Indiana, outside Gary.

Driving around the Midwest while working for a fiber optics company, Rosser developed and marketed his wrestling persona—a villainous character audiences loved to hate. A unique skillset combining athleticism, storytelling, relationship building, and dealmaking fueled his success.

By age 32, wrestling became Rosser’s full-time career. It was “like being the ultimate rockstar ... you’re moving from town to town, week to week, on the circuit.”

Over the years, he formed a community of fellow wrestlers, spectators, promoters, and local businesses across the Midwest.

Rosser, now 55, still makes cameo appearances in the wrestling world and helps train up-and-comers. But these days, he uses the culinary arts to serve audiences, either at private dinner parties or events at his dining room on South Walnut Street. “I had to figure out how to make money and still be me at the same time, because I kind of have no filter,” he says.



Lee Rosser transitioned from a full-time career as a professional wrestler to telling stories through food as a professional chef. Photo by Martin Boling

Training at Chef JJ’s Downtown in Indianapolis, he learned traditional techniques, multiple ethnic cuisines, and backyard barbecuing. Today, through his business Chef Lee in Your Home, he tells stories through food. He relishes bringing people together and creating memories.

“The table is my ring; my goal is to get you to come back for the next meal.”

### JANE DANIELS

Jane Daniels, 71, spent more than a decade as an administrator in the Indiana University football recruitment office, first during the mid-1970s under Hoosiers’ coach Lee Corso, then in the mid-1990s under Coach Bill Mallory.

Jane Daniels became a photographer and owner of Jane Daniels Photography after first working for the IU football program and later in the corporate world. Photo by Sarah Slover



Her role required her to wear many hats—building relationships with players’ families, coordinating visits and marketing efforts, and participating in game day events. “I just loved the social aspect of that job,” she says. “It was fun.”

In a subsequent job at Cook Medical, as a customer service professional, Daniels adapted to a new environment and further honed her ability to build rapport and meet expectations. After decades in corporate settings, however, she never anticipated the turn her career would take. Feeling ready for something new, Daniels and her husband decided to sell their home. A photographer who arrived to take shots for the listing mentioned needing help in her business.

Daniels, then 55, was an amateur photographer at the time. She took a chance and decided that working as a photographer might suit her well. Later, she launched Jane Daniels Photography, which has grown substantially over the past 13 years, making her one of the most sought-after real estate photographers in the area.

Her work as a photographer and ▶

business owner gives Daniels the opportunity to build relationships and delight her customers. “It’s almost identical to what lit my fire in football,” she says. “I guess I’m a good communicator, and I love being able to talk to different people.”

**STEVE SMITH**

Bloomington native Steve Smith, 62, was born into the shoe business. His grandfather opened Smith Shoes on the downtown square in 1952. The store, which later moved to College Mall, was known for its in-house mynah bird, Joe.



Smith, not fond of cleaning Joe’s cage, left Bloomington in 1980, leveraging his experience in the store to land a management job at athletic footwear giant Foot Locker.

A decade later, when Smith’s father called to say his time with the family business was winding down, Smith returned to Bloomington. “I took a lot of the knowledge that I learned during my time at Foot Locker and applied that to our business.”

He significantly expanded the store, then called Smith’s Sport ‘N’ Shoe, adding new product lines. Later, he purchased a small shopping center on South Walnut Street, where the store became Smith’s Shoe Center.

Smith enjoyed working with his wife and sister at the store and getting to know dozens of employees and product representatives over the years. But after business slowed, and the landscape of online competitors grew, Smith, then 56, closed the store at the end of 2018. “It was a really hard decision,” he says, “but I did have other interests, and a tenant was interested in the space.”

Smith, who had been studying to become a licensed Realtor, joined F.C. Tucker Realtors. Today, he enjoys a successful and award-winning career in real estate, where he is repeatedly recognized for being among F.C. Tucker’s top agents in the state.

“Instead of talking about shoes and feet and alignment, now it’s all about homes and inspections,” he says. “But so much of what I do is the same, and the commonality is customer service.” ✨

Although he was born into the shoe business, worked in management for Foot Locker, and eventually took over his family’s shoe store, Steve Smith found his second career as a licensed Realtor at F.C.Tucker Realtors.  
Photo by Sarah Slover



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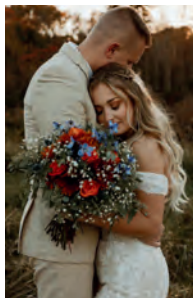
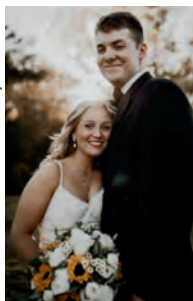
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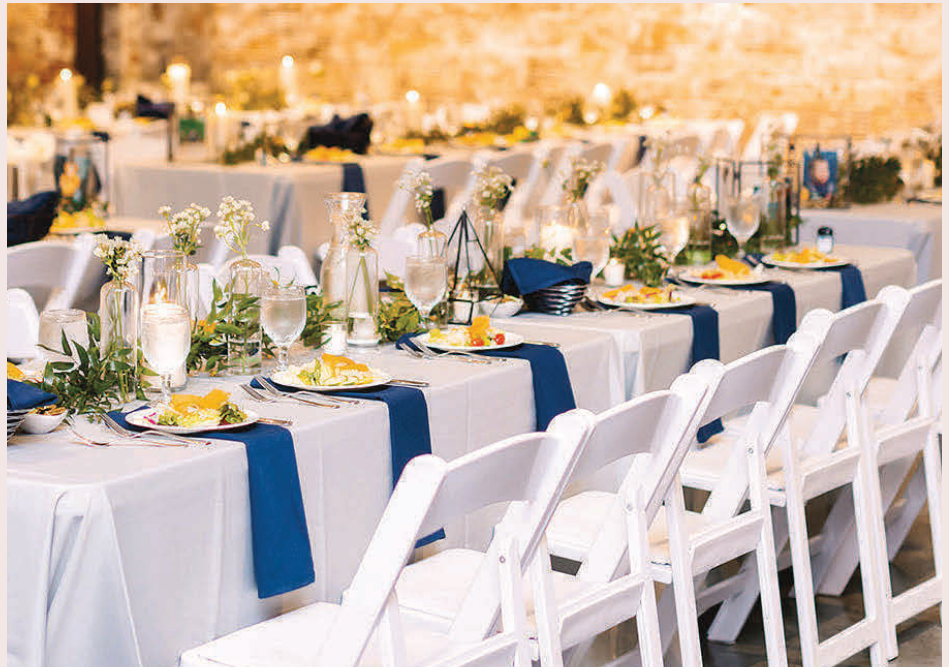
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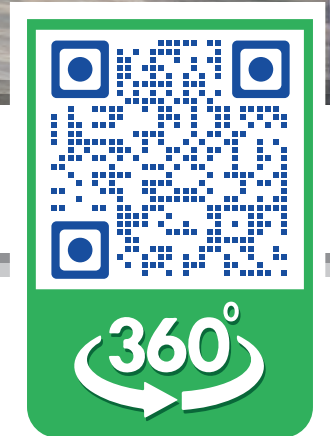
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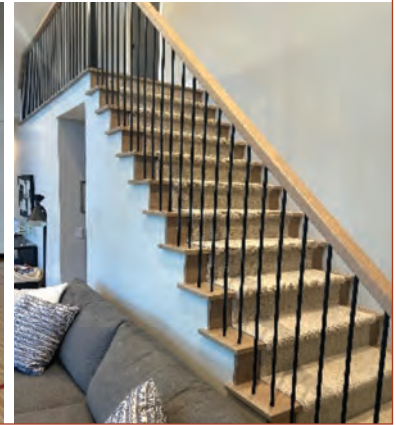


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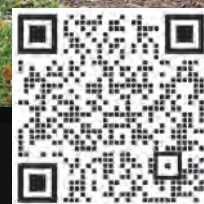
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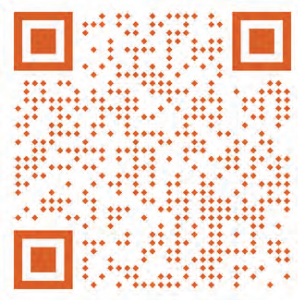
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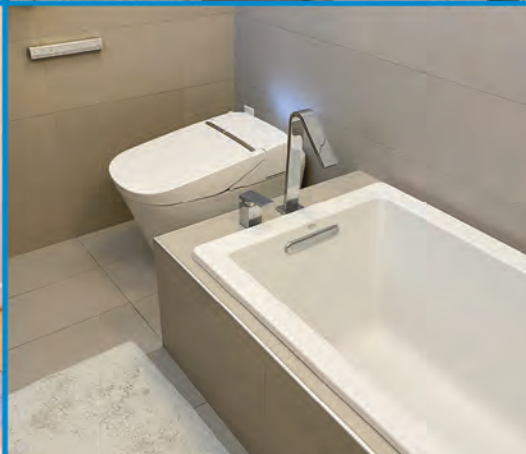
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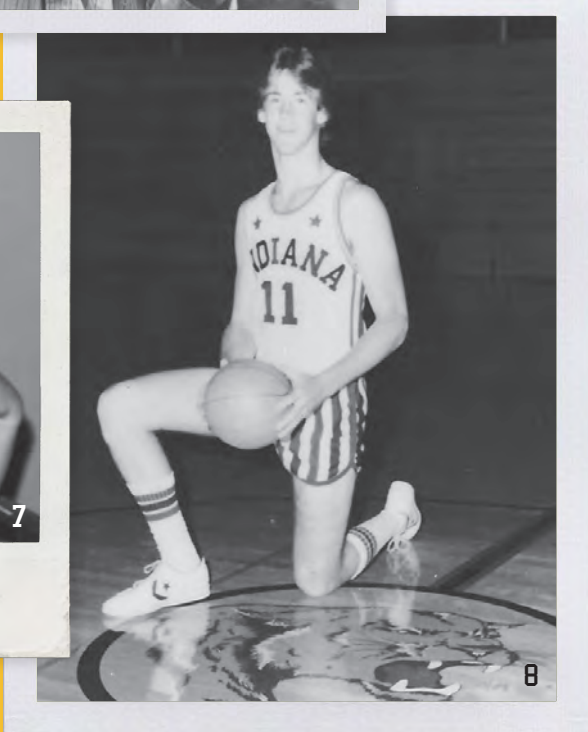
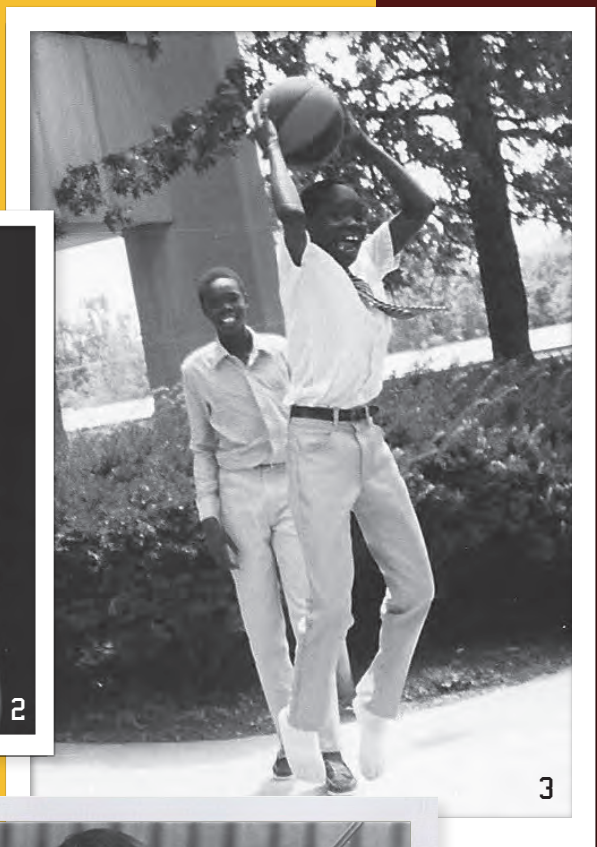
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1. Hoagy Carmichael.  
2. Meg Cabot.  
3. (l-r) Kueth Duany and his brother Duany Duany.  
4. Steve Kinsler.

5. Joshua Bell.  
6. L. Jon Wertheim.  
7. Michael Koryta.  
8. Terry Stotts.  
*Courtesy photos*

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**A L U M N I**

*by Brittany Marshall*

The Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) is no stranger to shaping successful alumni. With a history of professional athletes and musicians, renowned writers, a teenage math prodigy, and more, it comes as no surprise that MCCSC continues to produce notable graduates.

The consolidation that created MCCSC in 1968 produced two local high schools: Bloomington High School South (BHSS) in 1972, and later that year Bloomington High School North (BHSN).

Both schools are consistently ranked in the top 10% in the state, and each is known for its commitment to academic excellence, college readiness, superb music and arts programs, and athletic success.

We asked BHSS Principal Mark Fletcher and BHSN Principal Matthew Stark to share their perspectives, memories, and staff remarks on some of their school's distinguished alums.

# BLOOMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SOUTH ALUMNI



Courtesy photo

Carmichael composed hundreds of songs in his career, including the hits “Stardust,” “Georgia on My Mind,” “The Nearness of You,” and “Heart and Soul”—four of the most recognized and believed to be most recorded songs of all time. He graduated from the IU School of Law in 1926, and appeared in 14 films, including his debut, *Topper* (1937), and the classic *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). He won an Academy Award in 1951 for Best Original Song for “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening.”

“The school auditorium is named after Hoagy as he remains a source of pride to our school community.”

**HOAGY CARMICHAEL, BHS '20**

Musician, composer,  
songwriter, actor, lawyer

**JENNA KLOOSTERMAN, BHSS '00**

Engineering  
researcher, scholar

An associate professor at California Polytechnic State University, Kloosterman received her B.A. in physics from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.S. in astronomy and doctorate in philosophy from the University of Arizona. She was a postdoctoral fellow and radio frequency microwave engineer for NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Her research on emerging technologies has led to the development of innovative heterodyne receivers used for NASA balloon missions in Antarctica. This high-resolution spectroscopy studies astrophysical phenomena, and the “Life Cycle of the Interstellar Medium” in our galaxy, as presented in her coauthored study, “The Stratospheric THz Observatory (STO)” for the 2010 Astronomical Telescopes + Instruments conference in San Diego.

“Jenna was known as wise beyond her years and it’s a surprise to nobody to see her doing great things in science. She was an incredibly intelligent student who also had the ability to be unassuming when working with her peers. She was incredibly kind to everyone, a team player, and a gifted young scientist.”



Courtesy photo



### MEG CABOT, BHSS '85

New York Times bestselling author

No. 1 *New York Times* bestselling author Cabot has written 84 novels, including her best-known young adult series, “The Princess Diaries.” The series was made into two Disney films, grossing over \$165 million globally, with a third film in the making. She’s also written other award-winning novels including *The Mediator* and “The Heather Wells Mystery” series.

“Like so many of these alumni, she is used as an example for students of the potential careers that can come from valuing their education.”

Photo by Steve Raymer

### DAVID SHUSTER, BHSS '85

Emmy Award-winning broadcast journalist

Most recently serving as anchor and correspondent on the streaming news commentary show *The Young Turks* and its Revel HQ YouTube channel, Shuster is recognized as having been a substitute or primary anchor at networks like MSNBC, Fox News, Al Jazeera America, and more. He led Fox News’ coverage of the investigations into President Bill Clinton—including the Monica Lewinsky scandal—and anchored MSNBC’s prime-time coverage of Michael Jackson’s death. He was at the Pentagon during the September 11, 2001, attack. Shuster received a regional Emmy Award for investigative journalism while a political reporter at KATV-TV in Little Rock, Arkansas.

“Many of our teachers in language arts and media refer to David as a potential role model for those interested in his field.”



Photo by Jeffrey Hammond



### REX GROSSMAN, BHSS '95

Former NFL quarterback

The 1998 Indiana Mr. Football and 2003 Chicago Bears first-round draft pick was recently named to the 2024 Southeastern Conference Football Legends class for his success as a University of Florida Gator. As a sophomore at Florida, Grossman finished second in voting for the 2002 Heisman Trophy and was named the Associated Press College Football Player of the Year.

In 2006, Grossman led the Bears to the NFC Championship before losing 27-24 to the Indianapolis Colts in Super Bowl XLI. He left Chicago for the Houston Texans in 2008, then closed out his playing career with the Washington Redskins from 2009–2013.

“While Rex had many amazing experiences, he has said that leading Bloomington South to the state championship in 1998 was his most memorable and satisfying accomplishment due to the Bloomington community, families, and close life-long friends.” ►

Photo by Keith Allison (CC BY-SA 2.0)

# BLOOMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SOUTH ALUMNI



Photo by Lauren Waiz/Indiana University

## JORDAN HULLS, BHSS '09

Former point guard, IU men's basketball, IUMBB Recruiting Coordinator

In 2009, Jordan Hulls led the Panthers to a 26-0 season and the Class 4A Indiana state basketball championship. He was named Indiana Mr. Basketball and Gatorade Player of the Year the same year. In his third season at IU, Hulls set the IU and Big Ten record for consecutive free throws made with 58 and led Indiana to winning the 2013 Big Ten Championship for the first time in 20 years.

Hulls played professionally for a year each in Poland, Kosovo, and Belgium before a six-year stint in Germany, where he finished his career ranked fifth in the league for 3-point field goals. In May 2022, Hulls returned home to become the team and recruiting coordinator for IU mens basketball.

“Never have I seen an athlete improve by leaps and bounds from one year to the next throughout his playing career like Jordy did. Much of that improvement had to do from his relentless work ethic and passion for the game.”



Courtesy photo

## STEVE KINSER, BHSS '72

Former high school state championship wrestler and professional race car driver

In 1971 as a BHSS junior, Steve Kinser finished second in the Indiana high school state wrestling tournament before winning the state title his senior year, earning a spot in the Indiana High School Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2004. But it's from behind the wheel of a race car that he's best known.

Kinser began racing sprint cars around the many dirt tracks in the area in 1976. He joined the fledgling World of Outlaws (WoO) series in 1978, winning its inaugural race at Devil's Bowl Speedway, the first of his 690 WoO feature wins and 20 championships. Kinser also raced in the 1997 Indianapolis 500 (finishing 14th), the 1995 Daytona 500 (finishing 40th), and the invitation-only International Race of Champions series (best finish of 6th in 1994.) He was inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in 2005 and the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America in 2017.

“The Kinser name is synonymous with both championship wrestling and race car driving. Steve's nationally known name is a sense of pride, and a part of this community's love for both sports.”



**DANIEL LARSEN, BHSS '22**

Award-winning mathematician and *New York Times* crossword puzzle contributor

Courtesy photo

While in high school, Larsen proved an unsolved mathematical conjecture related to Carmichael numbers—numbers that appear to be prime but aren't, which can cause deceptiveness in mathematical testing. His proof was inspired by a 1994 paper by W.R. Alford, Andrew Granville, and Carl Pomerance who theorized that there is a Carmichael number between any number and its double, which is exactly what Larsen was able to prove. In 2022, Larsen won \$100,000 at the prestigious Regeneron Science Talent Search for his proof and used the reward to pay for his college tuition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

What's more, he is the youngest person to ever publish a *New York Times* crossword puzzle at just 13 years old—he went on to have 10 more puzzles published before graduating high school.

“Daniel Larsen is hardworking and already an extremely successful mathematician whose future potential is limitless.”

Photo by Øystein Vidnes (CC BY-SA 2.0)



**WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN, BHSS '77**

American novelist, journalist, war correspondent

In addition to being the author of more than 20 novels and works of nonfiction, Vollmann worked as a war correspondent during the Bosnian War and went to Afghanistan to write about and fight with the mujahideen against the Soviet Union. He also won the 2005 National Book Award for Fiction for his historical fiction work *Europe Central*, a chronological series of stories about resistance to totalitarianism in Germany and the U.S.S.R. during the 20th century.

“William Tanner Vollmann is a highly regarded novelist. Interestingly, he and I share a dislike for cell phones, social media, and credit cards.”



**DR. TOM KLOOTWYK, BHSS '78**

Sports medicine orthopedic surgeon

(l-r) Drs. Tom Klootwyk and Arthur Rettig.  
Courtesy photo

Highly regarded as a knee expert, Klootwyk spent 23 years as the team doctor for the Indianapolis Colts and has continued to work as a team consultant since stepping down in 2022. He is an expert orthopedic surgeon with over 37 years in the medical field. Klootwyk's interest in sports medicine began as a high school football and basketball student-athlete at BHSS.

“Patients constantly refer to his high levels of communication and follow-up care. He goes above and beyond with personal calls, explanations of procedures, and genuine care for his patients in all related areas. His ability to safely and expediently return athletes to their competitive sports after injury is second to none.” ▶

# BLOOMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL NORTH ALUMNI

**JOSHUA BELL, BHSN '84**  
World-renowned  
violinist, bestselling recording artist



Photo by Eric Kabik

Bell is a Grammy Award-winning and world-renowned violinist with a career spanning more than 30 years. Since his debut at Carnegie Hall in New York when he was just 17 years old, he has performed with countless major orchestras around the world. Best known for his interpretations of classical violin concertos, he has served as a visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London and as an artistic partner of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

“Josh Bell not only is a significant alumnus, he also has worked to support the [BHSN] orchestra program through his generosity and has helped this program to continue to impact the lives of students throughout our school community.”

AP Photo/Kathy Willens



**JARED JEFFRIES, BHSN '00**  
Former NBA  
basketball player

The 6-foot-11 forward, Indiana’s Mr. Basketball in 2000, and Gatorade national player of the year helped the Cougars to a 25-1 record and the Indiana High School Athletic Association Class 4A state runner-up. Jeffries was recruited by Bobby Knight, though Knight was fired just before the start of Jeffries’ freshman season. As an Indiana Hoosier, he was named Big Ten Player of the Year, leading the team to the 2002 NCAA Championship game, where they lost to Maryland. He was drafted by the Washington Wizards as the 11th overall pick in the 2002 NBA Draft and played 11 years in the NBA.

“His success at North is well known as well as his continued success at Indiana University and in the NBA. Family and education are mentioned a lot when talking with staff about his time here at North.”



Photo by Shannon Zahnle

## MICHAEL KORYTA, BHSN '03

New York Times  
bestselling novelist

Koryta was a professional writer by his senior year of high school, contributing to *The Herald-Times*' sports, general features, and weekend police beats. Before graduating from Indiana University in 2006, he had written 1,000 *H-T* articles and published two novels. He received the Outstanding Young Alumni Award from IU's College of Arts and Sciences in 2008.

Koryta's contemporary crime and suspense fiction novels are inspired by a culmination of his studies, including a high school independent study with the private eye firm Trace Investigations, a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from IU, and his work as a private investigator and newspaper reporter. He's also an experienced screenwriter, and his work is featured in scripts for Fox, Universal, and Amazon Studios.

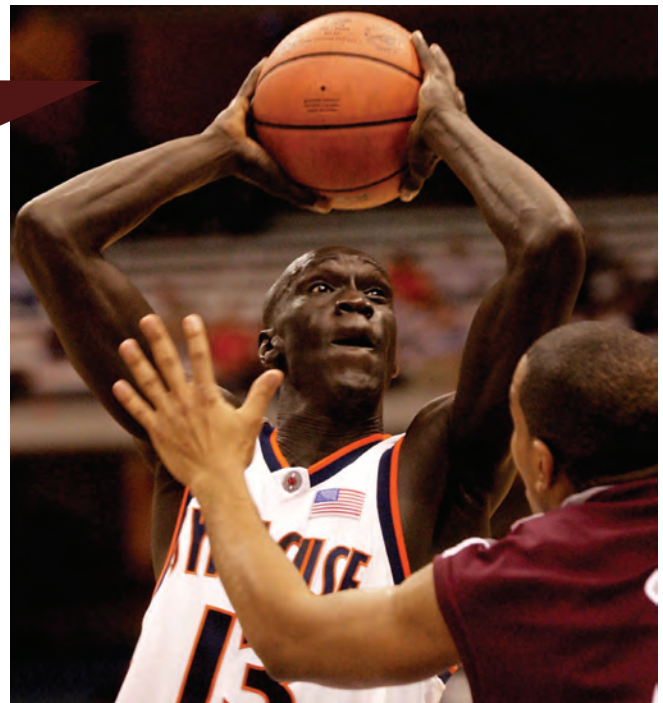
"His books have been an inspiration to many of our staff and families. Scott Bless, former BHSN football coach says, 'He is a proud alumnus who continues to follow the activities of our school and sends words of encouragement to students and staff.'"

## KUETH DUANY, BHSN '98

Former professional  
basketball player

The 6-foot-6 Sudanese-born shooting guard was a three-time varsity letter winner and a 1997 state championship winner as a Cougar. A Nike All-American, Duany went on to play at Syracuse University and, as senior captain, led the team to victory in the 2003 NCAA Championship. He played professionally from 2003–2007 in the U.S., Finland, and Germany, and was inducted into the Monroe County Sports Hall of Fame in 2021.

"Kueth is a person of high character from a great family. We are so excited for his success. So many staff and family have such kind memories of his time at North." ►



AP Photo/Kevin Rivoli

# BLOOMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL NORTH ALUMNI



**L. JON WERTHEIM, BHSN '89**

Executive editor, senior writer, *Sports Illustrated*

A 25-year sports journalist, CBS *60 Minutes* correspondent, and 10-time bestselling author, Jon Wertheim built his career at *Sports Illustrated* beginning as a senior writer in 1999 and advancing to executive editor in 2012.

“Jon Wertheim has continued to connect with his BHSN roots. One of our current students, Nash Henry, has interviewed and sought him out for his advice and mentorship. He is remembered especially for the time he spent following North basketball, leading to his book, *Transition Game: How Hoosiers Went Hip-Hop* [Riverhead Freestyle, 2006].”

Courtesy photo



**WHITNEY THOMAS, BHSN '05**

Former IU women's basketball star

After averaging 16 points and 10 rebounds per game in high school, Thomas went on to star at Indiana University, where she was named to the Big Ten Conference all-freshman team. Throughout her four-year career at IU, she started 130 of the 131 games in which she played, scored 1,240 points, and tallied 1,090 rebounds, 258 assists, 273 steals, and 73 blocks. Thomas took advantage of an NCAA-permitted fifth year of eligibility in another sport to join the IU volleyball team for its 2009 season. In 2018, she was inducted into the Monroe County Sports Hall of Fame.

When Thomas experienced a season-ending knee injury her senior year at North, then-volleyball coach Eugene Kim recalls, “She stood there on the sidelines and cheered and coached her teammates, and I remember thinking that I was even more proud of the sort of kid she was than the sort of athlete.”

Photo by Ashley Wilkerson



Courtesy photo

**SEAN MAY, BHSN '02**  
Former professional basketball player

A three-time all-state power forward, May was a member of the 2002 McDonald's High School All-American team and was named Indiana Mr. Basketball the same year. He played starting center for the University of North Carolina (UNC) Tar Heels and was named Most Outstanding Player of the 2005 NCAA Tournament. May was drafted by the Charlotte Bobcats as the 13th overall pick in the first round of the 2005 NBA draft. He played professionally until he took a coaching position in 2015 at his alma mater, where he is currently a Tar Heels assistant coach.

"His success at North and North Carolina as a player is well known and we're proud of his continued work with NC program. Andy Hodson, former North assistant coach, speaks fondly of his sense of humor and dedication."

**TERRY STOTTS, BHSN '76**  
NBA basketball coach

Stotts led BHSN to the school's first sectional championship and became the school's first Indiana All Star. He attended the University of Oklahoma on a basketball scholarship and started his junior and senior years. After that, he played professionally in the Continental Basketball Association and in Europe for 10 years.

Along with assistant coaching stints in Seattle, Milwaukee, Golden State, Dallas, and Portland, Stotts was head coach for the Atlanta Hawks (2002–2004), Milwaukee Bucks (2005–2007), and Portland Trail Blazers (2012–2021), where he accumulated the second-most wins in club history—including eight consecutive NBA playoff appearances. He's currently the lead assistant coach for the Golden State Warriors.

"Terry Stotts was an excellent student. He related with all students and fit in with many different groups—a very sincere, intelligent man, highly respected. A good friend," says George Fielding, retired guidance counselor and former basketball coach at North. ✨



Photo by Carrite (CC BY-SA 3.0)

# YOUNG ★ SUPERSTARS ★

An international mastermind of emerging technologies, a DEI champion, and a global philanthropist are making their mark on Bloomington and the world.

By Rodney Margison,  
Greg Siering  
& Elizabeth Ellis



(l-r) Anshu Roja Selvamani, Isak Asare, and Nichelle Wash. Photo by Rodney Margison



## Isak Asare

### International AI and Cybersecurity Expert & Humanitarian

**Isak Asare** describes himself as a “third-culture kid”—someone who grew up in a culture other than his or his parents’ nationality. Asare’s mother is from Walla Walla, Washington, his father is from Ghana, and they met in Sweden, where Asare was born.

“My mom was an international contractor, so we moved every two to three years,” he says. Azerbaijan, Estonia, Mexico, Ghana, and the Middle East were all “home” at some point. “One truth about third-culture kids, it’s sort of like a survival mechanism. You very rarely talk about yourself. When you’re living overseas you don’t go around saying, ‘Hey, I’m an American!’ You just learn to fit in.”

Asare also lived in the U.S. for a bit in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Laramie, Wyoming, which is where he graduated from high school and met his future wife, Mariah. “My dad was a visiting law professor [in Wyoming] for a little while, so we went there so I could finish high school,” he says.

Asare, 36, moved to Bloomington in 2007 to attend Indiana University, earning bachelor’s degrees in political science and linguistics and a certificate in African Studies. He and Mariah were married at Lake Monroe on June 11, 2011, just weeks after graduating.

The newlyweds moved to England where Asare attended the University of Oxford to study international development while earning a 2013 master’s degree in philosophy.

“When people asked where I was from I would say Indiana,” Asare says of living overseas, “because that was the first place where I got to choose to come. Bloomington always felt like home.”

The couple stayed in England for several more years, while Asare did what he describes as government-adjacent consulting. “And I was a researcher for some time. I was an OK researcher, but I had a lot of language skills so I got put on a lot of international projects.”

Asare speaks five languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili, and Akan.

One of those projects was working with the Mexican government. “It was actually a very exploratory project,” he says, “helping them think about new technologies, new development in the economy. What that evolved into was the foundations of what became Mexico’s national artificial intelligence strategy.” And it was only the seventh national strategy in the world for artificial intelligence.

“That really opened up a lot of opportunities,” Asare says. His consulting and federal funding clients grew to include organizations such as the intergovernmental Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Education, the United Kingdom (UK) Government Digital Service, and the UK Foreign and



Isak Asare is the assistant dean for undergraduate education and student affairs and the co-director of the Cybersecurity and Global Policy Program at the Indiana University Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies. Photo by Rodney Margison

Commonwealth Office.

“I became one of the first people to work at that scale, really at any scale, on artificial intelligence,” Asare says. “Then I started working with some local governments around the same questions. And that’s how I ended up here.”

Well, more or less.

### No place like home

At age 28, Asare was diagnosed with leukemia. “That’s why I moved back, because you make rash decisions when you’re dying. There was a job open in Bloomington, and there’s no place like home when things are going wrong. So we relocated in 2018 and have been here ever since.”

That job was with the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, where Asare is now assistant dean for

undergraduate education and student affairs and the co-director of its Cybersecurity and Global Policy Program.

“Ninety percent of the work that I do is at the convergence of policy, governance, and emerging technology of all sorts,” Asare says. “Anything that you might think of such as the internet of things, things that are data driven connected to the internet, smart cities, those types of things.

“To me, technology is not neutral,” he continues. “It’s going to be laden with social norms, it’s going to be laden with decisions. So now we start thinking about technologies that have the potential to change the world. How do we govern these to get the most out of them? But more so, how do we align them with our highest values as humans and as a society? To me, then, it’s a governance question. How do we structure our society, our dependence on technology, our relationship to data and each other, especially now as society is becoming more and more mediated through technology?”

## Helping low-resource entities

The other portion of Asare’s work is helping low-resource communities such as local governments, critical infrastructure providers, small businesses, and others build capacity around these emerging technologies. “I also run the IU Cybersecurity Clinic,” he says, which enables students to go out into the community and help those types of organizations that have huge cyber needs but don’t have the funding or personnel or capacity to address. “So, we go out with students to help them build that cyber capacity for free.”

## Bloomington City Council member

Being able to invest his skills into a community’s infrastructure helped drive Asare to run for public office, first in a failed bid for U.S. Congress in 2022 before successfully running for Bloomington City Council in 2023.

“One of the things I’m really passionate about is how do we make sure that we share resources,” he says. “IU has more people who work in cybersecurity than any other university in the United States. How do we make sure that these assets are connected, that we’re leveraging that to the best possible opportunity to make this community awesome?”

But, he explains, his service to community runs deeper, pointing out that City Council recently approved the largest ever housing development in Monroe County and is in the process of changing the way the City budgets to an outcome-based system.

“I’m just really interested in doing the best that I can within my sphere of influence to make the world around me a bit better, an inch better,” Asare says. “We are a place that’s resource rich. I think we have all of the things necessary to be one of the greatest cities in America. And I just think this is a really exciting place to be.” —Rodney Margison ►



(right, top) Isak and his wife, Mariah, at his 2013 graduation from the University of Oxford; (right, center) Mariah and Isak at their Indiana University graduation in 2011, just weeks before marrying; (far right, l-r) Isak; his father, Richard; his late mother, Nancy; his younger sister, Anna Tubbs; and Mariah on a trip to Ghana; (right) Isak in a studio portrait at around age 4.

Courtesy photos



# Anshu Roja Selvamani

## Global Philanthropist

### As a global altruist,

model, artist, writer, and podcast host, it is an understatement to say Indiana University junior Anshu Roja Selvamani is a busy woman.

A self-professed overachiever, at 21, Selvamani has made an international name for herself spearheading international community programs over the last five years. Last fall, she received the Social Impact Award at the Global Entrepreneurship Festival held in Nigeria for establishing two notable charities in her home country of India—Art for a Cause and Power of One India. Additionally, Selvamani received notification about her selection as a 2025 Global Impact Advocate at the Atlanta-based LeadHERship Gala that was held in early February.

Currently majoring in computer science at the IU Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering, Selvamani grew up in the Indian cities of Hyderabad and Chennai. At age 13, her philanthropic spark was kindled seeing her peers performing manual labor on a local construction site.

“A lot of times children are illegally put into those situations, and they are just trying to help their parents who are very poor,” says Selvamani. “I wanted to help those specific children get access to education, so I started an after-school tutoring program to teach them how to read and write.”

### Founding two charities

This initiative blossomed into Art for a Cause, which she founded at age 16 in partnership with her close friend Shanjeev. They created digital and physical portraits on commission, with the proceeds supporting education for area children. Although Shanjeev has moved onto other pursuits in recent years, Selvamani has worked with local artists to transition Art for a Cause from digital to physical art pieces to be sold at local fairs, small art exhibitions, and craft shops.

“Since education cost is pretty low in India for most schools, we have been using our profits to help around 10 kids fully, and many more with school supplies,” says Selvamani.



Anshu Roja Selvamani, 21, is a self-professed overachiever who already has started several humanitarian nonprofit organizations. Photo by Rodney Margison

Her second charity, Power of One India, was founded concurrent with Art for a Cause to help women in her surrounding communities more easily gain access to mental health resources. Selvamani hosts digital strategy meetings with the organization’s volunteers every month or so to set goals and provide logistical support.

“I have struggled with mental health most of my life with an anxiety disorder,” says Selvamani, who published her memoir, *The Flame in My Heart* (TZP Publishing), about this topic in 2022. “A lot of times mental health isn’t really talked about in South Asian communities, and I struggled with accessing resources, getting a therapist, and navigating life with this anxiety. I wanted to make it easier for others to get support.”

## Finding other tech women

Selvamani felt some of that anxiety creep in the first few weeks of her freshman year at IU, especially after the thrill of arriving in the U.S.—a dream since childhood—started to fade. Thankfully at Luddy, Selvamani connected with the Women in Computing Club and the Center of Excellence for Women & Technology where she is a production intern and host for the *Women of IU* Podcast.

“I always found it really difficult to find women I could collaborate with in tech,” says Selvamani. “These two places helped me find women with similar interests. I have been able to find leadership opportunities and attend professional events that helped me adapt to life in America and at IU.”

Selvamani credits her supervisor, the Center of Excellence’s Assistant Director Jeannette Lehr, for helping her to achieve her full potential as an undergraduate, as well as the support of Tiana Iruoje, director of student engagement and success at Luddy.

“Anshu is an invaluable part of our center because of her commitment to our mission of highlighting the accomplishments of women at IU,” shares Lehr. “She came to us with a little bit of social media experience, but no podcast or audio editing experience, but she had the drive, passion, and willingness to learn.”

## ‘Women of IU’ podcast host

While the learning curve was steep, Lehr says over the course of the last year Selvamani has excelled at shaping an episode, adding music, and audio editing. Taking some tips from the video editor for the Kelley School of Business, Gabrielle Sanchez-Steenberger, Selvamani honed her post-production skills and was soon able to take over as the podcast host.

“It is truly remarkable the impact Anshu has been able to make in such a short period of time,” says Lehr. “I know that our Center is achieving its mission thanks, in part, to Anshu’s work on this podcast, and I think she’s learned a lot too.”

Between balancing social entrepreneurship and academic responsibilities, Selvamani models to promote a positive self-image to other young women and to manage her anxiety.

“Modeling and content creating are some of the things that get me out of that fear,” says Selvamani. “The modeling environment can be very competitive, but I wouldn’t say that’s a negative experience—it has helped me with resilience, adaptability, and redefining what beautiful is. You begin to realize how much goes into that perfect image.”

## Her new venture, Binary Horizons

Marrying her passion for global education equity with her digital prowess, Selvamani is currently laying the groundwork for her newest humanitarian nonprofit called Binary Horizons, which will partner with schools in Nigeria to teach coding and provide laptops to students. Currently Selvamani is hoping to partner with Hello Globe Conference—a platform to help young adults navigate life challenges and emotions—to promote Binary Horizons that will take place at University of Lagos in Nigeria this coming July.

“For me, it has always been about how do I use whatever talent I have to make some kind of impact,” says Selvamani. “I like falling in love with different things and experimenting. That’s what your 20s are for—I want to figure myself out, what I like, and help people along the way.”

Follow @anshurojasel on Instagram to learn more about her initiatives.

—Elizabeth Ellis ▶



(above, left) Selvamani at age 12 at her childhood home in Chennai, India; (above) Selvamani with medals she won for her writing about women’s issues in India, and an award for a social impact project about generating employment for women in underdeveloped rural areas; (below) Selvamani accepts the Social Impact Award at the 2023 Global Entrepreneurship Festival held in Nigeria; (bottom) in 2022, Selvamani, then 17 and a senior in high school, published her memoir, *The Flame in My Heart* (TZP Publishing) and attended a book launch event at The Reader’s Cafe in New Delhi, India. Courtesy photos



## Nichelle Wash

### Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Leader

**When asked about** her journey through life, Nichelle Wash is quick to acknowledge the people who provided her with opportunities and inspired her to succeed. So, it is no surprise that she is dedicated to providing those opportunities to others, helping them grow into their best selves.

Wash, 32, has had a wide-ranging career path—from biomedical research, to student support in higher education, to training on topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Now, after years of putting DEI at the center of everything she does, she is CEO of The Guarden, the professional consulting company she founded in 2019 “to offer a unique approach to connecting people to DEI learning,” she says.

### Two important mentors

Wash grew up in Indianapolis’ Pike Township. Her path toward Bloomington started with a summer research program for high school students through the Indiana University Simon Cancer Center. While participating in her second year of stem cell research there, she met then-IU first lady Laurie McRobbie, an encounter that would confirm Wash’s desire to study human biology at IU. Wash recalls, “What I remember is how amazing it is to have a first lady of an institution be so relatable. And I remember her telling me, ‘When you get to campus, let me know that you’re here, and I’d love to have you over, and we can have tea, and we can talk.’” That experience both energized Wash’s interest in the sciences and taught her early lessons about the impact a personal relationship can have on another’s life.

Wash’s life-changing experiences continued at IU when she met Eric Love, then director of diversity education at IU-Bloomington. When they met at the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, Love invited her to a retreat to explore Whiteness. To a young Black woman from urban Indianapolis, heading off to the woods to talk about Whiteness didn’t seem very appealing—or even safe—but Love was persistent, and Wash found the retreat revelatory. She says, “It was the first time I had a conversation around what is Whiteness, and how we all are impacted by it and its dominant cultural norms.”

### Pivoting to a career in DEI

The exploration of race and culture intrigued Wash and let her see her life experiences in new ways. “I left there really being able



Nichelle Wash launched her business, The Guarden, to reach organizations and people who didn’t have large budgets and needed support in learning about DEI. Photo by Rodney Margison

to think about how my own experiences as a Black woman in the biomedical sciences had largely been shaped by these different dimensions of diversity,” she says. “I continued my studies in biomedical research, but I knew that I wanted to really pivot and start helping more people think about how diversity, equity, and inclusion touches us all.”

In her time as a biomedical researcher and clinician—first at the IU Simon Cancer Center and later on projects at IU—Wash was always either the only Black woman or one of only a few in the workplace. Realizing that there had to be more women of color who wanted to do that work, she committed herself to increasing opportunities for Black women in STEM (science, technology,

engineering, mathematics) and to incorporating DEI principles into everything she does, whether it is in her job description or not.

Later, Wash brought those values back into higher education when she returned to IU to support students' development in the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Affairs. "I really wanted students to think about how to be more prepared, more interculturally competent, before transitioning into the workplace," she says.

In her final role at IU, Wash worked for the Office of Admissions. "I was specifically supporting diversity recruiting and outreach, and bringing more diverse perspectives to our campus," she recalls. At that point, she had come full circle, offering students the kinds of opportunities she had been given by McRobbie, Love, and other instructors and mentors, all while helping to enrich and diversify campus culture.

## Involved with Bloomington

This work at IU reconnected Wash with the larger Bloomington community, where she has built networks of like-minded advocates and engaged in volunteer work that aligns with her values. "I enjoy Bloomington," she says. "It's not without its challenges, but I have found that the network I have created here is one that is energizing and keeps hope at the forefront. I feel like I am in a community that is committed to having these conversations. Even when we get it wrong, we still figure out how to keep going."

Wash has chaired the Monroe County Women's Commission, where she established a Girls Coding Camp to engage young women in STEM. She currently serves on the boards of both the Monroe County Public Library and Monroe County Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA), and she is on the city's Black History Month Committee, among numerous other community-focused projects.

Community also comes first professionally. Wash says, "The Guarden really ramped up the work in response to the societal crises of 2020," including the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the local organizations it has worked with include Monroe County CASA; Tandem Community Birth Center and Postpartum House; WonderLab Museum of Science, Health and Technology; Bloomington Farm Stop Collective; and the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce.

"When I first launched The Guarden," she says, "my intention was really to reach organizations and people that didn't have large budgets and just needed support on how to navigate the conversations and learn the basics [of DEI]," adding that most of her work has been local to Indiana. "It's one of the commitments that I have to ensure the smaller organizations without DEI leaders are able to afford the work."

## Working with large corporations

Since then, Wash has joined the international DEI consulting firm, Seramount, where she works with larger corporations that are seeking to develop more inclusive workplaces. She is also a celebrated public speaker on DEI through All American Entertainment, which represents, among others,



basketball legend Magic Johnson, environmental activist Erin Brockovich, and Bernice King, Civil Rights leader, author, and daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

No matter what setting in which she consults, Wash puts the concept of grace at the center of her work, which she sees as essential when exploring challenging topics like bias, systemic racism, and culturally sensitive communication. "Grace is the giving of an underearned access to be human," she says. "It does not run on a background check, meaning you don't get to withhold grace from someone because of what they've done in their past. And that is the antidote to cancel culture. It's letting people evolve." People must hold themselves accountable for mistakes they have made, she says, "but when we center grace, we leave the door open for people wanting to continue learning, even when it is hard and when they don't like what you just said."

Whether through her consulting, education, or volunteer work, Nichelle Wash puts that grace at the center of everything she does, inviting people to grow and thrive, and providing the support they need. —Greg Stiering ✧

(right) Wash (far right) at around age 12 with three of her five siblings; (below, right, l-r) Wash with her grandmother, Clara Zell. "She's my motivation—a woman from Mississippi who relocated to Indiana, raised six kids, and served her community through civic engagement." Wash had just accepted an award in high school where she was recognized as the rising star of her graduating class; (below) Wash's first-grade school portrait. *Courtesy photos*



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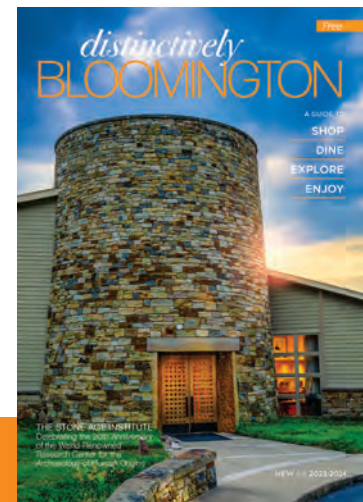
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