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# FOREWORD

by Kaleb Turner

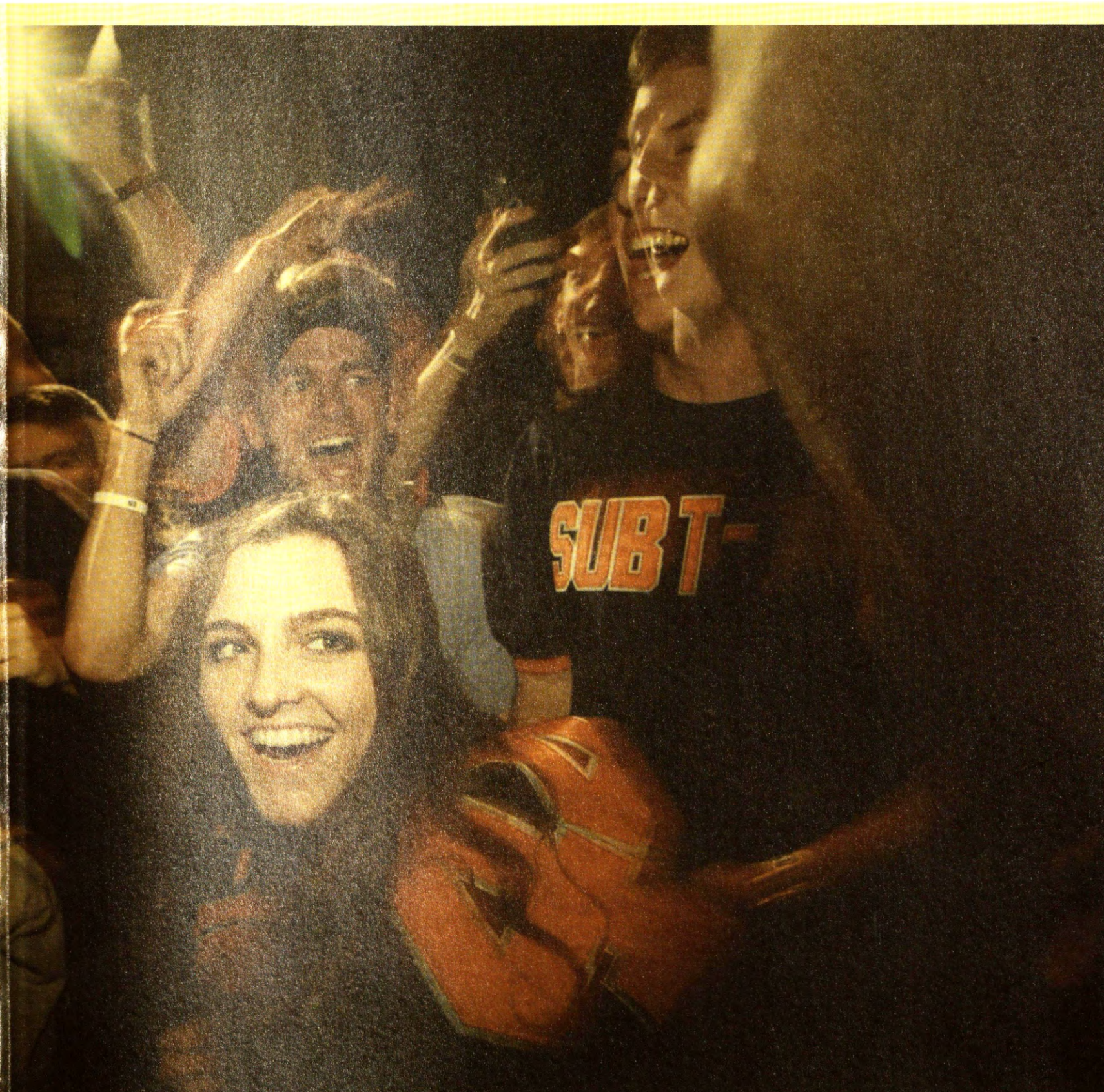
**T**he Petit Jean — it's a story of new beginnings and old traditions, of fresh starts and bittersweet endings. It's a story for you, not for us. A story for us — a campus collective — moving forward together to records broken, relationships forged and dreams fulfilled. It's our story, gathering the pieces of our time here and leaving better than we came. It's the story of our Harding experience.

This year, campus became the place for personal reflection, accomplishment and discovery. As a team, we found new goals to reach and new life to be lived. Our friends became vessels for laughter and tears and our mentors became pillars for hope and refuge. In the impossibility of collecting these pieces of our year and putting them to ink, we've created a mosaic of memories to be recalled.

The pieces of our story lie here in the 94th Petit Jean in the year of our **SYNTHESIS**.







Sophomore Dara Niemi celebrates with her new brothers of men's social club Sub T-16 on March 27, 2017 in front of women's dorm Sears Hall. Queening was a campus-wide, decades-old tradition where club members voted to add honorary female members to their brotherhood. // Photo by Kazu Fujisawa







# THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO KATHY HELPENSTILL

WORDS *Megan Ledbetter* // PHOTOS *Abigail Cooper*

**D**uring 19 years of teaching at Harding, Kathy Helpenstill, associate professor of behavioral sciences, has used her social work experience in oncology, hospice and acute psychiatry to teach students how to see humanity through a different lens. Constantly working alongside the Department of Human Services and being an ambassador to the community through the Child Safety Center of White County (a project started by her community practice class in 2007), she has been a role model, mentor and friend to students who leave her classroom prepared to serve others. Because of her unwavering love for her students and her desire to make the world a truly better place, the student body unequivocally dedicates this 94th Petit Jean to Kathy Helpenstill.

**MEGAN LEDBETTER:** Why did you choose social work?

**KATHY HELPENSTILL:** “My very first semester [of college] I took sociology, and I was hooked. I came in as a family and consumer sciences major, and I changed it the next semester to social work. I took intro to social work, and I have just been rolling ever since. I am very much the poster child for social work because, as hard as it is, it’s never the same day twice, and I just feel like my life is so much richer for understanding people and understanding life and just experiencing what people experience.”

**ML:** How does your experience in the field of social work prepare you for what you do at Harding?

**KH:** “Students can ask me about mental illness, and I can talk about that; people can ask me about child abuse, and I can talk about that; people can talk to me about sexual abuse, and I can talk about that. I just feel like all of that [experience] brought me to where I am, but then also makes me more accessible. [...] I have done a lot, and even though I have been in academia for 20 years, I am still doing a lot, and I think that helps me to keep my finger on the pulse of things that are relative. [...] And I don’t mean any of that to toot my own horn, but my point is that when we open ourselves up to God’s will — and my prayer is constantly, ‘Let me be your vessel,’ — then it just becomes a ride. Some of it is terrifying and some of it is heartbreaking and some of it puts you on a cliff, but then He always equips and provides a support team, whatever it takes to get through that. Even as a social worker, how do you listen to that and keep going? That is really what I feel like is the macro level of what God has brought me through and brought me to and my mission. Harding is my mission field to turn out workers

that can address the needs, but I try to do it by example and not just by textbook theory.”

**ML:** What keeps you teaching among everything else you do in the field of social work?

**KH:** “I [often] ask people, mentors or colleagues I respect, ‘Are we copping out? Are we taking the easy way out by sitting here in a classroom with a nice comfy chairs and nice desks and a nine to five schedule? Is this really where we are supposed to be or are we supposed to be doing something bigger, better, different?’ Everybody says the same thing. ‘You are put here for a reason. You have the experience and the perspective. That is the best teacher. It is not all about theory and models. It is about reality; therefore, you can make a difference by teaching people to be good social workers.’ Probably one of my big struggles is wanting to be in the field but wanting to equip people for reality.”

**ML:** Is there an overarching lesson you try to teach all your students?

**KH:** “People come first. It is not the addiction. It’s not the crime. It’s not the behavior. It’s the people. When we see people as the same as us, then there is no difference. If you see an abused kid, that could be your kid, so what are you going to do about it? If you see an elderly person that is being neglected, that is your grandmother. I feel like we belong to each other, and we are not polarizing Democrats and Republicans or mentally ill and healthy or rich and poor. We are not divided. We are the same. We just have different experiences, and that is what I want people to know. It is not us and them. We belong to each other. We are tribe, and we are a community of humanity.”