



# LEADERSHIP

For about four years, Harding students live under the direction and guidance of Harding's Christ-centered faculty, staff and administration. We learn from them, rejoice with them and, sometimes, mourn with them. Over the years, a bond develops that surpasses that of an ordinary educational experience. When graduation day

arrives, the Harding faculty sings "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" to the graduating class, effectively passing the role of guide back to God. The leadership at Harding provides not only an education but also a mentorship that encourages and challenges each of us to be what God has called us to be.

EDITOR, AUSTIN NIGHTENGALE





## MCLARTY PARTY

President Bruce McLarty took office in the fall of 2013. His former positions as professor, dean and vice president in the College of Bible and Ministry prepared him for his presidency and influenced his mantra for his term as president: a community of mission.

However, the McLarty influence in the Harding community did not end with the president. The “McLarty Party” also included Bruce’s brother, Karl McLarty, an adjunct professor of Bible and the full-time minister at Cloverdale Church of Christ; and Karl’s son, senior Kaleb McLarty, was a student studying communication sciences and disorders. With Bruce’s wife Ann working as a nurse in health services and Kaleb’s younger brother, sophomore Joshua McLarty, studying mechanical engineering, the pervasive family influence could not be denied. Altogether, the presidential family reached many areas of campus and spanned several generations.

Karl said that though the family dynamic did not change much in light of Bruce’s role on campus, his new responsibilities meant managing time a little differently.

“We see less of him because we share him with Harding more,” Karl said.

According to the family, the largest difference was that family gatherings were moved to the president’s house on the east end of campus. Suddenly, all eyes were on them.

“The view from inside the house looking out didn’t change, but the view from outside looking in did,” Bruce said. “All of a sudden people don’t know what to do with you. [Ann’s] siblings asked her, ‘What should we call you?’ There is a certain awkwardness that comes with this, but I haven’t felt any of that from the family.”

The family’s relationship, though limited by new responsibilities, remained humorous and supportive both on and off campus.

“In class it used to be that when I told a big brother story, I was just telling a big brother story,” Karl said. “Now when I tell one, it’s like, ‘Oh, you just told one on the president.’”

Bruce’s family provided the kind of personal connections a college president needed, whether with faculty, staff or students. As a student, Kaleb helped his uncle by casually providing insight from the student body.

“Sometimes for songs in chapel, Uncle Bruce has emailed me and asked for some newer song suggestions,” Kaleb said.

Bruce’s presidency was not entirely his own; it was a product of a larger community, represented by his most immediate family members but expressed in every familiar interaction on campus. The McLarty family bridged multiple generations, uniting Harding into a true community of mission.

**By Chloe Savage**





**1. Dr. Bruce McLarty** sits with his brother, Karl McLarty, and nephew, senior Kaleb McLarty, as they meet together in his office Dec. 2. The McLarty family typically met for lunch every weekend. **Photo courtesy of Brianna Burcham**

**2. The president** stands by the Lilly Pond in front of the Administration building. McLarty sought to uphold his goal of bridging the gap between himself and students throughout his second year. **Photo by DJ Lawson**





**A member of the board of trustees since 2011,** Joe Wild showed strength and courage in fighting cancer while managing his many responsibilities. Kirsten Wild, Rachel Wild Leon, Christopher Leon (son-in-law), Glenda Wild, Joe Wild, Jessica Wild, Trevor Wild, Andrea Wild Livingston. **Photo Courtesy of Glenda Wild**

# FAITHFULLY PERSEVERING

During the school year, many students persevered through late nights of studying for difficult exams. However, perseverance came to mean something deeper for Joe Wild, a member of the board of trustees, when he was diagnosed with cancer in February 2013.

Wild was rushed to the emergency room after experiencing intense pain from gastrointestinal bleeding. He lost nearly half of his blood, and doctors later broke the news that cancer had caused the bleeding.

"What they figured out was it was appendix cancer," Wild said. "That's a really rare type of cancer. There are only about 300 cases a year in the United States."

Wild traveled to Houston to visit with an appendix cancer specialist and soon began the long road of chemotherapy.

"I'll tell you, chemo is awful," Wild said. "My chemo did not cause my hair to fall out, but what it caused is a sensitivity to cold stuff. But you kind of have to deal with that, and that went on until about August of that year when my chemo was finally finished."

While Wild focused on his battle with cancer, he also managed his responsibilities as a county judge, an elder at the Vero Beach Church of Christ in Vero Beach, Florida, and a board member for both Harding and Christian Home and Bible School in Mount Dora, Florida. Wild's family members attested to his unwavering commitment to his work, family and faith.

"Neither one of us have ever questioned or asked the question 'Why me?' or 'Why us?'" Glenda Wild, Joe's wife of over 30 years, said. "Joe would tell you that he feels like when people read the book of Job that people always want to read that and say, 'But God, why Job?' And with us, we've read that, and we have come to the conclusion that that's the wrong question to ask. The question is, 'Why not me?'"

Supported by his family, the Harding community and his coworkers, Joe successfully maintained his leadership positions. He felt very blessed by the encouraging notes he received and by the prayers offered on his behalf.

"I've been able to get back to the

board meetings last May and this last October, so I'm back on campus, and I obviously missed a couple meetings, but I'm right back in it," Joe said. "Just being around those men and women [on the board] is really encouraging — just to know they have been praying the whole time. I think I learned to leave a lot of things in God's hands, and to be really positive with the fact that He will watch over the situation."

Joe returned to Houston for two follow-up appointments, where scans revealed that he was cancer-free. His daughter, senior Kirsten Wild, saw the perseverance that her father displayed during his battle with cancer.

"I know I questioned why this happened to him or why this happened to our family and that kind of thing, but he never questioned it," Kirsten said. "I think it's one of those things where God maybe picks people who are strong enough to handle it, and I definitely think my dad is one of those people that could handle it."

**By Dane Roper**



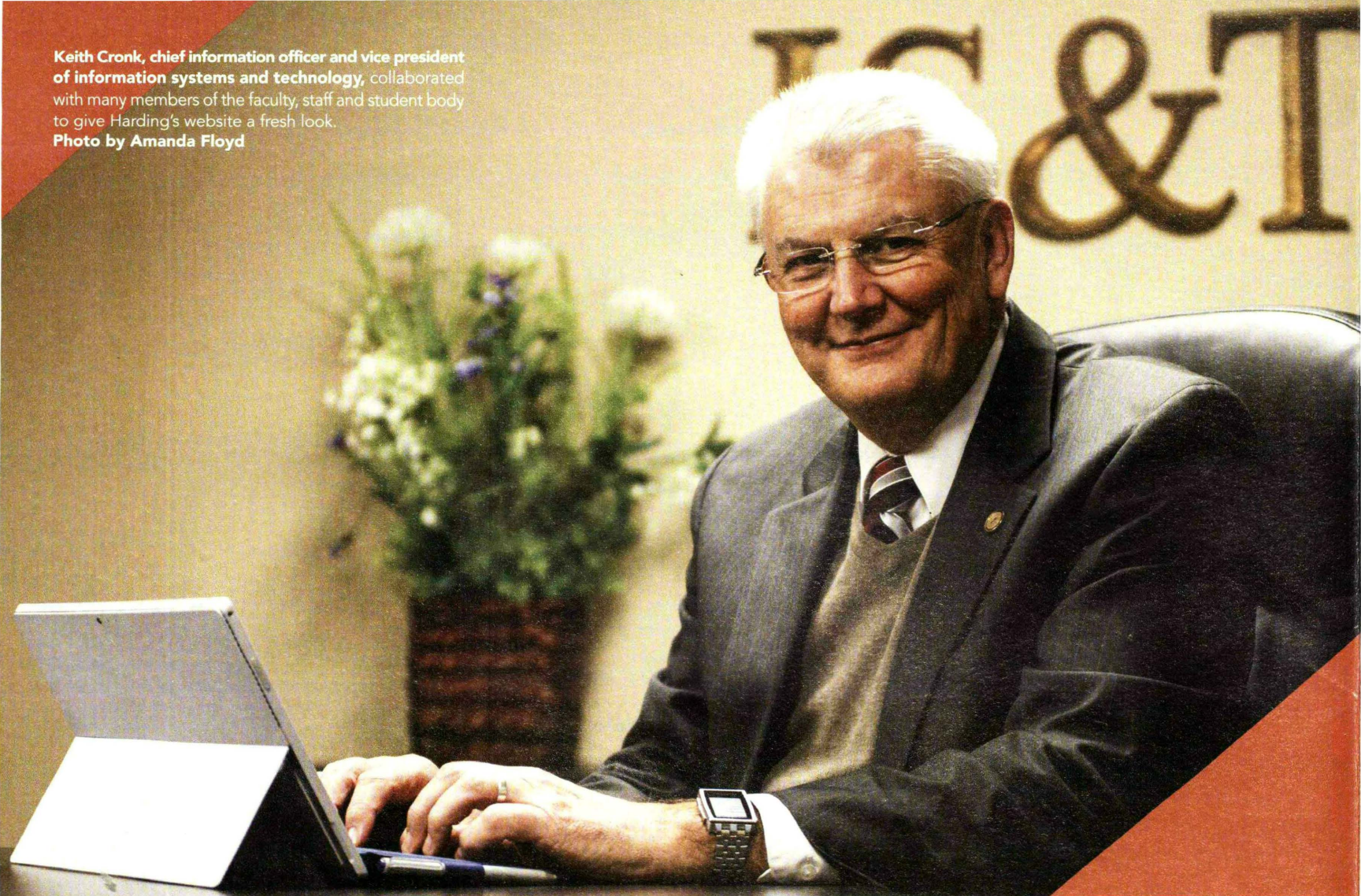


**Board of Trustees** **Row 1:** David Waldron, La Vergne, Tenn.; Joe Wild, Vero Beach, Fla.; Harry Risinger, Millington, Tenn.; Jerry Morgan, Amarillo, Texas; Harrell Freeman (Secretary), Metairie, La.; Bruce Binkley, Broken Arrow, Okla. **Row 2:** Bruce McLarty (Ex-Officio), Searcy, Ark.; Russ Burcham, Kennett, Mo.; Becky Tubb, Sparta, Tenn.; Bob Brackett, Vero Beach, Fla.; Harold Redd, Memphis, Tenn.; Bob Diles, Searcy, Ark.; Lundy Neely, Dayton, Ohio **Row 3:** Bob Walker (Vice Chairman), Decatur, Ala.; John Reese, Austin, Texas; Don Shores, Cave Springs, Ark.; Mel Gardner, Ft. Worth, Texas; Jimmy Cone (Treasurer), Little Rock, Ark. **Row 4:** Roy Reaves (Chairman), Russellville, Ark.; John Simmons, Columbia, Tenn.; Jim Holsombake, Panama City, Fla.; Richard Gibson, Longview, Texas; Charles Ganus, Searcy, Ark.



Keith Cronk, chief information officer and vice president of information systems and technology, collaborated with many members of the faculty, staff and student body to give Harding's website a fresh look.

Photo by Amanda Floyd



## A SITE FOR SORE EYES

Though students spent plenty of time scrolling through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, Pipeline and the Harding website likely fell toward the top of most students' "recent history" lists. To make the university's online presence more modern, vice president of information systems Keith Cronk and his team implemented a redesign of the Harding websites, marking the completion of a project nearly five years in the making.

"The design was about five years old," Cronk said. "In the website-designing world, that's about the time that you really want to refresh."

Though the team knew the website needed a facelift, they soon found that they lacked some of the resources necessary to complete the ambitious project on their own. To achieve the best possible results, they hired iFactory, a Boston-based company that focused on technology solutions for institutions of higher education. Application development and enhancement manager Shawn Spearman said that iFactory stood out as a personal and education-oriented company.

"We chose iFactory after looking at several companies, and they were, by far, the best candidate," Spearman said. "Their process interested us ... they would come here and try to get to know Harding — try and understand it and how it works — to help convey that online through the website."

Along with the new website came a new position in the public relations office. The office hired 2014 alumna Bethany Aspey

as the web content manager, placing her in charge of finding material for the new website. Aspey said her job required a new approach to web content.

"It's going to have a lot of stories," Aspey said. "We're going to include student stories, faculty stories and alumni stories. ... What that's going to be doing is showing prospective students, 'This is what your life could be like at Harding.' It's better than us just telling them, 'Come to Harding, it's great!' It's giving them specific examples of how that's happened in other people's lives."

Since the beginning of the project, Cronk aimed to recreate Harding's online image. According to Cronk, the modern university's website could not just be about the detail-oriented "clinical-type" information such as demographics and curriculum. Instead, a website needed to tell an important story about the university.

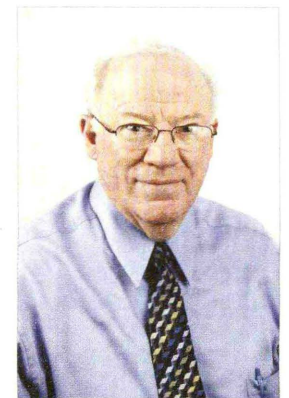
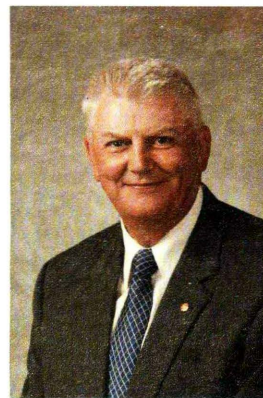
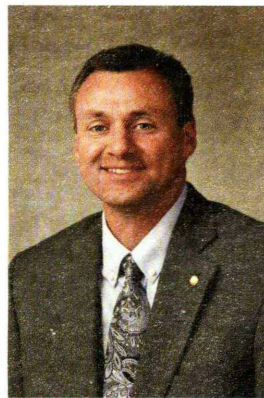
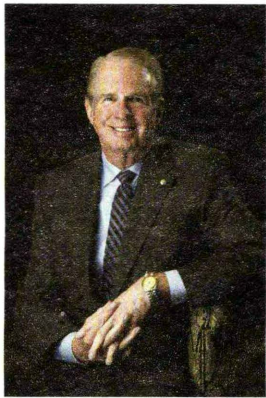
"[The website] shows where we really want to go," Cronk said. "We have plans for the future."

Though the update took place online, it affected real-life relationships, bringing people from all over campus together to accomplish a common goal.

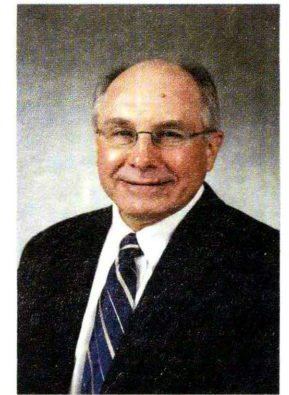
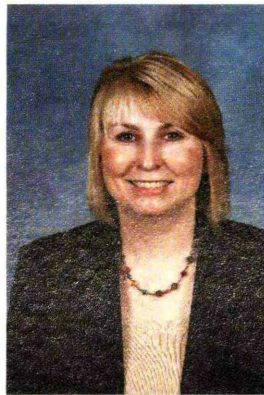
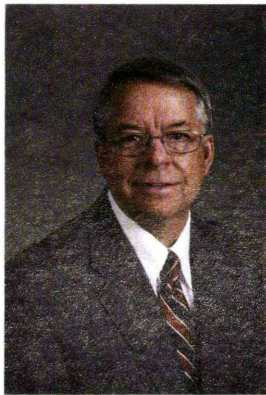
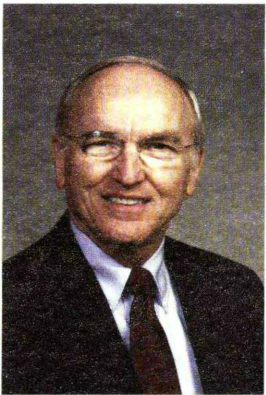
"For me, personally, it's been a good opportunity to get to know people around campus and see how Harding works together as a whole," Aspey said. "I think it really reinforces Dr. McLarty's community of mission."

By Austin Nightengale

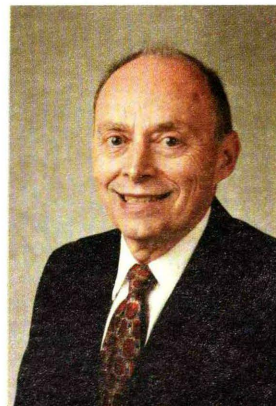
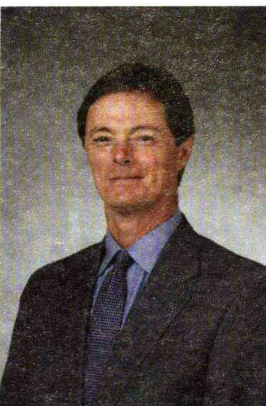




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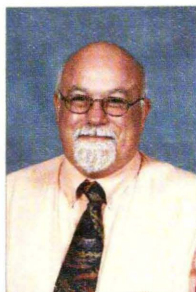
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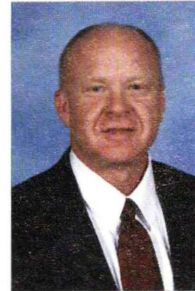
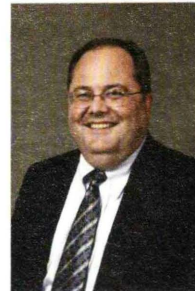
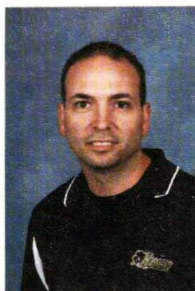
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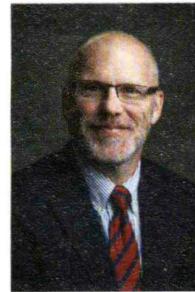
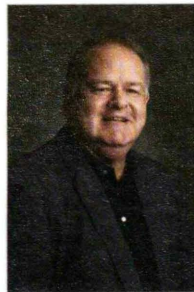
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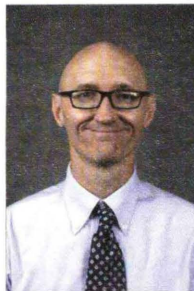
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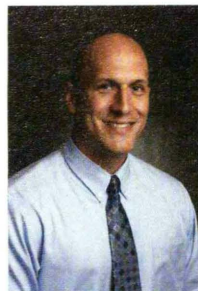
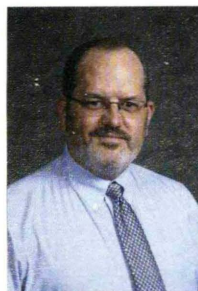
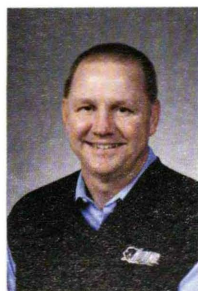
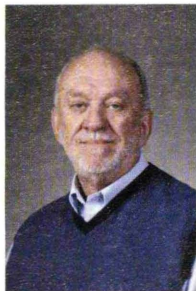
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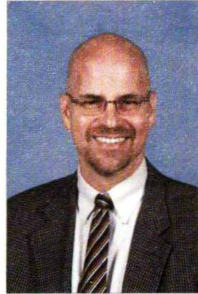
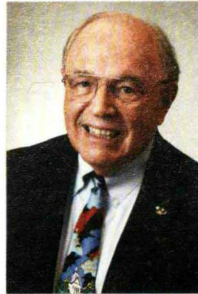
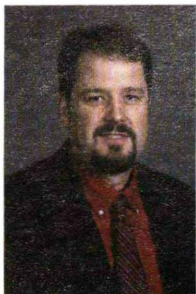
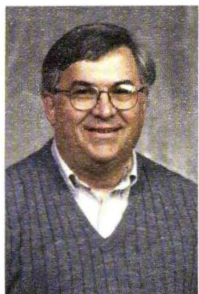
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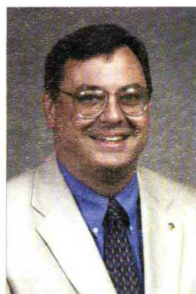




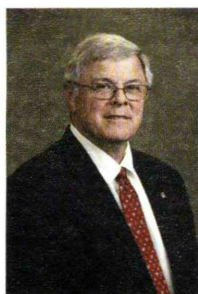
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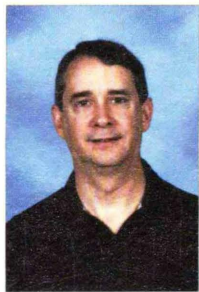
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Dr. Susan Kehl, new dean of the Carr College of Nursing, stands in front of the mission statement of the college on Sept. 22. Kehl quickly established her role as a leader in a dynamic and challenging field. **Photos by Amanda Floyd**



# NURSING

## LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

For the first time since its establishment in 1980, the Carr College of Nursing experienced a change in leadership in the fall. When Dr. Cathleen Shultz stepped down from her 34-year position as dean, she left a large gap to fill. Expectations were high, but Dr. Susan Kehl, new dean of the college, understood those expectations and had no intention of leaving them unmet.

"This program has a long, rich legacy with Dean Shultz," Kehl said. "So although her decision to step down was a surprise to some of us this spring, she left an excellent legacy, an excellent program and many excellent traditions."

This tradition of excellence rested in sure hands; faculty and staff alike admired Kehl's leadership during her first year as dean.

"The faculty are all working well together, and I think they're really all on board and supportive of Dr. Kehl," Dr. Julie Hixson-Wallace, assistant provost for the Center for

Health Sciences, said. "I think she's going to be a great leader to take the College of Nursing to [its] next level of history and continue the legacy that's already there."

The college's long-established legacy included its commitment to a rigorous program that produced quality, patient-ready graduates. Kehl sought to enhance the program by constantly staying up-to-date in the nursing field's latest trends.

"I believe that one of my roles is to continually watch for current practice changes, educational trends and initiatives," Kehl said. "We offer very current dynamic educational experiences for our students so that they are prepared to function in rapidly changing healthcare environments."

In addition to searching for the latest trends, Kehl's forward-thinking attitude extended into professional education experiences — a result of the teamwork within the Center for Health Sciences.

"Dr. Kehl is super accessible and very open to ideas of what we all think," Dr. Dona Clarin, director of the family nurse practitioner program, said. "She wants to share the responsibilities and governance of the College of Nursing. Everybody has a say, and everyone can voice what they're thinking."

The legacy of the college never swayed in its dedication to Harding's mission and goals as a university. Kehl's dedication to ministry assured everyone that the program would continue to empower students to serve.

"I want us to continue to challenge the students and inspire the students to have a career in nursing that is centered with ministry to the Lord and is for his kingdom," Kehl said. "I love nursing because I believe it's a way for us to live out the Lord's second greatest commandment: to love our neighbors as ourselves."

**By Dane Roper**





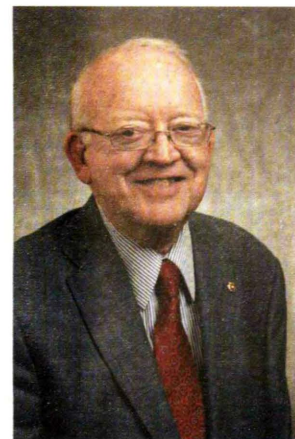
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Dean of College of Business  
Administration



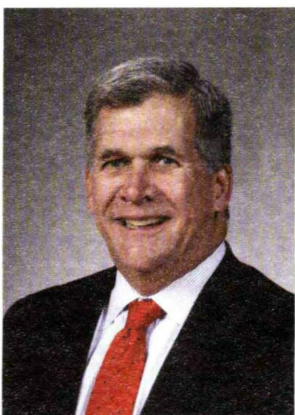
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Dean of College of Arts and  
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**Monte Cox, Ph.D.**  
Dean of College of Bible and  
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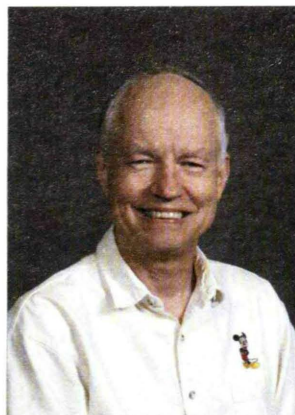
**Tony Finley, Ed.D.**  
Dean of College of Education



**Jeffrey Hopper, Ph.D.**  
Dean of International Programs



**Susan Kehl, Ph.D.,**  
Dean of College of Nursing



**Travis Thompson, Ph.D.**  
Dean of College of Sciences

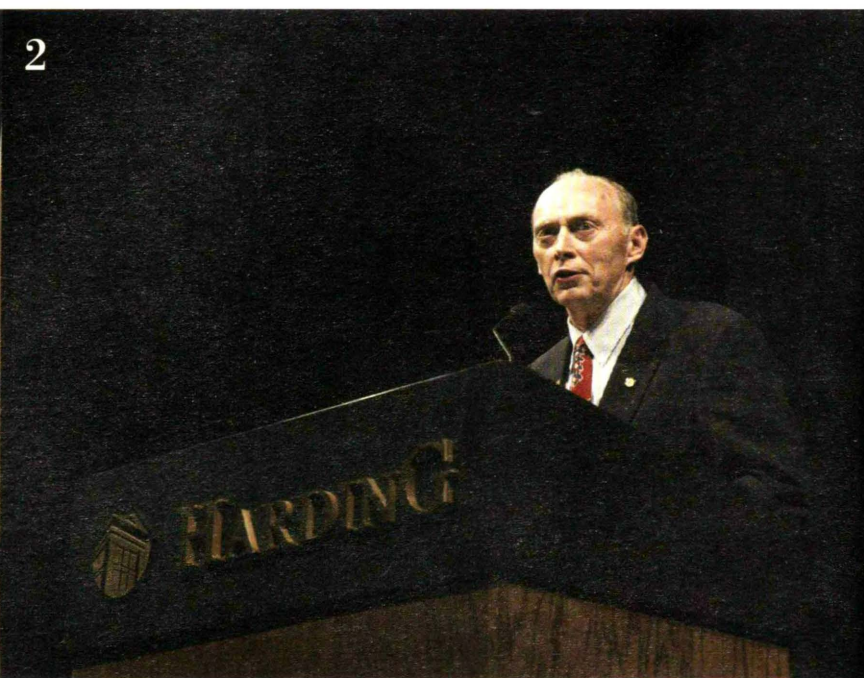


**Beckie Weaver, Ph.D.**  
Dean of College of Allied Health

“ I LOVE NURSING BECAUSE I BELIEVE IT'S A  
WAY FOR US TO LIVE OUT THE LORD'S SECOND  
GREATEST COMMANDMENT: TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS  
AS OURSELVES. ”

- DR. SUSAN KEHL





# Building

## ON A SOLID FOUNDATION

The Harding University Annual Bible Lectureship, one of Harding's oldest traditions, saw a new face leading its efforts in the fall. Dr. Dan Williams, vice president of church relations, took on the planning and execution of the 91st annual lectureship for the first time. Supported by great momentum and a rich history, Williams enjoyed transitioning into his new position.

"I was able to build on a strong foundation that was left for me by the previous lectureship directors — Dr. McLarty before me and Howard Norton before him," Williams said. "Those are both men that I respect and admire very much."

Bolstered by advice and suggestions from an experienced planning committee, Williams felt this change went very smoothly. Since he had no prior experience planning the lectureship, Williams found himself in a uniquely creative position that helped push the event forward.

"I would say the main thing that I brought to lectureship is ignorance, because everything was fresh and unknown," Williams said.

"I was basically starting from a position of innovation. I did not know what had been done before. I had the benefit of the advice of Dr. McLarty and Dr. Norton, and they were very good to help me any time I asked them, but basically I was just coming up with my own ideas."

Some of those new ideas included an increase in the number of women's presentations and the expansion of marketing via email, social media and webpages.

"For marketing, part of it is just keeping up with the times, and part of it was an attempt to reduce our budget in what we spend on advertising," administrative assistant to the vice president of church relations Teresa Castleman said. "Social media is pretty free."

With these changes, the 91st lectureship saw some of its attendance far surpass previous records, attracting a 21 percent increase in general lectures and a 44 percent increase in the evening keynote addresses. This success was generated in part by opening speaker Alan Robertson of "Duck Dynasty" fame.

"I think the lectureship was a really big success," senior Matthew Howard, a student worker for the lectureship, said. "I was able to see the registration and everyone coming in as well, and it seemed like there were people from everywhere that were coming in and were really excited for it."

Castleman also noted excitement in the feedback she received from lectureship attendees and thought the transition in leadership re-energized the event.

"Sometimes I think we attend events — everybody does this, I believe — with certain expectations," Castleman said. "I think when we try to be a little bit more open minded about things, we leave room for the Spirit to really work, and we come away with fewer complaints or newer, fresher insights."

Castleman said that such an open attitude simultaneously improved experiences beyond the lectureship, which aimed to spark conversations among its participants that would continue in their local congregations and communities.

**By Dane Roper**





**1. Vice president of church relations Dr. Dan Williams and his administrative assistant Teresa Castleman** discuss details while getting ready for the lectureship. Williams and Castleman worked tirelessly for one year in preparation for Lectureship. **Photo by DJ Lawson**

**2. Williams introduces the keynote speaker** Monday, Sept. 29. The series featured seven keynote speakers, including B. Chris Simpson and Jim Martin. **Photo courtesy of Jeff Montgomery**

**3. The audience stands** during a keynote devotional. There was a record attendance for keynote sessions, estimated at about 44 percent more than the previous year. **Photo courtesy of Jeff Montgomery**

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DIRECTORS...  
- DR. DAN WILLIAMS

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**Dr. Steve Williams** stands prepared in front of his patrol car on Oct. 1. Williams' work as the White County Constable provided students with a unique educational perspective as he incorporated his experiences into his teaching. Photo by Amanda Floyd

# SERVING & PROTECTING

Dr. Steve Williams, professor of business, began serving at Harding in the fall of 1997. Williams taught several classes, including personal finance, Christian business ethics and many others at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Beginning in 2010, however, Williams balanced his professional responsibilities with his position as a White County constable.

"Constables were one of the first law enforcement agencies in Arkansas," White County Sheriff's chief deputy Phillip Miller said. "They're an elected official, and at one point every township in each county had an elected constable. They are charged with the same law enforcement duties as any other agencies and that is to enforce the laws of the state of Arkansas."

Though elected constables were required by law to perform their duty, they received little or no compensation. They provided their own supplies and hardware. The position demanded special knowledge and the maintenance of the proper certifications in their efforts to faithfully execute the law.

"It's not a job. There's no pay," Williams said. "Everything I spend is out of pocket. I had to pay for my uniform. I had to pay for all of my emergency equipment. In order to be a constable on patrol, I have to have a

fully equipped emergency vehicle certified by the state. I had to attend police academy. I had to maintain my annual certifications in firearm training."

Williams' official township was Gum Springs, Arkansas. His jurisdiction reached from South Beebe Capps Expressway to the city of Beebe, Arkansas, and from the county line in the east to Honey Hill Road in the west. As a constable, he made many sacrifices, including his own safety.

"I got shot at when I got a little too close to a meth lab outside of McRae," Williams said. "I responded to a call in Judsonia. The officer had asked for help because the guy was barricaded in the house. He shot at us."

According to Williams, even everyday procedures could become unexpectedly dangerous.

"About a year ago, I stopped a truck for having no license plate and the guy attacked me," Williams said. "Turned my whole face red, and I had to go to the doctor's."

Dr. Bryan Burks, dean of the College of Business Administration, said that Williams was well-liked by students and added to the college's high standards of academics through his work. Williams served as the director of Harding's Master of Business Administration program from 1998 to 2003.

He was a part of the President's Council at Harding from 1997 to 2004, and in 2000 he was named the College of Business Faculty Member of the Year.

According to Burks, Williams handled his two responsibilities admirably.

"I remember him coming to me a few years ago when he started this process, asking for permission," Burks said. "I approved it and said that it was fine as long as this does not interfere with his work. He has done a very good job. From what I can tell, it is a rare occasion where he has to miss a class. I have never heard a complaint from students about him canceling classes because he is taking calls. He works very diligently to make sure that doesn't happen."

According to the Arkansas Constable Association's website, a constable needed to care for their communities and neighbors. Williams expressed that care, saying that was why he devoted so much time to a volunteer position.

"I'm doing it to give back to the community," Williams said. "Harding has this deep-seated mission to contribute to the community, to be a part of the community, to serve the community. This is a way I can do it. It is a way I enjoy."

By Tin Nguyen



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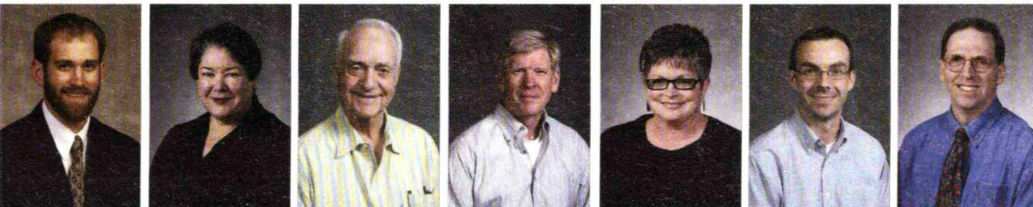
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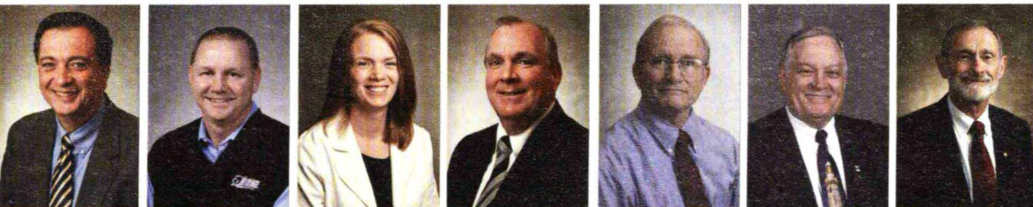
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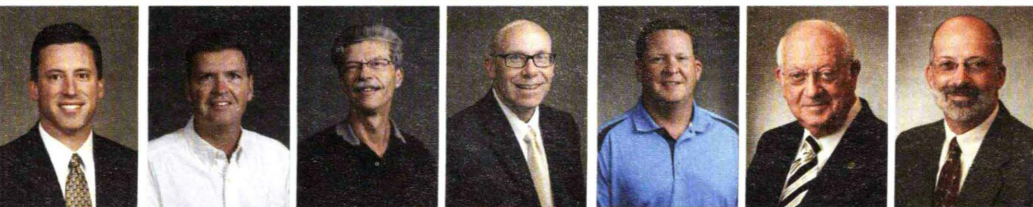
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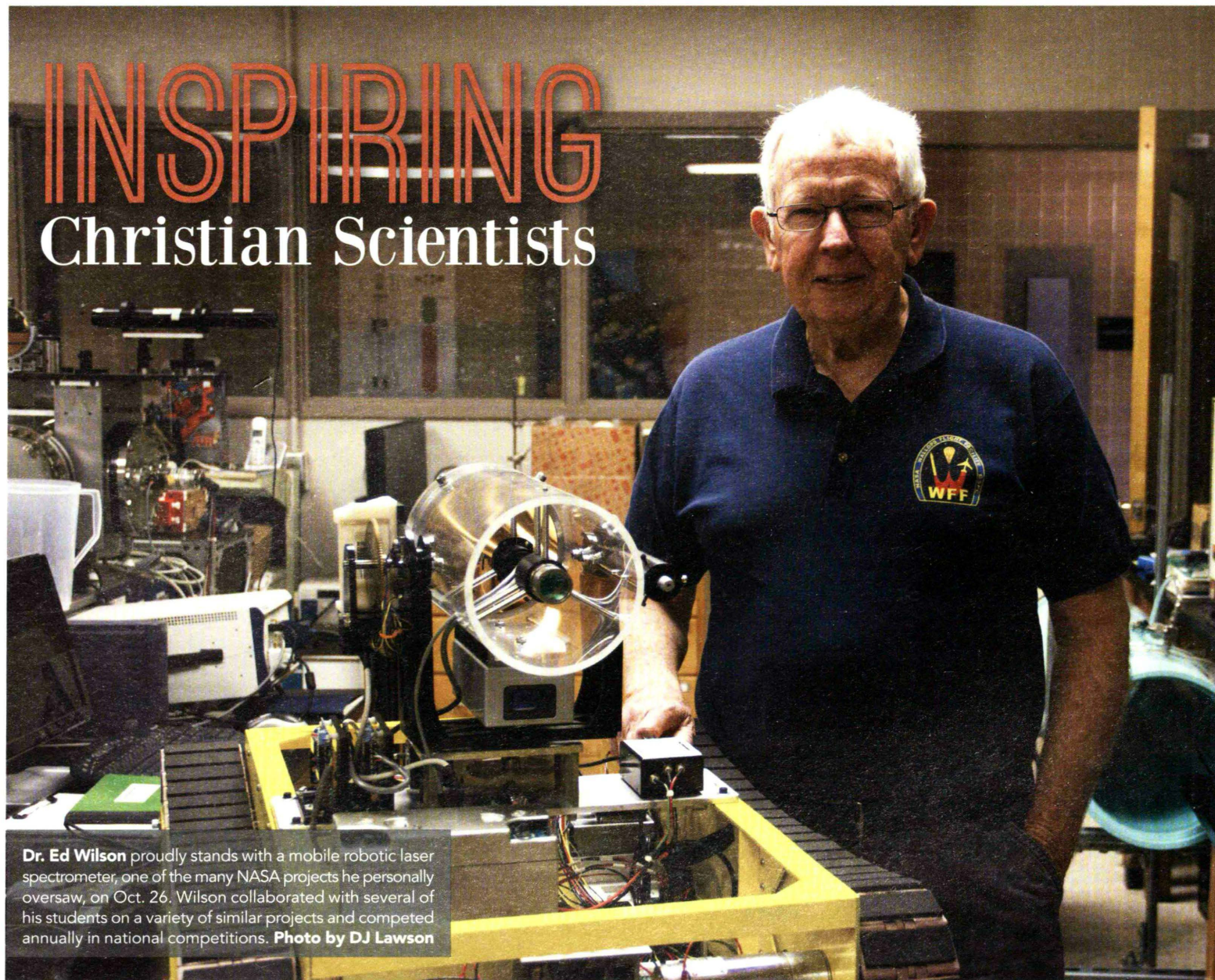
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# INSPIRING

## Christian Scientists



**Dr. Ed Wilson** proudly stands with a mobile robotic laser spectrometer, one of the many NASA projects he personally oversaw, on Oct. 26. Wilson collaborated with several of his students on a variety of similar projects and competed annually in national competitions. **Photo by DJ Lawson**

Dr. Ed Wilson, professor of chemistry and long-time Harding employee, never planned on teaching anywhere west of the Mississippi. He ended up at Harding by an "act of providence" and stayed through a series of circumstances he never expected.

"When I first came here, the facilities here were very poor, but I'm an optimist," Wilson said. "I became very discouraged because we only had two instruments, and neither one of them worked properly. Finally I just went home one day and cried because I couldn't do any type of research."

Instead of giving up, Wilson said he began writing grant requests to national foundations to get funding for new instruments and scholarships.

"[These grants] have made all the difference because they have given me some money so that I can give scholarships every year to students," Wilson said. "I can have some money for buying supplies and materials

to help them with their research."

Junior Stephanie Inabnet met Wilson when she asked him for help with chemistry homework. She ended up traveling and working on multiple projects with him throughout her time at Harding. Inabnet said she appreciated Wilson's involvement in students' lives and his effort to expose them to "all the real science things in the world, rather than just classroom stuff."

Inabnet said that though Wilson was incredibly intelligent and could have been doing research anywhere, he loved working with Harding students too much to go anywhere else.

"It's actually really cool that he lets us work with him, because we're undergrad students and we don't really know much at all," Inabnet said. "I once told him, 'Thanks so much for letting me work for you.' And he said, 'Stephanie, you're not working for me, you're working with me.'"

Senior Brennan Thomason compared working with Wilson to having a granddad on campus. Thomason said he was influenced by the passion Wilson showed for life and teaching.

"He's taught me to have a passion for your work," Thomason said. "He said it's taken him many years, but he's finally found what he's passionate about. I see him really enjoy what he does every day, so that inspires me to find something that I really like doing and not just settle for something that's mediocre."

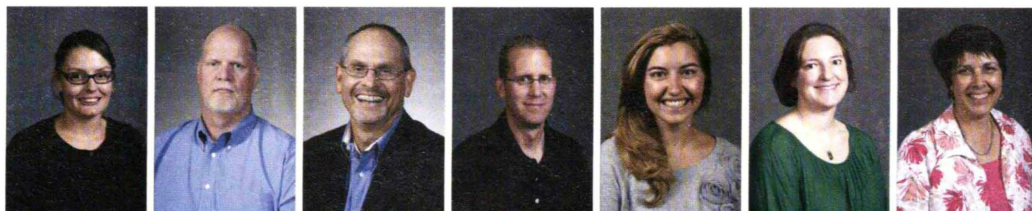
According to his students, Wilson's love for life and passion for people made him more than just a teacher; he was a friend.

"I love this place, and I love the students," Wilson said. "There's no boredom. I think a boring job is the worst thing a person could have, and I'm never bored here. There's always something coming up."

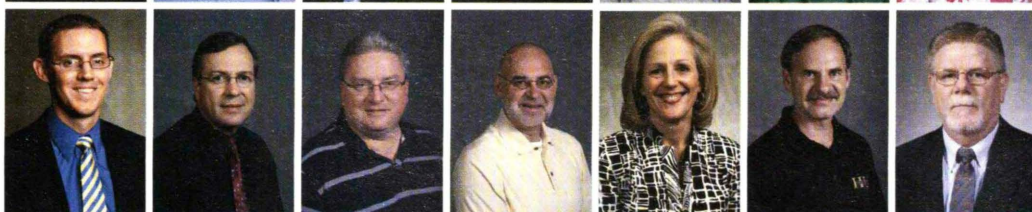
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**Ronda Reely**, B.S.N., Instr. of Nursing



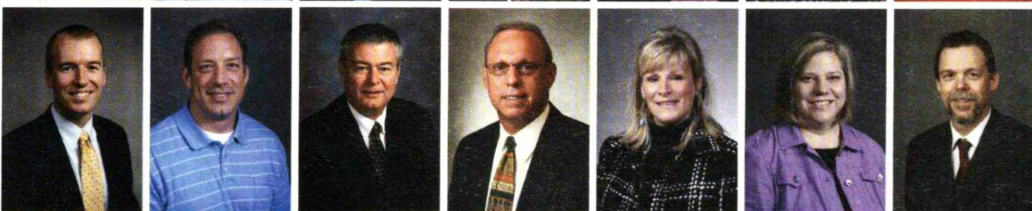
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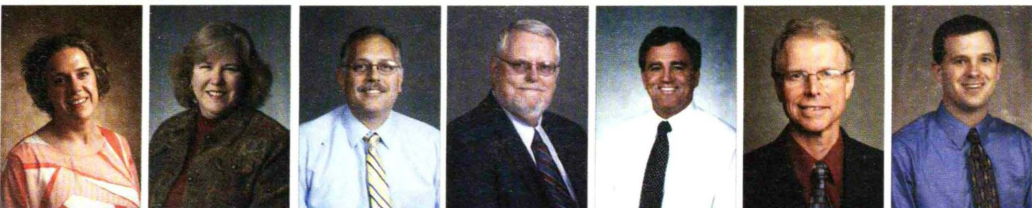
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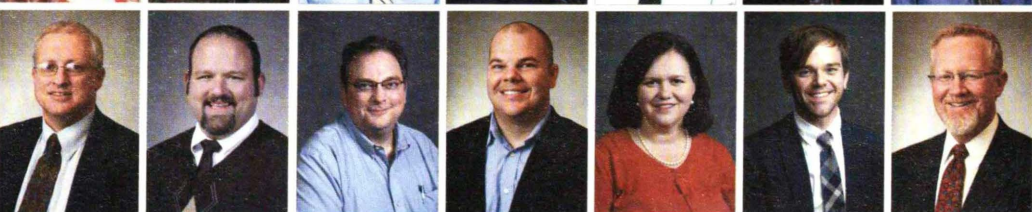
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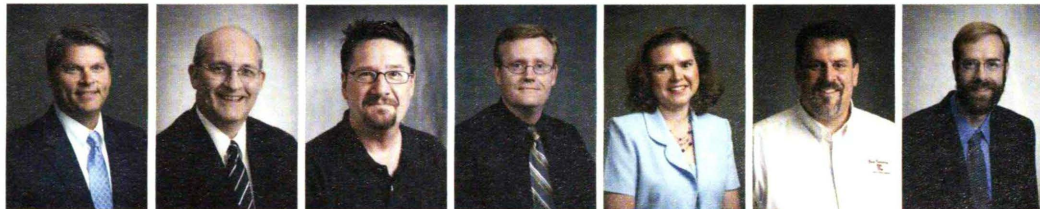




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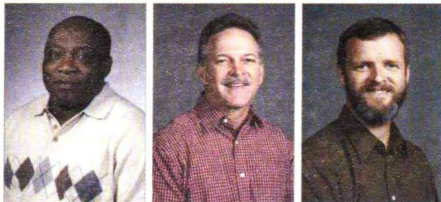
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**Jon White**, Ph.D., Asst. Prof. of Engr./Asst Prof of Engr,



**Patti Jo White**, Ed.D., Dir. of NLRPC/Asst. Prof.  
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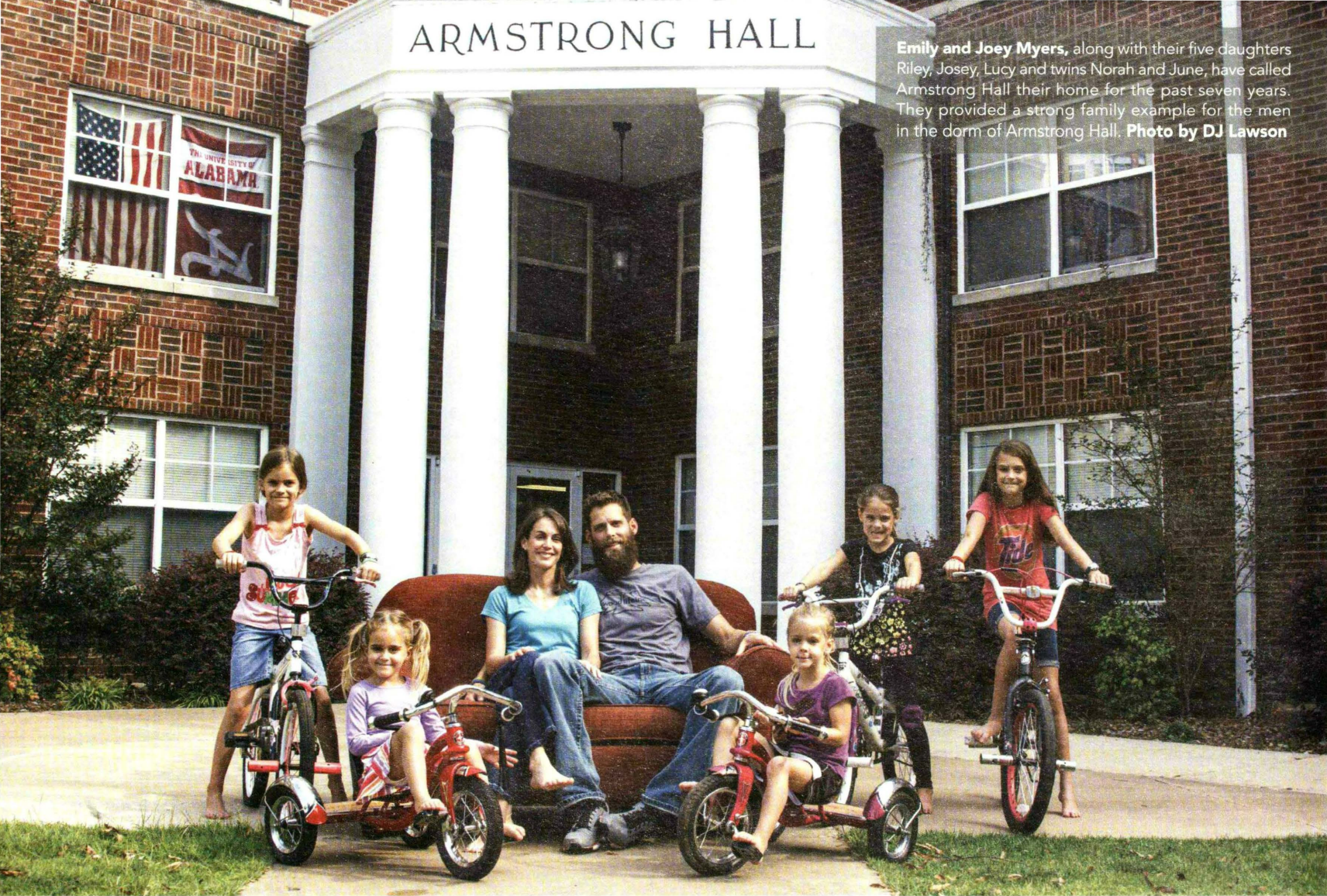
**Beth Wilson**, Ed.D., Prof. of FCS/Dept. Chair  
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Emily and Joey Myers, along with their five daughters Riley, Josey, Lucy and twins Norah and June, have called Armstrong Hall their home for the past seven years. They provided a strong family example for the men in the dorm of Armstrong Hall. Photo by DJ Lawson



# BUILDING A FAMILY

In the fall, Emily and Joey Myers began their seventh year as dorm parents for freshman men's dorm Armstrong Hall. The couple cared not only for 211 freshman males but also for their five daughters: Riley, age 10; Josey, age 8; Lucy, age 6; and twins Norah and June, both age 3. Emily said the family wanted to find a job that would allow her both to work and to stay home raising their girls.

"It has been a lot of fun to be able to meet the guys and love on them and just be a part of something so much bigger," Emily said. "They get to see a family. When they come to school, they are only around their peers, so they don't really see families anymore."

The Myers family's most important job was building relationships with the young men who lived in Armstrong.

"That's what this whole thing is about," Joey said. "This is a transition into what it's like to be an adult."

While the family certainly benefited the students, the girls were blessed by the new

friendships they made as well.

"[They] love going out and playing with the big boys," Emily said.

After spending his freshman year in Armstrong under the Myers family, senior Erik Smith decided to stay three more years as a resident assistant. He described the couple as his "Harding parents."

"They've been great mentors, and I've looked up to them a lot," Smith said. "They are willing to do whatever for me."

Smith said the couple helped young men grow in their Christian walk by starting conversations about spirituality.

"God comes up and Scripture comes up really anytime and in any conversation," Smith said. "I think that plays a big role for guys and for us RAs. I think it sets a big example on how to be a Christian and what that means."

Going above and beyond her obligations as a dorm mom, Emily made brownies and held "Mondays with Mom" once a month to build community within the dorm.

"It just makes them feel like they are cared about," Smith said. "This is a huge step because they are coming from being taken care of by their real moms. Having Mondays with Mom and her being out in the lobby every night gives them a sense of security."

Emily described her job as a mission opportunity.

"It's just a really fun job ... to let them know they are loved but encourage them to live for Christ and let them know the decisions they make have consequences," Emily said. "Part of my job is taking that opportunity and teaching them to think beyond the moment next time."

Emily said she would like her family to remain in Armstrong as long as they continued to make a difference.

"Our desire is for them to enjoy their freshman year and know this will always be a home to them if they want to come back or need something," Emily said.

By Elizabeth Harper





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 Bob Barnett, Preventive Main Services Specialist

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 Donald Bennett, Pressman  
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**Wanise Lemmons**, Office Mgr. Coll. of Nursing







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**Amy Maddox**, Academic Records Coord.

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**Wes Plybon**, Lab Director/English & Physics  
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**Donna Welch**, Secretary of Math/Comp. Sci.

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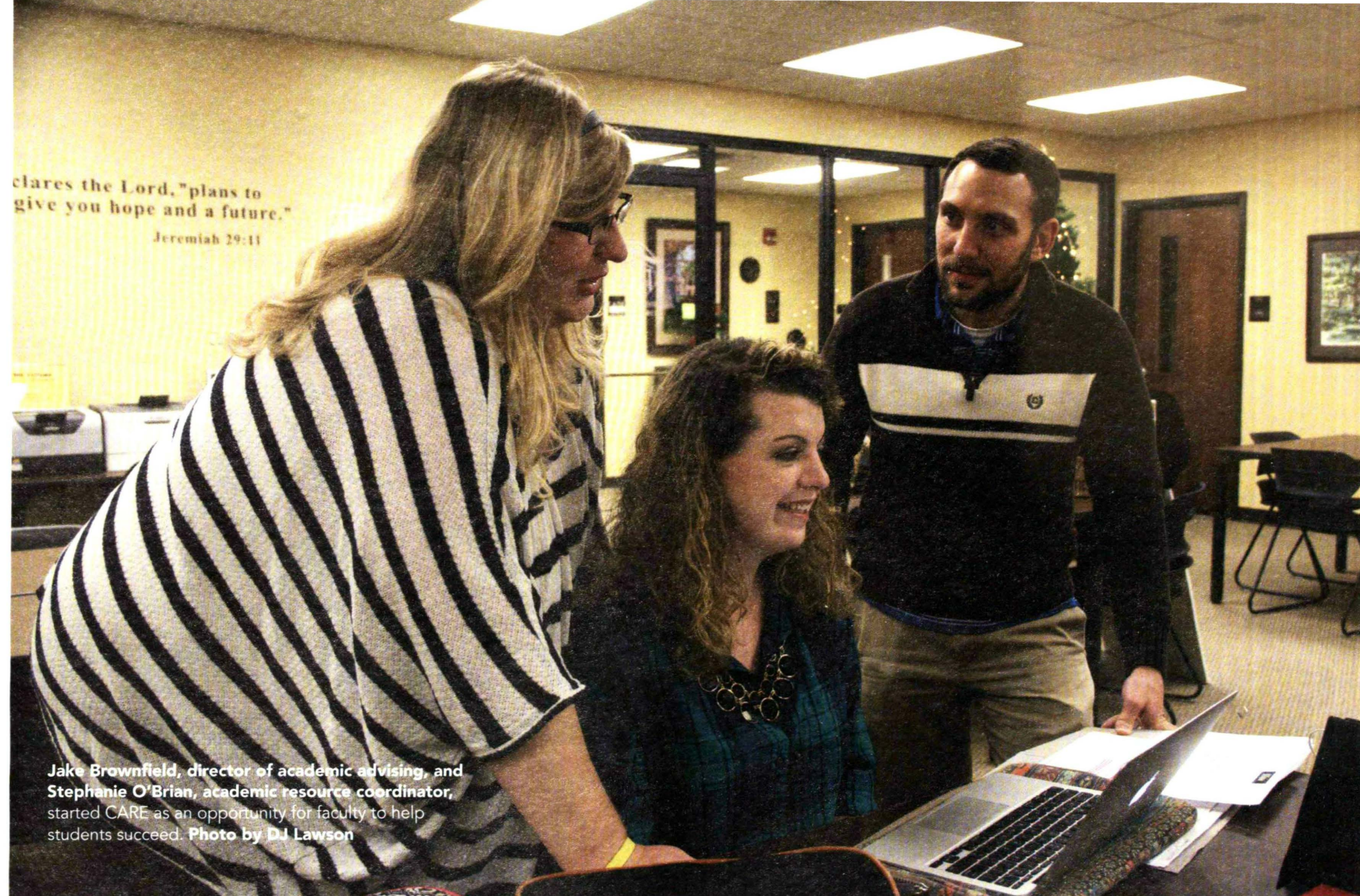
**Sharon Williams**, Office Mgr. of Coll. of Bible and Ministry



**Clarence Wilson**, STK Accounts Payable  
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Jake Brownfield, director of academic advising, and Stephanie O'Brian, academic resource coordinator, started CARE as an opportunity for faculty to help students succeed. Photo by DJ Lawson

## PROVING THEY CARE

Students had many resources for academic assistance at their disposal; oftentimes, however, they did not take advantage of them. In the fall, the Center for Student Success focused one goal: to bring the resources to the students before they were too overwhelmed to seek help on their own.

For 10 years, Harding's "early alert" system allowed professors to notify students during the fourth and fifth weeks of the semester that they were falling behind in the course. According to Stephanie O'Brian, the center's academic resource coordinator, warnings sometimes came too late for students to pull their grades up.

In response to this problem, the Center for Student Success implemented a new program called Concerned Alert Response Effort. Jake Brownfield, director of academic advising and creator of the early alert system, believed that having a program like this earlier would have prevented many students from failing classes.

"The primary focus is grades, but CARE encompasses students' emotional and spiritual needs as well," O'Brian said.

Using CARE, professors could send an alert to O'Brian and Brownfield voicing their concern. After they received the alerts, Brownfield and O'Brian would determine the best way to help students, whether that meant checking up on them by email, referring them to the counseling center or giving them the option to work with a tutor in the Center for Student Success.

Many professors jumped at the opportunity to use CARE to help their students; one professor sent a report five minutes after the program was announced. The program grew more quickly than expected, serving at least 35 professors in the weeks after implementation. According to Dr. Amy Qualls, associate professor of English, CARE even helped teachers recognize and address problems with attendance.

"If a professor notices multiple absences in just the first couple of weeks of class ... it's usually a good indicator that the student will struggle with attendance in the long run, which often results in failure," Qualls said. "Getting an early warning about attending class regularly, both from the professor and the Center

for Student Success, can work well to motivate a student to take attendance seriously."

In the future, O'Brian hoped that the program would be seen as a blessing and not a burden for students who were contacted. She said CARE was meant to be a resource and a support system, not another reason to stress. According to O'Brian, students generally responded well to the efforts being made to reach out to them.

"All of this is worth it to help just one student, and already we have helped more," Brownfield said.

Both O'Brian and Brownfield also encouraged students to be proactive and come to them without feeling the need to be contacted first. Brownfield said that he expected further expansion during the years ahead, though the first year of CARE was certainly a success.

"Harding is a community, and communities work together," Brownfield said. "This is a way for this campus to work together for success."

By Paige McNeilly