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NOVA **SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**COM Outlook** WINTER/SPRING 2022

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## CELEBRATING A *Happy* ENDING



When I joined Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in 1999, one of the initial tasks I was charged with was creating a magazine for the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM)—an incredibly exciting, but daunting, endeavor.

Thanks to the collegiality and contributions of my colleagues, as well as the amazing network of alumni and students, the magazine evolved into an incredibly popular publication that served as the

inspiration for several other Health Professions Division college magazines that were established in the ensuing years.

Therefore, it is incredibly serendipitous that this issue of *COM Outlook*—the 83rd and final edition—will literally end on a joyful note, as the theme of this edition is happiness. After garnering more than two dozen regional and national awards for its design and journalistic excellence as a college-focused magazine, NSU's Office of Printing and Publications and I have been asked to transition our efforts into the creation of a university-wide publication.

One of the many pleasures of creating each issue of *COM Outlook* has been the compelling stories we've been able to share about the talented and compassionate KPCOM family of students, faculty members, and alumni, who are the college's "beating heart." Throughout its 22-year existence, the magazine served as a printed time capsule that documented the college's numerous milestones and revealed compelling tales about the people who comprise the extensive KPCOM family.

A gripping early piece, which was featured in the winter 2001 issue and penned by the college's dean Dr. Elaine M. Wallace called "Hell on Earth: A Trip to Ground Zero," documented her experience as a physician volunteer in the days following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York.

Many other engrossing articles followed, including a 2009 piece called "Miracle on the Hudson" that suspensefully recounted what a KPCOM student experienced before and after a U.S. Airways flight made an emergency landing in New York's Hudson River. On a more lighthearted note, a spring 2021 piece titled "Fellowship Fun" shared the experience of a lifetime a KPCOM alumna enjoyed during a six-month stint as a surgical communications fellow on the popular TV drama *Grey's Anatomy*.

During the past two years, COVID-19 forced us to get creative in regard to producing a magazine in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic. Consequently, we found new and award-winning ways to connect to our readers by creating theme-specific issues and inviting students and faculty and staff members to pen personal essays reflecting those themes.

Working on this wonderful magazine has been the absolute high point of my career to date. However, I look forward to new challenges and a fresh creative collaboration as we strive to share our compelling stories with a broader audience.

Scott Colton, B.A., APR  
 Director of Medical Communications and Special Projects





As I embark on a new chapter of my NSU career, I wanted to take the time to express my appreciation to my colleagues in the health professions community.

It has been a sincerely humbling experience to have the privilege to serve two great institutions of higher education—Southeastern University of the Health Sciences and Nova Southeastern University—during the past 37 years. I owe a debt of gratitude to many of my colleagues for their help in assisting me throughout this incredibly fulfilling journey.

I officially stepped down as chancellor of the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Health Professions Division (HPD) on January 3, 2022. However, I will continue to work to achieve the university's goal of preeminence in my new role as chancellor emeritus. I also intend to work in the area of development to raise funds to enhance existing, as well as new, programs as an element of NSU President George L. Hanbury's Vision 2025.

There are too many people to name, but I must acknowledge and express my enduring gratitude to my mentor, the late Dr. Morton Terry, who was the founder of Southeastern University of the Health Sciences and the NSU Health Professions Division. His vision provided me with a guiding light to fulfill my responsibilities with fairness and integrity in my role as HPD chancellor.

One of the proudest moments of my career was playing a role in the merger between Southeastern University and Nova University in 1994, which created a truly great and diverse institution of higher education—Nova Southeastern University. In the years following the historic merger, I also had the great honor of helping to establish additional health professions colleges at NSU.

I want to thank all my colleagues and the administration at NSU for their support, teamwork, and dedication to INSU. That support, as well as the unselfish sharing of their abundant wisdom, made coming to campus every day a joy as we worked to improve and build upon what had already been created.

I look forward to continuing to work with many of you to guarantee NSU's preeminence as we create a lasting legacy as one of the greatest universities in the United States.

I thank you all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frederick Lippman".

Frederick Lippman, R.Ph., Ed.D.  
Chancellor Emeritus, Health Professions Division

**One of the proudest moments of my career was playing a role in the merger between Southeastern University and Nova University in 1994, which created a truly great and diverse institution of higher education—Nova Southeastern University.**



To say that the past two years have been extremely challenging would be an understatement—yes, I’m looking at you, COVID-19. In the midst of all the misery, however, Nova Southeastern University (NSU) coordinated a range of events and initiatives that have buoyed the spirits of those within the NSU community, as well as those of the general public.

One of those events even helped people get Happy!, which is coincidentally the name of an exhibit the NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale curated.

#### **Getting Happy!**

When the Happy! exhibit, which featured 80 art pieces, debuted in October 2019, it seemed as if Bonnie Clearwater, M.A., the museum’s director and chief curator, was prescient in her decision to oversee an exhibition that would bring much-needed pleasure to people when the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded several months later.

# COMFORT AND JOY

## NSU INITIATIVES BRING THE HAPPY!

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR



As a meteorological phenomenon, rainbows fill us with awe. They are symbols of peace, serenity, and hope.

“While in retrospect the exhibition might seem prophetic due to the pandemic, I think it would have seemed timely whenever we presented it, as the premise explored how artists deal with the universal human condition: We are born, suffer, and die,” said Clearwater of the exhibition, which can still be viewed online at the museum’s website.

“The exhibition explored the full range of emotions,” she added. “For many of the artists included in the exhibition, artmaking is a way to channel sadness, stress, and trauma. Their art provides them with a sense of well-being that helps them cope with life’s challenges.”

### Solace from Stress

The exhibit certainly provided a welcome diversion from the COVID-19 pandemic for the many patrons who viewed the exhibit either in person or online.

“The exhibition was an immediate hit with visitors when it opened in October 2019; however, it became an essential resource for audiences coping with the suffering and anxieties caused by the pandemic,” Clearwater explained.

“Fortunately, we documented the exhibition as a 360-degree virtual tour before COVID, so that when we closed to the public from March to September 2020, our educators were able to provide free, virtual field trip

# COMFORT AND JOY

tours of the exhibition to more than 3,000 Broward School District children, as well as virtual guided tours for adults, during the pandemic,” she added. “Many of our members informed us that they accessed the tour on our website as a family activity to cope with the pandemic and that it provided them with great solace.”

The museum also offered step-by-step art projects on its website to help families make art together to help deal with their COVID-related stress. “When the museum reopened in September 2020, we promoted the event with photos of the Happy! exhibition and the tagline ‘Visit Your Happy Place,’ which attracted a new and appreciative audience to the museum,” Clearwater said. “Although the exhibition closed in October 2020, the virtual tour is still accessible on our website and is the most requested virtual field trip on our roster.”

A quote from a Google reviewer summed up the feeling of the many patrons who viewed the well-timed exhibition. “Every time I visit [the museum], I am impressed by how well curated the exhibitions are. Happy! is no exception. It’s interesting, uplifting, humorous, beautiful, and intriguing.”

## Appetite for Education

Another attention-grabbing NSU activity—a thriving fruit-and-vegetable garden—is an ongoing endeavor that is providing both a connection to the earth and a sense of well-being to those involved at the Lower School at NSU University School (USchool). Much like the Happy! exhibit at the NSU Art Museum, the garden is



This watercolor from the late 1940s was painted by Russian-born artist Esther Phillips.

bringing much-needed enjoyment to people during a difficult time.

“I guess you could say I started the conversation, but many other people collaborated to make it happen, and I truly consider it a group project,” said Donna Tobey, Ed.S., Lower School director. “As a gardener myself, I feel there are so many benefits for children, such as having opportunities to be outside in nature, learning about how things are grown, and being able to take these lessons home to replicate in home gardens.”

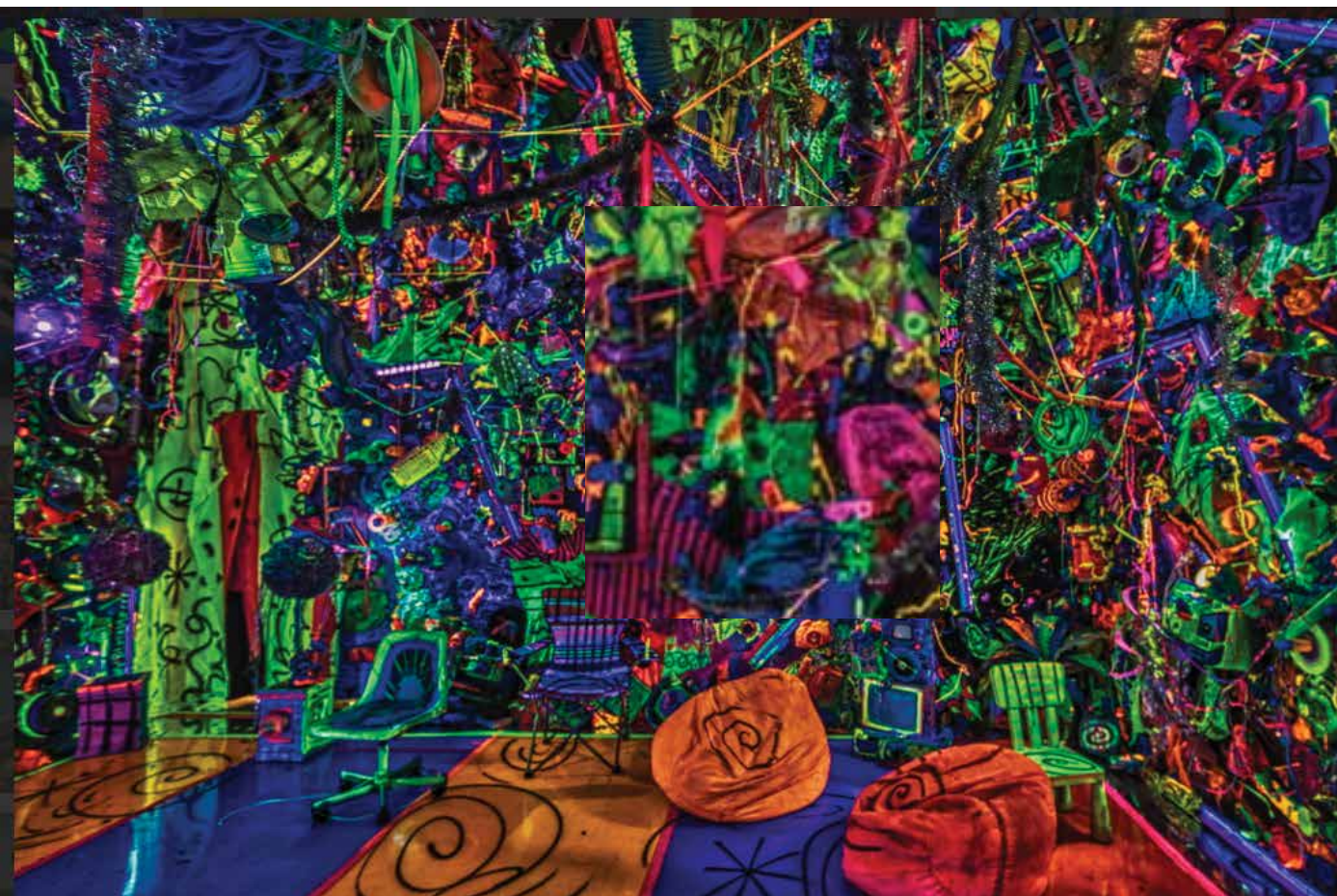
Following initial planning meetings with faculty members, parents, other members of the NSU community, and outside experts from the community at large, the first beds were installed in February 2019 and

replanted that fall. “As a result of seeing the engagement of the children in 2020, we decided to institute a full gardening program in 2021 for all grades K–5 this year,” Tobey added.

## Gratification Through Gardening

During the conceptual phase, Tobey spearheaded and led the nascent initiative from multiple perspectives, including curriculum and mindfulness. “While researching the garden, I was fortunate to find a wonderful book called *The School Garden Curriculum: An Integrated K–8 Guide for Discovering Science, Ecology, and Whole-Systems Thinking*. It was exactly what we were looking for in order to plan an effective program,” she explained.





Above: These large bears symbolize peace, gentleness, good luck, and positive thoughts.

Top: This piece is an immersive, Day-Glo, multisensory installation that mixes pop art with the hedonistic club and disco culture of the 1980s.

“Over the summer of 2021, a team of teachers and I participated in a professional learning community to begin to examine the curriculum,” Tobey continued. “We met via Zoom with the book’s author, Kaci Rae Christopher, to gain additional insights and advice and also met with a master gardener at Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach, Florida.”

In 2020, a mix of edible flowers, herbs, and vegetables were grown at the Lower School Garden. These included broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cilantro, cucumbers, eggplant, jalapeño peppers, kale, marigolds, mint, scallions, and sunflowers. Medicinal plants, such as aloe vera, calendula, and tulsi, were also cultivated.

As of fall 2021, the Lower School Garden comprised six raised garden beds consisting of edible items such as celosia, cherry

tomatoes, lemon drop peppers, shishito peppers, sissoo spinach, sweet potatoes, and winged beans. “We removed a large grassy area and installed pea rock, which will soon be the location for outdoor tables that will create an outdoor classroom,” Tobey added.

### Food for Thought

According to Tobey, the gardening program is a “whole-school initiative” that involves all USchool classes. “We currently have growing areas at the Marilyn Segal Early Childhood Studies Center, where our JK and preschool programs reside,” she explained. “The Middle School has an area for aquaponics, and the Upper School maintains the Butterfly Vivarium, which is close to the Lower School Garden.”

Feedback from the teachers who are leading the gardening



# COMFORT AND JOY



Pictographs representing various emotions are created using basic punctuation marks. The smiling face is created with a colon for eyes and right parenthesis for the smile (a dash is also used for the nose). These pictographs have been transformed into a full range of emojis to represent emotional nuances in digital messaging.

curriculum has been uniformly positive. Equally impressed are the students, who shared their innocent—and humorous—insights about the gardening program. “Gardening class is calming, peaceful, and the people are really good. And it’s fun to get dirty,” said fourth-grade student Brady. “I love the class because it’s teaching important things to survive,” said fellow fourth-grader Lydia. “No gardening means no food, right?”

Because the gardening curriculum is relatively new, Tobey and her team have not yet explored the mindfulness aspects of the program. “Anecdotally, however, the teachers have reported that the students are focused and calm when working in the garden.



White clouds symbolize happiness, joy, and equilibrium. To be “on cloud nine” is to be in a state of blissful happiness, while even dark clouds are said to have “a silver lining.”

We believe the garden holds great potential for adding mindfulness techniques to our overall curriculum,” she said.

“I think we have an obligation to help our students become the environmental stewards of the future,” Tobey stated. “By actively

engaging them in the process of gardening, they learn to take ownership for something, if only for a small part of the larger environment. They are able to see something develop from start to finish and learn that their efforts can have a positive effect on the world.” □





## Respect and Future Plans

The 2021–2022 theme at the Lower School is Because Respect Matters—a concept woven throughout the curriculum. “We talk about respect for self, respect for others, and respect for the environment,” Tobey explained. “The garden brings the concept of respect for the environment to life.”

Because of the gardening program’s overwhelming success, four additional gardening projects are planned for areas near the Lower School playground. These include a sunflower garden, a sensory garden, a wildflower garden, and a new butterfly garden, which will be a collaborative project with the third graders and the Upper School Garden Club. □

# biking for a cause

HONORING LOVED ONES  
THROUGH ACTION

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR



When Trevor Fuhriman's beloved grandmother Bev passed away in March 2020 after battling breast cancer for several years, the second-year Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) student quickly transitioned from grief to engagement.

"She was a perfect role model in my life, a steadfast example of how to love and serve others while finding joy in everything," Fuhriman said. "After her passing, I realized how prevalent, yet preventable, the disease is and became involved in the fight against breast cancer. To honor my grandmother and all the other women affected, I decided to raise awareness and turn heads toward breast cancer awareness through my love of, and knack for, cycling."

To help raise both awareness and funds, Fuhriman enlisted the assistance of his friend and fellow second-year KPCOM student Eytan Mendelow to mount an ambitious cycling expedition that encompassed 15 days; 1,702 miles; 85,470 feet of elevation; and 69,847 calories burned. Using the moniker Pedal4Pink, the duo created an Instagram account to track its progress (@pedal4pink) and embarked on a memorable excursion, with Fuhriman doing the cycling and Mendelow following behind in a 25-foot RV to provide Fuhriman with a place to sleep and refuel.

## West Coast Wanderings

The cycling adventure, which began near the U.S./Canada border in Blaine, Washington, and concluded at

the U.S./Mexico border near Tijuana, was strategically selected for several reasons. "The Florida weather in July is extremely hot, plus Trevor is a San Francisco native, so the route made sense logistically, as he could visit his family at a central location on the route, as well as meet people we could reach to spread our message along the way," explained Mendelow, whose grandmother Judie is a breast cancer survivor. "Not only did it offer a head-turning, challenging route, but also the added appeal of world-class views and climbs."

According to Fuhriman, he and Mendelow "enjoyed embracing the wanderlust, RV, hippie, cyclist, breast-cancer-advocate lifestyle. The one-on-one conversations with people along the route about our mission confirmed our approach and gave us strength to keep going," he explained.

"While fueling up on pizza at a place in Malibu, I had a brief conversation with a woman who ended up sharing our cause on her social media and donated \$300," Fuhriman added. "The ripple effect was fun to witness. During the trip, we met the actor who played the head chef in the *Mrs. Doubtfire* Heimlich maneuver restaurant scene, stayed overnight in Walmart and Costco parking lots, and shared cramped RV quarters with my golden retriever Theodore."

As they traversed the West Coast terrain, the duo were inspired by people's stories of how they were personally impacted by the disease and how much they



Right, from left: Fuhriman, Courtney Hagge (sister), Finn Hagge, Landin Hagge, Mendelow, and Fuhriman's golden retriever at a Costco parking lot in Eureka, California.

Below left: Trevor Fuhriman poses at the U.S./Canada border at Peace Arch Historical State Park in Blaine, Washington, on the first day of his biking excursion.

Below right: Fuhriman and Mendelow at Cannon Beach, Oregon



appreciated the pair's mission, which made even the hardest days worthwhile. "Together, we were able to keep on schedule, put out informational Instagram posts, provide daily updates from the trip, share stories told to us by the locals, and be interviewed by local news and radio stations to further spread our message," Fuhriman said.

### Digging Deep

Pushing himself to the limits of his physicality is nothing new for Fuhriman, who ran track when he was a student at Brigham Young University and almost broke the four-minute mile. However, he admitted that the physical and mental toll of performing that feat was entirely different.

"Instead of 4 minutes on the track, this was over 88 hours on the bike in 15 days," Fuhriman emphasized. "Except for a 130-mile day where my dad joined, I biked the other 1,572 miles alone. Fortunately, the lesson of understanding your 'why' was reinforced. I knew why I was biking and who I was biking for—my Grandma Bev and the breast cancer community—which allowed

me to dig deeper and find that extra gear during the lonely, grueling times of the trip. This endeavor has enriched my 'why' in becoming a doctor and everything else I invest my time in."

Another gratifying aspect was the money Fuhriman helped raise for the Women's Breast & Heart Initiative. "So far, we have raised \$7,826 across 61 donors, with 100 percent of the proceeds going toward access to mammogram screenings for women, specifically those of lower socioeconomic status who wouldn't otherwise have access or be able to afford the tests and screenings," Fuhriman said.

"The Women's Breast & Heart Initiative is also doing amazing things in the community, spreading education about the importance of early detection and prevention of breast cancer," he concluded. "One in eight women will have breast cancer in their lifetimes; however, 98 percent of cases are curable with early detection and prevention. Eytan's grandmother Judie, who is a breast cancer survivor, is a perfect example of how important it is to get screened in a timely manner. □



# HELP AND HAPPINESS

**KRISTI MESSER DEVOTES CAREER TO ENRICHING PEOPLE'S LIVES**

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR



Kristi Messer interacts with a child during a humanitarian excursion to Puerto Rico in March 2020.

Whether it's helping the homeless, providing educational opportunities for countless health care students, or being an intrinsic nurturer to all who know her, Kristi Messer, D.H.Sc., M.P.H., M.S.W., LCSW, has dedicated her life to making the world a better place.

Messer, who serves as assistant dean of bachelor's programs at Nova Southeastern University's (NSU's) Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM), knew from an early age that assisting others would be the key to her contentment. "I am a fairly simple person who thrives on community service, sharing life with others, and helping individuals find their purpose," she said. "My baseline is thankfully that of happiness, which is conveyed in my playful and relaxed spirit in everyday life. I view my life as a gift and my role in this world to give back and help others see their lives as a gift."

### **Ardent Learner**

By the time Messer began college at the University of Wisconsin—Madison to pursue her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, she was ready to embrace every opportunity that came her way, which included joining clubs that advocated for various community and individual needs. "Madison was the perfect environment to find my passion for people and communities and be reinforced for thinking outside the box," she explained.

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin—Madison,

Messer continued her educational odyssey, earning two master's degrees (a Master of Public Health in Maternal and Child Health and a Master of Clinical Social Work) from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill. "Like at Madison, Chapel Hill was filled with passionate individuals who were fervent about advocating for underserved communities," said Messer, who would spend the next decade working as a licensed clinical social worker.

It proved to be an eye-opening experience for Messer, who cared for a range of individuals facing life's challenges, including juveniles with a history in the criminal justice system, women in abusive relationships, youth with severe behavioral disorders, individuals dealing with substance-use disorders, and children admitted to inpatient psychiatric settings. Eventually, however, Messer realized she needed to steer her career in a different direction.

### **Passion for Public Health**

"Over time, I realized our medical system simply addressed the presenting symptoms and not the upstream social factors that contributed to the mental health challenges I witnessed daily. Social factors—such as poverty, adverse community conditions, and trauma—inevitably influence one's sense of self-efficacy, resilience, and ability to trust others," Messer explained.

"Mental health is public health, and we cannot adequately treat mental health issues without attending to the myriad drivers that ultimately affect one's



emotional state and resiliency," she added. "Once this connection was apparent, the transition to a focus on public health was a logical and easy step for me."

With a renewed focus, Messer tackled a range of roles during the next phase of her career, including working as an adjunct faculty member at Montgomery College, as an educational consultant at the Weinfeld Education Group, and as a public health analyst at the Bureau of Primary Care, which is a component of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Her work with the DHHS allowed her to support communities in the successful launch of federally qualified health centers. "My primary responsibility was to oversee the federal funding of grant awards that were earmarked to support individuals experiencing



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homelessness, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, rural communities, and underserved populations,” she said. “I was passionate about my role in increasing access to care for millions of Americans and was proud to serve as a federal employee.”

## Academic Return

After spending several years in federal service, Messer yearned to return to her first passion—

education. With her eye on South Florida, Messer applied to the KPCOM in August 2010 and was hired by the college to develop and launch the most robust U.S. medical school curriculum specific to the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. As executive director of the HRSA-funded grant venture Project HOPE, Messer established a homeless-specific curriculum in the KPCOM in 2011.

“To position myself for this task, I spent considerable time

with individuals experiencing homelessness to better understand their plight, gain perspective of their experiences with the health care system, and further appreciate how health care providers can meet their needs with not only clinical expertise, but with compassion,” Messer explained. “All KPCOM students participated in the augmented medical school curriculum through lectures, problem-based learning, community service with individuals experiencing homelessness, standardized patients, and small-group engagement with this significantly misunderstood population during class.”

Although the project concluded in 2015, Messer said it’s an experience “I will carry with me forever. The ability to affect the way burgeoning physicians understand, appreciate, and care for a misunderstood population like the homeless was an honor and a privilege,” said Messer, who also served as project manager of the college’s Institute for Disaster and Emergency Preparedness during this time. “I met some of my life’s heroes on the streets.”

Following Project HOPE, Messer tackled a new KPCOM challenge that involved developing and running an innovative medical immersion camp experience for future health care providers called AIM-High, which was established to generate enthusiasm for a career in the health professions and to instill a passion for medicine in high-achieving high school students.

Messer provides supplies and health education at a refugee camp for families displaced by an earthquake in Puerto Rico in March 2020.







From left: Enjoying a family trip to Washington in 2019 are son Jordan, Messer, husband Eduardo, and daughters Hannah and Rachel.

**For Messer, giving to others and making their lives better is what provides her with her greatest source of satisfaction.**

### **Undergraduate Leadership**

In August 2020, Messer was promoted to her current position of assistant dean of bachelor's degree programs, where she oversees four of the college's undergraduate degree programs, all of which were established in the past five years—Bachelor of Science in Public Health (2017), Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition (2019), Bachelor of Science in Health and Wellness Coaching (2020), and Bachelor of Science in Health Informatics (2021).

“These four undergraduate programs represent the only accelerated premedical programs

in the country where students can complete their undergraduate degree and medical school curriculum in seven years,” said Messer, who also serves as director of the Bachelor of Science in Public Health program. “These programs are among the most highly sought at NSU because of the innovative curriculum, hands-on faculty members, and travel outreach courses that expose students to underserved people and regions.”

What she enjoys most about her current role is the opportunity to “develop innovative academic programs, positively impact the lives of students through teaching, and build a cohort of premed students who understand and appreciate patients from a whole-person perspective,” said Messer, a true lifelong learner who earned her Doctor of Health Science degree from NSU's Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences in 2021. “Through innovative programming, I am passionate about building interprofessional academic opportunities for students that create physicians who understand people and relate to the challenges patients experience,”

### **Courting Contentment**

Although her career is fulfilling, Messer derives her greatest joy from spending time with her family, which includes two sisters, one brother, son Jordan, and daughters Hannah and Rachel. “My family is extremely close, and we enjoy traveling and spending time together,” she said. “We have an annual family variety show each year during the holidays—an event where we choreograph dances, sing,



# HELP AND HAPPINESS



Messer (far right, second row) led a team of KPCOM Bachelor of Science in Public Health students during an earthquake relief effort to Puerto Rico in March 2020 in conjunction with the International Medical Relief organization.

and enjoy being silly. Laughter truly is life’s best medicine.”

In 2013, Messer’s life ripened even more when she met her soul mate, Eduardo Fajardo. After six years of dating, the couple tied the knot in July 2019 in separate ceremonies in Mexico City—her husband’s place of birth—and in Colorado—Messer’s birthplace. “Eduardo shares my enthusiasm for the outdoors, music, food and wine, and family,” she explained. “I am grateful to share my life journey with him.”

Another key to her contentment has been Messer’s ability to reinvent

herself professionally and avoid complacency throughout her career. “I had the privilege to serve others as a licensed clinical social worker, a special education consultant and teacher, grant writer and program developer, project manager, executive director, high school teacher, and a small business owner launching a creative dance business for typically developing children and children with special needs,” she explained.

She also gains satisfaction from the work she does with her On My Own nonprofit

organization (see page 17), as well as her various other altruistic endeavors. “On a weekly basis, you will find me feeding the less fortunate, sharing resources with the homeless, teaching life skills to individuals with disabilities, serving on the board of directors for four local community nonprofit organizations, and empowering those in recovery to stay the course,” she said.

For Messer, giving to others and making their lives better is what provides her with her greatest source of satisfaction. □

# On my own

## ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

As the parent of a child with a disability, Messer knows firsthand the difficulties facing “individuals with possibilities,” as she prefers to call them. This is why she and her husband cofounded the On My Own nonprofit organization in 2018. The organization’s mission is “to provide training to adults with disabilities to support the attainment of independent living skills, overall employability, job sustainability, and community engagement, with the overarching goal of successful employment and independent living.”

“Hannah’s special needs have never deterred her from pursuing her dreams and living life with passion and intention,” Messer emphasized. “She lives life the way most of us should—with an appreciation for the present,

a special love for people, and with a beautiful gratitude for purposeful and meaningful living. The concept of On My Own was born out of a desire to replicate Hannah’s success and provide critical hands-on activities, training, education, and social engagement to other adults with disabilities.”

The organization offers a range of trainings that encompass independent living skills, job training and coaching, household management, budgeting and money management, healthy eating, food preparation/food shopping, and fitness/recreation. Services are provided in a manner that help individuals realize their maximum level of independence, as well as achieve overall integration and participation in the community. □







Students at the Tampa Bay Regional Campus pack the donations for delivery to refugee families in Miami, Florida, and Houston, Texas.

# CONTRIBUTING RELIEF

## KPCOM Students Assist Afghan Refugees

BY ANEIL TAWAKALZADA





The monetary contributions were used to purchase a range of necessities, including school supplies.

**T**he people of Afghanistan have suffered from more than 40 years of war. Recent global events, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to a humanitarian crisis that has left Afghan refugees displaced around the world. Currently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that nearly six million Afghans have been driven out of their homes due to conflict, violence, and poverty, including many who recently immigrated to the United States.

As events within Afghanistan escalated in July 2021, I worked with other leaders within the Afghan American community to create OneAfghanistan—a nonprofit organization that streamlines opportunities to help Afghan

refugees. Many Afghan Americans, including myself, felt helpless as we watched the events in Afghanistan unfold. Many of our parents came to the United States as refugees in the early 1980s, leaving many of us devastated as history began repeating itself, so we were eager to get involved to help the people of Afghanistan during their greatest time of need.

### **Mobilizing Efforts**

Through a professional website and social media pages that gathered thousands of views, OneAfghanistan listed petitions, protests, volunteer opportunities, mentorship programs, mental health counseling, and more to help streamline ways to provide relief for Afghan refugees. I

worked directly with Afghan refugee families, including one woman who said, “We’ve been in the United States for a few weeks now. It was very difficult in the beginning, as we couldn’t get groceries or medicine for my daughter when she was sick,” she explained. “We left Afghanistan with nothing but some clothes and the little money we had saved up.”

To help provide relief for Afghan refugees, second-year Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) students Sheela Anasseri (class of 2024 secretary, Fort Lauderdale/Davie) and Isabel Bernal (class of 2024 programs chair, Fort Lauderdale/Davie) worked with me to create the Med Students Supporting Afghan Refugees Initiative. “As the



# CONTRIBUTING RELIEF



An Afghan child writes a thank you note for the donated supplies her family received.

daughter of immigrants, I felt a duty to do my part to drive a positive impact through tangible actions,” Anasseri said.

After weeks of planning, KPCOM students partnered with Miry’s List and Lutheran Services Florida (LSF)—two nonprofit organizations that have worked directly with Afghan refugee families across the United States. Through their partnership with Miry’s List, KPCOM students worked to provide essential

supplies for Afghan refugee families, including bedding, pillows, bed frames, baby cribs, household supplies, school supplies, clothing, and more.

### Assisting Others

As a result of their partnership with LSF, KPCOM students focused on resettlement efforts. This encompassed enrollment of children in K–12 public schools and English as a Second Language classes, transportation of families

from airports to homes, housing for families, health screenings, and access to social services such as Medicaid and Social Security.

“Lutheran Services was a lifeline to my family and countless other Afghan families I know that moved to Jacksonville, Florida, in the early 2000s,” said fourth-year student Morsal Osmani. “They helped pave the road to a smoother transition to life here in America. I’m confident that Lutheran Services will welcome these families with the same kindness my family received when we came to America.”

In order to promote the campaign, KPCOM students turned to social media, where they spread awareness and posted educational flyers that showcased lesser-known aspects of Afghan culture, including the city of Herat’s love for poetry, the world’s first oil paintings in the caves of Bamyan, and Alexander the Great’s Afghan wife Roxanne.

### Widespread Relief

The student body concluded the three-week campaign by raising \$11,200 for Afghan refugees in the United States. Through donations to Miry’s List, students were able to provide more than 80 families with a two-month supply of hygiene products, cleaning materials, and school supplies, as well as essential items such as mattresses, bedding, pillows, and living-room rugs. Through donations to LSF, students supported long-term resettlement efforts for Afghan refugee families in



Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, and Tampa, Florida.

In addition to monetary donations, KPCOM students collected and donated 62 handwritten welcome letters, which gave Afghan families a warm reception to their new lives in the United States, and hosted a competition to see which KPCOM class could raise the most toward the cause. The class of 2023 was the big winner, garnering the three highest fundraisers.

Additionally, the Student Government Association Executive Board collected and donated more than 2,100 new or slightly used clothing items, which were distributed in Miami, Florida, and Houston, Texas. Additionally, the AMBOSS organization sponsored the campaign and agreed to provide 50 students in Afghanistan with free resources to aid their studies.

Although the Med Students Supporting Afghan Refugees Initiative has concluded, I am continuing to provide relief for Afghan refugees in the United States through my nonprofit organization OneAfghanistan. My latest efforts focused on collecting holiday gifts for refugee children to be distributed in Florida, Virginia, New York, and California, as well as creating scholarships for Afghan refugees so they have the opportunity to pursue quality education without having to face financial hardship. □

*Aneil Tawakalzada is a third-year KPCOM student and the class of 2023 president at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.*



Top: Students at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus prepare the donations for delivery.

Bottom: KPCOM students collected and donated 62 handwritten welcome letters to the Afghan refugees.





# COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY

## A PROGRAM DEFINING AND CELEBRATING FAMILY-SYSTEMS THINKING

BY W.B. KING

With a unique curriculum that focuses on systemic approaches to mental and behavioral health, Nova Southeastern University Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine's (NSU-KPCOM's) Department of Couple and Family Therapy offers education informed by systems thinking.

Holistic, interactional, and relational in nature, the college's philosophy allows for the understanding of how disparate systems can successfully work together, which is especially useful given the lessons learned from the pandemic. Through a prism of curiosity and self-reflection, faculty members consider diverse perspectives from the students and communities the university proudly serves.

"While thinking systemically, the faculty maintains an ongoing process of creating and promoting a culture in which knowledge and experiences are shared and appreciated in a respectful manner," said Phyllis J. Filker, D.M.D., M.P.H., the college's associate dean of undergraduate, graduate, and community education. "The members of the department notice and pay attention to patterns of what is





From left: Josh Boe, Ph.D., M.S., assistant professor of family therapy, and Couple and Family Therapy M.S. student Kimberly Reid counsel a couple at the Brief Therapy Institute.

working and look for solutions to the academic and professional dilemmas that are encountered on a day-to-day basis.”

Providing learner-centered education, the KPCOM’s 143 full-time and 120 adjunct professors, including those at the Department of Couple and Family Therapy, prepare competent and empathetic lifelong learners. The multifaceted programs integrate the compassionate principles of osteopathic medicine with advancing knowledge from contemporary science. The overarching mission is for faculty members to introduce students to the health care field, including mental and behavioral health care, while underscoring the benefits of relational and systemic thinking.

### **Teaching Inclusion, Transparency, and Collaboration**

At the KPCOM, students enjoy a matchless combination of best-in-class doctoral, master’s, and bachelor’s degrees, as well as certificate programs. Classes are

offered at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie or Tampa Bay Regional campuses. Due to the proximity to NSU’s Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center at the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, clients and patients can be referred directly to KPCOM physicians, residents, faculty members, and students.

With a dedication to teaching and training students to work with culturally and sexually diverse populations, the Department of Couple and Family Therapy offers a B.S. program in Health and Wellness Coaching (HAWC); an M.S. program in Couple and Family Therapy, which is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE); an innovative Doctor of Marriage and Family Therapy (D.M.F.T.), which is in the process of receiving COAMFTE initial accreditation; and a Ph.D. in Couple and Family Therapy that is COAMFTE accredited.

“For us, problems evolve and dissolve in relationships. We look for strengths and solutions within the



## With a unique curriculum that focuses on systemic approaches to mental and behavioral health, NSU-KPCOM's Department of Couple and Family Therapy offers education informed by systems thinking.

context of relationships,” said Fariha Niazi, Ph.D., M.S., LMFT, LMHC, who serves as chair and assistant professor in the Department of Couple and Family Therapy. “Our department is proud to be transparent about our values of inclusion and affirmative practices on all levels of education and training. Students, as well as faculty and staff members, are committed to a collaborative and noncompetitive learning environment where we embrace diverse ideas and cultures.”

Launched in the fall of 2020, the HAWC undergraduate degree program prepares students for a career directly working with clients, their families, and the broader health care system in the community. “Students learn to assess client lifestyles and family support systems, develop tailored wellness plans, create health education materials, conduct health workshops and seminars, build a coaching practice, and apply solution-building strategies to coaching,” said Shazia Akhtarullah, Ph.D., LMFT, LMHC, director of the HAWC program.

The HAWC degree program prepares students for both employment opportunities and enrollment in NSU graduate programs, including Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, Master of Science in Nutrition, Master of Public Health, Master of Science in Couple and Family Therapy, Doctor of Physical Therapy, and Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant, among others.

“Students also have an opportunity to seek dual admission into the D.O. program, as well as dual admission into the M.S. in Couple and Family Therapy program,” Akhtarullah added.

### Promoting Diverse Philosophical and Clinical Perspectives

Providing a direct pathway to a broad clinical license that allows graduates to see individuals, couples, groups, and families is the mission of the M.S. in Couple and Family Therapy (CFT) program, explained Anne Hearon Rambo, Ph.D., director of the family therapy master's program.

“Our class sizes are small—we accept roughly 40 students per year. Close faculty mentoring is a feature of the program. Students begin their clinical work with

live supervision seeing clients, while a faculty supervisor observes behind a one-way mirror and interacts with them,” Rambo said.

“This close mentoring continues in the second year of the program. Students meet with faculty in groups of no more than two students per faculty member to discuss clinical cases,” Rambo noted, adding that graduates continuously enjoy a 100 percent employment rate in the field.

The Ph.D. in Couple and Family Therapy and Doctor of Marriage and Family Therapy programs are unique in that students receive advanced training in both historical and cutting-edge theory, informing the current practice of couple/marriage and family therapy (C/MFT), noted Kara Erolin, Ph.D., M.A., associate professor and director of the doctoral programs.

“A misperception is that C/MFTs do not work with individuals, but at NSU, they are trained to work with couples, families, and individuals within the context of larger systems,” Erolin continued. “Applying a systemic, holistic, and contextual perspective to our teaching and clinical supervision, we focus on the relational strengths and resources of both students and clients, with an appreciation of, and respect for, diversity and social justice.”

Approximately 15 to 20 students are admitted to the highly competitive doctoral programs each year. “Students are trained to become leaders in the field through clinical theory and practice, teaching, supervision, and research,” Erolin added. “Faculty members mentor students by working collaboratively to help develop students' knowledge and skills as scholars and as advanced practitioners in the field.”

Housed within NSU's CFT department, the Equine-Assisted Family Therapy concentration is the first of its kind to be offered by a nationally accredited C/MFT program. “Through this experiential, hands-on process, students develop insight into how they navigate as novice couple and family therapists,” said Natalie Rothman, Ph.D., M.S., M.S., LMFT, LMHC, CAP, instructor. “Each class, which is limited to no more than 12 students, is offered as a hybrid format featuring seven experiential barn days, which are scheduled throughout the 15-week

*(continued on page 26)*





Above: Couple and family therapy student Nathalie Soto initiates a rapport with Paris.

Left: Front row from left: Barbara Parris-Amore (doctoral student), Natalie Rothman, Arlene Gordon, and Kara Erolin. Second row from left: Fariha Niazi, Sarah Conklin (M.S. student), Daniella Lau (M.S. student), Kimberly Reid (M.S. student), and Merlissa Pierce (administrative assistant). Third row from left: Francesca Agiuli (BTI assistant supervisor of front desk operations); Shaelise Tor, Ph.D., M.S. (assistant professor); Ashley Chamorro (M.S. student); Anne Rambo; and Josh Boe. Back row from left: Carlos Mendez (doctoral student), Georgie-Ann Neil (doctoral student), Sanna-Shae Sterling (M.S. student), and Mert Yildiz (doctoral student).





# COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY

term.” To date, more than 200 students have completed coursework in Equine-Assisted Family Therapy.

Rothman, who has earned two master’s degrees and, most recently, her doctorate from the KPCOM, said that the CFT programs utilize postmodern systemic approaches. “The programs teach students the importance of understanding multiple perspectives in relation to all social systems. In the classroom, topics of diversity and inclusion are intentionally discussed through relevant and relatable discourse,” Rothman continued. “Students are supported by the faculty to follow their instincts and explore their interests through research and community service.”

## Championing Community Health Practices

The Brief Therapy Institute (BTI) is an umbrella for services from the community-focused training facility at NSU’s Department of Couple and Family Therapy. The BTI collaborates systemically with individuals, couples, and families. Clients come to BTI’s Family Therapy Clinic from all walks of life, explained Arlene Brett Gordon, Ph.D., M.S., LMFT, who is the institute’s director and an associate professor.

“At this training site, our master’s and doctoral degree students work in teams under the direct supervision of a licensed faculty member—a supervisor approved by the American Association for Marriage

and Family Therapy,” Gordon said. “Advanced doctoral student clinicians also see clients and patients once they complete their internal practicum training and are prepared for the next steps in their therapeutic practice.”

Prior to COVID-19, the BTI hosted in-person workshops covering diverse topics offered by faculty members, students, and community providers. The social-distance limitations imposed by the pandemic led to the introduction of Zoom portals. This has allowed Gordon’s team to offer workshops and appointments to a wider field of participants and patients.

“Our increasingly popular telehealth visits and in-person meetings adhere to strict safety protocols. As a training facility at a large university, we have to proceed cautiously and make certain our students maintain the high level of training they deserve,” Gordon said. “We moved to telehealth, maintained our practicum classes and supervision, and recontacted our clients to continue services.”

## Fulfilling Academic Journeys

While the pandemic presented certain challenges, the KPCOM successfully instituted an innovative hybrid model of learning across all departments, explained Niazi. This approach allowed students to take all courses required to graduate—whether in







From left: Arlene Gordon and Natalie Rothman, along with Pamela Moran-Walcutt, D.O., assistant dean of preclinical education and assistant professor of family medicine, and Paula Anderson-Worts, D.O., M.P.H., assistant dean of faculty and alumni affairs and associate professor of family medicine and public health, interact with a patient at the Sanford L. Ziff Health Care Center.

person, remotely, or via a hybrid solution. “We learned that we are creative, resilient, flexible, and adaptable,” Niazi said. “We can master technology and live with uncertainty while moving forward.”

Depending on degree focus, CFT students are offered elective credits with specialized training in courses, such as Infant Mental Health, Military Families, Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention, Collaborative Divorce, and Working with Autism and ADHD. In addition, concentrations in medical family therapy, solution-focused coaching, and equine-assisted family therapy are offered.

“This is an opportunity for students to explore and gain experience in topics of their interest and prepare for career pathways of their choice” Niazi said. “This also opens up new possibilities and employment opportunities for them.”

To further enhance the educational experience, faculty members and students regularly collaborate on book chapters and articles underscoring clinical modalities that best serve all demographics. These important publications and findings are often presented by professors and students at national and international conferences.

“We engage our students in presenting on interdisciplinary professional education activities with other programs in the KPCOM,” Gordon said. “Like many other NSU clinics, we focus on serving folks

who might not be able to afford therapeutic services elsewhere, offer the underserved a modest sliding scale fee, and work with clients to find ways to explore our services.”

Over the course of the KPCOM’s celebrated history, graduates of the program have successfully secured positions at community mental health agencies, treatment and medical facilities, hospitals, managed care companies, religious settings, health care organizations, and academic institutions.

“Students can work as clinicians, private practitioners, agency administrators, clinical supervisors, trainers, program directors, and managers,” Niazi said. “The hiring rates for our graduates are high, and the majority of our students secure employment as soon as they graduate.”

Looking forward, Filker said the key differentiator in CFT programs is the embracement of the systems-thinking philosophy. This approach proactively aggregates resources that best inform each student’s academic journey.

“As the department grows and expands, the faculty members will continue to remain systemic, strength-based, and student-centered,” Filker said. “The KPCOM faculty and staff teams are committed to serving our communities, working with other organizations and systems, and finding more opportunities for our students to grow.” □

# NOBLE VENTURE

## CLASS OF 2024 DUO EMPOWERS MINORITIES THROUGH MENTORSHIP

BY MELISSA ALVAREZ AND PAOLA TORRES

We met during the summer of 2019 on the first day of orientation for City Year Miami. City Year is an organization that places young adults in low-income schools where they can act as additional resources in the classroom, with the goal of improving the dropout crisis. We soon realized exactly how much we had in common, as we both

attended the same middle school and college.

Although we were placed at different schools in Miami, Florida, our friendship grew each time we interacted. Interestingly, in the beginning of our year of service, Paola expressed hesitancy about applying to medical school for that cycle. I encouraged her to apply

and put her in contact with an admissions director who ultimately convinced her to submit her application. Throughout the year, we would update each other on our medical school applications at monthly corporate meetings.

Coincidentally, we saw each other again in November 2019, but this time it was at our Dr. Kiran C.



Melissa Alvarez and Paola Torres virtually mentor a premed minority student.



Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) interviews. After the interview, we wished each other good luck, but did not speak again until May 2020 when we saw each other on the GroupMe page for the KPCOM class of 2024.

The first year of medical school began, and we became close friends. Our shared experiences led us to have similar interests in mentoring students and helping the underserved.

We both remembered feeling frustrated and lost during our premed journey, and we talked about ways we could help others avoid going through the same struggles we did. On a whim, Paola decided to make an Instagram page offering free premed mentoring services. Within a day, the page began to gain followers, and we realized it could turn into so much more. This is how URMed Mentors was founded.

We founded the organization and created the following mission statement: “We are a passionate group of medical students seeking to empower and support underrepresented minority (URM) students through mentorship and advising as they navigate their premed journey.” Our focus is on providing an equitable path to medicine for underrepresented minorities.

We decided to create a program that would match medical students and premed undergraduate students throughout the country. We match each of our mentees and mentors based on shared experiences, so our mentors’ skills are most effectively used. Our mentors offer free mentorship and application services to their

mentees. All our mentors are passionate about mentoring students and do this free of charge while in medical school.

The program, which has been in existence for more than a year, already has mentees who have received multiple interviews during the 2021–2022 medical school application cycle. To assist the mentees, we post premed advice, giveaways, and tips for getting into medical school on our Instagram page. An additional service we provide is mock interviews. Anyone is welcome to request a free mock interview from us and does not have to be part of our program to qualify.

We want to be a resource for all and assist people who need help. The program’s success has been more than we could have ever

anticipated. We have even been featured on other premed Instagram pages and on a podcast. We also developed a website so the mentors and mentees can easily apply to the program and learn about who we are.

In the future, we hope to establish URMed Mentors as a nonprofit organization and continue growing until the journey to a medical school acceptance is equitable and accessible to all. Additionally, we hope to inspire others and show just how much a friendship, a passion, and an idea can turn into something more.

Visit the [urmedmentors.org](https://urmedmentors.org) website or the Instagram handle [@urmedmentors](https://www.instagram.com/urmedmentors) to learn more. □

*Melissa Alvarez and Paola Torres are second-year KPCOM students.*



Melissa Alvarez and Paola Torres: Empowering minorities through mentorship

SPECIAL SECTION



# HAPPY

## PERSPECTIVES





# Presidential Positivity

## GEORGE HANBURY SHARES KEYS TO SUSTAINING HAPPINESS

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR

Throughout his prestigious career, George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., president and chief executive officer of Nova Southeastern University (NSU), has experienced towering highs and soul-crushing lows. His life lessons provide keen insights into how to be resilient and maintain a high baseline of happiness.

### Use Humor to Deflect Friction

When Hanbury was fired from his job as city manager of Virginia Beach, Virginia, in the early 1980s, he employed a surprising tactic to deflect the friction and earn a six-month severance package: humor. When he met with the 11 city council members, who had voted in a close 6-to-5 decision to oust him, Hanbury surprised the elected officials by asking to share an amusing story.

“I said, ‘Listen, I don’t have any severance pay, but let me tell you a story about another city manager who had gotten fired.’ The council members are sitting there thinking, ‘We just fired you and you want to tell us a story?’ I figured there was no need to be unhappy during a very stressful time in my life, so I told them a humorous story,” he explained.

“That story broke the tension in the room, and the council members laughed and agreed to give me six months of severance,” he added. “If I had gone in there blaming them for all the problems I had, that wouldn’t have happened.”

### When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade

Although he was now unemployed, Hanbury relied on his intrinsic optimism and innate self-confidence to lead him to his next vocational opportunity, which was tendered by the neighboring city of Portsmouth, Virginia, to become its city manager. “I received a call from Portsmouth, which said, ‘Mr. Hanbury, we want you to come to Portsmouth and do here what you got fired for in Virginia Beach,’” he explained.

“When I came to Portsmouth, a reporter asked me, ‘You got fired in Virginia Beach. Why do you think you



Happy Couple: George and Jana Hanbury

### HAPPINESS IS A MINDSET

**“Happiness is like success—it’s a progressive realization of a worthy goal. And if you make one of your goals to enjoy life instead of finding fault with it, to look forward each day, to make life better not only for yourself but for others, I think you’ll find happiness.”**

—George L. Hanbury II

would then get hired in Portsmouth?’ My response was, ‘I don’t know. But one man’s trash is another man’s treasure,’ which became the headline in the newspaper,” he noted. “If I had said it’s because the city council members in Virginia Beach are dummies and they have no idea how to run a government, what would that have accomplished? You always need to look for the positive side. And things can indeed be better as long as we are on the green side of the grass.”

### **Adjust Your Attitude**

According to Hanbury, we are the architects of our own happiness based on the daily decisions we make. “For example, when you are driving down I-95 and somebody cuts in front of you, it’s up to you to determine how you’re going to act. That person has driven away as happy as can be, but if you have allowed that person to make you angry, that’s on you,” he emphasized.

“Don’t ever let anybody else take away your happiness,” he added. “When I was a city manager, I was criticized constantly for how dumb I was and for how badly I had run the operation. But you have to bite your tongue and know your true character. You see, your reputation is what other people think of you. But your character is what you know of yourself.”

### **Set Lofty Goals**

While he was devising his ambitious agenda for the university in 2010, Hanbury recalled hearing from a number of doubters about his Vision 2020 Realizing Potential campaign. “When we adopted those matrices

and goals in 2010, many people told me it was too audacious and said, ‘Why would you put false hopes out there? Why would you do such a thing?’ There were a lot of Debbie Downers,” he admitted.

“They weren’t too happy, but I was happy, because we established challenging goals that had never been achieved in the history of this university,” he continued. “And we set those goals above our reach. But we eventually had everybody believing we could get there, because one day at a time, one week at a time, and one month at a time, we measured to see how close we were coming to meeting those matrices.”

Hanbury’s “audacious” plan proved to be incredibly successful, as the Realizing Potential campaign realized its lofty goals three years ahead of schedule. His Vision 2025 goal is equally as bold, as it states that “By 2025, NSU will be recognized as a preeminent, professional-dominant, doctoral-research university that provides competitive career advantages to its students and produces alumni who serve and lead with integrity.”

“In my opinion, Vision 2025 is no more than an enhanced Vision 2020, because we’re taking the matrices and goals we previously established and have cumulatively added them for 2025,” Hanbury explained. “I haven’t heard anybody say that being recognized as being preeminent is audacious, because people now believe that if we continually measure to see how close we are coming to meeting those matrices, we will not only be recognized as premier, but as preeminent. And that will make me happy.”





# Happiness Is Habitual Excellence

BY HANNA SHANAR

In these most unusual times, rejoicing in gratefulness and appreciation of subtle things that push us to continue our journey become invaluable. These subtleties may be a walk around a park, a dinner with loved ones, or a single deep breath that reminds us of all there is to be grateful for. Small moments of happiness become memories that serve to propel us onward as we live day to day.

Colloquially, happiness refers to a particular instance, or short period of time when we feel joy, and is usually associated with pleasure. In behavioral sciences, happiness refers to one of the seven universal emotions. Philosophers, such as Aristotle, suggest that happiness is the result of a lifetime of excellence, which is significantly different from the mainstream use of the term.

Aristotle defines excellence as constant engagement in acts of virtue and goodness guided by rational thought. Aristotle acknowledges that the ability to rationalize is particularly inherent to humans. As a result, a good human is one who successfully employs rational thought in his or her decision-making to always do what is good and virtuous.

The implication then becomes that happiness does not necessarily describe a particular “feel-good moment” of joy, contentment, or pleasure, but describes a lifetime of virtue and is the end goal of human life. If we employ this concept of happiness in our everyday activities, we no longer rely on singular instances of “happiness” to push us along or give us future events to look forward to. Rather, we begin to rely on constant acts of goodness and virtue in pursuit of our end goal—happiness.

It just so happens that acts of virtue tend to be intrinsically pleasurable and fulfilling. Conveniently, living life in pursuit of Aristotle’s happiness is pleasurable in itself, because acts of goodness are pleasurable. Of course, we can still take the time to appreciate the subtleties in life that bring us joy and satisfaction.

At times, these subtleties may even be necessary for our sanity. However, we should rely on constant acts of goodness like charity, helping others, being good people, and making the right decisions in order to reach our end goal—happiness.

*Hanna Shanar is a second-year KPCOM student.*



**In behavioral sciences, happiness refers to one of the seven universal emotions. Philosophers, such as Aristotle, suggest that happiness is the result of a lifetime of excellence, which is significantly different from the mainstream use of the term.**

# COVID-World Contentment

BY PHYLLIS J. FILKER, D.M.D., M.P.H.



**As we move forward as a college, let's not forget to find happiness in the little things. And may we continue to be advocates of joy for those who may be having trouble finding it themselves.**

Woody Allen stated that 80 percent of success is showing up. For most professionals, our personal success is closely linked to our happiness. So, in these unprecedented times, how do we achieve happiness when there are so many events taking place in the world that seem to douse all our efforts in doing so?

The challenge can be exhausting. While the past few years have been difficult and uncertain, they have also opened our eyes to new sources of joy we may have overlooked in our pre-COVID lives. Examples include seeing our colleagues, friends, and family face-to-face after only seeing them in a small, virtual box; witnessing the passion of KPCOM students and faculty and staff members to effect change with the KPCOM Unity Program initiative; and even something as small as getting to have in-person conversations on campus is no longer taken for granted.

Scientists brought us joy when they showed up and produced an mRNA vaccine in less than one year that could help protect the world against COVID-19. Voters showed up in record numbers and elected the first female vice president of the United States.

We have learned that the secret to our happiness as students, colleagues, faculty members, and a society is to continue to show up. Showing up for ourselves, showing up for those around us, and showing up for those in need who don't have a voice are the keys to a successful and happy life.

As we move forward as a college, let's not forget to find happiness in the little things. And may we continue to be advocates of joy for those who may be having trouble finding it themselves. Kurt Vonnegut once said, "Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you'll look back and realize they were the big things."

*Phyllis J. Filker is the KPCOM's associate dean of undergraduate, graduate, and community education.*





Phyllis J. Filker and her husband Steven D. Muckey, D.D.S., beat the COVID-19 blues by traveling to various parts of the United States and enjoying the great outdoors.



# The Value of Relationships

BY LEROY SWAIN



Through a series of experiences, I've come to believe that our happiness is mainly derived from the relationships we form and maintain throughout our lives.

One day, near the end of our Osteopathic Principles and Practice class, our instructor asked how we planned to spend the upcoming holidays. After the discussion, he said, "Remember that medicine should not be the center of your life. Your friends, family, and relationships should be at the center of your life."

After hearing such wise words, it began to make sense as to why I recharge the way I do. We all have many ways of recharging our batteries and staying happy. This can range from going for a run to watching your favorite TV show. Growing up, I always felt recharged after spending quality time with loved ones. Getting the chance to catch up with family and

celebrating the accomplishments of childhood friends always kept me centered. Being part of their joyous moments always brought me joy.

Through times spent with patients, both before and during medical school, I've come to notice that when the future seems dim, we tend to prioritize the connection we have with others. Recently, I met a man in the hospital who was experiencing exertional dyspnea and cough for many months. He decided to come to the hospital that day because he just learned his wife was about to undergo major surgery.

He knew that in his current state, he wouldn't have the capacity to take care of her during her time of healing. During his stay, he frequently emphasized that he was willing to do whatever was necessary to make it back in time before her surgery. After a thorough cardiac workup and

cardioversion out of atrial fibrillation, he looked like a new man the following morning. He thanked us and expressed how happy he was to be able to go home and prepare for his wife's surgery. A surgical mask hid how genuinely happy I was for him to make it back to her.

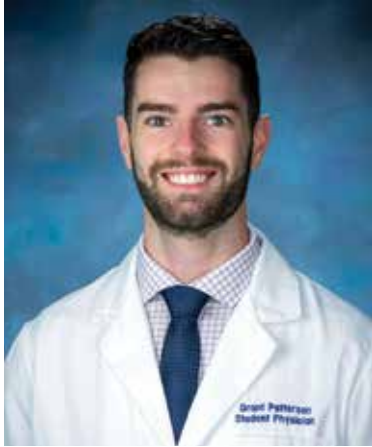
Experiences like these continue to reinforce my thought that many different things can make us feel fulfilled. We can accomplish many things and overcome all kinds of adversity. But many of these experiences really aren't worth much if you don't have anyone to share them with. With your finite time here on earth, I always encourage others to hold your loved ones close and appreciate that you have what plenty of research has suggested is a big key to good health and happiness.

*Leroy Swain is a fourth-year KPCOM student.*



# The Importance of Gratefulness

BY GRANT PATTERSON



It's easy to get caught up in the sadness and chaos of the world, especially during the time of a global pandemic. We're expected to be flexible with changing rules and regulations no matter their impact on our personal lives. It's exhausting to keep up with daily responsibilities, let alone to keep up with the rigor of medical school.

It seems like if we take even a moment out of our day for personal relief, we get so far behind in our studies and responsibilities. How then are we expected to thrive and find happiness amid all these burdens? The answer is simple. We must be grateful.

A few years ago, I dreamed about being in medical school and would have given anything to have the knowledge that I would succeed someday. As I reflect on my life since then, I am grateful for the hardships and uncertainty I faced then, because each trial contributed in some way to the life I have now.

I'm living my dream as a medical student, and though it is a difficult stretch, I'm grateful I can be on this path. I'm grateful for the friends I have who don't let me give up, I'm grateful for my professors who want me to succeed, and I'm grateful for my family members who love me and let me know it. I'm grateful for living in such a warm and beautiful place where there is always something to do outside. It's these things I'm most grateful for that often get overlooked by others, but provide the driving force for me to keep going every day.

Gratitude helps us remove the focus from ourselves and find happiness in any circumstance. It is truly the framework for a healthy and successful life. Nobody can pick and choose the cards they are dealt, but they can choose to be grateful that they can make each experience their own.

We can compare ourselves to other people and never feel like

we're good enough, or we can be grateful that we are unique and not like anyone else—that we have exclusive skills and characteristics to offer. Gratitude is a choice, and the more we choose to be grateful, the happier we will be.

If you follow the news and keep up with the various tragedies across the world, you'll probably agree that 2020 and 2021 have been the most difficult years yet. My opinion of them—that they have been the best years of my life—remains unpopular.

I have found happiness with an attitude of gratitude. I am extremely grateful for the education I am receiving and the blissful moments I can enjoy in my off time. To anyone who is sifting through life's chaos, remember that we can choose to be optimistic. We can choose to be happy. We can choose to be grateful.

*Grant Patterson is a second-year KPCOM student.*



# My Guide to Happiness

BY AMBER RAMPERSAUD

## Family, Friends, and Loved Ones

A long embrace after a hard day.  
A warm, home-cooked meal.  
Relating over shared experiences.

For those moments when the fire that fuels your passion begins to falter, surrounding yourself with a strong support system of those who love you helps to reignite the flame. They provide the much-needed mental break from academics by reminding us of the other important things in life.

Medical school friends are equally essential, as they are the only people in the world who truly understand and can relate to the frustrations, celebrations, and everything in between. Taking time from studying to enjoy a fun activity together and reconnect with these special people is how you tackle the arduous journey that is medical school and life.

## Mother Nature

A simple walk on the beach, staring out onto the horizon, and basking in the warm colors of a sunrise while the calming waves ebb and flow. Going on a hike through a cool forest, surrounded by the cheerful chirping of birds and the wind rustling through leaves. Even going on a stroll outdoors and gazing at the carefree clouds as they shapeshift through

the sky. Taking a step back and immersing yourself in nature allows you to connect with the natural world in a way that offers healing.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed with the daily adversities that occur in medical school. Whether it's through deep meditation or just being present in the moment, appreciating the outdoors helps you recenter and feel grounded. It is easy to seek comfort in Mother Nature, for her power is limitless. By actively immersing yourself in the sublimeness of nature, the greatness of the world that exists beyond our stressors becomes clear.

## Giving Back

Preparing and serving meals to the less fortunate in our communities, cheering on those with disabilities as they cross the finish line, collecting trash from local beaches—whichever activity you prefer, volunteering is one of the most fulfilling activities. Being able to make a change in the community, no matter how large the scale, provides a feeling of satisfaction unlike any other.

We chose to pursue health care because we wanted to make a difference. While we can't quite yet practice medicine, volunteering offers a taste of altruism, knowing



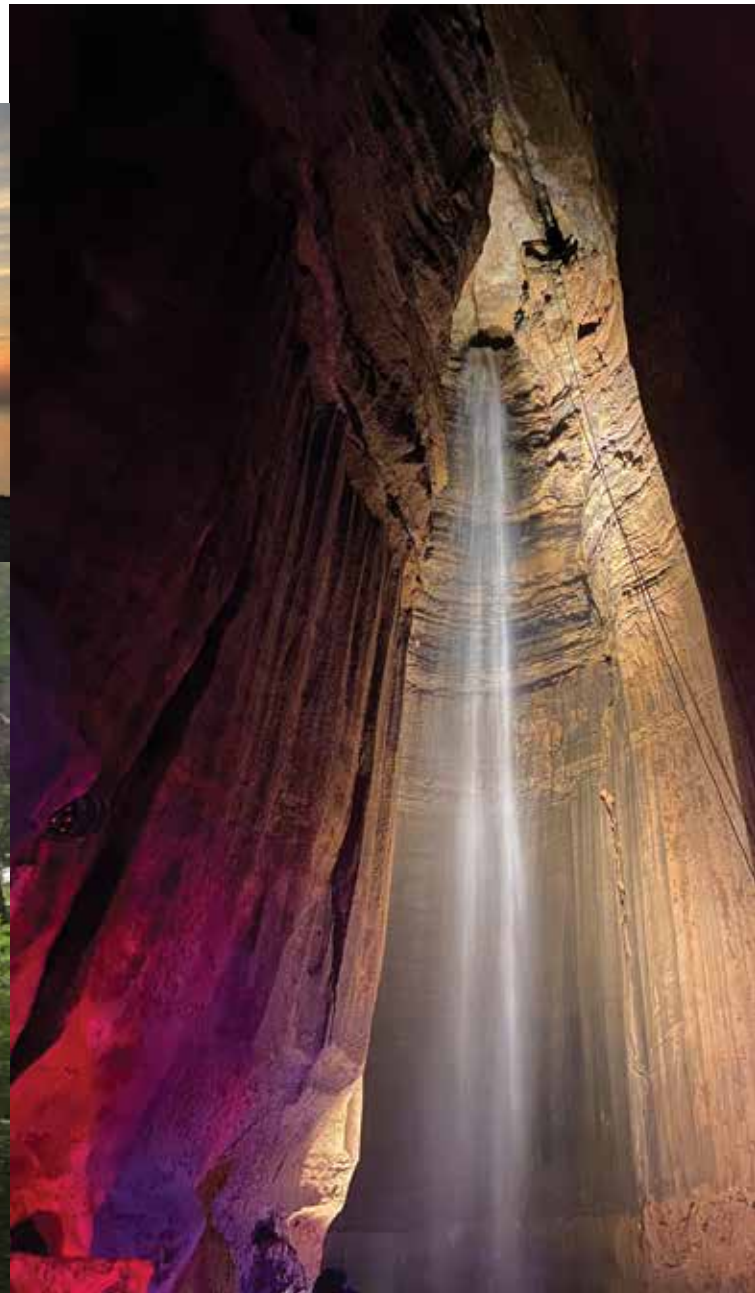
that you positively impacted someone, somewhere, somehow. While busy schedules are not always conducive to volunteering, dedicating any amount of time can make a change in someone's life, as well as your own. The gratification from giving back provides an instant rush of dopamine that reduces stress and fosters optimistic attitudes.

## Tending to You

While there are numerous pathways to finding happiness, the most important is remembering to value your physical and mental health. To take care of others, we must tend to ourselves first. Thus, do whatever you require to live a life with purpose, knowing you made the most of each day. That is the key to happiness.

*Amber Rampersaud is a second-year KPCOM student.*





**While there are numerous pathways to finding happiness, the most important is remembering to value your physical and mental health. To take care of others, we must tend to ourselves first.**

# Happiness and Purpose

BY JAAFAR ABOU-GHAIDA

Happiness is an elusive concept. It presents itself in unimaginable ways. Being a second-year medical student, I started my education amidst a pandemic. I faced challenges ranging from a compressed curriculum and strict personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines to an overall sense of nervousness for what awaits.

I spent most of my days isolated at home studying and watching lectures via Zoom. There was uncertainty around every corner. How will I become a successful health care practitioner in these tough circumstances? Will I be able to navigate these obstacles, as I face not only a difficult, but also compressed, curriculum? Even the white coat ceremony, one of the defining events of a medical student's career, was postponed. It was much to bear.



Abou-Ghaida's sister Zeinab created this illustration that depicts what he was feeling in the midst of the uncertainty the COVID-19 pandemic created.

However, this burden vanished as I witnessed what health care professionals were going through on the front lines. Daily, they were informing the public of the dangers of this pandemic. They were going through emotional and physical strain constantly. They were putting themselves in harm's way to manage patients.

They isolated themselves from their families to protect them. They were patient and adhered to a strict daily regimen of PPE and hygiene. Their masks never left their faces, and those scars at their noses are the testament of their sacrifice. This gesture of honor and kindness, this noble stand, endowed me with purpose—a purpose I will gladly bear on my shoulders for the rest of my life.

My purpose in life is to become a selfless individual. Someone who would look at all the turmoil in the world, remain patient and resilient, and create a supportive atmosphere where others feel welcomed and cared for.

I am happy I began my medical career bearing this responsibility in mind. I am happy that I, too, have the opportunity to sacrifice. I am happy I have attained a benevolent purpose. Happiness is about finding a purpose that endows us with meaning in our lives.



Even though this purpose might drag people through tough times, might make them question their choices down the line, if one were to reflect on it, they would realize how much better a person it made him or her. I attain my happiness by pursuing this purpose every day through my interactions with family, colleagues, professors, and friends.

I attain it through my voluntary services toward my community. I attain it by working every day to become more knowledgeable and disciplined than the day before. I am happy I have made the most out of these tough circumstances and decided to be part of a school of thought built on resiliency, patience, and sacrifice.

*Jaafar Abou-Ghaida is a second-year KPCOM student.*



# Living with Enough

BY GABRIELLA ORTA

What does it mean to be happy? Why does happiness always seem fleeting? What brings happiness? What disturbs happiness?

Our society teaches us that more stuff, the perfect relationship, or even the right job can bring us happiness. Although all these things may bring momentary happiness, it generally doesn't last. Our happiness is often challenged when we enter a confrontation with a loved one or when the job we thought was ideal becomes overwhelming.

That's why, when describing the state of happiness—or should I say deep satisfaction—I wish to attain, I prefer to use the word contentment. Yes, I used the word contentment instead of happiness. Why? Because contentment goes beyond the momentary happiness of a positive life event. Contentment embodies the state of being satisfied and peacefully happy regardless of circumstances. It is about living a meaningful life, not a life in pursuit. That leaves me with two questions. How do I find contentment, and how can it be sustained?

In my teens and early 20s, I found three keys to my personal contentment. The first thing I discovered was that serving others brought me joy. When I was 18, I was privileged to interact with some of the poorest children in a mountain village in Nepal.

These children were living in an orphanage. They didn't have



**As someone who likes to plan and be in control of my circumstances, I continually seek to learn the art of surrender. It is only when we fully trust that we can be at peace and find contentment in our current situation.**

their own rooms, enough food, or even an extra pair of shoes, yet they smiled from ear to ear. These children knew how to be happy with the little they had. This drew my mind away from my own unending desires driven by a materialistic society. It made me realize how much abundance I have. I have more than enough.

Serving others led me to the second lesson on contentment. Have you tried complaining while counting your blessings? It is almost impossible. Through all the stressors of the last two years, I often felt like complaining and feeling sorry for myself. This only made me feel more anxious.

One day, I decided I'd had enough. I pulled out my journal and started counting my blessings. Soon, I could see that even the things that seemed negative had a positive side. Gratitude opens the door to contentment.

The third lesson I learned about contentment was trust. I learned that we only find contentment when we surrender control of our circumstances and learn to trust in God. As someone who likes to plan and be in control of my circumstances, I continually seek to learn the art of surrender. It is only when we fully trust that we can be at peace and find contentment in our current situation.

Contentment for me is sustained by turning my thoughts away from myself, cultivating an attitude of gratitude, and trusting the journey and my circumstance to God. These lessons have brought balance and have filled my life with enough, which others might call happiness.

*Gabriella Orta is a first-year KPCOM student.*

# For Every Season, Find a Reason

BY DIANNA LEVIN AND SHIRLEY ZITON

With the copious perspectives and different walks of life people come from, it is fair to assume that happiness means something unique to everyone. I have found that sources of happiness arise from a variety of avenues, such as watching a new movie in the theaters with my favorite snacks, spending time with family members either in person or on FaceTime, enjoying a scenic sunset, or simply going to the beach after a long day of classes.

After initially writing the list of things that bring me happiness, I realized that it mostly consisted of external sources of happiness. Nonetheless, over the last year, it has become more apparent just how much true bliss comes from internal moments of growth and perseverance. I have been on a personal journey to find new sources of happiness after many external sources were no longer accessible after starting medical school.

The true feeling of joy is simpler than one may imagine and does not always need the company of other stimuli. Joy may emerge from having a breakthrough after months of not being able to tackle an internal issue. It can also come from smaller victories, such as finally being able to lift that weight in the gym or consecutive days of meditation.



Dianna Levin

Sources of happiness come from a plethora of beginnings, but the commonality stems from being able to look forward to something in the near future. Finding harmony between internal and external causes of happiness has been a balancing act we are all still working on perfecting.

My own interpretation of sustaining happiness is similar to the idea of the changing seasons. Happiness is seasonal in the sense that our definition of it changes as we face new experiences. Before starting medical school, I was enthralled in a season of enjoying time with loved ones. The warmth of a father's hug, an inside joke with a sibling, or a peaceful walk with a mother are examples of what truly brought me joy in that season.



Shirley Ziton

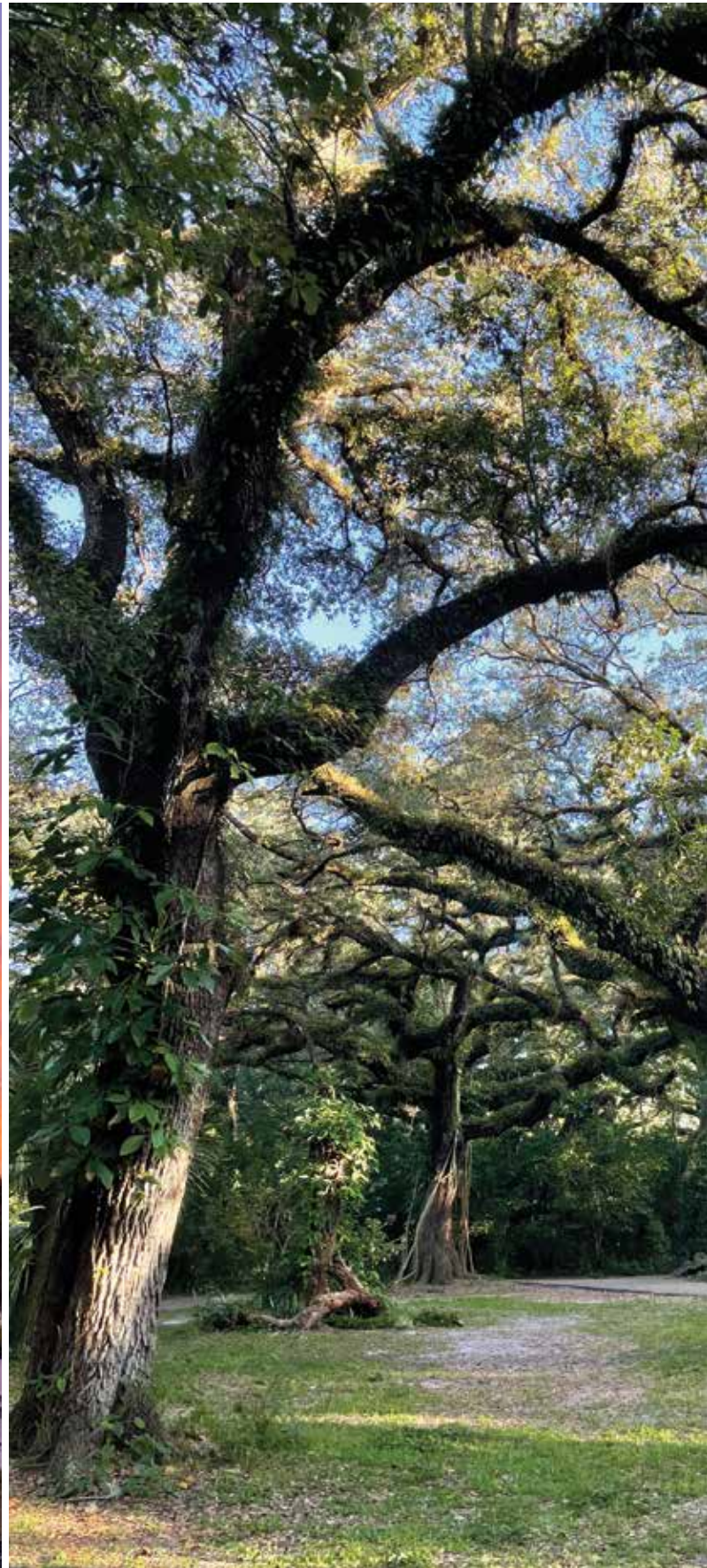
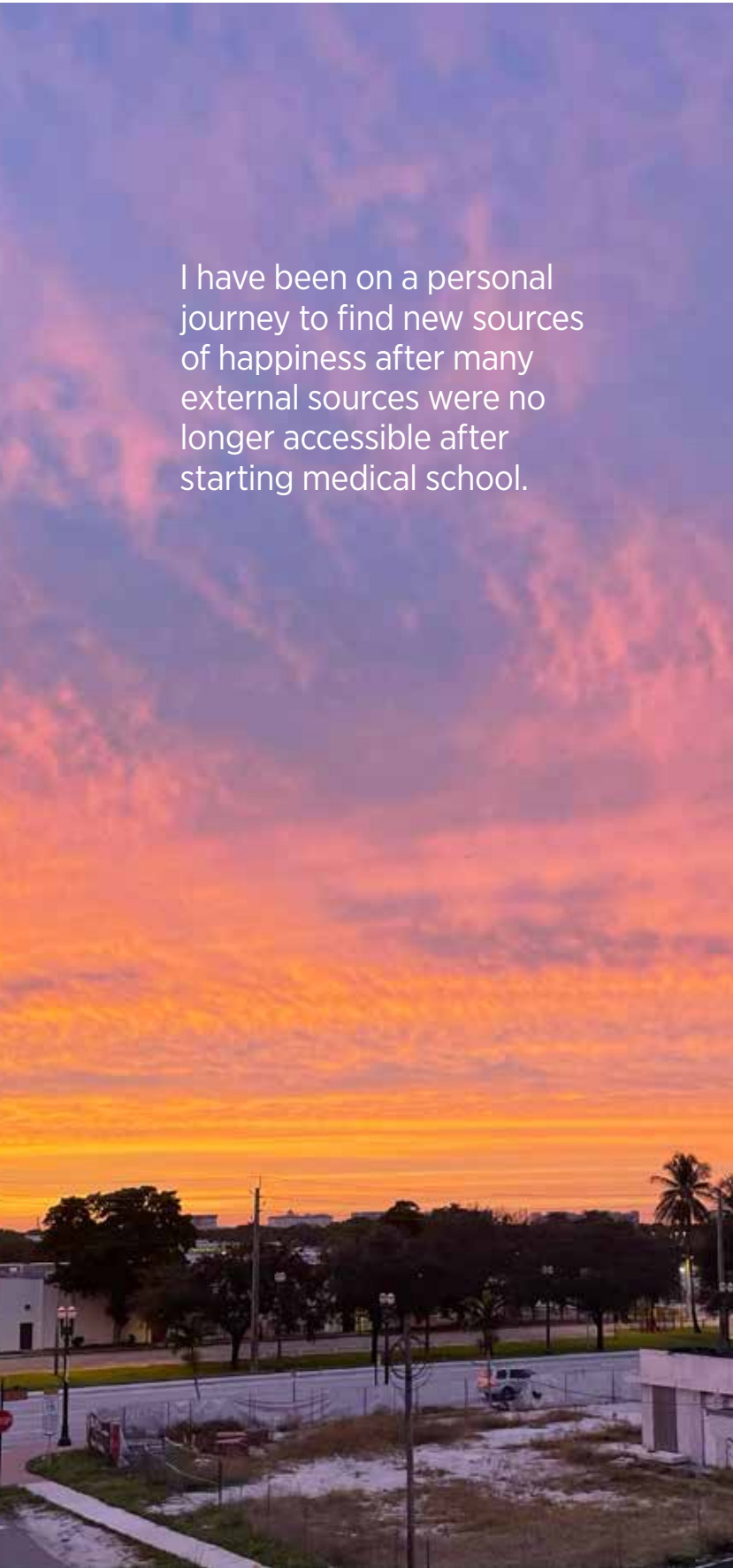
But, as I journey to my next season, my happiness and sense of bliss stem from my routine. Since previous luxuries, such as ample amounts of free time and the presence of lifelong friends and family, were put on hold during this season of my first semester, I now choose to find joy in little victories.

From waking up early and having my morning harvest blend herbal tea, to finally hitting my gym goals, I was able to see the ways happiness can be internal. So, as the tilt of life's axis changes our season, we can find ways to ensure our happiness with whichever internal or external sources are in bloom then.

*Dianna Levin, a first-year KPCOM student, collaborated with Shirley Ziton, a fourth-year student, to better express her impressions about happiness.*



I have been on a personal journey to find new sources of happiness after many external sources were no longer accessible after starting medical school.





# Happy Is as Happy Does

## HOW I (HAPPILY) SURVIVED MEDICAL SCHOOL

BY MARY CLARK

No one can prepare you for medical school. Those who have gone through it will try to explain how draining it is, but you won't fully understand until you're there, completely drained. So much information to learn, and so little time.

Most, including me, attack it with the fervor of a student with a newly acquired UWorld account. At first, it's all very exciting, but the excitement only lasts so long. Soon, it fades into the daily grind of lectures, reading assignments, labs, and what seems to be a never-ending test schedule. It can become all-consuming, but it doesn't have to be.

In 2018, I began medical school, ready to crush it. During college, I did well with admittedly little effort, so to say I had a rude awakening at the start of medical

school is an understatement. With the workload we were given, and the advice from upperclassmen during orientation, I thought the formula to doing well was living, eating, and breathing medicine.

I "didn't have time" to exercise, cook healthy meals, or spend quality time with my friends and family. I was working harder than I ever had, and by the end of the first semester, I was struggling. Academically, I was doing fine, but I was unhappy. I gained weight, began to hate studying, and resented my significant other for not understanding what I was going through.

Ultimately, it was the turmoil in my relationship that made me seriously question my priorities. Medical school? Relationship? Then it occurred to me. Where in the rules and regulations of medical school does it say I have to check my personal life at the door?

I made the decision to prioritize my happiness. For me, this meant sleeping seven to eight hours a day, exercising at least three times a week, and attending to relationships with family and friends, including my now fiancé. My mood improved, and it was evident to everyone around me, even patients. I became a better person and a better student.

When I began medical school, grades took precedence over everything else. I now realize that



grades are important, but they are not the end all and be all. Being with the people I love and who love me is just as important.

"Working hard is good, but it should not be done for the sole purpose of a goal's sake at the expense of relationships with others." That was said by Kyle Martin, a 2019 high school valedictorian whose speech has now gone viral on YouTube. His words bring home the hard lesson I wish someone had taught me earlier: Do your absolute best to excel academically in medical school, but not at the expense of your emotional and physical well-being. You can enjoy life and do well.

To paraphrase the late Senator Paul Tsongas, no doctor on his deathbed ever said, "I wish I had spent more time studying."

*Mary Clark is a fourth-year KPCOM student.*







# Phone Dates While Walking

BY RACHEL PRAY

Incorporating more walking into my daily life has been one of the best things I have done for myself physically, mentally, and spiritually. Never underestimate the power of a brisk 15-minute walk.

Growing up in the Northeast and enduring its cold, harsh winters, I am familiar with feeling trapped indoors during winter months, and thus, moving my body much less during this time. I knew that, in order to fully support my mental and physical health during medical school, I needed to be in a warmer climate that allowed me to walk and run outside year-round. I am so grateful to attend medical school in Florida, where I'm able to take study breaks every day that consist of walking outside, no matter what month it is.

Throughout my time in medical school, going on walks has been one of the biggest factors in maintaining my overall health. It has allowed me to shut my brain

off and escape from the feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration that 12+-hour days of studying at a desk can bring.

Walking has allowed me to connect more with nature and be present in the moment—something that can be difficult as a medical student. Taking a minute to actually feel the breeze on your skin, listen to the birds chirping, and glance at the number of clouds in the sky is extremely grounding and therapeutic.

I began calling my parents on the phone while on my daily walks, so I'm able to mentally reset from studying and also stay in touch with my family. I plan phone dates with friends from home and college and walk while I talk to them. By the end of a phone call, I've just caught up with a great friend and walked four to five miles without even realizing it.

As a future physician, I can't wait to share with my patients this



greatly overlooked lifestyle tool and educate them about its incredible benefits. From an osteopathic perspective, walking is one of the easiest and simplest, yet most effective, things we can do for our overall cardiovascular and mental health. Even better, it is free and can be done at one's own pace. Walking is one of the best forms of self-care and therapy.

I understand that, as an able-bodied, active person, I am very privileged to have the chance to walk, run, jump, and use my body how I please. This is not something I take lightly. I am extremely grateful that I am able to move my body in this way and experience the many benefits of walking. My goal is to always take care of my body so I can spread my message about the benefits of walking, still have the ability to walk in my older years, and continue to reap its many benefits.

*Rachel Pray is a second-year KPCOM student.*





# Savor the Bliss

BY NIMISHA LINGAPPA

During periods of monotonous studying or other struggles of life, I partake in activities that have previously added positivity to my life.

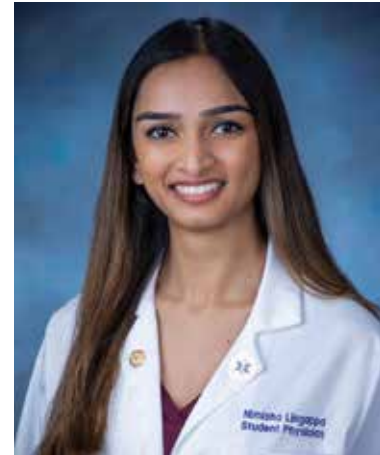
Allowing myself to be reminded of more encouraging times can help break me out of a negative rut. The seeking of fulfillment is an individualized process that changes based on different stages of life. My journey in pursuit of happiness starts with the baby steps of setting achievable goals for myself. By creating realistic but meaningful goals, we can celebrate small victories and place more meaning on positivity in life.

People often think happiness is a default state, but it is truly something that is worked for. When accomplished, it provides a rewarding feeling unlike any other. During these moments of bliss, I am reminded of why I wanted to start on the path of becoming a medical professional. I am reminded of my roots and cultural background. I am reminded of instants of pure joy when I thought “life cannot get any better than this.”

I am reminded of fleeting moments when I wished I could pause time to savor my surroundings. I am reminded of surreal scenes from what felt like a movie. I am reminded of spontaneous travel that uncovered untouched ranges of Mother Nature’s beauties. Although each person is reminded of happiness in different ways, one thing remains a commonality: Happiness consists of those heart-warming moments you look back on and cherish.

I value happiness in a variety of ways. During stressful weeks, simply waking up with the feeling of “today is a good day” can be enough to provide the much-needed positivity during constant studying. Other days may require more. This can include satisfying cravings by visiting my favorite restaurant and splurging on that mouthwatering meal, or even taking the time to cook my mother’s special recipes that remind me of home.

It can also be as simple as being kind to others and feeling a sense of appreciation and gratitude.



Hearing that you have made someone’s day just by being a kind and caring individual can provide a progressive outlook on your own life. In my opinion, these moments of unexpected positivity can be more rewarding than actively trying to seek happiness itself.

Thus, my aim in life has become to live in the moment and savor all aspects of my emotions. You never know what can change in the blink of an eye.

*Nimisha Lingappa is a second-year KPCOM student*



# Modeling Kindness

BY SUZETTE SIVITER, M.P.A.

Frank Turner's song *Be More Kind* summarizes my approach to staying positive and achieving happiness in today's world.

I like to think of myself as a positive person. I love my work as a career adviser. I have spent most of my professional life as an adviser in higher education, and nothing makes me happier than to see my students succeed.

In another Frank Turner song, he sings "Let's make compassion in fashion again." I also find this line so meaningful and appropriate for today's world.

Let's face it. There is quite a bit of anger and negativity to go around, so what if we try a different approach? We don't all have to agree about everything, but we can respectfully disagree and still display kindness and compassion.

This message is a timeless one, but one that we must remind ourselves of. Perhaps this simple message sounds a bit Pollyannish to some. I will admit that I am conflict-adverse and try to be the peacemaker when necessary. I want those around me to be happy and be welcoming and accepting of people. Conflict makes me tired, and kindness makes me feel happy and gives me a peace of mind nothing else can.

The last two years have been some of the most difficult times many of us have experienced in our lifetimes. My goal is to share

compassion and kindness as much as possible. That's how I stay happy.

Part of our mission as career counseling advisers is to promote wellness in our medical students. I am a firm believer that kindness can contribute to a person's overall health. The Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine career counseling advisers demonstrate kindness every day.

One of the websites I have been reviewing is *kindness.org*, which is a great resource for those who want to choose kindness more often. The most important thing you can do to encourage kindness is to model kindness every day.

*Suzette Siviter is the KPCOM's director of career advising.*







Above: Siviter derives joy from watching the Detroit Tigers beat the Tampa Bay Rays.

Right: Siviter relishes watching a coyote wander through her backyard.

Opposite page: Raising money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital conjures a sense of contentment.



# Prioritizing Fulfillment

BY VIRGINIA FERNANDEZ

What is happiness? It has been defined as an emotional state characterized by feelings of joy, satisfaction, peace, and fulfillment. For many people, happiness comes from monetary success, having a fulfilling career, or spending time with their loved ones.

Happiness is the time I get to spend making memories with my family and friends and the time I make for myself to do the things that bring me joy. That time, short as it may be, is essential not only for my mental health, but it is also a component of what makes me whole.

In my spare time, I like to indulge in several activities. I have been drawing since childhood, thanks to my father, who taught me everything I know about art. I also believe art and medicine are intertwined. In fact, this relationship is one reason I fell in love with medicine in the first place, because I get to create something that combines two things I love. I also enjoy biking with my husband around our neighborhood and Florida parks.



The freedom of being able to explore nature and my surroundings while biking makes me happy and keeps me close to nature and to the people around me. Reading is another hobby of mine, one I wish I could do more often. I especially love reading science fiction books. Reading brings me peace and keeps me sharp, not to mention, it is one of those pastimes that can bring you happiness without much effort or money.

Traveling is probably my favorite activity when I have the time and I can afford it. Exploring new places, meeting new people, trying new foods, learning new cultures, and taking in new sights is the best way in which I stay connected to the world. This past year, I traveled with my family and friends to new places. I went to Guatemala with my family and was able to explore Antigua and its beautiful mountains, volcanoes, and museums.

I also traveled to Saint Maarten this past summer to celebrate my

husband's own graduation from medical school and spent time exploring the ocean, the beautiful beaches, and the French forts. My favorite experience was zip lining down the tallest mountain in Saint Maarten, the Flying Dutchman.

Overall, happiness for me is making memories whenever and wherever, doing the things I love, with the ones I love most. Everyone finds happiness in his or her own way. Happiness doesn't have to come from money, for it can be as easy as going outside and enjoying the sun, smelling the fresh air, or treating yourself to your favorite dessert once a week.



We are all different and live through different realities and situations, so finding happiness is a unique experience for everyone. All that matters is that we give ourselves a real chance to be happy and feel complete. Figuring out the how is the easy part.

*Virginia Fernandez is a third-year KPCOM student.*







# A Family Away from Family

BY JAMIE THOMAS

Doubt. Exhaustion. Dejection.

The journey we embark on as medical students can be quite daunting. Not only does it demand the utmost commitment, but it also requires an arduous degree of sacrifice. Many students must abandon their refuge to pursue this passion that has been burning inside them. Unfortunately, this sometimes includes moving away from loved ones and missing life events to fulfill their true potential as aspiring physicians.

Although this is what people often think when looking at this journey from the outside, we as students, well-versed in facing adversity, have a knack for finding a glimmer of comfort and happiness in situations that may seem grim.

While navigating through the grueling training of medical school, I cannot downplay the importance of meeting open-minded people and finding those who not only push you to reach your potential, but also provide a sense of comfort and familiarity. Medical school is not easy by any means, but surrounding myself with like-minded individuals has helped me through an experience that could have been extremely isolating. From countless nights penned up in the Martin and Gail Press HPD Library and Steele Auditorium studying for classes and boards, to grabbing dinner, watching sports, and any other extracurriculars, I can readily say I was blessed to find a group of friends that have become my family.

As our friendship blossomed, the support we were able to lend each other became more substantive. Comforting each other through periods of grief, frustration, and defeat became indispensable. We balanced each other, carried each other when one might be struggling, and made sure none of us forgot that as important as the end goal might be, it is just as important to enjoy the journey you take to achieving that goal.

Even during our dedicated period for boards, studying for what felt like endless days and nights,

we managed to set aside time for breaks to keep ourselves levelheaded. This willingness to encourage one another came from a place of solidarity to overcome our challenges in unison.

As medical students, we have made sacrifices, missed important events, and given up on certain hobbies, but something that should never be forfeited is happiness. Although difficult times can make you lose sight of your goal, a strong support system—and making it a point to focus on your happiness and mental health—helps clear any doubts you may face.

As the English poet Ben Jonson says, “True happiness consists not in the multitude of friends, but in the worth and choice.” Choose your friends wisely, and you will forever be surrounded by people you can call your family.

*Jamie Thomas is a third-year KPCOM student.*



Thomas (in tan) enjoys spending time with his KPCOM support team of (from left) Ted Frederic, Issac Ichoa, and Ram Hirpara.



# Underwater Ecstasy

BY JULIA GROTE

Toes dangling off the edge of the platform, I hear the phrase so familiar to me—one, two, three, DIVE! I am instantly surrounded by the glistening blue ocean. I slowly descend to the ocean floor, now immersed in a new, underwater universe.

With the distractions of the outside world far above me, I am at peace, swimming among the vibrant corals and sea creatures. I float past underwater caves made of rocks and coral. Fish dart through the reef, escaping larger predators.

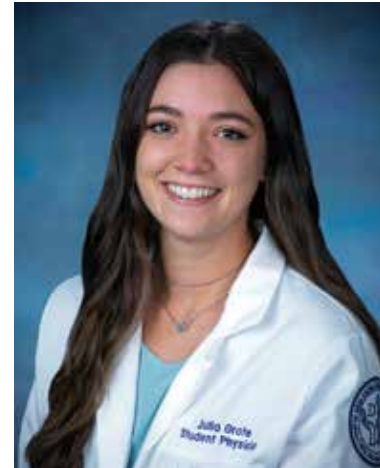
From the young age of 11, I relished the beauty and tranquility of scuba diving and exploring new coral reefs. It was almost as if the second I jumped in the water, any negative thought slipped away. A bad day, stressful week, or even a disappointing grade on a test turned into a thought as small as a grain of sand after an afternoon of scuba diving.

As the years went by, my passion for scuba diving blossomed, and I was determined to share my love

for the underwater world with others. I discovered Diveheart, an organization that provides scuba-diving opportunities to children and adults with disabilities. It warmed my heart to watch a wheelchair-bound, young girl stand fully upright on the ocean floor, then hear her excitement when she told her family about her first dive, and to see the tears in the eyes of an amputee who thought he could never scuba dive again after his accident.

Because I am in my second year of medical school, it is so easy to feel like I'm drowning in endless responsibilities, endless exams, and endless stress. I quickly learned the importance of cherishing the moments that bring me joy while in medical school.

A morning spent scuba diving with my favorite dive buddy, my dad, puts all my worries into perspective. After I ascend to the surface, my mind is clear, and I am ready to conquer a long weekend of studying. Spending an afternoon at



the pool, teaching children with disabilities the ins and outs of scuba diving, reminds me of my goals in becoming a physician.

I continue to remind myself to take moments to clear my mind. I often meditate for a few short minutes, thinking about the peacefulness of the ocean. When asked what makes me happy in medical school, I think about the time I spend scuba diving.

*Julia Grote is a second-year KPCOM student.*



# Set Your Happy Baseline

BY AMANDA RAMNOT

For a while, I thought happiness was unattainable in the face of pain, sickness, and every other possible misfortune we are all susceptible to. I thought there would be a time and place to be happy, but the truth is, the time and place is now and here.

Simply choosing to be happy seems like wishful thinking, especially when the days are long, the nights are sleepless, and you feel like you are on the constant go to survive. I would not have the perspective I do without experiencing both unhappiness and happiness. After creating my version of joy, I have learned that I am not interested in ever not working toward the life I am proud of and, therefore, happy with.

I think there are two kinds of happiness: the kind we experience with moments, and then the kind of happiness that is our baseline. The latter is wherein lies the hard work. For me, I have moments of joy when I catch the beautiful South Florida sunrise or listen to my favorite songs on an early-morning drive to work—the “little things” in life.

To be truly happy, though, to have the kind of happiness maintained even in the face of adversity, is not attained overnight. It is the happiness created by us, and like any good thing, it does not come easily.

After being diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, prioritizing my diet and lifestyle were no longer a choice. I needed to be whole and healthy if I wanted to live a life I am proud of. I wondered why my body would betray me for a while, but now, all I am is grateful. Eating a diet free of grains, regular exercise, adequate sleep, and supplementing essential nutrients are significant components of my recipe for feeling my best.

Beyond the physical efforts that go into being happy, the rest is mental. We are constantly working toward something or waiting on something to happen, and it takes a conscious effort to look on the bright side. Although I do not always do this, slowly but surely,



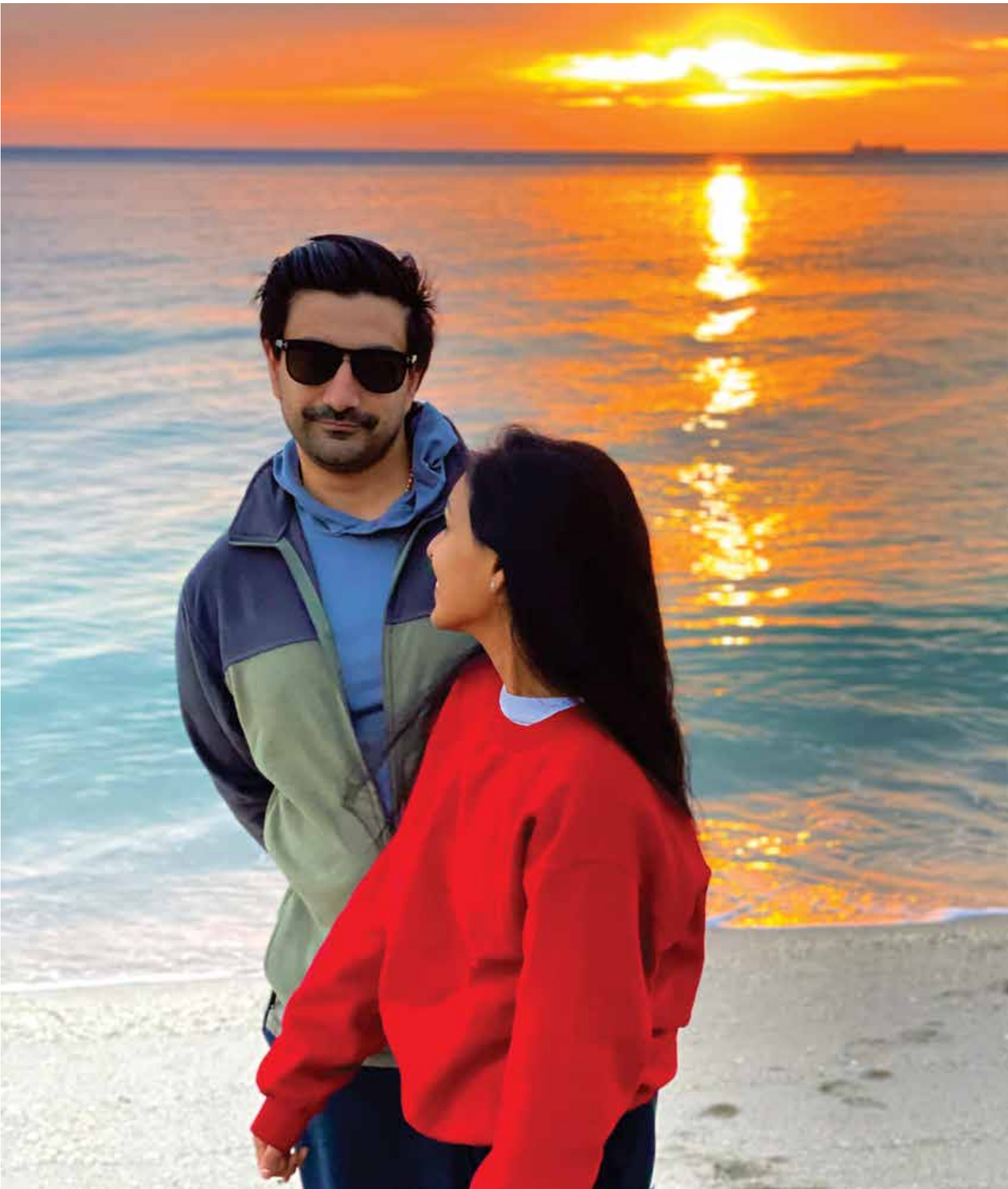
I am getting better at taking life as it comes and being present.

I used to want to plan every detail of my life, and I found myself becoming disenchanted with life when circumstances were not according to plan. Eventually, I acknowledged that I was only sabotaging myself by attaching myself to hypothetical scenarios. Sometimes, we do not get what we want; instead, we get what we need.

It is necessary to figure out what is meaningful to us and then fill our lives with that. I just want the people I love close to me and for all of us to be in good health. I want to live my life passionately and eagerly. As long as I have the means to do this, the rest will work itself out. With the right people and the commitment to myself, the best is yet to come.

*Amanda Ramnot is a fourth-year KPCOM student.*





# A Different Type of Happiness

BY KAROLINA LEWCZUK

As the first semester of my first year nears its end, I cannot help but reflect on these last four months of my life. The adjustment to medical school has been one of the most intense periods I've ever experienced in my 30+ years of life—and life has required me to adapt numerous times.

It's been hard to process and compartmentalize, and even harder to describe to friends back home. And yet, amidst the chaos, there was happiness—a different type of happiness.

Happiness. The definition is so vast and simple, yet so easily molded into countless individual and complex forms. This fleeting feeling sneaks up on me in the most unexpected moments, like when I'm heading out for my sunrise run still half asleep or picking up flowers at the grocery store as a study break. It is a feeling in which time stretches past its conscious perception.

In that suspended moment, the place and the time are perfectly aligned, embracing me fully. I not only feel the deepest satisfaction from being alive, but I also feel invincible.

This happiness does not come as a result of accomplishment or success, as I've experienced it the morning after a failed exam or after turning down an invitation to a party. Maybe its source is the pursuit of the biggest life goal yet—that of becoming a doctor.

Western folks tend to prioritize the future, and it is the slowing down and enjoyment of the present moment that we struggle with—the rising popularity of mindfulness practices, yoga studios, and meditation apps can speak to that. At the same time, the medical student path can feel extremely demanding. Sometimes, just glancing at the never-ending to-do list full of tests, meetings, and volunteering can feel overwhelming and anxiety-inducing. The finish line at which we will receive our white coats seems like an insanely far future.

They say this race is a marathon, but I'd call it an Ironman on steroids. How does one find happiness amidst the chaos? Martial arts master Bruce Lee believed that a goal is meant to serve as a target and give one something to work toward. It is meant to liberate and not trap us from being able to enjoy the present moment.

Similarly, NSU's own Farzanna Haffizulla, M.D., a recognized internist, author, and educator, credits the habits of gardening, dancing, and cooking for her tremendous success in the medical field. I believe it is in those transient seconds of enjoyment of life where we can seek and find the force to propel us forward to tackle the intense pace we're faced with on a daily basis.

May we keep learning it all in medical school, but most importantly, may we tune in and become masters of catching the smallest moments of everyday happiness. They just might end up making us feel invincible.

*Karolina Lewczuk is a first-year KPCOM student.*





# Happiness Through Hobbies

BY AAKANGSHA JAIN

Art has always played some part in my life. It has also allowed me to help express myself when I was unable to with words. From making homemade water paintings with my mother as a child, to creating ceramic sculptures in studios as an adult, art has always resonated with me. It has always been a therapeutic means to escape from the constant stresses of everyday life.

Many students become consumed with the competitive and demanding nature of a medical school environment. Guilt is a common feeling experienced by many when participating in any hobbies outside of academics, with a constant nagging in the back of their minds echoing, “I should be studying.”

While in school, students often put aside passions, or even wonder what it would have been like if they pursued that career in cooking or music. I would be lying if I said these thoughts had not crossed my mind at times as well. I deferred my own passion of art for almost two years during my graduate studies, thinking my free time would be better spent solely focusing on core academics rather than doing something so leisurely as a “pastime.”

Only recently was I finally able to grasp that after learning how to balance school and my hobbies, I was actually more productive, successful, and happier in my career. Through my experiences, I have learned there is no reason you cannot do both.

When applying to medical school, there is a section that makes candidates stand out—extracurricular activities. All students have good grades, solid MCAT scores, and leadership positions; however, what makes them unique are these secondary creative talents. In essence, hobbies help mold individuals into who they are as a person and can not only make one stand out among peers, but also allow for a glimmer of joy in an ever-chaotic schedule.

Art allowed me to become more meticulous with my work and notice finer details others may have missed. Exposure to different types of media provided



me with the opportunity to view the world from different perspectives that may have never crossed my mind if it were not for my experiences. Finally, being able to block out the world during my creative process became my sanctuary.

For those who do not already have a hobby outside of medical school, it is not too late. Despite having a demanding career, it is still possible to discover passions during this time. Additionally, delving into what makes you enthusiastic can help you discover and mold the person you are outside your career.

John Locke, a famous philosopher, cleverly coined the term “tabula rasa”—the theory that individuals are born without built-in mental content, and therefore, all knowledge comes from experience or perception. Learning what you do and do not enjoy will only allow you to discover more about yourself.

*Aakangsha Jain is a third-year KPCOM student.*



# Buckets

BY SIMRUN UPPAL

I distinctly remember sitting in my 10th-grade world literature classroom and my teacher presenting the students with a challenge. He told us, “If any of you can bring me a bucket of happiness tomorrow, I’ll give you an A for the year.”

This was an impossible task, because no matter where you go, no matter who you ask, the definition of happiness differs. His idea of happiness was vastly different from our ideas of happiness, because there is no perfect guide, recipe, or step-by-step instructions for how to achieve it—it’s inherently personal and individualized. What I’ve realized is we carry this bucket with us every day, and it’s up to us what we put in it. What do you do for yourself that brings you happiness?

I fill my bucket with experiences. My happiness comes from experiencing new things with the people I love most. Happiness is coming home at the end of a hard day and curling up on the sofa with my significant other and watching *Harry Potter*. Happiness is laughing until my stomach hurts while going on rides at the state fair with my brother. Happiness is sitting at my mom’s kitchen counter as she frosts cupcakes.

Happiness is belting out song lyrics to cheesy boy-band songs with my best friend on a warm summer day with the windows down while driving down the highway. Happiness, for me, is in the moments with the people I love, collecting them and filling up my bucket, my own little storage of happiness. A bucket that never seems to fill because there is always more to see, more to do, and more time to spend together.

The most important factor is making a conscious effort to fill your bucket—making time for your happiness—because it won’t fill up on its own. Between long hours at work and drowning in disturbing headlines, it’s easy to forget about our buckets in our day-to-day lives. Without the conscious effort to fill our buckets, we forget to prioritize our own mental well-being. You can’t pour from an empty glass, or in this case an empty bucket. So find what fills your bucket, so that, through your own happiness, you can bring joy to others.

As I reflect back on my teacher’s question, I would like to modify it before I pass it forward and ask, not what is happiness, but rather, what brings you happiness? And how are you filling up your bucket?

I encourage everyone to keep mindfully filling their bucket. Keep finding the things that bring you happiness. Seek them out and steal those moments of joy. You are in charge of filling your own bucket. No one can bring you a bucket of happiness. You have to fill it and continue to fill it on your own.

*Simrun Uppal is a third-year KPCOM student.*



# Happiness Is a State of Mind

BY SIYA KHANNA

French novelist Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin once said, “There is only one happiness in life. To love and be loved.” I have to disagree.

Happiness. One word, nine letters, three syllables. Seemingly simple, yet it appears as if all of society’s efforts are directed toward achieving this one thing. The world around us is consumed with how to be happy, the importance of being happy, and how to make others happy.

And then I stop and wonder—to what extent does the world around me influence my desire to be happy, and to what extent has this desire influenced who I am? All this talk about being “happy” makes you stop and think for a moment. What does happiness really mean?

Happiness, like the definition of any other great word, is subjective. You decide what happiness means to you. Is happiness a fleeting moment of joy, or is it a state of mind? Can happiness be constant? Or can it fade away?

I have struggled with this concept for the past several years. There were many times I felt lost or incomplete. Always trying to derive happiness from outside sources, relationships, friends, etc., only to learn the source of it was myself all along.

Cliché, right? It took 25 years, 2 significant relationships, several broken friendships, and countless mistakes to realize I am already everything I need to be happy.

I would argue that true happiness is not to love or be loved, but rather to love yourself. It is the acceptance of all that is, just as it is, and finding joy in it. If you ask me, being happy is a state of mind. It’s when you don’t allow the ups and downs of life to sway you from your peace. If I had to describe what true happiness feels like, I would say it’s light—a bright light that radiates through your body and projects outward into the world.

From my experience, happiness is

- hugging a friend or family member after spending weeks or months apart
- sharing a laugh with good company
- picking a flower and stopping to smell it
- sitting by a fire on a cold winter night and embracing the warmth
- plunging into the ocean and feeling the cool breeze at night
- gazing into the mountains and witnessing a world far beyond you
- watching the sun rise or set and watching the colors of the sky change
- singing along to your favorite songs with friends on a long drive
- traveling to a new city and spending time exploring it
- being comfortable with being uncomfortable

I implore you to ask yourself, “What does happiness mean to me?” How can you find your happiness? In my experience, you choose happiness. It takes effort to build a happy life once you choose to work toward that reality. Then all that’s left is to go out and create it.

*Siya Khanna is a second-year KPCOM student.*







# Trickling Creeks

BY ASHLEY HACKWORTH

As I open the back door, a brisk breeze hugs my cheeks while hints of petrichor fill my nostrils. I stop and grin, “Hmm, it smells like fall today.” I place my boot on the step in front of me and reach back to help Dorothy navigate toward the car.

We’re on our way to a cabin in the Rocky Mountains, a four-hour drive. I never much minded long drives. In truth, I enjoy them. It’s the one time my mind doesn’t have to do somersaults figuring out my next move.

I reminisce about what I was thinking about a few hours ago: “The house is a mess,” and I proceeded to get a broom. “You need to finish your secondary essays,” so I headed toward my laptop.

But right now, none of that. I don’t have to “do” anything but drive. My mind is free to wander down any fanciful path it desires. And my eyes are blessed to soak in the cocktail crimson reds and

honeysuckle yellow leaves as they flash by the highway.

I like to believe that Dorothy enjoys car rides, too, though I’ll never know for sure. She was diagnosed with early onset dementia five years ago. She stopped speaking a few years after that.

My attention veers to the road. The car climbs in elevation, and I hear the trickles of a creek nearby. Curious, I pull over to a patch of dirt. I watch Dorothy; her gaze is at the creek. She takes a deep breath in with the corner of her lip trending upward, on the brink of a smile, and lets out a sigh that can only be described as perfect contentment. I wonder what she is thinking.

Dorothy is special in a way I don’t think many people will ever come to appreciate past childhood. Within her dementia, her mind is free of worry, of responsibility. She is just simply present.



I ponder what happiness feels like in my own life. My first thought brings me to think about the last vacation I went on. One to Greece, another to Spain. I think out loud, “Was that when I was the happiest these past few years?”

Unsure of the answer, I remember the last activities I indulged in. A zip line adventure, ice skating on an outdoor lake. I search for the answer another level down. “What moment did you feel most happy recently, Ashley?” As I’m lost rummaging through my memories, the melody of the creek trickles back into the forefront of my attention. I stop, smile, and sigh. I am pretty happy right now.

Perhaps happiness isn’t exclusive to a vacation or a hobby. Perhaps it’s hidden in every moment we experience—like finding the sound of a tranquil creek trickling in the background of a busy highway. We just have to stop long enough to find what’s in front of us.

*Ashley Hackworth is a second-year KPCOM student.*







Perhaps [happiness is] hidden in every moment we experience—like finding the sound of a tranquil creek trickling in the background of a busy highway.



# A Prescription for Joy

BY VEENAH FRANCIS

Why can't we all just wake up one day and decide we're going to be happy? Of course, there are a million and one reasons this isn't feasible unless you want to start looking at the glass half full instead of half empty.

When one of my professors said, "You only see what you look for," I really took it to heart. In fact, I added it to my "just don't stop" advice from my high school wrestling coach, and I started to get a clearer picture.

While it may not be the entire picture, it's enough for me to genuinely say I'm happy. I no longer see daily contentment in medical school as a ridiculous notion. Feelings are fickle and fleeting, and I became tired of letting them lead me astray. I decided I wanted to become conscious and disciplined in the approach I took with my attitude.

Despite still failing a lot more than I'd like, I can say with confidence it gets easier. Don't take it from me, though. Research shows that anything you do for 21 days becomes a habit, and happiness isn't excluded. I often make the decision to recenter my mindset on joy a few times on a good day, and the same rules apply, so it's not impossible.

Here comes the best part: I'm the best version of myself when I'm happy. So, not only do I enjoy it, but the people around me enjoy it, too. Talk about a win-win situation. I'm also more productive, motivated, flexible, calm, determined, hopeful, inspiring, encouraging, reliable—and the list could go on.

I know it sounds odd, but I'll outline a plan for you. The first time you try it, it'll probably end horribly. You won't want to try it again for a few weeks, but you'll eventually get tired of being tired and worn down. You'll give it another attempt. This time it might work for a few hours or even a half day, but something inevitably goes wrong.

You'll now likely only wait about a week before getting back on the horse. This cycle will continue for a few more weeks as you make your way up to almost a day at a time every few days. You'll notice the days



you're successfully happy are often the ones you're the most flexible and where you continually choose joy.

I'm still not quite sure what full-time joy looks like. It might even be a bit too intense for me in practice, but my sweet spot is joy about 80 to 95 percent of every day. I implore you to try it. In fact, I confidently write my first prescription—don't stop looking for joy in the little things.

It may not work for everybody, but that's the drawback to any treatment plan. Fortunately, there aren't any negative side effects, so what do you have to lose?

*Veenah Francis is a second-year KPCOM student.*







Kevin Friedman served as a flight surgeon in the U.S. Navy after completing medical school.

## Novel Course

### NAVAL BACKGROUND LEADS TO MEDICAL DEVICE CAREER

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR

As a child growing up in Kendall, Florida, Kevin Friedman, D.O., a 2005 Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) alumnus, had a clear vision of what his professional path would be. “The only career I truly considered pursuing was medicine,” said Friedman, who was raised in a close-knit family of physicians.

“My father and his sister are both physicians, and they owned a practice in South Miami,” said Friedman, who spent a

considerable part of his youth at their office. “My dad is a retired M.D. internist, and my aunt is a family practice physician who is still a practicing D.O. Both were inspirational to me as a young kid, based on their love of patient care and the intellectual and emotional impact of practicing medicine. Their patients truly adored them and always had great things to say about them when I visited the office.”

In addition to his father and aunt being physicians, Friedman’s

older cousin also decided to become an osteopathic physician. His cousin’s career choice would soon factor into Friedman’s decision regarding where to attend medical school.

#### **Destination NSU**

Before he graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Nutritional Sciences and a minor in business administration, Friedman knew he wanted to return to South Florida to pursue his



medical school education. After doing some research, Friedman deduced that Nova Southeastern University (NSU) would be the ideal choice.

“I really liked the campus and was impressed by the professors I had met while visiting NSU,” he explained. “Because my aunt and cousin were both D.O.s I respected, in addition to my academic background in nutrition and personal interest in athletics, I thought the osteopathic field would be a good fit.”

Another appealing aspect involved the close proximity of his D.O. cousin, who was about to begin his orthopedic residency training at a hospital near NSU’s Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus. “The location of NSU made it ideal for the two of us to live together,” said Friedman, who

thoroughly relished his time as a KPCOM student.

“My most memorable times at NSU were the countless long nights I spent studying for exams with my friends and fellow students, followed by a weekend off enjoying the Miami nightlife,” he admitted. “My ability to function with little sleep allowed me to optimize those years and get the most out of medical school, both personally and professionally. My personal motto at the time was if I did not go to sleep on Saturday nights, it made my weekend much more productive. Later in life, however, I certainly learned the value of a good night’s rest.”

#### **Military Man**

Although medicine was always going to be his primary pursuit, Friedman also possessed interests

in business and the military. “A few of my father’s physician friends had done their training and served in the military, and my grandfather had been a dentist with the Navy and had loved his experiences during those years of service,” he explained.

Consequently, Friedman applied to the Health Professions Scholarship Program “because I wanted a unique experience that allowed me to serve as a physician in the military,” he said. “While on my third-year KPCOM clinical rotations at a military hospital, I heard about the opportunity to either be a physician with the Navy SEALs or become a flight surgeon, go through flight school, and fly various aircraft.”

Because he had been a diver for many years, he decided to pursue a new experience and become a flight



Friedman poses with several children during a medical outreach trip to Bolivia.

surgeon while he was completing his internship year at Bethesda Navy Hospital, now known as the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. “After an incredible year in Pensacola, Florida, going through aerospace medicine training, I received my first assignment to be a flight surgeon with the Marines at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma in Arizona.”

It was a heady time for Friedman, who spent the next three years serving as a flight surgeon on active duty, including a deployment on a western Pacific tour that involved both ship- and land-based stays in Australia, Okinawa, the Philippines, and Thailand. After completing his active duty, Friedman spent an additional four years on reserve status.

### Telemedicine Connection

During his Navy service, Friedman developed an interest in the benefits of telemedicine and the

ability to perform a patient consult virtually, which led to a relationship with a telemedicine startup called InteractiveMD. “When I left the military, I joined the company as its medical director and hired physicians across the country to provide consults to patients over the platform,” he explained.

He also made numerous presentations and appeared on TV shows to discuss the company and the benefits of telemedicine to the U.S. health care system. Not surprisingly, his growing savvy soon garnered notice from other medically related industries.

“Within the first six months of working with the company, I had several conversations with recruiters in both the pharmaceutical and medical device industries,” Friedman said. “Due to my interest and involvement in telemedicine, I was approached by Roche Diabetes Care to help the company develop a web-based patient/physician portal, as well as clinical decision tools to

assist in the treatment of diabetes. I found the opportunity intriguing and decided to move from living on the beach in Boca Raton, Florida, to Indianapolis, Indiana, to become Roche’s program director of global medical and scientific affairs.”

### Multifaceted Fulfillment

Once he honed his expertise in the medical devices realm, Friedman received enhanced employment offers. Two years after joining Roche Diabetes Care, he became the medical director for Kimberly-Clark Health Care, which was a \$2-billion-a-year revenue arm of the Kimberly-Clark company. “Since then, I went through the Kimberly-Clark spinoff of its device business that formed Halyard Health, and then an acquisition of part of that business by a large global distributor, Owens & Minor,” he explained.

In 2019, Friedman returned to diabetes care by joining Becton



Family togetherness (from left): Maria Friedman (mom); Robert Friedman, M.D. (dad); Diane Friedman (sister); Sean Friedman (son); Kevin Friedman with Gator the cat; Loren Friedman (wife) with Paisley the cat; Bruce Beer (father-in-law); and Bonnie Beer (mother-in-law)



Dickenson as its senior director of global medical affairs. In June 2021, he was named interim head of medical affairs for BD Diabetes Care, which involved supervising a team of more than 20 medical affairs professionals. “The medical device/medical affairs career path has provided me with the constant change and unique experiences I always wanted,” Friedman said. “I can utilize my clinical knowledge and work with cross-functional colleagues to develop and market products that benefit patients globally. I also get to travel to international meetings and work with some of the top minds in the medical field.”

As is the case with most professions, the COVID-19 pandemic compelled the medical device industry to conduct more work remotely and meet with customers virtually. “My office is in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, while I live in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to COVID-19, I would travel to New Jersey for in-person meetings several times a month, with the rest of my time spent joining conference calls while at home,” he explained.

In addition to his thriving career, Friedman gains fulfillment from his family, which includes wife Loren, who is an attorney, and their infant son Sean, “who is an extremely active and happy little guy who brings a lot of excitement into our busy lives.”

Because his path to professional success was more unorthodox than many of his osteopathic peers, Friedman imparted some words of wisdom to the next

generation of physicians, stressing that one of the keys to success is “always being open to opportunities and taking the time to evaluate the different paths you can take. No amount of research

will prepare you for the changes ahead, so just enjoy the moment,” he emphasized. “One day, you will wake up far along one of the forks in the road you could never have imagined was possible.” □



Kevin and Loren Friedman on their wedding day



Lucy Avant happily displays the engagement ring she received during her in-air marriage proposal.

## Love Is in the Air

### AMBITIOUS ALUMNUS TAKES TO THE SKIES TO PROPOSE

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR

Ryan Garbalosa, D.O., a 2009 Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine alumnus, took the art of making a marriage proposal to new heights when he asked his girlfriend Lucy Avant to marry him in August 2021.

Not content to simply get down on bended knee during a quiet dinner to make his proposal, Garbalosa concocted an elaborate plan to wow Avant, who he met several years ago at McLeod Health in South Carolina, where he works as a cardiologist and she as a nurse. Because he's a licensed pilot, Garbalosa decided to pop the question by working with a community member to have the words "Lucy, will you marry me?" painted in big letters on a grass airstrip.

According to the on-air story on WLTX News19 in Columbia, South Carolina, Avant was completely

clueless to Garbalosa's plans. "He had the plane all ready, and we went up," she said. "We started circling, and I was like, 'Oh, we've kind of gone in circles a few times here,'" she said, while Garbalosa chuckled beside her.

"I'm flying around, circling the airstrip, and trying to get her to look down—and she's not looking," he laughed. "I finally said, 'Hey, look at that runway down there. There's something on it.' And finally, she saw it. I gave her the ring, and she cried, and I cried. It really was magical."

After landing, the happy couple went to see the words up close, which made Avant appreciate Garbalosa's grand gesture even more. Due to COVID-19, Avant and Garbalosa have yet to set a wedding date, but they hope to tie the knot sometime in 2022. □





Ryan Garbalosa arranged for the words "Lucy, will you marry me?" to be written on a grass airstrip with paint used on soccer and football fields.





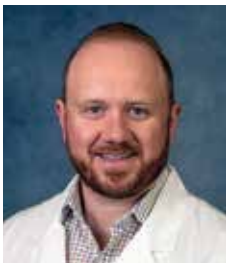
**Kayvan Amini, D.O.,** FACC ('01), was reappointed as a member of Florida's Drug Utilization Review Board, which reviews and makes recommendations for the drug-use criteria and standards for both prospec-

tive and retrospective drug-use reviews. He was appointed as vice chair of the board.



**Marlow B. Hernandez Cano, ('11),** D.O., M.P.H., M.B.A., FACP, chief executive officer of Cano Health, appeared on CNBC to discuss the health care company he helped establish and the success Cano Health

has had in reducing mortality by 60 percent among its patients with COVID-19.



**Ryan Chapman, D.O.** ('14), who is board certified in internal medicine and hospice and palliative medicine, joined the medical staff at St. Francis Reflections Lifestage Care in Titusville, Florida.



**Bryan A. Currie, D.O.,** FASA ('06), who is affiliated with Winchester Anesthesiologists, Inc., in Frederick County, Virginia, and is the Valley Health Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee chair, was featured on

WUSA9 news in a segment titled "Virginia Doctors Urge People to Get Vaccinated as ICU Beds Fill Up, Canceling Elective Surgeries."



**Linda Delo, D.O.,** FACOPF ('86), was appointed as chair of the American Osteopathic Association's Council on Economic and Regulatory Affairs, which was previously known as the Bureau of Socioeconomic Affairs.



**Matthew Denson, D.O., M.S. ('15),** who specializes in laparoscopic and minimally invasive surgery, as well as colon pathology and colon cancer surgery, joined the Mohawk Valley Health System Surgical Group in Utica, New York.



**Ryan J. Enders, D.O.** ('15), joined the medical staff at North Oaks Surgical Associates in Hammond, Louisiana, as a general surgeon. Enders is trained and certified in minimally invasive interventions,

including advanced endoscopic, laparoscopic, and da Vinci robotics surgical techniques.



**Kathryn Fitzgerald, D.O. ('15),** who specializes in laparoscopic and minimally invasive surgery, as well as abdominal wall and inguinal hernia repair, joined the Mohawk Valley Health System Surgical Group in Utica, New York.





**Jeffrey S. Grove, D.O.,** FACOFP *dist.* ('90), received the American Osteopathic Association's (AOA's) Distinguished Service Award during its 101st House of Delegates Annual Meeting on July 15 in Chicago, Illinois. The

award, which is the highest honor the AOA bestows, is presented annually to deserving physicians or lay individuals for outstanding contributions to the understanding and advancement of osteopathic medicine through research, education, financial aid, or other areas that enable the profession to make a greater contribution to public health.



**William Gunther, D.O.** ('17), who graduated from the University of Michigan Hospice and Palliative Care Fellowship program, coauthored the article "Buprenorphine for Chronic Pain in a Pediatric Patient With

Sickle-Cell Disease," which was published in the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*.



**Lisa Gwynn, D.O.,** M.B.A., M.S.P.H., FAAP ('98), interim division chief of child and adolescent health at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, received the Miller School of Medicine Dean's Faculty Award for Community Engagement,

which is "awarded to the faculty member who has demonstrated commitment to the Miller School of Medicine and university's effort to address and advance health equity in our local communities."



**Timothy N. Hembree, D.O., Ph.D.** ('10), who is board certified in internal medicine, was promoted to assistant chief medical officer of patient care at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida.

In this role, he serves as a liaison between physicians and Moffitt administration, nursing, and ancillary staff members to design and promote processes to improve patient care. Hembree, who has another role as Moffitt's division chief of hospitalist medicine, also serves as an assistant professor of medicine at the University of South Florida's Health Morsani College of Medicine, where he received the 2020 Teacher of the Year Award.



**Randy S. Katz, D.O.,** FACEP ('99), was promoted to associate district medical director for emergency services at Memorial Healthcare System (MHS), the fourth-largest public health care system in the United

States. MHS operates six emergency departments with close to 500,000 annual emergency room visits. In his new role, Katz will oversee all emergency department operations, including trauma care, emergency preparedness, and emergency medical services integration.



**Angela Y. Kim, D.O.,** M.P.H. ('17), recently joined the Sutter North Medical Group in Yuba City, California. Kim, who is board certified in dermatology, completed her internship and dermatology residency

training at St. John's Episcopal Hospital—South Shore in Far Rockaway, New York.

(continued on page 74)



**Will Kirby**, D.O., FAOCD ('00), a board-certified dermatologist and chief medical officer of LaserAway, appeared on a recent episode of the Disney+ series *The Book of Boba Fett* and served as a keynote speaker at the

Medical Spa Show being held January 28–30 in Las Vegas, Nevada.



**Khoi Luong**, D.O. ('07), who is board certified in geriatric medicine and internal medicine, was named senior vice president of post-acute care of NYC Health + Hospitals in February. Luong will oversee all aspects of opera-

tions and patient care provided in the five skilled nursing facilities, the long-term acute care hospital, the short-term rehabilitation, and the adult day health care programs.



**David Magness**, D.O., M.B.A., FACOFP ('09), is the new medical director of the Center for Living Well—Epcot in Orlando, Florida. The center, which is open 365 days a year, is one of two medical offices that

serve as the primary care medical home for the 85,000 cast members, employees, and dependents at Walt Disney World. He also serves as secretary of the Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians.



**Anna Mercer**, D.O. ('20), received the 2021 Outstanding Resident of the Year Award in OMM, which is presented by the American Osteopathic Foundation (AOF) and the American Academy of

Osteopathy. Mercer was recognized for her exemplary work, demonstrated leadership, and steadfast clinical performance, as well as her passion for, and unwavering commitment to, the osteopathic profession. Mercer, who also received a \$5,000 monetary award, was recognized at the in-person and virtual AOF Honors Gala on October 22.

**Diparshi Mukherjee**, D.O., M.S. ('00), who has been a physician at Kaiser Permanente since 2004, was appointed to the Naturopathic Medicine Committee by California Governor Gavin Newsom.



**Jason Okuhara**, D.O., FACOI ('02), who is board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease, and interventional cardiology, joined the medical team at the DeBakey Heart Institute in Hays, Kansas.



**Ravin Patel**, D.O. ('20), was elected as the family medicine representative for the 2022 American Medical Society of Sports Medicine Sports Medicine Resident Council. Additionally, he had his case study “Vaccine

Administration Leading to Subacromial Bursitis” published in the *Acta Scientific* journal. His work takes a look at shoulder pathology during this increased time of vaccine administration.





**Laura Peck**, D.O., M.S.W. ('15), joined the medical team at MDH General Surgery in Macomb, Illinois. Additionally, she recently completed a fellowship in minimally invasive surgery at Ascension St. John's in Saint Clair Shores, Michigan.



**Jacob Pennington**, D.O. ('15), joined Advanced Orthopedic Center Surgeons in September at its sites in Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda, Florida. He did his orthopedic surgery residency at Michigan State University's

McLaren Greater Lansing Hospital, which he followed by completing an adult reconstruction fellowship in July 2021 at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, Ohio.



**Elizabeth Arena Rook**, D.O., M.P.H., M.A. ('06), is a rheumatologist and the CEO and owner of Thrive Arena Coaching, which has a mission to improve the mental, emotional, and physical health

of high-achieving professional women by helping them say yes to themselves to thrive in their lives and health. She was certified as a life and weight loss coach from the Life Coach School in October 2021 and blends these tools with her other training to serve women online, as well as by volunteering her services to women with chronic illnesses living in western Colorado.



**Nicolas Sikaczowski**, D.O. ('17), recently founded his psychiatry practice Peace Behavioral Health in Miami, Florida, which is accepting both in-person and telehealth patients.



**Richard R. Thacker**, D.O., MACOI ('92), was named associate dean of clinical resources for the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine (ACOM). In this role, Thacker will oversee third- and fourth-

year clinical training through ACOM's expansive network of hospitals, clinics, and preceptors. He has been involved with the ACOM since the college opened in 2013, previously serving as assistant dean of clinical sciences and clinical resources. Additionally, Thacker was recently recognized as a master fellow by the American College of Osteopathic Internists for his contributions to the profession.



**Michael C. Weiss**, D.O., FAOAO ('86), was named chief of surgery and chief medical officer for iRISE Spine and Joint, headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida. In his new role, Weiss will oversee all orthopedic,

neurosurgical, and interventional pain management medical and surgical operations, as well as assist in expansion efforts.



**Lauren Westafer**, D.O., M.P.H., M.S. ('13), assistant professor of emergency medicine at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School—Baystate, received a \$900,000 grant from the National Heart, Lung, and

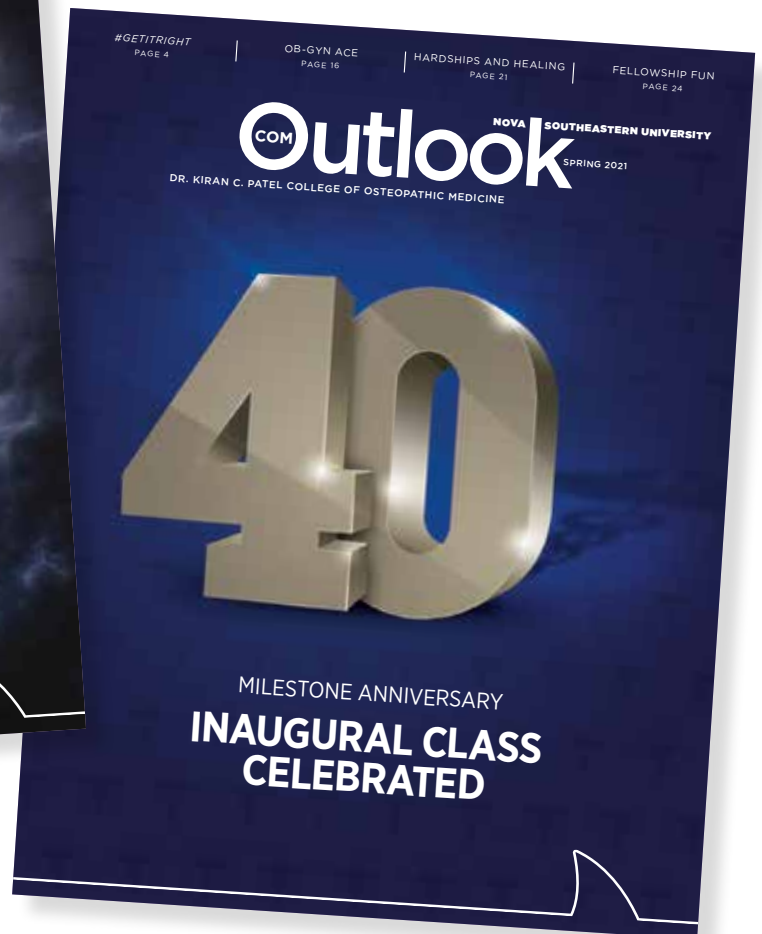
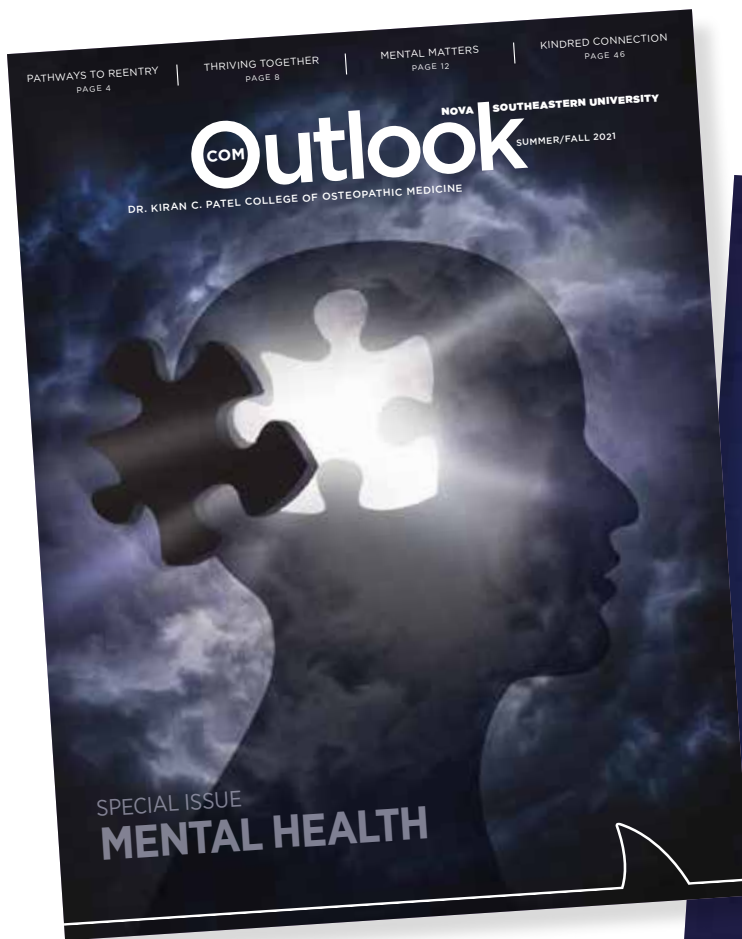
Blood Institute to fund the project "De-Implementation of Low-Value Evaluation of Pulmonary Embolism [DELVE-PE]" to improve evidence-based care in the emergency department. Additionally, she was named one of emergency medicine's "25 under 45" by the Emergency Medicine Residents' Association and received the FOAMed Excellence in Education Award from the Society of Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM). The award honors a SAEM member who has made outstanding contributions to the online learning community of emergency medicine through innovative and engaging FOAMed content.

## COM Outlook Wins Two PRSA PRestige Awards

The Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine's venerable magazine *COM Outlook* received first-place honors in both the Magazine and Periodicals and the Writing categories at the Public Relations Society of America Tampa Bay PRestige Awards ceremony held November 3. The PRestige Awards recognize outstanding public relations programs and tactics by Florida practitioners and organizations and are open to both PRSA members and nonmembers.

In addition to *COM Outlook* winning the top award in the Magazine and Periodicals category, the article "Fellowship Fun: Inquisitive Alumna Savors Grey's Anatomy Stint," which appeared in the spring 2021 issue, received the top prize in the writing category. The article was written by Scott Colton, B.A., APR, director of medical communications and special projects for NSU's Office of Printing and Publications.

This is the second year in a row that *COM Outlook* earned the first-place award in the PRestige Awards competition. □





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