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Beyond the classroom

Strengthening communities
through service learning



Donnelly students study in the Dragon's Den campus coffee shop before class.



ON THE FRONT COVER

Project L.O.U.D. participants read to elementary school students at Resurrection Catholic School.

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SPRING FORWARD

Highlights from the 2023 spring semester



A Staff and faculty gather before the 2023 Super Bowl.

B A student participates in a flame test experiment during a fundamentals of physical science class.

C President Monsignor Stuart Swetland perfects his DJ skills during the inaugural Spring Fling dance.

D Representatives from local companies recruit Donnelly students for jobs at the Job and Internship Fair hosted by Donnelly's academic support and career services team.

E Students dress in traditional African attire during the Multicultural Festival fashion show.

F The eleventh issue of student literary journal DIME is unveiled at the publication's release party.

G To celebrate Earth Day, board member Sister Anne Shepard, OSB guest-teaches an environmental ethics class. Her lecture and discussion focused on environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, who was taught by the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica.

H Donnelly students pose with students from the University of Kansas after receiving certificates for participating in the annual Pan American Summit. This all-day event brings students together to discuss the biggest issues in the Americas while presenting ways to resolve those issues.

I Outgoing Student Senate members receive flowers for their contributions during the 2022-23 academic year. Nursing student Stefanie Ambroziak (back row, second from left) was elected president for the upcoming school year.

“Learning is for everybody...”

“**B**ut especially for people who want it the most.”

Those were the parting words of author Zena Hitz as she wrapped up a Q&A session with Donnelly students and staff for the annual Common Read author talk.

Hitz’s book, “Lost in Thought: The Hidden Pleasures of an Intellectual Life,” was Donnelly’s 2022-23 Common Read book selection. The book focuses on the purpose and value of learning for its own sake in a world in which people are often judged on their usefulness. It also highlights the need for academic institutions to promote a love of learning in and out of the classroom.

Donnelly’s Common Read is a campus-wide initiative to include one common, thought-provoking book on the reading list for all students and faculty each academic year. In addition to separate Q&As with staff and students, Hitz also hosted a virtual talk with Donnelly students at Lansing Correctional Facility.

Each academic year, an internal committee votes on book submissions from staff and provides free copies of the selected book to students and Jerome Society members (those who give \$1,000 or more annually to the Donnelly Annual Fund). Dr. Guy Sechrist, assistant professor of history and chairperson of the Common Read committee, said that the committee looks for books that can be easily incorporated into the curriculum.



Author Zena Hitz poses with Donnelly student Marco Ramirez after signing his copy of “Lost in Thought.”

“The notion that the act of contemplation should continue to remain at the forefront of our endeavors is really a critical component of what it means to be a scholar and individual who pursues truth, community and excellence,” he said.

One unique aspect of the Common Read initiative is the face-to-face interaction between students and author. Students spend time in their classes discussing key themes in the book to prepare for the on-campus author visit each spring.

Donnelly freshman Myaliyah Robinson resonated with “Lost in Thought” and found the book

“challenging,” but also encouraging; the phrase “keep learning and never stop” stuck with her, even after the author talk.

Hitz, who as a child, found an escape in the books she read, shared her hope for students to similarly find their own passion within the world of books and stories. She encouraged students to set aside previous judgments before stepping into someone else’s experience.

“When you are reading someone’s book, you’re stepping into their perception of the world,” she said. “It can be frightening to step back into your own world, because you have to figure out what has now changed in your world, based on what you learned.” **D**

Donnelly celebrates student success with Phi Theta Kappa induction ceremony

On a sunny afternoon in April, friends and family members gathered in Donnelly's Event Center to celebrate the academic achievements of Donnelly's highest-achieving students. The joyful inductees made their way into the space to officially join Donnelly's Alpha Omega Theta chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. Donnelly's PTK chapter requires students to earn and maintain a 3.5 GPA or higher. Among this year's inductees were seven students enrolled in Donnelly's College in Prison program through Lansing Correctional Facility. A separate ceremony was hosted for the Lansing students.

For sophomore Alejandra Martinez Gonzalez, being inducted into PTK was a memorable experience. She felt nothing but pride in herself, noting that the uphill battle to earn a college degree was worth it for that moment.

"My parents never finished elementary school," she said. "For me, they always emphasized education. I feel grateful that all my hard work has paid off. Even when I may feel stressed and overwhelmed, in the end, it will benefit my future self and my career."

As Dean of the College Lisa Stoothoff read closing remarks, she recognized that many of these students have not only excelled in their courses, but did so while raising families or working full-time or multiple jobs.

This year, Donnelly was named a REACH (Recognizing Excellence in Acceptance and Completion with Honors) Rewards chapter through the Phi Theta Kappa governing body for increasing the membership acceptance rate to 15 percent or higher. **D**



The *Class* of 2023

112
TOTAL
GRADUATES



93
FIRST-GENERATION
STUDENTS

“For the students it’s just such an honor to hold the commencement ceremony in the Cathedral. They’ve worked so hard and accomplished so much.”

Lisa Stoothoff, Dean of the College

24 Phi Theta
Kappa Honor
Society
members

1 DELTA AWARD RECIPIENT:
REVEREND TONY CARTER, JR.

Rev. Carter was nominated and selected as this year's Delta Award recipient. The Delta Award is given to an individual whose contributions embody the mission and values of Donnelly College.



“Today is always my favorite day of the year for the College because we get to see our students’ accomplishments.”

President Monsignor Stuart Swetland speaking at Commencement

4 CEREMONIES WERE HELD
THROUGHOUT GRADUATION WEEK

Invocation and Commendation (prayer service), Commencement, Nursing Pinning and an additional Commencement ceremony at Lansing Correctional Facility.



5 SERVICE-LEARNING HONOR RECIPIENTS

6 LANSING GRADUATES

Each graduate earned an associate of applied science in business at Lansing Correctional Facility.

Meet the Commencement Student Speakers

Aadesh Biswa

Aadesh Biswa earned his associate of arts degree. He is a first-generation college graduate and a member of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. During his time at Donnelly, Aadesh was a member of the Student Senate, Students for Social Justice Club and Anime Club. He worked as a DIME literary journal intern and on-campus tutor.

He is a Bloch Scholar and is currently enrolled in the bachelor's program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is majoring in English with an emphasis in creative writing. He hopes to continue his education by earning a master's and doctorate degree. His dream is to travel back to his home country of Nepal to build a school and teach children of all economic backgrounds and social classes.



Eny Mejia



Eny Mejia earned her associate of arts degree. She is a first-generation college graduate and a member of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. Eny was a recipient of Donnelly's Presidential Scholarship and a speaker at Donnelly's 2022 annual SHINE fundraiser.

Eny plans to enroll at the University of Kansas to earn a bachelor's degree in biology. She hopes to find volunteer and shadowing opportunities at local hospitals during her schooling. She then plans to attend medical school so she can become a travel doctor to assist in war and catastrophe zones.

Check out a video highlight from Commencement 2023!





Students Vanessa Arevalo and Francisco Marin pose with Donnelly's mascot Lux at the #1Day4Donnelly photo booth.

Donors break fundraising record for annual giving day

In just its fourth year, Donnelly's fundraising event #1Day4Donnelly raised \$52,752, exceeding last year's total of \$47,833. This was the highest amount ever raised for the 24-hour giving event.

In addition to fundraising for student scholarships, #1Day4Donnelly serves as a learning opportunity for students – emphasizing the importance of philanthropy for nonprofit institutions.

This year, one of the most impactful activities for students was a philanthropy panel hosted on campus. Participating students had the opportunity to speak with donors, board members and alumni in small groups while sharing personal stories, often about not being able to attend college without the help of scholarships and grants.

Another new addition to the #1Day4Donnelly schedule included a "Go Ask Your Father" activity, putting Donnelly President Monsignor Stuart Swetland in the spotlight. Students, staff and other visitors on campus participated

RECORD-BREAKING
\$52,752
raised

35 first-time donors

98 total donors

in a Kahoot! game featuring fun facts about Msgr. Swetland as well as a Q&A session for anyone to ask hard-hitting questions on faith and beliefs.

This year there were 98 total donors who gave to #1Day4Donnelly, including 35 first-time givers. The growing success of this annual event is a testament to the Donnelly community's commitment to serving students, especially those who come from underserved populations. **D**

SHINE

FOR DONNELLY COLLEGE

SAVE THE DATE

THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 5, 2023

The Abbott
1901 Cherry Street, Kansas City, MO

Visit donnelly.edu/SHINE
for sponsor benefits,
tickets and event
details.

2023 SHINE
Chairs
John and Terry
Gillcrist

Check out a
video recap of
SHINE 2022





Students work in the community garden at Wyandotte Towers, a public housing facility for low-income elderly residents.

Strengthening communities through service learning

Some of the most impactful teachings in life do not always occur inside a classroom. Research shows that including hands-on, real-world learning opportunities for students greatly enhances their overall academic experience. That is exactly the mindset and focus of faculty members who offer courses with a service-learning designation.

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience; ultimately teaching civic responsibility and strengthening communities. While service learning has been incorporated into Donnelly's curriculum for over a decade, the College has expanded service-learning efforts after several faculty conducted research on the benefits to students.

Director of Humanities Gretchen Moffet, who completed a research release on the benefits of service learning in the 2017–2018 academic year, has seen firsthand how these efforts have impacted students.

“Students are overwhelmingly positive and receptive [to service learning],” Moffet said. “They enjoy getting out of the classroom and feeling like they are making a contribution, that they have something to offer. It helps build their confidence. For some, it may get them thinking about what they could do as they move on in their life.”

In addition to the typical course assignments and exams, service-learning courses require students to spend a specific number of hours completing the initial studying and preparation, community service project outside the classroom and post-service reflection. Students who complete at least four service-learning courses receive a service-learning honor cord at graduation.

At this year's commencement ceremony, five graduates earned service-learning cords, the first group to do so in the school's history. One of those students, Felix Dominguez, completed four service-learning courses: First Year Experience (taken by all new Donnelly students), Environmental Ethics, Environmental Science and Immigrant Fiction. A moment that stood out to him was witnessing his classmates find joy and purpose in serving the local community. In one of his courses, a group of students felt that even though they completed the required hours, they wanted to go above and beyond and planned an entirely new project to provide food and water to homeless people.

"I learned to not take what you have for granted," Dominguez said. "There are always people who need more than you. Something as small as a granola bar could be a whole meal for someone."

For graduate Issis Lopez, some of her favorite community service projects included working with refugee families, packing backpacks with school supplies for children and sorting furniture at a thrift store. She especially felt joyful to give back to community members facing food insecurity.

"I learned that it is better to give than to receive," she said. "We never know when we'll need assistance too. During [the height of] COVID-19, my family was one of the families needing to pick up food. I knew I was going to be able to give back eventually and help those who helped me."

Besides enrolling in courses with the service-learning designation, students can participate in a number of service-oriented Donnelly events throughout the school year. A favorite among staff and students is Donnelly's annual Day of Service. This event brings together all new students at the start of each school year to participate in community service projects with faculty.

Students enrolled in the developmental reading and writing course Success First also have a unique opportunity to learn outside of the classroom. Through Project L.O.U.D. (Literacy Outreach in Urban Districts), students partner with a local school to read aloud to elementary and middle school students.

Assistant Professor of Biology Joe Multhauf has seen students actively seeking out ways to participate in service-learning activities. "They love it," he said. "The enrollment is higher in service-learning courses because students seek them out when enrolling each semester. Most students know it will be a positive experience."

This year's community partners include TurnStyles Thrift, KCK Housing Authority, Hope Distribution Center, Splitlog Farm and Gray Horse Equine Assisted Therapy.

More about Project L.O.U.D.

Project L.O.U.D. reinforces the idea that reading is a lifelong skill and that going to college is an attainable goal. For the past several years, Donnelly has partnered with Resurrection Catholic School and donated books to the partnering classrooms.

"The Donnelly students who participate in Project L.O.U.D. are usually a little nervous about reading and speaking out loud because a lot of students are second-language learners," Moffet said. "They come back [to Donnelly's campus] afterward and are overwhelmingly excited. It's good for elementary and middle school students to see Donnelly students who look like them. It helps them envision themselves as college students too. They need to be able to see people like them who are in college and successful."



As Lopez reflected on her time as a Donnelly student, Galatians 6:9 stood out to her, especially the connection to Donnelly's core value of Community.

"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season, we will reap, if we do not give up." **D**

Students in Donnelly's First Year Experience course volunteer at Hope Distribution Center.

Laying the foundation: Jerome Society donors come full circle

Donnelly alumni and Jerome Society members Mary and Larry Meyers made their way to the third-floor Alumni Lounge, the last stop on a brief tour of Donnelly's academic building. Peering through the floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook campus, Mary remarked, "What a view," a comment one could disregard as small talk filling the emptiness of a room. But it was just the opposite—a tender, reflective comment laced with nostalgia and a proud affinity. Larry nodded in agreement, matching his wife's sentiment. In that moment, the couple contemplated the school's past, present and future and the unique way that Donnelly has impacted their lives.

Both Mary and Larry attended Donnelly in the 1960s at the College's former building on 12th and Sandusky streets.

"I came from a working-class family, and I didn't think about college in high school," Larry said. "[But] Donnelly was an open, welcoming experience. It made you want to do more."

The College was a beacon of opportunity for the Meyers family, and Donnelly left such a lasting impression on them both that, decades later, they joined Donnelly's Jerome Society. Not only do they donate to the College annually, but they knew the person for which the Jerome Society is named: Sister Jerome Keeler, OSB, co-founder of Donnelly College.

As dean of the College during the Meyers' time as students, Sister Jerome fostered and nurtured the growth of every student in a way that was welcoming to all.

"It didn't matter—night school, day school—even if Sister Jerome was in her office, she would come out and greet



"If it wasn't for a place like this, my whole life would have been completely different."

Mary Meyers

you," Mary said. "I never experienced that anywhere after [my time at Donnelly]."

Larry, welling up, recounts what made Sister Jerome so memorable.

"I get emotional sometimes thinking back to her," he said. "She was such a humble person. I remember coming in early one morning, and she was sweeping the floor, and I said, 'That's not right. She's the head of this College.' She was very humble."

One of the programs Sister Jerome

facilitated was Donnelly's student trips to different states. She was an advocate for the students to experience the world outside of Kansas, knowing that the best teachings do not always occur inside the walls of a classroom. It just so happened that one of these student trips would lead to a romance between Mary and Larry. On a trip to Washington, D.C. and New York City, the Meyers' love story began, with their first date being at the famed Copacabana nightclub and

Join the Jerome Society!

Honoring the legacy of Donnelly's co-founder Sister Jerome Keeler, OSB, an esteemed academic and member of the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, the Jerome Society continues Sister Jerome's support for accessible higher education. The Jerome Society is a community of Donnelly's most dedicated and generous supporters. By committing to an annual minimum \$1,000 gift to the Donnelly Fund, members sustain the mission of making the transformative power of a Catholic college education available to all.

One of the many perks for Jerome Society members is a permanent, public tribute on campus. Commemorative bricks include member names and the year they joined the Society.

To join the Jerome Society, email advancement@donnelly.edu or call (913) 621-8729.

with a live performance by Grammy award-winning jazz singer Nat King Cole. The date fastened a bond that has spanned 57 years.

After graduating from Donnelly, Larry in 1961 and Mary in 1963, both earned bachelor's degrees from different institutions. They have four children who have all earned bachelor's and master's degrees. Both being first-generation college students, Larry and Mary realized that if they had not found Donnelly, their children and grandchildren may not have been as likely to attend college.

"With this school, you get the idea that success is possible, and then you plant the expectation in your children," Larry said.

As the couple continued to reflect on their time at Donnelly, they applauded Donnelly's mission and affordability model.

"If it wasn't for a place like this, my whole life would have been completely different," said Mary. "We were able to go to college because it was affordable. And that was in part because of

Sister Jerome. That was one of her philosophies. If somebody could do that for us, then we should be giving back."

In the closing moments of the Meyers' visit to campus, they pondered the question of how it feels to be back at the school that was the genesis of so many things in their lives. Larry sat in the Alumni Lounge—a space conceived with the purpose of welcoming alumni back home—scanning the room, now blanketed in the afternoon sun and smiled.

"It's terrific," he said. "When I look at our children and see what they've done, it's inspiring to me. Such humble beginnings and what it's turned into...wow."

Sister Jerome was remembered as an approachable leader, and she frequently encouraged people to donate "dollars for bricks" for future Donnelly expansion. It's fitting that, to honor her memory and hope for Donnelly's growth, the bricks commemorating Jerome Society members are a physical reminder of laying a strong foundation to serve those who might not otherwise be served in higher education. **D**



Mary and Larry Meyers find their dedicated Jerome Society brick on campus.

Remembering Father John Melnick, SSA

Father John Melnick, SSA, 62, passed away on Sunday, January 15, 2023. He served as a Donnelly faculty member and vice president of spirituality and mission from 2009–2020. During his 11 years at Donnelly, Fr. John impacted countless students through campus ministry programming, theology courses and assisting with daily Mass and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). He also provided friendship and counsel to all faculty and staff including the president and board of directors.

Students and staff remember Fr. John's lively class discussions and his habit of wandering through the hallways singing hymns and showtunes. Although Fr. John retired before Donnelly's current academic building was opened in the summer of 2020, he contributed initial design ideas to what is now the Blessed Seelos Chapel.

Fr. John radiated the joy and presence of Christ as "Lux Vera," meaning True Light. In a 2010 letter to alumni and supporters of Donnelly, Fr. John reflected on the College's mission and dedication to serving diverse populations and creating community.



“While we celebrate Donnelly’s Catholic distinctiveness, we also recognize the rich tapestry of the Donnelly family, made up of many colors and textures. The College is as culturally, racially, ethnically and religiously diverse as it comes. Far from dividing us, we see these diversities uniting the Donnelly community in a common search for truth, peace and mercy as global citizens.”

Father John Melnick, SSA

Former students and coworkers share stories and testimonials

From theology to the elegance of fountain pens, Father John embodied the spirit of Donnelly and “making the love of God tangible in our world.” May all those who came under his tutelage carry his spirit of love, charity, compassion and grace. Father John was a gift to us from our Heavenly Father.

Jonathon Westbrook '07, '13

I remember him as a happy person who would like to sing in the halls. You could hear him coming down the hall singing a melody, and talking to him was always a joy. Father John was an extraordinary person and a character for sure.

Yessenia (Silva-Leos) Lopez '12



Students pose with Fr. John in 2017.

Father John Dedication and Memorial Monday, August 28, 5-7 p.m.

Join us for an open house to dedicate a permanent, on-campus tribute to Fr. John Melnick on the Feast of St. Augustine. Alumni and friends are invited to attend and share memories and a toast to Fr. John. Light food and drinks will be provided.

RSVP recommended

Email Roger Berg at rberg@donnelly.edu



Fr. John embraces his silly side at the 2012 campus bistro blessing.

I met Father John, as many have done, in theology class. I remember being surprised that he always kept a Bible, the Talmud and a Quran in his bag. He welcomed all beliefs. He even held a brief debate in class with one of the students that was an atheist. He stated: “I really admire you as an atheist, for it takes much more faith than I have to believe in absolutely nothing.”

Roger Berg, III '15, '17

Fr. John was first and foremost a priest who radiated the presence of Jesus to all those he served. He also was a faithful Augustinian who valued the example and teaching of St. Augustine and St. Monica. I saw this in his devotion to prayer, community and the Augustinian saints. He was committed to seeking God, pursuing the truth and an interior life of depth and substance centered on Christ. I was and am proud to call him a friend. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.

Monsignor Stuart Swetland, President

*For more testimonials and stories, visit donnelly.edu/blog. If you would like to contribute a remembrance of Father John to the blog post, please email marketing@donnelly.edu. **D***

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering those who have recently passed away.

Alumni

Norma Baker '88

Denis Callaghan '60

James Goethe '59

Edward Kennedy Cameron '60

Edward Wollmuth '75

Former Faculty

Sister Barbara Kushan, SCL

Father John Melnick, SSA

Father Blaise McInerny,
O. Carm.

Dr. John Murry,

former president

A full remembrance will be included in the next issue of the Digest

NEW IN THE DIGEST!

Welcome to Class Notes

Sharing exciting alumni news with our entire Donnelly family

Alumni: To share news and milestones (births, adoptions, job changes/promotions, family/life updates, marriages, personal or professional achievements), submit the online form at donnelly.edu/class-notes. If you'd like to connect with Donnelly's marketing team to share a larger story, please email marketing@donnelly.edu.

STAFF NOTES

2022-2023 Staff Awards

Nominated and selected by peers

- **Dr. Patty Palmietto**
Faculty Member of the Year
- **Dr. Karen Lombardi**
Staff Member of the Year
- **Christopher Lowrance**
Adjunct Instructor of the Year
- **Ana Maradiaga & Joseph Multhauf**
Team of the Year
- **John Hewitt**
Catholic Social Justice Award



Donnelly students and staff traveled to Washington D.C. for the annual March for Life rally in January 2023.



STEM's Biggest Supporter

Director of Liberal Arts and Sciences Ana Maradiaga is passionate about encouraging young people to pursue careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). Maradiaga, who also teaches chemistry and physical science at Donnelly, resonates with the saying, “Students can’t be what they can’t see.”

“As a Hispanic woman in STEM at a higher education institution, I feel a great sense of responsibility,” she said. “I have an opportunity to be a role model for my community. In my classroom and lab, I share my passion for chemistry and engineering, and I invite students to consider pursuing careers in STEM.”

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CALLING
ALL
ALUMNI!



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Every week, Donnelly posts resources such as our latest job openings, networking opportunities and alumni-only events. Make sure you list Donnelly College on your LinkedIn profile to show you are **#DonnellyProud**.