He had the chemistry, and I had the bees.

An expert entomologist and a beekeeping chemist join forces to save honey bees from their biggest threat, the hive-wrecking varroa mite.
URI RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP PHOTO CONTEST 2023: THE WINNERS

Entries in URI’s sixth annual Research and Scholarship Photo Contest included underwater photographs, images of muscle tissue taken through microscopes, and macro shots of insects. They showcased the breadth of work that URI community members are immersed in.

This annual contest offers students, faculty, and staff an opportunity to share their perspectives of their work in any area of URI research and scholarship. Images from laboratories to libraries to the depths of the ocean and beyond have streamed in over the years and been featured in the three URI magazines sponsoring this contest—the University of Rhode Island Magazine; the URI Division of Research and Economic Development magazine Momentum: Research & Innovation; and the Rhode Island Sea Grant/URI Coastal Institute magazine 41°N: Rhode Island’s Ocean and Coastal Magazine.

First Place
AQUATIC ODDBALL
Michael Corso ’24
Aquaculture and fisheries science

At 70 feet below the surface, a rare whitelined toadfish peers out from the darkness to observe a research dive group from URI. Corso captured this photograph of a creature that is endemic to Belize’s barrier reef system while on an aquaculture and fisheries science Winter J-term course in scientific research diving. Corso says, “As an AFS major, I focused on biological survey techniques and underwater photography while collecting real scientific data. While the toadfish exemplifies the extent of a reef’s ecosystem biodiversity, warming seas and ocean acidification are chipping away at the natural world’s biodiversity and weakening reefs. The highly specialized animals that rely on these underwater jungles are being impacted directly,” Corso says.

Second Place
LIFE IS A MAZE
Janelle Mercer ’23
Marine biology

Mercer took this photo of maze coral off the coast of St. George’s Caye, Belize, roughly 40 feet underwater, during an underwater archaeology class with Diving Safety Officer Anya Hanson in Belize. Maze coral is a type of stony coral with a photosynthetic dinoflagellate living within polyps on the coral’s surface, providing coloration. The polyps and their corallite walls have a unique twisting, maze-like formation. Mercer, who earned her American Academy of Underwater Sciences Scientific Research Diver certification on this trip, is preparing for a career in marine biology and conservation.
GOT NECTAR?
Julia Vieira ’21, M.S. ’23
Graduate student in plant sciences and entomology

This macro photo shows a brown-belted bumble bee foraging for nectar from common milkweed. The female worker takes a break to re-energize by sucking up the delicious, carbohydrate-filled nectar within the milkweed flower with her long proboscis (tongue). The bumble bee was visiting one of the many milkweed plants within the acres of pollinator plantings on URI’s East Farm. Vieira’s research primarily focuses on assessing bumble bee visitation to various flower species to enhance Rhode Island bumble bee conservation programs by improving recommendations for pollinator plantings throughout the state.

CROSSING UNDER
Olivia Mazzone ’23
Marine biology

This photo depicts a comb jellyfish floating among seaweed at dusk off the southeast corner of Conanicut Island (R.I.). “The day that I took this picture was the first time I ever picked up an underwater camera. It was an assignment for a class, a class that was supposed to involve scuba diving except that I broke my elbow two weeks before the start of the semester. So I found myself snorkeling alone, in the middle of April, in a small cove in Jamestown,” Mazzone says. Her first attempts to photograph anything underwater failed, she says, and she longed to get out of the water and go home. “But then when I was finally exhausted, for whatever reason instead of getting out of the water I lifted my feet and let myself go completely. I became part of the tide, and everything in my view became clear,” she says—including this jellyfish, whom she now considers “a dear friend.”

MALE BOMBUS IMPATIENS
Gena Anika ’23
Wildlife and conservation biology

This photo is a close-up image of a Bombus impatiens (common eastern bumble bee) face. The yellow patch of hair on the bee’s face signifies it is male. There are pollen granules present on the bee’s face, and you can see the hexagonal lenses (ommatidium) in the compound eyes. Anika used a digital microscope to observe the bee closely to help learn bee characteristics and to identify its species and sex for the class BIO 338 Bees and Pollination.

FLUORESCENCE MICROSCOPY OF NEUROMUSCULAR JUNCTIONS
Alyssa Madden ’23
Molecular neuroscience

This fluorescence microscopy picture shows the neuromuscular junctions in the calf muscle of a rabbit modeling cerebral palsy. In the Manuel Lab, Madden is working on looking at the differences in neuromuscular development in a rabbit model of cerebral palsy. Using confocal microscopy, researchers can observe how the structure of the neuromuscular junctions is affected by cerebral palsy, in the hope of better understanding this disorder.
The Greatest Generation
Brig. Gen. Elliott R. Thorpe ’19, Hon. ’51, says, “I suppose the most important thing I ever did was to notify Washington of the forthcoming attack on Pearl Harbor.” His warning was ignored. Thorpe’s military story spans some of the biggest moments of World Wars I and II.

Keeping Watch on Narrow River
Meet veteran Watershed Watch volunteer, Veronica Berounskey, Ph.D. ’60, who’s been monitoring water quality in Narrow River for two decades.

For the Love of Honey
Chemistry professor Matt Kiesewetter and entomology professor Steve Alm are developing better ways to fight honey bees’ number-one enemy: the varroa mite. Plus, alumni craft brewers donate a portion of their profits to URI bee research.

Class Notes
Catch up with your classmates—and share your note.

In Memoriam
Remembering those we’ve lost. And a tribute to URI legend Agnes Doody.

Your Stories
Alumni reconnect after many years, finding love after loss.

Rhody’s 100th
The Nicolatos are a two-mascot family. That’s something to celebrate.

Rhody Traditions
The Mayor of Kingston—a funny campaign for an honorary office. Do you remember this tradition?

In Brief
URI news to keep you in the know.

Syllabus
Professor Tolani Olagundoye on leadership and emotional intelligence.

Quad Angles
Join music faculty member Adam Levin on a listening journey with J.S. Bach.

Innovators
Ella Schneider ’26 is finding sweet success in the world of bean-to-bar chocolate.

Momentum
URI research news, plus newly published books from URI faculty.

The Class of 2023
Meet this year’s inspiring student Commencement speakers.

Big Ideas. Bold Plans.
URI’s comprehensive campaign continues to transform the University.

Water Warriors
URI’s water outreach programs—all headed by dedicated alumni—work together to keep the state’s waterways and watersheds clean and healthy.

Swimming with Sharks
Mary Patline joined URI “shark guy” Brad Wetherbee and his BIO 492 students on a trip to Isla Mujeres in Mexico. She learned a thing or two about shark research—and a lot about an inspiring teacher and his exceptional students. And she took notes.

Sisters Cracking Up
Abby Rodman ’84 and sister Julie Howard ’86 host Sisters Cracking Up, a podcast that approaches the challenges of midlife with humor.

Caption This
Stroll down Memory Lane, check out the last issue’s winners, and send your best captions for this issue.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

A DAY TO CELEBRATE
URI’s Graduate School Commencement Ceremony was held on Friday, May 19, in the Ryan Center, where 781 graduate students earned master’s and doctoral degrees. Congratulations to all our 2023 URI grads!

Milestones and Celebrations

URI has a profound impact in Rhode Island and beyond. As our incredible 2023 grads step into their next chapters, that impact will increase with their contributions.

As we closed another academic year, capped by a truly memorable Commencement in May, I can’t help but feel a sense of pride in all that we accomplished. And while Commencement, for many, marks the end of a journey, it is, by definition, a beginning. After shaking the hands of thousands of our graduates as they eagerly crossed the stage to collect their diplomas, I am confident that, while they may be departing our campuses, URI has prepared them for bright futures.

This July, I will mark two years of serving as president of URI—two transformative years that have been filled with growth, change, excitement, and deep gratitude for our community. We have achieved so much together, and as our campuses shift to summer activities, I reflect on this past year, marked with milestones and much to celebrate: a record number of applications; an inauguration; a successful $100 million bond campaign for the Narragansett Bay Campus (thank you Rhode Islanders); the launch of a 10-year strategic plan; the appointment of Provost Barbara Wolfe; new academic programming and formal collaborations; athletic championships; historic levels of financial aid offered to our students; a State of the University address; millions secured in federal funding for research; unparalleled giving by donors and friends; and renewed commitment and investment by the state in Rhode Island’s flagship university. URI has and always will be in service to all Rhode Islanders, and just as we are changing lives every day in many ways across our campuses, it is our staff, faculty, students, and alumni who impart real change in their own communities and beyond.

The features in this issue share some of the ways URI is broadening and deepening our impact. “Rhode Island’s Water Warriors” profiles URI’s water outreach programs, including Watershed Watch, which rely on a robust network of volunteers and work together to keep the state’s waterways and watersheds clean and healthy. “For the Love of Honey” documents chemistry professor Matt Kiesewetter and entomology professor Steve Alm’s work in developing better honeybee protections. “Summer on the Wild Side: Studying Whale Sharks with Wetherbee” showcases the important programming by assistant professor of biological sciences Brad Wetherbee, whose passion for shark research draws everyone from Mary and me to underrepresented high school students to his boat to learn about these notorious sea creatures. Finally, there is the story of Abby Rodman ’84 and Julie Howard ’86, who host a podcast focused on navigating midlife with truth and sanity.

URI—thank you—it has been a tremendous and rewarding journey so far! And to our newest alumni from the Class of 2023, welcome to the next chapter!

Marc B. Parlange
President, University of Rhode Island

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS; MICHAEL SALERNO
Feedback

We welcome and encourage letters to the editor. Write to us at urimag@uri.edu

Visit us and comment online at uri.edu/magazine

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer issue! Here, we offer you summer reading and an introduction to a few notable members of the Rhody family who are working hard and having fun. And that’s the best kind of work.

In these pages, you’ll meet a chocolate entrepreneur, a craft brewer, and a skating instructor. You’ll meet alumni sisters finding the humor in life’s challenges. And you’ll meet URI researchers who study some cool creatures—sharks and bees.

Keep reading and you’ll find master classes on authentic leadership and music appreciation. And if you like history, you’ll meet someone I can’t help seeing as the Greatest Generation’s Forrest Gump: Brig. Gen. Elliott E. Thorpe ’19, Hon. ’51, who managed to be part of some of the biggest moments in history; in fact, he might have changed history had his warning of the imminent attack on Pearl Harbor been heeded.

Since summer reading wouldn’t be complete without a little romance, we offer you two love stories: Norm Scholler ’71 and Barbara DeCubellis Taylor ’70, who met in kindergarten, dated as URI students, went their separate ways, and then reunited, discovering they had both lost their spouses to Alzheimer’s; and David Nicolato ’98 and Cortney Nicolato ’01, who were both Rhody mascots as students, and who still see URI as the foundation of their life together.

Finally, if your summer includes some time in the water, “Rhode Island’s Water Warriors” is a must-read, along with companion story, “Water Detective.” The stories show how four programs—Watershed Watch, Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officers, Onsite Wastewater Foundation, and On Block Island’s Water Warriors” is a must-read, along with companion story, “Water Detective.” The stories show how four programs—Watershed Watch, Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officers, Onsite Wastewater Foundation, and On Block Island’s Water Warriors”—are working hard and having fun.

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Finally, if your summer includes some time in the water, “Rhode Island’s Water Warriors” is a must-read, along with companion story, “Water Detective.” The stories show how four programs—Watershed Watch, Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officers, Onsite Wastewater Resource Center, and Home Ast”syst—together to help keep the state’s water—from our rivers, ponds, and oceans to our wells and groundwater—clean and healthy. As a proud member of the volunteer army that works with the amazing Elizabeth Heron ’88, M.A. ’04, for Watershed Watch, I hope this story demonstrates the important work these programs do for all of us.

So find a comfy spot by the water and dig in—your summer reading is here.

—Barbara Caron, Editor-in-Chief
NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL

Traditional measures of business success focus on how well corporations create economic opportunities and deliver value to customers and shareholders. But that’s changing—business leaders are looking for ways to benefit people, the planet, and the bottom line.

URi’s fall 2023 Honors Colloquium, coordinated by College of Business faculty members, will explore how businesses and their leaders can do good while doing business. Speakers, including Lauren Ajabshir ’19, social entrepreneur and chief development officer for United Way of R.I., and Wallace Nichols, marine biologist, author, and blue mind visionary, will discuss how businesses operate and thrive while embracing sustainability, the challenges and limitations of business approaches to social good, and more.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the URI Honors Colloquium and the 100th anniversary of URI’s College of Business.

COMPUTING REVOLUTION

URI launched a quantum computing initiative to position students and the Rhode Island workforce at the forefront of the next computing revolution, and to enable scientific discovery and advancement.

Quantum computing offers enhanced processing speed and allows for modeling complex issues, including climate change. Supported by $1 million in federal funding secured by U.S. Sen. Jack Reed, as well as funding from URI’s College of Arts and Sciences and Graduate School of Oceanography, the initiative establishes a research partnership with IBM.

“This initiative will help establish URI as a hub for quantum information science in the Northeast, helping the University expand its teaching capacity, bringing in experts to expand the University’s quantum degree programs, and training the next generation of students and researchers,” said Reed.

STUDENT AFFAIRS VP NAMED

Ellen Reynolds ’91 was appointed URI’s vice president for student affairs following a national search. Reynolds, who holds a Ph.D. in education leadership, has served in leadership roles at URI for two decades, most recently as interim vice president for student affairs. As vice president, Reynolds oversees multiple departments, including the dean of students, counseling center, housing and residential life, dining services, student health services, campus recreation, and Talent Development. She works closely with the Office of Community, Equity and Diversity to develop strategies and programs that support an inclusive and equitable community. She will also develop and implement policies and procedures that support the University’s strategic plan.

URI President Marc Parlange praised Reynolds’ leadership and her commitment to helping students in all aspects of their learning and development.

BUILDING MEDIA LITERACY

Courageous RI, a new URI initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is working against violence and extremism with training and tools that counter disinformation and encourage conversation. The two-year initiative will offer free online workshops on propaganda, disinformation, hate speech, and media regulation. Courageous RI was the only New England grant recipient in this national effort.

Professor Renee Hobbs (communication studies), founder and co-director of URI Media Education Lab, said, “Courageous RI will provide individuals with practical strategies and problem-solving skills at a time when people spend an increasing amount of time online, on social media, and in other digital spaces.”

Get more news at uri.edu/news

MEDICAL SPOTLIGHT

You Can Quote Me

On the popularity of Lego’s Jurassic Park set, in an issue highlighting the 21 best dinosaur toys to spark a child’s imagination:

“Jurassic Park … was the game changer: a whole new generation of now early- to mid-career paleontologists caught the fever from the Jurassic Park and Jurassic World series.”

David Fastovsky, URI professor emeritus, geosciences
Forbes

In an opinion piece marking the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on the topic of sanctions:

“As a tool in the foreign policy arsenal, sanctions should be used sparingly … otherwise they carry the risk of alienating allies, hurting average citizens rather than the elites, and shifting global trade away from the U.S. dollar.”

Koray Ozturk, URI professor of supply chain management
Providence Business News

On “forever chemicals,” found in myriad consumer goods and a study showing that elevated PFAS levels in blood promote weight gain and make it harder to maintain weight loss:

“Our results add to the concern that environmental pollution may be affecting our metabolism, so that we tend to gain weight.”

Philippo Grandjean, M.D., who holds a research professor appointment with the URI College of Pharmacy and serves on STEEP, a special URI-led science effort aimed at understanding PFAS contamination
WebMD

On NASA’s new video demonstrating the gargantuan size of black holes in the galaxies and the hot dust and gas that gets pulled into the black holes, some never to return, while much is spewed back out into the cosmos:

“Black holes are terrible at eating things. They are notoriously picky eaters.”

Douglas Goble, URI astrophysicist
Mashable

PHOTOS: COURTESY ELLEN REYNOLDS; NORA LEWIS; ISTOCK
What do you believe is wrong with the world?
Who am I? Why am I here?
How can we make what is wrong right?

First, Professor Tolani Olagundoye smashes a few leadership myths. Leadership is not something only certain people are born to. It’s not exclusive to extroverts. And it isn’t about being the loudest, the most confident, or the bravest in the room. Aspiring leaders would be better served concentrating on being authentic, service-minded, and selfless, says Olagundoye, Pharm.D. ’17.

Olagundoye is a clinical assistant professor of leadership in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences and a Coastal Institute Fellow. She teaches leadership through URI 101, a course for first-year and transfer students designed to ensure their successful transition to college. A one-credit seminar, URI 101 sets the foundation for a student’s academic life. The University runs about 150 sections of URI 101 each fall.

Most URI 101 sections group students according to their majors and are taught by faculty and staff who work within that discipline. The primary goal is to plan, define, and develop the skills that contribute to students’ academic success, but URI 101 takes a holistic approach to educating students, covering a broad range of topics, including self-care, campus life, technology tools, and leadership.

Olagundoye tells her students the key to finding your leadership style is first to know yourself.

THE FOUR ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
“I have a set of questions I ask my students,” says Olagundoye. “The first I ask is, ‘Who am I?’”

Typically, students answer with an inventory, sharing how many dogs they have or if their grandparents are still living.

“I say, ‘No, that’s not what I’m asking. I want to know—when you’re alone in a room or a car, and the radio has stopped working, and you ask yourself, ‘Who am I?’—how would you answer that?’” Olagundoye says. “Then I ask, ‘Why are you here?’ and they’ll say they’re here to get a degree to get a good job,’” Olagundoye says. “And I say, ‘No, that’s not what I’m asking. I’m asking about your purpose on Earth.’”

Olagundoye’s students nail the third question: What do you believe is wrong with the world?

“They have so much to say: climate change, food insecurity, technology, social media, and the resulting identity crises we’re all going through right now.”

Olagundoye saves the hardest for last: How can we make what is wrong right? But this question speaks to students’ agency—and hope, Olagundoye explains. “Humanity is the cause of many of the global issues we face now,” she says, “but humanity is also one of the solutions to it.”

Self-assessment completed, students examine leadership theories. Olagundoye leans toward authentic and transformational leadership approaches. Authentic leaders favor genuineness, serving alongside the people they work with. Transformational leaders create change by setting an example, Olagundoye says, riffing off New York Times bestselling author Simon Sinek’s Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don’t by Simon Sinek.

In his second book, motivational speaker Sinek, who once worked for the global advertising, marketing, and public relations company Ogilvy, outlines the full complement of challenges an organization might face and recommends a purpose-driven leadership model for dealing with them. The newest edition of his bestselling book includes a bonus chapter on leading millennials.

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Leadership Theory and Practice by Peter Northouse

This textbook on leadership theory is used by more than 1,000 colleges and universities across the world. In addition to outlining the major theories and models of leadership, Northouse includes case studies of companies’ theories in practice. Northouse is a professor emeritus of communication at Western Michigan University.

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves

Bradberry and Greaves outline four pillars of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management as a guide to increasing emotional intelligence, which, they contend, is the key to achieving personal goals and fulfilling one’s potential.

Watch

How Great Leaders Inspire Action

In this short TED Talk (under 20 minutes), Simon Sinek draws upon the examples of Martin Luther King Jr., the Wright brothers, and Apple to illustrate how innovation emanates from a life defined by purpose.
I

For five minutes, close your eyes. We are in the middle of the classic guitar circuit. The note sails into our ears, and we feel an impulse to applaud. But, to our surprise, the first note of the next movement, Menuet 3, begins, and we are catapulted into another world. What’s Up Doc? bar, with carrot cake flavor. In the fourth and fifth movements, Menuets I and II, the music becomes simple and repetitive, yet contemplative and expressive with little ornamental flourishes, and in Rondeau, the music becomes exuberant, which persists through a jig-inspired final movement, Gigue, until the E major chord is gallantly arpeggiated at the end of the work and we exhale, satiated.

Adam Levin is an award-winning classical guitarist and artist/teacher in classical guitar at URI’s Department of Music. He is also the founder and artistic director of the URI Guitar Festival, which will hold its eighth edition from October 18–22, 2023. The festival demonstrates the universal nature of the guitar while uniting artists and audiences alike. For more on the festival, visit uriguitarfestival.org. To follow Levin’s career, please visit adamlivinguitar.com.

Sweet Success

Ella Schneider ‘26 launched an award-winning bean-to-bar chocolate company with her father.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some people made sourdough starter. Ella Schneider ‘26 made chocolate. She and her father, Steven Schneider, purchased a melanger—a stone-on-stone chocolate grinder—in January 2020, just before the pandemic. But it was during the long hours of lockdown that the Wakefield, R.I., residents experimented with different varieties of cacao beans—along with sugar, milk, and cocoa butter—to perfect their recipes. Ella gave bars out to friends and teachers, while her father, an OB-GYN at South County Hospital, gave them out at work. “We got such great feedback,” she says, “we thought we might actually have something.”

It turns out they had the seeds of a business. In 2021, the Schneiders started Ganseit Craft Chocolate, now Rhode Island’s only bean-to-bar gourmet chocolate company. In the past year, they’ve sold thousands of chocolate bars and won national awards. Ella, a business major at URI, has been perfecting the company’s business plan with the help of Launch Lab, an initiative combining mentorship, networking, and events for budding entrepreneurs on campus. “It helped us map out our true costs and better plan for the future,” she says.

Steven Schneider has long been obsessed with small-batch bean-to-bar chocolate and got his daughter hooked when they toured a chocolate maker in 2013. When they got serious about experimenting, they used cacao beans from a small producer in Peru. “They come in smaller quantities and cost more, but they were the best ones we tried,” Steven says. The Schneiders also add less sugar—just 30 percent—compared to some commercial chocolate makers who use up to 70 percent. Since, the pure taste of the chocolate comes through.

Father and daughter started making dark chocolate, then milk, before getting increasingly creative with recipes—like Rhode Island coffee milk and a bagel spice, on the other hand, didn’t make the cut. “It helped us map out our true costs and better plan for the future,” she says.

Despite being new to the industry, the Schneiders achieved a sweet victory at the 2022 Chocolate Alliance Awards when they were among six out of 150 entries to win a gold medal for their milk chocolate—confirming instant acclaim on their fledgling enterprise. “It was a really emotional day for my dad,” Ella says. “He cried a little.” Since then, they’ve also won a gold for their Rhode Island coffee milk and a silver for milk chocolate at the 2023 Craft Chocolate Challenge, a fledgling bean-to-bar chocolate competition sponsored by Kentucky craft chocolatiers Chocolat Bean.

The business has brought the Schneiders closer together, as they bounce ideas off each other and spend long hours roasting beans and setting chocolate bars in molds. “It’s our most popular flavor now,” other top sellers include Lil’ Rhody Sea Salt and 70% Dark Brown Butter Sage. For next Easter, they are considering releasing a "What’s Up Doc" bar, with carrot cake flavor. (A milk chocolate with everything bagel spice, on the other hand, didn’t make it off the drawing board. “That was just gross,” Ella says.)

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Ella plans to continue working for the business part time while she earns her URI degree, then launch the business full time in a storefront upon graduation. Even after all the hard work, she remains a chocolate lover herself. Her favorite flavor? “Milk chocolate,” she says. “You can never go wrong with that.”

—Michael Blanding
A URI team led by John Taylor, associate professor of agroecology, landed a $970,000 National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant to map alternative food networks.

Urban agriculture has attracted attention in the U.S. as a strategy for stimulating economic development, increasing food security and access, and combating obesity and diabetes. Developing effective policies and programs demands, as a first step, accurate mapping of existing urban agriculture sites. Taylor hopes to provide that template, along with URI researchers Julie Keller, associate professor of sociology, and Melva Treviño Peña and Patrick Baur, both assistant professors of fisheries, animal and veterinary sciences.

With partners at the University of Maryland and the University of the District of Columbia, they will map the alternative food networks of immigrant communities and communities of color in Providence, R.I., Baltimore, Md., and Washington, D.C.

For more on URI research, check out Momentum: Research & Innovation, the magazine of URI’s Division of Research and Economic Development, at uri.edu/research/momentum

**MAPPING URBAN AGRICULTURE**

**ALZHEIMER’s DETECTION THROUGH EYE EXAMS**

URI researcher Jessica Alber, an assistant professor in the College of Pharmacy and George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience, is the principal investigator of a new study of whether routine eye exams could be an early screening tool for Alzheimer’s. The study is funded through a five-year, $10.3 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Posterior emission tomography (PET) scanning or lumbar puncture can detect signs of the disease, but the procedures are both invasive and expensive. Using retinal imaging as a “window to the brain,” Alber and collaborators seek to develop a more affordable and accessible screening tool that could potentially be part of a routine eye exam.

“Early detection of any disease leads to therapies,” said Alber. “Over the last 10 years in [Alzheimer’s] research, there has been a shift to preventive medicine, to screening and catching it early.”

While completing his Pharm.D. program, including six clinical rotations at Rhode Island Hospital, Taman played football for the Rams for four years and will enter Brown University’s Warren Alpert Medical School this fall.

“I was raised in a one-parent household, where my mom worked tirelessly at multiple jobs to keep my two brothers and me in school and sports,” Taman said. “My mother has been there every step of the way, offering endless support as I pursued my dreams. Today, I stand before you … and I know that this accomplishment would not have been possible without the unwavering love and encouragement of my mother. So, Mom, look at us now—we made it.”

URI’s newest alumni received diplomas in May. Get to know our 2023 student Commencement speakers.

**THE CLASS OF 2023**

**Thank You, Mom**

URI research that Hilda Lloréns did for her latest book as Irma and Maria.

That’s because the area she studies—the communities surrounding the Jobos Bay in southern Puerto Rico—is where she was born and where generations of her family have lived. In Making Livable Worlds: Afro-Puerto Rican Women Building Environmental Justice (2021), Lloréns chronicles the lives of women in this region who draw on deep cultural knowledge to navigate myriad environmental challenges from industrial pollution to disasters like hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Lloréns, an associate professor of anthropology at URI, says her goal was to elevate the stories of women whose contributions to their community are often overlooked or even erased entirely.

Last year, Lloréns won two prestigious awards for her book. She says she’s appreciative of the recognition, but what’s more important to her is being an advocate for those living around Jobos Bay.

“My academic tradition is advocacy anthropology, so I like to be involved in community work,” Lloréns said. “I didn’t write this book just to write a book; I’m really hoping to help change the reality of a place that needs advocacy.”

—Kevin Stacey

**FEATURED BOOK:**

**MAKING LIVABLE WORLDS**

Most anthropologists would refer to the ethnographic research that Hilda Lloréns did for her latest book as fieldwork. But Lloréns calls it “homework.”

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—Kevin Stacey

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**Thank You, Mom**

Hilda Lloréns, an anthropologist at URI, says her goal was to elevate the stories of women whose contributions to their community are often overlooked or even erased entirely.

That’s because the area she studies—the communities surrounding the Jobos Bay in southern Puerto Rico—is where she was born and where generations of her family have lived. In Making Livable Worlds: Afro-Puerto Rican Women Building Environmental Justice (2021), Lloréns chronicles the lives of women in this region who draw on deep cultural knowledge to navigate myriad environmental challenges from industrial pollution to disasters like hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Lloréns, an associate professor of anthropology at URI, says her goal was to elevate the stories of women whose contributions to their community are often overlooked or even erased entirely.

Last year, Lloréns won two prestigious awards for her book. She says she’s appreciative of the recognition, but what’s more important to her is being an advocate for those living around Jobos Bay.

“My academic tradition is advocacy anthropology, so I like to be involved in community work,” Lloréns said. “I didn’t write this book just to write a book; I’m really hoping to help change the reality of a place that needs advocacy.”

—Kevin Stacey
Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island continues to transform the student experience, the campus, and the research capabilities of URI. As the campaign enters its final year, we are in an exciting phase where early campaign gifts have gained traction and made a difference, with other significant projects still underway and primed to benefit from additional support.

Thanks to the campaign, we’ve seen endowed scholarships bring unique students to URI. We’ve seen academic and athletic spaces reborn for a new age. We’ve seen professors drawn to the University for its academic excellence and sense of community. It has been inspiring to see groups come together to make a collective impact. The senior class set a new giving record. Faculty and staff showed their generosity and belief in our mission with $1 million in cumulative gifts. The Alumni of Color Network launched a new endowed scholarship thanks to community support. When we talk about a campaign, this is what it means. These are the stories that inspire us and position URI in the national spotlight.

Lil Breul O’Rourke
President

Alfred J. Verrecchia ’67, M.B.A. ’72, Hon. ’04
Chairman of the Board

A Network for Leading Women

As part of the campaign, the URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement has launched the Women’s Philanthropy Circle. This new group recognizes women who have committed $100,000 or more in cumulative philanthropic support to the University. Starting in 2021, members have come together for events featuring guest speakers and unique networking opportunities.

The goals of the Circle include expanding opportunities for students, raising the profile of women philanthropists, and sharing ideas for the good of the URI community. Elizabeth A. “Liz” Burt ’79 recently joined the Circle and shares her reflections on this new group.

“Being a member of the Women’s Philanthropy Circle has given me the opportunity to experience the collective enthusiasm, dedication, and team effort of women, diverse in their personal talents and interests, who are united in their commitment to URI. As part of this shared goal, the group has served to solidify and strengthen my support of and engagement with URI, its initiatives, and future leaders.

“My hope for URI students is that they take advantage of the many opportunities and resources URI has to offer that will enrich and support their college experience. In addition to pursuing academic goals, make time to get involved on campus or in the community, cultivate lasting friendships, utilize their education to make a positive impact, and develop a desire for lifelong learning and growth.”

Lil Breul O’Rourke
President

Alfred J. Verrecchia ’67, M.B.A. ’72, Hon. ’04
Chairman of the Board

An Engine for Growth and Discovery
Early in the campaign, URI trustee and former chair of the URIFAE board Thomas M. Ryan ’75, Hon. ’99 and current URIFAE board chair Alfred J. Verrecchia ’67, M.B.A. ’72, Hon. ’04, each established an endowed scholarship for exceptional students. The Thomas M. Ryan Endowed Scholarship and the Alfred J. Verrecchia Distinguished Business Scholarship both went into effect quickly, being awarded to several students year after year, creating a unique community of ambitious young scholars. These students have come to fully embrace the URI experience and work to make their mark on the world.

Katie Tenebruso
Alfred J. Verrecchia Scholar

Activities
• Double major in business administration and kinesiology
• President, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Club
• Vice president and assistant, Women in Business
• Spirit chair, Student Alumni Association
• Rhody Ruckus leadership team
• Member of the Pre-PT Club and Kinesiology Club

Getting the Scholarship
When I found out that I got the Verrecchia Scholarship, I was getting ready for my high school theatre production. And I got the phone call, and they told me that I got this full-ride scholarship to URI. Immediately I ran and told my mom. She was so excited. And then I went off and told all my friends that I was going to the University of Rhode Island.

Standout URI Moment So Far
One of my favorite moments that I’ve had at URI so far is completing the “train the trainer” program. I was learning how to teach a functional 45-exercise program at the gym – basically a HIIT (High intensity interval training) workout, running through different circuits and pods. I got to learn how to take over the class, how to coach others through the class, how to critique form, and how to encourage others to have fun while working out.

Goals as a Student
Before I graduate, there’s a lot of things I want to do. Of course, staying involved on campus, being able to really leave my mark and make a difference. Specifically taking over as president of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Club recently, I definitely want to grow that club since it’s so new. And I want to take advantage of as many opportunities as I can. I want to get as much experience in kinesiology as possible: being able to be a physical therapist, teaching group exercise courses, and really meeting a lot of mentors and getting that networking experience.

Cristian Varela
Thomas M. Ryan Scholar

Activities
• Double major in industrial systems engineering and Chinese
• Double minor in sustainability and international development
• Enrolled in the Peace Corps Prep Program
• Member of Engineers for a Sustainable World
• Member of the Institute of Industrial Systems Engineering
• Member of the engineering fraternity Theta Tau
• Member of BOND (Brothers on a New Direction)

Getting the Scholarship
Nobody in my family knew that I applied for it except for my mom and my grandfather. Dean Libutti [vice provost for enrollment management] told me on the phone, “Congratulations, you got the Ryan Scholarship.” Then it was two minutes of just like, “I did it!” Then I called my grandpa, who helped me brainstorm ideas. And then I had to call my other grandparents. And that’s when I was thinking, I really won it because of them. My application itself was about them, in essence. It really was never only me. It was my grandparents, my parents, everyone who supported me.

Standout URI Moment So Far
One of the best moments for me at URI so far was actually on September 5 of my freshman year, before classes even started. I knew which direction I wanted to go in, and that I wanted to go abroad and do humanitarian engineering. I found the Peace Corps Prep Program. I spoke with Dr. Michael Rice to officially join the program. With that, I had my application paperwork sent to Washington, and felt like, this is the start. For me, that was a really emotional moment.

I remember calling my mom and telling her, “It’s starting. I’m really starting to get going here.”

Goals as a Student
So what I hope to accomplish before graduating is to keep building a big community. I’ve been involved in a lot of student organs, meeting everybody from engineers, nonengineers, people from the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, faculty members, it’s just been a great experience. In the upcoming year I’m also going to be a global peer ambassador, working with the Office of International Students and Scholars and with study abroad students who are coming to URI for the first time, helping them build a support network and adding them to my own. I hope I can be a good first face for them to see.

Having the Verrecchia Scholarship means the world to me. It gave me the opportunity to pursue my passion. My mother really taught me that hard work does pay off. Getting this scholarship showed me that.

Katie Tenebruso
CRISTIAN VARELA

KATIE TENEBRUSO
Key Upgrades
• Training room for student-athlete care
• Video board and teaching wall for enhanced training
• Fueling station to maximize student-athlete performance

The final touches are on schedule for the official opening of the Soloviev Basketball Practice Facility this fall, while the women's and men's basketball teams will gain early access for practice sessions in August.

The state-of-the-art facility provides the men's and women's teams with more court time and greater schedule flexibility, while also showcasing URI's first class facilities for recruits.

The former West Gymnasium has been undergoing a complete renovation since 2022 and features one full-sized basketball court and two half-sized courts, with the same surface as in the floor of the Ryan Center.

An artwork contest sponsored by the Soloviev Art Foundation encouraged URI students to design wall art for display in the hallway leading to the practice facility. The winner of the contest will receive a $2,500 scholarship and credit for the installation.

Practice Makes Perfect
The Soloviev Basketball Practice Facility nears completion

When I entered URI as a fine arts student, the existing building was brand new. Today, the patina of splattered paint and spilled plaster attest to a building which has served as a workplace for decades of art students. A new facility, with more light and space, will become the laboratory for new artists. What a wonderful and important project!

MAEVE HICKEY ’70, DISTINGUISHED MULTIMEDIA ARTIST

From Good to Great
Fine Arts Center as a Community Destination and Artist Showcase

The Fine Arts Center is set to benefit from public support that will update the half-century-old facility. A state bond investment of $57.3 million as well as $16 million allocated in the 2023 state budget will provide much needed renovations. One major initiative of the campaign is to elevate this effort to ensure that the new center reflects the caliber of fine arts talent and the history of artistic accomplishment at the University.

With the recent achievements of Tony-winning actor Andrew Burnap ’13, the long term success of Billboard chart-topping professor Adam Levin, and the potential of students refining their art each day on campus, there is no doubt about the quality of fine arts education at URI. The physical structure of the center needs to communicate this to the broader community, while also serving as a beacon of entertainment and cultural enrichment for 50,000 visitors each year.

Alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations have already contributed to this effort. The University will continue to bring in transformational support to realize this vision.
In 2022, a committed group of faculty and staff agreed to serve as ambassadors to encourage their peers to contribute to URI Day of Giving. This successful initiative gained momentum and raised $1.44 million from 641 individuals by the end of the fiscal year.

The effort continued the following year, topping the previous total to reach $1.55 million with even more faculty, faculty emeriti, and staff members joining in. This level of support from those who are working on campus each day indicates not only their dedication to URI students but also their confidence in the University's direction and the goals of the campaign.

An impact accelerator fund has allowed Metcalf Institute to add staff positions that are essential to scaling up for a broader impact. In 2022, they welcomed a development consultant to expand their donor base, heighten immediate use fundraising, and forge connections among organizations, corporations, and potential funders. Metcalf Institute will further expand this year with the addition of a staff member focused on its inclusive science communication portfolio and support of the growing global community of practice.

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This was a truly awesome fellowship. I woke up every day excited to learn more and hear from a new round of experts. I have a better understanding of how to navigate scientific papers and relationships with scientists, and how to report on the climate. 

KYLE BAGENSTOSE
USA Today, 2020 Annual Science Immersion Workshop for Journalists

Metcalf Institute has extended the reach of its critical work of promoting informed, inclusive communications about environmental challenges and solutions. The institute is developing an increasing number of public programs in addition to its core work of conducting science training for journalists and communications training for scientists, researchers, and other experts. Philanthropic support during the campaign has been key to this growth.

Support From Within

In 2022, a committed group of faculty and staff agreed to serve as ambassadors to encourage their peers to contribute to URI Day of Giving. This successful initiative gained momentum and raised $1.44 million from 641 individuals by the end of the fiscal year.

The effort continued the following year, topping the previous total to reach $1.55 million with even more faculty, faculty emeriti, and staff members joining in. This level of support from those who are working on campus each day indicates not only their dedication to URI students but also their confidence in the University’s direction and the goals of the campaign.

“I have always felt it is important to move University initiatives forward,” said one of the ambassadors, Jeffrey Ulricksen M.P.A. ’21, assistant director of spatial services. “As a staff member, an alum, and parent of two students, I want to ensure that others get to experience this wonderful community. That’s why I give and why I serve on this committee.”

89% toward new $300M goal

Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for URI has made all of these things and more possible, advancing URI and creating new opportunities across five strategic areas:

- Student Access
- The URI Learning Experience
- Transformative Faculty Leadership
- Innovative and Distinctive Programs
- Strategic Opportunities

But the work is not yet done! It will take everyone across the URI community working together to bring the University to the next level of educational and academic success.

$15,000+

Rhody Senior Challenge
The Class of ’23 set a record for the senior class gift
URI’s four water outreach programs—all headed by dedicated URI alumni—work together to keep the state’s waterways and watersheds clean and healthy. Together, they comprise a quiet but mighty force that helps Rhode Island care for what is arguably its most precious resource: water.

By Bill Ibelle

Look at any map of Rhode Island and you’ll realize that we visualize our state as a network of paved pathways that carry us to work, the beach, the mall, and to see friends. But beneath this web of pavement, the natural world has its own system of arteries and capillaries, many of them so tiny they go unnoticed. Yet this network is the lifeblood of our planet—the natural filtration system that purifies our water so we can drink, boat, swim, and simply admire its beauty.

It’s often said that water is the new oil—a resource that will determine which nations thrive and which crumble. This underscores why it’s so important for Rhode Island to preserve the health of its water supply. And this is exactly what the University of Rhode Island is doing through a cluster of four water outreach programs designed to educate decision-makers, engage the public, and create a detailed database to serve as the foundation for cutting-edge research. To create that database, Elizabeth Herron ’88, M.A. ’04, has recruited an army of more than 350 citizen volunteers who test water quality at more than 220 locations.

“The state can’t possibly monitor all of that, so we need volunteers to get the job done,” says Herron, director of URI’s Watershed Watch.

Meanwhile, URI students perform the laboratory analysis on the test samples collected by citizen volunteers.

“Our students gain a ton of lab experience and put into practice all of the things they’re learning in the classroom,” says Herron. “After graduation, many of them go on to work for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Nature Conservancy, and other environmental organizations.”

The database created by Watershed Watch stretches back to 1988 and serves as the basis for water quality restoration plans issued by the state Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

“They are the primary source of data in Rhode Island for determining whether a water body is impaired,” says Katie DeGoosh, a principal environmental scientist at DEM.

In 2002, Watershed Watch data identified elevated fecal coliform levels in Greenwich Cove, which flows into the shellfishing grounds of Greenwich Bay. Additional testing traced the pollution to its sources and was the basis for a DEM cleanup plan that installed 23 catch basins throughout the watershed to reduce road runoff. The plan also eliminated a host of failing septic systems by connecting the offending homes and businesses to the town sewer system. As a result, water quality in the bay improved dramatically, and in 2022, the state reopened a portion of Greenwich Bay for shellfishing for the first time in 20 years.

Waterways are all interconnected, so we can’t ignore any part of the system.”

—Elizabeth Herron, ’88 M.A. ’04, director, Watershed Watch
You never know what you’re going to find when you follow testing to the source of water pollution. It can be as egregious as an untreated sewer outlet or as benign as an upstream beaver dam. In the early days of Watershed Watch, bacteria counts spiked in Tighe Lake in Coventry. The villain? A friendly bread truck that was dropping off bags of day-old bread on the causeway for people to feed the ducks and geese. The birds were adorable, but they pooped so much the lake had to be closed.

Around the same time, Watershed Watch testers encountered a curious phenomenon at Yawgoo Pond in South Kingstown. As an isolated pond surrounded by forest and swampland, it should have been an ideal water-purifying environment. Yet the pond suffered from repeated blue-green algae blooms. Not only did this turn the pond the color of pea soup, but it also signaled the presence of toxic cyanobacteria, which can kill dogs and cause nausea, vomiting, rashes, and liver damage in humans.

“Testing showed that the algae bloom was caused by a phosphorous overload, which is usually caused by fertilizers,” says Art Gold, founder of Watershed Watch. “But there was no agriculture near the pond, so it wasn’t from the turf farms.”

Testers were able to trace the phosphorous to one of three tiny brooks that fed the pond, then follow the pollution upstream and through a swamp to an illicit shellfish processing plant.

“The state cleaned up the site and the pond rebounded,” says Gold, a professor emeritus of natural resources sciences at URI.

This is a classic example of how the capabilities of our water network—the unnoticed swamps and streamlets—can cause problems in major bodies of water.

“Waterways are all interconnected, so we can’t ignore any part of the system,” says Herron.

More recently, Almy Pond in Newport has suffered a series of blue-green algae blooms each summer. Although no one swims in the pond or drinks its water, it sits right behind Newport’s world-famous Cliff Walk and drains into the exclusive Bailey’s Beach, which suffers from annual closures due to high bacteria counts.

Residents have responded by installing burpsy filled with biochar, a highly absorbent charcoal designed to pull phosphorous out of the water.

Across the state in Tiverton, Stafford Pond was closed in 2020 for a similar type of algae bloom. That community responded by treating the lake with aluminum sulfate, which binds to the phosphorous deposits in bottom sediment, making it impossible for cyanobacteria to feed on it.

Who’s the Culprit?

So where does all this lake-killing phosphorous and nitrogen come from? You. Me. All of us.

It’s in the fertilizer we use on our lawns, pet droppings we fail to pick up, the waste from imperfect septic systems, and motor oil and exhaust metals that run off our driveways and roads when it rains. This is what’s called “nonpoint source” pollution because it can’t be traced back to a single culprit like an unregulated fish plant or a large sod farm. Most waterway pollution comes from dozens of sources that silently leach contaminants into the ground, then seep into nearby streamlets, which carry them to a river, lake, or reservoir.

In more urban areas, pollutants wash down the street, into the sewers, and overflow into Narraganset Bay, closing popular beaches.

Gerry Messina, an avid surfer and treasurer of the Rhode Island chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, which works with Watershed Watch to sample and test saltwater sites in the state, says that testers routinely find elevated bacteria levels at three popular surfing breaks on the east and west sides of Point Judith and Second Beach in Newport.

But like many small environmental organizations, the Surfrider Foundation has neither the money nor the manpower to improve state and local environmental policies. This is where the work of the three other URI Cooperative Extension water programs comes in—one focused on septic systems, another on private wells, and a third on environmentally friendly development.

Septic: Gone, But To Where?

It’s hardly a revelation that failing septic systems are a major cause of water pollution. Fixing the problem is another matter, according to Alissa Cox, ’10, M.S. ’13, Ph.D. ’20.

As director of the Onsite Wastewater Resource Center at URI, Cox provides classroom and field training to septic system designers, installers, inspectors, and the public. Her first challenge is human nature: out of sight, out of mind.

“Most of us don’t think about where our water comes from, let alone where it goes,” says Cox. “We just assume our water is clean because this is America.”

The second challenge is financial. Cox notes that an advanced septic system typically costs upward of $25,000, which is why she’s working in partnership with the town of Charlestown to pilot a far less expensive treatment system. While most advanced systems come with a proprietary nitrogen treatment system that removes nitrogen from wastewater before it leaves this system, Cox is testing a drainfield system—developed in Ontario, Canada, and piloted on Cape Cod—that uses layers of sand and sawdust to remove nitrogen in the drainfield.

The goal is to win state regulatory approval for this innovative system design. This requires two years of testing data from 10 locations. Charlestown currently has four of these systems up and running and needs funding for the remaining six. If successful, the URI/Charlestown project could establish an affordable way to improve septic systems throughout the state.

The third challenge Cox faces is maintenance, which is a tough sell, given that septic systems live underground and are rarely noticed until the backyard starts smelling funny—which is long after pollution has plumed through the watershed.

“Even a well-designed system doesn’t work if it’s poorly maintained,” says Cox. “It just like your car: if you don’t change your engine oil, it’s going to seize up and that’s the end of it.”

Surprisingly, even new systems can be a problem. Some advanced systems don’t work because they were installed or designed improperly. URI researchers have discovered dozens of new advanced systems that weren’t working because the switch for the nitrogen removal mode was never turned on and others that didn’t work because of faulty software.
S U M M E R  2 0 2 3

“Communities along the coast are more likely to adopt conservation development because land values depend so much on water quality.”

—Lorraine Joubert ’77, M.S. ’91, director, Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials

Sometimes contamination is catastrophic. In 2001 the water supply for most of Burrillville, including the reservoir and private wells, was contaminated by MTBE, a toxic gasoline additive. Testing traced the contamination back to Charlestown, where an MTBE spill shut down the entire district’s water supply, required a multistory cleanup, and culminated in a civil suit in which Exxon Mobile paid the town $7 million.

This, of course, is an extreme example. In general, the drinking water quality in Rhode Island is quite good, according to McCann, and most problems can be resolved with relatively simple treatments such as chlorine shock for bacteria and a variety of water filters for other pollutants.

“We provide periodic training sessions throughout the state on what to test for, how to test, what the results mean, and how to treat various problems,” says McCann.

Development: A Better Way

Development doesn’t have to be a dirty word. Both new development and modifications to existing development can be done in an environmentally sound manner, according to Lorraine Joubert ’77, M.S. ’91.

As director of URI’s Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program, Joubert teaches city and town officials about these practices and helps them craft ordinances that ensure their implementation.

Some improvements are relatively simple. For example, parking lots typically pave over large natural areas including tiny depressions and streamlets that serve as the capillaries of our natural water systems. Joubert advocates for ordinances that require new parking lots to be dotted with small green spaces where water can gather and filter into the soil rather than running off into sewers. Similar improvements can be made to existing parking lots.

As for roadsides, we can dig swales and natural catch basins along the sides that will filter runoff through the soil, rather than channel all those contaminants into sewers.

Other improvements are more complicated but equally doable. Charlestown recently enacted a “conservation development” zoning ordinance, which reconsiders traditional lots. Using the same amount of land, it groups houses in a village-like cluster, leaving the rest of the land in its natural state. These patches of forest, wetlands, and fields act as natural filtration systems to protect groundwater, the town’s only source of drinking water.

While based on results in other communities, Charlestown officials believe conservation development will increase property values by preserving the natural beauty of the area and may even allow homeowners in these mini-villages to share a single septic system.

“Communities along the coast are more likely to adopt conservation development because land values depend so much on water quality,” says Joubert. “It’s harder to convince communities in the northern part of the state.”

In partnership with DEM, Joubert created a detailed process—the Low Impact Development checklist—to help towns assess their current regulations.

“What we do, basically, is we take all these ordinances and help towns assess their current regulations. A URI graduate conducted this process with officials from the seven towns that form the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, which has been designated a Partnership Wild and Scenic River System by the National Park Service.

“The project fit beautifully with my site-planning and wetland ecology classes,” says Hayden McDermott, M.S.M. ’22, who just received a master’s degree in environmental science and management and recently landed a position with the city of Newport. “It also fits well with my career recently. I was working as a consultant of sorts to local policymakers.”

Performing the checklist was a mammoth undertaking for McDermott, who averaged about 60 hours per town to conduct the detailed evaluation, then put on a PowerPoint presentation before each of the seven planning boards.

“I loved the Q&A after the presentation because the officials were excited about finding ways to implement these ideas,” says McDermott.

The Saugatuck River is one of more than 220 locations monitored by Watershed Watch volunteers.

Alien Invasion

Invasive plants are another notable threat to water quality. Because they have no native predators, they can spread rapidly and ruin prized lakes and ponds for swimming, boating, and fishing. They rob the water of oxygen that fish need to survive and shade out native plants that serve as food for aquatic animals.

The two most common of these invasive plants are milfoil and fanwort, which can be found in more than 100 bodies of water in Rhode Island. Both are dense, feathery green plants that mass just below the surface. Milfoil can grow more than an inch per week and reproduce when it breaks apart, as it does easily when stirred up by boats or swimmers.

One of the newest invasive species in the state is the water chestnut, which was first spotted by a URI graduate student in North Kingstown’s Belleville Pond. The plant has since spread to several other locations including the Blackstone River, Chapman Pond in Westerly, and Central Pond in East Providence. Like water lilies, the dense floating leaves of the water chestnut can cover the entire surface of a pond, blocking out sunlight needed by other plants and fish.

“We expect chestnut to be exponential,” says DeGroot of the DEM.

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early morning on Narrow River and the spring wind blows chillingly from the north as Veronica Berounsky, Ph.D. ’90, lowers a Secchi disc over the side of her Carolina Skiff. The disc is a simple test of water clarity, virtually unchanged since the device was invented in 1865 by the pope’s astronomer, Angelo Secchi.

Berounsky, who has been a volunteer with URI’s Watershed Watch for 20 years, can distinguish the black and white sections with URI’s Watershed Watch astronomer, Angelo Secchi.

Device was invented in 1865 by the pope’s astronomer, Angelo Secchi. The disc is a simple test of water clarity, virtually unchanged since the device was invented in 1865 by the pope’s astronomer, Angelo Secchi.

By Bill Ibelle

It’s

early morning on Narrow River and the spring wind blows chillingly from the north as Veronica Berounsky, Ph.D. ’90, lowers a Secchi disc over the side of her Carolina Skiff. The disc is a simple test of water clarity, virtually unchanged since the device was invented in 1865 by the pope’s astronomer, Angelo Secchi.

Berounsky, who has been a volunteer with URI’s Watershed Watch for 20 years, can distinguish the black and white sections of the disc to a depth of 6 feet, which is quite good compared to the 3-foot visibility typical in midsummer. Cloudy water usually indicates excessive algae growth, which is caused by nutrients from lawn fertilizers, pet waste, and failing septic systems. As the algae die and decompose, they use dissolved oxygen in the water, leaving less for fish and other animals.

In addition to water clarity, all volunteers for the program monitor temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, acidity, chlorophyll, algal density, and nutrients, such as phosphorous and nitrogen. Most importantly, they also watch for elevated bacteria levels, which have kept Narrow River closed to shellfishing since 1986.

Berounsky, a coastal ecologist and coordinator of alumni relations and communications for the Graduate School of Oceanography, explains that tidal estuaries like Narrow River play an important role in New England ecology because the daily mixing of salt and fresh water provides a unique habitat for hundreds of plant and animal species.

But among these biologically diverse microenvironments, Narrow River is special. About 4 miles up the river lie two deep-water kettle ponds carved by retreating glaciers 11,000 years ago. These ponds are protected from the full tidal surge by shallow sandbars that reduce the mixing of salt water that slides in over the bars.

The result is three distinct layers of water with the bottommost devoid of oxygen. Scientists from around the world visit these ponds to study unusual microorganisms that live without oxygen and survive entirely on sulfur.

Berounsky emphasizes that an overturn is an entirely natural phenomenon. It’s smelly, weird, and no fun if you’re a crab—but it’s not caused by pollution.

She also notes that three decades of monitoring the Narrow River have demonstrated that conditions are improving steadily and that new municipal sewer systems, coupled with catch basins to filter road and yard runoff, are making a difference.

Although closed to shellfishing, the river has never been closed to swimming, a fact that Berounsky recently took advantage of by swimming the length of the 6-mile river to raise funds for its preservation.

“As an ecologist, it was interesting to watch the biology change as I swam down the river. It was a new perspective on a river I’ve lived on and worked to preserve for 30 years,” says Berounsky, who is co-president of the Narrow River Preservation Association and chair of the Rhode Island Rivers Council. “It’s a unique body of water and important for us to preserve its beauty and ecology.”

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS

An army of 350 Watershed Watch volunteers monitor and test the water at more than 250 locations around Rhode Island. For one volunteer, who’s been tracking water quality in Narrow River for two decades, it’s a labor of love.

By Bill Ibelle

What’s that smell?

On Friday, Oct. 12, 2017, residents noticed a strong smell of rotten eggs. The next morning, the URI women’s crew team noticed that the river’s lower pond had suddenly turned a strange milky white. Dead fish floated in the water and crabs scurried out of the pond to dig themselves into the soggy exposed mud.

The cause was an “overturn,” in which the stratified water layers of the kettle pond flipped upside down—the top layer rotating to the bottom and the anoxic bottom layer rotating to the top, bringing with it the smelly sulfur that feeds the strange lifeforms thriving in those murky depths.

An overturn is relatively rare, occurring once every decade or so. It requires a combination of several factors. The first is an exceptionally dry fall, which results in less fresh water flowing into the pond and more cold, dense ocean water coming in over the top. The result is a top-heavy pond. But this alone isn’t enough. A quick drop in temperature and a blustery wind are also required.

Berounsky emphasizes that an overturn is an entirely natural phenomenon. It’s smelly, weird, and no fun if you’re a crab—but it’s not caused by pollution.

She also notes that three decades of monitoring the Narrow River have demonstrated that conditions are improving steadily and that new municipal sewer systems, coupled with catch basins to filter road and yard runoff, are making a difference.

Although closed to shellfishing, the river has never been closed to swimming, a fact that Berounsky recently took advantage of by swimming the length of the 6-mile river to raise funds for its preservation.

“As an ecologist, it was interesting to watch the biology change as I swam down the river. It was a new perspective on a river I’ve lived on and worked to preserve for 30 years,” says Berounsky, who is co-president of the Narrow River Preservation Association and chair of the Rhode Island Rivers Council. “It’s a unique body of water and important for us to preserve its beauty and ecology.”

PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS

An army of 350 Watershed Watch volunteers monitor and test the water at more than 250 locations around Rhode Island. For one volunteer, who’s been tracking water quality in Narrow River for two decades, it’s a labor of love.

By Bill Ibelle

What’s that smell?

On Friday, Oct. 12, 2017, residents noticed a strong smell of rotten eggs. The next morning, the URI women’s crew team noticed that the river’s lower pond had suddenly turned a strange milky white. Dead fish floated in the water and crabs scurried out of the pond to dig themselves into the soggy exposed mud.

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PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS
Whale sharks are the largest sharks and the largest of any fishes alive today, reaching lengths of up to 60 feet. They are plankton/filter feeders, so they’re not dangerous, says Brad Wetherbee, who takes students in his BIO 492 course, which focuses on field methods for studying sharks and rays, to Mexico to observe whale sharks in the wild.

When Marc began his tenure as president of URI in the summer of 2021, I knew we were in for an adventure. But I couldn’t have imagined that a year later I’d be swimming in the dark blue waters off the coast of Isla Mujeres, Mexico, eye to eye with a whale shark.

By Mary Parlange

**Summer on the Wild Side**

**WHALE SHARKS WITH WETHERBEE: A TRAVELOGUE**

When Marc began his tenure as president of URI in the summer of 2021, I knew we were in for an adventure. But I couldn’t have imagined that a year later I’d be swimming in the dark blue waters off the coast of Isla Mujeres, Mexico, eye to eye with a whale shark.

By Mary Parlange

**AUGUST 2, 2021**

It’s Marc’s first day at URI, and we are welcomed by a crowd of faculty and staff on our new front lawn. URI’s resident tick expert, Professor Thomas Mather, gives us a can of tick repellent. A group of students presents us with a cantaloupe grown in the teaching garden. Professor Brad Wetherbee invites us out shark fishing. “Wait, what?”

**SEPTEMBER 19, 2021**

It’s a clear day. Brad Wetherbee and a few of his students are waiting at the Wickford, R.I. docks to usher Marc and me onto the R/V Hope Hudner. We’re joining them on their regular shark-tagging excursion. Wetherbee, as his students call him, conducts field research on sharks and rays and teaches ecology, marine biology, and shark biology in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences (CELS). He’s popular with students, who love his dry sense of humor. He also runs a summer shark camp for city kids that has been featured on NBC’s Today Show.

Wetherbee is not a man of many words or expressions. At the helm of the boat, he’s the picture of a crusty fisherman. I can’t get a read on whether he’s happy we’re out here or not, and I’m usually good at reading
people. But as we motor out past Point Judith and set out the lines, things start to relax. I get to know the students: Dario Castillo, I learn, is one of only four National Geographic STEM field assistants in the whole country. Colby Kresge will do a master’s degree with Wetherbee. Jahnae Drummond came to URI from Bali, Indonesia. She swims incredibly muscular with shorter snouts and backs. Makos are compact and sleek, supple swimmers with cobalt blue sharks. Blue sharks are long, are common in R.I. waters, as are they then carefully release. Makos tag, and photograph the fish, which a Mako shark while they measure, photograph, tag, and release. Each one jumps to his or her station to help bring a shark aboard. Dean Kirby and I have jobs, too. While two students run water across its gills, the rest of us measure, photograph, tag, and then carefully release the shark. I’m impressed by how much they have already learned about handling sharks and collecting data.

**FEBRUARY 17, 2022**

Wetherbee gets in touch with me to share the details of the summer course in Mexico. For my August schedule is wide open, so I decide to tag along solo on the two-week adventure, rooming with the other faculty member on the trip, marine affairs assistant professor Elizabeth Mendenhall.

**AUGUST 3, 2022**

The summer course begins. First, we spend a week on waters close to home—four half-days on the Hope Huddien, learning how to catch, measure, sex, tag, and take tissue samples, from sharks. Every day a different student takes the helm of the boat and drives out past Point Judith. I join them one morning, along with CELS Dean John Kirby. Even though the students are brand new at this, they have been taught what to expect, and when the last shark, each one, jumps to his or her station to help bring a shark aboard. Dean Kirby and I have jobs, too. While two students run water across its gills, the rest of us measure, photograph, tag, and then carefully release the shark. I’m impressed by how much they have already learned about handling sharks and collecting data.

**AUGUST 8, 2022**

It’s 7 a.m. and we’re at T.F. Green Airport in Providence, R.I. A few of the students have never been outside the U.S. before, they are excited and a little nervous. Professor Mark Parlange has himself as a little anxious about renting with the president’s wife and I do my best to break the ice. It turns out that she is the perfect complement to Wetherbee on this adventure, building immediate rapport with the students by her relaxed, confident manner. Two graduate student teaching assistants are with us as well: Colby, who was with us on the Hope Huddien, and Dan Daye. We are in good hands. Soon, we’ve landed, made it through customs in Cancun, and boarded the ferry to Isla Mujeres. Hordes of golf carts pour along streets lined with tourist shops, restaurants, churro stands, and swings bars (there are literally swings at the counters). Our hotel is right on the beach, run by Rhode Island native Anthony Mendillo Jr. and his wife, Kin. They also own a restaurant and a sportfishing business—Keeen M International Blue Water Encounters. His boats, crew, and guides will be taking us out to the sharks this week. The hotel’s golf carts are a hit with the students.

**AUGUST 9, 2022**

During the night there is a huge storm, but morning dawns clear. The seas are still rough, and some of the students regret forgetting to take their Dramamine. Up on the bow of the boat our guide scans the horizon with binoculars. I have no idea how he can spot a shark—every wave looks like a fin to me. Finally, the radio buzzes with something other than “Nada,” and we join a flotilla of boats surrounding a few fins moving slowly through the water. The protocol is this: A guide in the water directs two people at a time to a jump in, have a short swim alongside the shark, and then go back to the boat. Of course, the shark is moving, so the boat must keep pace, maintaining a reasonable distance from the swimmer, while not hitting any sharks, people, or other boats. This dance gets increasingly complicated as more boats join the crowd. Wetherbee tells us that in past years hundreds of sharks have aggregated here, and the number of tourist operations getting into the whale shark business has been growing steadily. This year, however, very few boats are showing up. No one is really sure why—and Wetherbee reminds us that this is another reason that doing research on whale sharks is so important.

My turn comes. The water is dark, dark blue, the bottom, miles down. The shark is a spotted behemoth gliding powerfully through the water, its mouth a gaping cavern. For most of the students in the course, swimming with the sharks was the highlight of the trip.

And then the shark is past us and the guide waves me back to the boat. The students, full of adrenaline, show each other videos from their GoPros. “That was so cool!” “I was right next to it!” Wetherbee beams at their excitement.

**AUGUST 10, 2022**

The water is much calmer today. Everyone nods off as we motor out. News of a shark sighting cracks on the radio and in minutes, dozens of boats zero in on the spot like ants swarming a speck of food. It’s just one shark, though. The boats line up, depositing and collecting their human payloads. Our students take their turns in the water with the shark and emerge exhilarated. Our captain, Luis, hears of another spotting. That scene is far less orderly, however, with several boats breaking protocol. Soon the guardaparques, or park rangers, show up with flashing lights and sirens, ordering everyone out of the water. Luis tells us that the downside of the
explore in whale shark tourism is that probably only 30 percent of the drivers are experienced. With hundreds of sharks spread over a larger area, it’s manageable, but this is a potentially dangerous situation for people and sharks alike. Luís has had enough. We head off to a nearby reef for snorkelling and ceviche.

AUGUST 11, 2022

Today is the one “free” day on the trip, for students to do whatever they want. I decide I need to understand sportfishing, so I charter one of Anthony’s boats for the morning. Wetherbee joins me, along with Colby, Dan, and Emma. I get the first bite—a 25-pound skipjack tuna. Dan reels in a bonito. Then the captain spots it—the ultimate catch, a sailfish. Emma harnesses in and the fight begins. She’s tougher than the fish and shines with joy as she poses for the obligatory photo, before the fish is released back into the blue.

Flashes of neon yellow and blue indicate a school of mahi-mahi. Unlike the sail, this is a fish we can keep. We’re about to give up for the day when the captain spots another sail. This time Colby has the rod, and the fish puts up an epic fight. We all line up for another photo, Colby grinning ear to ear.

On the way back to port, Wetherbee, who didn’t catch a single fish, is smiling like the Cheshire cat: “It’s moments like this...” he says, trailing off. “I’m so happy he caught that fish.”

AUGUST 12, 2022

The full moon is setting behind a cloud as we motor out on calm seas. Somewhere there’s a fin cutting that smooth surface, a whale shark swimming up its bloodstream. We spot a pod of dolphins in the distance and change course to intersect with them, cutting the engine so we can jump in the water. Below the surface, it’s a cacophony of clicks and squeaks, the dolphins plunging under and around us. I take off, kicking my flippers as fast as I can. A big one swims circles around me. I can reach out and touch them! They’re talking to me! I’m in the pod! One of them lets loose a stream of poop right in front of me. I surface and reorient myself, listening as the clicks fade. The high of this incredible interspecies experience stays with us for the remainder of the trip. I would have come to Mexico just for this.

When we arrive at the site of a shark sighting, we count 120 boats, including the guardaparques. Instead of joining the chaos, we take turns jumping off the bow of the boat and then head to the reef, where we see a sleeping sea turtle, a small shark in a crevice, and a pod of cuttlefish.

I chat with some of the students about what they want to do with their lives. “I want to be Dr. Wetherbee when I grow up,” says Rachel. “I want to drive a boat and tag a shark. I want to study the reproductive lives of fish.” “Did you know some fish species have three sexes?” She knows all of them. “I have a pet store, and this is the first time she’s been to a reef. Julianna wants to teach high school science. Steph contemplates turning her wildlife biology major into a job as a fish and game warden and is happy she’s been able to spend so much time on the boat without getting seasick. Every evening we have listened to presentations—Wetherbee, teaching assistants Colby and Dan, Professor Mendenhall, and a colleague of Wetherbee’s, Mahmood Shiyu, director of the Guy Harvey Research Institute at Nova Southeastern University in Florida. For the next two evenings, the students are the teachers. Working in pairs, they share what they have learned about whale shark ecology, from ecotourism to field methods to population dynamics and migration patterns.

Later, I head out into the warm night to visit the sea turtle hatching site on the beach outside the hotel. Volunteers collect eggs laid on the island’s beaches, tend them, and then release them when they are ready to go—protecting them from predators at every stage of the journey. Earlier in the week, we saw three big turtles digging their nests into the sand near the pool. Tonight, under the red of their headlamps, the volunteers show us a bin of hatchlings. One day they, too, will crawl up on this same beach to lay their eggs.

AUGUST 13, 2022

On the last evening of the trip, we feast at Anthony’s restaurant—and on the fish we caught. I reflect on something Wetherbee told me before the trip—that there is nothing quite like observing whale sharks in the wild. And now I understand.

“I reflect on something Wetherbee told me before the trip—that there is nothing quite like observing whale sharks in the wild. And now I understand.”

Wetherbee tells me, “It’s great to see these students experience another country and culture while learning about a species as impressive as whale sharks.”

Meat Mary

Since arriving at URI in 2021, Mary Parlane has pursued her interest in environmental issues and sustainability by organizing discussions that bring students, faculty, and local business leaders together. She has become a certified Master Gardener and is involved in URI’s Fred Forman Market. She is passionate about community-building at URI, with a particular interest in welcoming and assisting international students, scholars, and their families. Parlane has a B.A. in philosophy from Pomona College and an M.A. in atmospheric science from the University of California, Davis. She has been a writer, editor, translator, and media relations professional for more than 25 years.
Sisters Julie Howard ’86 and Abby Rodman ’84 host *Sisters Cracking Up*, a podcast focused on midlife. They interview authors and experts as they seek truth and sanity. It’s funny, poignant, insightful, authentic—and did we mention funny?

By Diane M.Sterrett
Things that keep us laughing, keep us sane. The things that can really crack us and all the things that we can talk about all the things that keep us laughing, keep us sane. Sisterhood is one of those things.” With that inspiration, Sisters Cracking Up was born, and the first episode launched June 16, 2020. Producing a Winner Creating the show was a journey in every aspect: the steep technological learning curve, surveying listeners to find topics that landed, and deciding what kind of conversations to have. They manage every aspect of the show from soup to nuts, including leaving in those little sisterly jabs that add to the authenticity and charm of the podcast.

At first, a listener is drawn in by Abby and Julie’s banter and unering insights. Their interviews, with an incredible range of podcast guests, keep listeners coming back for more. “Our message resonated with folks. There were some experts we reached out to, we’re really excited to have on, “ and questions like, “Can I be your third sister?” They stress the importance of sister-friends, those who are not biologically related but who serve a sister role in your life. “There’s an honesty in your relationship with your sister and sister-friends that you don’t really find anywhere else,” Julie explains.

At the end of each podcast, they hope listeners feel entertained, a little more informed, and part of the family—as well as part of something larger than themselves. “We want them to feel they know us and that they’re not alone, whatever it is that they’re going through,” Abby says.

What makes the podcast unique? One of their guests, Steven Petrow, offers some insight. In Season 2, he spoke about his book, Stupid Things I Won’t Do When I Get Old. He is an award-winning journalist and book author who is best known for his Washington Post essays on aging, health, and civility. “I might be biased in favor of Julie and Abby because I have a real-life sister, also named Julie, who’s my best friend,” Petrow says. “When I was a guest on Sisters Cracking Up, I felt at home with these two wise, funny, and empathetic women who were so present in the interview. This might not seem like a big deal, but they actually listen to people, which is pretty close to my own. For all these reasons, Abby and Julie are unique in the media landscape today.” How To Happily Work Together Not all siblings can work well together, but these two clearly do. Abby warns it wasn’t always a bed of roses. In the beginning, one of their biggest hurdles was learning how to collaborate and make room for what was important to each of them, given that they both like things to be “just so.” “We really had to adapt to the way the other one worked, to our own sensitivities, frustrations, working styles—all of that. You can love someone and hang out with them forever, but if you don’t work with someone, you have no idea who they are in that situation,” Julie says.

Even so, they agree that working with each other has also been their biggest joy. “Julie is absolutely creative to a fault. She’s super-bright, much brighter than I am, and that’s so great for me. I get to ride on her coattails. But honestly, nobody in this world makes me laugh like she does,” Abby says.

“We laugh all the time,” Julie agrees. “And people really like Abby, so much more than me, which has been incredibly helpful in getting guests. I think she could get anyone to come on the podcast.” Beyond the practical how-to podcast lessons, they’ve both learned some things about themselves from the process. “The podcast has forced us to look at things about ourselves that maybe we wouldn’t have had to do in any kind of work situation, because this work situation is unique,” Abby says. “I know what triggers Julie, she knows what triggers me. We have a shared childhood experience and history. The key is looking at ourselves and each other and not always liking what we see but leaning into the love anyway.”

“The idea was to create a community of women in our age group where we can talk about all the things that can really crack us, and all the things that keep us laughing, keep us sane.” — Abby Rodman ’84

Julie can be hard enough—aging parents, empty nests, career challenges, physical changes—but then throw a pandemic in the midst and you have the makings of a crack-up. Sisters Abby Rodman ’84 and Julie Howard ’86 have each other to lean on, and their listeners have their podcast, Sisters Cracking Up.

Think back to spring of 2020. Like many, Abby, a psychotherapist, and Julie, a life and leadership coach, were burned out, worried about getting sick, sanitizing everything, living too far apart, and dealing with ever-present uncertainty. They had always wanted to work together and saw the pandemic as an opportunity.

“We both had more time on our hands than we ever had before, we were checking in on each other more often. The podcast gave us flexibility to work on a project where we didn’t have to travel and we didn’t have to be together,” Julie says.

Their focus on midlife grew organically, as well. As they point out, it’s a life stage that previous generations really didn’t talk about. They are typical midlife stage that previous generations really didn’t have to be together, “Julie says. And sisterhood is one of those things. “When I was a guest on Sisters Cracking Up, I felt at home with these two wise, funny, and empathetic women who were so present in the interview. This might not seem like a big deal, but they actually listen to people, which is pretty close to my own. For all these reasons, Abby and Julie are unique in the media landscape today.”

How To Happily Work Together

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Making the Most of Every Hour

In addition to the podcast, they both have full-time jobs, clients, families, and other demands on their time. Abby is a speaker and author of the Amazon bestseller Without This Ring: A Woman’s Guide To Successfully Living Through and Beyond Midlife Divorce. She is regularly sought out by media outlets for her expertise on relationship and parenting issues and is a featured contributor to HuffPost. Julie is a former beauty, wellness, and trend expert who has worked for some of the world’s most recognized brands. She is also the author of a middle-grade fantasy novel and a young adult coming-of-age novel and is a lifelong advocate for the healthy development and empowerment of women and girls.

How do they manage it all? With grace and humor. “When you’re passionate about something and you want to do it, you find the time,” Abby says. “I don’t think either one of us has as much free time as we’d like, but we’re doing this amazing thing together, talking to great minds and authors and expanding our own worlds and hopefully expanding others’ worlds, as well. It’s a pretty rewarding way to spend your time.”

Rhode Islanders at Heart

Though they live out of state, the sisters still have a home in Rhode Island and feel URI is an inextricable part of their history. Julie was an art major, and Abby was a journalism major. For them, college was a safe space to test the boundaries of independence. “I felt supported by the faculty and the teaching body that I had around me. It was a very healthy, solid education for life,” Julie says. “At URI, we learned to flex our creative muscles,” Abby explains. “It’s funny that all these years later, doing this podcast kind of reflects our studies from URI. Journalistically and creatively. Certainly my journalism studies helped me tremendously in the work that I’m doing now on the podcast in terms of what it means to tell a story start-to-finish and tell it well. A lot of those things I learned at URI.”

What’s Next?

The sisters show no signs of slowing down and aim to keep podcasting on a regular basis. “We have a list of dream guests including soccer great and author Abby Wambach, podcaster and author Mel Robbins, physician and addiction expert Dr. Gabor Maté, and actor Danny Bonaduce,” says Abby. “We will keep going as long as we can attract incredible guests and our sisterhood of listeners sticks with us.”

Get in on the Conversation

Abby and Julie invite you to listen to the podcast on your favorite podcast platform and reach out at sisterscrackingup.com. “We’d love to hear from URI alumni! If anybody’s doing anything interesting that they want to talk about, let us know,” Abby says. And then you, too, can be part of the family and offer your insights on life’s crack-ups with a side of humor.
For the Love of Honey

Chemistry professor Matt Kiesewetter and entomology professor Steve Alm are putting their heads together to develop better ways to protect honeybees from varroa mites.

By Lauren Rebecca Thacker

When Matt Kiesewetter was promoted to associate professor of chemistry in 2018, he breathed a sigh of relief and thought it might be time to find himself a hobby that had nothing to do with his work. So, on a whim, he ordered bees.

“Why bees?” he offers, and quickly answers, “I have no damn clue. I can’t tell you why. But when I was growing up, I raised butterflies in the yard. Back then, in the country, you could grab milkweed from the side of the road and raise some monarchs. I guess that sparked my interest in insects. So, I got bees.”

Now, five years later, he’s got four hives in his backyard and more honey than he knows what to do with. And in that time, he realized that beekeeping didn’t give him the break from chemistry he was looking for, but instead gave him a new focus: controlling the honeybee’s enemy. Enter, the varroa mite.
Varroa mites. Kiesewetter explains, are the number one stressor of honeybee hives. If you’re a bee- and honey-lover, but not a beekeeper, you may be surprised by this. What about colony collapse disorder, the mysterious and widely reported phenomenon that causes worker bees to flee their hives, leaving their queen to die? Well, that’s certainly a problem, but it’s not as prevalent as it’s used to be. The Environmental Protection Agency reports that incidents of colony collapse disorder have dropped dramatically since the disorder’s height in 2008. If you’re a backyard beekeeper, varroa mites are probably your biggest headache.

Female mites enter and lay eggs in a honeybee brood cell—where the eggs, larvae, pupae, and adult bees develop. Mites develop alongside the growing bees, eventually attaching to a honeybee’s fat body, a type of insect tissue that is analogous to the liver in mammals. There are seven confirmed diseases that the mites bring to hives and at least a dozen more suspected—all determinantal, some fatal. The mites cannot exist without the honeybees. They work and are just great. And it’s been a lot of fun. "

Steve Alm is no bee amateur. The professor of plant sciences and entomology is an expert in pollinators of all kinds, from the honeybee to the bobcat and coyote research; efforts to develop species for the bees and the beekeepers. "One particularly challenging aspect of studying varroa mites is their short lifecycle. Mite populations are at their peak in August, September, and October. Scientists want to study mites during this peak, but three months isn’t much time."

Casey Johnson, M.S. ’22, published a logical Survey’s Eastern Ecological Science Center; and Kassie Picard, Ph.D. ’23, published a paper demonstrating their findings. "The research, published in the Journal of Economic Entomology, tested four organic acids at a variety of concentrations on varroa mites and three insect species. The results showed that varroa had levels of mortality consistent with the other species, suggesting that other, more readily managed test subjects can be used when testing varroa mite treatments."

Kiesewetter is pleased with the experiment, which also tested methods of applying the various acids.

"These organic acid treatments are very popular,” he says, adding that he uses them in his own hives. The research gives insight into how they work and paves the way for more experimentation. “In the future, we’ll experiment with some synthetic pesticides that are less toxic to bees while hitting the target mites—that we want.”

Alm explains the risks inherent in the process of treating a hive with standard commercial products with formic or oxalic acids, both naturally occurring chemicals. “Products with formic acid say right on the package that they may kill your queen and up to 1,500 bees. So, yeah, that’s very rough on a colony. And with oxalic acid, you need to wear special respirator, so it’s been beekeepers, as well. Sometimes the cure is almost as bad as the disease. We’re trying to find safer materials for the bees and the beekeepers.

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Casey Johnson, M.S. ’22, a research associate, adds that while there are methods to rear varroa mites outside of a honeybee colony and their natural lifecycle, “it’s very work-intensive and not foolproof. With our methods, we can get them to live for 24 hours in the lab outside of a hive, but that’s it.”

And then there are the additional challenges of maintaining the hives and controlling the scale of experiments, things that Kiesewetter had to adjust to when turning his attention to honeybees.

“You think about a hive being 50,000 bees and you’re like, ‘OK, good, that’s great,’ he says. "But it’s only one hive. Fifty thousand bees are a data point of one. If you have five experimental hives and five control hives, you can do more tests; syn can get out of hand, real fast. Our initial tests are meant to figure out if we should scale up.”

Julia Vieira ’21, M.S. ’23, a student in Alm’s lab, tells us about a recent experiment designed to address these challenges, saying, “The idea was, could we get another species that is comparable to varroa, and has a similar mortality rate, that we could use for preliminary bioassays when we don’t have access to varroa populations?”

It turns out, the answer was yes. In 2022, Kiesewetter, Alm, Vieira, and Johnson, along with colleagues Elizabeth Varkonyi, M.S. ’22; Howard Cimb erg, scientist emeritus with the U.S. Geological Survey’s Eastern Ecological Science Center; and Kassie Picard, Ph.D. ’23, published a paper demonstrating their findings. “The research, published in the Journal of Economic Entomology, tested four organic acids at a variety of concentrations on varroa mites and three insect species. The results showed that varroa had levels of mortality consistent with the other species, suggesting that other, more easily managed test subjects can be used when testing varroa mite treatments.”
The beekeeping community must contend with varroa mites in order for hives to survive. And Johnson points out that varroa mites are a problem for honeybees now but says, “There are documented cases of pathogen spillover from managed honeybees to native bees. Beekeepers,” she explains, “have a responsibility to monitor and treat varroa to help mitigate the spread of diseases into our native wild bee populations.”

There are different perspectives on how best to treat the mites and ensure a healthy honeybee population. One approach is what Kiesewetter calls Darwinian beekeeping, using no controls, in order to develop a strain of bees with inherent mite resistance. But that’s a long game, and Kiesewetter isn’t sure it’s a realistic approach. Other beekeepers are interested in physical methods, like heating hives to a temperature that harms mites but not bees, and using powdered sugar to coat bees, then shaking them until the mites release their hold. But research, including a soon-to-be-published paper by Johnson, shows that powdered sugar is effective for monitoring mite populations, but not for eradicating them. And studies on heat treatments are in the early stages. So that leaves chemicals, synthetic and natural.

“It might sound like, ‘Oh, of course the chemist wants to use chemicals;’ it’s not really like that,” Kiesewetter says. “Pesticides work. They have sustained the beekeeping world for decades. But if people stop using them or if mites develop resistance, that would be catastrophic for the beekeeping community.”

As a chemist and a beekeeper, Kiesewetter wants to keep his hives healthy, and yours, too. Even if beekeeping didn’t end up being the nontoxic hobby he first imagined, it has meant a lot to him over the years. It gave him a new direction and exciting collaborations.

“Part of the allure of Colorado was that the brewing and beer scene was much more established, especially back then,” Kevin says. “We were excited to get into the beer scene as much as we could and explore a new area of the world,” he remembers. “But it all a fire under me to get the ball rolling and do something I had always wanted to do.”

“In May 2021, Hive Beer officially launched as an alternating proprietorship brewery. Kevin maintains his day job and forwards his equipment. He pondered it for a while, and then the pandemic hit. “Things were weird in March 2020. I didn’t know what was going to happen in the world,” he remembers. “But it all a fire under me to get the ball rolling and do something I had always wanted to do.”

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Kevin got his first taste of brewing on professional equipment in 2018, when he used Grey Sail’s facility to make a batch of beer in honor of his and Michelle’s dog, Mahoney. Grey Sail sold the commemorative beer in their taprooms, with proceeds going to canine cancer research.

Kevin calls the experience a “lightbulb moment” that got him wondering if he could fast-track his dream of launching Hive commercially by renting Grey Sail’s equipment. He pondered it for a while, and then the pandemic hit. “Things were weird in March 2020. I didn’t know what was going to happen in the world,” he remembers. “But it all a fire under me to get the ball rolling and do something I had always wanted to do.”

Kevin and Michelle returned to Rhode Island, where Kevin started working as a software engineer and Michelle decided to take her interest in beer and go pro. She joined Grey Sail Brewing, based in Westerly, R.I., in 2012. More than a decade later, she has held many positions at Grey Sail, including head brewer.

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Opposite page: Ang Cai, Ph.D. ’17, shot this photo of the moon gate at Kinney Azalea Gardens in South Kingstown, located just a half-mile southeast of URI’s Kingston Campus. Cai is a research assistant professor in URI’s College of Pharmacy and is director of the Centralized Research Core Facility for RI-INBRE. He pursues photography when he’s not working for the pure fun of it. “My work creates positive experiences for me,” he says. “Every time I see the perfect shot in front of me, I cannot wait to share it with my friends.”

The proprietors of Kinney Azalea Gardens are URI alumni Tony Faella ’51 and Betty (Kinney) Faella, M.S. ’67. The Azalea Gardens are a popular destination in the spring, when the azaleas are in bloom. Cai was inspired by the serenity of this moment on a May evening just before sunset, calling the light “tender and inviting.”

Follow Cai on Instagram @Leon_tsai_.

CALLING ALL ALUMNI PHOTOGRAPHERS
Share your photos with your classmates and fellow Rhody alumni in URI Magazine. Send photos, along with background (the story behind the photo), to urimag@uri.edu and we will consider all submissions for publication in future issues of URI Magazine.

LET’S KEEP THE RHODY NETWORK STRONG
Would you take a moment to update your information for URI’s alumni database? Thank you!
Visit alumniportal.uri.edu/update-info.

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CLASS NOTES
Let your classmates know what you’re up to. Reunions, gatherings, career or academic updates, weddings and birth announcements, retirements, exhibition openings, travel, or your favorite URI memories. Submit notes and photos by email to urimag@uri.edu or online at alumni.uri.edu.
Facebook and Instagram and shipping to most states via you’re a fellow URI alum! Find them @BassersFineWine on festival every October. If you’re in the area, stop in and mention Springs/Parkland community, featuring the best wines from 2019 opening were some amazing friends from their URI days. Basser’s Fine Wine and Craft Beer in are the proud owners of Emily (Fried) collaborators Mitch Seidman and Paul Mason ’84 (top) and musical URI FRIENDS GATHER FOR NETWORK SUMMER 2023 startup record label, North Star, at a and Richard nity to join two more URI alumni, including Arthur Montanaro ’82, and successful sports and of TD Garden, one of the of Business students at our held a lunch with the College was named Finan- of Foreign Wars (VFW) Washington Office. He is the 911 veteran to hold the position. He served in the Army Reserves from June 1999 to June 2007. He served in the Iraq War from 2003 to 2004 as a civil affairs officer with the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, where he received the Bronze Star for meritorious service and the Combat Action Badge. While still serving in the Army Reserves, he used his G.I. Bill benefits to earn a bachelor’s degree in journalism and political science from URI. He leveraged his education and experience to become deputy communi- cations director at the American Veterans (AMVETS) National Headquarters before landing at the VFW Washington Office. Graham Gardner has pub- lished a new book, Tiny and Wild: Build a Small-Scale Meadow Anywhere. Published in March 2023 by Cool Springs Press, an imprint of Quarto Group, the book is available at qarto.com and Amazon. Gardner dis- cussed his book as part of the Gardening with the Masters Tour, sponsored by URI’s Cooperative Extension Master Gardener in June. For more about Gardner, visit uri.edu/ news/2023/05/tiny-and-wild.

2008 Maria Cotta, M.L.S. ’08 was named 2023 Alumna of the Year by the URI Graduate School of Library and Informa- tion Studies at the GSLIS Annual Gathering and 60th Anniversary Jubilee in May. Cotta has worked as a youth librarian at the Paw- tucket Public Library, Central Falls Free Public Library, and Knight Memorial Library in the Providence Community Library. In 2013, she returned to the Pawtucket Public Library as a bilingual children’s librarian. There, she spearheaded efforts to develop a sensitive friendly inclusive group to empower librarians to better serve neu- raldiverse individuals and their families. Among many other accomplishments, Cotta has also served as chair of the Rhode Island Latino Book Awards since 2014.

2010 Noelle Tubbs will be pursuing a lifelong dream to attend vet- erinary school, as she returns to New England this August to start her D.V.M. program at the prestigious Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University (Class of 2027). She graduated from URI in 2010 with a B.S. in marine biology and biological oceanography, and wildlife conservation. She later attended the University of Cape Town in South Africa for an MSc in zoology, studying how climate change affects the physiology, behavior and reproductive capabilities of endangered African penguins. Between and after studying, who practices in an internal medicine outpatient clinic at UConn Health. She served as president of the Connecticut Pharmacists Association from Sept. 2021–Sept. 2022 and was inducted as a Fellow of the Connecticut Pharmacists Asso- ciation in their inaugural class in 2019. She lives in Southing- ton, CT with her husband and two children.

2006 Ryan Gallucci was named the executive director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Washington Office. He is the post-9/11 veteran to hold the position. He served in the Army Reserves from June 1999 to June 2007. He served in the Iraq War from 2003 to 2004 as a civil affairs officer with the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, where he received the Bronze Star for meritorious service and the Combat Action Badge. While still serving in the Army Reserves, he used his G.I. Bill benefits to earn a bachelor’s degree in journalism and political science from URI. He leveraged his education and experience to become deputy communi- cations director at the American Veterans (AMVETS) National Headquarters before landing at the VFW Washington Office.

2005 Samuel Sneed, M.C.P. ’05 was appointed as a board member for the Maryland Transportation Authority by Governor Wes Moore and confirmed by the Senate in April of 2023. He will serve in this role for a four-year term while maintaining his posi- tion as director of transportation for Anne Arundel County. He is also actively serving the Baltimore- more Regional Transportation Board and is a board member for the Transit Association of Maryland and a commissioner for central Maryland Regional Transit Agency.

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and is a trustee of the William H. Davies, Jr. Career & Technical High School.

2017
Reuven Hoffman writes, “Don’t be afraid to start over in life. This past August I moved from Long Island to Coos Bay, Oregon. I got offered a job with the U.S. Forest Service and decided to accept it. I had never been to Oregon before and didn’t know anyone there. I would only have the belongings in my car. I felt like I needed a fresh start in life. I was experiencing burnout. I was an essential worker for much of COVID, I went through a breakup, I helped my family move. I felt like it was time for a change. I knew it was a longshot of an application. But I saw the opportunity was there. Ultimately, I had to choose between two job offers with the agency. I was already working full-time as a gardener. I liked the organization and the people I worked with. I could have easily declined both offers. But I decided to go for it. In a sense it was like coming to URI for the first time. Moving to a brand-new place I had never been to all by myself. I had to make an effort to put myself out there. I’m happy I was able to find good friends and organizations to get involved with. Sometimes in life we need to start over. It can be seem daunting. But sometimes we need that change of pace.”

2019
Taylor Cardillo, M.L.I.S. ’19 was named 2019 Recent Alumna of the Year by the URI Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at the GSUS Annual Gathering and 60th Anniversary Jubilee in May. Since earning her degree, Cardillo has worked as a reference and young adult services librarian at the Coventry Public Library and is now branch librarian at the Oak Lawn Branch of the Cranston Public Library. She hosts a podcast, “Down Time with Cranston Public Library,” serves on the Rhode Island Teen Book Awards committee, and is co-chair of the intellectual freedom committee of the Rhode Island Library Association.

Daniel DiTusa recently joined the law firm Goldberg Segalla in Garden City, New Jersey. DiTusa focuses his practice on counseling and representing clients in the retail and hospitality industries in a variety of litigated matters. After receiving his B.A. from URI, he earned his J.D. from the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University.

Amanda Silver ‘13 and Jared Arnold ‘13, son of Pamela (Wolf) Arnold ‘82, were married on October 26, 2022, at Shephed’s Run in South Kingstown. A number of URI alumni were in attendance! The couple resides in Wayne, N.J.

JC Glick ’95, LTC (Ret) U.S. Army, URI ROTC Hall of Fame and Jennifer (Waters) Glick, ‘93 Esq., were married in Newport, Rhode Island, on May 14, 2021.

Noelle worked as a U.S. national park ranger in biological sciences at Yellowstone, a state and local government aquatic biologist, and veterinary nurse for international marine wildlife organizations. She plans to continue working with marine wildlife as a government aquatic biologist, and veterinary nurse for international marine wildlife organizations. She plans to continue working with marine wildlife as a government aquatic biologist, and veterinary nurse for international marine wildlife organizations. She plans to continue working with marine wildlife as a government aquatic biologist, and veterinary nurse for international marine wildlife organizations.
In her 45 years at U of R, Professor Emerita Agnes Doody worked tirelessly to help her students and to make the University a better place.

REMEMBERING A LEGEND:
PROFESSOR EMERITA OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES
AGNES DOODY, HON. ’08

Professor Emerita Agnes G. Doody, 93, died in Wakefield, R.I., on April 28, 2023. She inspired and enriched URI for 45 years. Known for wearing purple, coiling her hair in a crown, and driving a pair of Mercedes-Benz cars with “TALK” and “TALK2” as license plates, Doody was staunchly committed to her students’ success and well-being.

Doody grew up on a 400-acre farm in North Branford, Conn. She milked cows, which was a crack shot with a rifle and camera, and in 1946 became the first female to win the State Meat Animal Fair. During World War II, she was an airplane-spotter, until officials discovered she was only 15 and had lied about her age. She did not hesitate to tell people she was expelled from Central Connecticut State College (now university) for hitchhiking. She enrolled at Emerson College in Boston, where she was a self-described underachiever who placed on academic probation. But she graduated and ultimately earned a doctorate from the Pennsylvania State University.

Doody began teaching at URI in 1958 and quickly earned accolades for her marvelous sense of humor could diffuse even challenging situations. As President of Underrepresented Groups, and encouraged students to become responsible professionals. Her marvelous sense of humor could diffuse even challenging situations. Agnes was a brilliant public speaker, avid reader, and talented chef and gardener. Above all, she helped her students’ dreams come true.

Gifts in her memory can be made to the Agnes G. Doody Scholarship Fund at alumniportal.uri.edu/Doody
The Mayor of Kingston

Dave Lavallee ’79, M.P.A. ’87, and his family unearthed a bit of URI history when they found his dad’s typewritten 1938 speech and photo from his run for the mayor of Kingston.

Not to be confused with the Paramount crime drama Mayor of Kingston, URI’s mayor of Kingston was all about fun and was elected through an annual “mayoralty campaign.” We spoke with Betty Cugini ’52, who recalls that the whole campus voted to elect a mayor, who had various honorary responsibilities. She says each candidate had a theme and would campaign at the student union (a Quonset hut, at the time) in the evenings.

Cugini says this was fun and community. “The college,” she says, “was a real community then.”

“Dave Lavallee ‘48 clearly had that spirit of fun,” says David, a former URI alumni relations officer. “He would always have a little bit of a pie on his desk. I remember one time I was in his office. I said, ‘I want to try that pie.’ He said, ‘Well, you can have it, but you have to eat it in the office.’”

Lavallee’s political career may have been short, but his platform sure was sweet.

fun of Lavallee’s slight stature. “The next speaker is a member of the freshman class. We have just lifted him on a stool so he is within range of the microphone. A resident of Riverside, he entered college from East Providence High School.”

Lavallee’s speech began:

“Friends of the Radio Audience – Today I come to you as the candidate of the Modernist Party, whose slogan is ‘Go modern with the Little Giant.’ I am the Little Giant, although I am only five feet two inches tall. I may assert, however, with all modesty, that through the endowment of mental capabilities, I am literally a giant in intellect. I am the Little Giant, and live happily ever after.”

Many thanks to the Lavallee family for sharing this URI history with us.

URIMAGURIURI.COM

The Mayor of Kingston in 1938

I n 1953 I had a favorite girl in my kindergarten and first-grade classes at Norwood Avenue School in Cranston, R.I. I looked forward to going to school just to talk with her. My family moved to Warwick the following year and I lost contact with Barbara, but never forgot her.

Fast-forward about 17 years, 1970. At the beginning of my senior year, I found out that my kindergarten friend was on campus, but I didn’t know where she lived. Then, I spotted her at a fraternity event in Point Judith, so I introduced myself. Soon we were dating and enjoying our senior year.

After graduation, she moved back to her family home and started her first job as a social worker. I had graduated school and joined the military service waiting for me, so we said a tearful goodbye—our second goodbye. She told me she would always feel love for me, and that was on my mind as I went off to boot camp at Fort Dix with the Vietnam War raging.

Fast forward 49 years, 2019. After a heroic nine-year battle with early onset Alzheimer’s, my wife Ann died. About four months later, our country plunged into the COVID-19 pandemic. While I was housebound, I received a beautiful alumni directory from URI. I looked up a dozen friends, including Barbara DeCubellis Taylor. She was the only person I looked up who still lived in my home state of Rhode Island.

I emailed her and later we spoke on the phone. I told her what our family had been through trying to take care of Ann. I said to Barbara, “So, I see you married Joe from North Providence. How are things going?”

After a brief silence she said, “I lost Joe to early onset Alzheimer’s in 2020.” I almost fell out of my chair. What were the odds of both of us dealing with this disease? We started talking on the phone nightly and then met in Watch Hill for lunch.

We have such an amazing history together and now we talk every night and meet every few weeks to create new memories together. It’s been over a year now, and we have met each other’s families, including the grandkids. We refer to this as an “amazing reconnection.” We both have an “attitude of gratitude” for where we have been and this special time we are enjoying.

— Norm Schoeler ’71

Two Rams in Love

D avid Nicolato ’98 and Cortney Mahoney ’01 break the mascot code of silence to share their story in celebration of Rhodey’s 100th birthday.

When they met in 1996, Cortney Mahoney was a “cocky little thing”—she prefers “resourceful”—from Pawtucket, R.I., and David was a New Jersey kid.

Cortney, who worked full time to pay for college, was looking for a way to be connected to the University. She learned David ran the mascot program. True to the code, David wasn’t admitting anything.

“I went right up to him and said, ‘I hear you run the mascot program,’” remembers Cortney. “He was like, ‘What do you mean?’ I said, ‘I know you run the program.’ He admitted it and said, ‘Well, you’re going to have to try out!’ He was kind of a jerk. I’m not going to lie.”

“There were never really any tryouts at that time,” confesses David. “I was just putting her through the ringer.”

At URI, they built camaraderie through their mascot roles and as resident assistants in Hopkins Hall. “David used to throw out the worst pickup lines ever. Now he’s taught our children these ridiculous pickup lines,” jokes Cortney. “He’s still convinced that’s what wooed me.”

A couple of years after college, they went on their first date, to URI’s Blue and White Ball. Three years later, they were engaged at the ball; they married in 2005.

After several moves, they returned to Rhode Island when Cortney was hired at United Way, and one reason was to be close to her family.

“We wanted our kids to see what a fantastic place it is,” says David, who followed an interest in fixing things to start a handyman business, My RI Handyman. “The kids can go eat Albie’s cheese fries or we’ll go to a Fine Arts event.”

They made one of the first donations to the Rhody the Ram Endowment, which provides scholarships to students who serve as Rhody.

“We are forever grateful for our time as Rhody because it brought us together and we have built this beautiful life and family,” Cortney says. “We are thankful that we are a small part of the history of this iconic mascot.”

— Tony LaRoche ’85

Read more of Cortney and David’s story, and more about Rhody, at uri.edu/news/rhody-centennial

An Amazing Reconnection

That’s what Norm Schoeler ’71 and Barbara DeCubellis Taylor ’70 call their relationship, which started as a kindergarten friendship. Life took them separate ways and then brought them together—again!

Barbara and Norm on the URI campus in their senior year, 1970, and in 2022 at a family wedding.

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PHOTOS: COURTESY DAVE LAVALLEE, COURTESY URI AND URI ALUMNAE, URI LIBRARY, COURTESY NORM SCHOELER AND BARBARA DECUBELLIS TAYLOR
The gravity of his team intercepted coded Japanese military communications containing specifics about where and when the attack on Pearl Harbor was to be staged in the Dutch East Indies in 1941; his team was stationed in the Dutch East Indies until the (War) Student Memorial Union. After serving in Australia as chief of counterintelligence, Thorpe founded the Army Language School in 1947. The sword is now on display in the Rare Books Room in the University Archives.

I suppose the most important thing I ever did as an intelligence officer was to notify Washington of the forthcoming attack on Pearl Harbor.


I would have no idea what I was doing, so when they see me, they're like, 'Mom!'” she says, laughing. But skating is where she really shines. Cunningham is a natural on the ice (she ran her own skating school in Franklin, Mass., for years), and each spring, she teaches an eight-week-long OLLI class for 50- and older skaters, twice a week. “My motto in skating—well, in everything—I want my students to know more and to appreciate the efforts of others,” she says.

Two of Cunningham’s best friends from Park View Middle School in Cranston, R.I.—Janet Wilson and Maria Gladue—can’t, ‘and I believe that because I’ve witnessed it so many times before.” Cunningham remembers. But throughout her years teaching—whether her students were 7 or 70—she’s always believed that if you do the work (and have fun), you can achieve a great deal.

“You only get out of a thing what you put into it, and it doesn’t matter if you go to a big-name school or wherever… you can still make it no matter what, but it depends on you,” Cunningham says. “There is no ‘can’t,’ and I believe that because I’ve witnessed it so many times before.”

Raning to Go

Dottie Cunningham ’64 shines when she’s teaching—in the classroom or on the ice.

“My kids have no idea what I’m doing, and the (War) Student Memorial Union. After serving in Australia as chief of counterintelligence, Thorpe founded the Army Language School in 1947. The sword is now on display in the Rare Books Room in the University Archives.

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Photo Caption Contest

Do you have a funny idea for a caption for this photo from the URI Archives? Email your caption to urimag@uri.edu or respond at uri.edu/magazine.

Submit entries by August 31, 2023

Typing Is Hard

Well, Rhody readers, you guys are funny. And smart. And creative. And apparently, many of you remember taking (or maybe wishing you’d taken?) your high school typing class— that was an overwhelmingly recurring theme in the caption ideas you submitted.

This photo from the URI archives is from a folder dated 1970–1993. A note indicates that another photo with students using a similar typewriter is from 1982. That’s it. That’s all we know.

We can’t help loving that our winning caption wouldn’t be funny anywhere but here at URI (well, except maybe at another school with a building called Peck Hall).

Spring 2023 Winners

Winning Caption
“Another Long Semester in Peck Hall.”
—Stephen LaFlamme ’87

Runners-Up
“Hmmm, now which one is the Wite-Out key?”
—Mary J. Scott ’88
“What’s my password?”
—John Pyers ’78
“Siri, what does this button do?”
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It’s What We Do Together

Join the thousands of Rhody Rams around the world making their voices heard on URI Day of Giving. While students fill the Quad to celebrate their shared bonds at URI, alumni and friends reconnect and show their support for the areas they care about most.

Tune in on October 5 for real-time challenges and regular updates from students, professors, and coaches. You can help students with scholarships, see which class year comes out on top, and push your favorite sport to the next level. Whatever you do, we hope you will use this as a day to show your Rhody pride!

URI.EDU/GIVE
Meet Basil, the therapy dog who arrived at URI in September 2022 and has been melting hearts and making smiles every day since then.

Basil is based in URI’s Psychological Consultation Center. Center director Lindsey Anderson, M.A. ’07, Ph.D. ’11, M.S. ’22, reached out to Boonefield Labradors in New Hampshire after hearing they had donated a therapy dog to the East Providence, R.I., Police Department. She knew a therapy dog would be invaluable on a college campus.

“The goal is really to get animals into spaces where they are most needed. And there is no greater need than college campuses, given what’s happening with mental health among college students,” Anderson says.

“So far everyone who has interacted with her is smitten.”

See Basil in action at uri.edu/magazine/basil