

Summer 2020

## Alumni Notes

Linfield Magazine Staff

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## Chapter: noun

chap·ter | \ 'chap-tər: a local branch of an organization



Linfield alumni chapters are regional groups that gather to connect and contribute to the university community and alumni network. These societies allow Wildcats to stay engaged without

having to set foot on campus.

Our chapter leaders in Portland and Seattle continually develop new opportunities for connection. Have ideas? Join our Facebook groups, **Linfield University Portland Alumni Chapter** or **Linfield University Seattle Alumni Chapter**, to share your thoughts.

If you want to join but don't live in Seattle or Portland, stay tuned. We're exploring the possibility of more chapters and want your input on new locations. Drop us a line at [alumni@linfield.edu](mailto:alumni@linfield.edu).

— *Joni Claypool '06, director of constituent engagement*

## 1950-59

**Dave Lum '58** of Astoria and his family celebrated the 50th year of business for Lum's Auto Center.

## 1960-69

**Gene Tapper '63** of Las Vegas, Nevada, has retired from AmeriCal Insurance as the president and owner of the agency.

**Carol (Loftis) Granger '68** of McMinnville received the McMinnville Economic Development Partnership Service Recognition Award on Oct. 3, after serving on the board for the past 14 years.

## 1970-79

**Bill Mackie '71** of McMinnville was honored on Oct. 3 with the 2019 McMinnville Economic Development Partnership Manufacturing Leader of the Year Award.

**Glenda (Hermanson) Hyde '74** of Sisters received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences during a conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The award is the highest presented by the association. Glenda is an associate professor with Oregon State University Extension Service.

**Donald Firesmith '75** of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, recently published *The Secrets of Hawthorne House*, which won the 2019 Readers' Favorite silver medal in the website's young adult paranormal-urban category.

**George Sebastian-Coleman '75** of Unionville, Connecticut, recently retired as professor emeritus from Tunxis Community College in Farmington, Connecticut.

## Alumna credits Wildcat network for her success



As a student, **Louie Deraita '16** made connections in the classroom, the community and

through Greek life that shaped her career.

"I really enjoy helping people," she said. "I was never great in the sciences, but I liked writing and I felt it was something I was good at."

When she took Intro to Mass Communication, Deraita discovered an aptitude for public relations.

Her advisor, Professor Lisa Weidman, connected her to internships in Portland and at the McMinnville Chamber of Commerce, while urging her to apply to a larger PR firm when she graduated.

After earning her bachelor's degree in mass communication, Deraita joined the Portland office of WE Communications on the recommendation of her Alpha Phi sorority sister, **Alyssa Townsend '15**, who had been at WE for a year.

"She was honest about what the field is like and was incredibly helpful, offering

to look over my resumé and cover letter, which I really appreciated," Deraita said.

Four years later, Deraita is a senior account executive for WE's Microsoft account. She ensures that the software company's PR messages are consistent across products for brands like Dell and Lenovo. "Every brand has a story to tell," she said. "My job is to connect the brand to the consumer."

— *Ben O'Loughlin '22*

# Alumni Notes



## From the archives

In February, **John Prutsman '57** donated his 1956 Northwest Conference Championship football jacket to the university archives. The gift is part of a project to commemorate “The Streak” — Linfield’s 64 consecutive winning football seasons.

“I was not a good athlete,” Prutsman deadpanned about his early days as a Wildcat in an oral history interview with archivist Rich Schmidt. “I had very little experience and I started out as an end. Then I found out you were supposed to catch a ball — so that screwed things up for me a little bit.” Things improved when he switched to playing tackle, he said.

More seriously, Prutsman added, “I got the best classroom in the world out there on the football field, because it takes cooperation, it takes energy, it takes all these things that you need in life.”



**Jeanmarie (Kombol) Bond '76** of Coronado, California, is the new president and CEO of the Coronado Schools Foundation.

## 1980-89

**Richelle (Gaskell) Vandiver '82** of Kennewick, Washington, retired from the Walla Walla School District in August.

**Sandy Cameli '85** of Honolulu, Hawaii, was recently interviewed for the “What School Could Be in Hawaii” podcast.

**Scott Brosius '88** of McMinnville has been named the manager for Team USA after spending nine months as USA Baseball’s senior director of player development.

**Barbara Stillings Ibrahim '88** of Metolius earned the Infant Toddler Mental Health Specialist Credential through the Oregon Infant Mental Health Association and is an internationally board-certified lactation consultant. She has been admitted to the Infant Toddler Mental Health Graduate Certificate program at Portland State University.

**Su-Yen Wong '89** of Singapore has joined PeopleStrong, a human resources and work tech company in Asia, as an independent board member.

## 1990-99

**Bart Charles '91** of Sherwood has joined Atlantic Forest Products in their Lake Oswego office. He works in risk management and trading.

**Jennie (Lund) Dye '91** of Pleasant Hill, California, is a reading intervention teacher at Bel Air Elementary in Bay Point, California.

**Janiece (Kern) Paulat '93** of Vancouver, Washington, completed a Doctorate of Nursing Practice – Education degree through American Sentinel University in December.

**Jody (Bogle) VanDePol '95** of Clarksburg, California, shares that her family’s Bogle Vineyards was named the 2019 American Winery of the Year by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*.

**Christine Davis '95** of Phoenix, Arizona, is ethics counsel for the State Bar of Arizona.

**Danny Langsdorf '96** of Fresno, California, is the pass game coordinator and quarterbacks coach for the University of Colorado. He previously worked for several university football programs as well as the NFL.

**Erik McLaughlin '96** of Walla Walla, Washington, has been named a 2019 Wine Industry Leader by *Wine Business Monthly*.

**Brian Hodson '97** of Canby is an executive director with Avamere Health Services. He also serves as the mayor of Canby.

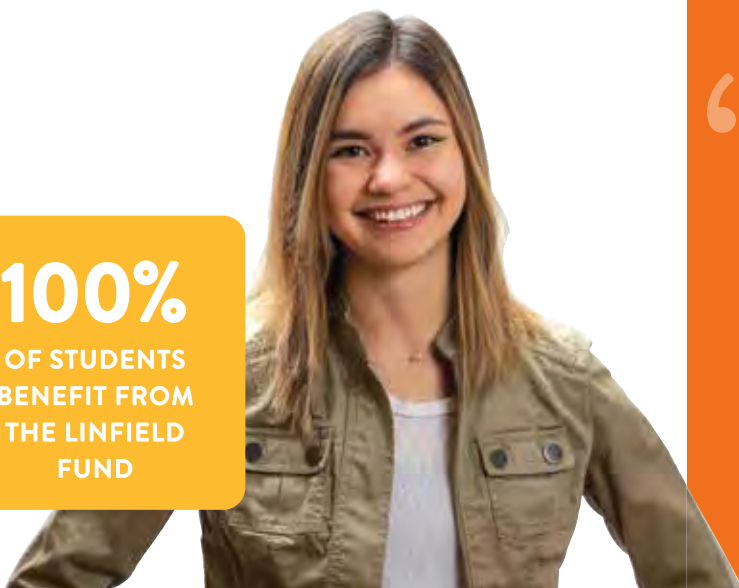
**Dan Smith '97** of Portland is the chief financial officer for Shari’s Management Corporation. Previously, he served as corporate controller for the Papa Murphy’s brand.

**Mary (Nightingale) Lago '97** of Lake Oswego was recently featured in a “Women Leaders in Finance” interview by *Authority Magazine*. She works for Ferguson Wellman Capital Management and has served on several nonprofit boards in the Portland area.

**Laura (Stahl) Cossey '97** of San Francisco, California, and Ramon Cossey were married Oct. 5 in Sonoma, California, with a second celebration in San Francisco.

## Presenting the Class of 2020

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OF STUDENTS  
BENEFIT FROM  
THE LINFIELD  
FUND



“Linfield allowed me to embrace my individualism while fostering a supportive community. As individuals, we can voice our ideas and opinions, but together we can create movements and promote change.”

– Stacie Johnston '20, nursing graduate

This spring, 539 Wildcats earned their degrees, including nursing program graduate Stacie Johnston. Now, more than ever, her Linfield experience is shaping her approach to joining the frontlines.

Please consider honoring the class of 2020 with a donation to the Linfield Fund. No matter the size or designation, every gift counts! Make your gift today at [linfield.edu/gift](http://linfield.edu/gift).

**Amy (Casterline) Newman '98** of Laurel, Maryland, and her husband James welcomed their first child, daughter Quinn Elizabeth, on March 14.

**Ryan Hunter '98** of Kalispell, Montana, was elected to the Kalispell City Council on Nov. 5.

**James Pfrehm '99** of Homer, New York, is an associate professor of German and linguistics at Ithaca College. His video lectures "Learning German: A journey through language and culture" were recently published by The Teaching Company as part of its Great Courses series.

**Ali (Trimble) Emerson '99** of Bend was appointed circuit court judge in Deschutes County in February.

**Lisa (Setting) Hawes '99** of San Luis Obispo, California, is a registered nurse in the outpatient surgery center at French Hospital Medical Center in San Luis Obispo.

### 2000-09

**Shelby Darland '00** of Meridian, Idaho, welcomed a daughter, Graycen Charlie Anne, on April 3.

**Elizabeth Compton '00** of Austin, Texas, was named Eanes School District 2019 Educator of the Year. She teaches orchestra at West Ridge Middle School in Austin.

**Yarmela Pavlovic '00** of Alameda, California, is a partner in the San Francisco office of the law firm Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP.

**Heather (Carl) Thomas '01** of McMinnville passed the Nationally Certified School Nurses certification exam in November.

**David Rath '01** of Newberg and his company, Precision, LLC, received the McMinnville Economic Development Partnership award for Manufacturer of the Year on Oct. 3.

## Financial aid director honored for inclusion efforts



**Araceli Cruz '09**, Linfield's associate director of financial aid, earned recognition this year from the Oregon Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators for her contributions

to the profession.

Cruz received the association's Distinguished Service Award in February, in honor of her efforts to advance equity, diversity and inclusion.

Cruz's seven years as a financial aid administrator have been marked by a focus on breaking down barriers for historically marginalized students to access and thrive in higher education.

Equity, diversity and inclusion "is not glamorous work, but it's critical in order to better serve the rapidly changing population of students in Oregon," she said.

In addition to chairing OASFAA's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Cruz also has served on the boards of the Portland Leadership Foundation, the Oregon College Access Network and the Northwest Association of Student Affairs Professionals.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in sociology and Spanish as a first-generation student at Linfield, she went on to earn a master's degree in student affairs administration from the Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling.

"I understand that financial aid is a crucial component for a student to have a successful college career," she said. "As a first-generation student myself, I understand that students and families in my community need the appropriate tools to reaffirm their identity, backgrounds, and self-worth; I want to help them achieve that through higher education."

— Jillian Martin

**Ryan Pate '03** of Goodyear, Arizona, and his wife Chelsie welcomed their second daughter, Annalise May Pate, on March 10.

**Aubrey (Turriaga) Nava '03** of Gilbert, Arizona, was promoted to team lead medical technologist at Mayo Clinic Arizona Hospital, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology.

**Ricky Gaspar '03** of Ridgefield, Washington, owns Local Boy Tatau,

specializing in Polynesian tattoo art, and Nemesis Art Gallery. The two businesses share space in a historic building in downtown Vancouver, and were the focus of a story in *The Columbian* in October.

**Ben Pappas '04** of Tualatin received the 2019 Linfield Alumni Service Award, in recognition of his service and support of the college.

**Catherine (Dondlinger) Nicholas '05** of Fort Worth, Texas, is the medical director for Cook Children's Health Plan in Fort Worth.

**Cinthia Manuel-Martinez '05** of Woodburn has launched her own business, Autentica Consulting, LLC, as of February.

**Andy Galpin '05** of Long Beach, California, welcomed son Atticus Brooks on March 6.

**Laura (Nielsen) Armstrong '07** of Portland and her husband James welcomed a daughter, Sauvie Mae, on April 2. She joins big brother Clark.

**Josh Henke '07** of Portland, Maine, has completed a master's degree in clinical nursing at Georgetown University.

**James Holan Jr. '07** of Mill Valley, California, has been named head football coach of Clackamas High School.

**Patrick Miller '07** of Camarillo, California, has been promoted to principal of Malibu High School.

**Leah (Caine) Pearce '07** of Phoenix, Arizona, and her husband Sean welcomed a baby boy on Aug. 23.

**Katie Klaniecki '08** of Ellensburg, Washington, completed a doctorate in sustainability science at Leuphana University of Luneburg in Luneburg, Germany.

**Lindsay (Stephenson) Griffiths '08** of Corbett and her husband Chris welcomed their second child, Brian Jeffrey, on Feb. 4. He joins older brother Keegan.

**Julienne Chandler '08** of Baltimore, Maryland, completed her masters' in nurse anesthesia from UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia/Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, in 2019. She is now a certified registered nurse anesthetist. She has taken a CRNA position at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

**Kendall Moriarty '09** of Salt Lake City, Utah, welcomed her first child, Keira Moriarty Teter, on June 12, 2019.

**Chris Schuldt '09** of Lake Oswego and his wife Megan welcomed a baby girl, Grace Eleanor, on Jan. 14.

**Nicole (McManus) Turner '09** of Durham, North Carolina, along with her husband Joshua Turner, welcomed their daughter, Sofia Riley, on Aug. 20.

**Chris Hawley '09** of Spokane, Washington, married Joey Redmon on June 21, 2019.

## 2010-19

**Aaron Boehme '10** of McMinnville, along with his wife Angelica and son Huston, welcomed baby Elle Brooke on March 11.

**Tal Edman '10** of Tacoma, Washington, and wife Allyson welcomed a baby girl, Delilah Kaye, on Dec. 4.

**Becca (Williams) Mendez '10** of South Bend, Indiana, is the associate director for the Master of Global Affairs program at the Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame.

**Kaila (Lemerande) Noble '10** of McMinnville and husband **Nate Noble '10** welcomed their daughter Abigail Leigh, born March 30.

**Sarah Wendt '10** of Greeley, Colorado, received her licensed clinical social worker credential in November.

**Lauren (Loepp) McCune '10** of Portland, along with husband Jamison, are happy to announce the birth of their first child, Graeme R. Thomas, on Feb. 6.

**Darren Valenta '11** of Carbondale, Illinois, received a doctorate in communication studies from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, after defending his dissertation titled "Pointing and Laughing: Stand-up Comedy and Anti-Mental-Illness-Stigma Advocacy."

**Chris Saunders '11** of San Francisco, California, has been named head football coach at Menlo-Atherton High School in Atherton, California.

**Rachel (Mills) Hutchins '11** of Fallon, Nevada, and Ben Hutchins were married June 7, 2019.

**Kole Krieger '12** of Portland was a recipient of the Rainmaker Award from *Portland Business Journal* for his work with biotech company AbSci.

**Emilee (Lepp) Gisler '12** of Colville, Washington, and husband Steven welcomed baby Avery Claire, born Jan. 17. She joins big brother Ridge, born April 30, 2018.

**Mica (Parke) Rozairo '12** and husband **Garrick Rozairo '12** of Portland are proud to announce the birth of their second daughter, Harbor Brandon, born on Nov. 12.

**Brenna (Patterson) Behnke '12** of Portland married Quinn Behnke on Nov. 2.

**McKenna (Pyeatt) Knapp '13** of Eugene, and her husband, **Erik Knapp '13**, welcomed their first child, Claire Elizabeth, on March 6.

**Sarah (Hansen) Stein '13** of Tacoma, Washington, and her husband Travis welcomed a baby boy on Nov. 2.

**Nora Burnfield '13** of Ferndale, Washington, is in her first year of graduate school at Bastyr University, studying nutrition.

**Kyle Pfeiffer '13** of Wasco and his wife Aliasha welcomed their first child, Delaney Rae, on April 20.

**Stephanie Stovall '14** of Madras received her medical degree from Oregon Health & Science University. She is beginning a residency in general surgery at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, Washington.

**Megan (Wallo) Renander '14** of Hillsboro and her husband Eric welcomed a baby girl, Hunter Dee, on June 19, 2019.

**Nichole (Thoens) Anderson '14** of Vancouver, Washington, and her husband David welcomed their first child, Isaiah Henry Anderson, on April 25, 2019.

**Emerson Morris-North '15** of Seattle, Washington, is currently living in Guatemala while working as an investment analyst for Pomona Impact.

**Joe Montano '16** of McMinnville and Karina Vallejo-Langlely were married Sept. 14. Joe is a software engineer for Open Dental Software in Salem, and he and Karina are developing a home-based business in McMinnville.

**Giselle (Cruz) Naranjo-Nelson '17** of Portland, and her husband, Mason, welcomed their first son, Rey, born Aug. 17.

**Elizabeth Gibson '17** of Portland is a communications coordinator for the Riverdale School District.

**Jim Landefeld '17** of Bothell, Washington, and **Marquesa (Dixon) Landefeld '18** were married in Woodinville, Washington, on Aug. 25.

**Sara (Levering) Zander '17** of Silverton recently received a Master of Arts in Teaching from George Fox University.

**Joshua Ward '18** of Beaverton is a staff nurse at OHSU Tuality Healthcare.

**Heather McNutt-Kaestner '19** of Philomath recently became a certified Prosci Change Management Practitioner. She is an organizational effectiveness specialist at Columbia Sportswear Company.

## Young alum donates what he can: his time



After **Nathan Pellatz** graduated in 2017, he knew his contributions to Linfield were far from over. He'd chosen Linfield for its small-school feel and sense of community, and he wanted to maintain that connection as an alum.

"A lot of young alumni are in the same shoes as me, where we can't necessarily donate a lot of money to the school," he said. "What I can do is donate my time. That's where I see my opportunity in helping out Linfield right now."

Pellatz, an analyst with Sellwood Consulting in Portland, serves on the Alumni Leadership Council, a group of alumni who represent different decades. One of the council's duties is awarding scholarships to incoming and current students.

"We don't want to confine students to scholarships that only come from their intended area of study," Pellatz said. "By incentivizing students to look beyond their normal bubble or community, they essentially get a head start on a liberal arts education. They will be exposed to different departments, clubs, organizations, thinking processes, etc., in their time here; this is a great start."

— Ben O'Loughlin '22

**Grant Blodgett '19** of Depoe Bay is the owner of G.O.A.T. Sports & Street Style, a vintage sportswear and street apparel shop in Portland.

**Camila Arguello Riveros '19** of Pittsburg, California, has authored a book, *Swipeable: Avoid the 8 Mistakes Men Make on Dating Apps and Discover What Women Actually Want*.

## In memoriam

**Dorothy (Ramsey) Heida '39** of McMinnville, March 1.

**Barbara (Wood) Tyler '45** of Portland, Oct. 3, 2018.

**Dorothy (Buckingham) Adkins '47** of McMinnville, Jan. 3.

**Clella Wilson-Hancock '48** of Hillsboro, Jan. 26.

**Cavour Redfield '50** of Olympia, Washington, Aug. 27.

**John Blaser '51** of Emmett, Idaho, Nov. 26. Survivors include wife Bette (Lawson) '54 and daughter Jaye W. (Blaser) Johnson '82.

# Alumni Notes

**Doris (Martin) Hartley '51** of Beaverton, Sept. 26.

**Martin Bergan '51** of McMinnville, Nov. 18. Survivors include wife Margie (Nieson) '54, granddaughter Janelle P. Pharris '14 and brothers Robert D. Bergan '60 and John E. Bergan '58.

**Marvin Heater '51** of Salem, Nov. 30. Survivors include grandson Francisco R. Martin '10.

**Virginia (Howard) Widman '51** of Salem, March 12.

**Joan (Larson) Waddingham '52** of Forest Grove, Oct. 19.

**Cherril (Tanner) Scarth '55** of Mill Valley, California, Jan. 16, 2019.

**Howard Wood '57** of McMinnville, Nov. 27.

**Gordon Hammerle '58** of Roseburg, Dec. 28, 2018.

**James Gunton '58** of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Feb. 16.

**Richard Riley '59** of Carlton, Feb. 3. Survivors include brother Milton W. Riley '57.

**Keith Sutfin '59** of Clatskanie, April 10.

**Sharon (Canterbury) Langenbach '60** of Napa, California, March 29.

**A. Roger Truax '60** of Buckley, Washington, March 1. Survivors include daughter Melissa V. Reid '96, son Anthony Truax '89 and granddaughter Kayla C. Truax '14.

**James Hawley '61** of Newport, Feb. 3. Survivors include wife Nancy (Vanderpool) '59 and son Dennis S. Hawley '90.

**Barbara (Dodge) Middleton '62** of Norton, Massachusetts, Jan. 28, 2019.

**Ronald Rudo '65** of Merritt Island, Florida, Dec. 1.

**Joe Rainwater '65** of Portland, Nov. 1. Survivors include wife Lynne (Border) '66.

**Sharon (Krieger) Travis '65** of Monroe, Washington, Jan. 8.

**Robert Howd '68** of San Jose, California, Jan. 6. Survivors include wife Sherry Howd '68, sister Rita Tomison '70, brother-in-law Bill Tomison '68 and brother Russell P. Howd '69.

**John Youngblutt '67** of Keizer, Sept. 6.

**Shari (Dixon) Maksud '67** of Corvallis, Dec. 15.

**Barbara (Hartman) Pruess '68** of Tillamook, Dec. 8.

**Thomas Jackson '71** of Tacoma, Washington, May 30, 2019.

**Vincent Doherty '72** of Mesquite, Nevada, Jan. 1.

**Denise (Ward) Gerhardt '74** of Gilbert, Arizona, Dec. 19, 2018.

**Audrey McLaren '77** of Seattle, Washington, Nov. 6, 2018.

**Gregory Schaffner '78**, Jan. 28.

**Steven Flitcroft '83** of Eugene, May 14, 2019. Survivors include wife Barbara '89 and daughter Annie J. Mills '04.

**Jeanie (Yoast) Sandall '85** of Dayton, March 4.

**Neil Thompson '89** of Sayville, New York, Aug. 11.

**Altafhussein Fazal '99** of Tanzania, Jan. 15, 2017.

**Tomi Deveraux '01** of Hillsboro, Feb. 15.

**Jacqueline (Amiel) Chavez '02** of Portland, Jan. 22.

**Nathan Epling '07** of Littleton, Colorado, Dec. 17.

## Friends and family

**Juan Gomez** of Salem, Feb. 22. Survivors include daughters Jessica A. Graham '98 and Katrina Gomez '07 and son-in-law Tyrell J. Graham '98.

## Got news?

Tell us about it. Have you changed jobs? Received a promotion? Returned to school? Did you get married or have a child in the past year? Submit a class note at [linfield.edu/alumni](http://linfield.edu/alumni). For more information, contact the Office of Constituent Engagement at 503-883-2547 or [alumni@linfield.edu](mailto:alumni@linfield.edu).

## In remembrance



**Mitsue (Endow) Salador '45**, a

Japanese American internment camp survivor featured in the Spring 2019 issue of *Linfield Magazine*, died on April 22 from complications due to the coronavirus. She was 96.

Salador was studying to be a teacher in 1942. In the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, she was separated from her family and detained at the Portland Assembly Center. She was released after three months on the condition that she relocate 1,800 miles east. On the recommendation of Linfield professor William Smith, she was able to transfer to William Jewell College in Missouri to finish her studies.

Salador went on to earn master's degrees in nursing and teaching. She settled in New York State, where she retired as a teacher in 1984. She often spoke about her internment, sharing her perspective at libraries and community events. World War II was devastating, she told *Linfield Magazine* in 2019: "I feel very thankful having been at Linfield, because that made it possible for me to continue my life."

She is survived by her son Jerome Salador and daughter-in-law Lynn Salador; her daughter Deborah Smith and son-in-law Albert Smith; her sister, Connie Morioka; six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Her husband, Fred, preceded her in death.

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## Answer: ‘Linfield’

Question: ‘Where did the Jan. 24 “Jeopardy” champion go to school?’

*“I wanted the chance to represent Linfield in a college tournament where most competitors are from big universities.” — Heather Nelson ’09*

By Alexandra Feller ’21



**While competing on Jeopardy, Heather Nelson ’09 bantered with host Alex Trebek about Oregon wines. “The Willamette Valley will be pleased to hear that he is a fan of Chardonnay,” she joked.**

“I wanted the chance to represent Linfield in a college tournament where most competitors are from big universities,” she recalled. Nelson took the show’s contestant qualifying test online, but she wasn’t selected as an undergrad.

She kept trying, and a dozen years later she finally received a call to audition. “I just did my best on the test and was myself through the game play and interview,” she said. “I am a total extrovert, so interacting with other contestants and the contestant coordinators was easy for me.”

After a successful audition, Nelson had a month to prepare for competition. “I started trying to brush up on some of my weaker areas, like Shakespeare and poetry, by checking out library books that were compendiums on a subject. I read a 300-plus page book on all of Shakespeare’s plays in less than 24 hours — only to have zero Shakespeare questions actually happen!”

To kick her studying into high gear, she and her husband, Michael Nelson ’10, analyzed old episodes to see how

After a full day of teaching math at Lake Oswego Junior High School, Heather Nelson ’09, boarded an evening flight to Los Angeles. The next day, a “Jeopardy” shuttle escorted her from her hotel to the Sony Pictures lot.

“Jeopardy” was a fond childhood memory for Nelson, but she never considered competing on the show until she watched the college-themed episodes while majoring in psychology at Linfield.

contestants bet on different types of Final Jeopardy questions. “I tend to be conservative with betting, so I learned how to assess a possible position and make a plan based on the category,” she said.

The show films five episodes a day, three before lunch and two after lunch. Nelson waited for hours to be called. Her episode was the last of the day. After all her preparation, the competition lasted about 30 minutes.

“Once it was time for my game to start, all my nerves came rushing in,” she said. “I was shaking so badly that I had to hold my buzzer with two hands. I was worried I’d accidentally ring it just with my shaking.”

Even so, Nelson’s studying paid off. Thanks to a smart bet in Final Jeopardy (the category was “Bestselling Authors”), she officially became a “Jeopardy” champion.

She won \$7,799 and prepared to enter the next show as a returning champion. She was scheduled to film the following Tuesday. In between, Nelson returned to work and spent time with friends and family. All she was allowed to say was, “I have to go back to L.A. next week.”

Only her close family, who had watched the taping live, knew that Nelson had won. Two and a half months later, when her episode aired Jan. 24, she hosted nearly 70 people at her house for a watch party, including many Linfield friends. “I received so much support from all over,” she said, with people sending hundreds of texts, emails and social media messages.

Nelson didn’t win her second round of competition, but she’s proud of her performance on both shows. “It’s a really cool place to be,” she said. “Fewer than 33% of the people who even get the honor of being on the show get to be a champion.