

UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE MAGAZINE

VOICE

FALL 2017







THE UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE'S world-class Chamber Singers and the Mountainside Chorale delighted Austria and Germany during the summer, performing in six cities over 11 days. Many of the 18 Chamber Singers had never seen Europe before and for some, it was the first time traveling in a plane. Longtime friends of the university and supporters of the arts, Fred and Juli Baumann, made the trip possible.

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WAR & PEACE

Firas Arodaki's exposure to war in Kuwait as a child fuels his passion to help others surviving violence in the Middle East.



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HARD DRIVE

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FROM THE EDITOR



When my mother first set foot on American soil in 1958, she had left her home, two sisters, and parents in Japan. Despite being 24 years old, she looked at Washington, D.C. like a wide-eyed teenager, navigating a strange place with people speaking strange languages. She sacrificed all that she had ever known so she could start a family and take a chance on the American dream.

That spirit – the drive to pursue the American dream – is the theme of this edition of VOICE magazine. The University of La Verne is rich with diversity, and we embrace it as one of our core values. From international students to immigrants to natural-born Americans, global perspectives and patriotism abound on our campuses. These students, alumni, faculty, and friends are thriving in the classroom and impacting their communities in incredible ways.

In this issue, you will read about a Master of Leadership and Management student who is helping refugees from war-torn Syria settle in Southern California. You will discover the odds-defying tale of a College of Law alumnus who rose from poverty in the Philippines to become a respected judge. And you will get to know a professor who traveled from Beirut to enroll at what was then the University of La Verne's American Armenian International College, setting in motion a career teaching computer science.

We will also tell you about a high-flying alumnus and a new track and field coach who wear the country's colors with pride.

We hope these remarkable stories will do justice to the richness and depth of our campus community. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Melissa Pinion

Melissa Pinion
Editor

COVER IMAGE:
A projector illuminates a
quote onto Firas Arodaki '12
during a VOICE magazine
photo shoot.



UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE MAGAZINE

VOICE

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As the University of La Verne enters its 126th year, I often hear faculty, staff, and students say “I belong here.” We create common ground for people from different cultures, creeds, and contexts, focusing on that which binds us together rather than the wedges that divide us. Our core values and academic programs foster an environment in which every member of our community can achieve more than they ever imagined.

The people and stories in this edition of VOICE magazine are just a few of the innumerable examples of students, faculty, staff, and friends who embrace our supportive and nurturing environment and work to build better lives for themselves and others. We are proud to have played a strong role in their successes.

We continue to focus on maintaining an inclusive and supportive environment, and that commitment is helping us build on our growing reputation as one of the premier universities in Southern California. Our future is bright with possibility and opportunity.

Devorah Lieberman, Ph.D.
President

Our core values and academic programs foster an environment in which every member of our community can achieve more than they ever imagined.

WHAT'S NEW

FAST FACTS WITH

PRESSIAN NICOLOV, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES AND ENGAGEMENT



Q What does the Office of International Services and Engagement do?

We ensure that students transferring to the University of La Verne from another school in the United States or applying from abroad are eligible to attend the university based on federal guidelines. We provide students the forms to study in the U.S. and give them an orientation on student visa requirements. Once they are here, we connect them with services such as academic advising, campus engagement, and co-curricular activities.

Q What are the most common home countries for the university's international students?

Our population is predominantly from China and most are graduate students in our business programs. We are seeing an increase in students coming from the Middle East,

Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, as well as Taiwan, Brazil, and Europe. We also serve students from Thailand, the United Kingdom, Canada, Vietnam, India, South Korea, and more.

Q What are some recent challenges in serving international students?

We have been dedicating more time toward helping students, making sure their documents are in order so they can get here to take their classes and return home upon completion. We must remain nimble in the current political landscape. We stand firm in our mission to ensure that these students have access to and succeed at the University of La Verne.

Q Why is it important to serve the international student community?

International students provide a tremendous influx of diversity in the classroom and in the campus community. On an educational level, they are invaluable in that they provide different perspectives, ideas, and approaches in the classroom. This fall, we are expecting one of the largest incoming classes of international undergraduates. As always, we look forward to the knowledge, experience, and energy they bring to our campus.

LEO ON THE STREET



Elmeera Nosrati
President of the Associated Students
of the University of La Verne

What does the American dream mean to you?

The American dream has always meant inspiration to me. Throughout my life, the notion of the American dream inspired me to be ambitious and push myself to accomplish tasks I never thought possible. I grew up in a traditional and conservative culture, but the concept of being able to shape my future and accomplish anything I put my mind to inspired me to challenge the status quo. I had the freedom to say no to the traditional expectations placed on women to only be a mother and wife and instead I pursued college and took on leadership roles. Through hard work, anything is possible.

SAVE THE DATE

NOVEMBER 12, 2017

**SUNDAYS AT THE
MORGAN PRESENTS
VIJAY GUPTA**

6 PM
ANN & STEVE MORGAN
AUDITORIUM

JANUARY 15, 2018

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
DAY OF SERVICE**

Students, faculty, staff, and alumni are invited to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy of service by helping organizations throughout the Inland Empire.

MARCH 24, 2018

SCHOLARSHIP GALA
SHERATON HOTEL &
CONFERENCE CENTER

An enchanting evening to celebrate and support student success at the University of La Verne.

MY PERSPECTIVE

NIKI ELLIOTT

I HAVE DEDICATED MY CAREER to serving students who struggle with learning and behavioral challenges. For years, I dreamed of leaving traditional schools to develop a holistic learning clinic that provides services to students with learning or behavioral issues. Then I learned about the Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness at the University of La Verne. It was like I had received a call to join a revolution! The university's LaFetra College of Education established the center in spring of 2017 to teach strategies that serve the unique way a person's brain functions.

At the center, neurodiversity is a matter of social justice. Society has made strides in achieving greater equality and inclusion regarding gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Yet, in many learning spaces, we still tolerate exclusion and bias against people with neurological differences.

People with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, mental illness, developmental delays, and behavioral challenges are often seen for abilities they lack, rather than their unique forms of genius. Neurodiversity explores what is possible in education when we approach these differences as variations to be understood and supported, rather than conditions that need to be eliminated in search of "normal." This respect



for diversity and inclusivity is central to the mission of both the LaFetra College of Education and the University of La Verne as a whole. The center — founded and co-directed by Associate Professor of Education Dr. Patricia Taylor — will train parents, classroom teachers, professors, mental health professionals, community educators, and others. Through certificate programs, weekend workshops, and experiential learning, these professionals will improve their ability to teach and serve neurologically diverse learners at a high level.

The center's hallmark is its approach to learning and wellness. We focus firmly on the value of mindfulness and nutrition to support a healthy brain and nervous system. Our first event of the fall features best-selling author Joel Fuhrman, M.D. His Oct. 26 lecture on the role of nutritional medicine in optimizing brain function and learning is the first of many events designed to expand fixed views about learning and cognitive potential.

The Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness is located at 1574 Arrow Highway, Suite A, next to the university's Human Resources and Business Affairs offices. Please stop by to visit. We look forward to having you join our revolution!

READERS CORNER

READ THE VOICE ONLINE

Did you know that VOICE Online contains exclusive web-only stories, videos, slide-shows and other interactive media? Stay connected! Visit **voice.laverne.edu**

 Read More Online

TWITTER WALL

Like a story or have a comment to share? Tweet to us @ULaVerne using hashtag #ULaVerne

 [laverne.edu/twiter](https://twitter.com/laverne.edu/twiter)



Congratulations @ULaVerne Class of 2017! Enjoyed the Baccalaureate Ceremony & looking forward to Commencement ceremonies!

@MIKERAPHONE



My grandparents came from El Salvador and finally got to see where their first grandchild will go to college. Thank you @ULaVerne!!

@CAROLEEEENA_

I owe everything I have to @ULaVerne and the amazing foundation they gave me to build my life and goals upon! Grateful to be a #LeoForLife

@MELANIENADON



Students in a @ULaVerne college prep program take a tour of Diamond Valley Lake & Skinner Water Treatment Plant #thinkh2o

@MWDH2O

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

We want to hear from you! Submit comments on VOICE at **voice.laverne.edu**. Please include your full name, class year, degree and the city in which you live. We reserve the right to tailor submissions for style and length.

 Write Online

“What I love about each issue of VOICE is the diversity of heartfelt stories about the people of La Verne — from its students to professors — there is a true emotional connection that is a lasting impression of the university’s rich history.”

GARY R. GASAWAY '07, '10

TAKE LA VERNE WITH YOU

Traveling the world? We are calling on all students, alumni, faculty and staff to share their trip with the rest of us by sending a photograph of themselves on location wearing La Verne garb (hat, shirt, sweater, etc.). Please send images that are at least 1MB to **proffice@laverne.edu**.



Vanessa Ocegueda '17 poses with a copy of VOICE magazine on the **Golden Gate Bridge** during a trip across California with her family in July. The trip celebrated Ocegueda’s college graduation and her brother’s high school graduation.



IRA

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Satisfy some or all of your required minimum distribution for the year.



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Make a gift that is not subject to the 50% deduction limit.



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You have saved and saved, now use your savings to create your legacy.

If you are 70½ or older, you can use your individual retirement account (IRA) to support the University of La Verne. Making an IRA charitable rollover gift to us will lower the income and taxes from your IRA required minimum distributions this year. Visit our website to learn more about how you can create your legacy by making an IRA charitable rollover to support La Verne. **Ready to talk now? Give us a call!**

NEWS & NOTES



NEW CAMPUS LOCATION AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN BAKERSFIELD

The University of La Verne is expanding its commitment to Bakersfield and surrounding communities with a spectacular new location for its regional campus and four new academic programs tailored to the educational and professional needs of that region. The new campus is larger and more visible than the previous facility, closer to where students live and work, and surrounded by vibrant dining, retail, and entertainment space. New bachelor's degree programs have launched in psychology, information technology, and criminology/criminal justice, and a master's program in school psychology is now open. These new programs complement the regional campus' expansive offerings in the areas of education and business.

UNIVERSITY BREAKS GROUND ON RESIDENCE, DINING HALL

The University of La Verne broke ground in April on its new five-story, 116,000-square-foot residence and dining hall, the first project in the recently-approved Facilities & Technology Master Plan. The project includes 398 beds, a dining hall, lounge and study spaces, and outdoor patios. It is scheduled for completion in August 2018. The dining hall will be a one-story 16,600-square-foot structure connected to the residence hall. The ground floor will be dedicated to housing offices, dining, cafeteria, and lounge areas.



ADVANCEMENT AWARDED FOR FUNDRAISING EXCELLENCE

The Council for Advancement of Higher Education (CASE) presented the University of La Verne with the 2017 Educational Fundraising Award, one of the highest honors in the field. The award recognizes private universities with endowments under \$1 billion that have shown the greatest improvement in fundraising over the past three years. The university's fundraising increased by 134 percent between 2013 and 2016, with much of the growth coming from the support of trustees and alumni. During that time, the university received a \$10 million gift from Trustee Tony LaFetra to support the LaFetra College of Education. Hundreds of new alumni also became involved through the Count Me In Challenge, which raised more than \$500,000 and bucked a national trend in higher education of declining alumni engagement.



ELEVEN MORE SCHOOL DISTRICTS JOIN COLLEGE ADMISSION PARTNERSHIP

Eleven additional school districts have partnered with the University of La Verne to expand what was already one of Southern California's largest initiatives to ensure that students have access to a high-quality, affordable college education. The Partnership for Access to College Education (PACE) now encompasses 23 districts that house nearly 100 high schools and serve more than 383,000 students per year. Those districts stretch from Montebello to Palm Springs, and from Kern County to the Jurupa Valley.



NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTION RECEIVES GRANT TO DIGITIZE HOLDINGS

The university's Cultural & Natural History Collections received a \$10,000 Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in June, allowing researchers to begin photographing and organizing artifacts to include in an online archive. Accompanying each item will be detailed information such as dimensions, materials, and how the donor acquired it. The Cultural & Natural History Collections has occupied its current space on Second Street since 2015. Until now, it has served exclusively as a teaching tool for University of La Verne students, but the online archive will make the digitized holdings available for examination and study worldwide.



Dr. Rigoberta Menchú Tum

SECOND SEASON OF LYCEUM HEADLINED BY NOBEL AND PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS

The second season of the Lyceum visual and performing arts series launched in the fall with keynote talks by a Nobel Prize-winning humanitarian and a Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Nobel Prize Laureate Dr. Rigoberta Menchu Tum spoke about her fight against injustice in Guatemala. Pulitzer Prize winner Viet Thanh Nguyen, the author of "The Refugees," this year's One Book, One University selection, also came to campus to meet with students. Upcoming signature events include a performance on Nov. 12 by LA Philharmonic violinist Vijay Gupta and a Feb. 26 talk by Kenneth B. Morris, Jr., the great-great-great grandson of both Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. See a full calendar of events at laverne.edu/lyceum.



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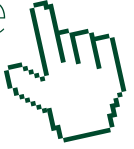


HARD DRIVE

BY BARBARA GOEN___

Seta Whitby's ambition to do something with her life after high school led her on a journey from Lebanon to La Verne, where she has become a respected and beloved computer science professor.

PHOTO
BY
AARON
OKAYAMA

Whitby initially considered pursuing nursing. But she reconsidered after testing her own blood in a biology class. “As soon as I saw the blood, I got woozy,” she said. “The teacher said, ‘Maybe this isn’t for you.’” 

 eta Whitby '84, '87, '03 yearned for college and new life experiences after she graduated high school, but there was a problem: the Lebanese Civil War stood in her way. Attending a university in Beirut meant risking her life crossing the city. For three years, she deferred her dreams of education and hunkered down with her family to endure the chaos.

“My parents’ main goal was to do the utmost to keep us safe,” she said.

But Whitby, who is now a highly-respected professor of computer science and computer engineering at the University of La Verne, could sit still for only so long. She had to do something to get out.

Her brother and a small group of friends had enrolled at what was then the American Armenian International College at the University of La Verne in 1979. Whitby, who was born in Syria but raised in Lebanon with her Armenian family, would soon follow them to the United States.

When she arrived, she had no scholarships or financial aid. Her brother worked to cover their tuition.

Whitby initially considered pursuing nursing. But she reconsidered after testing her own blood in a biology class.

“As soon as I saw the blood, I got woozy,” she said. “The teacher said, ‘Maybe this isn’t for you.’”

Then she found her calling in computers.

“It was so logical and so fascinating,” she said.

In the early 1980s, there were no laptops, no networks, and no Internet. Students had to sign up for a half hour on a DEC mainframe computer, often at 2 or 3 a.m.

Whitby graduated in 1984 with a computer science degree. Two master’s degrees followed, one in computer



Seta Whitby displays a breadboard during a computer engineering course.

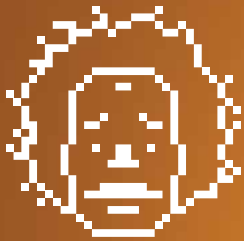
education and the second in information science. She later received a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership. Whitby was looking for a job when a faculty mentor left and she was asked to fill his spot.

In the ensuing years, Whitby’s influence on computer science and STEM education has become the stuff of legend. She presents her research at conferences around the globe, and is currently organizing an international interdisciplinary conference called InSITE 2018 at the University of La Verne.

In 2002, she introduced a major in e-commerce and she is now building an online degree program in information technology, creating new opportunities for the next generation of students at the University of La Verne.

“I love my job,” she said. “The mission of La Verne is really embedded in me.”

INSPIRATIONAL IMMIGRANTS



ALBERT EINSTEIN

In addition to him developing the theory of relativity, I really love and admire one of his quotes: "The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."



GORDON WHITBY

The person I admired the most who lived the American dream was my husband. He even wrote a book entitled, "Earning the American dream." He was the university's vice president of business and finance for many years and served as a trustee.



DR. SISSAG BOGHKIAN

My brother not only worked several jobs to pay for both of our tuitions, but he eventually helped my entire family legally immigrate to the U.S. I would not be in America if it was not for him.



AUDREY HEPBURN

I considered her humanitarian work inspirational. She served as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, traveling the world to help children and adults who suffered from poverty, famine, and a lack of other resources.





Fulfilling a Promise

By Melissa Pinion

Retired aerospace engineer Dr. Taghi Mirsepassi came to the University of La Verne in 2017 to fulfill the wishes of his late wife, Heshmat. Dr. Mirsepassi's mission has yielded an endowed scholarship fund that will help students achieve their dreams.

The faces of the elementary school children Heshmat Mirsepassi taught in her native Iran lingered in her mind for decades. Many of those children came to school with just a crust of bread to eat for the entire day. One day, she vowed, she would have enough money to help them.

Her husband, Dr. Taghi Mirsepassi, fulfilled that vow this year, using money his wife saved and additional funds to establish the \$1 million Heshmat Mirsepassi Endowed Scholarship Fund at the University of La Verne.

It was his wife's dying wish. And it is an investment that will pay off far beyond the students who are awarded the scholarship.

"If a student becomes a doctor, an engineer, or a computer scientist, many more people are going to get help," Mirsepassi said.

Now a resident of Claremont, Mirsepassi, 97, grew up in Sari, Iran. By high school, math and science had captured his attention, and he pursued a Master of Science in Mining, Methodology, and Petroleum at the University of Tehran.

While staying at his father's friend's house, he met the man's daughter – a young beautiful school teacher named Heshmat. Though marriage was not at the front of his mind, Mirsepassi said the two families thought Taghi and Heshmat were a good match.

"She was very much a loving person," he said.

They married, and Heshmat gave up her career as a teacher to be a homemaker. The couple eventually relocated to the U.S., where Mirsepassi obtained master's and doctoral degrees.

He worked for Aerojet Rocketdyne in California for

13 years, and later took on consulting positions at Aerojet and General Dynamics at its Pomona division. All the while, Mirsepassi noticed his wife regularly putting money in a small box. He would ask her what she was doing, but she declined to answer.

"You don't need to save money," Dr. Mirsepassi said. "I'll get you whatever you want."

She finally revealed her secret a week before she died. "She called me and said, 'What is in that box is for students. Don't spend any of it for anything else.' She was very clear and I knew she was serious."

Dr. John Khanjian, a senior adjunct faculty member who is one of Mirsepassi's neighbors, introduced him to the University of La Verne.

After learning about the university and its mission, touring the campus, and meeting students, Mirsepassi knew he had found a home for a scholarship fund that would have made his wife happy.

"Dr. Mirsepassi's passion to help University of La Verne students speaks volumes in that he has no personal ties to the university prior to establishing this scholarship," University of La Verne President Deborah Lieberman said. "He chose us because he shares and supports our mission of cultural and interfaith diversity. This gift will no doubt help many students, and I thank him for his generosity."

The scholarship is open to Muslim students with financial need. It complements a range of other scholarships offered by the university to support students of many cultural backgrounds.


Information: (800) 649-0160 or finaid@laverne.edu



Heshmat Mirsepassi vowed in her youth to save money so she could one day help students go to college.



War & Peace



Firas Arodaki '12 lived through the Persian Gulf War and Iraq War while growing up in Kuwait. Those experiences now motivate the Master of Science in Leadership and Management student to assist others. He helps Syrian refugees settle in Southern California, raises money to support a Syrian orphanage, and stands up for the rights of Muslims.

Written by **Melissa Pinion**

Photography by **Aaron Okayama**



The predawn sky filled with smoke and orange flames after a Scud missile struck a shopping mall several miles from Firas Arodaki's home in Kuwait. It was 2003, and the Iraq War had just begun. Arodaki, then 14 years old and frightened, peered out of his second-story window. "The whole building was shaking and we were trying to figure out where it was," he said. "Then we saw the fire."

Fourteen years later, those memories remain vivid for Arodaki, who earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of La Verne in 2012 and is now pursuing a master's in leadership and management. In fact, they drove him to create a nonprofit organization, the American Relief Fund, which supports people who have survived the horrors of war in the Middle East.

He also helps Syrian refugees settle in Southern California, provides aid to hundreds of orphans in Syria, and tutors English for students at the Islamic Center of Claremont.

"I want people to become successful when they come here to the U.S., get in the habit of being responsible, and help others to succeed," Arodaki said. "Selflessness builds communities and makes them influential. Selfishness destroys communities and marginalizes them."

The land of opportunity

Arodaki's parents are both Syrian, but raised their children in Kuwait where there were more job opportunities. Eventually, they sought a better life in the United States. The family applied for green cards and immigrated in 2000.

Arodaki traveled between Kuwait and the U.S. for several years before settling in the U.S. for good in 2007.



Left: Firas Arodaki raises money for Syrian orphans, such as the ones pictured here, through his organization, the American Relief Fund. Right: Firas Arodaki, right, and his brothers Ghiath, center, and Fadi sit on the couch of their home in Kuwait in 2000.

He moved to Oregon with his brother and began college courses, but did not know what he wanted to do with his life.

When Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, California, accepted his brother for a doctoral program, Arodaki took a closer look at his own future and applied to the University of La Verne. A love of programming led to him to major in computer science.

Soon after classes started, Arodaki and two other students – Nawal Atoura '13 and Rasha Dubuni '13 – found each other while searching for a prayer room on campus. The students would go on to create the Muslim Student Association in 2010.

An on-campus screening of the 1976 Anthony Quinn film “The Message” – a historical drama chronicling the life of the prophet Muhammad – served as the kickoff event for the club. The club quickly gained momentum,

and Arodaki had found an outlet for his passion for activism and advocacy.

Arodaki, now the Muslim Student Association president, regularly speaks and organizes public events on campus to help people better understand what he says are Islam’s core values of peace, respect, and love.

“Firas has a brave and gentle spirit,” said Dr. Zandra Wagoner, university chaplain and the club’s adviser. “He is committed to supporting marginalized persons, both in this country and abroad.”

Professor of Computer Science Dr. Seta Whitby said Arodaki might not have found his calling at a place other than the University of La Verne.

“The campus community taught him that, yes, you have a voice,” she said. “He blossomed, and I am very proud of him.”



“Somet
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Standing up for Syrians

Arodaki discovered the Union of Free Syrian Students while searching the Internet for ways to help his compatriots. The students, from colleges across Syria, organized following the start of the 2011 Syrian civil war to protest the government of Bashar al-Assad.

The union recruited Arodaki because it needed an English translator. He helped organize protests and developed curriculum for Al-Furat University after the Free Syrian Army gained control of the campus. At times, his volunteer work became so intense that it took a toll on his academic well-being.

“I wasn’t keeping up with my homework and studying,” he said. “I was dedicating too much time toward Syria. But the professors were very considerate about this.”

Arodaki made the grades, and he graduated in 2012 with his computer science degree. In 2016, he and six others founded the American Relief Fund in Fullerton. The nonprofit provides rental assistance to refugees, pairs sponsor families with refugees to help them integrate, and financially supports more than 600 orphans in Syria and Turkey.

It can be a difficult job, with families still trying to shake the terror they experienced back home. Arodaki works with a Westminster family from Aleppo, the worst-hit city in the civil war. The family’s teenage son suffers from a head wound he sustained when a gunfight broke out on the street.

“A bullet passed through a wall, hit his head, striking one of the nerves,” Arodaki said.

The 17-year-old high school senior struggles to walk, but through surgery and physical therapy, his condition is improving.

Arodaki joined the youth branch of the Los Angeles-based Syrian American Council, and traveled with the organization to Washington, DC, in March to urge legislators to support bringing refugees to the U.S. and put pressure on the Syrian government to stop killing civilians. He serves as an adviser for the group’s youth committee.

He also joined protesters at Los Angeles International Airport this year following a presidential executive order banning entry to the U.S. from certain Muslim countries. Some airport visitors honked in support, while others – unhappy to face travel delays – told him to get a life. But he has no plans to give up on his mission to help others.

“Sometimes you have to stand up to send a message,” he said.

“Showing solidarity is very important. Sometimes it affects our lives. Maybe I’ll be late for a flight, but I’ll feel good that I supported people who are affected by war.”

Learn more about Arodaki’s organization at arfororganization.org



The Colors of Culture

A woman with flowing blue tresses and Aztec earrings stands tall outside the Landis Academic Center, looking west. She is not a student, professor, or staff member.

She is the University of La Verne's new mural, titled "Nevertheless...They Persisted."

The vivid 20-foot-tall artwork is part of the Mural Project, which was conceived by students who wished to see their culture represented on campus through art.

"The Los Angeles region is so rich in murals," said Dr. Jon Leaver, professor and department chair of art history. "They felt it would be great if we could add that to the La Verne campus as well."

University administrators agreed. They formed an Arts Council and placed Leaver in charge. The university selected Los Angeles artist Kristy Sandoval for the first piece. Sandoval, who has painted more than 30 murals, juxtaposed symbols of indigenous culture, La Verne history, and the perseverance of college students. She painted orange groves — paying tribute to the city's citrus industry of yesteryear — and included students in caps and gowns, commemorating the graduating class of the university's 125th anniversary year.

A handful of students and alumni, including Jacqueline Recendez '17, helped with the painting, which is located on the south wall of Landis. Despite being exposed to the elements, the mural is designed to last 20 to 30 years.

"I think it's a great way to engage the students and add vibrancy to the campus," Sandoval said.

As she painted the mural toward the end of the spring 2017 semester, Sandoval said many students asked questions about the painting's elements and back story.

The university unveiled the mural in the fall. Artists will be commissioned to paint three more murals around campus in the next several years.

See photos of the completed mural at voice.laverne.edu.

MAVERICK

*A lifelong
fascination with
flying led Tyler Davies '07
to become part of one of the
world's most elite fighter
squadrons.*

BY MATT HUTAFF



The F/A-18 Hornet is one of the most iconic jets in American aviation. A lightweight fighter with impressive maneuverability, it flies at almost twice the speed of sound and assists in both ground and air defense.

But the plane's chief claim to fame is not combat – it is spectacle. For more than 30 years, the Hornet has been the ride of choice for the Blue Angels, the U.S. Navy's elite demonstration squad that has performed knuckle-biting precision acrobatics in front of more than 11 million spectators since its formation in 1946. One of those wide-eyed fans was Tyler Davies '07.

"The first time I saw the Angels was at an air show with my dad when I was 6 years old," he said. "From that point on, I knew I was hooked!"

"The first time I saw the Angels was at an air show with my dad when I was 6 years old. From that point on, I knew I was hooked!"

That is an understatement. Davies enlisted in the Navy after high school and pursued the life of a pilot ferociously. Awarded Sailor of the Year in 2007. Primary flight training. Advanced flight training. Carrier landings. Thousands of tactical hours in a plane.

But it all paid off. In 2016, Davies became a member of the Blue Angels. He now flies opposing solo in jet six, thrilling a new generation with his skill behind the throttle.

"It was truly an amazing experience," he said of the first time he took one of the signature blue and gold jets into the skies. "It's a moment I'll never forget."











The Blue Angels is one of the most exclusive squadrons in the air today. The entire team, including support staff, is less than two dozen people, and only seven fly the Hornets themselves. Because of this, the application process is rigorous, with personal statements, flight records, and air qualifications making up just a small part of the overall selection process.

Fortunately, Davies was well prepared, thanks—in part—to the organizational management degree he received from the University of La Verne’s campus at Naval Base Ventura County.

“I never expected to get a college degree,” he said. “But being stationed there presented the opportunity, and I had

to jump on it. The staff made me feel like the degree was not only possible, it was achievable. So I directed all my efforts toward completing the program.”

Davies’ schedule was packed, with a 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift leaving little free time before four hours of evening classes. “The days were long but very productive,” he said. “The base was very proactive about sailors getting their education and looked to help in every way possible.”

Dr. Mike Stadler, the La Verne academic advisor stationed at Naval Base Ventura County, worked closely with Davies.

“Dr. Stadler put together a plan that made sense,” Davies said. “He truly showed he cared about my



Tyler Davies '07 (far right) with members of the Navy's Blue Angels.

progress and genuinely wanted me to succeed.”

The two have kept in close contact even after graduation. Stadler recently received a care package from Davies filled with Blue Angels memorabilia.

“Tyler was the guy who came in the office like a ball of fire and lots of personality and said ‘I want to go to school,’” he said. “I knew when I met him he was going to keep me on my game; he’s the type of service member that makes me proud to do this job. Education is far more rewarding because of sailors like Lt. Davies.”

This fall, the Angels transition from the Hornet to its younger brother, the Super Hornet. It is a change a long time coming, but one Davies is fully prepared for

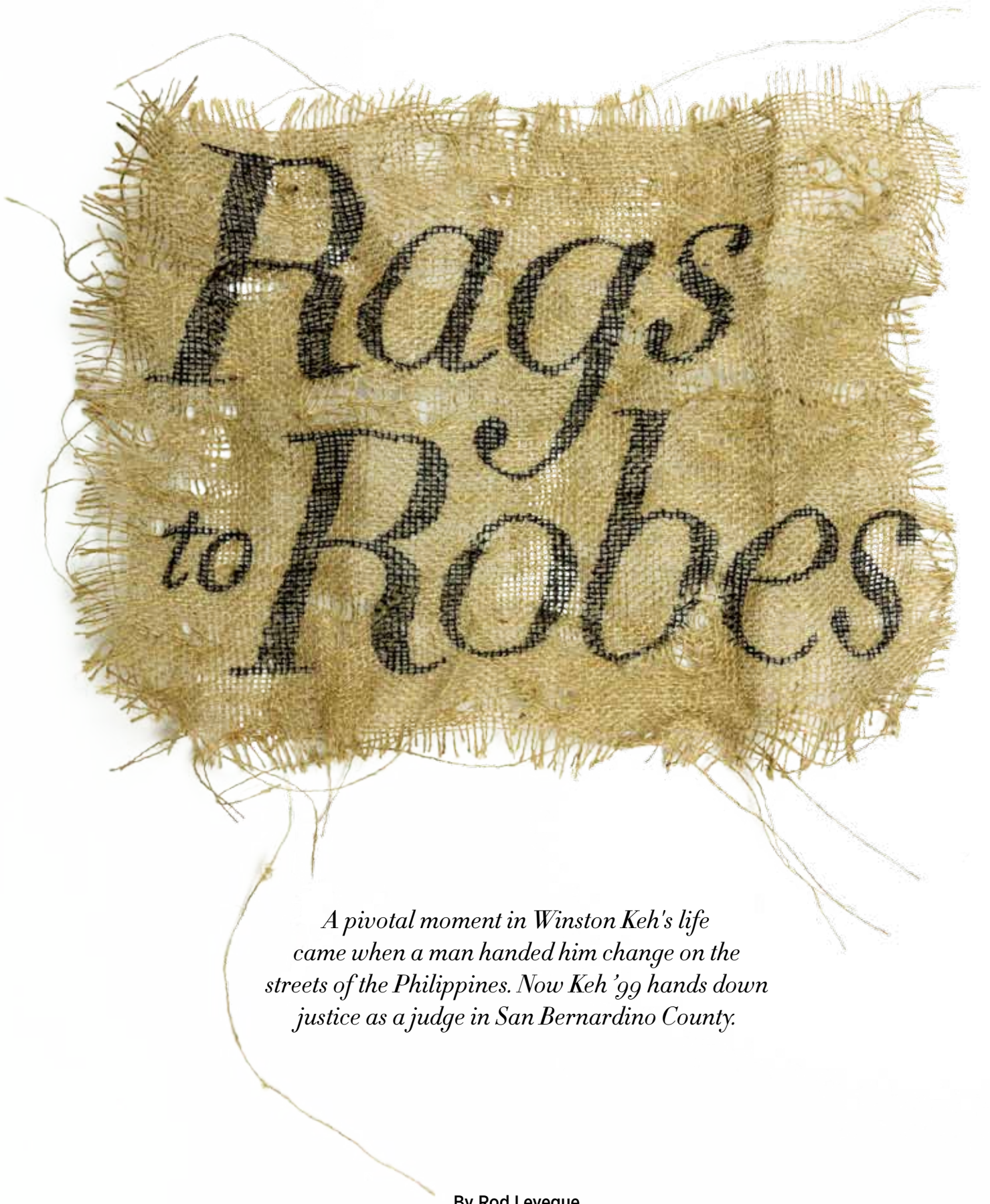
(he trained on the newer jet back in 2010). Just part of the natural evolution of the team, one he is proud to be a part of.

“I joined the Navy to travel and see the world,” he said. “I’ve seen so many countries, cultures, and lifestyles throughout my time in the Navy. It taught me how to focus and direct my energy to achieve my goals in life.”

Including his degree? Definitely.

“I was determined to get a degree,” Davies added. “It was a career track I hoped for but never thought possible. My experience with the University of La Verne absolutely opened the door for this opportunity to become a reality.”





A pivotal moment in Winston Keh's life came when a man handed him change on the streets of the Philippines. Now Keh '99 hands down justice as a judge in San Bernardino County.

By Rod Leveque
Photography by Jeanine Hill



WITH NEARLY-EMPTY POCKETS and tattered clothes, Winston Keh, set out to find food for his family.

Just two months earlier, his mother died and his father left, leaving the 13-year-old to care for his four young siblings on the streets of Manila in the Philippines. If they were lucky, he would bring home a can of sardines to get them through the day.

As Keh walked toward a market, an old man called him over and placed something into his hand.

“Here’s 50 cents,” the stranger whispered. “Go get something to eat.”

The generosity was a blessing, but it also embarrassed Keh. He had not asked for the handout. How pathetic must he have looked for the man to notice him, he wondered. And then a revelation struck him that would define the rest of his life.

“Right then I said to myself, ‘I’m not going to be a charity case. I’m not going to be holding my hand out for food. On that day, I became determined to stand on my own two feet.’”

Forty-two years later, Keh stands tall.

Last May, California Gov. Jerry Brown appointed him to be a San Bernardino County Superior Court judge, capping a remarkable ascent for the 1999 graduate of the University of La Verne College of Law. He now presides over a juvenile delinquency court, hearing criminal cases that range from vandalism to homicide.

Keh’s path to the bench has been so arduous and improbable that a fellow judge once called him “the Rocky of our generation.” He raised his siblings while juggling as many as three jobs. He immigrated to the United States as a teenager, went to college at night for 16 years to earn three degrees, and worked his way up the legal ladder from a mailroom.

Along the way, he discovered his passion for serving the community through the law.

“Winston is a man for whom family, community, and service are paramount,” said Gilbert A. Holmes, dean of the University of La Verne College of Law. “His career and his latest position represent the best of what La Verne Law produces—people who care about people and dedicate their professional lives to advancing themselves, their families, and those around them.”

Keh was born in the Philippines. His mother died of complications from kidney failure, leaving behind five children in a small apartment. Her husband disappeared immediately afterward. Keh, the eldest boy, became the head of the family. While other children played games, he looked for food, helped his brother and sisters with homework, and washed clothes.


“We used to do laundry by hand,” he said “We used to clean the floors with soap and hot water and half coconut shells, if you can imagine that.”

Such was his life for the better part of three years. Then, shortly after his 16th birthday, his father returned with a new wife and moved the family to Van Nuys, Calif.

Despite the culture shock, life was good for the first few months. The family was together, they had food and shelter, and they were living in the land of opportunity.

“If they were lucky, he would bring home a can of sardines to get them through the day.”



A coconut shell is shown from a top-down perspective, lying on a dark, textured surface. The shell is open, revealing a large, empty, white interior. The dark brown, fibrous outer husk is visible around the edges of the shell. In the bottom left corner, there is a small, white, triangular piece of coconut meat. In the bottom right corner, there is a larger, white, curved piece of coconut meat. The text is centered within the white interior of the coconut shell.

“We used to clean the
floors with soap and
hot water and half
coconut shells, if you
can imagine that.”

“I know what it’s like to go to bed having no food in my stomach...I know what it’s like having no money to pay rent. To have siblings counting on me to feed them. I know what it’s like to have three jobs, and to work very hard just to make a decent living. And I know what working hard is all about.”



UT AS SUDDENLY AS HE HAD REAPPEARED,

Keh’s father left again to pursue business opportunities back in the Philippines. He sent money initially, but the money stopped coming during Keh’s senior year of high school, leaving the children to fend for themselves again.

“Pretty soon the landlord was knocking at the door,” Keh said.

Keh got a work permit and took jobs at a supermarket and a liquor store. His older sister became a bank teller. Together, they led the family like mother and father.

At 21, he married his high school sweetheart from the Philippines and brought her to the United States. For seven years, he balanced three jobs while attending community college at night. He became interested in the law while working toward an associate’s degree. After he graduated, he took a job in the mailroom at a Los Angeles law firm.

A law firm partner urged him to become a paralegal, so he took classes after work and earned a bachelor’s degree in about five years. Next, he enrolled at what was then the

University of La Verne College of Law’s Woodland Hills campus to get a law degree. He graduated with honors in four years and passed the bar exam on his first try.

Through the late 1990s and into the new millennium, he practiced as an attorney at a handful of law firms, primarily handling insurance litigation. He became partner at a large firm with offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento.

The success did not bring him happiness. He had chosen law because he wanted to help people. Instead, he was poring over arcane legal jargon for large insurance companies.

He found his calling by happenstance.

Los Angeles County offered a free professional development class that he needed to maintain his law license, but as a condition of enrollment, he had to submit an application to be a volunteer temporary judge.

He thought the application was a technicality, but to his surprise, the county selected him and assigned him to hear traffic and small claims cases. The legal issues were relatively minor, but they had a big impact on the lives of those involved, and Keh immediately fell in love with the work.



Judge Winston Keh '99 speaks during his installation ceremony in July.

“It was like night and day,” he said. “This is what I was meant to do.”

He served as a volunteer judge for eight years. In 2014, he saw a newspaper ad announcing that San Bernardino County was hiring court commissioners, and he applied.

He worried that he lacked the political connections and Ivy League pedigree to get the job, but the county was so impressed by his legal acumen and life story that it hired him. He began in late 2015 and quickly wowed colleagues with his relentless work ethic. On some days, he finished his own docket and volunteered to take cases assigned to other judges. When a local high school needed a judge to preside over a criminal sentencing in a mock trial, Keh stepped up, even though he had never conducted such a hearing in his legal career.

“He learned how to do it just to volunteer and be with the students,” fellow judge Lynn Poncin said. “And that’s Winston. That’s his work ethic.”

After less than a year and a half on the job, the governor elevated Keh to fill a judgeship. In July, nearly 30 of the county’s judges and dozens of other supporters

filled a San Bernardino courtroom for Keh’s swearing-in ceremony. Presiding judge Raymond Haight said it was the largest turnout he had ever seen.

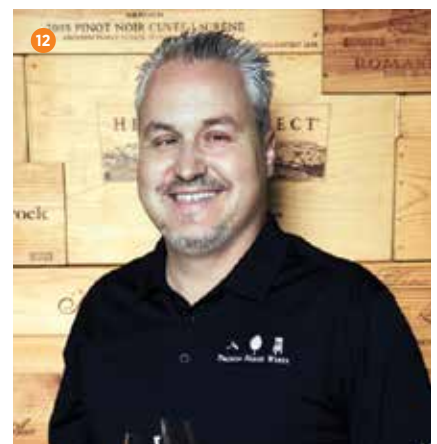
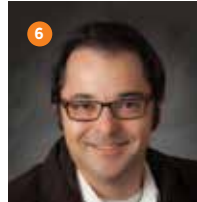
Keh prepared a speech but abandoned it to instead speak from the heart.

“There are no words to describe how humble I am to stand here before my colleagues,” he told his guests. “I’m ready to work even harder than I’ve ever worked before. It’s my goal to be a credit to the judicial system, a credit to the bench, and a credit to the community.”

Keh says that the people who come before him in court are often going through the lowest point in their lives. His past helps him empathize with those who life has treated unfairly. But that does not mean he is quick to let anyone off the hook for wrongdoing.

“I know what it’s like to go to bed having no food in my stomach,” he said. “I know what it’s like having no money to pay rent. To have siblings counting on me to feed them. I know what it’s like to have three jobs, and to work very hard just to make a decent living. And I know what working hard is all about. I’ve been there, done that, and I’m still doing it.”

WHAT'S NEW ALUMNI NOTES





1 WJLA Washington hired Emmy-winning reporter **Nathan Baca '03** to its 7 On Your Side team as government waste investigator in June. Baca previously worked as a reporter at WBNS in Columbus, Ohio.

2 **Sabrina Ruiz '15** joined KHTI (HOT 103.9) as an on-air DJ in July. She previously worked for KVGQ (Q 106.9) in Las Vegas, Nev.

3 **Steven Johnson '13** married **Samantha Schneider '14** in Claremont. They met at the University of La Verne while studying biology and both went on to medical school together. Steven graduated in May and started an emergency medicine residency while Samantha finishes her last year of medical school.

4 **Kathleen Fariss '05, '08** was named Chief Operating Officer for the Genysys Group.

5 **Ciriaco "Cid" Pinedo '11** was named Chief Executive Officer of Children's Fund in July. He previously served as president of the Hope through Housing Foundation and director of development at the University of La Verne. Children's Fund is a San Bernardino-based nonprofit organization that provides support for at-risk children.

6 **Rody Boonchouy '08** became associate superintendent of instructional services for the Davis Joint Unified School District. He previously served as Da Vinci Charter Academy principal in Davis.

7 **Donna Redman '88, '97, '07** received the Congressional 2017 Woman of the Year Award in April from Congresswoman Grace Napolitano for 10 years of service as a La Verne City Council member.

8 **Michael Navin '78** of Associated General Contractors of California was named Chief Financial Officer of the Year by the Sacramento Business Journal. He joined AGC in 1995 and became CFO in 2003.

9 **Jonathan Serret '16** was named the new deputy cultural affairs director for the city of Thousand Oaks. He was honored with a "40 Under Forty" award from the Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce on April 27. This accolade recognizes the contributions of dynamic, young professionals in the Greater Conejo Valley.

10 **Kristi Hottenstein '04** was named vice chancellor for enrollment management at the University of Michigan-Flint. She began her position in July.

11 **William Battin '95**, senior vice president at Fox Sports/FS1, received a Sports Emmy in the category of Outstanding Sports Promotional Announcement.

12 **Sal Medina '98, '05**, owner of Packing House Wines in Claremont was awarded Business Person of the Year by Congresswoman Judy Chu.

The South Whittier School District appointed

13 **Gary Gonzales '03** as its superintendent. He began his position on July 1.

14 **Sean Krispinsky '02** was appointed as senior vice president and deputy general counsel for the American Beverage Association.

David Hollinger '63 was elected to the American Philosophical Society in the area of social sciences.

Rod Foster '85 became chief of parish operations with St. Edward the Confessor Catholic Church in Dana Point. He previously served as Laguna Niguel city manager.

The Saugus Union School District in June appointed **Victoria Kubasak '98** as principal of North Park Elementary School. She has worked in the district as a teacher and administrator for nearly two decades.

Damien Arrula '05 received City Manager of the Year award from the Association of California Cities Orange County.

Don Ogden '05 was appointed as assistant superintendent of human resources for the Folsom Cordova Unified School District in Northern California in July.

Allison Farole '07 was hired as regional emergency management coordinator for Charlottesville, Va., the University of Virginia, and the County of Albemarle. She began her new position on June 30.

Jeffrey Ream '09, '11 was named a 2017 top mental health blogger by OnlineCounselingProgram.com for his blog "The Counseling Geek."

Benjamin Sankey '10 married alumna **Crystal Gonzalez '12** on Nov. 11, 2016. His is the third generation of his family to have relatives who met at the university and later married.

Tony Durso '11 debuted a new radio show "The Spotlight" on the national VoiceAmerica Network in July. The live one-hour weekly show focuses on elite business executives and innovators.

Palo Verde Hospital in Blythe hired **Nemmir Salem '11** as its new information technology director.

Gina Hogan '13 was appointed dean of language arts at Citrus College.

William Livingston '14 was sworn in as an officer with the Claremont Police Department in May.

Josh Hill '14, '16 became assistant soccer coach at San Diego State University in July. He previously served as assistant soccer coach at the University of La Verne and was a three-time team captain for the Leopards.

Renee Bryant '17 was named director of English learner and multilingual services for the Anaheim Union High School District. She previously served as executive director of the office of language acquisition in the Westminster School District.

In Memoriam

John Coffey '79 of Santa Maria passed away on July 14. He was 82. He served as a communication specialist for the Air Force for 22 years. After retiring from the Air Force, he worked at Vandenberg Air Force Base as a training engineer for 35 years.

Jack Marvin Smith '80 passed away on May 26 in Honolulu. He taught in the Pomona and Claremont Unified school districts.

STARTING LINE

**Coach Kevin Reid's current hurdle
is preparing the track and field
team for its first meet in January**

Kevin Reid may not oversee a competitive meet until January, but he is already laying the foundation for a winning season.

That means the University of La Verne's new head track and field coach is getting to know the nearly 30 men and women in sprints, middle and long-distance, hurdles, relays, jumps, and throws. And then he plans to work on getting them to work as a team.

"Putting together the workouts, building the science behind those workouts — the athletic piece is easiest," Reid said. "It's the personalization that I really look forward to and enjoy. What makes these athletes tick and what makes them better as individuals?"

Reid is respected nationally and has a long history of success as a coach. He has been involved with USA Track & Field since 1990, and has coached in three Olympic Games. Most notably, he coached Bryan Clay to a gold medal at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing and a silver medal in Athens in 2004. He has coached in every U.S. Olympic Team Trial since 1992 and every USA Track & Field Championship since 1990.

He comes to the University of La Verne this year from Azusa Pacific University. During his tenure there, he earned 13 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Coach of the Year awards and was inducted into their Hall of Fame in 2014. His teams garnered 14 national championships.

Reid is excited about his new position and appreciates the opportunity to serve the university's large population

of first-generation student athletes. For these students, he intends to be "very mindful and intentional" about supplying the tools they need to succeed and graduate in four years.

"As I build relationships with individual athletes I want to help them to balance their personal, social, and spiritual lives," he said. "When we develop quality relationships, the athletic piece benefits."

Although his athletes compete as individuals, they spend time together in the weight room and out on the track, bonding as a team and building skills that will help them beyond graduation.

"As we chase the goal of a conference championship, it will take an effort from everybody," Reid said. "I want the 100-meter people cheering the long jumpers, and so on. They should be investing in their teammates so we are at our best come January."

Reid feels an excitement for the changeover in the program. There have been healthy conversations among athletes and staff, and a new energy around the team.

"I couldn't feel any more supported than I do," Reid said. "The university provides a very welcoming, productive environment."

But for Reid, productivity on the track and field is only a part of the job.

"These athletes are figuring out who they are as people," he said. "If I can direct them in the right way as they are making decisions, if I can get them on that track, I feel successful."



HEART OF LA VERNE UNIQUELY LA VERNE

TERRENCE LEWIS '16 took photographs of numerous classmates, including this one of alumnus Oran Herndon, to illustrate life within a minority culture in America. His photography book "6%" served as his senior project.



WAY-BACK-WHEN TRIVIA

“From Preparation Into Practice” served as the motto of Lordsburg College’s first graduating class, which graduated in _____.



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TYLER DAVIES '07 performs aerial stunts with the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels. Davies credits his organizational management degree from the University of La Verne's Naval Base Ventura County campus for helping him land a spot on the elite fighter squadron.

