APRIL 7, 2018
7:30 PM

Sancta Civitas
Ralph Vaughan Williams

Sung in English

DAINES CONCERT HALL
CHASE FINE ARTS CENTER,
Utah State University.

Special Guest Conductor
Stephen Cleobury,
King’s College Choir
Cambridge

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OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Conceptual artist Mikey Kettinger wants to move you to stop and think.

“One of my favorite artists, Chris Johanson, says ‘Art made with love is better than art made with hate,’” says Mikey Kettinger, MFA ’17. Read his story on page 8.

UPENDING ENGINEERING EDUCATION

One professor’s quest to challenge engineering culture

LISTEN. YOUR BODY IS SPEAKING

Yoga is more than an exercise for the body

OVERCOMING EVERYDAY ABUSE

Abuse has lifelong consequences. What if we could prevent it from happening?

On the Cover:
BUSINESS CLASS UPGRADE

Ten years later: How a $25 million gift jump-started the business school’s transformation

On the cover: photos by Ron Adair and LMN Architects. Illustration by Elizabeth Lord.
FROM THE EDITOR

Change, for the Better

Woodrow Wilson says that if you want to make enemies, try to change something. Change can be tough, but it is necessary, especially in a competitive world. Tough because of the unknowns, necessary because it keeps us from becoming unknown.

Maybe change does make enemies, but it wins over many more friends. The ability of Utah State University to embrace change as a power for good is an inherent quality of the institution because it rings so true — Aggie blue.

On page 14, Douglas Anderson, as new dean of the College of Business in 2006, observed, “If we don’t change quickly, we’re not going to be able to play in the same league.” It is a sense of urgency that prompted and propelled the college to reach new heights — to get better fast. The same urgency that has moved the university forward and has helped to keep it relevant. The perennial construction cranes on the campus horizon attest to this. The campus structures and changing skyline may reflect the quality of the academy’s educational offerings, but buildings come and go. The true legacy lies in the people, programs, and place that live on.

There may be no better example of this than Jon M. Huntsman Senior. We were saddened to learn of his passing as we were about to go to press. His legacy of generosity has forever changed our institution for the better. He told me during an interview that people are born to see the happiness in others when in the act of giving. “It’s been such a joy in our lives to see the difference it’s made.” A difference that extends beyond the building that bears his name. A difference in the form of more than 5,000 scholarships his family Foundation has given to students, mostly in Utah and Idaho. The funding of a student’s education is an act of trust and a gesture of confidence in one’s potential. He experienced that as a young man fresh out of high school with a scholarship that changed his life for the better. Right up to his final days, he was thinking about USU students when he sent to Dean Anderson a set of questions centering on student progress.

It is fitting that in Mr. Huntsman’s efforts to help others build their own legacies, he has come to ensure his own.

John DeVilbiss
Executive Editor, Utah State magazine

We welcome your thoughts. Please email letters to mageditor@usu.edu or mail to Utah State Magazine Editor, 0500 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322–0500. Please include full name, address, phone number and email, if available. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.
Universities are places of perpetual change. Every year new students unpack their bags and stretch their wings while another senior class takes off to fly. They are places where research shifts what we thought we knew, ideas are scrutinized, and people are transformed. However, some changes are more visible than others, and President Noelle Cockett discussed a few underway at Utah State University.

Walking across the Logan campus, we keep seeing students wearing medical scrubs. Who are they? Those are very likely students in the new Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing program (BSN). We have had one-year and two-year nursing degrees offered at some regional campuses for years. However, Utah, like many states, plans to have 80 percent of its nursing staff hold a BSN by 2020. This fall, the Logan campus began offering a four-year nursing degree to help meet the state’s demand. There are about 20 students in the first cohort. We know that rural communities need more nurses. If we get more funding from the legislature, then we can expand the BSN program. Because here is the critical thing; there are 300 students here now who want to get into the nursing program. They are taking the prerequisites. But we can only accept 20 due to professional teaching requirements. That’s why I am asking for additional funding to hire more faculty and help meet Utah’s workforce development goals.

Is the large crane on campus part of the scheduled remodel of the Biology and Natural Resources Building (BNR)? No, the crane is working on the Life Sciences (LS) building. Several years ago, the Board of Regents prioritized investing in infrastructure for science education. We at Utah State developed a plan that addressed severe overcrowding and critical updates needed in our science labs using new and existing space. We were approved $38 million by the legislature to construct the LS building from the ground up. Another $20 million was to fund a remodel of the existing BNR building with the understanding that the money would come when we needed it. The BNR remodel, if approved by the legislature this year, will allow us to meet curriculum needs since most students are required to take one life science course to graduate and to adequately prepare students for 21st century careers. We take great care of our buildings here. The BNR building was built in 1958, and we don’t want to tear it down. It’s a great building. By investing in both, the old and new, we end up with 190,000 square-feet of new or remodeled space that will be more energy efficient. But the cost of construction will rise if we wait. If we don’t do it this year, then the cranes are going to pack up.
A Light Extinguished

Often, new buildings on university campuses are named for the individuals who paid for their construction. As budgets tighten, donors play an important role in funding the brick and mortar sites where teachers teach and students learn. The Matthew Hillyard Animal Teaching and Research Center is the rare exception. It was dedicated nearly a decade ago, the namesake of a man whose resume includes singing karaoke with state legislators at the Capitol and greeting politicians on both sides of the aisle with hugs and high-fives. Hillyard was born with Down Syndrome and often accompanied his father, Lyle — Utah’s longest-serving lawmaker — to the office. He could do the impossible: make reporters, legislators, and governors all smile.

At USU, buildings are not named for sitting legislators, but, then-president Stan Albrecht wanted to honor Lyle, ’65, for securing the $10 million of state funds to construct the center. Matt Hillyard cut the ribbon on May 8, 2008, ushering in a new era of research teaching at Utah State. Years later, the Matthew David Hillyard scholarship at USU was established for students majoring in special education. He died January 5 at the age of 42.

“Thanks for sharing your light with us for so many years. God be with you till we meet again.”

A One-Two Finish

Two teams of USU Aviation Maintenance Management students captured first and second place honors in the school division of the first Regional Aerospace Maintenance Competition, outperforming all but one of the military teams present. “You walk right into a challenge that you’ve never even seen before, and then the clock starts ticking,” says Jordan Bankhead, a member of the winning team. “You only have a few minutes to understand how the system you are working on operates, and then you have to fix it.”

Silver Status

The League of American Bicyclists recognized Utah State with a Silver Bicycle Friendly University award for its efforts to create a campus that’s both safe and convenient for cyclists. USU uses shared-lane markings on campus streets, provides bike lockers, carshare credits, and an emergency ride home service. “Creating a bike friendly campus is a four-way win,” says Jordy Guth, USU’s campus planner: It promotes an active lifestyle, makes travel affordable, reduces infrastructure costs, and reduces air pollution.

Laura Dotson Honored

Laura Dotson ’93 LPN, professional practice assistant professor, is USU Eastern’s nursing program coordinator and the college’s Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year. She began working as a nurse educator at Eastern in 2011. Dotson has grown the nursing program and improved the passing rate of nurses taking the state’s licensure exam. “I have learned to accept I can’t teach the students everything,” Dotson says. “The majority of their learning will come from working in the field and their experiences as a nurse. My job is to make sure they have a good foundation to build on.”

A More Nuanced View

If you listen to the nation’s political elite talk about climate change you might conclude that Democrats believe in climate change and Republicans don’t. A study published in the journal Climatic Change indicates despite the rhetoric, there’s a lot people from both parties agree on.

“When it comes to how people think about climate change obviously it’s very polarized,” says Peter Howe, assistant professor in USU’s Department of Environment and Society, who co-authored the paper. “And it’s become more polarized over time, but there’s still variation [within parties.]”

Researchers used eight years of national survey data collected between 2008-2016 concerning people’s beliefs about climate change by state and Congressional district. Much of the variation depends on where one lives. In regions where the risks of climate change are more evident such as in coastal Florida, a majority of Republicans say climate change is happening.

Similarly, in Utah where water sources are often snow-pack dependent, Democrats are more concerned about climate change than their counterparts in Illinois. While the causes of climate change may be debated between party members, most people surveyed support policies to reduce its effects through renewable energy research and reductions in carbon pollution.
**Listen to Mom**

Will Pearse’s mom reported that her snowdrops were blooming earlier each spring. The Utah State University evolutionary ecologist wanted a way to parse life cycle changes caused by climate change using data from herbaria plant collections, historical citizen scientists like Henry David Thoreau, and current observations from people around the world — like his mother.

Pearse partnered with scientists from University of Maryland, Colorado’s Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, Boston University, and McGill University to create a statistical estimator of changes such as the onset of flowering. They analyzed citizen science data and found that not only were flowers blooming earlier, but they were blooming with greater variability. Their results were published in the online edition of *Nature Ecology & Evolution*.

Pearse says the estimator allows scientists to reliably place modern observations within the context of historical data and unleashes the power of citizen science. “If you ever doubted the observations of an ‘ordinary’ observer, you can put those doubts to rest,” he says. “Those bits of information, like my mum’s vigilance and Thoreau’s fervent environmentalism, contribute to invaluable scientific observation.”

In other words, listen to your mother.

**600 Years of Data**

Hydrologists recently unlocked centuries of monthly streamflow data for three rivers in Northern Utah. How? Using growth rings from seven species of trees at differing elevations, all of which respond to the changing seasons differently, scientists reconstructed streamflow estimates at segments of the Bear, Logan, and Weber rivers stretching back to the 1400s in some instances. The updated model paints a more complete picture of streamflow than a single annular data point. This information may aid water managers to make more informed decisions about water use.

“It’s the seasonality that determines drought, how reservoirs fill, and when there are shortages,” says hydrologist James Stagge, a civil engineer who led the study. “Now that we have this method, we can start looking at what major droughts over the past 600 years would mean for today’s water supply.”

The study was published in the *Journal of Hydrology* in January.

**Growing More Farmers**

In Utah, the average specialty crop farmer in Utah is 60 years old. That’s four years older than the national average, and increasingly, farmers nationwide are entering retirement unsure of what the future of their business will be.

A new $599,615 grant awarded to USU Extension from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture aims to boost the number of new farmers in the Mountain West. It will create three incubator sites across the state through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and provide programming on urban and small-scale farming operations. The project will benefit Native American farmers, 65 refugee farmers, and 250 high school students involved with Future Farmers of America and 4-H.

**Invasive Frog + Native Birds = No Problem**

After Puerto Rican coqui frogs were unintentionally introduced to Hawaii in the 1980s, their population mushroomed, prompting concerns they would compete with the island’s native insect-eating birds. It turns out the coquis may not be such bad neighbors after all.

Utah State University researchers surveyed 15 sites across Hawaii listening for the frogs and estimating the population density through visual counts. Bird surveys yielded surprising results: native bird populations were unaffected by coquis. And in three sites with the invasive frogs, native birds were more abundant. The team published their findings in *The Condor: Ornithological Applications*.

“I was very surprised with the results for birds,” says Karen Beard, professor in USU’s Department of Wildland Resources and the USU Ecology Center and co-author of the study. “We’re pretty sure that some of this increase is due to these species preying on live or dead coquis, and we’re suggesting that some non-native birds are likely consuming coquis and this novel resource appears to be increasing their populations.”

Photo by Ryan Choi
It doesn’t make Idalis Villanueva uncomfortable to confront assumptions. It’s her mission to challenge unquestioned beliefs and conventions that a growing number of educators say are obsolete in 21st century engineering classrooms.

Villanueva is an assistant professor of engineering education — an emerging, interdisciplinary field that experts say is long overdue. She and her colleagues have a concise but complicated mandate: improve engineering education outcomes and retention rates for all students. The massive undertaking could make or break the much-needed supply of qualified engineers and computer scientists who will fill tomorrow’s top-paying jobs. However, given the current climate of engineering education in the United States, Villanueva has her work cut out.

Estimates suggest only about one-half of engineering undergraduate students nationwide complete their degree. Some students change majors; others drop out. Researchers say the reasons are numerous and complicated. Villanueva believes part of the problem is engineering education hasn’t changed much since its inception in the mid-1800s.

“We haven’t moved the needle,” she says. “Too few of us are taking a step back to reflect and ask: What can I do to make a difference? Engineering has a culture, it has norms — things that are assumed to be effective because they’ve always been that way. But the assumptions behind those norms are never questioned.”

Villanueva says engineering classrooms are ready for significant change and traditional metrics for assessing engineering knowledge need to be revisited. For over a century, multiple choice tests have been a standard tool for assessing knowledge of would-be engineers. But such tests are not always the best method to evaluate learning.

“What constitutes knowledge in engineering? What fundamental assumptions are we making when considering the kind of knowledge required to become a successful engineer?”

She highlights a common, awkward exchange she’s witnessed in the classroom.

“Engineering professors don’t assess the knowledge of a student who has considerable woodshop or automotive shop experience. In many engineering classrooms, those skills are not considered an important component of engineering knowledge,” she says. “In some cases, they’re completely dismissed.”

The irony, she points out, is that today’s educators stress the need for more robust design and problem-solving experience, yet their curricula rarely include opportunities for hands-on learning. As part of her research funded by the National Science Foundation, Villanueva is tackling a key source of the many assumptions that show up in the classroom: hidden curriculum, an idea studied in education, business, medicine and social sciences but relatively untouched in engineering.

“Hidden curricula refers to academic rules, social norms, or other knowledge that is obvious to dominant social actors in a particular setting but not necessarily to individuals from diverse social or cultural backgrounds,” she explains.

“For example, if you are a first-generation student or come from a different cultural background, you may not be aware of the resources and opportunities that will help you succeed as a student. Many students and faculty from non-traditional backgrounds often struggle with making sense of their environment. They struggle to understand the predominant culture and perspective.”

Villanueva herself is a first-generation college student and a rarity in the engineering world — a member of the 0.2 percent of Latinas with doctorates in the field. And that is not because minority women aren’t interested in engineering careers. Inadvertently withholding information, not discussing assumptions or explicitly stating expectations creates a power imbalance, says Villanueva. When hidden curricula is revealed, it shifts the power dynamic and puts students and faculty on equal ground.

Her research has the potential to reach about 11,000 undergraduates students and 570 engineering faculty around the country. Her work could be the foundation of a new model of education built around sharing integral academic rules and information that helps all students succeed.

“Engineering is a beautiful career,” Villanueva says. “It’s a needed career that has potential for enormous change. I see engineering as the next humanitarian career — one focused on collective impact and transformation.”
“ENGINEERING HAS A CULTURE, IT HAS NORMS — THINGS THAT ARE ASSUMED TO BE EFFECTIVE BECAUSE THEY’VE ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY. BUT THE ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THOSE NORMS ARE NEVER QUESTIONED.” — IDALIS VILLANUEVA

Idalis Villanueva argues engineering culture needs to undergo a shift. She was photographed in front of the sculpture “Passacaglia” by Ann Preston.
generally a place one passes through without pause. But one winter morning in 2015, a mini refrigerator rigged with a motion-detecting spotlight appeared. A note was tacked to the front reading “Gifts from an atheist.” Inside someone had placed cans of soda, chocolate, and apples. The occasional passerby stared into the freshly stocked fridge puzzled: Who are these for? Who are these from? And, may I take one?

The fridge was an installation Mikey Kettinger, MFA ’17 — the atheist — conceived after coming across statistics from a 2014 Pew Research Center survey about how Americans feel about members of different religious faiths. The groups who engender the coolest responses from their fellow countrymen include Muslims, atheists, and Mormons. At the time, Kettinger felt like a bit of an outsider at Utah State University — he was a transplant from Florida operat-
The atrium of the University Reserve building is empty, save for a black leather chair relegated to the west corner and a large wooden crate that seems to hold no purpose other than to stake out the doorway. 

**OFF THE BEATEN PATH**

By Kristen Munson
For his MFA show last spring, Kettinger cleared his home of the everyday detritus of living. He moved out the furniture and hung statistics from the Pew Research Center for the latest iteration of “Gifts from Atheists.” This time he invited members of faith groups viewed the least favorably to participate in a performance piece. And then Kettinger invited the public. More than 200 people squeezed into his apartment on Logan’s west side where they were greeted by Mormons, atheists, and Muslims carrying trays of fresh-baked lemon cupcakes, goat cheese, hummus, and pastries, offered with a side of conversation.

“The goal was for people to see atheists, Mormons, and Muslims as human beings and there’s no reason to feel coldly to them,” Kettinger says. “For me, it didn’t make sense to feel coldly to a person because of what their religion is. But we do.”

Caine College of the Arts Dean Craig Jessop was one of the guests circulating the exhibit. While he knew Kettinger from his work on the college’s arts committee, he had no idea what to expect from the show.

“It was genius,” Jessop says. “We were not only observing, but we had to work. Mikey’s default baseline is openness, inclusion, and wanting to bring people together. During his MFA show, he just showed us how much we have in common.”

Jessop believes the arts speak to the things that are the most personal to us. He argues that artists hold a mirror and reveal who we are as a society. They show us our flaws and our strengths.

“The role of the prophet was to see into the future and foretell, and so is the poet/artist,” Jessop said. “Part of their role is to show us where we are. I think Mikey is a poet-prophet. I think he has this gift to look at us and show us what’s really going on. He’s just at the beginning of his career. I hope he can stick with it. He may never be rich, but I think he will change lives.”

Three years ago Kettinger never considered living in the mountains of northern Utah. He was teaching grades K-8 at sea level and getting schooled on the merits of interactive learning. “Kids are an honest audience,” he says. Kettinger found that students can be consumers of information or they can interact with it, play with it, and potentially, learn from it. And those lessons seemed to generate the best responses. Then out of the ether, the phone rang.

“Are you interested in going to grad school?” the voice on the other end asked.

It was Mark Koven, a social engagement artist, and Kettinger’s former professor at Florida State University. He was now teaching at Utah State and told Kettinger about a new effort merging the arts with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that came with partial funding for two graduate student positions. The hitch: artists need to incorporate scientific data into their work.

“I went through my mental rolodex of students who had made an impact on me,” Koven says. “Mikey’s solutions were away off the beaten path. He is probably even further off the beaten path than I am. He seemed to understand that social engagement is important to bring about social change.”

Koven first met Kettinger in an intervention art class he was teaching. Intervention art centers on the idea that art, often performance art, can be a catalyst for transformation by engaging the public. Koven saw Kettinger as a perfect fit for fusing art with social science research. Kettinger applied and began packing his bags for Logan. It was time for something different. Utah would be a departure from the traditional paint it, frame it, hang it, show it, art he was used to producing.

“I liked that challenge,” Kettinger says. “I know how to fail through traditional art.”

He believes the intersection between art and science can be a valuable tool for education. So does Koven. Two decades ago scientists began approaching him for help creating infographics to tell the story of data. But it was always on the tail end of projects. Koven realized art could do more than that. “Art could be a fundamental tool rather than an afterthought by the scientists,” he says.
Koven’s works are interactive and often collect data, particularly on climate science. He recently received National Endowment for the Arts funding for a pilot mobile art project that will appear in rural communities across Utah and use 7-meter planetarium domes to examine people’s belief in science and identify potential incongruities in STEM career pathways. The project extends an earlier piece Koven installed in Albuquerque in 2015 with Kettinger’s help called “Taking People’s Temperature” after the city experienced deadly flashfloods.

“I know I am not saving the world, but I am impacting it,” Koven says. “You can’t create huge shifts [with art], but you can create movement.”

While Koven and Kettinger often echo each other, there are clear differences to their approaches. Koven can go dark. And Kettinger stays in the light.

“Mikey has always seen positivity as a way to influence people in his art work,” Koven says. “He always stays away from the negative. I can’t say that about myself.”

They often argue over the direction a piece of art should take: more aesthetic, less function (Koven), or sacrifice the aesthetics to communicate the message (Kettinger). Koven pushes him to direct his focus. Create less art because you feel like it and more to develop your strengths.

“One thing I haven’t told him to his face is how proud I am,” Koven says. “Just as important as I was to Mikey, Mikey was to me. How necessary it was for him to be here for me to accomplish what I needed to accomplish. There needed to be more than one voice about the potential of what art could be. He was a one-off. I think he learned the value of being a one-off, of being an island. I think he realized how beneficial that could be. But it’s hard to be a one-off. I think the arts benefited greatly from having him. For better or worse, you always create a wake when you come through.”

*

Since graduating Kettinger has found his footing as an art educator for the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art’s mobile art truck. Almost every time he parks at a farmer’s market or school he opens the door and encounters the same phenomenon — kids are the first to dive in. Their parents sit back and smile when Kettinger invites them to create art work of their own. It’s not for them, they say. Kettinger disagrees.

“Art is for people of all ages,” he says. “Art is for everybody.”

These days Kettinger is revisiting what seemed forbidden during his MFA. He’s drawing and painting and making music. And he’s hatching new plans. Because Kettinger doesn’t dispose of a piece once it’s completed. He tweaks it. Has fun with it. Like “Gifts from Atheists.” He’s dreaming of ways to reimagine it. Something about an ice cream truck, he muses.

“Everyone has their own role in art,” Kettinger says. Some people, like himself, are willing to make a statement and be the one to answer the questions that follow, he says. Others want to support the work behind the scenes. But the piece only works if people are curious and explore it. If they participate.

In the months since his MFA exhibit Kettinger’s apartment has transformed back to a living space. The couch is back. So is his bed. A paper on his refrigerator reads “be remembered as thoughtful.” Over his front door hangs a remnant of the piece — a sign, introducing Gifts from Atheists, Mormons and Muslims. There’s also a framed note on his wall that was anonymously delivered to the museum for Kettinger.

“Dear Atheist,” it begins.

“Your philosophy on art has shaped my perspective on life and the world, and I thank you for that. I hope to see more of your art; if not in this little corner then elsewhere … — A flutist”

A copy of the note hangs in a white frame in the atrium of the University Reserve building. If anyone stops to notice.
John Spuhler is a serial entrepreneur. After selling a tech company in Denver, he and his wife, Melissa, decided to semi-retire by moving with their three sons to Garden City, Utah, to be near family. That was 11 years ago, and not only did retirement not happen, but Spuhler became mayor of Garden City for two terms and started five new companies. Not exactly the life of leisure he had planned.

But for numerous residents in the Bear Lake area, including several Utah State University graduates, this entrepreneur is making it possible for them to be able to live and work right from home.

Spuhler's professional background running information technology and software sales companies integrated nicely with his responsibilities as mayor. One of the first challenges he faced was managing a rural town with 800 people on the voting roster that expands from 12,000 to 20,000 in the summer. Then add in the 3,000 residents who live there mostly year-round in their second homes, and there are three groups of people with very different needs.

The growing short-term rental market — the Airbnb's, VRBOs and privately rented properties — quickly surfaced as a much-needed answer to the huge seasonal influx of visitors, but also came as a challenge for the city, he said. With over 300 short-term rentals, averaging 24 people per rental, there was an additional 6,000 people staying in Garden City every night in the summer.

“Many people in the community have short-term rentals as a way to fund or help pay for their house and it is also a great way to share our beautiful area,” Spuhler said. “But it is critical that our city staff and residents have a way to easily see compliance with local ordinances and to pay their taxes on time.”

Helping small businesses

Despite the challenges, Spuhler says the growing short-term rental market is not a bad thing. He just wants the city to have a way to regulate those rentals and make sure everyone pays their fair share of taxes.

For the next year-and-a-half, the trio worked to create STR Helper, a software solution for the regulation of short-term rentals. The software was designed to scan the data for all area short-term rentals each night from 40 plus internet platforms and compare it to the city's business licenses, voter registration, parcel data, geographic information system (GIS), and even social media accounts to discover the city's rental inventory. The data is publicly available information, and the software combines key data points and makes recommendations that are then verified by employees.

“This brings into question the need for public policy and parity related to safety and taxes,” Spuhler says. “Do the rentals have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide sensors? Do they have a parking plan? What about noise levels and trash pickup? Hotel owners have to pay a room tax, but are those taxes also being paid by short-term rental owners? Without a method to manage these things, it was becoming a challenge to our small city staff and a concern to our professional providers of short-term rentals as well as our full-time residents.”

Spuhler, Bob Peterson, who was then-Garden City manager, and Kenny Jacobson, a Garden City second homeowner, got their heads together in July of 2015, while watching the Bear Lake boat parade from Garden City Park. They talked about the need for a solution that could address the challenges of the city's rental boom.

“We just started throwing ideas around, and we felt like instead of a sparse few people doing the ‘heavy lifting,’ we should let technology do it,” Spuhler says. “We all have software backgrounds, and that, combined with our experience in city government, helped drive the project. Garden City is like the perfect worst-case scenario.”

THrive

By Julene Reese

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“It also allows us to get a picture of whether or not the rental owners are in compliance with local ordinances on things like noise, trash and parking,” Spuhler says. “It keeps track of these
things, and if you ever end up with something unfortunate, like going to court, all the information is there.”

Spuhler says as STR Helper began to unfold, he met with Mike Young from USU Extension’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Young provided business assistance for Spuhler and his wife earlier for Elite Education Global, LLC, a business they started in 2012.

“When we launched our education company, we were looking for marketing guidance, because that’s not our strong suit,” Spuhler says. “Mike consulted with us and helped us find a marketing intern from USU who is now a full-time employee for us, and she is tremendous. So I contacted him again in the early phases of STR Helper. Mike has forward-thinking ideas and has given us great direction for promoting our business. He’s also helped with general analysis — looking at where our business is, and where we want it to go.”

Young says the SBDC of Cache Valley is proud to be part of the STR Helper journey.

“They were able to leverage their experience as civic leaders in a small resort town to address a specific, timely, critical market need,” he says. “Our primary aim is to help businesses drive economic growth and development in Utah, and STR Helper is certainly doing that. The founders saw a need and filled it. They’ve shown that with the right combination of hard work and entrepreneurial drive, even companies in rural Utah can achieve explosive growth and success. They are on track to hit around $2 million in annual renewable contracts in their first year alone, and they just received a $1 million investment.”

USU was selected by the Small Business Administration in 2016 to host the Utah Small Business Development Center Network to help provide statewide services. The lead center is located at USU-Brigham City through USU Extension and includes regional service centers throughout Utah. SBDCs provide business owners with free one-on-one consulting, mentoring, and training to help launch and grow their businesses.

“Just in the past calendar year, the Utah SBDC has worked with nearly 2,300 businesses across the state, helping them add over 600 new jobs, increase revenues by more than $20 million, and secure nearly $54 million in needed capital to expand operations,” Young says.

After STR Helper was launched, it quickly became apparent it would be a valuable tool for Garden City. Complaint calls to the city went down by 85 percent, room tax revenues came up 52 percent in just two years, and the compliance rates now approach 100 percent. The Utah League of Cities heard about the software and wondered if it would be applicable for other communities. The city of Moab, and Grand County Utah, signed on first, and now there are 50 cities around the country using it. The software may be used overseas if the language can be translated into Icelandic.

“Now we are just trying to keep up with the scale,” Spuhler says.

STR Helper currently has 16 staff and will be hiring more personnel next year when their new office space is completed, he says. By the first quarter of next year, the company will have 20 employees in the Bear Lake Valley alone. With new sales coming, that number will likely be doubled.

Underground fiber optics and high speed wireless installed in Garden City in recent years make it possible for nine of the employees from Bear Lake Valley to work out of their houses, many of whom are at-home moms.

“We have a unique situation in Utah where we have highly educated women who want to be at home with their kids,” he says. “A lot of what we need in our company is account maintenance, keeping up with the changes and verifying properties, so once the employees complete training, they can work day or night and have total flex time, whether in the office or from home.”

Heidi Poulsen, title service account manager for the company, is one such person. With three children at home, she is able to start her workday from home once she gets her kids off to school. She loves the flexibility and is able to pause her work time if her children need something. Prior to her work with STR Helper, she worked at an elementary school for six years, first as a special needs aid, then as a substitute teacher.

“I loved working at the school, but this job has been a huge blessing to me,” she says. “I am able to do more for my family, and it has more than doubled my income. And I know it’s been a big stress relief for a lot of the women who work for the company because it allows them to bring in income and still be with their kids.”

Spuhler is happy STR Helper can provide Garden City residents with year-round work that doesn’t shutter in the winter. He encourages people to think globally and outside the box, and realize that they can do almost anything from anywhere with technology.

“And don’t be afraid to let the experts help you,” he says. “The SBDC helped us with things we just didn’t know how to do, and their expertise has been invaluable to us. Our education company has done tremendously in sales and so has our software business. All from this little town here in rural Utah.”
In Memoriam

As we went to press, we sadly learned of the passing of Jon M. Huntsman Senior. The transformation of the school of business over the past decade is due, in large part, to the generosity and vision of Mr. Huntsman.
AND HE WAS PERFECTLY FINE WITH THAT, because when he started at Utah State University in July 2006 as the new dean of the College of Business, he had another view in mind. One he reveled in as a young man attending USU, walking to and from school along the Boulevard in Logan and looking out across the valley, wondering how he could permanently remain in such a place.

The culmination of that dream is apparent as you round the hill on 400 North in full view of Huntsman Hall. a great glass expanse loftily perched on the southern edge of campus. Thanks to his friend, Jon M. Huntsman Sr., Anderson has snagged a mighty good view. But Anderson isn’t satisfied. He has another vision in mind.
To get a clue, look no further than the challenge splashed across the wall in Huntsman Hall’s airy vestibule to “Dare Mighty Things.” Like everything else in this college, it means to inspire, motivate, and encourage bold action. It is an apt reflection of its dean, for Anderson is anything but subtle. Just like Theodore Roosevelt, the brassy cowboy president who penned the phrase.

Roosevelt had plenty to say about charging headlong into the unknown. He told Parisians in 1910 “Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure … than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.”

The mighty things that Anderson and Huntsman envision is a complete transformation of the Huntsman School of Business into the best undergraduate business and economics school in the Intermountain West, a heart-shaped region tucked between the Great Plains and California, spanning from Canada to the Southwest. A bustling school smack in the heart of the heart.

Anderson knows he is in a good place, and maybe that is why he is not concerned about the competition. He wishes them well, actually. He likes to think of the competition as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and the Huntsman School as the relentless posse tailing them, inching ever closer, forcing them to continuously look over their shoulders and ask: “Who are those guys?”

They are that little college on the hill in a picturesque mountain valley quietly building a brand around integrity, rigor, innovation, and leadership. They are practicing what business models teach, knowing that success breeds success. And they are coming for you, Brigham Young University, University of Utah, et al. It is the best and brightest they seek — all part of a 20-year plan already mapped out for the school.

Anderson defines his first decade with the college as phase one of Huntsman’s investment plan — to help USU compete statewide. Now the next 10 years is about elevating the school’s status across the Intermountain West.

“It’s a huge goal,” he says. “It’s an audacious goal, but we will be relentless.”

To accomplish this, he has focused, in true Steve Jobs fashion, on assembling a team of people who share his vision. He has cultivated relationships with remarkable people over the years, including Deloitte CEO Jim Quigley, best-selling author Stephen R. Covey, former Nike Brand President Charlie Denson, and Jon M. Huntsman Senior. His own accomplishments are likewise impressive, starting with his college career at Stanford, graduating from USU, getting his Ph.D. from Harvard, teaching at Harvard, and

Universities lose their focus on undergraduate experiences, which can cause them to deteriorate over time. We are leaning against the wind in that regard. That is where we can be different — be better.”

— Dean Douglas D. Anderson

Source: Jon M. Huntsman School of Business
then going on to start his own successful consulting business, a firm that looped him in with top corporate executives from around the world.

Students recognize this and respect Anderson for the relationships he nurtures with them and continues to foster with colleagues at Harvard and in Europe, says Michael Scott Peters, a Huntsman Scholar and USU Student Association president.

“He continues to go back and practices what he preaches,” he says. “To see these connections and the things he’s done instills confidence in me that he’s really more than just words; he’s actually living it.”

It is Anderson’s connection with Huntsman, considered one of the 20 most generous people in the world by Business Insider magazine, that has been, by far, the most invaluable. Yes, the $25 million dollar gift from Huntsman 10 years ago, along with another $25 million he gave last spring matched by yet another $25 million by Huntsman’s friend, Charles Koch, has provided the jet fuel for the college. However, the vision that Huntsman and Anderson share for the college ultimately made the gift possible.

“We are in complete alignment,” Anderson says.

The timing was fortuitous. Huntsman had been talking to USU about making a large gift for the institution at about the same time that Anderson was in discussions with former President Stan Albrecht about a job leading the business school. Anderson and Huntsman both knew the existing school was not the premier business and economics school in the Intermountain West. But, it could be. And the path to getting there required focusing on undergraduate education. In fact, the route required it.

Anderson was convinced undergraduates were the agents of change because he once was a USU undergraduate in the business college. His dad, Desmond L. Anderson, grew up on the “island” in Logan. His mother, Loila Rae Funk, was raised on a dairy farm in Benson, Utah. Both attended USU where his father was student body president (one day to become the 30th mayor of Logan) and his mom was queen of the 1947 Centennial Ball. After graduating from USU, they moved to California for his father to pursue his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

The Pasadena years for the young Anderson spanned from kindergarten to high school before enrolling at Stanford.

Utah State University is founded as the Utah Agricultural College (UAC) on March 8. Two years later, 11-year-old Vendla Berntson enrolls as UAC’s first student.

The UAC established its commercial department, making it the first business degree west of the Mississippi River.

The first eight students receive business degrees.
in 1968. Following his freshman year, he served a church mission for two years in Germany. When he returned, he decided to enroll at USU — just long enough to complete his general education requirements before going back to Stanford.

He never did. Go back to Stanford, that is.

“I fell in love with USU,” he told students during the Huntsman School’s first Focus Friday forum on Sept. 9, 2016. He already loved Cache Valley. All during his growing-up-years in California, his family would spend their summers in Logan, in the same house where his father had lived, and on his grandfather’s farm in Benson.

As a student at USU, he remembers his first — and favorite — teacher, Reed Durtschi, introducing him to the world of economics. He cherished the experience and never looked back.

“Did you have a dumb attack?” was a question he says people kept asking him for not returning to Stanford. It was frequent enough that he decided to develop a canned response. So whenever he was asked that question, he would reply: “To get a better education. Why else would you transfer from Stanford to Utah State?”

He liked that answer, and after repeating it awhile, he says he began to realize the truth in it. “But if that was going to be the answer, then it was going to depend on me. I had to own my own education.”

Today he looks back on his decision with no regrets. He remains in awe of the caliber of students who were his peers. People like Lars Hansen who went on to win the Nobel Prize in economics in 2013.

“I knew what he was capable of and I knew what others of my classmates were capable of,” he says in his office overlooking Logan Canyon.

Anderson also knew what was possible when placing undergraduates front and center. He felt the college over the years had been hollowed out and was losing its way. Shortly after becoming dean in 2006, he witnessed USU’s football team losing to the University of Utah 48 zip. That loss prompted his first memo to Provost Ray Coward and Albrecht: “It’s 48-0.”

It was tough for the dean to see his school’s team get shellacked like that. Things had changed from when he was a student in the fall of 1972 when USU crushed the U, 44-16. The contrast between the win in ’72 and the loss in ’06 morphed into a metaphor. It was his way of saying the business school that he loved as an undergraduate and now presided over as a dean had some catching up to do. It was his way of telling the president — and himself — that “if we don’t change quickly, we’re not going to be able to play in the same league with these guys, and I wouldn’t want to be the dean that followed me!”

He had a similar conversation with Huntsman, a competitive businessman who shared the same fondness for the university and optimism. Huntsman was raised in nearby Blackfoot, Idaho, and even though he never attended USU, he remembered hearing his father, a schoolteacher, always speaking highly of the institution. He grew up believing that USU was a place of distinction, “a symbol of excellence.” He still does. That is why he wanted to invest in the college’s future. “We essentially had to reinvent the whole department,” Anderson says.

And time was of the essence. Huntsman’s initial $25 million gift was an investment in which he wanted to see the return in years, not over a lifetime, hence their call to action, “Get Better Fast.” That entailed better financing, better faculty, better students, and better facilities, Anderson says.
“He told me he wasn’t giving for what the business school was, but what it could become,” he says. “He has been true to that all along.”

Anderson says Huntsman provided inspiration and credibility when he lent the college its name. It forced the school to think hard about its purpose, mission, and strategy. Huntsman wanted to engender excellence and viewed his gift as a down payment. More would come if the university held up its part of the bargain.

Since 2006, 80 percent of the faculty and 90 percent of the staff are new. Enrollment on the Logan campus has jumped by 50 percent, and scholarship support has increased tenfold. The school implemented a differential tuition policy, charging students more per credit than if they attended another college at USU.

The idea is that students are investing in the school’s success by paying more for top faculty, more for better programs, more for each other. It makes their diploma an appreciating asset that Anderson asserts will pay for itself many times over in the span of a career. In the last year, differential tuition has funneled $8 million into the school’s coffers to keep the college on a growth trajectory.

“It means the students are also invested in this process, in this transformation,” Anderson says. “They are investing their own dollars. That is very meaningful to Jon, and it’s very meaningful to our faculty.”

Chris Skousen, associate department head of accountancy, argues they could not recruit nationally competitive faculty without it.

“As I look at our rankings and how we are perceived outside this region and across the nation, you find that the School of Accountancy is ranked as a Top 50 program,” he told students in December during a special town hall meeting at the college. “Without differential tuition, we would not have that. I know that for a fact.”

Just as instrumental to the college’s transformation are Huntsman students. They are entrepreneurial, likely an artifact of the state’s pioneer past, hardworking, and honest. About half speak a foreign language. These are attributes that coincide with three of the college’s four pillars: ethical leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, and global vision. (The fourth is analytical rigor.)

“The name ‘Huntsman’ stands for all of this,” Anderson says.

It bestows their brand. It also helps spur on the Koch gift and philanthropic investment in the college by others. In 2006, the school had about $3 million in gifts, says Dave Patel, associate dean and Huntsman Scholar Program executive director. Now the college sees about $9 million in giving each year.

“It’s our oxygen,” Anderson says. Over the past decade, scholarships have gone from $203,000 to $1,795,000. Overall, student enrollment has increased 87 percent, including enrollment on regional campuses and overseas. Career development activities have surged from less than 30 to more than 400 per year.

And to accommodate these students, nearly twice as much space opened when Huntsman Hall first swung wide its doors in 2016. It marked the end of an elevated construction period for the college that started in 2008 with the $5 million refurbishment of the 48-year-old George S. Eccles Business Building, USU’s tallest at 108 feet. The building upgrade, combined with the new Huntsman Hall, nearly tripled the number of classrooms to 28 and boosted study rooms from 3 to 24.

Equally impressive is how beautifully the old blends with the new. The walkways from one building to the next, graced by a central courtyard that lights the interior of the building, provide a seamless transition. Large, abstract paintings, a gift from Salt Lake artist Howard Clark, hang in the spacious hallways and seem to challenge viewers to imagine whatever they want. Everything about this building, with its giant-pane windows, ample hallways, and spacious common areas, dares you to imagine and to think large. Open spaces abound and classrooms, many with name-
We were taping him for a video segment for a special Utah State University Old Main Society function.

The theme of the event was “Celebrating Generosity” and who better to talk to than Mr. Huntsman — one of the 20 most generous people in the world, according to Business Insider magazine? His close relationship with Stan and Joyce Albrecht, departing after 11 years as USU President and First Lady, quickly became evident.

His affection for the university was also on full display. Even though he never attended the university, he still felt a special kinship with the school.

Part of it, he said, was because of the town and community spirit of Logan. He talked about the quality of scholarship and faculty. He marveled how the university consistently competed against schools three, four and five times its size. From his childhood days growing up in Blackfoot, Idaho, Huntsman knew about USU. His father, a school teacher, spoke fondly of the agricultural college nestled in Cache Valley. But it was not until the late 1980s that he really came to appreciate its thriftiness and ingenuity, thanks, in part, to the College of Engineering.

Giants in the chemical industry, including Dow Chemical, Union Carbide, Chevron and Exxon had pitched in $100 million with him to develop an economically feasible way to recycle their products. At the same time, he approached USU engineers with a $1 million offer to see what they could do. That turned out to be a good thing. It seems the recycling plants where most of the joint funding dollars had been invested in major cities across the country were drowning in garbage.

As a result, they were shutting them down because people were not properly dividing their trash between plastics and non-plastics. In the meantime, USU’s Industrial Technology and Education Department found a solution. They designed and built a machine that automatically separated polystyrene, such as foam hamburger boxes and coffee cups, from other garbage. Best of all, they did it under budget. Huntsman was duly impressed then, and he remains so today.

“We’ve given vast amounts of money to other major universities in America, and we have received not nearly as much as the return on our investment as we have at Utah State,” he said.

He praised Utah State for its sense of purpose, entrepreneurship, and competitiveness. He talked about how comfortable his family is in giving to USU because they know that the university is careful with these dollars and accountable. He then pivoted from his admiration for the institution, to the person who was leading it at the time. He compared
Stan to the late J.E. Wallace Sterling, president of Stanford University from 1949-1968.

He said that most university presidents do not know their jobs. He recounted a commencement address by Sterling, who told the graduates that university presidents had two major missions: one to keep the grass cut, and the other to raise money. Lots of it. Good presidents are personally involved in the effort. Sterling understood that and followed his own advice to the extreme in building one of the greatest and most beautiful campuses in the world, Huntsman said.

“And President Albrecht has done that in spades,” he continued. “I love the man. I think he’s the finest president I have ever worked with.”

That seemed like a perfect place to end the interview, but while the camera was still rolling, we asked him if he had anything more he wanted to say. He paused for a long while and then said, “Yes, there is.” He cupped his hands and rested his chin on his fingertips while gazing down in deep thought. Then he looked up again and stared directly into the camera: “I would say to Stan and Joyce that you’ve carried out your duties in a remarkable and positive and most gracious manner.”

Then to Stan he singularly spoke, telling him that during his tenure his family had already donated some $40 to $50 million dollars to the university.

“We have a great new business school,” Huntsman said. “We have some wonderful faculty members, and to announce, at this point in time, that our family is giving another $25 million dollars to Utah State University, to the Huntsman School of Business.”

Jaws dropped. We did not see that coming. Nobody else saw it either when the video was shown at the Old Main Society gathering a few weeks later. That was because we edited out that part. Not that Huntsman had changed his mind, but rather because something else was in the works that might potentially double the amount.

Seven months later, with substantial support and guidance from Noelle Cockett, the university’s newly named president, USU announced its largest combined gift in school history — $25 million from Huntsman and another $25 million from his longtime friend, Charles Koch. What makes the backstory to this stunning gift announcement particularly pertinent is what it says about Huntsman, the way he leverages resources, and why he gives in the first place.

It was a thrill, to say the least, to be in on such a big and historic announcement. The Huntsman family, he said, would fulfill this new pledge over the next few years, and the money would mostly go towards scholarships “so we can continue to bring the best and brightest of our rural kids to Utah State, to kids all over the country, and to young men and women all over the world.”

It was a soft-spoken declaration, delivered straight from the heart. “We want you to know that, over the future, your impact will still be felt years from now,” he concluded. “Congratulations, Stan. It’s our great pleasure to keep giving. Thank you, my dear friend.”

Jon M. Huntsman Sr., namesake of the Huntsman School of Business, provided inspiration and credibility when he lent the college his name. Photo by Russ Dixon.
A $50 million joint gift between the Huntsman Foundation and the Charles Koch Foundation announced by USU President Noelle Cockett at commencement on May 6.

On Nov. 30 the Jon M. Huntsman Library officially opened, celebrating the life of the college’s namesake.
These are just some of the ways to measure the talent at the Huntsman School. There’s also our nationally ranked accounting and HR programs, a slew of individual awards, including the Truman Scholarship, the Elijah Watt Sells Award, for the top accounting students in the nation, and the fact that 6 of the past 7 student body presidents of USU have been Huntsman students.
Practicing yoga does not guarantee a person will ever perform a headstand or look better in workout pants. You do not have to eschew eating meat, drive a prius, or believe in balancing your chakras to be a yogi. You just have to be willing to listen to your breath. And that in itself may be a transforming experience.
Yoga is a philosophy that uses the body to connect with the mind. While rooted in ancient Indian religious texts, the yoga of today is diverse in its practitioners and purpose. However, a central tenet remains controlling one’s breath. But the breath in yoga is more than the respiratory system, says Camille Litalien, director of Utah State University’s Yoga Studies program. The breath, in yoga, is the ballgame. The breath is exploratory. It’s listening to your body as your lungs expand, identifying areas where pain exists — acknowledging them — and responding.

“The ability to listen is the most therapeutic and regulating thing that yoga can give you,” Litalien says.

Yoga is gaining acceptance as a form of complementary therapy for some medical conditions. Recent meta-analyses of studies involving patient populations with depression, diabetes, and chronic pain found improvements in glucose levels, lipid profiles, cortisol levels, patient function, and self-reported stress and anxiety levels. A review of interventions involving inmates who practice yoga found associations with increased behavioral functioning and psychological well-being. And a small, but growing, body of evidence examining the effects of yoga therapy on adolescents with a history of trauma have found it may help them cope with stress and regulate emotions.

But how does yoga improve one’s health?

One theory is that yoga may allow people to restore neural pathways linked with the body’s natural stress response system. For Litalien, it could be because yoga allows the body to revisit old trauma, whether physical or emotional, so you can move through the world without it affecting you, she says. “Yoga is not exercise. It’s not meant to make you fit. It’s there to balance the activities you engage in, in your daily life.”

She says that often what we think of as yoga is limited to splashy magazine covers or Instagram posts. The kind of images where a slim woman extends a leg above her head while standing near a cliff at sunrise? That’s the marketed version of yoga. We are leaving out the rest. And the rest, Litalien says, is critical. Because yoga is more than a series of poses.

“Yoga brings together things that are seemingly apart. It brings together the body with the heart, mind, and soul,” she says. “With yoga, we develop the capacity to listen to our bodies and become more sensitive to what it is saying.”

In other words, your pain has a story. Listen to it rather than try to shelve or push through it. Through regular yoga practice one may become more attuned with their body and learn how to regulate its response to both positive and negative stimuli. Students keep journals they share with the faculty. Yoga faculty member Emily Perry says she detects a change during the program. She shared one entry by student Linnea Leonard: “This semester I realized I don’t need to fight, I need to listen. If I’m still, my body and my soul will tell me what they need.”

An aim of the Yoga Studies program is to recalibrate how people think about the practice. Because achieving the perfect pose or a tighter butt isn’t it, Litalien says.

“One of the major goals for us is to contextualize the practice. Yoga is not a self-improvement regimen. It’s concerned with the problem of ignorance. Do you know who you are? In the beginning, the students always want us to give them the shapes because that’s what they think is being sold. We start by teaching them the stories. We provide a context where they can explore.”

About 60 students from across the university are enrolled in the Yoga Studies program, which combines coursework in religious studies, Yoga Alliance teacher accreditation, and offers a study abroad to Kerala, India. The one tell of a yoga minor is the hallmark rubber mat slung across one’s backpack.

During week one of the spring semester, 14 students in Yoga Teaching Methodology sit in a circle as Perry begins class with a reading from author Pixie Lighthorse. The students close their eyes and listen. “Thank you for this beautiful day of changing,” Perry reads. Afterward the students pair up for an exercise: One will guide the other across the room using only voice commands. No sight allowed. It is a lesson in communication. About the importance of using precise language. It is a lesson in finding one’s voice.

“Tone is just as important as direction,” Perry says. “Do you sound confident? It says, ‘Do you trust me?’”

— Camille Litalien
Twenty years ago, a landmark public health study tied childhood abuse and household dysfunction to some of the leading causes of death and disease in adults. The findings revealed the cumulative effect of past scars: the more trauma a person experienced during their youth, the more likely those surveyed were to attempt suicide, develop substance abuse disorders, or be diagnosed with depression, cancer, and heart disease later in life.

“What happened in childhood was casting an extraordinarily long shadow,” Vincent Felitti, lead author of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, told the Washington Post upon publishing the results. In the decades since, research has backed the original ACE study, which was the first large-scale investigation into how childhood exposures affected lifelong health risks. Among the most pernicious
discoveries was the sheer commonality of abuse.

More than half of respondents reported experiencing one or more exposures to psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, lived with someone with mental illness, substance abuse problems, suffered domestic violence, or was incarcerated. Over a quarter of participants reported being physically abused or living with an adult with a drug or alcohol problem. One in five people identified being sexually abused by an adult in their home. Consider what it would be like to live in that environment every day.

Researchers suggest the link between childhood adversities and the development of adult health issues is through behaviors that increase one's risk factors. For instance, adolescents may adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms such as overeating, smoking, drinking, or sexual promiscuity as a means to escape violence and dysfunction in their home life. However, toxic stress can wreak havoc on the body even earlier.

Most of the synapses in a baby's brain form after a baby is born, and that wiring is largely dependent on the inputs of their primary caregivers, says Vonda Jump Norman, assistant professor of social work at Utah State University's Brigham City Campus.

"For a child who lives in a chronically stressful home, their brains just develop a little bit differently during these formative years. The brain is chronically on alert because they don't have these home environments that feel really safe."

Their brains often operate in fight-or-flight mode, pumping stress hormones like cortisol throughout the body. Over time, this can produce physiological changes. That's, in part, why the first three years of a child's life, are so critical. It's a period when the brain flowers, building circuitry fueled by the touch and interactions of their caregivers. It's a time of explosive growth and a natural pruning of synapses.

"We can do a lot during adolescence. We can do something when somebody's 90 years old to change their brains — it's just a lot harder," Jump Norman says. “If we can provide education and support to parents in those early years, we don't have to rewire the brain later on, we can just help it wire optimally in the beginning.”

Recently, Jump Norman and a team of child development experts formed the Northern Utah Trauma Resiliency Coalition, including State Representative Ed Redd, a physician, and Esterlee Molyneux, executive director of The Family Place, a Cache Valley nonprofit that provides counseling and services to families. The group aims to mitigate adverse childhood experiences through community action in Cache, Rich and Box Elder counties. Jump Norman knows the lift is a heavy one. But she also knows that children are resilient, they just need support.

"I like to think we live in a valley where we don't have these things happening, but the reality is ... we are not immune from it.

And really what it takes to prevent [Adverse Childhood Experiences] is knowledge and awareness, and being thoughtful about how we interact with people.”

— Vonda Jump Norman

Norman says. “We are not immune from it. And really what it takes to prevent ACEs is knowledge and awareness, and being thoughtful about how we interact with people.”

She applied for a new faculty grant from the university’s Office of Research and Graduate Studies to involve undergraduates in a yearlong effort to reduce ACEs in Utah. She figured she could leverage their creativity and manpower to multiply the coalition’s efforts.

“One of the things that students really bring is fresh eyes and so many great ideas that somebody like me just might never have, which has been so powerful,” says Jump Norman.

Since the fall, senior social work students including Christina Lee, Natalie Harrison, Candice James, and Sarah Gasik have worked to build a network of people in northern Utah focused on preventing ACEs in the community. They've presented to health professionals, school counselors in the Cache County School District, and generated an asset map — a web of positive resources — that can buoy kids who are struggling.

Children exposed to adverse experiences are not doomed to a life of sickness or early death — they are just at higher risk. For some children, having a loving and supportive adult in their life can provide a buffering effect to disorder in the home, Jump Norman says. “Kids have incredible inner reserves. Many people who have had adverse childhood experiences do great things and function really well. Very often there’s been a supportive adult who has made a difference for that person. They have had help to lighten the load for them.”

That idea that one loving adult can change the trajectory of a child’s life resonates with Harrison, who hopes to have a career as a school counselor.

“Once you look at an ACEs test or a screening test around abuse or neglect or household dysfunction, I think most people will score at least a one. When you see that, it’s really eye-opening and you wonder who were those people in your life who were that buffer or that caring adult and how that made a difference for you?”
The seniors hope to organize meetings to present about ACEs at area elementary and middle schools and teach teachers, principals, lunch ladies about ACEs, Harrison says. “Because once you know about ACEs, you can be that buffering adult, that caring adult for a child. It helps teachers to look at students differently and understand that some students may have behavior issues coming from traumatic issues at home.”

For instance, children under five don’t often have the vocabulary to express when something is wrong at home. The way they communicate is through acting out. Adolescents in distress may appear preoccupied or especially sensitive to changes in the classroom environment. The goal for Jump Norman and her students is to get more people to understand how they can be that one stable person for a vulnerable youth.

“Once you know about ACEs, you can be that buffering adult, that caring adult for a child.”

— Natalie Harrison

Social work professor Vonda Jump Norman and senior Natalie Harrison discuss how using play dough can help children regulate their emotions, by shifting their focus to the brain’s frontal cortex.

something is wrong at home. The way they communicate is through acting out. Adolescents in distress may appear preoccupied or especially sensitive to changes in the classroom environment. The goal for Jump Norman and her students is to get more people to understand how they can be that buffering adult, that caring adult for a child. It helps teachers to look at students differently and understand that some students may have behavior issues coming from traumatic issues at home.”

For instance, children under five don’t often have the vocabulary to express when something is wrong at home. The way they communicate is through acting out. Adolescents in distress may appear preoccupied or especially sensitive to changes in the classroom environment. The goal for Jump Norman and her students is to get more people to understand how they can be that one stable person for a vulnerable youth.

“Once you know about ACEs, you can be that buffering adult, that caring adult for a child.”

— Natalie Harrison

Social work professor Vonda Jump Norman and senior Natalie Harrison discuss how using play dough can help children regulate their emotions, by shifting their focus to the brain’s frontal cortex.
had a really great background in kids’ development. The majority of the country doesn’t have that. The majority of people in the world don’t. So how do we know how to parent? Very often we parent how we were parented or the opposite of how we were because we are just completely sure we are not going to do what was done with us.”

A follow-up video taken just a month later shows baby Cassandra laughing and smiling back during a game of peek-a-boo. That’s how Jump Norman knows that kids can recover from adverse experiences with support — she’s seen it. She’s also witnessed what happens when kids and parents don’t have it.

“I used to work in child welfare, and I worked with people who had really done horrible things to kids,” Jump Norman says. “I would say that very, very few of those people wanted to do anything to hurt their kids. It’s just they didn’t have something else. They didn’t have the tools. Most people I worked with treated their kids a lot better than they had been treated when they were younger — they were doing the best they could. And so it’s giving people that something else.”

Seeing the everyday struggle of so many families who’ve experienced abuse and neglect spurred Jump Norman to pivot to prevention. In January, she and her students invited Dr. Cosgrove to talk about toxic stress in children to a room of two dozen pediatricians and nurses at Logan Regional Hospital with the hope that he could convince them to adopt a screening tool to identify children at risk in their practices.

“I’m not here because I have done any of this research,” Cosgrove says, pacing. “I am here because I care.”

Toxic stress changes the hardware in kids’ brain; he likens it to changes caused by lead toxicity, which even at low exposures can lead to mental retardation and behavioral issues. There’s no known safe dose, he says. “The higher the dose, the higher the effect.”

He points to a slide of brain scans pictured side by side. The left brain is from a healthy three-year-old, and on the right, a child of the same age who suffered extreme neglect. Jump Norman’s head nods at the sight. The brain on the left is bigger with more white matter. The brain on the right is much smaller with an abnormal cortex.

“This is a well-kept secret,” Cosgrove says. “We all should know this by heart. Unfortunately, we don’t. You’ve seen these kids. You saw them this week — you may not have recognized it. I can’t identify them and I’ve been doing this 34 years. And yet, I know the statistics. They’re in front of me every day.”

What’s a pediatrician to do, he asks? He suggests screening mothers of infants for ACEs to better understand what stresses she may be carrying. We need to ask about maternal depression so conversations can happen and local resources can be identified, he says. “When parenting, we hope to bring our best selves. But we also bring our dark sides. We heal with scars.”

Afterward, Jump Norman announces the coalition will be a screening of a documentary “Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope” in a few days. She places fliers on the table. A few of the physicians tuck them under their arms on their way out.

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DARE MIGHTY THINGS

Utah State University
Long after hanging up their pads, for decades, Len Rohde (#71) and his teammates gathered to watch the Super Bowl. Photo courtesy of USU Athletics.

**ALL-PURPOSE TEAMMATES**

John Ralston assembled some of the finest football teams to emerge from Utah State. During the years he coached the Aggies (1959-1962) he cobbled a 31-11-1 record and an appearance at the Sun Bowl. Ralston cherry-picked players from around the West and convinced them to relocate to a small agricultural community in northern Utah. One of those recruits, Nate Solomon, had no idea where Utah State University was when Ralston approached him about moving to Logan from Modesto.

“Remember it could get to twenty below in Logan — is it snowy there now?” Solomon chuckled one morning in December. He was waiting for a phone call from another Aggie, Ron Poindexter, to tell him where the next meeting of the “California boys” will be. He already knows when: Superbowl weekend. It’s a date he has reserved every year for his former USU teammates Poindexter, Clyde Brock, Bill Dickey, and William Redmond. Until recently, the group included the late Len Rohde and Pete Michaletos who both passed in 2017. (Ralston has also made appearances.)

Several of these Aggies were part of the university’s most winning team in history — the 1960-61 Aggies — and some teammates went on to play in the National Football League including Merlin Olsen, Lionel Aldridge, Brock, Doug Mayberry, Clark Miller, Bill Munson, and Rohde. Others like Solomon and Michaletos coached high school football. While it’s obvious this group knows a thing or two about sports, they also know something about friendship.

Long before social media and email made keeping in touch virtually instantaneous, these teammates carved out time every year for decades to meet, share a meal, and reminisce.

They also know that life is more than a tally of your wins and losses. When Michaletos retired in 2010 after a storied 46 years of coaching, he told reporters, “When I reach the pearly gates and I bump into St. Peter, he’s not going to ask me how many games I won … He’s going to want to know what I did for mankind.”

As the USU teammates moved around the country opening businesses, starting families, and teaching elementary school, they kept in touch. When one was honored, like Olsen in 2009 when the university named the playing field for him, they came to support him. When tragedy struck, like after Michaletos died, they did the same. Teammates like Solomon joined nearly a thousand of Coach Mike’s former athletes to attend his memorial service. “I think athletics is important,” says Solomon, who helped orchestrate many of the USU team reunions. “They teach values. They teach camaraderie and getting along with others.

Look at the friendship we kept up.

Sports also provided a pathway to college that some players may not have had otherwise.

“I probably wouldn’t have gone to college without football,” Rohde said in the book *San Francisco 49ers: Where Have You Gone?* (Sports Publishing, 2011). “I owe an awful lot to the game, and I was around people who had a great influence on me. I feel pretty grateful for the opportunities, and I wouldn’t trade them for anything.”

**1940s**

LaDean Alder (Bailey) ’49 Att, Oct. 13, UT
Evan A. Baugh ’42, ’45MS, Dec. 6, UT
Shirly E. Bishop ’48, Oct. 15, UT
Woodrow E. Evans ’43 Att, Jan. 16, UT
Elouise P. Goodaffile (Pugyl) ’44 Att, Oct. 17, UT
Leo G. Johnson ’49, Jan. 7, UT
Rae C. Johnson ’48 Att, Dec. 20, UT
Ellie W. Lamborn ’49, Nov. 26, ID
Paul W. Lamborn ’41, Nov. 24, CA
Mary Madsen (Stevenson) ’47, Nov. 23, NM
Grace G. Marden (Geddes) ’47, Nov. 15, UT
Glenna P. Merrill (Parkin) ’42, Nov. 26, UT
Torrill L. Nelson ’40 Att, Jan. 3, VA
Lorraine C. Nicholls ’47, Nov. 25, OR
Beth Sanders ’45, Oct. 4, UT
Louella Schwartz (Brewer) ’40, Jan. 17, CO
Viviano O. Simmons ’41, 60, Dec. 22, UT
Delmont King Smith ’49, 59MS, Dec. 31, UT
Sarah Westerberg (Spencer) ’48, Oct. 30, UT

**1950s**

John A. Adams ’53, Jan. 5, UT
Blanche Alde (Beurler) ’55, Dec. 25, ID
Nard V. Allen ’53, 59MS, Nov. 22, UT
Ray W. Alward ’50, Dec. 17, UT
Lex Buer ’50 Att, Nov. 18, UT
Douglas D. Bangertter ’51 Att, Nov. 2, UT
Shirley L. Bangertter (Ken) ’51 Att, Nov. 2, UT
Lou E. Bendixen ’53, Nov. 26, OH
Jay M. Bernhardt ’54, Nov. 26, UT
Herbert F. Blaude ’55, Nov. 1, WA
Dixie Bomm (Halgren) ’57, Oct. 17, CA
Kenneth Jay Braegger ’51 Att, Nov. 27, UT
Gerald L. Byington ’56, 60, Nov. 11, UT
H. Don Carmack ’53, Oct. 28, UT
Ruby J. Carnahan (Tanner) ’57, Oct. 23, ID
Fonnie Carter (Hansen) ’59, Nov. 1, UT
Edna E. Cleveland ’55 Att, Sept. 21, UT
Ronald Joe Collodie ’54, ’56, Dec. 25, UT
Ronald S. Crockett ’50 Att, Dec. 29, CA
Alice Edson (Nelson) ’50, Jan. 16, UT
Gordon H. Ewing ’54, 57MS, Jan. 13, NM
James E. Farmer Jr., ’59, Jan. 17, TX
Joseph E. Fielding ’51, Nov. 21, GA
Marllyn T. Flint (Taylor) ’51 Att, Oct. 24, UT
William S. Glenn ’54, Oct. 26, UT
Gregorson H. Hafen ’57, Dec. 16, UT
Barbara L. Hansen (Jones) ’51, Sept. 21, CA
Terry L. Hansen ’57, 59, Oct. 15, UT
Earl C. Hurch ’57 Att, Dec. 15, UT
Elvira B. Hirsch ’57, Jan. 12, UT
Joseph D. Huggins ’58, Oct. 19, UT
Dean Wayne Hard ’53, 57MS, Jan. 16, UT
Berdean H. Jarman ’53, Nov. 10, UT
Margaretten Johannes (Stander) ’57, Dec. 1, AZ
Fred A. Kazalski ’51, Dec. 28, NJ
LaRae G. Kygier (Gudranzen) ’52, Nov. 26, OR
Allan B. Laslaw ’59, 60MS, Jan. 15, UT
Larry James Larsen ’54, ’56, NV
Leonard G. Leach ’50, Jan. 6, OH
Thomas E. Lewis ’56, 74MAA, Dec. 1, UT
Howard Lloyd ’53, Nov. 7, UT
Tom C. McClain ’58 Att, Oct. 14, UT
Roy Hutchinson ’53, Nov. 9, UT
Betty McCormorr (Bartley) ’55, Nov. 29, UT
Kay L. Mechan ’57, Oct. 28, UT
Peggy D. Mickle ’54, Nov. 30, UT
Monte Merrill ’53, Oct. 12, WA
James D. Monson ’56, Oct. 27, UT
James C. Murphy ’59, Dec. 25, MA
Jay F. Pearson ’51, Dec. 7, ID
Stanley C. Peterson ’53, ’59, Jan. 6, KS
Ileen M. Purcell (may) ’51 Att, Dec. 27, UT
Robert F. Ralde ’54, 66MS, Oct. 30, UT
Donald C. Rawlings ’57 Att, Oct. 19, UT
Jay L. Risennay ’53, ’56MS, Jan. 20, ID
Don C. Russell ’52, Dec. 26, UT
William Snowe ’52, Dec. 23, UT
LaShene Seale (Hall) ’59, Oct. 23, CO
Delmar Seely ’56, Jan. 8, UT
Allen Stevens ’57, 61MS, Dec. 10, CA
Albert S. Stotson Jr., Nov. 25, UT
Frank O. Tremar ’54, 56MED, Dec. 14, UT
Merlin R. Walker ’59 Att, Dec. 5, UT
Wayne Wermund ’59MS, Nov. 15, NV
Robert J. Wheelwright ’59, Dec. 22, WA
Roy D. Wilsonon ’53, Dec. 9, MO
Roland C. Willis ’59, Dec. 22, UT
Van Zollinger ’58 Att, Oct. 21, UT

**1960s**

Mary Jane P. Anderson (Parkinson) ’69, Oct. 16, ID
Homer D. Armaton ’63, ’67WA
Bill Ray Barker ’68, Jan. 16, UT
Val J. Barton ’65, Nov. 9, UT
Nadon D. Bill ’99ED, Dec. 13, UT
William D. Bertolo ’69, ’71MM, Nov. 18, UT
Jack L. Burr ’64, Nov. 29, UT
Robert E. Charlton ’68, 69MA, 73PHD, Dec. 9, UT

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