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### Suffolk University Alumni Magazine, Fall 2023

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# SUFFOLK

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

suffolk.edu

FALL 2023



A WHOLE NEW (ADD)  
**WORLD**  
Suffolk is combining traditional learning with virtual reality, enabling students to go back in time, around the world, even inside complex DNA molecules

STATE REP. AARON MICHLEWITZ, MBA '13:  
THE WORKHORSE OF THE STATE HOUSE

CAN DEMOCRACY SURVIVE IN AN AGE OF  
DISINFORMATION?

ONE WOMAN'S REFUSAL TO LET  
LOSS HAVE THE FINAL WORD

## Service with a smile!

Senior Gavin Reid (left), a third-year resident assistant, swears that move-in is his favorite time of year—mini-fridges notwithstanding. Over Labor Day weekend, Reid and fellow RA Turner Mitchell (center) and Nico Miele (right) spent close to 30 hours helping scores of new first-year students move into Suffolk's residence halls, including Smith Hall on Tremont Street. And as RAM Supporters—students who serve as peer mentors for incoming undergrads, helping them get the hang of campus life—they also dispensed their best pro tips, like taking advantage of all the clubs and organizations Suffolk has to offer, says Miele. “These years of your life go by in a blink of an eye,” adds Reid. “Do everything you possibly can while you can.”

*Photograph by Michael J. Clarke.*



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Suffolk University Magazine is published twice a year by Suffolk University. The magazine is printed by Publication Printers in Denver, Colorado. We welcome readers' comments. Contact us at [publicaffairs@suffolk.edu](mailto:publicaffairs@suffolk.edu), or at Editor, Suffolk University Office of Public Affairs, 73 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02108-2770. © 2023 by Suffolk University. All publication rights reserved.

**On the Cover**  
 Hands-on research takes on a new meaning at Suffolk, where Biology Professor Celeste Peterson (right) and colleagues are using virtual reality to enable students like Isabel Smith (left) to expand molecules to the size of a classroom—the better to understand their structure and function. Photograph courtesy of Meta.



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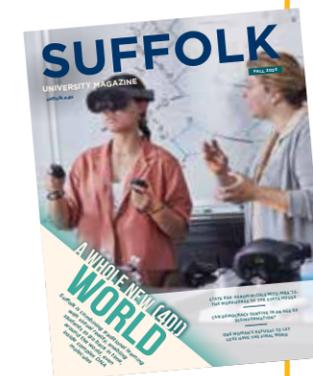


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Photographs clockwise from top left: Adam DeTour, Michael J. Clarke (3), Adam DeTour, Michael J. Clarke (2), Faith Ninivaggi, Michael J. Clarke



# Boston—and beyond

I often tell people that Suffolk University is in and of the city of Boston—but not bound by it.

From move-in weekend at the start of the academic year to Commencement weekend at the end (and every day in between—summers, too), Boston plays an enormous role in the life of this University and in the educational experience of our students.

The latest edition of *Suffolk University Magazine* is filled with examples of how this incredible University connects with this amazing city. For example, in September Suffolk was at the center of Boston's startup community as host of Startup Boston Week 2023. For five straight days innovators, investors, entrepreneurs, and influencers swarmed Sargent Hall—learning from experts, networking, and dreaming up the next big thing.

Suffolk Theatre students are collaborating with Boston's Front Porch Arts Collective, an award-winning Black theatre company founded to advance racial equity. With visiting guest artist Pascale Florestal, students are creating a contemporary adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which will be produced at Suffolk's Modern Theatre in downtown Boston in November.

In July, as part of the inaugural Suffolk University Summer Public History Institute, students from area high schools made Boston their classroom. Led by History Professors Kathryn Lasdow and Robert Allison, they visited colonial, Revolutionary, and modern history sites from Old North Church to the Kennedy Presidential Library. Along the way, they grappled with questions about the nature of liberty, freedom, and a changing American identity, as well as some of the nation's most complicated narratives.

Yet while our learning opportunities begin in Boston, they often extend around the globe. Consider international relations major Stephanie Bulega-Nasuna,

who is splitting her senior year between the US and Asia. After studying this summer in South Korea, where she was the first Suffolk recipient of a prestigious State Department scholarship, she is spending her fall semester in Japan on a Boren Award scholarship.

Before receiving her MPA/MAAP degree in May, Rae'Niqua Victorine took a course on our Boston campus with David Paleologos, renowned director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. When deciding what to poll, Victorine convinced her classmates to look further afield than Boston and shine a light on her often-overlooked home territory of the US Virgin Islands, whose residents have endured damaging hurricanes, a struggling economy, and unreliable power grids. The poll found that USVI residents often feel like second-class citizens and want to vote in US presidential elections.

Another alumnus, State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, MBA '13, embodies the idea of being in and of Boston, but not bound by it. A deeply rooted North Ender, he still lives in the neighborhood where he grew up and never misses an opportunity to help his constituents. And yet, as the powerful chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, helping determine how state funds are allocated, Michlewitz's reach now extends across the Commonwealth. He's worked to address the state's housing crisis and pushed for programs that support its most vulnerable citizens and expand access to early education, among other areas. He says he loves the idea that "you can change someone's trajectory with a small neighborhood issue or a big piece of legislation."

And then there are Suffolk learning experiences that are literally out of this world. Professors Melanie Berkmen and Celeste Peterson and other faculty members are expanding traditional classroom instruction using virtual reality, translating complex concepts into 4D space—an education that starts in Boston and extends to the metaverse.

In his remarks at Suffolk's Convocation ceremony in September, Student Government Association President Clinton Oreofe, Class of 2025, told first-year students that "college is the perfect time to figure out who you are, and Suffolk is the perfect canvas to do it on." That is a reality that goes beyond virtual, and every day our students are proving it in Boston and all around the world.

*Marisa J. Kelly*

*"College is the perfect time to figure out who you are," Student Government Association President Clinton Oreofe told new first-year students at Convocation in September. "And Suffolk is the perfect canvas to do it on."*

Photograph: Michael J. Clarke



The WORLD Is Their CLASSROOM

## An Appetite for Exploration

*Stephanie Bulega-Nasuna earns study abroad scholarships to South Korea and Japan*

**A** canceled prom, drive-through graduation, and a summer spent at home because of the pandemic marred the end of Stephanie Bulega-Nasuna's high school career. Now, after earning two prestigious government scholarships, she's making up for lost time by splitting her Suffolk senior year between the US and Asia.

Though she grew up just north of Boston, Bulega-Nasuna spent summers exploring her parents' vibrant home country of Uganda. She was determined to travel again once border restrictions eased and jumped at the opportunity to study in South Korea during her sophomore year.

Seoul was exhilarating, she says: "Something new is always happening—a new trend, a new cafe." Long walks through bustling neighborhoods turned into



picnics under cherry blossom trees by the Han River. She discovered similarities between Korean and Ugandan culture, from top-notch street food to a strong emphasis on family.

Taking courses on global politics through Suffolk's exchange program at Yonsei University helped her realize her interest in other cultures could be more than a passion: It could be a career. "I could be a foreign service officer, teach English abroad, or work in international business or law," she says.

So Bulega-Nasuna changed her major to international relations. She became a Study Abroad Ambassador, and worked toward Korean fluency by practicing with friends she met through Suffolk's Home Away From Home program, which connects American and international students.

This summer she studied in South Korea as the first Suffolk recipient of the State Department's Critical Language Scholarship, and is now spending her fall semester in Japan on a Boren Award scholarship.

—Andrea Grant

## Faculty Scholars Bound for Finland, Cyprus

*Sawyer Business School professors research marketing and business strategy during Fulbright fellowships*



Photographs clockwise from top left: courtesy of Stephanie Bulega-Nasuna, Michael J. Clarke (2), courtesy of Lauren Muro-Belandria

From top, Fulbright Scholars Marketing Professor Müjde Yuksel and International Business Professor Kim Wang.

**Two Sawyer Business School faculty members** have received prestigious Fulbright scholarships for the 2023–24 academic year.

Marketing Professor Müjde Yuksel is studying at the University of Vaasa in Finland, examining the role that others play in holding people accountable when it comes to physical activity and green consumption—areas in which Finns excel. Strategy and International Business Professor Kim Wang is researching the startup ecosystem of Cyprus.

Every year, the US State Department awards around 800 Fulbright grants to academics across the country, chosen

from a pool of more than 4,000 applicants. "This is a big honor for both faculty members and for the Sawyer Business School," says Dean Amy Zeng. "It is a testament to our global reach as well as the strength and depth of our faculty's research."

A native of Turkey, Yuksel appreciates the value of immersing oneself in other cultures and then sharing that knowledge with her Suffolk students. Wang calls the chance to see if an EU country can create its own Silicon Valley "an incredible business and research opportunity." —Ben Hall

## A FULBRIGHT FUTURE

*Lauren Muro-Belandria will spend nine months on a teaching assistant fellowship in Spain*

**W**hen Lauren Muro-Belandria, BA '23, resolved to study politics, philosophy, and economics at Suffolk, she didn't let anything stand in her way—not even the fact that she'd never set foot in Boston.

Breaking new ground comes naturally to the first-generation college student from Florida. So does striving to help others, from acting as a translator for her Spanish-speaking family to working with Habitat for Humanity and advocating for reproductive justice during two Suffolk Alternative Spring Break trips.

"My experiences growing up in an immigrant family with roots in Colombia and Venezuela and of being a woman made me realize how prevalent issues like discrimination still are worldwide," she says. "I wanted to work toward global cultural understanding."

A semester spent studying abroad as a Gilman scholar in Madrid was a start, but it left her wanting to connect more with locals and make an impact. When she learned about the Fulbright Program's nine-month English teaching assistant award, she jumped at the chance.

But the Fulbright application process is notoriously competitive, requiring multiple essays, recommendations, and rounds of interviews. Muro-Belandria, so accustomed to helping others, had to do something outside of her comfort zone: ask for help.

Luckily, Suffolk's Division of Student Success sprang into action, assembling a team to assist her, including Political Science & Legal Studies Professor Ken Cosgrove, himself a 2011 Fulbright scholar. "We aren't here for participation trophies. The goal is to win," he told Muro-Belandria, pushing her to create an authentic personal statement that would show why she'd be a standout ambassador for the United States.

So she wrote from the heart, sharing how her mother's sacrifices drive her to give back. She outlined her dream of

helping to create a more equitable world by working with the United Nations or as a foreign service officer. She wrote about discovering her passion for connecting with youth as an orientation leader and RAM Supporter at Suffolk, "helping people become the best versions of themselves."

When Muro-Belandria was accepted into the Fulbright Program, Cosgrove was proud but not surprised. "Her story is the American story," he says. "She'll be a good representative for the country because she'll engage with people and try new things." —Andrea Grant



# Caring for the Caregivers

*EMBA graduate helps land \$1.2 million grant to ease the 'respite crisis'*

**Elizabeth Bostic, EMBA '23**, knows all too well the challenges faced by caregivers of children and youth with special health needs. She's a single mother and the primary caregiver of a child who's medically complex, a term used to describe children who have a medical condition requiring ongoing specialized care.

"You are navigating complicated systems of care and struggling to balance meeting the demands of your child's needs with staying employed and making ends meet," says Bostic, an assistant director of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Division for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs.

A critical shortage of direct service providers to assist with routine care that children can't perform on their own means parents and caregivers "never get a break. Ever," she says. "Over 60% of caregivers have to change their work schedule or leave the workforce altogether due to their child's condition."

As she was contemplating these challenges in her public policy course during her Sawyer Business School EMBA program, Bostic had an epiphany: Why not create a network of parents to help care for each other's children?

She used her EMBA capstone course to design the Caregiver to Caregiver (C2C) Respite Network, a strategic partnership among existing nonprofit organizations like the Federation for Children with Special Needs. It immediately received enthusiastic support from families, the nonprofits, and from Bostic's professor, Mark Almeida.

"From the beginning of her capstone project, Beth possessed an extraordinary blend of intelligence, creativity, and unwavering determination," says Almeida. "She used the academic constructs of the capstone to build a compelling business case in support of her project."

When the American Rescue Plan Act authorized \$20 million in funding for Medicaid home and community-based services, the Federation for Children with Special Needs seized the opportunity. Bostic was thrilled when she learned the organization was awarded a \$1.2 million grant to help implement the C2C over the next two years.

"Everyone wins," Bostic says. "Children have access to specialized support, caregiver/employees get a much-needed break, and employers retain talent and institutional knowledge." —Ben Hall



## Racial Equity Takes Center Stage

*Suffolk's Theatre Department partners with the Front Porch Arts Collective for the 2023-24 season*

*Front Porch staged its award-winning production of Chicken & Biscuits (above left) at Suffolk; this fall, director Pascale Florestal joined the Theatre Department as a visiting guest artist and professor.*

The curtain is going up this fall on an exciting new partnership for Suffolk's Theatre Department. For its 2023–24 season, the department is partnering with Boston's award-winning Front Porch Arts Collective, a Black theater company founded in 2017 to advance racial equity.

As part of this collaboration, Pascale Florestal, Front Porch's education director and associate producer, is joining the Suffolk faculty as a visiting guest artist and professor. In addition to teaching a scene study and directing course, she will direct the fall main stage show at Suffolk's Modern Theatre, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students will collaborate with her on the production, which will include the play's original themes and familiar characters seen through a contemporary lens with modern-day language. "We'll have our

own fun creating it," Florestal says.

General Manager Jim Bernhardt says the Theatre Department was eager to work with Florestal and Front Porch for several reasons. "We have the utmost admiration, respect, and affection not only for what they are doing but for who they are as people and artists," he says. "Front Porch have made their mark collaborating with other companies in the Boston area, and we're very proud to have been a part of their first self-produced piece, *Chicken & Biscuits*." Produced at the Modern Theatre, that comedy was named Outstanding Play, Small Theater by the Boston Theater Critics Association at the 2023 Elliot Norton Awards.

For her part, Florestal says she's eager to expand the Front Porch community.

"With or without the awards, this work is important," she says. "The things that we

bring to the city are so needed, and it's a reminder that this community really values us. It's just more of a reason for us to continue to create the work that we know is important to our community here."

In March, Florestal will oversee the Boston premiere of Dave Harris' *Exception to the Rule* at the Modern Theatre. Directed by Donovan Holt, the play focuses on six Black students stuck in detention in the worst high school in the city as they try to make it through—fighting, flirting, and teasing. The production is the result of the Front Porch Reading Series and is a first-of-its-kind partnership between Front Porch, Suffolk, and Northeastern University.

—Rosalind Beauchemin

Photographs from left: Ben Hall, courtesy of Front Porch Arts Collective, Michael J. Clarke

## OF NOTE

*Two Suffolk History students, **ELIZABETH GLINA, 'BA 23, AND NEKA VLADIMIROV, CLASS OF 2024**, traveled to Poland this summer to work with the Bialystok Cemetery Restoration Fund. The pair helped **RESTORE AND DOCUMENT A LONG-NEGLECTED JEWISH CEMETERY** and desecrated gravesites nearby.*



## Suffolk Welcomes Ukrainian Girls Basketball Team

*These young athletes have been separated from home and family since the start of the war*

It's been awhile since the girls of Team MOBI have been home. The members of the under-16 basketball team from Ukraine have been refugees in Latvia for well over a year—separated from home and family ever since the war with Russia started. Their coaches are now their legal guardians, and while some will go on to play for the Ukrainian national team, for others the future remains uncertain.

With the help of Sawyer Business School Professors Lauren Hajjar and Skip Perham, Team MOBI visited Suffolk in June as part of a three-week trip to the United States sponsored by the Ukrainian American Youth Association. The day included a campus tour, greetings from President Marisa Kelly and Massachusetts Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll—herself a college basketball player who ran drills with the team—and a scrimmage at the Smith Fitness Center organized by the Suffolk basketball coaching staff.

“With Suffolk’s experience in public, private, and social sectors, as well as our international student population, it made it easy for us to do something special for this team,” Hajjar says. This fall, several of the team members are living with Massachusetts host families, she adds. “The goal is to keep them safe and offer them opportunities to continue their studies and do what they love most: play basketball.”  
—Ben Hall



Professor Lauren Hajjar (top photo) helped arrange the Ukrainian girls basketball Team MOBI’s visit to Suffolk, where they ran drills in the Smith Fitness Center with Massachusetts Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll (bottom photo, second from right).

## OF NOTE

*Suffolk Athletics is once again expanding, adding **WOMEN’S LACROSSE** to its growing lineup of NCAA Division III varsity programs, starting in 2025.*



*“This **INCREASES OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN** in a college sport that is one of the fastest-growing in the nation,” says Suffolk Athletics Director Cary McConnell.*

*Head coach Carolynn Keal, previously an associate head coach at Oregon’s Willamette University, says, “I am excited to recruit the inaugural class and begin to grow the Ram lacrosse legacy as a competitive program.”*

Photographs, clockwise from bottom left: Ben Hall, Michael J. Clarke, Courtesy of the Boston Red Sox, Dan McHugh

## BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

*Lifelong Fenway fan Daveson Pérez, BSJ ’15, is living the dream as manager of baseball communications and media relations for the Boston Red Sox*



Daveson Pérez, BSJ ’15, was 6 years old when he fell in love—with baseball and Fenway Park.

“My parents took me to my first game on my birthday,” he says. “I remember being so short that I had to stand on my seat to see the game.”

Twenty-four years later, Pérez has one of the best seats in the house as manager of baseball communications and media relations for the Boston Red Sox.

Before he was fielding questions from members of the media and setting up interviews with players, Pérez was majoring in broadcast journalism,

honing his skills as co-producer of *Clash of the Rams*, the University’s official sports talk show, and reporting for Suffolk in the City, where students get on-air experience through a partnership with New England Cable News.

Today, getting to work with boyhood heroes like David Ortiz or have an on-field view of game five of the historic 2018 World Series is “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” he says.

This spring, Suffolk University honored Pérez with its 10 Under 10 award, which recognizes graduates from the past ten years who are making major contributions

in their field and in the community.

Pérez—who met his wife, Casey (Waldron) Pérez, BSBA ’16, at Suffolk—called his award a “manifestation” of the hard work and sacrifices of his parents, Juan and Esperanza Pérez, Dominican immigrants who came to the US wanting a better life for Daveson and his two brothers.

“For a kid who grew up in this wonderful city as a big Red Sox fan, this job means the world to me,” says Pérez. “There is nothing better than being around the ballpark doing something you love.” —Tony Ferullo

## COVERING ALL THE BASES

*Business School students immerse themselves in the business of baseball*

In the 1988 baseball film *Bull Durham*, Kevin Costner reminds his team not to be so serious on the field. “This game is fun. OK?” he tells them.

While baseball may be fun, it’s also a business—which five Sawyer Business School students quickly learned while embedded with the Brockton Rox baseball team early this summer. They researched

marketing, surveyed fans, and learned all the hard work that goes into making the game fun.

The collegiate summer baseball team, based 25 miles south of Boston, has undergone a bit of a reboot the past two seasons, with the owners, the city of Brockton, and operating partners Liberty Sports Group committed to creating a more entertaining fan experience and making stadium improvements.

“The students were immersed in every aspect of what goes on here, and they uncovered all kinds of things,” says Marketing Professor Kim Ring. This fall, the students will present their findings to two MBA classes that will use them as part of their own projects.

The partnership follows on the heels of the multiyear partnership with the Boston Celtics as part of the University’s new sports management major. What makes the Rox experience valuable, Ring says, is that it is so immersive.

“We’re in the middle of the Brockton community. We’re talking to the mayor’s people. We’re talking to fans,” she says. “What these students are doing is going to help drive the future of where all of this goes for seasons to come.” —Ben Hall



Xander Balog (left) and Erika Penney (right), both Class of 2025, talk with a Brockton Rox fan.



Law student Sharifa Garvey (above right) was among the honorees at this year's Celebration of Black Excellence. The evening also featured a panel on "Black Men in Leadership" (above left), with Jelani Burns, BSBA '23; Neil Sicard, BS '01; Anthony Ross, BSBA '97; and Sam Faisal, JD '20.

## Celebrating Exceptional Leaders

University community gathers to honor Black alumni, faculty, staff, and students

**Achievement was overflowing** at Suffolk's fifth annual Celebration of Black Excellence last spring, when more than 200 members of the Suffolk community gathered at Sargent Hall to recognize this year's five honorees for their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and their impact across a wide range of fields.

Hosted by the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network (SUBAN) and the Office of Advancement, the evening doubled as a fundraiser for the SUBAN Scholarship Fund, which supports students in the College of Arts & Sciences, Sawyer Business School, and Suffolk University Law School.

"This event has become a wonderful tradition for us and a real sign of our commitment as a community to diversity and inclusion," Suffolk President Marisa Kelly told the audience. "We know that we have to continue to work, to learn, to grow, to challenge ourselves, to make progress, so that we are always moving toward our aspirations for ourselves."

This year's alumni honorees were attorney E. Macey Russell, JD '83, a partner at Choate as well as a recognized authority and lecturer on diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, and Jeffrey Lopes, BS '12, MPA '14, a detective with the Boston Police Department and a tireless advocate for

justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in the criminal justice system.

Student honorees were Sharifa Garvey, JD '24, the Law School's Diversity Fellow, who has worked to unite communities of color and their affinity groups to reach their maximum potential, and Ahria Ilyas, BA '23, a Diversity Peer Educator Scholar and vice president of the Black Student Union.

Jenny Joseph-Hayle, MPA '13, Suffolk's associate director of alumni career engagement, received the outstanding faculty/staff award for her unwavering efforts to create an inclusive environment for Black students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

The evening also featured a panel discussion on "Black Men in Leadership," with moderators Jelani Burns, BSBA '23, and Sam Faisal, JD '20, and panelists Tony Richards, MPA '21, vice president of equitable business development, Mass Housing; Anthony Ross, BSBA '97, managing director and head of real estate private equity, State Street; and Officer Neil Sicard, BS '01, of the City of Salem's Community Impact Unit. —Ben Hall

## OF NOTE

This spring, **SUFFOLK LAW AND ITS 11-STUDENT WAR CRIMES RESEARCH TEAM** became the **OFFICIAL HOSTS of the Ukrainian Accountability Project, an international effort to document atrocities perpetrated by Russian forces in Ukraine.**



## Cool Heads Prevail at 'Hot Bench' Competition

Suffolk Law students argue an affirmative action case before top jurists at Clark Competition finals

**T**his spring, in Suffolk Law's largest, oak-paneled moot courtroom, four student finalists in the Tom C. Clark Appellate Advocacy Competition faced what lawyers call "a hot bench"—a term used when a judge asks attorneys pointed questions.

Just so happens, this bench was filled with four judges at the top of their profession.

Judge Gustavo A. Gelpí, Jr., JD '91, HLLD '06, of the US Court of Appeals, and three Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court justices—Elspeth "Ellie" B. Cypher, JD '86; Frank M. Gaziano, JD '89; and Serge Georges, Jr., JD '96, HLLD '21—peppered the students with questions.

Winners Hannah Casey and Marisa Balleani and runners-up (and brothers) Ryan and Robert Callahan presented their sides in a fictional court case that hewed closely to the facts in the real affirmative action cases decided by the US Supreme Court in June.

Casey and Balleani defended fictional Faber College against allegations of unconstitutional discrimination against Asian American students and use of racial quotas in its admissions process. To excel in the competition, students had to respond in real time to judges' rapid-fire questions in a way that was convincing, on-point, and not so emotionally charged as to seem disrespectful.



Top photo: Clark Competition winners Hannah Casey (left) and Marisa Balleani (right) argue their case. Above: Suffolk Law Dean Andrew Perlman and President Marisa Kelly with Richard Voke, BA '70, JD '74, who won the Clark Competition 50 years ago and now helps fund it.

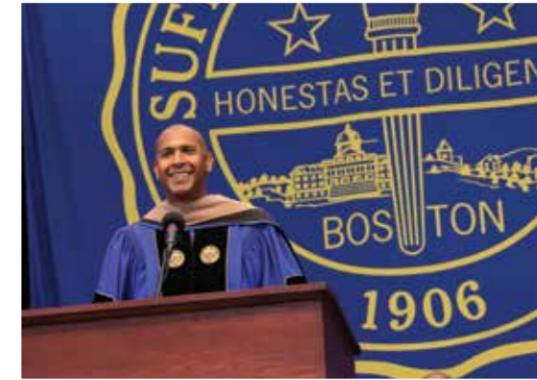
In their closing comments, the judges agreed that both teams had been top-notch—as good or better than many of the experienced attorneys they see in court every day.

Watching in the audience was past Clark Competition winner Richard Voke, BA '70, JD '74, a prominent Boston attorney who represented Chelsea and Charlestown in the Massachusetts House of Representatives for two decades. Now a dedicated supporter of the competition, including funding a prize for the winners, Voke has also endowed two major scholarships at Suffolk.

Suffolk University President Marisa Kelly praised Voke's "lifelong commitment to social justice and significant contributions to the greater good, which mirror Suffolk's educational mission. He serves as a role model for our students," she said. —Michael Fisch

Photographs: Michael J. Clarke

‘Get Ready To Dream Even *Bigger*’



**Suffolk awarded close to 2,000 degrees at Commencement, including an honorary degree to Marty Walsh, former US labor secretary and Boston mayor**

“No matter how uncertain the world is right now, or your life is right now, don’t limit yourself in what comes next. Go for that next dream, and get ready to dream even bigger.”

Those were the marching orders that the Honorable Martin J. Walsh—executive director of the National Hockey League Players’ Association, as well as the former US labor secretary and Boston mayor (photo, left)—gave to graduates at Suffolk’s 2023 Commencement, held under cloudless skies May 21 at Boston’s Leader Bank Pavilion.

During separate ceremonies for the Sawyer Business School, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the Law School, Suffolk conferred a total of 1,969 undergraduate and advanced degrees to graduates from 37 states and the US Virgin Islands, and from 74 different countries. Almost 30% of Suffolk’s 944 undergraduate degree recipients were first-generation college students.

One of those undergraduates was Lindsay Dieudonné, BA ’23, the student speaker at the College of Arts & Sciences ceremony. “Who would have thought we would have been graduating with *the Marty Walsh*?” she joked to her classmates. “He missed a few discussion posts, but that’s OK—we’ll talk later!”

Dieudonné also encouraged graduates to “remember your story and be yourself loudly. You have the power to change institutions, redirect history, and call down principalities

through the voice that you were given alone.”

Janai Nelson, president and director-counsel of the Legal Defense Fund (middle photo, right), as well as a recognized authority on voting rights and election law, received an honorary Doctor of Law degree at the Law School ceremony. Abe Ceesay, MBA ’05, CEO of Rapport Therapeutics (top photo, right), received an honorary Doctor of Commercial Science degree at the Sawyer Business School ceremony.

Ceesay—who also serves as chair of Life Science Cares, an industry organization working to alleviate the impacts of poverty—urged students to make sure their dreams were big enough to include others. “Where a network is required to drive action but none exists, be the start of one,” he said. “Where there is an issue to which little attention paid, shine a light. Identify outsiders and transform them into insiders.”

**Find complete Commencement coverage online at [Suffolk.edu/student-life/commencement](https://www.suffolk.edu/student-life/commencement)**

Photographs: Michael J. Clarke, John Gillooly



# SUFFOLK'S 10 UNDER 10

IN THEIR CAREERS AND COMMUNITIES, SUFFOLK'S 10 UNDER 10 ALUMNI HONOREES ARE ALREADY MAKING THEIR MARK



**T**he first Chinese American woman to earn an anchor seat at WBZ-TV CBS Boston. A retired Army staff sergeant who launched a nonprofit to provide support services to veterans living with PTSD. A Peruvian entrepreneur whose nonprofit provides low-cost, high-speed network access to under-resourced communities in Central and South America.

Those are just three of the remarkable Suffolk alumni honored at this year's 10 Under 10 awards ceremony, which celebrates ten Suffolk alumni who graduated in the last decade and are already making their mark in their careers and communities, while also continuing to give back to Suffolk.

Photographs clockwise from top left: Michael J. Clarke (2), courtesy of Karin Klim

## THIS YEAR'S 10 UNDER 10 HONOREES:

(CLOCKWISE FROM BACK LEFT, WITH PRESIDENT MARISA KELLY)

**David Campisano, BSBA '19**, founder of the veterans organization 22 Mohawks

**Daveson Pérez, BSJ '15**, Red Sox manager of baseball communications

**Tiffany Chan, BSJ '13**, WBZ CBS Boston reporter and weekend anchor

**Ajia Zimmermann, BS '16**, physician's assistant at Tufts Medical Center

**Noah Trofimow, BSBA '22**, mental health nonprofit founder

**Karim Rifai Burneo, BA '15**, social entrepreneur

**Carla Rojo, BA '14**, NBC Boston/Telemundo reporter

**Dina Akel, BS '13**, founder of the Vieira Luxe bridal store

**Alfredo Serrano Figueroa, BSBA '22**, data sciences consultant and podcaster

*Not shown:* **Brooke VanRosendael, BSBA '17, MSA '20**, PwC senior management consultant and a captain in the US Army Reserves (who accepted her award via Zoom)

## Taking on Big Tech To Stem Youth Mental Health Crisis

*Suffolk convenes Senator Ed Markey, CDC Director Walensky, and expert panel to address youth mental health*

**L**egislators and parents must curb the reach and manipulation of “Big Tech” to safeguard the mental health of young people, according to experts at a recent panel discussion convened by Suffolk University, Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), and former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky.

Nationwide, there has been an alarming rise in recent years in rates of depression and suicide attempts among teenagers. In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics declared a “national emergency” in children's mental health.

Markey has filed legislation to address what he described as a chief driver of the crisis, the influence of giant internet companies and sophisticated data-gathering processes that deliberately target vulnerable children and teens. “There is a straight line from the glaring lack of privacy protections for children and teens online to the decline in young people's well-being,” Markey told the panel's audience of educators, advocates, and lawmakers.

Social media experts on the panel included Josh Golin, executive director of Fairplay, which is leading a national campaign to end marketing directed at children. What's essential to understand, Golin said, is that “almost all advertising directed at children is targeted at their vulnerabilities.”

He pointed to a leaked Facebook memo in which executives boasted about monitoring individual posts in real time to identify when teens say they feel stressed, overwhelmed, or like a failure—information they could then share with advertisers.

“When we think about how hard it is to be a teenager already and how much kids struggle with what they look like and how they feel,” Golin said, “to use that as a marketing opportunity to exacerbate those feelings is just beyond the pale.”

Walensky said new federal initiatives to add badly needed mental health services were starting to help, but more resources were needed at the state and local levels. —Erica Noonan



## Suffolk Welcomes New Vice President for Advancement

*Karin Klim brings more than 30 years of leadership experience in higher education development, management, and financial services*

**K**arin Klim is Suffolk University's new vice president for advancement, succeeding Colm Renehan, who retired earlier this year. Klim comes to Suffolk from Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. As Rider's vice president for university advancement, she led five successive years of

record-breaking fundraising and spearheaded Rider's \$80 million capital campaign, a goal which has already been surpassed. As the campaign's lead fundraiser, she personally secured several multimillion-dollar gifts that benefited the university's business school, its science and technology center, and endowed scholarships.

Before moving into higher education, Klim worked for Merrill Lynch as a financial advisor. She holds a bachelor of science degree in marketing and management from Montclair State University.

“Karin understands the essential role that building a strong alumni network and strengthening a culture of philanthropy plays in helping a university better serve its students and deliver on its mission,” says President Marisa Kelly. “Her fundraising experience, commitment to our mission, and her leadership skills will help position us for the further success of our advancement operation.”



Photographs: Michael J. Clarke

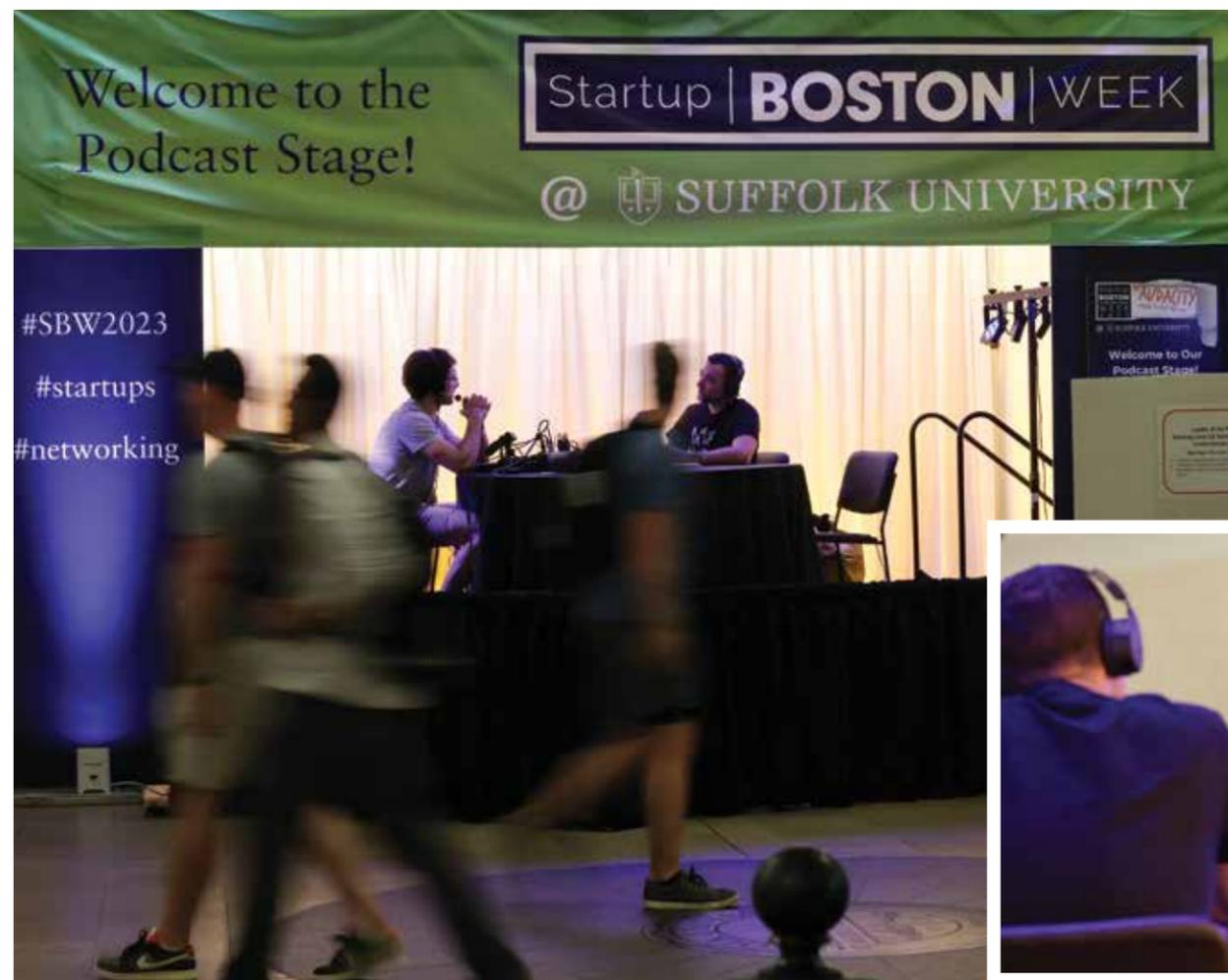
# The Start of Something BIG

*Suffolk University and the Sawyer Business School welcomed thousands of innovators and entrepreneurs to campus for Startup Boston Week in September*

For five days in September, Suffolk University was the hub of Boston's entrepreneurial universe during the seventh annual Startup Boston Week (SBW2023). The event, hosted by Suffolk with nonprofit partner Startup Boston, attracted nearly 5,000 participants, both in-person and virtually, including a who's who of innovators, entrepreneurs, investors, and influencers.

Startup Boston Week buzzed with more than 100 sessions and close to 300 speakers, along with a live podcast stage. Panelists explored the ins and outs of funding, the legal challenges of being an entrepreneur, potential pitfalls of success, and the unexpected dividends of failure. There was also a career fair, multiple networking events, and the first-ever "Startup Crawl," with scores of attendees streaming out into Boston to visit three "startup-friendly" worksites within walking distance of the Suffolk campus.

Among the gems offered at a finale session entitled "Sage Startup Wisdom from Seasoned Entrepreneurs," Wes Schroll, serial entrepreneur and founder of mobile app rewards company Fetch, told attendees that it's OK to surround yourself with people smarter than you. Why? Because you'll learn faster.



*Startup Boston Week offered a total immersion in what it takes to build and scale a startup company, with more than 100 sessions on everything from how to attract and retain customers to how to successfully navigate when your startup is acquired.*



## OF NOTE

**SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL** entrepreneurship faculty were **RANKED 41st IN THE WORLD** by the TCU Global University Entrepreneurship Research Productivity Rankings, which track research articles in entrepreneurship journals according to authorship and university affiliation.



# Public History for a New Generation

*Inaugural Suffolk summer program gives high school students a fuller picture of Boston history*

By Erica Noonan

On a steamy July morning, Maeve Donovan sat in the balcony of Boston's Old North Church. The pews were cramped and the air close and heavy, but the Lynnfield High School junior didn't mind: From where she was sitting, she had a clear, unobstructed view of Boston's colonial past.

Close to the church's altar, she could see the roomy private boxes where members of the wealthy merchant class would have worshipped. At the rear of the church, she could see the steep staircase that led to the balcony where she now sat—and where, in the years

leading up to the American Revolution, the church's free and enslaved Black members and congregants were relegated.

As she climbed back down the twisting stairs, Donovan reflected on how the trappings of status, wealth, and racial privilege followed colonial Bostonians everywhere. "You get a real sense of their experience from knowing their stories and their names," she said. "You feel like you can connect with the past."

## Wrestling With Big Questions

What does it mean to be an active citizen? How is American identity

continually shifting and changing? How did ideas of liberty and freedom differ in meaning for enslaved and free people during and after the Revolution? How do the stories we tell about a place and its people help us understand the nation's more complicated, but powerful, narratives?

Wrestling with big questions may not be the typical way teenagers spend their summer vacation, but Boston-area high schoolers like Donovan who enrolled in the inaugural Suffolk University Summer Public History Institute were more than ready for the challenge.

The two-week program for rising high

school sophomores, juniors, and seniors was designed to provide budding social historians with a deep dive into the rich history of Boston's colonial, Revolutionary, and modern eras.

The institute, said Edie Sparks, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, combines the University's enviable location and the expertise of CAS faculty to create programming that not only immerses high school students in US history, but introduces them to Suffolk's distinctive brand of experiential learning.

Created and led by Professor Kathryn Lasdow, an authority on the early history of the American republic and the leader of Suffolk's Public History Program, the course featured daily field trips to Boston's many Revolutionary War and Black history monuments located steps from Suffolk's campus. Day trips to Salem, Lexington, Concord, and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum on Columbia Point were interspersed with lectures, tours, and spirited discussions between students and Suffolk alumni working in the field as historians and educators about the nature of public history—the study and practice of how history is presented in nonacademic settings.

"It's always wonderful to watch kids who were the only ones in their class interested in history suddenly surrounded by other kids interested in history," said History Professor Robert Allison, a noted local history expert and author of several books. With Boston as a classroom, history "is not just a lot of dates and names. It becomes lived experience for students, and they really come to understand how the Revolution and Constitution are fundamentally about power, and how to form a government."

For Peter Olmeda of Winchester, the program was a sort-of time machine that helped humanize the stories of real people, especially those who spent centuries marginalized and ignored by traditional public history practices.

"When we went to the Old South Meeting House, for example, you were standing right where someone you learned about stood. That's



*Suffolk's unique location on the Boston Freedom Trail meant that students could immerse themselves in colonial and Revolutionary history just by stepping out the door. Students visited sites like the Old North Church (opposite page) and the nearby Paul Revere House, and got to stand "right where someone you learned about stood," said Peter Olmeda (opposite page, with classmate Dewy Lleshaj). "That's really exciting."*

really exciting," said Olmeda, now a senior at Stanford Online High School.

The group traveled by foot from campus to the North End of Boston for their private tour of the Old North Church—from which, many say, the American Revolution was "launched from the steeple."

The students gained fresh insights into the evening of April 18, 1775, including the close shave of Robert Newman and John Pulling, the two lantern hangers who were part of a secret band of conspirators protecting munitions stores in Concord from advancing British troops. They were able to briefly display the "one if by land, two if by sea" beacons before British troops began banging down the door of the church.

The men escaped through a church window to avoid capture, as the gears of the American Revolution were set in motion.

## Interacting With History

After lunch, the group strolled to the nearby Paul Revere House, located a few cobblestoned blocks away from the church. There they chatted with Executive Director Nina Zannieri and considered how much the teaching of history has changed, even in their lifetimes, from stuffy, word-heavy, static exhibits, to more interactive opportunities to see the many layers, even contradictions, in a particular artifact or event.

Ruthanna Kern, a senior at Somerville High School and self-proclaimed

Photographs: Michael J. Clarke



Students visited Black history monuments, including the Robert Gould Shaw and Massachusetts 54th Regiment Memorial, and made day trips to Concord, Lexington, Salem, and the Kennedy Presidential Library on Columbia Point.



**“I like that the places we are seeing are being more comprehensive about all perspectives, instead of just calling something ‘untold stories.’”**

—Ruthanna Kern,  
Summer Public  
History Institute student



Learn more about Suffolk's  
2024 Summer Public  
History Institute

“history nerd,” has traced her lineage back to the sister of Betsy Ross, the woman credited with sewing the first American flag in 1776. She was interested in the institute from the moment she heard Suffolk would be offering it. “I love history and feel lucky to live in Boston,” she said.

The movement toward inclusion in public history is gratifying to Kern. Earlier this year, she earned a gold medal at the Massachusetts Regional Showcase for National History Day Competition for her one-woman spoken-word performance piece, “Broken: The Treaties of Fort Laramie and the Myth of the Frontier,” which gave voice to Indigenous peoples involved in the negotiations between Native tribes and the US Government in 1868.

“I like that the places we are seeing are being more comprehensive about all perspectives, instead of just calling something ‘untold stories,’” Kern said.

For their final projects, students

created digital historical exhibits using Meta Quest virtual reality tools. Art & Design Professor Sean Solley gave the students a crash-course in programs such as SketchUp and Spatial to create their digital projects.

It is exciting, Lasdow said, to expose students to these tools so early in their development as historians. “We are finding that digital literacy is becoming more and more important to employment in public history for our majors.”

Next summer, said Sparks, the institute will be offered as a residential program from July 7-19, and “we plan to recruit students from all over the country and even internationally.”

“It is wonderful that Suffolk is a place where young people interested in history ‘find their people,’” Lasdow said. “They are seeing that history is something you can study and pursue for the rest of your life, not just as a hobby, but as a career.”

Photographs: Michael J. Clarke

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# Poll Hits Close to Home

Rae'Niqua Victorine, MPA/MAAP '23, and classmates give US Virgin Islands residents a voice through student-conducted survey

By Andrea Grant

Just 30 hours after Rae'Niqua Victorine touched down in Boston to begin her sophomore year of college in 2017, Hurricane Irma swept through the US Virgin Islands (USVI). The Category 5 storm brought winds of over 150 mph, devastating Victorine's home island of St. Thomas, damaging an already-unreliable power grid, and destroying homes and healthcare facilities.

Only two weeks later, Hurricane Maria dealt a second blow to the island and, she says, provided yet another example of how the USVI are often overlooked by those on the US mainland. Media coverage focused heavily on Maria's impact on Puerto Rico, while attention

and aid for the USVI were limited, says Victorine.

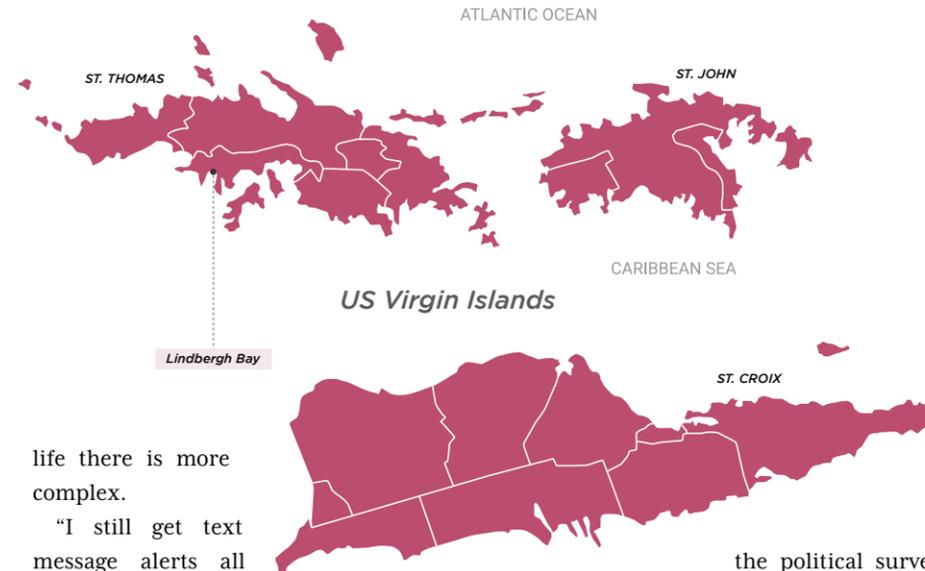
This year a new poll—produced by Victorine and her classmates in Suffolk University Political Research Center (SUPRC) Director David Paleologos' political survey research course—is helping to shine a light on the US territory, which consists of St. Croix, St. John, St. Thomas, and several smaller islands.

According to the poll, released in April 2023, an overwhelming majority of US Virgin Islands residents feel like they are second-class citizens, and a supermajority want to vote in US elections.

While USVI residents are US citizens, they are not able to cast electoral votes for president of the United States, and their delegates to Congress can vote in committee, "but not on the floor where it really matters," explains Victorine.

### The drive to make a difference

Victorine grew up in picturesque Lindbergh Bay in St. Thomas, a short stroll from where crystal-clear water gently crashes onto white sand beaches lined with palm trees. For those from the US mainland, the Virgin Islands are easy (no passport required!) vacation destinations. But beyond the no-filter-needed Instagram shots, the reality of



life there is more complex.

"I still get text message alerts all the time telling me that the power is out on St. Thomas," says Victorine, noting that research she conducted for another course showed that even with rising electricity costs on the mainland, Virgin Islanders still pay over three times more for unreliable coverage.

Seeing deficiencies in the island's school and healthcare facilities and other basic services fueled her desire to drive change. As a teen, she worked with the USVI government as part of the Virgin Islands' Legislative Youth Advisory Council, serving as chair of the committee on education, health, and youth relations. As a recent graduate of Suffolk's dual master of public administration/master of art in applied politics program, and as the assistant director of the University's Moakley Center for Public Management, Victorine is preparing for a career doing what she loves most: helping people.

During the spring semester, students in

the political survey research course each pitched an idea for the semester's poll. Typically students choose an issue close to home: a political race in Massachusetts, opinions about the T. But when Victorine made an impassioned plea for surveying the residents of her home territory, she inspired her classmates to break new ground.

"Pollsters tend to be cautious. They don't want to do something new and be criticized," says Paleologos of surveying a little-studied location like the USVI.

But the SUPRC has a history of taking on new types of polls, including its innovative CityView series exploring urban issues and bellwether polls that predict election outcomes based on specific demographic attributes of individual counties. "We know our methodology is sound and our accuracy is solid," says Paleologos. "This project fit right into our wheelhouse."

Students crafted questions, surveyed 500 USVI residents over the phone, analyzed

and proofed the data, and published their findings this spring. In addition to gauging the favorability of politicians on and off the islands—President Biden and Vice President Harris enjoy much more positive reviews in the USVI than they do on the mainland—the data reveals a pervasive dissatisfaction with the islands' infrastructure and resources.

Victorine describes her fellow Virgin Islanders as fiercely proud, resilient, and opinionated. "Having that opportunity to actually give them a voice on a national stage gave me the extra motivation to keep advocating for them. It matters seeing those results," she says.

Victorine is considering multiple paths to serve those in need, whether in the USVI, in Washington, DC, or in her adopted home of Boston. Someday, after conducting careful polling, she plans to run for office. Despite a difficult year dealing with a rare nerve condition that affects vision in her right eye, she is ready to fight to bring representation and resources to her communities.

"This class gave me that pick-me-up, that motivation to keep the fire alive. I'm ready to take the world by storm."

Photographs from left: Michael J. Clarke, Adobe Stock (illustration)

## THE SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY POLITICAL RESEARCH CENTER

Established in 2002, the Suffolk University Political Research Center (SUPRC) conducts statewide and national surveys as well as bellwether polls. It examines political races and analyzes voters' opinions on key issues. Suffolk's presidential polls have predicted outcomes in key battleground states, and its innovative CityView polls provide valuable insight into major urban areas across the country. Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight.com ranked the SUPRC at the top of its list of The Most Accurate Pollsters of 2021-22 for its polling of the 2021-22 Senate, House, and gubernatorial races.



# Why We Give: Barbara and Peter Sidel

*Helping Suffolk students build a better future is a family tradition*

*By Beth Brosnan*

The story of how Barbara and Peter Sidel came to give so generously to Suffolk—a university that neither attended—begins in Czarist Russia, wends its way through Depression-era Boston, and ends in the heart of the Suffolk campus.

Better yet, it's a story with a happy ending, not only for the students who have benefited from their support and encouragement, but for the Sidels themselves.

In 1903, a 12-year-old boy, Hersh Baraznik, fled his native Russia in 1903 to escape a wave of pogroms, eventually landing on the streets of Boston. To support himself, he sold newspapers outside the Boston Elks Lodge at 10 Somerset Street. After winning a scholarship (and changing his name to Harry Burroughs), he went on to become one of the very first graduates of Suffolk Law School and later a successful attorney.

In 1927, 15 years after he sold his last newspaper on Somerset Street, Burroughs bought the Elks Lodge and converted it into the Burroughs Newsboy Foundation. Over the next 25 years, thousands of boys—who, as Burroughs put it, “knew too much industry, too little play and laughter”—flocked to the gracious, four-story clubhouse to relax, take part in educational and mentorship programs, and earn college scholarships.

Barbara Sidel's father, Nathan R. Miller, was one of those newsboys.

All but orphaned by age 15 during the height of the Great Depression, Miller lived in a cramped basement apartment a few blocks away from Somerset Street. In between his newspaper rounds and classes at English High School, he spent his free time at the Burroughs Foundation, playing ping pong, listening to classical music, and imagining a better life for himself.

After earning his accounting degree from Bentley College and serving in World War II, Miller set about building that life. With funds he earned from his accounting practice, he began investing in Boston real estate, starting with a rooming house on Berkeley Street. Between 1963, when he bought his first commercial

property—6 Beacon Street, an 11-story office building located steps from the State House—and his death in 2013, he became one of Boston's most prominent real estate investors, with a dozen office buildings clustered near the Suffolk campus and in the financial district. He also began giving away part of the fortune he had amassed, making major gifts to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Bentley.

In 2005, Miller—who also never attended Suffolk, but whose career had flourished as the University itself came of age—endowed a full-tuition Suffolk scholarship program for Boston Public School students. In appreciation for Miller's tremendous generosity, Suffolk decided to name a new building in his honor.

But not just any building.

The Nathan R. Miller Residence Hall stands at 10 Somerset Street—the exact former location of the Burroughs Newsboy Foundation. Where the teenage Miller once dreamed of bigger things, the building that now bears his name rises 19 stories above Beacon Hill, offering the 300-plus students who live there their own chance to dream big, with views that begin at Boston Harbor, take in much of the city skyline, and extend all the way to the Charles River.

## When a scholarship is like 'winning the lottery'

For Barbara Sidel, the naming of Miller Hall was “a full circle moment”—a symbol of just how far her father had come over the course of his long life, and how hard he worked to get there.



*Barbara and Peter Sidel stand outside 6 Beacon Street, the very first commercial property that Barbara's father, Nathan R. Miller, bought. A former Beacon Hill newsboy (opposite page), Miller grew up to become one of Boston's most successful real estate investors. Both he and the Sidels have created impactful scholarships for Suffolk students.*

*Photographs: Adam DeTour, courtesy of Barbara Sidel*

Not that he minded hard work. “My father would get up at 5 o’clock every morning, and he’d be at his office by 5:30,” she says, seated just down the hall from that office in a photo-lined conference room at 6 Beacon Street, which overlooks the Granary Burying Ground and much of the Common. “He loved work, and this was his palace.”

What made Miller so good at his job, says Peter, a retired real estate attorney, was “his drive and focus. He paid such close attention to detail.” Every day Miller would walk through the neighborhood, dropping in on the different properties he owned, meeting with contractors, poring over plans. And like many a child of the Depression, Peter adds, he was “always looking to save nickels wherever he could.”

The harsh circumstances of his childhood left their mark on him in other ways. “My father’s quote in his high school yearbook was ‘I owe my success to myself.’ He felt he couldn’t rely on anyone,” Barbara



In 2003, Nathan R. Miller (with Barbara, left, and his wife, Lillian), received an honorary degree from Suffolk. In 2005, in recognition of his generous scholarship support, the University named Miller Residence Hall in his honor.

says, with not a little sorrow. Following his death, she resolved to carry on his good works, because on some level, she says, “I wanted him to know how much I appreciate everything he has done.”

Together, she and Peter have more than made good on that pledge. Not only have they adopted the Nathan R. Miller Scholars Program as their own, they created a brand-new scholarship for Suffolk students from Florida, where the Sidels now live for much of the year.

Barbara’s desire to see students succeed runs deep. An only child, she loved tagging along with her mother, Lillian, who ran a small nursery school program, for the chance to be around other

children. School didn’t always come easily for her, and because she knew what it felt like to struggle in class she went on to get her degree in education at Boston University and to work with students with learning disabilities. “Anything that can help young people,” she says, “that’s our top priority.”

And that commitment shows. “Barbara and Peter are genuinely invested in our students,” says Laureen Simonetti, associate director of the Center for Learning & Academic Success, which administers the one-on-one academic coaching and support services the program provides for Miller Scholars during their first year. “They want to get to know them, to learn more about their lives, what they’re studying, and what they hope to do. They truly care.”

Since its inception, the Miller Scholars Program has awarded scholarships to more than 270 Boston Public School students. For many of those students—who are often working part-time, caring for family members, and juggling other obligations—earning the scholarship is “life changing,” Simonetti says.

“It’s like winning the lottery. It eases a lot of their burdens and anxieties,” she says. “It’s also a real recognition of their accomplishments and their potential. It’s a pivotal moment in their lives.”

That was certainly the case for Ian De Musis Cardoso, BS ’23, who says that without the Miller Scholarship he would have been unable to attend college, “one of the best experiences of my young life.” A computer science and film major, Cardoso co-produced the documentary film *Roxbury*, which has already screened at two area film festivals.

When he and Barbara were Cardoso’s age, Peter says, “we never had any worry about being able to afford college, and we didn’t have the kind of extra burdens that some of these students do.” The Sidel Family Scholarship, he adds, is their chance to create opportunity for the kind of students who will make the most of it, because “all you have to do is give them some foundation, and they are able to make their own way.”

Like Nathan Miller and Harry Burroughs before them, the Sidels have come to relish the impact that the right gift, at the right time, can have on a young person’s life. Says Barbara: “Being able to give is simply one of the most enjoyable things we do.”

Photograph: Courtesy of Barbara Sidel

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-Clinton, Class of 2025

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I love the battle of trying to get things done—the idea that you can change someone’s trajectory with a small neighborhood issue or a big piece of legislation.”

—Aaron Michlewitz

## WORKHORSE OF THE STATE HOUSE

Despite being chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, MBA '13, remains a neighborhood guy at heart

By Michael Blanding | Photography by Adam DeTour



## THE SMELL OF MARINARA SAUCE AND CANNOLIS WAFTS OVER HANOVER STREET

in Boston's historic North End. Aaron Michlewitz, MBA '13, can barely walk a few steps without running into someone he needs to talk to. "How are you?" he says to a short elderly woman passing by. "We got \$75,000 for that program." She walks away beaming, as he explains that the budget just passed at the State House included an earmark for a program to assist neighborhood seniors.

At Caffé Vittoria, a cafe dating from the 1920s, vintage fixtures hang over the bar and paintings of Italy decorate the walls as tourists and locals alike bustle among the tables. "I've known him since he was a kid and he's never changed," says a woman in a Bruins jersey as Michlewitz stops at her table to chat. "He does well at his job, but he's an even better human being." At another table, a local firefighter busts his chops as a photographer takes pictures. "You want to get him in his Little League uniform?" he says. "I've still got it."

You'd never know from his easy interactions with locals that Michlewitz is one of the most powerful legislators in Massachusetts. As chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, he oversees the negotiations over the Commonwealth's budget, helping to decide where precious funds are allocated. As if that weren't enough, he represents 3rd Suffolk, one of the state's most powerful districts, including not only the North End but also most of downtown Boston, including parts of Beacon Hill, Chinatown, and the South End—as well as the Suffolk University campus.

Michlewitz still lives in the North End, where he grew up, his Polish-Jewish last name an anomaly in a neighborhood that was almost entirely Italian. While the neighborhood has changed a lot

since then, he still knows many of the locals, who greet him or accost him as he walks to and from the State House every day. "I always joke if they see me, they say, 'Why aren't you working?' And if they don't see me, they say, 'Why don't you come around?'" He rarely holds office hours in the neighborhood, he says, because people know where to find him. "I don't change my routines very much in terms of where I get my coffee—unless I really need to avoid someone," he jokes.

Despite his position in House leadership—and scuttlebutt predicting even higher offices for the 45-year-old representative—Michlewitz remains at heart a neighborhood guy. For more than a decade, he's focused his legislative work on championing those who lack a voice in politics—including immigrants and the elderly—and ensuring rights for women and LGBTQ+ people. More than fancy titles, he seems genuinely driven by making a difference for the people in the North End he passes on the streets on the way to work, and those like them in other neighborhoods he serves.

His path to elected office came through constituent services, the roll-up-your-shirt-sleeves grunt work done outside of the limelight. "Aaron is not the type of elected official who goes looking for headlines," says John Nucci, Suffolk's senior vice president of external affairs, himself a former Boston city councilor and school committee president. "In politics, there are show horses and there are workhorses. Aaron is clearly a workhorse."

## A North Ender through and through

Sitting on a red leather couch in his oversized office in the State House, Michlewitz doesn't come across as a typical politician, puffing up his own accomplishments. Despite the shelf full of awards and citations behind him, he appears calm and mild-mannered, even shy, wearing a blue shirt with a slightly frayed collar, his short dark hair just beginning to gray around the temples.

Michlewitz earned his community bona fides growing up in the tightknit environs of the North End. "You knew everyone who lived next door to you and everyone across the street," he says. "There was a big community feel." The son of a doctor, Michlewitz never suffered for his non-Italian last name, says Paul Scapicchio, a former city councilor from the North End a decade his senior who became something of a political mentor. "He never had to prove himself or be a tough guy," says Scapicchio, now head of the lobbying firm The Novus Group. "No one ever picked on him. He was just a very quiet, nice kid who everyone liked to have around."

Growing up, Michlewitz was crazy about sports, participating in youth leagues for baseball, basketball, street hockey, and even candlepin bowling. "It was very emotionally charged and competitive," Michlewitz says. "It was just constant." That same love of competition got him interested in politics at a young age, where he'd follow the local races and read both the *Globe* and the *Herald* every day—even walking into Scapicchio's office at age 17 to volunteer with this campaign. Originally thinking he might be a sportswriter, he studied journalism as an undergrad at Northeastern, before having second thoughts about the newspaper industry as it struggled in the late 1990s.

His introduction to public service began the summer after his freshman year, when he got a job at City Hall helping out with events for then-Mayor Tom Menino. "It turned out I had a good time setting up stages and sound systems, driving around the city," Michlewitz says. The summer gig turned into a part-time job, and then a full-time career after he graduated in 2001 and was hired as events manager in the mayor's special events and tourism office.

From that vantage, he got to observe Menino—Boston's longest-serving mayor,



As chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Aaron Michlewitz oversees negotiations over the Commonwealth's budget. As if that weren't enough, he represents 3rd Suffolk, which includes not only the North End (where he grew up and still lives) but also parts of Beacon Hill, Chinatown, and the South End—as well as the Suffolk University campus.

**“In politics, there are show horses and there are workhorses. Aaron is clearly a workhorse.”**

*—John Nucci, Senior Vice President of External Affairs, Suffolk University*

from 1993 to 2014—who was famously dubbed the “urban mechanic” for his emphasis on the day-to-day concerns of Boston's neighborhoods. The experience was a formative one for Michlewitz. "I got to see firsthand how much he cared about each individual community," he says. "He loved the job and he always centered it on the people. He didn't turn it off."

He took that “serve the neighborhoods” credo to heart when the state

representative from the North End, Salvatore DiMasi, became speaker of the house in 2004, and offered Michlewitz a job as constituent services director, handling the day-to-day tasks of serving community members and helping connect them to government services. Running for office himself wasn't on his mind. But in 2009, DiMasi was indicted on corruption charges based on a kickback scheme for lucrative software



Michlewitz meets regularly with North End residents and still handles individual calls from constituents seeking help with a housing issue or connecting with a government office. "I don't even tell my staff," he says with a smile. "People don't care what I do up here. I just know that if I don't help them with their issue, then I'm going to be in trouble."

contracts and forced to resign. Serving on the constituent side of the office, Michlewitz had nothing to do with the scandal; and with the 3rd Suffolk seat suddenly open, some neighborhood activists approached him about running for the seat.

"It's not something I ever computed in my head," Michlewitz says. "Growing up in the North End, the name 'Michlewitz' is never something you would figure would be on a political sign. But some folks felt like we needed to keep the seat in the North End, but come at it with a more inclusive perspective." Michlewitz was a "reluctant candidate," Scapicchio says. "He didn't covet that seat. Other folks in the neighborhood suggested it to him." Once he threw his hat in the ring, however, he gave it his all, beating his opponent in the Democratic primary by less than 200 votes.

Once elected, he brought his constituent focus to the role, determined to represent all of the people in his diverse district. Asked about his proudest early accomplishment, Michlewitz doesn't hesitate to point to his role in helping create bilingual ballots for Chinese Americans to make it easier to participate in elections. He also focused on helping to create job-training programs for refugees and immigrants, as well as for the unhoused population at the Pine Street Inn, the state's largest shelter, located in his district.

"I love this kind of work," he says. "I love the battle of trying to get things done and grinding through the process—the idea

that you can change someone's trajectory with a small neighborhood issue or a big piece of legislation."

### Sweating the details

At the same time he focused on legislative priorities, Michlewitz was also pursuing his MBA at Suffolk's Sawyer Business School with a focus on public administration. In fact, he started his degree before running for office, thinking that the State House already had enough lawyers, but that he could add a unique perspective by studying business and nonprofit organizations. Michlewitz says the program gave him both an industry and a nonprofit perspective, and a greater awareness of the importance of economic development and growing jobs, as well as the myriad challenges business owners can encounter.

Nucci, who was teaching as an adjunct professor at Sawyer at the time, remembers Michlewitz as someone who sweated the details, bringing real-world examples from the State House into the classroom. "His classmates certainly benefited from that." One class in particular that stands out to Nucci is the media relations course he taught, where, despite Michlewitz's natural aversion to the spotlight, he threw himself into the coursework. "He knew that public officials operate in the public eye and have to communicate with the press on a regular basis, and he was interested in refining those skills," Nucci says.

His business training certainly helped when he was tapped in 2019 to chair



the House Ways and Means Committee, which oversees the state budget. Michlewitz completed one budget and was just about to start on his second when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, throwing the state's finances into turmoil. "We had to purposely shut down the economy, and there was a lot of uncertainty and concern," he says. While the state's budget is north of \$50 billion, only about \$30 billion is discretionary spending. Initial projections called for a \$6 billion in cuts to balance the budget.

"That would have drastically affected people's quality of life in terms of what we would have been able to provide," Michlewitz says. He and other state leaders decided instead to hold off and produce a temporary budget while the pandemic

played out. Michlewitz walked to the State House every day, continuing to steer the committee with a skeleton staff. Sure enough, because of federal subsidies and stronger-than-expected tax revenues, the cuts never materialized, and the state looked at surpluses instead. Even while some progressives called for spending increases, Michlewitz counseled staying the course, putting money into the rainy day fund and controlling expenditures.

"Just as we were cautious in our deliberations on how to handle going into COVID, we wanted to be cautious in handling how we came out of it," he says. At the same time, he continued to push for spending to benefit the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens, emphasizing programs for those experiencing

homelessness and food insecurity, and increases for early education. After a federal program to provide free school lunches during the pandemic expired, Michlewitz helped Massachusetts become one of seven states to continue the program, in part using money from a new 4% tax on income over \$1 million passed by voters in 2022.

### Thinking like a statesman

While Michlewitz might miss the ability to have direct impact on people's lives in his district through constituent services, he is becoming accustomed to the potentially even greater impact he can have through control of the state's purse strings. "The role has definitely required me to expand my horizons and thought



processes," he says. "The most difficult thing has been getting out of the mindset of being a local district guy helping an individual constituent get through an individual problem and thinking more like a statesman."

Case in point: Michlewitz has taken on a higher profile on issues beyond the budget. When the US Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision came down overturning the right to an abortion in June 2022, he took the lead in negotiating with the Senate to strengthen abortion rights in Massachusetts by allowing women to terminate a pregnancy after 24 weeks in the case of a fetal abnormality without leaving the state. A year later, he was awarded with a visit to the White House on the anniversary of the *Dobbs* decision to meet with Vice President Kamala Harris, along with other state lawmakers. "It was very humbling," says Michlewitz.

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Suffolk students and professors trained faculty (including Professor Shane Austin from the University of the West Indies) to use VR during an American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology conference held at the University in July.

Thornhill—something that would take time, advanced training, and expense in the lab setting.

### FUN AND FUNCTIONAL

Berkmen freely admits she isn't tech-savvy by nature. She first learned about augmented and virtual reality when Physics Professor Walter Johnson and some of his students encouraged her to slip on a headset just for fun.

Johnson, who will retire this year after more than a half-century mentoring generations of Suffolk STEM students, saw the promise of AR and VR for classroom use nearly a decade ago and advocated for the resources to experiment. Since then he has inspired dozens of students and faculty across disciplines to adapt the technology to their fields.

Virtual groundwork that Johnson and his students laid—including working with Art & Design Professors Sean Solley and Sandro Carella to create an accurate scale model of a Mass General Hospital radiation treatment room to rehearse their long-standing neutron-shielding experiments—turned out to be a project-saver during the pandemic.

When lockdown prevented students from accessing the hospital, they were able to guide a clinical partner through the steps of the research session remotely, their avatars working together to accomplish tasks in the virtual space.

### FROM NOVELTY TO NECESSITY?

Kristen Procko, an associate professor of instruction at the University of Texas at Austin, learned how to use VR in a Suffolk workshop last year. She says the technology is harder to implement in larger classes

Photographs from left: Michael J. Clarke, courtesy of Nanome, Michael J. Clarke



Biochemistry Professor Melanie Berkmen and her colleague Biology Professor Celeste Peterson (photo, right) adapted Nanome, a powerful molecular design program used for pharmaceutical drug discovery, for classroom use so that students like Mikayla Cavanaugh and Isabel Smith (Nanome image, above) can now “see” complex molecular structures.



like hers, which can stretch to a hundred students or more. Equipment and software licenses are costly at scale. Maintenance, setup, and training are prohibitively time-consuming. But Procko, who specializes in molecular visualization for STEM education, sees its promise.

“We always ask the question, ‘Do our students see what we see?’” says Procko, praising the way VR allows students to see how structures move and interact, concepts that can be confusing to explain or model in other ways.

The benefits of using VR to study biochemistry seem obvious but need further study, adds Berkmen, who is working with Peterson on projects to expand training at Suffolk and elsewhere. They recently partnered with Procko to hold another faculty workshop on campus, and secured a National Science Foundation grant to allow trainees to take their headsets home. Soon they hope to measure student outcomes to see if the “cool factor” of using the technology is accompanied by a corresponding boost in learning.

“We want to make this technology accessible, not only for students to learn about biochemistry and molecular biology but also to prepare them for jobs in industry,” Peterson says, noting that some pharmaceutical companies are starting to use VR to develop new medicines.

Thornhill says working on a semester-long research project in Nanome helped her build confidence as an independent scientist and set her apart from other candidates when she interviewed for her current role as a research technician at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, even though the scientists in her lab haven't used it yet.

At first, Thornhill was wary of the hype around VR. She envisioned a dystopian future where humans become over-reliant on technology, “like the movie *WALL-E*,” she says. Now she makes a compelling case for the emerging tech in the field she loves.

**“We want to make this technology accessible, not only for students to learn about biochemistry and molecular biology but also to prepare them for jobs in industry.”**

**—Professor Celeste Peterson**

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Ucal McKenzie, BSBA '99, died long before his time.  
Suzanne McKenzie, BS '00, is making sure that his joyous spirit lives on.

By Alyssa Giacobbe | Photograph by Faith Ninivaggi

# ONE WOMAN'S REFUSAL

TO LET LOSS HAVE

THE FINAL WORD





Until his untimely death from cardiac arrest at age 32, Ucal McKenzie was a life force: a star soccer player for Suffolk; a respected high school soccer coach; a tireless youth mentor; a loving husband to Suzanne. Determined to further his work—and help herself heal—she launched the Ucal McKenzie Breakaway Foundation, which has grown into weeklong sports and education camps in Boston and Hartford for boys and girls ages 8 to 18.



In early 2009, Ucal McKenzie, BSBA '99, was playing a semi-pro soccer game at Moakley Park in South Boston. He left the field to get some water, teammates remember, and a few moments later, collapsed on the sidelines. Someone performed CPR, but by the time paramedics arrived, it was too late to save him from cardiac arrest. He was just 32 years old.

His wife, Suzanne McKenzie, BS '00, remembers Ucal had complained a bit of chest pains in the weeks before, but they'd both brushed it off. He had no family history of heart disease, no previous issues. "There's a chance that the pain was more serious, and he didn't tell me because he wanted to play," she says. "It's something that I'm regretful for not catching. But I don't think I could have known."

Suzanne was consumed by grief following the incident, unable to believe that her husband, Suffolk soccer player and youth mentor, was so suddenly gone. She knew she needed to find some way to honor him, further his work—and help herself heal.

Within just a few months, she launched the Ucal McKenzie Breakaway Foundation (UMBF), not quite sure what the

foundation would do at first; she just knew it would be dedicated to fostering connection and wellness through soccer and health education, that it would benefit the people who needed it most, and that it would be a way for Ucal's work to live on.

Soon that vision coalesced into a Soccer and Health Camp, a weeklong sports and education camp for girls and boys ages 8 to 18. Since then, it has grown to about 100 kids per session in Boston, plus another week in Hartford, Connecticut, and a third planned for New York City by next spring. Many of the kids are from underserved communities and attend for as little as \$75 for the entire week, thanks to Suzanne's outside efforts to fund the foundation. That includes the clothing brand, Able Made, a public benefit corporation that Suzanne, a designer and entrepreneur, started in 2013, part of whose proceeds help fund UMBF.

On a sunny day in late July, Suzanne, now 45, stands on the sidelines at Wentworth's Sweeney Field in downtown Boston. It's the second day of the camp, and cheers and laughter come from all sides of the field as kids run through drills and high-five each other and their coaches.

Photographs from left: Suffolk University Archive (2), Faith Ninivaggi, courtesy of Ucal McKenzie Breakaway Foundation, Faith Ninivaggi

From the camp's start, it was important to Suzanne that it focus on more than just soccer, and cover a variety of health topics—including mental health, nutrition, and hands-only CPR with AED awareness training—in a fun and engaging way. "Youth sports is out of control," she says. She's wearing a Kelly-green hat featuring a UMBF patch and a white Able Made T-shirt, looking very much the former youth soccer player she is. "When I was young, my friend's parents coached us for free. The idea that people are getting rich off youth sports gets me mad because it comes at the cost to the families—it's not affordable or accessible. There's no reason for that, especially when you can do it differently."

That first year, she ran the camp with the help of many of Ucal's former teammates and student athletes, many of whom have returned every year since to volunteer their time. As the camp's reputation has grown, so has its coaching staff; its roster now includes collegiate and professional coaches from the likes of the University of Connecticut and the New England Revolution Academy—a testament to Suzanne's hard work but also to how much her husband meant to people when he was alive.

### A shared passion for soccer—and for working with kids

Ucal was born in Jamaica and came to the United States with his family when he was 16. He was a natural athlete and gifted soccer player—quick, agile, and very fun to watch. He arrived at Suffolk University in 1993 as a forward and wasted no time making the field his stage: His freshman year, he was named "Rookie of the Year" after helping lead the team to a 10-4 season following a 2-8-1 record the previous year. "He helped turn the entire program around," recalls longtime University Athletic Director Jim Nelson.

Suzanne remembers one game when Ucal made a goal from nearly half-field. "He just blasted a shot and he scored," she says. "He was always scoring. I think he could have actually played Division I. I would say Suffolk got lucky by discovering him."

But what people remember most about Ucal was his laugh. That he was humble, and kind. That he enjoyed making people happy, and comfortable. He was easy to be around. He loved music and people. Everyone loved him, too, but especially Suzanne.

They met as floormates at what is now Smith Hall. At first they were friends, part of a diverse crew that they dubbed “the UN,” kids from Jamaica, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Cape Verde, and the US. “Different backgrounds, different cultures, but we all just gelled,” recalls Suzanne, who grew up in Maine. “It was a really formative culture to be in. Probably the best college experience I could have had.”

She had been a three-sport athlete back in high school—soccer, basketball, and softball—but arrived at Suffolk eager to figure out who she was “without sports attached.” Watching Ucal play, however, made her realize how much she missed soccer. They bonded over their shared love of the sport and began to spend more time together when he agreed to help her start a women’s club team at Suffolk. The romantic progression, she says, was natural.

After graduation, Suzanne and Ucal moved into a condo in Dorchester. She pursued a career in graphic design, working for Arnold Worldwide and Continuum on major brands such as Sprint, American Express, ESPN, and Timberland, as well as on social-minded campaigns like the Truth campaign against smoking. Ucal worked as an accountant before going back to school at Lesley

University for his master’s in school counseling, eventually landing a job as a high school guidance counselor and head varsity soccer coach at Newton North High School.

Ucal’s true passion was working with kids, and especially kids in need. In his downtime, he coached for Valeo Futbol Academy, a Newton-based nonprofit focused on developing leadership skills in high-level athletes, regardless of socioeconomic status. On the field and at school, he made a point to connect with his students and his players; finding out what drove them, what dreams they harbored, what support they needed to achieve those dreams. He and Suzanne were married in 2007 by the ocean in Pine Point, a section of Scarborough, Maine, just outside of Portland.

### A creative game-changer

Shortly afterward, Suzanne launched her own branding and consulting business in Boston, working with high-profile clients in the fields of fashion and design, but, as much as she was able, specifically on social-mission focused campaigns. After Ucal died, Suzanne returned to that work, but everything she did came back to UMBF. When a poster calendar she designed to raise money for the foundation became a smash hit—thanks in large part to contributions from famous branding designers, including Alan Dye from Apple, whom she’d connected with professionally—she decided she might try her hand in fashion design. She had no direct experience, but by then she had plenty of professional contacts.

Suffolk had primed her well for the work. “At Suffolk, I was able to be really entrepreneurial,” she says. “I started out in advertising but was able to connect with art school faculty and get myself into the graphic design program, where I had the opportunity to grow. I feel like that was a really good springboard.”

She moved to New York in 2012 to work for the Museum of Modern Art’s design group, and consulted on the side for Tom Ford, Supergoop, tennis star Maria Sharapova, and others working in the

The soccer camp includes hands-only CPR and AED training sessions. “Kids are empowered knowing that they could save a life,” Suzanne says, “and they take the education home to their families.”

fashion industry. At the same time, she was inspired by Ucal’s memory to create Able Made—an upscale line of ready-to-wear apparel and accessories with a focus on organic and sustainable fabrics—dedicating the brand to him. “It was another way to raise awareness and funding for the foundation, but in a way that felt elevated,” Suzanne says. She launched Able Made in 2013 with \$75,000 in angel investments and lots of hard, after-hours work, beginning by seeking out designer collaborations with brands such as Nike and Puma. Eventually, and organically, she grew the brand enough to not only help fund the foundation but also to partner with like-minded organizations, such as VHI’s Save the Music Foundation, to fund music education for children.

“Partnerships were how we built the foundation, so it was natural for me to build the line in the same way,” she says. At the same time, she could make up for her lack of a name in fashion by collaborating with trusted brands. “We could strategically draw upon other people’s audiences.”

That strategy worked. Slowly but surely, the line garnered attention and accolades from the fashion industry, as well as some famous fans—including Boston Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla, Patriots wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster, and the WNBA’s Sue Bird. Shielding herself behind other brands also helped her be with her grief a little while longer. “I probably wasn’t ready to lean into the story and really talk about it every day,” she says. “I feel a little bit more comfortable with that now.”

Suzanne kept her day job until 2022, when she finally decided to relaunch Able Made with less reliance on others for support. “Finally, I was like, let’s step away from these collaborations, develop our own point of view, and focus everything on just the foundation,” she says. “And since then, it’s exploded. I wish we’d done this earlier.”

The company now has stores in New York and Connecticut and is in the process of raising \$1.2 million in funding to expand further. “Soccer style is really universal right now,” she says. “We’re really speaking to the athlete mindset. If you like sports and style and sustainability, it’s your jam.”

### A campaign to save more lives

Suzanne saved perhaps the most important project, though, for this year. On a hot evening in late July, she stands before a crowd of friends, family,



UMBF’s AED project—an effort to bring automated external defibrillators to public parks around Boston and, eventually, nationwide—kicked off this summer at Moakley Park, where Ucal suffered his cardiac arrest in 2009. Suzanne worked with community partners to get the project off the ground, including Boston Parks Commissioner (and fellow Suffolk alum) Ryan Woods, MPA ’18 (left).



Suzanne, who earned her Suffolk degree in graphic design, has brought that same creativity to funding the foundation, launching a clothing brand, Able Made, part of whose proceeds help fund UMBF. The upscale ready-to-wear apparel takes its inspiration from soccer. “If you like sports and style and sustainability,” she says, “it’s your jam.”

Photographs from left: Pierce Giamportone, Christopher Schoonover for ABLE MADE (3)

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# Can Democracy Survive In an Age of Disinformation?

What happens online doesn't stay online—and it's causing seismic tremors in modern life, says journalism professor and social media expert **Jonas Kaiser**



**D**emocracy, says Jonas Kaiser, requires a few basic conditions to thrive: That citizens can address the issues they face together constructively, and that there is room for marginalized communities to be heard. Most of all, he adds, “We have to agree on certain basic facts.”

Disinformation throws all those things into doubt, and puts democracy at risk. That's why Kaiser, an assistant professor of communication, journalism & media at Suffolk (as well as a faculty associate at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society), has made disinformation a key part of his academic research, studying how it proliferates online and what that means for society. Now, he offers perspective on why toxic content thrives online—and what can be done about it.

By **Andrea Grant**

Photograph by **Michael J. Clarke**

## How did you first become interested in studying social media?

Going to college in Germany in the aughts, I could tell things were changing. The first study I did on climate change denialism took a very classical communications and journalism approach: You look at mass media, and then you go from there. But at the same time, I also saw that there was so much conversation happening online, and not in the ways that scholars were typically studying. It wasn't what politicians were saying that caught my attention, but rather what people were saying on Twitter and Facebook. It was what people wrote in online comments under articles. Suddenly, people were finding ways to speak their minds.

## Over the years, how has that initial interest sharpened?

Our society embraced social media platforms without having a clear vision of where things would go. People were putting all their information on Facebook and never questioning it. Then they started to realize “this company knows all about me and maybe I'm not really comfortable with that.” We're continuing to improve our knowledge and ask what is the impact of social media on people's well-being. But there are no clear answers. With any new feature or platform, and with new generations growing up on the internet, in a lot of ways we are flying blind regarding the effects of social media—we are just trying to shine a light through the fog.

## Why does inflammatory content thrive on social media?

Negativity is something that we as humans tend to reward. We're more likely to interact with negative content than with positive content. That is true if we look at which stories are more likely to end up in the news. It's often what makes people comment online under other people's comments and under videos. We are more likely to engage with scandalous and negative content because, at the end of the day, we really like to tell people on the internet that they're wrong.

## In your view, what responsibility should social media companies have to regulate the content and protect users on their platforms?

Freedom of speech inherently protects people from governmental interference, not from getting banned from Twitter

or YouTube. Private companies can choose what they want to see on their platforms.

The danger is that as more extreme voices spread their disinformation and their hate unchallenged—alienating, harassing, or threatening users—they are also “mainstreaming” much more extreme talking points in political discussions.

There are multiple direct consequences to this. When Twitter granted formerly banned accounts “amnesty” to return to the platform, there have been reports that the volume of extreme speech went up. The risk of letting formerly banned accounts back on the platform is threefold: one, you let more extreme voices on the platform that spew falsehoods and hate; two, they often harass other users relentlessly; and three, the platform itself risks alienating mainstream users and becoming a megaphone for extremist views.

## Does this negativity have impacts beyond the platforms?

First of all, it's important to understand that hate speech online can lead to offline action. There are also very real consequences to the spread of disinformation. For democracy to function, we need people to trust in institutions, in other people, and in journalism. Disinformation erodes that trust. Disinformation sows doubt, for example, on elections, on the electoral process, and inherently on democracy itself. Democracy needs to be legitimized over and over again, every day. If people don't trust the processes that reproduce and reinforce democracy, then that's a problem for all of us.

## Is there a role for governments to play in regulating online platforms?

Some of the hate speech that goes on in the US doesn't fly in Germany because it's illegal. You can't deny the Holocaust in Germany. If you do, then by law a social media platform has to remove that content. The EU is in the process of implementing its Digital Services Act, which addresses online misinformation and transparency.

In the US, free speech is obviously sacrosanct. However, there is bipartisan interest in reforming Section 230 of

**“We are more likely to engage with scandalous and negative online content because, at the end of the day, we really like to tell people on the internet that they’re wrong.”**

**—Jonas Kaiser**

the Communications Decency Act. Broadly speaking, Section 230 gives social media companies the freedom to host content, while not necessarily being responsible for it. This legal freedom allowed the internet to grow and companies to try things out. But as time has passed and we’ve seen the incredible power of social media, both parties agree in general that Section 230 needs to put some guardrails on those companies, outlining their legal responsibilities. And in the context of generative AI in particular—which amplifies a host of issues, including making it easier for users to create realistic fake images, videos, and content—we need those guidelines basically yesterday.

#### **How are you addressing generative AI technologies like ChatGPT in your classes?**

It’s important to understand when generative AI is helpful and when it’s not. In my Intro to Communication class, we look at a short paragraph of text created by ChatGPT that includes quotes. There are citations, but they’re missing page numbers, authors. We discuss each case through several ChatGPT-generated versions until the students are satisfied with the citations. But then I ask them: Have you checked whether those sources actually exist? And when they do, they discover the sources are just made up. So that’s just one example of how [using generative AI uncritically] can really harm your work by sounding authoritative, but actually being very wrong.

#### **You mentioned that people are losing trust in institutions, including journalism. How are you preparing your students to start their careers in that media environment?**

I can’t overstate the importance of journalism for the health of democracy. Trust in journalism is down among certain cohorts of people, certainly. But it’s not a blanket distrust. And across the spectrum there is strong trust in local journalism. Local journalism allows people to stay connected to their communities. People also kind of forget about political polarization on a local level because most issues aren’t “left” or “right.” If the community needs a new sewage plant, no one is asking, “Is this woke?” It’s just a question of a shared need. You have different opinions and you must come to an agreement.

Local news outlets closing, or being taken over by big corporations, is creating a crisis for democracy. There are now news deserts where you basically have no local news. Instead you have Facebook groups that are obviously not operating up to journalistic standards. And then you have national outlets that filter issues through identity politics, which is not very helpful. People need to be able to contribute to democracy every day. If local governments are not being held accountable, local businesses aren’t being held accountable, then you lose that sense of community.

#### **Any tips for helping users vet the information they share?**

Check your sources, of course, but also just remember that you might be wrong. We always want to be correct—and often we’re just not. We might remember something differently. We might have picked up something that has since been reviewed or disproven. I think the key part is just staying humble. I tell my students that if I’m wrong I appreciate a correction. Also, “I don’t know” is often an acceptable answer.

#### **Your research takes you to the very worst corners of the internet. Do you believe that social media can be a force for good?**

I think it’s very much a case-by-case basis. If you ask that question to [Facebook and Instagram parent company] Meta, they will cite movements like the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter that were aided by social media. And that is all correct. But there are so many negative examples as well. We have seen political interference, dangerous public health misinformation. Facebook has even been accused of fueling the genocide in Myanmar.

So if you ask me whether I think social media is a net positive or a net negative for the world? The jury’s still out, because we still don’t know where we’re going. ■

#### **Workhorse of the State House**

*Continued from page 35*

Such high-profile accolades have led some in state politics to mention Michlewitz’s name as a potential candidate for speaker of the house when the current speaker, Ronald Mariano, eventually retires. Michlewitz brushes off such aspirations. “Some people have my road mapped out for me, but for me it’s never been about the next thing; it’s always been about the job before me. One thing I’ve learned is that if you just do your job, opportunities will arise.”

It’s the kind of thing that politicians are supposed to say—but if Michlewitz’s track record is any indication, he means it. “Of course I’m biased, but I think his potential is limitless,” Scapicchio says. “But if you were to ask Aaron, he would want to be remembered as a good husband and neighbor and friend. He’s not fixated on getting ahead.”

As for Michlewitz, even as he takes on a higher profile in the State House, he confesses that he still handles individual calls from constituents. “I don’t even tell my staff,” he says. “People call with a housing issue or need help with a government office. They don’t care what I do up here,” he says with a smile. “I just know that if I don’t help them with their issue, then I’m going to be in trouble.” ■

#### **A Whole New (4D!) World**

*Continued from page 39*

“In the scientific papers I’m reading, they draw proteins and enzymes like a little crescent moon shape. But if I was able to load it in Nanome, I would be able to see the helices and the loops and turns, and any disulfide bonds,” she says.

Johnson says the future of VR at Suffolk is in good hands with faculty like Berkmen, Peterson, and Solley to carry on the work.

Some of his students who were integral to developing the augmented reality program have gone on to graduate programs, others to industry, and a few even founded their own VR production company. Johnson says these are outcomes that, like the VR project itself, are due in large part to Suffolk’s focus on teaching and mentoring students. When Johnson was a postdoctoral student at Harvard he chose to come to Suffolk and make that his mission, too.

“And if I had it to do over again,” he says, “I would do the same thing.” ■

#### **One Woman’s Refusal**

*Continued from page 45*

and supporters at Moakley Park to announce the launch of the UMBF’s AED project—an effort to bring automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to public parks around Boston and, eventually, nationwide. A partnership between the City of Boston, UMBF, Able Made, Tufts, and the In A Heartbeat Foundation, the project recognizes the fact that had an AED been available to Ucal on that day in May 2009, he might have lived.

“The AED project has been there in my head since the very beginning, and a swirling conversation for a while, but for some reason, this past year, it just clicked,” she says. “Someone performed CPR [on Ucal], but your chances are so much better when you have an AED.” Her work had connected her with In A Heartbeat founder and President Mike Papale, who was literally brought back to life by an AED after suffering cardiac arrest in 2006, and now uses his foundation to provide organizations around the country with AEDs.

Suzanne was able to connect with Boston Parks Commissioner and fellow Suffolk alum Ryan Woods, MPA ’18, and pitch him on her idea. “It doesn’t matter your age,” she says. “Cardiac arrest can affect anyone.” She points to Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who collapsed last January while playing, and to Bronny James, LeBron’s son, who collapsed while playing basketball for USC and was brought back to life with the aid of an AED.

“We’d never thought about putting them outside, mostly due to the weather and maintenance,” Woods says. “But if this pilot works out well, we’ll pick other parks where we can implement the devices and then maybe eventually golf courses, outdoor theaters, all other sorts of places.” They’ll see how it’s used over the next few months and ideally start rolling out more in the spring.

At camp, says Suzanne, the hands-only CPR and AED training session is one of the week’s most popular. “Kids are empowered knowing that they could save a life,” she says, “and they take the education home to their families.” Woods is hoping to see similar education in schools and from coaches who use the public parks. “I think more exposure will make it just a little less scary,” he says. Moakley Park was chosen as an ideal first location because of its heavy year-round use—but it’s also fitting given Ucal’s story.

Suzanne is ready, now, to talk more about it. “I don’t think you ever stop missing the person or the impact of them not being here. You never really stop grieving,” she says. If you’re Suzanne McKenzie, you also don’t stop trying. You focus on your goal, gather your team around you, and take your best shot. Like Ucal. ■

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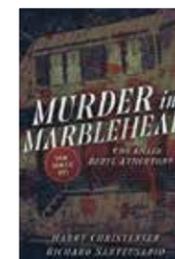
## Class Notes

Professional and personal milestones from Suffolk alumni

**Ray Ciccolo, BSBA '59** and his Village Automotive Group purchased Brigham-Gill Jeep, Dodge, Ram and Chrysler, a family-owned dealership for over 50 years, in 2023. The Village Group is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year.

**Gerard Devlin, BA '59** was named the 2023 Honorary National Commandant of the Marine Corps League earlier this year. A USMC veteran, Judge Devlin has long been active in Marine Corps League (MCL) affairs at the local and national level. The honor is the highest award given by the Marine Corps League.

**Paul Rabchenuk, BA '62** was honored at the Northeast Regional Educators Hall of Fame Rededication event in June, at which his name was permanently inscribed on a plaque at Salem State's McKeown School of Education designating him as a Hall of Fame inductee. In addition to his 19 years as a political science professor, he was honored for his work promoting genocide education.



**Richard Santeusano, BA '64** has co-authored a book with **Harry Christensen, JD '83** entitled *Murder in Marblehead: Who Killed Beryl Atherton?* The book details the 1950 unsolved murder of an elementary school teacher. Santeusano also served as a faculty member at Suffolk's School of Arts and Sciences from 1967-1976.

**Richard Brooslin, JD '66:** "I continue to practice real estate law on a full-time basis in Springfield. Over the years I have been involved with various community organizations, including 15 years on the Longmeadow, MA School Committee. My son and daughter-in-law are Suffolk Law graduates, classes of 1997 and 1996 respectively."

Longtime Haverhill License Commission Chairman **Joseph C. Edwards, BSBA '66** was honored in May for his 22 years of volunteer service on the board, which is responsible for administering liquor, food, and automobile dealer permits for the city.

### 1970s

**Susan Drevitch Kelly, BS '70** gave a talk at Encore Careers, a series hosted by Harvard's Division of Continuing Education.



**Dorothy M. Gibson, BA '72, JD '76** and attorney **Daniel Gibson, MPA '79** (above) proudly celebrated the May 2023 graduation ceremony from the Sawyer Business School of their daughter, **Mary Elizabeth Gibson, MPA '23**. Mary Elizabeth currently serves as the office administrator and legislative process consultant for the International Roll-Call Corporation in Richmond, VA.

**John Magnarelli, BSBA '74, MBA '75** reports: "A Zoom course in memoir writing prompted me to write and publish a book about my time in the military. *Memories of a Light Weapons Infantryman* in Vietnam chronicles my year in Vietnam as a rifleman with the 82nd Airborne and 11th Armored Cavalry. It has received great reviews and relates to both veterans and non-veterans alike. It is available on Amazon and helped me raise over \$20,000 for the Duxbury American Legion."

President Biden recently announced that **James T. Brett, MPA '76, HLLD '13**, CEO of the New England Council, has been reappointed to serve as the chairman of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

**Anne Koteen, MBA '76** is starting a new company this year focused on helping senior-level women in technology.

**Joseph Daisy, BA '78, MEd '82** became chancellor at Kaua'i Community College in 2020. He has more than 42 years of experience in secondary education as a teacher, vice principal, and principal, and in higher education.

**Andrea Eisenberg, JD '79** joined the board of the Northern Westchester Hospital (NWH) Foundation in Mount Kisco, NY, in spring 2023.

### 1980s

**Michael Grant, MBA '81** is currently serving his third-consecutive term in the Florida House of Representatives. He was named majority leader for the House in November 2022.

**Richard Grady, MBA '83** retired from AppGeo in Boston after 28 years, serving as president/CEO for the last 20 years. He actively hired interns from Suffolk and worked with graduate classes from the Business School on projects with AppGeo. He recently established the John E. and Mary L. Grady Scholarship in memory of his parents for first-generation college students attending Suffolk.

**William Stewart, MBA '83** was named chairman of the board of Imperative Global Group in March.

To commemorate 27 years of public school teaching in Massachusetts and Florida, **Ben Klemer, BSJ '84** threw out the first pitch at an AAA Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp game. The Jumbo Shrimp are affiliated with the Florida Marlins.

The **Rev. Nicholas A. Sannella, JD '84**, pastor of the Lowell Collaborative of the Archdiocese of Boston, delivered the commencement address for the School of Liberal Arts and the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at Merrimack College in May. The Rev. Sannella received an honorary Doctor of Health Sciences on the occasion.

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Justice **Elsbeth Cypher, JD '86** announced plans to step down in January 2024, when she will begin a teaching position at Boston College Law School for the spring 2024 semester as a Huber Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law.

**Joseph Giso, BSBA '86** was named to the board of trustees at Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, MA, in May.

**Edward Augustus, Jr., BS '87** joined Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey's Cabinet in June as housing secretary.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont nominated **Lynn Alvey Dawson, JD '88** to be a judge of the Connecticut Superior Court in April 2023.

**Arthur Hiou, BS '88** earned the distinction of appearing alongside Ben Affleck for a Dunkin' Donut commercial released during the 2023 Super Bowl. The lifelong Peabody resident and owner of A&L Liquors in Peabody has appeared in a number of films and commercials. He also starred in this spring's production of *Hunting Whitey* at the Wilbur Theatre in Boston.

**Lanre Ajayi, BSJ '89** joined the faculty as dean for advanced technologies and public service at Glen Oaks Community College in Centreville, MI, in summer 2023.

## 1990s

**Mark Welch, JD '90**: "On June 14, 2023, I was appointed by the chief justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, with the advice and consent of the Rhode Island Senate, to the position of magistrate within the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal."

**Dan McCarron, BS '91**, executive director and wealth advisor with J.P. Morgan Wealth Management in Boston, earned *Forbes'* Top Wealth Management Teams—Best-In-State honors in 2023.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont appointed **Thomas J. O'Neill, JD '91** to the state's Superior Court in May.

California State University's (CSU) interim chancellor appointed retired Navy Reserve Vice Admiral **Michael J. Dumont, JD '92** to serve as interim president of California State University Maritime Academy. Dumont began his position in July, and will serve in that capacity until a new president is appointed by the CSU Board of Trustees.

**Mike Levesque, BSBA '92** was named VP of accounting at Samuels & Associates in May.

**Robert Carey, JD '93**, a shareholder at Orr & Reno in Concord, NH, joined the New Hampshire Business Committee for the Arts board of directors in June.

**Coleen Downs Dinneen, JD '93** was awarded a Myra Kraft Community MVP Award in 2023 by the New England Patriots Foundation for her work with Ellis Early Learning.



"I beat breast cancer!" writes **Vicki Sullivan, BSBA '93, MBA '00** (right).

**Roger Fisk, BA '94, MSP '00** spoke on the Bloomberg show *Balance of Power* in June regarding former President Trump's comments after his indictment.

**Russell Kirshy, JD '94**: "On April 17, 2023, I was appointed to be a circuit judge in the 20th Circuit of Florida. I will be assigned to the Collier County Courthouse in Naples, FL. This comes after 29 years practicing law as a prosecutor and then criminal defense attorney."

**Gabrielle Labonte, JD '94** is the new judge of probate for the Northeast District of Connecticut. She will continue her elder law practice on a part-time basis.

The University of Oklahoma published an interview with **Chie Noyori-Corbett, BSBA '94** in celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May. Noyori-Corbett is the associate director of research and associate professor in the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work, Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences. She is also the founder and team leader of OU's Humanitarian Innovation Research Group, an affiliate of OU's Institute for Community and Society Transformation.

**Susan Church, JD '95** joined the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants as chief operating officer in May 2023.

**Kathleen Norton, BSBA '95** recently joined Douglas Elliman Real Estate in Boston and Nantucket.

**Maria del Mar Ruano-Bravo, BSBA '95** has assumed the position of head of marketing for EMEA (excluding Germany and Austria) of DWS, a position from which she will be responsible for leading and developing marketing strategies, with the aim of strengthening DWS's presence in key markets and promoting growth in the region.

The **Hon. Debra A. Saunders, JD '96** and the **Hon. Moira E. Reynolds, JD '92** were sworn in by Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee in June. Saunders will fill a newly created seat in the District Court. Reynolds will fill a vacant seat in Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Court.

**Trish Gannon, MPA '97** provides advising and consulting services to nonprofit organizations through Gannon Consulting for Nonprofits LLC, specializing in organizational development and board effectiveness. She also teaches nonprofit management and board governance courses in Suffolk's Institute for Public Service. A pastel artist and photographer, she recently was featured in *Stroll Winchester* magazine.



**Doug Gutro, MPA '97** (above) was appointed assistant commissioner external affairs for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection in June. He retired from USEPA Region 1 office, where he served as public affairs director for the past eight years.

**Jim McGaugh, JD '97** was appointed US head of corporate affairs for National Grid in June.

Photographs courtesy of alumni or public domain

**Gail Nastasia, BS '97** received her MFA from Emerson College in 2021. She published her first book, *The Fruit You'll Never See: A memoir about overcoming shame*, in May. She is currently working on her second book while continuing her work in the legal field.

**Chris Boynton, MSF '98** was named chief financial officer of Battelle in May.

**Stephen Creamer, MPA '98** joined CBIZ & MHMs higher education and not-for-profit consulting practice as a senior manager.

Natick Public Schools' superintendent announced on March 24 the hiring of **Matthew Gillis, MPA '98** as the director of finance.

**Jennifer Herbig, MPA '98** was named the new executive director of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility in August 2023.

**Farzin Khaghani, EMBA '98** joined Maxx Orthopedics in March as its chief commercial officer.

## 2000s

Eversource Energy (NYSE: ES) announced in March that **James Hunt, JD '00**, the company's executive vice president of corporate relations & sustainability and corporate secretary, has been named as interim COO.

**Jill Rathgeber, MBA '00** is a co-founder and global tri-chair of Women in Securities Finance, a group that seeks to promote the advancement of women in the securities finance industry. Rathgeber is director of product and strategy at BNY Mellon in New York.

**Anita Santos, EMBA '00** was promoted to chief marketing officer of Provation, a healthcare software firm, in April.

**John Duffy, Jr., MBA '01** was appointed CEO of Celly Nutrition in June.

**Vincent Failla, MBA '01** was appointed as municipal judge for Fairfield, NJ, in November 2022.

In May, **Kia Moore, BA '01** became an impartial hearing officer (administrative law judge) at the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings. In this role, she adjudicates cases arising under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which is tailored to disabled students age 3-21.

**Paul Bombara, BSBA '02, MBA '08** was recently promoted to manager of business operations at the Massachusetts Trial Court.

The *Worcester Business Journal* named **Karen Lafond, JD '02**, an attorney at Fletcher Tilton PC, to its 2023 Power 50 listing in May.

Former Lawrence Mayor **Daniel Rivera, MBA '03** is this year's recipient of the David Tibbetts' Economic Impact Award, given by the Lawrence Partnership. Rivera, known throughout the Merrimack Valley for his turnaround work in Lawrence and leadership during the Merrimack Valley Columbia gas crisis of 2018, now helps other cities as president and CEO of MassDevelopment.

The University of Maryland named **Jay Rosselló, MBA '03** vice president for legal affairs and general counsel in June. Rosselló most recently served as chief legal officer at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

**Thomas Watkins, MPA '04** was named business manager of the department of public services for the city of Newburyport, MA, in June.

**Josh Young, II, MBA '04** became vice president of field operations and legislative affairs for Action for Boston Community Development in July.

Habitat for Humanity of Cape Cod promoted **Tara Cronin, BS '05** to the position of director of resource development for the organization in May.

**Brian Gallagher, MPA '05** was pleased to return to the Suffolk campus this past fall to teach the nonprofit management course for the Providers' Council Certificate in Nonprofit Human Service Management Program. Brian is currently supporting organizations in transition by serving as interim executive director, most recently for the Garrison Institute in Garrison, NY.

**Kathleen Regan, MHA '05** published her debut young adult novel, *St. Damon's Hall* in December 2022.

**Gregory Sampson, JD '05** has joined Sullivan & Worcester as a partner in the Permitting & Land Use Practice Group.

**Hether Cahill, JD '06** joined Day Pitney as a partner in the private client department in May 2023.

**Bridget Kelly McDermott, JD '06**, a product line director at BAE Systems, was named a 2023 Outstanding Women in Business recipient by *New Hampshire Business Review* in May.

**Menaka Thillaiampalam, MBA '06** joined Lionbridge's Boston office as chief marketing officer in spring 2023.

**Carrie Abatiello, MBA '07** was promoted to general counsel senior vice president/compliance officer at Coastal Credit Union in April.

**Dave Ortendahl, MBA '07** will be serving as co-president of the Network of Academic Corporate Relations Officers (NACRO) professional association for 2023–2024. This will be his fifth year on the Board of Directors for NACRO. In his tenure he has served as co-chair of the benchmarking committee, member-at-large, as well as co-vice president and finance chair. NACRO was founded in 2007 as a professional development community for academia and industry.

**Jennifer Wines, BS '07, JD '10** is the author of *Invisible Wealth: 5 Principles for Redefining Personal Wealth in the New Paradigm*, published by Wiley in May.

**Setti D. Warren, JD '07**, distinguished public leader, Iraq War veteran, and former two-term mayor of Newton, MA, was named the next director of the Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School.

**John Allen, JD '08** has been promoted to partner at McCarter & English LLP in the firm's Boston office.

**Ryan W. Donehan, BSBA '08** was named business development manager for the northeast region at L&W Supply in June.

**Joseph M. Ferraro, BS '08** was named to the 40 Under 40—Founders and Leaders Shaping 2023 listing by StartUp Beat in spring 2023. Ferraro is VP of revenue for Hypothesis.

**Joshua Gordon, JD '08**: "I have continued to excel in the fields of sports law, arbitration, and mediation. I am honored to have been appointed as a FIFA mediator, where I contribute my expertise to resolve disputes within the world of football."

An article by **Andrea Martin, MBA '08**, assistant professor of law at Penn State Dickinson Law entitled "Beyond Brackeen: Active Efforts Toward Antiracist Child Welfare Policy," was accepted for publication by the *Yale Law & Policy Review* in spring 2023.



Double Ram **Erica Mattison, MPA '08, JD '13** (above center) recently served as a presenter at the Global Conference of the National Career Development Association in Chicago. After serving as Suffolk's first Sustainability Coordinator, Erica went on to work as an environmental protection lobbyist and then director of strategic communications within the sustainability field. She now provides executive coaching and career advising services to social impact and climate change professionals.



In June the *Westerly Sun* newspaper in Westerly, RI, profiled **Joe Nigro, BSBA '08** (left), CEO of Maslow Capital, spotlighting his thoughts on AI and the promise of technologies developed using it.

**Maggie Paluch, MPA '08** has served as acting city manager for the city of Largo, FL, during its nationwide search for a new city manager. Prior to joining the City of Largo, Maggie served as the city manager in Alamogordo, NM. She joined the government team in Largo four years ago and has served as project manager for the Horizon West Bay project.

**Siobhan Desmond, MS '09** joined the Cognitive Research Corporation team as VP of people and culture in April.

**Rebecca Mudie, JD '09** was named counsel to the New York Assembly in June. Mudie most recently served the Assembly as legislative counsel for program and policy, and was previously the director of intergovernmental affairs for the New York State Justice Center.

## 2010s

**Jerry Nadaeu, MBA '10** joined Flagship Pioneering in 2023 as senior director of site operations. Nadaeu has 30 years' experience in the biotech and pharma industry as a project manager, capital projects, and facility and real estate management.

**Andrew Biggio, BS '11** published his first book, *The Rifle: Combat Stories from America's Last WWII Veterans, Told Through an MI Garand*, in 2021. A second volume of the book, with more interviews with WWII veterans, will be published in fall 2023.

**Teddy Chery, MPMSP '11** joined the Harvard African Language Program in 2022, where he teaches Haitian Creole.

Photographs courtesy of alumni

**Peter Farkas, MBA '11** became associate director of workforce development and community education at Berkshire Community College in spring 2023.

**Christopher Gray, BSBA '11** was promoted to associate vice president of enrollment management at Lasell University this year. He is now overseeing undergraduate and graduate admission, admission operations, student financial services, the office of the registrar, and marketing & communications.

Greylock Federal Credit Union promoted **Jeffrey Vermette, MBA '11** to assistant vice president and Bank Secrecy Act officer in spring 2023.

**Megan Caron, BA '12, MPA '19** co-authored a report published in *PM Magazine* this spring on how local governments should advance democracy in the years ahead.



**Angela Christoforos, BSJ '12** (above) is beginning a new position as a senior specialist of external communications at Brigham and Women's Hospital. She will be responsible for communicating hospital news externally through the media and supporting the implementation of a hospitalwide media relations and communications strategy to support a positive image of Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Mass General Brigham system.

**Allison Dudley, BSBA '12** joined Literacy Trust, a New York City-based nonprofit aiming to build capacity and create fluent, motivated, self-confident readers, as director of finance and business operations in 2022.

**Meicheng Zhu, JD '12** associate, joins the Litigation and Intellectual Property practice groups at Arnall Golden Gregory in Washington, DC.

Ernstrom & Drete, LLP announced the addition of **Cavan Boyle, JD '13** to the firm in March 2023. Boyle will represent clients in surety, construction, and other complex commercial matters, including all aspects of claims, risk management, and litigation.

**Ashley Lawlor, BSJ '13** was promoted to senior producer and senior account strategist at Nail Communications. Lawlor joined Nail in 2022 after spending two years as a freelance producer. She was an integrated producer with Sleek Machine in Boston and spent five years with MullenLowe, most recently as associate producer.

**Diana Harte, BA '14**: "I had a job change to director of contracts and compliance at Verisk. Suffolk totally prepared me for various career roles in which I was able to apply my academic training and gained valuable experience with each job leading to my current role."

**Rachel Walsh-Peterson, MED '14** was promoted to senior cooperative education faculty at Northeastern University. This year also marks her tenth anniversary at the university.

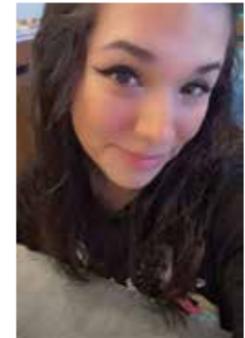
**Cristina Infanzón, JD '16** earned the Outstanding Young Alumni award from Penn State's department of political science in 2021. Infanzón is the managing accredited representative for the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project in Tuscon, AZ.

**Benjamin Linares, BSBA '16** and **Aja Zimmermann, BS '16** met freshman year at Suffolk and were married in the Boston area on Oct. 8, 2023.

**Yelena Margolin, JD '16** has been promoted to partner at McCarter & English LLP in the firm's Boston office.

**Elmira Zenger, LLM '16** joined Northeastern University's Center for Research Innovation as a contracts manager in April.

**Andrew Boschetto, BSBA '17** was named associate head hockey coach at UMass Lowell in August 2023.



After working for six years at Mass General Hospital as a practice manager in gastroenterology, **Bridgitta Vargas, BSBA '17, MA '19** (left) was presented a new opportunity to work at Tufts Medical Center as a business operations manager for genetics.

**Michael Bonetti, BSBA '18, MSMKT '20**, deputy director of Boston Mayor Michelle Wu's office of tourism, sports, and entertainment, joined the board of the Greenway Conservancy in May.



Mallcops, the rock band fronted by **Joey Del Ponte, BSJ '18** (above, second from right) performed at the Xfinity Center in Mansfield, MA, on September 17. The 19,000-capacity venue is the largest stage the band has ever played on. The group, also consisting of Jimmy Del Ponte, Tyler Graham, and Daniel Donovan, recently celebrated winning two Boston Music Awards and has amassed over 2 million streams worldwide.

USA for UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency, featured the work of **Clifford Oratokhai, MSPS '18** in a feature story this spring. Oratokhai is the HR & operations coordinator at the organization. He also serves on the organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion committee and as a "Culture Captain."



**Maggie Randall, BS '18, MAAP '19** (above) started a new role this spring as public and government affairs attaché for the Quebec Government Office in Boston. Randall most recently worked as manager of public policy and advocacy for the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council.

**Hannah Cechini, BA '19** recently signed a contract to continue as an anchor and reporter for another three years at WMDT-TV, an ABC affiliate out of Salisbury, MD.

**Nathan Hurley, BS '19** reached out to share this news: "Suffolk University gave me the tools and guidance to face life's challenges and achieve my goals. My passion for science has led me to work at Tufts Medical Center as a medical technologist. I processed countless COVID samples during the pandemic and performed other testing of organisms."

**Chelsea Kamuene, BS '19** earned her masters of social work from BC in 2021 and now serves as policy and advocacy coordinator at Mass Insight Education & Research.

**Mai Pham, BSBA '18, MST '19** (right) transitioned into the role of fund controller at Deloitte and writes, "My son is about to turn 3, and we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of a new baby next year."



**Anthony Savani, MBA '19** was appointed director of strategy and corporate development at Raytheon, an RTX company. He is head of strategy for two strategic business units, Air Power and Advanced Products and Solutions. Anthony and his wife, Diana, also welcomed their first child in February, Sofia Francesca Savani.

## 2020s

**Alex Burns, EMBA '20** joined The Bulfinch Group in July as a financial representative.



**Gabrielle Parker, BA '20** (above), who had been serving as interim director of human resources for the Norwalk, CT, public schools since February 2023, was appointed as the new director in May.

**Heiry Romero, MPA '20** started a new position at Horizons for Homeless Children as director of operations in May.

**Kaitlin Wright, MAAP '20**: "In January of 2023, I was appointed as the city clerk in Haverhill, MA."

**Julie Le, BS '21**: "Since graduating from Suffolk University, I have embarked on an exciting career path as a marketing & communications coordinator for US Technology at Santander Bank N.A. Additionally, I serve as a chief of staff coordinator, closely supporting the T&O COO, who coincidentally is also a Suffolk University alumnus. This unique opportunity enables me to craft visually compelling content and implement impactful social media campaigns that drive engagement and enhance brand awareness."

**Zachary B. Luczyk, JD '21** has joined Mirick O'Connell as an associate in the business group.

*The Worcester Business Journal* named **Michael Nicholson, JD '21**, mayor of Gardner, MA, to its 2023 Power 50 listing in May.

**Teresa Ogle, MSCJS '21**: "After much consideration, I decided the time was right for me to retire! I have three grandchildren ... This will give me more time to spend with my family and be the best Gigi these girls could ever have!"

**Ren Lovegood, MHA '22** is preparing to transition into a full-time PhD program at the University of Massachusetts Boston researching organizations and social change. "Our research is inspired by our learning at Suffolk," Lovegood writes, "and I will be focused on critical disability theory, human resource management, ableism, and systems of oppression in healthcare settings. I joined UMB as a dean's doctoral research fellow and look forward to this next step in my journey."

**James Bartlett, BS '23** started a new job as the Lynn reporter for the *Daily Item* newspaper.

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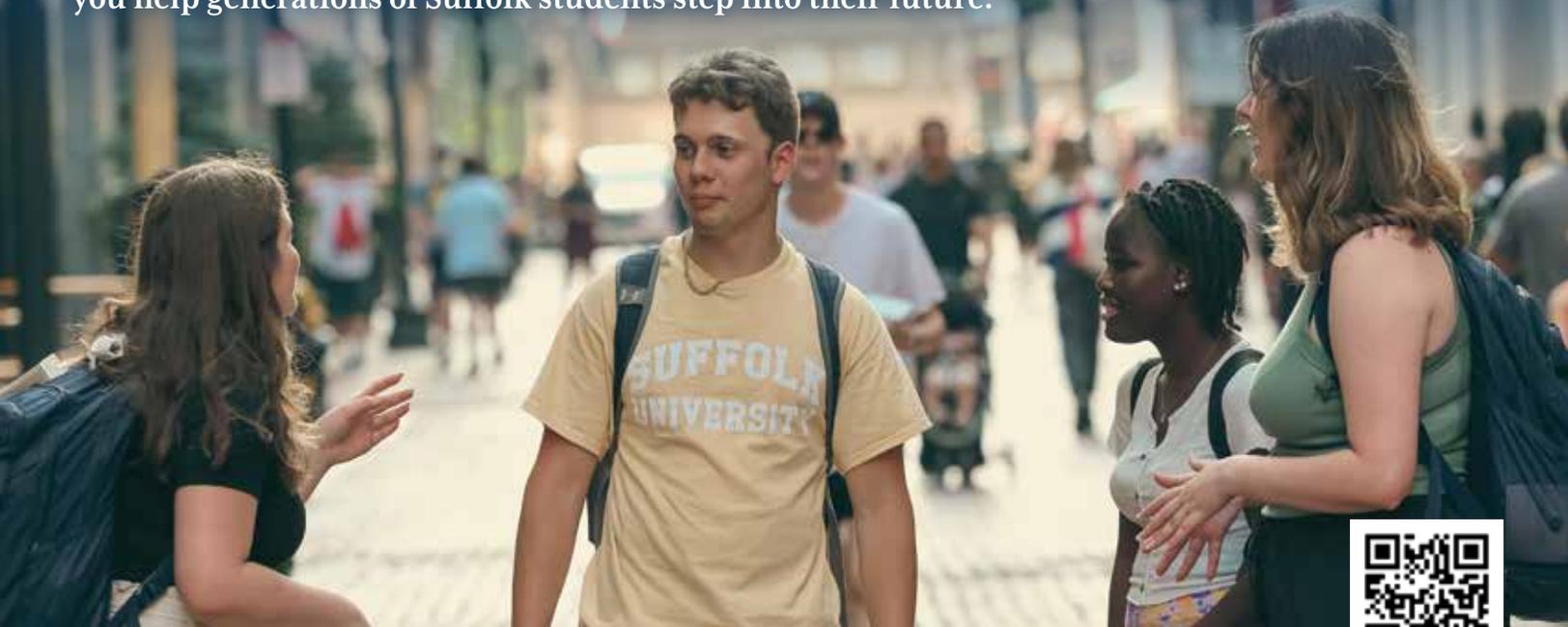


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