



# Caring for Others

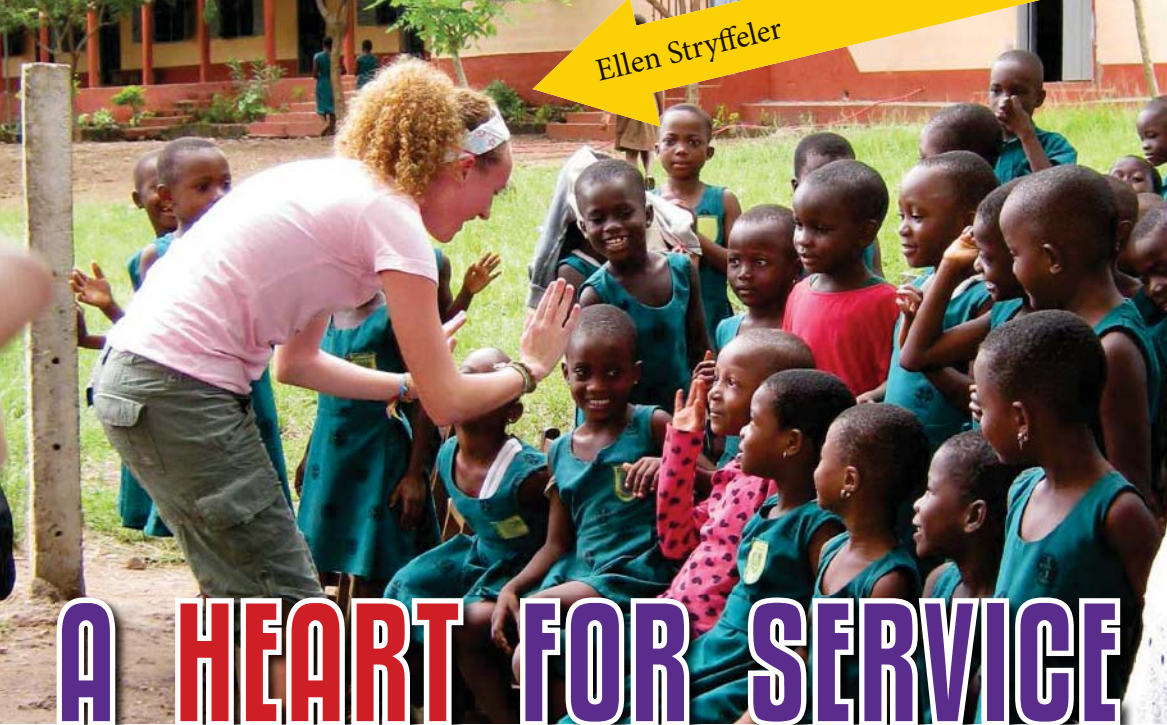
An enduring trademark of the Defiance College experience is the high value that all of us in the DC family place on caring for others.

The campus atmosphere itself exudes this ethos of care. There are supportive faculty invested in the learning of our students. Caring staff who nurture the learning and growth of students outside of the classroom. A close-knit campus environment which supports our students and encourages them to connect to meaningful and life-changing opportunities to help others. DC has a nationally-recognized reputation for service and civic engagement, an identity that has been a part of this special place for many generations.

The result: the environment that students experience during their time at DC sticks with them as they move on in their personal and professional lives. Many of the articles in this edition of the magazine feature the stories of members of the DC family who demonstrate their care for others in beautiful and inspiring ways. Although only a handful of our alumni are featured in this magazine, they certainly represent a universal and unique DC attribute: alumni who are prepared for professional success and for a life of service to others. That is a wonderful combination.

Ellen Stryffeler

# A HEART FOR SERVICE



As Ellen Stryffeler '12 puts it, "I have always had a heart for service." This is what has motivated her to join the Peace Corps, a goal of hers since middle school.

The youngest of four children, Ellen grew up on a sheep farm in Ohio with parents who instilled the importance of service through their example of humble service to others.

Defiance College wasn't Ellen's first choice, but that college turned out not to be a good fit. DC's focus on service was an attraction for her transfer. In addition to her studies, cross country and indoor and outdoor track, Ellen was active in the Defiance campus branch of Habitat for Humanity.

It was her junior year when she attended an open house conducted by the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity. "I was very shy, and it took a lot of courage to attend," she remembers. What she learned at the open house encouraged her to apply to become a McMaster Scholar. She was accepted into the trip to Ghana, and through this experience, she fell in love with Africa.

Ellen spent her time in Ghana working with the Shepherd's Center for the Aging in a small community. As she explains, Ghana has had a strong tradition of the younger generation caring for their elders. However, the urbanization of the country has resulted in a lot of the youth leaving the community, and a breakdown of this cultural system. Her project was working with the center to improve the standard of living for senior citizens on their own, by increasing their fitness levels, mobility and flexibility.

For her senior capstone project, Ellen served with AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America), a federal service organization, as a summer associate with Salem Lutheran Church in a small community in Minnesota. Here, Ellen worked with local youth. "This was a very poor area, and we established the Lunch Bunch, providing lunch and activities to local children

"If I can help even one person get a little closer to attaining their dreams or even making one person smile when they're having a horrible day, I could die a very happy person."

two days a week, in an effort to encourage positive behavior and service," Ellen explains. The program promoted positive interactions within the community, with law enforcement, fire department, and community businesses. This interaction was important because, as Ellen relates, "These kids only know police because they're knocking on their parents' door."

After earning a master's degree in teaching with a content area of physical education and health at the University of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, she joined AmeriCorps as an Anti-Hunger & Opportunity Corps VISTA in Norway, Maine, for a year. As part of the Healthy Maine Partnership, committed to decreasing food insecurity through outreach and education of the SNAP program, Ellen was involved in organizing a service event and promoting/establishing new Summer Food Service Program (summer meals) sites, along with recruiting and training volunteers.

The Peace Corps will take Ellen back to Africa in June to begin a 27-month stint. "I will actually be doing my training in Swaziland (located in southeast Africa) and after my three months of training, I'll be then sent to my specific site where I'll start work in my community." Ellen expects to be working in youth development and community engagement.

A huge driving force in Ellen's life is her faith. "When I see people in need I don't just see a need unfilled or a person hurting, I see Jesus and my heart breaks. Nothing brings me more joy than serving Him through being a servant to those around me."

Ellen sums it: "If I can help even one person get a little closer to attaining their dreams or even making one person smile when they're having a horrible day, I could die a very happy person. I firmly believe that the Peace Corps is going to give me that opportunity every day and in surplus!"

By Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving



A portrait of Mike Williams, an older man with white hair, glasses, and a mustache, wearing a plaid shirt. He is standing in front of several flags, including the American flag on the left and a blue flag on the right. The background is a light-colored wall with a framed picture.

# MIKE WILLIAMS:

## THE HONOR OF

## HELPING VETERANS

A series of serendipitous events led Mike Williams '79 to some life-changing decisions over the course of several years. In turn, those decisions allowed him to positively impact the lives of thousands of local military veterans.

The Defiance native retired at the end of October after more than 30 years as Defiance County veterans service officer. He leaves the position considering himself fortunate to have been able to serve so many veterans.

Before Williams became veterans service officer, he spent his first "hitch" in the Marine Corps followed by four years as a college student.

He was 21 and had received his discharge from the Marines only a few days earlier when he ran into fellow Defiance resident Tom Wiseman '76, who was then county veterans service officer. Williams shared with him that he hadn't yet found a job. Wiseman asked if he had thought about college, and Williams replied that he couldn't afford to go to college. "He said 'there's the GI Bill,'" Williams recalled.

Wiseman proceeded to call Defiance College and then wrote the name of Gerald Mallott on a card and told Williams to see the DC administrator the next day.

Williams did just that. Mallott led him through the application and enrollment process and introduced him to registrar Beverly Harrington who helped him schedule his classes. She led him through the bureaucracy of the VA to ensure that he would receive his education benefits.

"I was blessed to have run into Tom," Williams said. "I graduated on May 20, 1979, with no debt." He said he has always been grateful to Wiseman, Mallott and Harrington for their encouragement and support. And, there were many professors who had a lasting impact.

"The beauty when you go to Defiance College is you don't forget the people." He lists some of his professors – Harry Miller, Henry Diehl, Bill Markel, Elizabeth Wurst, Bill Chaney, Jarrell O'Kelley – as instrumental in his college education and helping him hone his skills.

The day after graduation, Williams returned to the Marine Corps. He was commissioned a lieutenant and served at Quantico, Camp Lejeune, Okinawa and Parris Island.

In 1983, his life took another turn. He received a phone call from his father informing him that Tom Wiseman had been elected mayor of Defiance and would be leaving the veterans service officer position. His father asked him if he might be interested in pursuing the position and returning to Defiance.

The rest, as they say ...

"This is a people profession," Williams said about his position. "I'm going to miss the people – the heroes, their families, their survivors. I've been blessed to have a front-row seat to history, getting to know those who served in World War I, World War II, some who were at Omaha Beach and Utah Beach ... It's been an honor to serve them and learn so much from them.

"Sometimes you'll know a veteran for years before they'll open up and tell you what they went through. It's a very emotional experience."

Williams was employed by the Veterans Service Commission of Defiance County whose members are appointed by the court. As veterans service officer, he assisted veterans of the county and their families in securing the benefits they earned from serving in the Armed Forces. He also administered a financial assistance program for veterans with unexpected financial hardships, with expenses such as housing, utilities, food, clothing and transportation. His staff included Tanya Brunner, Erin Clady and Nate Metz.

Recalling his own experience with Wiseman and Defiance College, Williams said he, too, talked with veterans about the college benefits to which they are entitled. "We applaud what Defiance College has done with the Yellow Ribbon Program," he said. The Yellow Ribbon Program provides additional funds to eligible post-9/11 veterans for their education program without an additional charge to their GI Bill entitlement.

While assisting veterans of the county, Williams was also in a Reserve unit for 12 years of his tenure as veterans service officer. His unit was activated during Desert Storm, and he was stationed in Okinawa for more than 10 months.

While he's not yet made any definitive plans for what he'll be doing in retirement, it's probably a safe bet that he will be involved and active. The running that was part of his training as a Marine has carried through the rest of his life, and he is often seen running in Defiance. He expects to explore some volunteer opportunities and will be spending more time with his family.

He and his wife, Jacquelyn, are the parents of Joseph, Benjamin and Elizabeth, and have seven grandchildren.

He expects that his first six months of retirement will be spent reflecting on opportunities that might interest him and figuring out what he wants to do "with the next phase of life."

*By Kathy Punches '96, Director of Public Relations and Marketing*



# INVOLVED

## INSIDE & OUTSIDE HER

# COURTROOM



"I try to press upon the parents and students the importance of education."

*Judge Denise Clayton '73*

*By Eva English, Grants Officer*

Long before becoming the first black woman to serve on the Kentucky Court of Appeals, Judge Denise Clayton '73 was just another student at Defiance College attempting to navigate her education and take advantage of every available opportunity.

Her passion for community involvement was immediately evident. She interned off-campus with the local community center, in the mayor's office to learn how local governments operate, and through independent study of English History. "It was a time of political upheaval," remembers Judge Clayton, "and this gave an additional edge to the need for people to feel involved and committed."

She made the decision to go into law when she was studying for a semester in Hong Kong, taking classes through the Yale University program in China. Since then, the importance of education has never been far from Judge Clayton's mind. In addition to serving on the Kentucky Court of Appeals, she currently serves as president of the Board for Summerbridge, a program providing at-risk middle school students with educational opportunities and support to continue their education.

This focus on student outreach and intervention comes naturally to Judge Clayton, whose family always prioritized education. Her mother graduated a year early from college. Through scholarships, Judge Clayton enrolled in college credit classes through the University of Louisville during high school. Rigorous summer school and extra courses led her to follow in her mother's footsteps, graduating from Defiance College a year early with a bachelor's degree. She went on to earn her juris doctor degree from the University of Louisville's Brandeis School of Law.

While Judge Clayton's career spans a multitude of legal positions, she continually returns to education in some form: student legal services at the University of Louisville, teaching in higher education, and serving over a Truancy Diversion Docket for at-risk students exhibiting attendance issues.

"I try to press upon the parents and students the importance of education," says Judge Clayton. Her work with the Truancy Diversion Docket attempts to identify the barriers to at-risk student success. The program works closely with school personnel to address the causes of student absence. Like Summerbridge, Judge Clayton attempts to give students the tools they need to take charge of their education.

Her ability to directly impact students stems from her undergraduate experience at Defiance College. She recalls the college showed her how a nurturing and supportive environment could stimulate the desire for education, where professors were always willing to speak individually, and engage in subjects with students.

Judge Clayton continues to exemplify the supportive nature of Defiance College through her focus on education and giving back to her community.



# LIFE IS AN

*By Kristi Jo Leaders '09, Assistant Director of Marketing*

The adventures began early for Ben Maynard '16. "It all started when I was beginning to walk," the DC student pronounced. "My parents always took me camping and hiking so I got into it at a very young age." His family encouraged a lifestyle that included camping and walks in the outdoors all through his younger life. During his teenage years, he was drawn further into the thrill of adventure by several popular survival shows on television, such as *Man vs Wild* with Bear Grylls and *Survivorman* with Les Stroud. "Seeing the unique environments led to me working on my outdoors skills even more because I knew I would want to go out and explore one of those big places someday," he explained.

As he grew up, Ben was able to become more independent and go on adventures on his own instead of following an adult, though he still treasures hiking with family members. He enjoys an annual Fall hike with his younger cousins and hopes that the activity will help teach younger generations about the benefits of getting outside, while also forming a closer relationship with them. It seems to be working, as Ben commented: "Every time we go to my grandparents', my younger cousins ask to go hiking or go outdoors and this is a great feeling knowing they really enjoy being outdoors."

Rather than just go outside and explore, Ben, from rural Defiance, also took it upon himself to learn survival skills and hone his knowledge of the outdoors. By hiking safely, he's able to get the most out of his trips. By a curious twist of fate, it was a media class at DC that kicked off a growing internet presence for Ben that applies to his hobby. The assignment was simple: create a blog and make ten posts throughout the semester on a topic of personal interest. "Naturally, I picked my blog to be about adventure and the outdoors," he said. "I worked on the blog throughout the semester and really enjoyed writing about the outdoors each week, and it slowly began to grow over the semester. After my blog, Twitter, and Instagram really started to grow and get more views, I decided to keep it going after the semester was over because I figured it'd be a great way to journal all of my hikes as well as do gear reviews, etc."

Since the creation of his blog, aptly titled "Ben on Adventures," in mid-September 2014, Ben has accumulated more than 1,700 followers. This number doesn't include the 1,400+ followers on his social media accounts. When asked what newcomers to his blog could expect to find in the posts, he responded that, even though a multitude of topics are covered, the overall focus would always be adventure. Ben writes tips for handling different types of weather or survival scenarios, shares trip advice and experiences, and, as of summer 2015, has been doing gear reviews for various companies. Currently, Ben is an ambassador for both Minus33 and Rocky S2V. Oftentimes, his blog has posts themed for days of the week, such as Survival Saturday and Review Tuesday.

Ben is an active "tweeter," both with his own Twitter account and with group chats throughout the week. #AdventureChat on Monday, #CampChat on Tuesday, #GearMeOut on Wednesday, and #HikerChat on Friday. "On all of these chats there are several topics being talked about



# ADVENTURE



Ben Maynard '16 out on another adventure!

ranging from gear to trips to culture and so much more,” he explained. “It’s a lot of fun! It’s great to get on Twitter to talk with others who have similar interests.”

He started a weekly Twitter chat for RockyS2V (#S2VChat) on Wednesday nights at 8 p.m. EST. All of the adventure talk doesn’t get tedious to Ben. As someone who is passionate about the outdoors and travel, he loves every minute of talking to others who share his hobbies. His passion is certainly visible, and he works to be highly interactive with his followers. A benefit to maintaining a strong social media presence is that it helps him grow his network with other individuals and companies.

Although the popularity of his blog came as a surprise to Ben, it’s easy to see why someone would be interested in following him. Looking at posts he has made, words that come to mind to describe them are resourceful, positive, honest, and caring. He is an inspiration to individuals and families alike who are interested in the outdoors. This year marks Ben as a senior at DC, and he’s already making plans to complete one of his dream hikes, either the Appalachian Trail (Georgia to Maine) or the Pacific Crest Trail (California-Mexico border to Washington-Canada border) after graduation in 2016.

There is a yearning for adventure and new sights found in the hearts of many people, a fact that is especially true for Ben. His positive attitude and helpful posts are sure to keep his blog a success for as long as he maintains it, and he has no current plans to stop posting. Among the valuable outdoors information, he shares suggestions and encouraging words for everyday life. His advice to keep in mind is: “Adventure doesn’t have to be in a desert or jungle; it can be anywhere as long as you make it an adventure.” For Ben, life itself is an adventure, and it’s just getting started.

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## SOLAR PANELS INSTALLED

In an effort to become a greener and more energy efficient campus, Defiance College has completed a thermal solar project with installation in August of solar panels on two residence halls. This is in addition to the solar panels installed on the George M. Smart Athletic Center when it was constructed in 2011.

The solar collectors aid in warming the hot water supply in all three buildings as well as radiant floor heat in the Athletic Center. Other energy-saving measures include installation of low-flow shower heads and multiple envelope upgrades in the residence halls. A new boiler system and heat circulation upgrades were made to McReynolds Hall.

All of the measures seek to reduce the College’s carbon footprint, while at the same time reducing energy costs. This is a continuation of ongoing efforts to become greener and more efficient. In 2012, the College conducted an energy audit to determine energy conservation opportunities.

Also in 2012, the College completed a two-year project that included window replacement and lighting upgrades on campus. Interior and exterior lighting fixtures were replaced with more energy efficient models. Windows were also replaced in McReynolds and Dana Halls.

Much of the work on the projects has been done by the College’s maintenance staff, headed by Jim Coressel, director of the physical plant.



Solar panels on Whitney Hall



# GROW WHERE



Rockford University president Dr. Robert Head '76 spent much of the first half of his professional life in the world of banking. During a portion of that time, he was also a member of the Defiance College Board of Trustees. Somewhere along the way, his career goals began to change.

In relating the experience, he references a quote from Helen Hayes: "She said you learn to walk, talk and laugh from your parents, but when books are opened, you learn to fly. Over time, I found my passion was more aligned in helping students learn to fly than in helping my wealthy clients become wealthier. Aligning my passion and vocation was a life-changing decision."

Head left the banking world in 1992 and became a vice president at Illinois Benedictine College (now Benedictine University). He went on to become president of Urbana University in 2001, and in the summer of 2016 he will retire from the presidency of Rockford University in Illinois, a position he's held since 2008.

"As a college president, there is no greater satisfaction than seeing a student enjoy an enriching collegiate experience, graduate, and then journey on to their professional goal," says Head.

The positive impact of a small private college was felt by Head decades ago when he enrolled as a student at Defiance College.

Head grew up in Cleveland where his public high school graduating class numbered 900 students. "Upon entering Defiance College, I found myself in classes with small numbers and faculty who quickly knew my name and encouraged my progress throughout my learning journey," he says. "I also was required to take a liberal arts core that opened my eyes to a world well beyond my previous experiences. Having faculty take an interest in me as an individual was and is fully in the small, private liberal arts institutions and differentiates them from larger public universities."

He describes his academic experience at Defiance as outstanding and was shaped by faculty like Jim Frey, Robert Pearce, and Doug Wozniak, who "were able to reach me where I was and inspire a love for learning that I've carried throughout my life." He was a business major, but says he gained inspiration from courses in religion, psychology, political science and music which provided a well-rounded framework for engaging in a multi-faceted world.

"I have often cited our work in higher education as serving as a bridge between dreams imagined by students to dreams accomplished by graduates. My DC education was the bridge for me!" he says.

# YOU'VE BEEN PLANTED

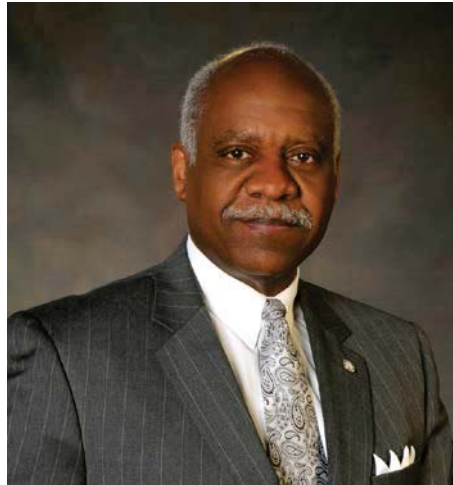
After graduation, Head worked in banking, first in Toledo and later in Chicago. Around that time, he became a member of the DC board of trustees, and that experience began to sway his interest and passion toward higher education. After joining Benedictine as vice president for administration, Head picked up other duties including director of service learning and responsibility for international recruiting. He completed his doctorate and began teaching in the school's MBA program.

Those experiences were good training for his next role as president of Urbana University in west central Ohio. At Urbana, he led initiatives to grow the enrollment and greatly enhance the campus infrastructure.

In 2008, Head accepted the presidency of Rockford University. He will leave Rockford in a few months knowing that he has led the university to a good place. Rockford is enjoying its highest student enrollment in history, its international population has grown from four students to more than 80, and it is a Tier 1 Midwest institution according to U.S. News and World Report. He told a local reporter that the path to a successful college was not "nuclear science," but simply strong financial discipline, growing enrollment, and investing in the institution. He said, "Focus on what you're good at and build on those strengths."

He said he will retire at the conclusion of this academic year "knowing Rockford University is a much stronger institution than it was prior to my tenure as president."

Head's involvement isn't defined by campus boundaries. He has been an active member of the Rockford community, serving on numerous boards including Alignment Rockford, Golden Apple Foundation, Keith Country Day School, Kobe College Corporation, Rockford Chamber of Commerce, Rockford Symphony Orchestra, SwedishAmerican



Health System and Transform Rockford. In addition, he has co-chaired two bond referendums in support of the city's public K-12 system, both of which passed by a large margin and enabled construction and renovation of facilities appropriate for teaching and 21st century learning.

"Overall, I share with students that we all have the responsibility to be the architects of change in our communities," he says. "As Shirley Chisholm once said, 'Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth.' I find myself reflecting on my participation in this world and note that I am much more motivated to help others than to receive personal rewards or acknowledgements."

One of the community service endeavors that he's most enjoyed is that of Scoutmaster to a Boy Scout troop. Head says that he was inspired by great mentors in his youth. "Some were teachers, others were coaches, and all were caring individuals." The fact that each took significant time out of their busy days to guide and encourage him made a major impact. "My desire to pay that debt of gratitude forward is manifested in my efforts to assist young men to learn leadership skills through scouting," he says. "Each young man in my troop has a number of options available to occupy their time; some positive and some not

"Overall, I share with students that we all have the responsibility to be the architects of change in our communities."

*Dr. Robert Head '76*

so positive. I am rewarded by their commitment to live by the attributes championed in scouting and to make progress on their trail to become an eagle scout, the pinnacle rank in scouting."

So, what will be next for this soon to be retired university president?

"During my opening convocation speech, I shared several lessons I've learned in life," he says. "One such lesson is to grow where you've been planted. The lesson is to fully engage and develop in your current situation and avoid wasting time and energy longing for the next phase."

Head will continue to steward the growth and development of Rockford University through the rest of the academic year, committing all of his energies to that.

"While I know that I will stay engaged in higher education in the future, as that is my passion, I have plenty of time to complete that plan. The two things that I know are that I will pursue my passion in a much warmer year-round climate and on my own schedule following retirement!"

Head and his wife, Sheryl, are the parents of three children: Robert IV, Jason and Adrienne.





By Kathy Panches '96,  
Director of Public Relations and Marketing

# PASSION FOR LIFE

“There are little things that we can do or everyday habits that we can change that can help the world.”

*Dava Donaldson '16*



For Defiance College senior Dava Donaldson '16, a summer conference at the United Nations in New York City gave her the opportunity to share her passion for social justice and sustainable development with more than 500 like-minded college students.

Donaldson, of Elyria, Ohio, is majoring in global studies and received financial assistance from the Jenzabar Foundation to attend the Millennium Campus Conference. She described the five-day event as a networking conference for college students from around the world. “We looked at the Millennium Development goals within the United Nations and upcoming sustainable development goals, and what our generation is doing and can do to address those goals,” she said.

“It was really interesting because I was exposed to so many like-minded students. Our generation was taught that to survive you have to have a job to make a lot of money, so students aren’t doing what they are passionate about. It was incredible to be surrounded by individuals who have the same ideas as you ... to learn more about sustainable development and how at Defiance, there are things we are doing to work toward those goals. There are little things that we can do or everyday habits that we can change that can help the world.”

As a Defiance College student, Donaldson has traveled to Peru as a Service Leader and has made two trips to Tanzania through the college’s McMaster School for Advancing Humanity. As a McMaster Scholar, her project focused on the availability of clean water for rural Tanzanians. At the conference, “I was able to talk with people who have experience in water sanitation – how they do it with minimal resources, training people, and creating businesses out of water and solar resources,” she said.

Talking with other college students and representatives from a variety of international organizations, Donaldson said she quickly realized “what an incredible opportunity” is offered to Defiance students through the McMaster School. “I realized how fortunate we are to have these programs on our campus, to get these professional academic experiences that not only put us ahead of the game in terms of graduate school and careers, but in terms of life.”

For her senior capstone project, Donaldson is focusing on micro-lending, “The idea is to help people gain not only financial stability but to be part of something bigger than their family unit,” she said. She will explore both the positive and negative aspects of social entrepreneurship, and what are the best things to help communities develop. At the Millennium conference, she was able to talk to individuals about her capstone research.

After graduation, Donaldson hopes to work in the nonprofit sector with a concentration in peace and conflict resolution. “Hopefully I can create my own nonprofit based on worry-free water and be able to do foundational research for at-risk communities.”

She said Defiance College gave her the freedom to explore many avenues and to find her passion. “That’s one of the greatest things I love about my school. I was able to change my career path and still graduate on time. I was able to take those classes and explore those options and still graduate with my class. I came here for the United Church of Christ affiliation because it aligns with what I believe spiritually and what I try to live by. I really found my home here in every aspect of the word.”



## MAINTENANCE Wears Many Hats

*By Eva English '12, Grants Officer*

When Jim Coressel left the manufacturing industry to become director of the physical plant at Defiance College, the welcoming campus environment made his adjustment easier.

“The greatest thing about working for the College is the direct impact we have on students, faculty and staff,” says Jim. “The direct effects of the physical plant crew influence all the other departments on campus.”

It’s this accountability, and feedback accompanying their work, that allows the maintenance staff to positively affect everyone on campus. There are nine staff members at the physical plant: Carson Kosier, Brent Greear, Julie Godfrey, Ron Vorlicky, Steve Elchinger, Ted Czartoski, Tom Stevens, Phil Stelzer and Jim Coressel.

“People on campus have challenges, not problems,” says crew member Ted Czartoski, “and we’re here to help with those challenges. Maintenance wears many hats.”

The “many hats” of the maintenance crew include participation in various activities off campus and in their own communities. While the maintenance department at Defiance College tends to remain behind the scenes, quietly taking care of residence halls, campus buildings, and other needs that arise on a small campus, their community work is anything but routine.

Jim joins local community leaders on the executive committee of the local Emergency Planning Committee, working in close collaboration with the Emergency Management Association and Black Swamp Safety Council.

Family, faith and friendship serve as the cornerstones for Ted’s life. In addition to farming more than 700 acres in his

spare time, Ted volunteers for his small Catholic credit union. For the past 12 years, he has helped issue numerous loans to members of his community. He also serves as church trustee at St. John Lutheran in Sherwood.

Steve Elchinger participates in the Make-A-Wish Foundation through the Bowling Green Tractor Pull event with his family-oriented sports team, Triple Stacked Motorsports. For five years, Steve and his two sons have made dreams come true for the children able to check out their truck during this event. Like Ted, Steve farms 250 acres in his time outside work and tractor-pulling.

Also, one of the many hats worn by a maintenance crew member happens to be a firefighter’s helmet. Julie Godfrey always looks for ways to challenge herself and offer help to neighbors and her community. Eighteen years ago, she took up firefighting as a way to accomplish both. She finds that both firefighting and working the grounds at the college are ideal positions for her, and she is familiar with being the only female member on a team.

The maintenance crew at DC is quick to stress the positive aspects of working on campus. “Each student, staff, and faculty member bring a new element to campus,” says Steve.

However, like the students and others they serve, the maintenance crew each contribute a unique perspective to the College that reflects the caring nature of the DC campus.

*Pictured from left to right: Brent Greear, Phillip Stelzer, Ted Czartoski, Julie Godfrey, Steve Elchinger, Jim Coressel, Ron Vorlicky, Tom Stevens, Carson Kosier, and Dave Ciccotelli.*

# DEFY (ing)

the  
ordinary

For Nick Niehaus '09, the Defiance College tagline “Defy the Ordinary” isn’t just a marketing phrase. It’s more a state of mind.

“Defiance’s mentality of “defy the ordinary” has really stuck with me,” says the 2009 alumnus now living in California. He spent several years in the solar industry and recently transitioned into education.

“Working in the solar industry, we were trying to show that there are other cleaner, more beneficial alternatives than your local utility. Just like in solar, I am trying to help ‘defy the ordinary’ in education to help change a system that hasn’t changed in 100 years.”

Niehaus worked for several years as an accountant for Sunrun, a residential solar company that leases and installs solar panels for homeowners. “Working at Sunrun made me realize the importance of believing in what you are working towards. When I started, I was employee 105, and now the company has more than 2,500 employees nationwide,” he says. Sunrun’s customer base went from 9,500 when Niehaus joined the company to more than 75,000 when he left. In his final months there, he was assisting the company to achieve its goal of going public.

“I wanted a career change to apply the knowledge I received in my years at Sunrun to another start-up company making an impact.”

Niehaus found such a place in AltSchool, PBC. It’s a collaborative community of micro-schools utilizing outstanding teachers, deep research and innovative tools to offer a personalized, whole child learning experience for the next generation. “I wanted to continue working for a company that is truly trying to make a positive impact on the world,” he says. “I have only been at AltSchool for a short period of time, but I have enjoyed every moment so far. It is exciting to be working for a company that is trying to positively rethink our education system. What we are working on now could truly become something great and change the way we envision education in the future.”

The DC grad is reminded every day of the people he is helping. “One of the perks of working at AltSchool is having a classroom near the corporate office. Every day, I can see the students we are trying to help shape,” he says. “This allows me to keep things in perspective and know what I am working towards.”

The success of AltSchool is evidenced by two additional locations opening since he began – another in California and the first school in New York.

A Defiance College education instilled in Niehaus a desire to be of service to others. “I am still active in community engagement by volunteering at local soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Defiance College taught me the value of giving back that I still carry today.”

But living in San Francisco, Niehaus has also found recreation to fill his leisure time. He has taken up hiking and golf, things he can enjoy year-round.

A native of Dayton, Niehaus attended Centerville High School. His parents, Greg and Deb, encouraged him to consider Defiance College, believing that the small campus and classes would be a good fit. He threw the hammer in high school and says that is what ultimately got



“Being a member of the football and track teams really helped teach me discipline, which was not my strong suit coming to DC!”

*Nick Niehaus '09*



him to visit DC and enroll.

“Being a member of the football and track teams really helped teach me discipline, which was not my strong suit coming to DC!” he recalls. “Football taught me the importance of working on a team and being prepared. All eleven people on the field must do their job for the team to be successful.

“Track showed me that working towards your goals is not easy, and you can’t throw in the towel when things get hard. Also, it taught me how to lead and be accountable.”

He knew that he wanted to study accounting and finance, and DC was able to provide him with excellent real-world experiences. “Without these, I would not be where I am today,” he says. “I remember my junior year going to local businesses and helping them set up their accounting systems. I learned that not everything goes as planned, and you need to be able to roll with the punches. Not all the set-ups went smoothly,

and I had to learn to think on my feet to work through the problems.”

Former faculty member Dr. Mike Gallagher had a positive impact on Niehaus’s college experience. “His teaching style was to engage students and encourage them to get real-life experiences. During tax time, he would allow students to assist local residents in tax preparation. ... He encouraged me to apply for a senior internship at a local CPA firm that ultimately gave me the confidence to enter the ‘real world.’”

But, college was more than accounting classes for Niehaus. He says his most interesting experience was playing offensive line for the Jackets, never having played a down of football in his life. And his fondest college memory is his first day of his freshman year. “It was my first time away from home, and I was unsure about my decision. But within 24 hours I was able to meet friends that, almost 10 years later, I am still close with.”

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## SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS PAY IT FORWARD

Students from Defiance College’s Social Work Macro Practice with Communities and Organizations class conducted their annual Pay It Forward initiative during the fall semester. The course directly impacts community needs by awarding financial assistance. This year, the class awarded a \$1,000 grant to CPC Women’s Health Resource.

Since 2008, the class has awarded more than \$15,000 to address needs of transportation, hunger, unemployment, youth mentorship and cultural understanding in northwest Ohio. With steps embedded in the curriculum, students conduct a five-county community assessment, prepare a request for grant proposals, send RFPs to approximately 50 non-profit social service agencies, and award grants to applicants that best address the identified community need.

The project began in 2008 with funding through the Pay It Forward student-led philanthropy program led by Ohio and Kentucky Campus Compacts, and later with the support of the Women’s Giving Circle of Defiance. In recent years, the class has raised its own funds through a number of events such as raffles, bake sales, and donation solicitation. This year, a portion of the funds was raised with support from Buffalo Wild Wings and Applebee’s, both of which donated a percentage of one-day dining sales.

This year’s grant recipient, CPC Women’s Health Resource, is a Christian, nonprofit social service agency that assists women and families with pregnancy, prenatal care and parenting skills. CPC has been serving Northwest Ohio for 29 years, now serving six counties. In 2014, the agency served 994 clients, 6,404 office visits and 5,601 screened telephone calls. Last year, 218 babies were born to CPC clients.

The Pay It Forward grant will be used toward the Earn While You Learn Program. EWYL began in 2005 as a way to build mentoring relationships with clients and provide parenting and life skills training. Clients earn material items needed toward raising a healthy family while learning how to be good parents. With the \$1,000 grant, the program will be able to purchase car seats and cribs with mattresses.



*Pictured above are: Patty Meriweather, CPC Women’s Health Resource, and DC social work student Breanna Zipfel.*

# DEFIANCE COLLEGE AGAIN NAMED TO MILITARY FRIENDLY SCHOOLS LIST

Defiance College has been designated a 2016 Military Friendly® School. This is the seventh consecutive year that DC has been named to the list. This designation provides service members and their families with transparent, data-driven ratings about post-military education and career opportunities.

The title is awarded to the top colleges, universities, community colleges and trade schools in the country that are doing the most to embrace military students and to dedicate resources to ensure their success both in the classroom and after graduation. The methodology used for making the list has changed the student veteran landscape to one much more transparent and has played a significant role in capturing and advancing best practices to support military students across the country.

Criteria for making the Military Friendly® list include military support on campus, graduation and employment outcomes, and military spouse policies.

Defiance College has a long tradition of supporting the military. A veterans committee addresses the needs of students, and all are encouraged to become involved in campus activities to broaden their college education experience. VA school certifying official Carrie Relyea works closely with veteran students, veteran dependent students, and campus offices to ensure a smooth process in utilizing veteran benefits.

“Post-secondary institutions earning the 2016 Military Friendly® School award have exceptionally strong programs for transitioning service members and spouses,” said Daniel Nichols, chief product office of Victory Media and Navy Reserve veteran. “Our Military Friendly® Schools are truly aligning their military programs and services with employers to help students translate military experience, skills and training into successful careers after graduation.”

Defiance College is showcased along with other 2016 Military Friendly® Schools in the annual Guide to Military Friendly® Schools, special edition of G.I. Jobs® and Military Spouse Magazine, and on MilitaryFriendly.com.



## DC GRAD RESCUES TODDLER

What could have been a tragedy for a Michigan family turned into a happy ending thanks to the excellent work of a Defiance College alumnus and his K-9 partner (pictured).

Allegan County Sheriff’s Deputy Ben Haas ’05 and his K-9 partner Medo reported for duty along with dozens of other first responders last May 29 when a two-year-old wandered away from home and was reported missing by his frantic parents.

The search went on through the night and through rain storms, covering open fields and wooded areas around the family’s residence.

At about 4 a.m. the next morning, Medo caught Preston’s scent and led Deputy Haas to the little boy who was in the woods, playing in the mud, about a quarter-mile from home.

News accounts reported Haas as saying, “He sat right there, smiled and waved. I thought for sure he was going to cry when I picked him up. He was happy and grabbed onto my shoulder. We walked out to the shoulder of the road, and he just started waving at people.”

Haas, a nine-year veteran of the sheriff’s department, said, “When I saw him sitting up and he was looking at me and smiling, there wasn’t a better moment in my career.”

The little boy was uninjured despite his seven-hour ordeal. He reportedly asked Haas if he could pet the German shepherd Medo.

Haas is a 2005 graduate of Defiance College with a criminal justice major.