

# Telescope

The Newsletter for Northern Star Alumni

Vol. 14

Fall 2011



## Schmoozing with Hall of Famers

Honorees from February's Hall of Fame dinner are (from left) Marcus Leshock, Young Alumni Award winner; and Hall of Fame inductees Maria McCarthy, Barry Stark, Bob Palermi, Barry Rozner and Mark Ridolfi. (Missing is Eileen Norris.) The event capped a weekend "Schmoozefest" for Star alumni. Honorees' stories, page 12.



Pete Barrett, Jerry Thompson, Mark Ridolfi and Rick Baert reminisce during the Twin Tavern gathering Feb. 25.

## You're part of the Star's legacy; now make it count even more



**Caron Weil Blitz**  
'80

NORTHERN STAR  
ALUMNI PRESIDENT

Remember the high (yes, the legal kind) that you felt the when you saw your first byline in The Northern Star? Or, the first time you saw the ad you sold featured on one of the pages? How about the thrill of waking up to see the Star in bins around campus ... the same Star you helped put together only the night before in production?

Those were the days — I'm sure you'll agree. We all have stories about our stories. If you didn't have street smarts before you started working at the Star, you did by the time you left. Sure we learned the ropes about becoming journalists and savvy businesspeople, but more important, we learned how to troubleshoot, multitask, meet impossible deadlines and have a good time along the way.

Now, it's time to give back.

Our Star — yes "Our" Star — the one that built our self-confidence, launched our careers, and gave us the chutzpah to take on the world, needs us like never before. There's no need to dwell about economic challenges; many of you are too familiar. But, what you may not know is that the Star's operations depend completely on its ad revenue. As its income continues to decrease, the need for money to replace aging equipment grows more dire each day.

For the first time ever, we are launching a campaign to provide financial support for the Star. Our

goal is to raise \$1 million for an endowment fund to be completed in 5 years. Shorter-term, within the next 18 months, our target is \$45,000 for needed equipment.

Please include your name among your fellow alumni as together we launch The Star Legacy Fund.

Inside this newsletter, you'll find a donation form. Unlike many charitable organizations you may support, you know firsthand how every dollar counts at the Star. And if it's been years or decades since you last visited, not much has changed when it comes to the paper's lean operation.

So, please, don't put this aside. You can donate online or just mail in the enclosed form.

You are part of The Star's legacy. Now, make it count even more! How?

- Give what you can and, if possible, make it an annual donation so your legacy lives on.
  - Donate a piece of equipment to be acknowledged with a plaque in your name.
  - Remember a loved one with a donation in his or her name. These memorials will be acknowledged in a special way and your input is welcome as we develop this program.
  - Ask your company to make a matching gift.
- While financial contributions are greatly ap-

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**INSIDE: UPDATES ON 104 ALUMNI FROM 1956 TO 2011**

# Repay the gift

common trait – Northern Star Pride.

This journalistic laboratory worked for us and needs a future. The ultimate product from middle class students at Northern Illinois doesn't take a backseat to anybody now or then. Bring on those Big Ten Conference student newspapers. Our journalism excellence is documented. Associated College Press All-American ratings during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. National Pacemaker winner in 1974 and 2008. National Pacemaker finalist in 1999 and 2009. Three-time National Online Pacemaker winner in 2001, 2002, and 2004. Numerous other awards.

That's us. All of us.

Star alums.

As you know, times are tough for everyone. The economy is a mess. The state owes NIU and all levels of education millions of dollars. To its credit, The Northern Star is a fiscally sound, independent, self-sufficient entity and no longer funded by the Student Association. But to sustain and enhance the daily award-winning level of student journalism and excellence, the Star needs your help. It's payback time.

With the leadership of adviser Jim Killam and business adviser Maria Krull, plus the newly reorganized and expanded Alumni Board led by president Caron Blitz, we are announcing the campaign kickoff for Northern Star Pride. There are short-term and long-term computer needs, software updates, scholarship aid, etc. You cannot produce a 21st Century newspaper with 20th Century tools. While it was extremely gratifying to see the establishment of the Dan Parmenter Memorial Scholarship recently, we don't need tragedy to realize many students will need some financial help to complete their formal educations. These are the future Star Hall of Famers. They need the same, but contemporary environment to succeed as we all did.

Help the old "alma mater." Return the gift. Traditional Star turnaround. Northern Star Pride.

*mkorcek@niu.edu*

Northern Star Pride.

Admit it. Those were some of the best years of our lives. Think about it. How much did we learn about journalism, life, and, most of all, ourselves from our unique Northern Star experience? Have you ever taken a moment to assess what an incredible career launching pad the Star turned out to be?

Star alums. Whatever the generation. From the pioneer editions of The Northern Illinois in 1899 to the early steps as a prize-winning college daily newspaper in the mid-1960s to the cyberage Pacemaker days in the 21st Century. Whatever the format. Print. Internet. Video. Multi-media. For 11 successful decades and beyond, the truth must bear all light.

Vital news and entertainment source. Viable community watchdog. Vigorous forum for campus opinion. The most effective campus demographic vehicle. The day-by-day documented history of Northern Illinois University. Every aspect student-run, written, and edited. The Northern Star. Now in Volume 112. What a distinguished, indelible legacy – one that must be sustained and nurtured.

Remember your first Star byline? That first nerve-racking interview? Your first photo credit? That initial advertising sale? The late nights putting the polish on a Star story and then starting a class paper? Fellow Star staffers who became lifelong friends—or maybe your spouse? The awe-inspiring senior editors who helped when you were a lowly freshman? And then the traditional Star turnaround when you reached upperclassman status and tutored some of those bright-eyed frosh?

Unforgettable Northern Star stories and headlines. The JFK, RFK, Martin Luther King assassinations. The campus riots in 1970. Man on the moon. Richard Nelson. The Challenger. Clyde Wingfield. The demise of the Berlin Wall. 9/11. The campus shootings. News, features, editorials, special sections – all produced by the Star team for delivery every weekday a.m.

Whatever the department. Editorial. Advertising. Production. Photography. Technology. We are an elite and eclectic subset of the 225,000 living NIU alumni with at least one



**Mike Korcek**  
'70

NORTHERN STAR  
ALUMNI BOARD  
MEMBER



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Telescope is published annually, both in print and online at [www.northernstar.info/alumni](http://www.northernstar.info/alumni). Our mailing list includes about 1,000 Northern Star alumni around the world. Please contact others from your era at the Star and tell them to get in touch with us.

If you have ideas for articles about Star alumni, or would like to get involved in writing articles or planning events, please contact us.

### Contacts

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### Your donations will immediately help pay for ...

- New PCs and Macs
- Updated software
- Photo/video equipment
- Student training and travel to conferences

## From the president

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preciated, your time and ideas are also valuable. For example:

- Do you have connections to help get new or donated equipment?
- Would you be interested in talking with students about your career and how the Star motivated you? Could you network with students to help them find jobs ... perhaps even hire a talented student yourself?
- Would you like to help with our alumni events?
- If we've lost track of alumni, please pass this along to them and ask them to help.

If you would like more information about how to make your legacy count, contact me and let's talk about it.

In an effort to help address the Star's pressing issues, we are formalizing The Northern Star Alumni Board and its objectives. Recently, I was elected president and have the pleasure of serving with a great group of alumni. One in particular deserves special recognition: Barry Schrader, past president and now president emeritus.

### To donate online:

Visit [www.niufoundation/give](http://www.niufoundation/give). Check the box to designate your gift to a specific area. Then choose "University-General" and then "Northern Star."

100 percent of your contributions go to the Northern Star fund.

Barry led the board for several years and we thank him for all his efforts.

Starting on this page, you'll find short bios of our new board officers and members. If you would like to join our board, I'd love to hear from you.

And, please save the date for "Schmoozefest 2" on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012 in DeKalb when alumni older and younger will meet for a Star reunion complete with a visit to The Star office, campus tour and evening gathering at Twin Tavern. More details soon on that.

Meanwhile, look for updates on our Northern Star Alumni Facebook and our Northern Star Alumni website at [northernstar.info/alumni](http://northernstar.info/alumni).

Looking forward to reconnecting as we work together, have fun and protect the future of the Northern Star.

Contact Caron Weil Blitz at 847-204-0755, or [prblitz1@gmail.com](mailto:prblitz1@gmail.com)

Northern Star Alumni Board members are working hard to support the Star as it addresses financial challenges. The board also is eager to create opportunities for alumni to share their experiences with students, improve the database so alumni can reconnect and network with one another, and relive the old days at reunions in DeKalb and Chicago.

**Caron Weil Blitz '80, President** – Worked on the Star four years in various editorial positions and then as editor-in-chief for two semesters in '79 and '80. Caron survived as one of the few PR majors during



the hardcore Royko/Woodward and Bernstein-era days at the Star. All the razzing prepared her for a career starting in financial PR at Arthur Andersen (she is quick to point out that she was long gone when "stuff" happened there) and eventually specialized in PR for healthcare companies. Today she is a PR Adviser to BASF Nutrition & Health, a global leader in nutritional ingredients for foods, beverages and dietary supplements. She is married to The Star's "Best Damn Reporter," Al Blitz '75, and has two daughters.

**Kevin Sheldon '80, Vice President** –

The former advertising manager worked five years at The Star (yes it took him that long to graduate) and got his start in the ad production department. He has been in the Electronic Components business for more than 30 years and has worked for Nichicon America Corporation for the majority of that time. Kevin was part of the major expansion of the electronics industry having



seen the advent of the PC and worked with Apple when it was just a startup (yes, he's that old). He's now actively involved with new technologies for alternative energy such as electric vehicles, solar power and wind power. Kevin lives in Cary, Ill., with Vicki, his wife of 26 years. They have a son, 24, and a daughter, 22.

**Laura Dodd '97, Treasurer** – The former Star sales rep and advertising manager is now the Director of Strategic Development for inHealth, A HealthGrades Company.



She and her husband, Steve, have two kids: Tyler, 7, and Kendall, 3. Laura is training to run a few races in the next few months, in hopes of a marathon sometime soon.

**Maria Krull, Secretary**, is the Star's business adviser.

**Barry Schrader '63, President Emeritus** held several jobs on the Star and



also cofounded an underground campus magazine, "The Quarterback", a Journal of Fact, Opinion and Literature. He was a weeklies editor/publisher, 10 years as a dailies editor in Illinois and California, and the last 25 years as PIO, manager of public affairs and employee communications, community relations supervisor and lastly an oral historian. Since returning to DeKalb, he writes a column for the Daily Chronicle. He has two published books: "Will the Last Person Leaving Livermore Please Unscrew the Bulb in Fire Station One" (1991) and "Hybrid Corn & Purebred People" (2010) with 100 favorite columns from the Daily Chronicle.

**Mark Brown '77** worked on the Star from '73-'77 including as editor-in-chief. He is



the Page-2 columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times. Mark joined the Sun-Times in 1982 and began writing the column in 2000. He took up soccer five years ago, which so far has necessitated only one surgery.

**Mary Butler '85** worked as a Star reporter, entertainment editor (SpotLight), editorial editor and editor-in-chief.



Mary is a digital strategist with more than a decade of online publishing experience. Currently, she is Senior Content Strategist at Razorfish in New York where she leads content strategy

for the company's largest automotive web-development projects. Prior to joining Razorfish, Mary was editor in chief of ForbesAutos.com (now Forbes.com/vehicles). Before that, she was managing editor of Cars.com.

**Greg Clemens '03**, an offensive lineman on the NIU football team, was the Star's advertising manager. After graduating, Greg was a sales rep at the Chicago Tribune. He received several promotions and awards during his four years there including "Rookie of the Year" and



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## ★ Meet the Northern Star Alumni Board ★

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quarterly sales leadership awards. He left the Tribune in 2006 to pursue owning a business. That dream was realized when Greg opened an insurance agency in 2010. He and his wife, Katy, (former NIU soccer player) celebrated the first birthday of their daughter, Norah, in September and live in Orland Park. Greg said he is excited to be on the board and about getting more recent graduates reconnected.

**Jim Killam** is the Northern Star adviser.

**Sabryna Cornish '92** (BA) and '95 (MA) was



city editor, managing editor and editor-in-chief. She teaches journalism courses in NIU's Department of Communication and serves on the Star's Publication Board. Sabryna collects Hello Kitty artifacts.

**Jerry Huston '86** was editor in chief for the 1985 summer and fall semesters and in spring 1986. Jerry graduated from Sangamon State University (now



University of Illinois at Springfield) in 1987 with a Master's Degree in Public Affairs Reporting and interned for the Chicago Tribune in its Springfield bureau in spring 1987. He worked as a reporter at the

Memphis Commercial Appeal from 1987-1994. Jerry returned to the Star in 1995 and 1996 as a writing coach, while attending law school at the NIU College of Law, from which he was graduated in 1997. Jerry is an attorney practicing in Chicago and continues to represent and advise the Star in legal matters.

**Mike Korcek '70** was sports editor. He served in the U.S. Army before joining NIU Intercollegiate Athletics where he was



Assistant Sports Information Director, Assistant Athletics Director / Sports Information Director, Sports Information Director Emeritus. His professional honors include NIU Outstanding Service Award; Donald R. Grubb NIU Journalism

Alumni of the Year Award; Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame, Media Wing; College Sports Information Directors of America Lifetime Service Award; All-American Football Foundation Lifetime "Scoop" Hudgins Lifetime Sports Information Directors Award; Northern Star Hall of Fame; and NIU Athletics Hall of Fame. Mike also is a Superman geek.

**Joelle McGinnis '89** worked on copy desk and as reporter, editorial page editor and managing editor. She is press secretary for the Illinois Tollway, Support the Illinois Tollway

Communications Department internal and external communications efforts, including media and public relations. Joelle spent her senior year spring break in Springfield, doing interviews for the Star – including Speaker Michael J. Madigan – with Sean Noble and Paul Wagner. The highlight was the Hen House Restaurant visits. Joelle is married to ...

**Greg Rivara '91**, former Star managing editor and now spokesman for the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

**Jim Slonoff '80** was managing editor, photo editor and a photographer. He began his career at The Doings newspaper in Hinsdale, Ill., as a photographer and was promoted to publisher.



Jim is now publisher and co-owner of The Hinsdalean newspaper. He is past president and now treasurer of the Illinois Press Association, and past president and now adviser

of the Hinsdale Chamber of Commerce. He is a board member of the Illinois Press Foundation, Gift of Hope Advisory Council, and The Community House Players. Jim met "the love of my life", Ilene, at the Northern Star and they have been married 30 years, with two sons and live in Hinsdale. The former photo editor has not forgiven The Northern Star editor at the time, Caron Weil, for replacing his notorious Santa photo with clip art in the Christmas special section. Details can be shared at the next reunion.

**Zach Smith '95** held "virtually every position in sales from assistant account executive



to sales manager" during his nine semesters at NIU. Currently, Zach is the Local/National Sales Manager for WGN-TV. He has worked for Jack Levy and Associates, Katz Media Group and FOX Television.

**Jerry Smith '66**, recently retired as Executive Director of the DeKalb County Community Foundation. Jerry served as the foundation's first full-time administrator for 10 years,



following a 30-year printing career at Castle PrinTech. Long active in business and civic affairs, he is now assuming limited consulting opportunities. Jerry remains involved in many campus activities, including the Huskie Athletics Advisory

Council and the school's Lifelong Learning Institute. He and his wife Ging, a '72 NIU grad, live in DeKalb. They have a son, who is a '02 NIU grad. Away from the office, Jerry is known to partake of good food, good wine and any college or pro football game that happens to be on TV.

**Dave Timmersman '77** was advertising manager. He is now Director of Sales for LSA Laser, a subcontract supplier to the implantable medical device industry.



Previously, Dave was Founder and President of Midwest Flame Spray, Midwest Coating Supply, and Doors of Distinction. Prior to that he was Vice President and General Manager of the Midwest Division of IFCO Sytems

and Vice President of Sales of the North America Container Group. Dave spends most weekends at his lake home in northern Minnesota, unwinding from frequent business travels.

**Tom Collins, '96, Past President**, was the Star's Systems manager and now is a consultant with Accenture LLC. He remembers almost being arrested while moving Northern Star computers from Campbell Hall to Altgeld Hall, when the Star temporarily moved to before the Campus Life building was completed.

**Ed Underhill '81**, a former Star reporter, has been with the Masuda Funai law firm for more than 23 years. He focuses his practice



on the representation of businesses in commercial transactions and disputes. Ed assists the Star periodically on legal matters and has been part of the Star Alumni board since its inception.

**Jeff Farren '70** is publisher of Record Newspapers, based in Kendall County. He's a past president of the Illinois Press Association.



**Matt Bute '99**, former Star ad sales assistant manager, is Senior Director of Advertising at the Chicago Tribune. He and his wife, Julie, have two young sons. Matt is chairman of the Northern Star Publication Board.



**Jerry Thompson** is the retired Northern Star adviser (1971-1995).

# Answering a call means turning the page

When career intersects with calling, sometimes that demands a radical move.

Many of you know I've done several Christian mission trips to places like Haiti and the Middle East. Along with doing relief work, I've functioned as a journalist, reporting about amazing things going on in missions and ministries in those places.

The time has come for me to pursue missionary journalism full-time. About a year ago, I began the application process with ReachGlobal, a world missions organization that reaches more than 75 countries. In March, a colleague and I spent about two weeks reporting from Beirut, Lebanon, and Amman, Jordan. What I couldn't say publicly then was that the trip was a trial run, to make sure of this calling.

We're sure.

In June, my wife, Lauren, and I were accepted by ReachGlobal as long-term missionaries. We now are in the process of building a support team; missionaries raise their entire income and expenses through the support of individuals, churches and sometimes other organizations. We hope to spend a large portion of next summer working from Europe, reporting stories from about a dozen countries.

Once I'm doing this full-time, about half of that time will be spent traveling and reporting internationally, and the other half building a news service that



**Jim Killam**

NORTHERN STAR  
ADVISER

will serve churches and individuals all over the world. I'll be joining a friend and colleague who pioneered this ministry as ReachGlobal's first journalist. Together, we'll report via traditional written story, video, blogging and all manner of social media. To borrow a phrase I heard recently from a former Chicago Tribune foreign correspondent, we hope to "shine a light on people who otherwise might die in darkness."

We are thrilled at this opportunity, and especially with the fact that we get to invent this as we go. Sure, I leave the security of a great job here at NIU, but I feel even more secure following God's clear calling.

My career transition will happen gradually. Sometime during the spring 2012 semester, I plan to switch to part-time here at the Star, working three days a week and using the rest of the time to grow our missions support team. My last day as adviser is uncertain. Most likely, it will come in May, depending on our support-raising progress. (If you'd like to become part of our team, contact me and I'll be glad to tell you more about it.)

The timing for this is good, as the Star needs to experiment with different business models in order to remain sustainable long-term. That might include some changes in the adviser's role, though those conversations are just beginning. There's much to be considered, and we will need you alumni to play an important

role in that thought process.

**In the past 50 years**, only three people have held the full-time job of Northern Star newsroom adviser. Not a day passed when I didn't think of Roy Campbell and Jerry Thompson, and wonder if I was even beginning to measure up to the incredible standards they set. Not an hour passed when I didn't marvel at the dedication, skill and enthusiasm of Maria Krull, the glue who holds this place together.

I've had the privilege of teaching good journalism in a place synonymous with that term. I've been blessed with the chance invest in the lives and careers of hundreds of students – many of whom will be lifelong friends. But, as I've told many of you over the years, I never planned to retire here. I love teaching journalism, but I love doing journalism even more. Getting back to reporting is going to be an absolute blast. Doing it in a ministry capacity is a calling I simply can't turn down.

These certainly won't be my final words to all of you about this – especially with my exact timetable being uncertain. But now that the clock is ticking, it's best for the Star that you know. Our students and alumni will indeed have a voice in finding the next adviser. Please take advantage of that opportunity.

And thank you for the privilege of keeping this chair warm for almost 17 years. Alumni, if you offer the new adviser the same support system you so graciously have extended to me, the Star will be just fine.

## Despite financial challenges, the Star still succeeds



**Kim Skibinski**  
'12

NORTHERN STAR  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Hi everyone! Life at the Northern Star is always eventful, and this semester is no exception.

A couple weeks ago, our management board (begrudgingly) decided to cut our Friday issues in order to save money. Right now, the Star loses about \$35,000 a year on Fridays, and if we didn't change something, we wouldn't have existed for much longer. Because of this, we'll have to restructure the way in which a lot of people do their jobs as well as the process in which the paper gets to print every night. It's not the most wonderful news, but we know getting rid of Fridays will benefit the Star in the long run, and that's what

matters most.

This year has also been a rebuilding year. We have a lot of first-time editors and even more first-semester reporters, which means relearning the basics and revamping sections from the ground up. Our section editors are working incredibly hard to teach, train and push reporters, photographers, videographers and designers to put out their best work, and I am so proud of them for that. There are also a handful of new employees who have a great passion for the job, and I cannot

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## ★ Alumni Updates ★

### 1956

**Dan Bjick**, former Northern Star sports editor, on Aug. 2 achieved every golfer's dream: a hole-in-one. It was on the 140-yard seventh hole of the Golden Horseshoe Green Course in Williamsburg, Va., where he works a couple of days a week as a starter and ranger. "I was playing alone, and just like that Coke ad where this kid is playing alone at the end of the day but his hole-in-one is seen by a maintenance worker, the same thing happened to me. One of our guys was sitting on his mower near the green, and when he let out a 'whoop' I knew the ball went in, since these old eyes couldn't see that far."  
*wsox@cox.net*

### 1963

**Barry Schrader** published a book of his 100 favorite newspaper columns titled "Hybrid Corn & Purebred People" last November. It is already out of print. He has resumed his weekly column, "DeKalb County Life" in the Daily Chronicle after taking the summer off. His column website is [www.dekalbcountylife.com](http://www.dekalbcountylife.com).  
*barry815@sbcglobal.net*

### 1968/'75

**Jo Fredell Higgins** (B.S. 1968, M.S. 1975) is a retired teacher and award-winning writer, photographer, essayist and poet. She had her fifth title with Arcadia Publishing released in June 2011. "Montgomery" is a pictorial history of the village. Her previous published books with Arcadia include "Naper-ville," "Geneva," "DeKalb" and "Aurora." Jo's sixth book was released by Tate Publishing in June 2011. "A Song for Celia" is the story of an Orphan Train child who comes west and is adopted by a prominent Peoria family in the 1920s. She's working on her seventh book, "Souls: A Portrait of Belfast," which delineates the year she lived in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It will be published by Tate Publishing in the spring 2012. She'll participate in

Irishfest Peoria 2012 featuring this title.  
*poetrylady45@yahoo.com*

### 1968

**Kurt Sipolski**, of Palm Desert, Calif. is in talks with an Australian producer to adapt his biopic, "Too Early for Flowers: The Story of a Polio Mother" to the screen. The drama takes place in Illinois and Sydney, Australia. "This has been one long, hard job," Kurt writes. "Publishers won't even look at a novella because theoretically they can't make as much money. So I published it online and fortunately have had interest from major stars, particularly in the over-50 female lead."  
*Canman619@aol.com*

### 1969

**Allan Zullo's** two latest books were published this fall by Scholastic: "Heroes of 9/11" and "Miracle Pets: True Tales of Courage and Survival." In December, Scholastic will publish his book, "Titanic: Young Survivors," a collection of true stories about children who survived the sinking of the Titanic. (April 14, 2012, marks the 100th anniversary when the fabled ship fatally struck an iceberg.)  
*allan@allanzullo.com*

### 1971

**Ray Gibson**, a member of the Northern Star's first Hall of Fame class in 2000, retired from the Chicago Tribune in July 2011, after 36 years as a reporter there.

### 1972

**Candace Perkins Bowen** ('72, MA '81) recently completed "Sources, Verification and Credibility" for NewsUniversity. The self-directed module guides students (and citizen journalists) through activities to help them best to assess source credibility and become better news consumers, news producers and citizens in a democracy. The module is also part of NewsU's J101 pilot program, a 16-week online course taught

now in partnership with Florida Atlantic University, Missouri State University and California State University, Fullerton.  
*cbowen@kent.edu*

### 1972/76

**Keith Peterson** is in his 25th year as a foreign service officer with the Department of State (originally with the U.S. Information Agency before the merger in 1999) "and am trying to cram Greek into 60-year-old brain cells for my final assignment as the Counselor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia, Cyprus next July," he writes. "When I return in 2014 I will be bearing down on 65 and retirement. My last journalism job was as chief editorial writer at the Daily Herald in Arlington Heights and I left for my adventure with the service in 1986. Now I have lived in seven countries and it has been a great ride. Other than that, my son Collin, 19, is the lead singer and rhythm guitarist for a band called 'The Neon Rush.' It is a wonder I can still hear."  
*samura138@gmail.com*

### 1973

**Gary Benson** continues to grind away at his law practice (33rd year) in Chicago's Lincoln Park area, although he reports that the real estate portion of his practice has been "mighty slow." The extra free time has allowed him to play about a hundred rounds of golf this year. Daughter Elizabeth (Yale Law, 2009) learned recently that she passed the California Bar exam, and now works at the Bingham-McCutcheon firm in San Francisco and spent most of the past year working on litigation issues related to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Son Steven parlayed his Stanford MBA into a job as a Regional Enterprise Manager at Google Corporation. He works at the Googleplex headquarters in Mountain View, Calif. "Both kids live in San Francisco and intend to stay out there," Gary writes, "and my significant other, Brenda Brazik, and I

**As provided by your e-mails, phone calls and visits.**

expect we will be living there as well before too long (at least in the winter)."  
*gsbenlaw@gmail.com*

**Claire Lavern Hubbard** reports that, after doing in-depth genealogy research in the late '70s and early '80s, "I wound up changing my name, to Peter August Hubbard. Not only is it a lot less androgynous (no more direct mail appeals for me to sign up for women's magazines), it is a nice reflection of family heritage, in which there were Peter Hubbards in the family continuously from 1633 to 1907." In his early career he worked in the book publishing industry in PR and retail, then moved to working on in-flight magazines for commuter airlines in Texas. His longest career stint was at the now-defunct Houston Post, from 1978-1994, in advertising sales and later as Special Sections Editor for the Classified Advertising Department. "From 1984 until about two years ago I earned my income primarily as an automotive editor, columnist and web site contributor. During much of my writing career, I also played saxophone in jazz bands, having been a charter member of Ron Modell's NIU Jazz Ensemble." He now lives in Austin, Texas, where he'll take over a used musical instrument business in January.  
*peterhubbard51@yahoo.com*

### 1975/79

**Alan Blitz**, B.S. '75 / M.A. '79, has enjoyed serving most facets of the healthcare public relations, advertising and educational field. Presently, he manages the eLearnConnection.com online learning platform for the continuing education of healthcare professionals such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, dietitians

## ★ Alumni Updates ★

and other medical areas. He lives in Riverwoods, Ill., with his wife and fellow Star alum, Caron ('80) who also serves as a public relations consultant in the nutritional foods industry. Caron and Al have two daughters: Courtney who lives and works (at an integrated marketing firm) in Los Angeles, and Rachel who is majoring in marketing and is in her junior year at Bryant University (and a Division I field hockey player) in Smithfield, R.I.

[al@elearnconnection.com](mailto:al@elearnconnection.com)

### 1975

**Sophia Dilberakis**, in addition to her work at SD Communications as a business-to-business public relations expert, started a humor blog this year. Called Rantopolis ([www.rantopolis.com](http://www.rantopolis.com)), the blog tackles a variety of everyday topics viewed through her acerbic filter. Support for the blog can also be found on Twitter @rantopolis and on Facebook.

[sophiad@att.net](mailto:sophiad@att.net)

**Deb Nelson** is launching an investigative reporting program at University of Maryland this fall, in collaboration with the Center for Public Integrity, the leading watchdog journalism nonprofit in Washington, D.C. Twelve students will work with CPI staff on a multimedia project that delves into the impact of Washington politics and economic policies on working poor families. Deb also traveled to Latvia in May as a Fulbright specialist and to Beijing last fall to train journalists and students in investigative reporting.

[dnelson@jmail.umd.edu](mailto:dnelson@jmail.umd.edu)

### 1976

**Martin Haeger** has been serving as Senior Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church and School, Mattoon Ill., since September 2010.

[nidsouth@aol.com](mailto:nidsouth@aol.com)

### 1978

**Shane Gericke's** latest thriller novel, "Torn Apart," was named a finalist for the Thriller Award for Best Novel of 2010 by the

International Thriller Awards organization. The book also was named Best Thriller and a Book of the Year by Suspense Magazine.

[shanegericke@comcast.net](mailto:shanegericke@comcast.net)

**Marla Antelis Karlin** retired in 2007 and moved to Prescott, Ariz., where she lives joyfully with her husband Rich and cats Abby and Melody. To her, retirement has meant staying active both physically and mentally. When not hiking, biking or taking exercise classes, she teaches basic computer skills, volunteers with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, assists the elderly, and last -- but not least -- edits a newsletter for a nonprofit organization. Life is good!

[marla\\_karlin@yahoo.com](mailto:marla_karlin@yahoo.com)

**Kim MacAskill Fowler** is an attorney for the Illinois Senate, living in the Springfield area. "I worked for years on the staffs of Governors Edgar and Ryan and am proud to have been fired by Gov. Blagojevich," she writes. Kim and her husband have two children: Kurt, a junior at Northwestern University and Kate, a senior in high school. "I am still a news junkie!"

[KFowler@senategop.state.il.us](mailto:KFowler@senategop.state.il.us)

### 1979

**Rick Caffey**, a former Northern Star sales representative, is a G.M. at Wvee/Waok/Wzgc.

[caffeyR@CBSradio.com](mailto:caffeyR@CBSradio.com)

**Jim Elliott** is founder and president of Diveheart & Diveheart Military Wounded (DMW), and also is founder and president of The Angelfish Foundation. "A PBS film crew just left our offices after a week of shooting to finish a half-hour piece about Diveheart for their Turning Point series," Jim writes. "And CNN featured Diveheart two weeks ago. I think we're on the radar." To view the CNN piece, go to YouTube and search: "CNN Leaders with Heart."

[www.theangelfishfoundation.org](http://www.theangelfishfoundation.org)

[www.Diveheart.org](http://www.Diveheart.org)  
[jim.elliott@diveheart.org](mailto:jim.elliott@diveheart.org)

**Chip Gettinger** works with organizations to automate

publishing processes with an emphasis of establishing best practices in moving and authoring print documentation in web-friendly approaches. He lives in Portland, Ore.

[gettinger@yahoo.com](mailto:gettinger@yahoo.com)

### 1980

**Kevin Sheldon** is Business Development Manager at Nichicon (America) Corporation in Schaumburg, Ill. (an electronic components manufacturer) and has been in the electronics business since graduation. He lives in Cary, Ill., with his wife, Vicki, and has two children who are both out of college and off on their own (at least for now). Kevin enjoys playing basketball (although not very well), bicycling and public speaking.

[Kevinsheldon7@gmail.com](mailto:Kevinsheldon7@gmail.com)

### 1981

**Ed Beckmann** started a new job in February 2011, as Vice President of Marketing and Retail Services at Meridian Trust Federal Credit Union, based in Cheyenne, Wyo. He still lives in Colorado and commutes across the border to work.

[edbeckmann@yahoo.com](mailto:edbeckmann@yahoo.com)

**Karen Smith (Smitty) Green** is director of communications and outreach at the Renaissance Computing Institute (RENCI) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The institute is a collection of ubergeeks and research scientists who develop and deploy advanced technologies to further the university's research efforts and solve problems identified by the state of North Carolina. Karen was lured to North Carolina in 2005 by her former boss at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois, where she was director of public affairs. She made the switch from newspaper journalism to PR/communications back in 1988, when a freelance PR job with the University of Illinois Extension Service gradually grew into a full-time gig. Karen and her husband, Andy, live in Durham, N.C., and enjoy trips to the mountains and the beach

in their free time. Karen sporadically posts to her cooking blog, [thejazzchef.com](http://thejazzchef.com), and has been a PR/communications volunteer for High Performance Computing conferences in the U.S. and Europe for the past 10 years.

[kgreen@renci.org](mailto:kgreen@renci.org)

**Brendan Sullivan's** first novel, "The Living Wills," will be published before the end of the year. The former Star ad manager is a Corporate Creativity Coach ([wwwcreativitycoach.net](http://wwwcreativitycoach.net)).

[bsullivan@creativitycoach.net](mailto:bsullivan@creativitycoach.net)

### 1982

**Mike Burke's** first book, "What You Don't Know About Men," is a Chicago Writers Association Book of the Year finalist in the nontraditional fiction category. The book tells the funny, heartbreaking stories of 20 sometimes shy, sometimes sexy, often sentimental men who march through life as punch-drunk fathers, sons, brothers, uncles, friends and lovers. The book's stories are written to depict the triumph, defeat, stalemate and surrender of everyday life.

[poetsknow@yahoo.com](mailto:poetsknow@yahoo.com)

**Colin O'Donnell** was promoted to Senior Vice President/Director of Content and Strategic Planning for Paddock Publications. He directs all content, including news content and niche products.

[codonnell@dailyherald.com](mailto:codonnell@dailyherald.com)

**Karen (Schmelzer) Ross** recently was named marketing supervisor for the Warrentonville Park District. She also continues to offer consulting services as part of her business, KR Communications.

[krcomm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:krcomm@sbcglobal.net)

### 1985

**Janyce Hamilton** is a Chicago writer and editor for Hamilton Communications. She gives talks, hangs around her Italian Irish family and flies

☞ Continued on next page

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through half and full marathons “for fun.”

[writing99@aol.com](mailto:writing99@aol.com)

### 1988

**Dave Tuley**, in addition to running his ViewFromVegas.com website and covering the Las Vegas race & sports book beat for Daily Racing Form, also is doing a weekly report for ESPN.com Insider on the Hilton SuperContest – “the most prestigious football handicapping contest in Sin City.”

[davetuley@hotmail.com](mailto:davetuley@hotmail.com)

### 1992

**Michael McCulloh** works as a communications consultant at ONEOK in Tulsa, Okla. It's one of the nation's premier energy companies involved in the natural gas and natural gas liquids businesses. “The biggest adjustment (other than missing Chicago style pizza) has been the heat,” he writes. “The daily temperature this past summer usually averaged about 103 degrees.”

[Michael.McCulloh@gmail.com](mailto:Michael.McCulloh@gmail.com)

### 1993

**Karen Craven** is Director of Marketing at America Society of Plastic Surgeons.

[kcraven@plasticsurgery.org](mailto:kcraven@plasticsurgery.org)

### 1993/95

**Jim Huguelet** (B.S. '93, MS. '95) is president of The Huguelet Group LLC ([www.huguelet.com](http://www.huguelet.com)) which provides strategic information technology consulting and project management services to clients in the Chicago area. He is President of the NIU Computer Science Alumni Council and was honored this spring by the NIU Alumni Association as its 2011 Outstanding Alumnus from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. He would like to hear from other Star alumni who are also CSCI grads or now employed in the I.T. industry.

[jhuguelet@huguelet.com](mailto:jhuguelet@huguelet.com)

### 1995

**Danny Alig Jacobson** reports “the only real change is that we have two kids. Our daughter Rhea was born last year in June. That, and in addition to the other places I teach, I'm also teaching a lot for different government departments now. Oh yeah, and I finally managed to get Swiss citizenship.”

[dannyfanny@hotmail.com](mailto:dannyfanny@hotmail.com)

### 1996

**Lesley Rogers** is Chief Communications Officer for Seattle Public Schools. Hired in April, she oversees strategic external and internal communications for the 48,000-student district.

[lesley.rogers5@gmail.com](mailto:lesley.rogers5@gmail.com)

**Lisa Katzenberger** can be reached at:

[lisakatz@gmail.com](mailto:lisakatz@gmail.com)

### 1997

**Jeff Preusser**, former Northern Star sales representative, is Vice President – Financial Adviser at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in Chicago. He previously was employed by Morgan Stanley Dean Witter and Wells Fargo.

[Jeffrey.presusser@mssb.com](mailto:Jeffrey.presusser@mssb.com)

### 1998

**Mike Logan** is Director of Midwest Sales at eventful.com

[Mike.logan10@gmail.com](mailto:Mike.logan10@gmail.com)

**Erin Hallstrom-Erickson** works for Putman Media, a B2B publishing company in Itasca, Ill. She is the Digital Editor for FoodProcessing.com. Erin is also the Vice President of the American Society of Business Publication editors where she works with fellow business editors on improving their websites as well as their careers. She also does website consulting for small to mid-size businesses.

[erin.alissa@gmail.com](mailto:erin.alissa@gmail.com)

**Jennifer (Holub) Zurko** is Associate Editor of GrowerTalks and Green Profit, magazines published by Ball Publishing or West Chicago, Ill.

[jzurko@ballpublishing.com](mailto:jzurko@ballpublishing.com)

### 1999

**Jonathan Twitty** is an agent at State farm Insurance. Jon previously worked at 22nd Century Media and The Business Ledger.

[Jontwitty@gmail.com](mailto:Jontwitty@gmail.com)

**Veronica Gonzalez** left her job at the Wilmington, N.C. Star-News, where she'd worked since 2005, to become a public safety reporter for The Virginian-Pilot. Also this year, Veronica and a former colleague received second place from the North Carolina Press Association for investigative reporting of the liquor-control system. Their reporting led to two criminal convictions -- one in federal court and one in state court. “And lastly,” she writes, “in non-work news, my husband Russ and I are having a baby! Well, I'm having the baby. He gets to watch or help me breathe or something.”

[vergonzo@hotmail.com](mailto:vergonzo@hotmail.com)

**Iva-Marie Palmer** and her husband, Steve, are celebrating their son Clark Stephen Stanis' first birthday on Oct. 10. “That's the big, best news; he's awesome and parenthood is awesome.”

[ivamarie@gmail.com](mailto:ivamarie@gmail.com)

**David Spitz** has a new job, as Solutions Consultant at Covalent Marketing.

[davidspitz@hotmail.com](mailto:davidspitz@hotmail.com)

**Bill Tynan** recently was named the Crime Prevention Officer in St. Charles, Ill. He starts the new role in January. Primary responsibilities include teaching “Too Good For Drugs” classes in the middle schools, compiling and tracking crime trends, helping homeowners, property managers and business owners in curbing property crimes and conducting liquor and tobacco compliance checks. “But I also will have a lot of time to be creative and start up new programs that hopefully will strengthen the police department-community relationship,” he writes.

[dekalb77@yahoo.com](mailto:dekalb77@yahoo.com)

**Eric Nanney**, Star sales representative, works as IT project manager at Bank of America. Eric lives in Tinley park with his wife Beth and their children, Sophia and Dylan.

[Eric\\_nanney@yahoo.com](mailto:Eric_nanney@yahoo.com)

### 2000

**Joe Biesk**'s wife, Kate, gave birth to their second child, a girl, on Sept. 9, 2011. Her name is Maggie Rae Biesk. Joe also has been named managing editor at the SouthtownStar and the Joliet Herald-News.

[joebiesk@gmail.com](mailto:joebiesk@gmail.com)

**Katie (Scrivano) Naze** is Vice President/Group Manager at Edelman Public Relations in Chicago, leading a dedicated group of media strategists who develop and execute national media relations campaigns for clients such as Darden Restaurants, Hilton Worldwide, Butterball, Travelocity and others. In summer 2011, Katie married another NIU alum, David Naze, a former NIU graduate student and instructor in forensics, and current communications professor at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights.

[Katie.Scrivano@edelman.com](mailto:Katie.Scrivano@edelman.com)

**Justin Steinecker** has a new job as Regional Manager-Major Accounts with Interactive Health Solutions in Arlington Heights, Ill. “New” daughter Sara is now 2 and son Joe will be 4 in November.

[jsteinec\\_1999@yahoo.com](mailto:jsteinec_1999@yahoo.com)

**Sean Kearney** is Director of Digital Advertising Sales at Weather.com.

[Skearney@weather.com](mailto:Skearney@weather.com)

**Sarah Boomgarden Williams**, '00, and her husband, Ryan, '00, welcomed Andrew David Peter into the world on May 1. He weighed 10 pounds and was 23 inches long. He joins big sister Hannah, age 2 ½, at home. Sarah is a part-time writer in the Communications Department at the Institute for Genomic Biology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. And, she has recently

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returned to her journalism roots as a freelance reporter for the new weekly paper in Farmer City, Ill., where she and her family live. She recently became a certified postpartum doula and helps moms, babies and dads after baby arrives by providing support, education and nurturing. Learn more at her Website: [www.treeoflifedoulas.com](http://www.treeoflifedoulas.com)

[randswilliams@gmail.com](mailto:randswilliams@gmail.com)

### 2001

**Marvin Doolin** lives in South Elgin, Ill., with his wife, Carrie, and two young children, Kinsey and Lawson. He develops business software at Nelix, Inc. in Schaumburg and enjoys playing guitar in his band, Staring Contest.

[marvdoolin@yahoo.com](mailto:marvdoolin@yahoo.com)

### 2002 / 2008

**Christian Arrecis** has accepted a full-time position teaching photography at Illinois Central College in East Peoria. Previously, he taught as an adjunct instructor at Kishwaukee College for 8 years, and for 3 years at NIU. While he continues to make artwork and exhibit nationally, he now makes his home in Peoria with Seamore, a strange, strange dog of unknown origin.

[www.christianarrecis.com](http://www.christianarrecis.com)  
[c\\_arrecis@hotmail.com](mailto:c_arrecis@hotmail.com)

### 2002

**Lynn Celmer** just celebrated her one-year anniversary as Managing Editor of PLBuyer (Private Label Buyer) magazine, a BNP Media publication. She is looking forward to her second year of attending the big PLMA show in Chicago in November.

[lynncelmer@yahoo.com](mailto:lynncelmer@yahoo.com)

**Janna (Smallwood) Sobol** works as an independent personal trainer and attends the Illinois Institute of Art in Chicago as a culinary student, with plans to graduate in December. Janna will celebrate her third anni-

versary with husband Andrew this November, and likely will be toiling away for many hours in hot kitchens for low pay, but for the love of the culinary arts. Janna plans to combine her love of writing and food into one tasty blog, which will soon be launched at [www.handoverfeast.wordpress.com](http://www.handoverfeast.wordpress.com).

[janna.sobol@gmail.com](mailto:janna.sobol@gmail.com)

### 2003

**Courtney Cavanaugh** works as a Junior Account Manager and Photo Coordinator at Equator, a graphic design and branding firm, in Batavia, Ill. She lives in Geneva, Ill. with her newly adopted dog, Grover, and spends her spare time working out and volunteering at Anderson Animal Shelter in South Elgin.

[paintedclouds1981@yahoo.com](mailto:paintedclouds1981@yahoo.com)

**Todd Krysiak** is editor of the Baraboo News Republic, a daily newspaper near Wisconsin Dells, and the Sauk Prairie Eagle, a weekly publication north of Madison. "Due to changes in professional responsibilities, I left CaveSounds, the semi-professional home recording studio I operated a few years ago with another former NIU student, but remain involved with the music scene in the area."

[trkrysiak@gmail.com](mailto:trkrysiak@gmail.com)

### 2004

**Linda Luk** is the interim assistant director at the University of Chicago's Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. In August, she married her high school sweetheart and the two of them live in Skokie, Ill.

[linda.luk@gmail.com](mailto:linda.luk@gmail.com)

**Jaime Swanson** still lives in Chicago's Ukie Village and works at the Daily Herald. "I've taken on a lot of big projects, such as election design planning and, most recently, our 9/11 anniversary design," she writes. "More often than not, I'm the front-page designer, and I'm often the weekend night editor."

[j.e.swanson@gmail.com](mailto:j.e.swanson@gmail.com)

### 2005/07

**Deanna Cabinian** started working for Crain's Chicago Business a few months ago in marketing/audience development. "I enjoy it and must say I was thrilled to see my name in a masthead again!"

[deannacabinian@yahoo.com](mailto:deannacabinian@yahoo.com)

### 2005

**Marc Marin** is the publisher of three weekly newspapers in Arizona: the Arizona Silver Belt, San Carlos Apache Moccasin and Copper Country News. He's been in Arizona since 2008. "Hard to believe I have so much responsibility," he writes, "but I know my time at NIU and at the Star played a huge part in me getting to where I am now."

[marcmarin@hotmail.com](mailto:marcmarin@hotmail.com)

**Carrie (Stobart) McKinney**

works as Staff Accountant for Mule-Hide Products in Beloit, Wis. She and her husband, Jeff, are celebrating their fifth anniversary in October ... and in November they are expecting their second child.

[cas1226@aol.com](mailto:cas1226@aol.com)

**Kartikay Mehrotra** is living in New Delhi, India, where he works as a reporter for Bloomberg, covering energy and foreign trade. He's also getting married in 2012, in India. "If any of you wind up in this part of the world, please do give me a call at +91 98736 78055. Email works too."

[Kartikaym@gmail.com](mailto:Kartikaym@gmail.com)

**Casey Toner** has been writing for the SouthtownStar in Tinley Park, Ill., for five years. Former Northern Star boss Joe Bies is his editor. "I do a lot of investigative reporting. While friends of mine toil away in corporate cubicle-obscure, I'm writing about gang murders and political corruption. Even if there aren't newspapers 20 years from now, people will still want to read about the ugly messes politicians cause. Student reporters should try to do as much of it as they can to get an advantage over other applicants when applying for

jobs."

[ctoner@starnewspapers.com](mailto:ctoner@starnewspapers.com)

**Gerold Shelton** got married in 2008, to Amanda Hermens. On March 10, 2010, they welcomed a daughter, Kaitlyn Rose Shelton. Gerold now works for Subway as a General Manager over four stores in East Moline, Silvis and Hillsdale, Ill. He's working on purchasing a store in the next five years. "While this is not what I went to school for, life is good," he writes.

[gshelton11@yahoo.com](mailto:gshelton11@yahoo.com)

### 2006

**Rasmieyh Abdelnabi** is in her final year of a master's program in Middle East Studies at the University of Virginia, with a focus on Palestine and Israel. She spent this past summer interning for the United Nations Development Programme in Jerusalem, working on a project regarding gender and Palestinian statehood.

[rabelnabi@gmail.com](mailto:rabelnabi@gmail.com)

**Justin Gallagher** is living in Bayan Olgii, Mongolia and is a development worker for the Peace Corps. "Now is a great time to apply for the Peace Corps if someone wants to leave in the summer of 2012," he writes.

**Jessica Kalin** moved to Knoxville, Tenn., where she works in marketing and communications for Fox Den Country Club, home of the Knoxville News Sentinel Open, which is part of the PGA Nationwide Tour. She loves the fact that East Tennessee gets hardly any snow and that people won't plan their weddings in October, unless it's a Vols bye week.

[j\\_e\\_kalin@yahoo.com](mailto:j_e_kalin@yahoo.com)

### 2006

**Jess King** obtained a new position this spring as a communications specialist for MetaStar, a nonprofit health care quality organization in Madison, Wis. She is also taking graduate courses at Edgewood

☞ **Continued on next page**

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College toward a certificate in Sustainability Leadership. She said she's enjoying local music as always.

[supernova1984@hotmail.com](mailto:supernova1984@hotmail.com)

**Dawid Klimek** is Director of Restaurants for Trump Hotel and International Tower in Chicago. "Still taking pictures," he writes. "Currently wine making in Croatia."

[dawidklimek@gmail.com](mailto:dawidklimek@gmail.com)

**Dominic Poggi** started a new job in September with Wolters Kluwer, doing inside sales.

[poggidom@gmail.com](mailto:poggidom@gmail.com)

### 2007

**Stephanie Rivera** is an account executive at Momentum Worldwide, she was previously employed at Fox Sports Net.

[Stephanie.rivera@momentumww.com](mailto:Stephanie.rivera@momentumww.com)

**Rachel (Yarris) Johnson** and her husband, Josh, have had quite a year. Not only did they become homeowners (still living in Rockford) but they had their first child in February, a son named Jaydran Alexander.

[rajohnson829@gmail.com](mailto:rajohnson829@gmail.com)

**Stephanie Kohl** recently celebrated her four-year anniversary with the Pioneer Press. During those years, she has bounced from beat to beat. Her most current assignment is covering the Barrington and Lake Zurich areas.

[slkohl@gmail.com](mailto:slkohl@gmail.com)

**Brandon Mangia** works as a research specialist for Proactive Worldwide, a global decision support, research and consulting firm in Schaumburg, Ill. He also still serves as a freelance sports reporter for the Sun-Times Media, usually covering events for the Elgin Courier-News or Aurora Beacon-News.

[Bmangia03@live.com](mailto:Bmangia03@live.com)

**Chris Norman** spent more than three years at WIFR-TV in Rockford, Ill, doing everything from VJ to reporting on-air and finally working as a producer. Recently he won the 2010

**Moving?  
Changing jobs?  
Changing your  
primary e-mail  
address?  
Don't forget  
to tell us!**

award for "Best Use of New Media" from the Illinois News Broadcasters Association. "I shot and field produced a cross country road trip where an anchor and I used social media and Skype to ask people where we should go next," he writes. This summer, Chris moved to Fort Myers, Fla., where he's now a morning show producer.

[cnorman9@gmail.com](mailto:cnorman9@gmail.com)

**Sean Ostruszka** spent the last three years in Kentucky working as an editor for FLW Outdoors Magazine. He and his wife moved Lockport, Ill., in August, where he now works for a website, [bassrankings.com](http://bassrankings.com), does freelance writing and is in the process of starting up a fishing lure company.

[spostruszka43@hotmail.com](mailto:spostruszka43@hotmail.com)

### 2008/'10

**Ben Gross** moved to Denton, Texas in August to begin a Ph.D. program in the department of Political Science at the University of North Texas. He was awarded a Doctoral Fellowship through the Toulouse Graduate School and will be studying political theory and American government.

[ben\\_i\\_144@hotmail.com](mailto:ben_i_144@hotmail.com)

### 2008

**Alan Cesar** has relocated to Florida, where he's associate editor at Motorsport Marketing, publishers of Grassroots Motorsports and Classic Motorsport magazines. "Though the bulk of my creative work – writing and photography – will be in GRM, I still do plenty of editing for Classic," he writes. "I've taken on captaining the magazine's

racing team for the 24 Hours of LeMons."

[alan@sentimentalmechanic.com](mailto:alan@sentimentalmechanic.com)

**Herminia (Irizarry) Chase** is now an account manager at Imagination Publishing in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood.

[herminiachase@gmail.com](mailto:herminiachase@gmail.com)

**Carlene Eck** is an account executive at Gibbs-Soell public relations in Hoffman Estates, Ill.

[CarleneEck@gmail.com](mailto:CarleneEck@gmail.com)

**Andy Mitchell** left the Clinton Herald in Clinton, Iowa, last April to take a position as the City of DeKalb reporter at the Daily Chronicle, where he gets to work alongside fellow alums from the Star and from the University of Illinois at Springfield.

[andrewmitchell85@gmail.com](mailto:andrewmitchell85@gmail.com)

**John Puterbaugh** is managing editor of the Lake County Journal in Grayslake, Ill. This new job is the second-coolest thing to happen to John this year after getting married to fellow Northern Star grad Caitlin Mullen (2009) on Sept. 24.

[jdputerbaugh@gmail.com](mailto:jdputerbaugh@gmail.com)

**Amanda Walsh** is back in the NIU Department of English, teaching freshmen composition. She'll be graduating with her M.A. in English next May.

[tiny.earthquakes@gmail.com](mailto:tiny.earthquakes@gmail.com)

**Patrick Yeagle** started Aug. 15 as Springfield bureau chief for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, after nearly two years working for Illinois Times, the alternative newsweekly in Springfield. "I'm excited to be back in the Statehouse at the same publication for which I interned during grad school," he writes. "I'll be covering the Illinois General Assembly, the governor and the Illinois Supreme Court."

[pyeagle@gmail.com](mailto:pyeagle@gmail.com)

**Justin Zegar** is engaged to NIU and College of Business Alumni Allison Saull. The wedding is planned for June 16, 2012. Justin lives in Palatine, Ill., and works for Sears Holdings. He recently was promoted to Mar-

keting Planning Manager for Kmart Consumer Electronics. He's also a video game blogger for [www.kmartgamer.com](http://www.kmartgamer.com). His blogger name is "THEingloriousONE."

[Justin.Zegar@gmail.com](mailto:Justin.Zegar@gmail.com)

### 2009

**Caitlin Mullen** recently took over the cops and courts beat for the Daily Chronicle in DeKalb, where she's been a reporter since April 2010. On Sept. 24, Caitlin married fellow alum John Puterbaugh (2008) and they're living happily ever after!

[caitlin.m.mullen@gmail.com](mailto:caitlin.m.mullen@gmail.com)

**Steve Nitz** is a sports writer for the Morris (Ill.) Daily Herald.

[srnitz86@yahoo.com](mailto:srnitz86@yahoo.com)

**Thomas Salzman** is a Media Sales Representative at Screenvision Direct.

[tsalzman@screenvision.com](mailto:tsalzman@screenvision.com)

**Justin Smith** worked at Rehab Management Solutions in Racine, Wis., as Public Relations Coordinator. It's a healthcare consulting company specializing in physical therapy and Justin is in charge of a national publicity campaign. He also has joined a professional development organization, the Young Professionals of Racine. He serves on the board as the Community Relations Director and is responsible for coordinating volunteer activities for members. He covers the school board beat for his local Patch.com site. And, he's doing public relations consulting for a local business owner. "I'd say I have enough on my plate right now," he writes, "but being busy is a good thing."

[justin.eric.smith@gmail.com](mailto:justin.eric.smith@gmail.com)

### 2009

**Alex Wilkinson** has been promoted to Field Director at Northwest Mutual Financial Network.

[Alex.wilkinson@nmfn.com](mailto:Alex.wilkinson@nmfn.com)

**Mike Van Der Harst** became the new features editor Aug. 15 at the Kane County Chronicle, based in St. Charles, Ill. He de-

signs the daily feature sections and writes articles for them. He was previously a copy editor and page designer within the same company, Shaw Media, working on the Kane County Chronicle as well as DeKalb's Daily Chronicle.

[dmbfan825@gmail.com](mailto:dmbfan825@gmail.com)

## 2010

**Alyssa Johnson** accepted a full-time position this summer as a proofreader with Aspen Marketing Services, a division of Epsilon, in West Chicago, Ill., where she had been working freelance since March. "I still commute from DeKalb, as my boyfriend is finishing up his degree in computer science. Also, just over a year ago, he and I added a new member to our family: A big, giant Great Dane named Charlie, who you might see walking around the lagoon in DeKalb."

[alysameredith@gmail.com](mailto:alysameredith@gmail.com)

**Amanda Podgorny** works at the Beloit (Wis.) Daily News as a page designer, copy editor and reporter. She is recently engaged and living with her fiancé, enjoying the Wisconsin life. "But don't call me a cheesehead."

[amandarpodgorny@gmail.com](mailto:amandarpodgorny@gmail.com)

**Alissa Lower** is a Sales Planner at Tribune Media Group.

[alower@tribune.com](mailto:alower@tribune.com)

**Derek Burk** is a sales representative at Victor Envelope Company.

[dburk@victorenvelope.com](mailto:dburk@victorenvelope.com)

**Justin Weaver** decided to leave his job as a reporter for the Beloit (Wis.) Daily News in early 2011, and now works at

Gleason Cutting Tools in Loves Park, Ill. "I enjoy my job tremendously and though I loved the Star I don't miss reporting at all," he writes. "I live in Beloit, Wis., and spend my free time writing what I'll vaguely call "future projects" in addition to fixing an 80-year-old radio and arguing about pro wrestling with Alan Edrinn."

[justinpweaver@gmail.com](mailto:justinpweaver@gmail.com)

## 2011 (M.A.)

**Katie Leb** is editor of the Dodge County Pionier in Mayville, Wis.

[editor@dodgecountypionier.com](mailto:editor@dodgecountypionier.com)

## 2011

**Mike Buda** is freelancing for Pioneer Press, and is enrolled in a yearlong program at the Illinois Center for Broadcasting. He's also doing an internship at 670 The Score in Chicago.

[buda\\_645@yahoo.com](mailto:buda_645@yahoo.com)

**Dave Thomas** is a graduate student in the University of Illinois-Springfield's Public Affairs Reporting Program.

[thomas.davidjames@gmail.com](mailto:thomas.davidjames@gmail.com)

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**Marissa McArthur** is an IT Recruiter at TEKSystems.

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**Lauren Peters** is an IT Recruiter at TEKSystems.com.

[lpeters@teksystems.com](mailto:lpeters@teksystems.com)

## Advisers

**Jim Killam** and his wife, Lauren, became grandparents this year. Granddaughter Kylie was born Feb. 1, 2011, just hours before the blizzard hit. Also this year, Jim and Lauren found themselves face-to-face with three grizzlies while hiking in Glacier National Park, Montana. The mother bear and her two nearly grown cubs came around a trail bend. Jim and Lauren, along with several other hikers, quickly moved off the trail. After a few nervous moments, the bears passed peacefully. Shaky photos at [www.jimkillam.com](http://www.jimkillam.com).

[jkillam@niu.edu](mailto:jkillam@niu.edu)

**Maria Krull** is having a jolly grand time with the current gurus. Chief is fine. All good!

[mkrull@niu.edu](mailto:mkrull@niu.edu)

**Jerry Thompson** reports "nothing noteworthy since last time." But he does have a new email address:

[jerwin.malta@frontier.com](mailto:jerwin.malta@frontier.com)

## Faculty

**Rus Elder** is teaching again. "After Edith died in 2005, I went to live in Utah with my daughter and her family. I met a very sweet lady online, and we got married a year ago October. We are both teaching courses at Provo College. It's fun to be back."

[raelder@yahoo.com](mailto:raelder@yahoo.com)

## OBITUARIES

**Nancy (Grapp) Walker** (1980) died March 5, 2011, of a heart attack. "I know that her time at the Northern Star was one of the happiest times of her life," writes Mike Walker, her husband of 18 years. "She spoke of it often, and with great fondness. She recently acquired some photos from that time and enjoyed telling me about them and laughing at her clothes and hairstyle. She was humble as well as funny."

"I'll keep the website up for a while, in case anyone wants to purchase any of her jewelry. It was always meant to be loved and worn. She loved making it, and I think that shows. That was the reason we did so many craft fairs and art shows, so that she could meet the people that were going to wear her jewelry and help them find exactly the right piece."

[www.nancywalkerdesign.net](http://www.nancywalkerdesign.net)

**Dr. Albert Walker**, who founded the NIU public relations program and who created and advised the PRSSA chapter from the mid-'60s to 1990, died June 22, 2011. He was 91. As the sole teacher of the public relations upper-level courses for many of those years, he guided PR undergraduate majors through their studies and internships and then into their first PR jobs from his office in 114 Reavis Hall. And as the director of journalism graduate studies for many years, Dr. Walker guided all of the department's master's students through the intricacies of graduate school procedures.

## From the editor in chief ...

☞ Continued from Page 5

wait to watch them learn and grow. It's refreshing to know that some people still get as excited about journalism as I do, and I know the Star's future is in good hands.

And we're still winning awards! Kyla Gardner (managing editor) and I were

lucky enough to fly to Orlando for this year's National College Media Convention. The Star received second place for Best Design of the Year for Magazine/Special Section Cover, and Kyla won second place for News Story of the Year. We're all excited about it, and I think it'll give us the push we need to end the semester strong.

I hope all is going well in your parts of the world. Have a great rest of the year, and if you're in the Midwest, try to stay warm.

*Kim Skibinski is a senior journalism major from Oswego, Ill. Contact her at [kimskibinski@gmail.com](mailto:kimskibinski@gmail.com).*

★ 2011 Hall of Fame Inductees ★



**Maria  
McCarthy**

★  
*Class  
of 1997*



By  
*Maria Krull*

Family connection is the reason why Maria became a Northern Star “guru.”

John Phillips, Maria’s older brother, often talked about the good experience he got at the Northern Star and encouraged his sister to apply. She did, and became one of the Star’s best sales representatives. She was promoted to assistant ad manager for 1996-97.

Maria remembers a fun experience at the newspaper, from the camaraderie with other advertising staffers to trips to the Chicago Tribune.

“I still remember when Rich Schovanec from the Tribune would come to the Star to help with training,” she says. “He was such an inspirational speaker, and he was fun. Those sessions at the Crystal Pistol after training ... well, they were just special.”

“I remember when I made a good commission I would take the production kids out,” she adds. “I learned then to appreciate those who make my job easier. But it wasn’t only that. The Star gives you confidence to go out and actually accomplish what you set out to do.”

Maria graduated in 1997 with a major in corporate communications. She landed a job at the Chicago Sun-Times, a company that usually did not hire brand-new grads. But, the Star experience gave her the edge. At the Sun-Times, she was a

retail account manager and in 1997 surpassed her quota by 31 percent. In 1998, while exceeding her yearly sales quota again, she helped launch a new Recruitment section, educating agencies on the new product. She was promoted to National Account Manager, and again surpassed sales goals.

In 1999, Maria joined Landon Media Group as National Account Manager, responsible for health-care and telecommunication categories for 14 major-market newspapers. In 2000 she received the Special Sales Recognition Award, an award bestowed by clients.

In 2000 she was hired by Sports Illustrated Women and Sports Illustrated For Kids (Time Inc. titles) as account manager. By January 2002 she worked exclusively for Sports Illustrated for Kids as the Midwest Sales Manager. Her performance led to the 2007 promotion to Corporate Sales Director Midwest for Time Inc., a position she currently holds. Maria received the “Marlin Award” for effective development and execution of marketing programs for clients.

Maria thrives in using her creativity to develop ideas and strategies to help clients achieve their marketing goals. She particularly enjoys the challenges presented by today’s business environment.

Maria lives in Chicago with her husband, Dennis.



**Eileen  
Norris**

★  
*Class  
of 1978*



By  
*Jim Killam*

Eileen Norris may not be famous, but she could write the book on successfully managing a journalism career and parenthood.

Eileen was not originally on a track to attend college. After high school she found work as a secretary, and eventually took some classes at Triton Community College. There, a professor pulled her aside and told her she should pursue a writing career.

Three years behind her high-school classmates, Eileen entered NIU not knowing a soul. In a journalism class, Dr. Avi Bass encouraged her to apply at the Northern Star. She was hired as the Star’s police reporter. “I’m pretty sure it was because I had a car,” she says. She wound up spending the rest of her college career in a variety of Star roles. She credits Adviser Jerry Thompson with showing her the way. “He was unbelievably kind and smart.”

“The Star was a place to belong. I had never been part of a group or a clique before,” she says. “These were people who were passionate about doing good.”

After graduation and early stints at the Suburban Tribune and Crain’s, she moved to the American Medical Association, where she was senior editor of the AMA Encyclopedia of Medicine. Much of Eileen’s professional journalism career has been free-lancing, emphasizing health topics. She’s developed, edited or written several widely known health books. She was managing editor for “You:

The Smart Patient,” a 2006 New York Times Best Seller by Drs. Mehmet Oz and Mike Roizen.

She was lead writer for 2010’s “The Smart Parent’s Guide to Children’s Health Care: An Insider’s Guidebook for Getting Your Kids Through Illnesses, Accidents and Checkups,” by Dr. Jennifer Trachtenberg. Due out this April: a book she edited, “The Available Parent: Radical Optimism in Raising Teens and Tweens,” by Dr. John Duffy.

Eileen knows that working behind the scenes as a writer or editor often means others get credit for the heavy lifting. But bylines aren’t as big a deal for her anymore.

“I think your first five to 10 years out of school you’re really keen on that. But it’s not all that critical. The work is most important.”

“My best double byline was having the kids.”

Eileen and her husband, Bruce Dold, editorial page editor for the Chicago Tribune, have two daughters, ages 26 and 24. Both have incorporated writing into their young careers.

“The kids saw the potential,” she says. “A writing and reporting background is something you can take through life and still do other things. We never pushed them. I just think they saw that we really loved what we did.

“It’s a great career for having it all. I could be a mom, and show up at those 3:30 volleyball games, and also have something to talk about at parties.”

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## ★ 2011 Hall of Fame Inductees ★

During his 30-plus year newspaper career, Bob Palermini transformed his role from journalist to technology leader at newspapers ranging from a rural Illinois weekly to the Los Angeles Times.

Growing up in suburban Westchester, Bob loved to take photographs. He became a staff photographer for, and eventually editor of, his high school newspaper. The opportunity to express his creativity while documenting his world proved thrilling.

So during his NIU freshman orientation in the summer of 1974, before the photojournalism major took even one class in DeKalb, he snagged a job at the Northern Star.

"I wanted to be a journalist, and NIU was definitely one of the top places in Illinois to go for that," Bob says. "The best part about the Star was that it was real-life newspapering. We were a dedicated group who put in crazy hours, cared about the product and really cared about doing journalism - good journalism."

When he left NIU in 1977, he became editor of the tiny Tri-County Press in Polo - a newspaper that understood the role of community journalism and the importance of photographs in that mission.

He eventually put down his camera, except during Friday night football games, and led the business and production operations of the three small newspapers plus commercial printing venture

as publisher.

"My interest in technology came from the photography," he says. "A lot of photographers led the way and became the technology leaders at their papers."

Bob went on to manage production and technology at various Shaw Newspapers and then landed a job with Tribune Company at their Newport News, Virginia paper. This led to bigger jobs in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and then back in Chicago at the corporate office.

In 2000 when Tribune purchased Times Mirror, he moved to Los Angeles to become Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at the Times and later Vice President of Technology for all nine Tribune papers. There he directed a project to implement and operate one of the largest newspaper editorial systems in the world, serving more than 3,000 journalists.

Two years ago, not enjoying the changes in his industry, he left the Times to become Vice President for Planning and Technology at Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles. It reminds him of his early days at the Tri-County Press: improving the lives of people in the place where he lives.

Bob and Tracy, his wife of 33 years, are parents to 23-year-old Stephanie, a recent University of Southern California graduate.



**Bob  
Palermini**

★  
*Class  
of 1978*



*By  
Mark McGowan*

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In high school, Mark Ridolfi ran a vending box route for the Indianapolis News, an afternoon paper with an avid following.

"We'd race from the downtown loading dock out the east side, aiming to beat the end-of-shift whistle at RCA and other manufacturing plants," he recalls. "Every day, I'd be surrounded by plant workers who couldn't wait for their paper."

And, he would read the paper cover-to-cover between stops.

"The deadline rush and daily encounters with quarter-carrying newspaper customers pretty much assured my career choice," he says.

After Mark's parents moved to the Chicago area during his senior year of high school, Mark elected to stay in Illinois for college: first at the U of I's Circle Campus, then College of DuPage and finally NIU for his final two years. In a dilapidated house called Campbell Hall, he found a home.

"It was a night-and-day difference when I walked into the Northern Star," he said. "It was a bunch of crazy, long-haired students working their butts off. Making decisions - not relying on someone else to make them."

Adviser Jerry Thompson was a constant presence, too, teaching students to think like journalists.

"The Star had covered a big fire on Greek Row,"

Mark says. "I came in the next day and said I was going to go check on fire damage. Jerry said, 'I guess that would be a story. But a real reporter would go check the inspection dates on fire extinguishers around town.' So I did, and sure enough, some were out of date."

Those reporting skills served Mark after graduation, when he took a job with the Moline Dispatch. After that came a stint as Quad Cities bureau manager for United Press International. When UPI's existence became shaky, Mark returned to the Dispatch as a reporter and later city editor.

In 1987, he returned to Indianapolis, as assistant city editor for the paper he'd once delivered. But in 1993 he went to the Quad City Times in Davenport, Iowa. He's been there ever since, first as city editor and, since 2002, as editorial page editor.

Mark's editorial page work won first-place awards from the Illinois Press Association in 2002 and the Iowa Newspaper Association in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

He's been on the Mid America Press Institute board for 11 years, serving one term as president. He's also a journalism educator, having advising the student newspapers at Blackhawk Community College and Augustana College, and teaching interactive journalism at Knox College in Galesburg.



**Mark  
Ridolfi**

★  
*Class  
of 1980*



*By  
Jim Killam*

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★ 2011 Hall of Fame Inductees ★



**Barry  
Rozner**

★  
*Class  
of 1984*



*By  
Jim Killam*

**B**arry Rozner knows he has a sports fan's dream job. The Daily Herald columnist, Chicago radio host and book author has enjoyed a front-row seat to sports history. It's occurred to him as he sat at a table in Cooperstown with Hank Aaron, Billy Williams and Andre Dawson. Or during one of the many times he's walked 18 holes covering Tiger Woods. Or the first time he was in the same room as the Stanley Cup.

"I consider it an absolute privilege," he says.

That from a guy who's been around Chicago sports most of his life, starting as a vendor at Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, Soldier Field and Chicago Stadium. That continuing weekend and summer income helped convince him to attend close-by NIU. His major went from business to computer science and finally to journalism - which was what he wanted to do all along.

"I had always heard there was no way to make a living in journalism," he says. "But I talked to my parents and they said I should do what I wanted to do."

That included getting a reporting job at the Northern Star. "Of anything I did at Northern, the time I spent at the Star was the most important," he says. "It was the foundation of my journalism skills. There was so much teaching that went on there."

Then, out of the blue, NIU athletic administrator and former football coach Jerry Ippoliti called Barry and offered him a chance to write, edit and produce Huskie Herald, an NIU sports magazine.

"It was a chance to write sports," he says. "There were no openings at the Star in sports and it didn't appear that there would be in the next year. So I took it. How my name was presented to him, to this day I do not know."

That work led to a part-time sports job after graduation at the Elgin Courier News, which in turn led to a sports job at the expanding Daily Herald in 1985. In late 1989 the Herald offered Barry the Chicago Cubs beat. He held that spot until 1997, when he took on the column that he continues writing today.

Along the way, Barry wrote books with Ryne Sandberg and Steve Stone, and even has quietly written a couple of Baseball Hall of Fame induction speeches.

"I work very hard," he says, "but I try to take a moment to remember how lucky I am. I'm sitting there at the Super Bowl as Devin Hester is returning the opening kickoff for a touchdown. I'm getting paid to do that.

"It's all a wonderful gift. And it all started with the Northern Star."



**Barry  
Stark**

★  
*Class  
of 1966*



*By  
Barry Schrader*

**B**arry Stark has the distinction of staying around NIU longer than almost any other Northern Star Hall of Famer. Barry spent four years as an undergraduate, then utilized his photography skills to land a job with the NIU News Bureau. He'd carry a camera in DeKalb for the next 29 years.

He did take a four-year leave to enter the U.S. Air Force, where he worked as a weather observer at Forbes Air Force Base in Kansas and then overseas at Soc Trang Army Air Field in Vietnam. But once back at NIU in 1970, Irv Kummerfeldt hired him at the NIU News Bureau. When that office was disbanded in 1972, Barry transferred to the Art Photo Department (now called Media Services) and remained chief photographer there until retiring in 1999.

While an undergraduate, Barry had joined both The Northern yearbook staff and the Northern Star as photographer and cartoonist.

"I learned the power of the press," he says. "One of my cartoons, the Russell Road pothole pathos, caused people to send copies of the cartoon to the mayor and the road got repaired ... somewhat. Later, it was republished when the problem came up again and the city finally took action and repaved all of Russell Road."

Barry's photography was widely distributed throughout the nation in connection with NIU and his exhibits have been seen over the years on campus, at the Norris Gallery in St. Charles, College of DuPage and Gallery 200 in West Chicago. The awards have been many, including from the Illinois Press Association and from Communication Arts Magazine.

Since retiring, Barry has kept busy as a photo instructor at the College of DuPage, and also takes on numerous freelance assignments for Chicago area corporate clients, magazines and nonprofits.

"I still use a modified version of Hallie Hamilton's syllabus," he says. "Hallie's class helped me with my Star assignments, and I still teach my students the same principles today. Had it not been for my Star experience, I may have gone an entirely different direction in my life and not been as satisfied as I feel today."

Barry's sideline work as editorial cartoonist for the Press-Republican newspapers and Liberty Newspapers spanned 20 years, from 1983 to 2003. His outside interests include golf, aviation history and even a fountain pen and vintage pencils collection. He and Anne, his wife of 41 years, have a son, Brett, who is married and lives in Colorado.

★ 2011 Young Alumni Award ★

Marcus Leshock didn't set out to become an entertainment journalist.

"I don't know if I ever really decided," he said. "It just kind of happened. I always loved entertainment. I always knew that I wanted to write about films and music and the arts. I just really love telling those stories."

That passion brought Marcus both to the Northern Star and to Northern Television Center while attending NIU. He admits today that he approached Allen May, NTC's general manager of broadcast news, "on a whim." Several years and two Emmy awards later, Leshock has become one of Chicago's leading entertainment journalists, and the recipient of this year's Northern Star Outstanding Young Alumni award.

The Schaumburg native earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in communications at NIU, while working as a writer and editor for the Star's Weekender section and as a film critic with NTC. He took full advantage of NIU's proximity to Chicago, attending critics' screenings with the likes of Roger Ebert and Richard Roeper.

Leshock's professional career began in 2005, while still working toward his master's. Chicago-land Television (CLTV), a division of Tribune Co.,

was impressed with his work at NTC and the Star, and offered him a correspondent position for its Metromix program. He was hired full-time after six months, and within about a year he was asked to take over the show's hosting duties. Then, in 2009, he became a feature reporter for superstation WGN-TV.

That same year, Marcus was recognized for his contributions to television, winning local Emmy awards for his work on CLTV and for his recaps of "American Idol." He refers to the experience as "surreal."

"I really never thought I would be in television," he says. "Here I am, accepting these awards and looking out on all of the people in Chicago television that I had grown up watching, and here they are looking at me and listening to what I'm saying."

While he admits that being lauded for his achievements at such a young age did put some pressure on him to reach further, Marcus says he's content working at WGN and continuing to tell the stories that drew him to journalism in the first place.

"It's a fun job," he said. "I want people to turn on the news every day and say, 'Hey, I would love to do that.'"



**Marcus Leshock**

★  
Class  
of 2003/05



By  
Connor Rice

★ "Schmoozefest" Weekend 2011 ★



Kevin Sheldon and Caron Weil Blitz honor Jerry Thompson.



The group enjoyed Saturday breakfast at The Junction restaurant.



NIU provided a bus tour of the campus.



Ron and Jolene Kremer chat with Maria Krull.

Northern Star Alumni  
Campus Life Building, Suite 130  
Dekalb, IL 60115



# Telescope

The Newsletter for Northern Star Alumni

2011 ISSUE INSIDE

Save the Date!  
**Schmoozefest 2**

Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012

Watch your email  
and the Northern Star  
Alumni Facebook page

