



Fall 2026

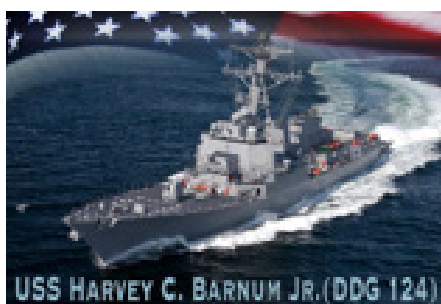


# Message from Kate Cellucci

## BWSF Executive Director



Did you miss me? I have missed all of you! So much has happened in the Spring and Summer. Our big fundraiser, "Casino Night" in May was a great success (Pictures on page 17) and we had fantastic candidates apply for scholarships, but my greatest joy was the opportunity to meet many of you in person this spring and summer including going to the United States Navy ship commissioning of the USS Harvey "Barney" Barnum. The invitation came through VU alumni and U.S. Marine Ed Fitzmaurice '62 who served in the Vietnam war. "Fitz"



served as a pilot and trained or fought alongside "Barney" Barnum and fellow Villanova alumni and U.S. Marines: David Breen '62, Deacon William (Bill) Finnegan '62, Jan Garigliano '62, William (Bill) Hussey '62, Stan Moore '62 and Harry Tucci '62. Most of the gang met both in the Fall in Philadelphia for the 250th birthday of the Marines and in April in Norfolk Virginia for the commissioning of the USS Harvey C. Barnum, Jr. The ship, is an Arleigh Burke-class guided

missile destroyer named after Medal of Honor recipient, USMC Col. Harvey Curtiss "Barney" Barnum Jr. The ship ( See pictures below and page 17) honors Barnum's gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life beyond the call of duty during the Vietnam War. On Dec. 18, 1965, then 1st Lt. Barnum assumed command of his company after the commander was mortally wounded. With two armed helicopters under his control, he moved fearlessly through deadly fire to lead air attacks against the enemy's well-entrenched positions while directing one platoon in a successful counterattack on key positions. Having cleared a small area, he requested and directed the landing of two transport helicopters to evacuate the deceased and wounded. He then assisted in seizing the battalion's objective. Below is a picture, left to right, of U.S. Navy Adm. James W. Kilby, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, The USMC Commandant, Gen. Eric M. Smith, and Col. Barnum at the commissioning.



During the summer I was invited to the home of Kathleen and Gerry Franceski who opened their hearts with an incredibly generous donation of \$36,873. These kind of extraordinary gifts insure that the Foundation's mission will continue far into the future and benefit generations of deserving Villanova students. Thank you Gerry and Kathleen!

I began this school year as a proud adopted parent of our Blue White Scholars. Jack Ferry '27 on his first

day with me as one of my three interns told me about his fraternity honoring the men and women who died on Sept. 11, 2001( See back cover ) and new scholar Gabby Silva '28 kicked off the Student Nursing Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP) by hosting a guest who taught the student nurses about Ovarian Cancer and the non-profit foundation "Teal Toes". Teal Toes was started by Ed Fitzaurice's daughter "Carey" in 2007. Their mission at Teal Toes is to raise awareness about ovarian cancer by getting teal colored pedicures. Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer:  
\*Bloating that is persistent  
\*Eating less and feeling fuller  
\*Abdominal pain  
\*Trouble with your bladder  
Early diagnosis dramatically improves outcomes and saves lives. Experts suggest a combination pelvic/rectal exam, a transvaginal ultrasound, and a CA-125 blood test. More to come on this topic by Abby Golembiewski '27 who worked this summer at Fujirebio on a blood test for Ovarian cancer.

**Go 'Cats!!**

*Kate*



**This salon is raising  
ovarian cancer  
awareness.**

# Gift Letter from Gerald B. and Kathleen Franceski

## *Why We Give*

My wife and I recently made a special gift to the Blue and White Scholarship Fund. Kate asked me to share a brief note about why we support this mission. Quite simply, we believe in the importance of paying it forward. I graduated from Villanova in 1965, and although I have been fortunate in life, I believe hard work and dedication contributed to my success as much as my degree. I loved Villanova and the time I spent there.

## *A Longstanding Connection*

I have supported Blue and White since it was first established as the Wildcat Club more than 40 years ago. The club was started by Robert Capone, a friend and member of the football team. Unfortunately, the University later wanted to control the funds and withdrew its support of the club. Shortly after that, Bob became very ill, and Kate Cellucci, who was an attorney, stepped in to keep the mission active. At the time, the club had very few resources, and it took a great deal of hard work to keep it going.

## *Kate's Leadership and the Scholarship Mission*

Today, the club is stronger than ever because of Kate's determination and hard work. She has instilled that same spirit in the scholarship recipients. During my time on the Scholarship Committee, I was deeply impressed by the quality of the applicants. Their achievements are a tribute to the caliber of students Villanova attracts, as well as to the support of their families.

## *The Value of the Scholarship Experience*

I am especially impressed by the scholarship requirements, which ask students to work while continuing their studies. In many ways, I believe being part of this organization teaches them lessons that are as valuable as anything they might learn in an individual class.

## *Looking Ahead*

I wish you all the best in your future endeavors, and I simply ask that you remember to pay it forward.





**Matthew  
Dickerson '26**

**Hometown:**  
Broomall, PA

**Major:**  
Electrical Engineering

#### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

- Radar Lab Research Assistant
- Kids Against Hunger United
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)

#### **Career Aspirations**

- After graduating from Villanova, I hope to work in either the defense or biomedical industry and design systems to protect others or improve their quality of life.

#### **Favorite Quote**

- “If there is no struggle, there is no progress” – Frederick Douglass

#### **How the Blue White Scholarship is Helping Me**

- Due to my financial situation, I have funded my education by taking out loans and working multiple jobs both during the school year and over breaks. With the Blue White Scholarship, I will be able to better manage the expenses of college while also having more time to focus on my education and extra-curriculars.

#### **Extraordinary Circumstances:**

- Due to health and medical issues, my family has been financially burdened with many medical bills, including indefinitely reoccurring medical supply costs, as well as job and lifestyle changes. With my sister graduating from college a few years ago with a large amount of student loan debt, I have tried to pay for my education as much as possible without having to further burden my family. I have worked multiple jobs and internships at any given time both over the summer and during the school year to help fund my Villanova education.

#### **Jobs I've Worked to Help Pay for School**

- Grocery Associate at Giant Food Stores
- Dining Hall Staff at Bryn Mawr College
- House Manager for Mullen Center for Performing Arts
- Intern for Monroe Energy
- Intern for Naval Service Warefare Center



**George  
Georgelis '26**

**Hometown:**  
Queens, NY

**Major:**  
Applied Quantitative  
Finance

#### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

- Wildcat Fund Portfolio Manager
- Society of Actuaries Treasurer & Social Media Chair
- Hellenic Student Association Co-President
- Villanova Leadership Program Operations Director
- Challenge Course Facilitator

#### **Career Aspirations**

- I want to become an actuary, utilizing my love of mathematics and applying my skillset to a field that can be beneficial for others through insurance.

#### **Favorite Quote**

- “Compromise where you can, but where you can’t – don’t. Even if everyone is telling you that something wrong is something right. Even if the whole world is telling you to move, it is your duty to plant yourself like a tree, look them in the eye, and say, ‘No. YOU move.’”  
– Captain America: Civil War

#### **How the Blue White Scholarship is Helping Me**

- This scholarship is helping my family and I to pay for my Villanova tuition, reducing the amount of money I need to take out in loans and alleviating any financial stress and/or concerns my family and I had. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity, and I thank the foundation and the donors from the bottom of my heart for this.

#### **Jobs I've Worked to Help Pay for School**

- Co-founded Storage Scholars LLC.
- Worked as a Financial Intern for the New York City Mayor's Office of Contract Services



## **Carlos Morales Portalatin '26**

### **Hometown:**

St. Thomas, USVI

### **Major:**

Computer Science

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

- Wildcat Crossing Committee
- WISE Executive Board Member (Working to Be Informed, Studious, and Engaged)
- Tutoring Assistant (Computing Sciences Department)
- NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers)
- Intramural Sports (Basketball, Soccer)

### **Career Aspirations**

- I aspire to be a Front-End Software Developer working on innovative technologies to aid in the advancement of education accessibility and learning experiences.

### **Favorite Quote**

- "Success isn't always about greatness. It's about consistency. Consistent hard work leads to success. Greatness will come." – Dwayne Johnson

### **How the Blue White Scholarship is Helping Me**

- Since I am majorly responsible for paying for my education this scholarship is going to significantly relieve the financial stress. In turn this, will allow me to better immerse myself into my college life both academically and socially without the constant burden of financial concerns.

### **Extraordinary Circumstances**

- My father, who is legally blind and diabetic, has been unemployed since the pandemic first hit. The income he receives from disability benefits mostly goes towards his expensive medications, leaving little left over for other needs, including my education. Adding to this, my mother works as a self-employed taxi driver, but her income fluctuates greatly from day to day. This variability makes it challenging to budget for educational expenses consistently.

### **Jobs I've Worked to Help Pay for School**

- VU Computing Sciences Teaching Assistant
- VU Computing Sciences Office Assistant
- VU Computing Sciences Research Assistant



## **Andrew Weirzchon '26**

### **Hometown:**

Wauconda, IL

### **Major:**

Chemical Engineering

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

- NOVAdance Committee
- CEER PEERS
- Tutoring in Learner's Studio
- Club Lacrosse
- RUIBAL

### **Career Aspirations**

- Drug development and research

### **Favorite Quote**

- "To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world". -Dr. Suess

### **How the Blue White Scholarship is Helping Me**

- The Blue White Scholarship is helping me because I am the one paying for my college education and coming from a middle class family it doesn't show that I need much financial support and therefore did not receive financial aid. So by receiving this aid from the Blue White Scholarship allows me to worry less about my financial situation and I'm able to focus more on my academic studies.

### **Jobs I've Worked to Help Pay for School**

- Primrose School of Long Grove Support Staff
- Blue White Intern (Two Years)

# Congratulations!



Angela Choi '26  
Political Science - Dec '26



Dominic Cipriani '27  
Mechanical Engineering



Ethan Cook '27  
Economics



Hannah D'cruz '26  
Nursing - Dec '26



Marina DiCristofaro '28  
Accounting '28



Lauren Eidman '27  
Nursing '27



Jack Ferry '27  
Accounting & Finance



Abigail Golembiewski '27  
Biochemistry



Jesse Krinetz '27  
Statistics

# Welcome Our New 2026-2027 Blue White Scholars!!!



Owen Niles '27  
Finance



Eamon O'Brien '28  
Accounting



Jack Orendac '27  
Computer Engineering



Charles Power '27  
Computer Engineering



Gabriella Silva '28  
Nursing



Our 2026-2027 Blue White Scholars will be attending the Benjamin Franklin "Pay it Forward" ceremony at Overbrook Golf Club on the Sunday of Parent's Weekend (September 27, 2026). Our Benjamin Franklin reenactor, Barry Stevens, will be joining us to celebrate the students embracing Franklin's concept of extending a good deed far into the future.

# Spotlight: Carlos Morales Portalatin -Computer Science



One of the most iconic and influential games I've ever experienced is Super Mario Bros. What began as a simple side-scrolling platformer became the foundation of modern gaming and a symbol recognized across the world. Developed by Nintendo and released in 1985 for the Nintendo Entertainment System, Super Mario Bros. introduced players to the Mushroom Kingdom, where tight controls, imaginative level design, and a sense of constant discovery defined the experience. With a clear goal, save Princess Peach, Mario transformed jumping into an art form and gameplay into something intuitive, fun, and endlessly replayable.

What makes Mario truly remarkable is how the series has evolved while staying true to its core. From Super Mario World and Super Mario 64 to Galaxy, Odyssey, and Wonder, each generation reimaged what a Mario game could be while preserving the same joy and accessibility that defined the original. Mario didn't just adapt to new technology; it often led the way, showing how 3D movement, physics, and level design could feel natural and exciting. Beyond games, Mario became a cultural icon, appearing in cartoons, movies, merchandise, and even theme parks, cementing his place in global pop culture.

On a personal level, Mario has always felt like an invitation into creativity and play. I remember sitting in front of the TV, controller in hand, attempting the same level over and over, not out of frustration, but determination. Every hidden block, secret warp pipe, and unexpected shortcut made the world feel alive and rewarding. Playing Mario taught me patience, persistence, and the joy of mastering something through practice. The games were simple to pick up, yet deep enough to keep me engaged for years. Mario also inspired my interest in game design. The way each level subtly teaches the player, without words, how to jump, run, and overcome obstacles is a masterclass in intuitive design. Mario showed me that great games don't need complex stories to be meaningful; they need thoughtful mechanics, clever environments, and a sense

of wonder. Every coin collected and flagpole reached reinforced how powerful good design can be.

Looking ahead, I see the future of gaming continuing to blend innovation with accessibility, much like Mario has always done. As technology advances through AR, VR, and AI, the heart of great games will still be fun, creativity, and connection. As an aspiring game developer, I hope to create experiences that capture the same magic Mario gave me, games that are welcoming, memorable, and capable of bringing joy to players of all ages, just as Mario has done for generations.

## Mario Trivia

**1. In which 1981 arcade game did Mario make his very first video game appearance under the name "Jumpman"?**

A. Donkey Kong B Super Mario Bros. C. Mario Bros. Answer: Mario originally appeared as "Jumpman," a carpenter trying to rescue his girlfriend Pauline from a runaway ape in Donkey Kong.

**2. In what year did Mario's green-clad brother, Luigi, make his debut in the arcade game Mario Bros.?**

A. 1981 B. 1983 C. 1985 D. 1988 Answer: Luigi made his debut as a palette-swapped player two in the 1983 arcade title Mario Bros.

**3. Instead of traditional level-clearing flagpoles, what primary collectible item must Mario gather to progress and face Bowser in Super Mario 64?**

A. Shine Spirits B. Moon Orbs C. Power Stars Answer: Collecting Power Stars opens new rooms and worlds within Princess Peach's castle.

**4. What was Princess Peach's original name in the North American localizations of early games like the original Super Mario Bros.?**

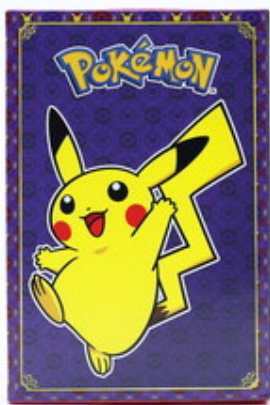
A. Princess Peach B. Princess Daisy C. Princess Mushroom D. Princess Toadstool.

Answer: Princess Peach was known as Princess Toadstool in the West until her name was officially aligned with Japan starting in the mid-90s.

**5. What official species is Mario's archenemy, Bowser. Classified as in the series lore?**

A. Koopa B. Goomba C. Dragon D. Shy Guy Answer: Bowser is the king of the Koopas, a turtle-like race

# Carlos Morales Portalatin -Aspiring Game Developer



One of the most exciting and influential games I've ever encountered is Pokémon. What started as a simple RPG about collecting creatures has evolved into a global phenomenon spanning decades, cultures, and generations. Originally launched in Japan in 1996 by Game Freak and published by Nintendo, Pokémon quickly captured imaginations with

its core gameplay: catch, train, and battle. The original titles, Pokémon Red and Green, introduced players to a world of strategy, adventure, and friendship, all built around an expanding ecosystem of creatures and a spirit of exploration.

What's remarkable is how Pokémon grew from a Game Boy title to a multimedia empire, with trading cards, an anime series, movies, merchandise, and now mobile and console games like Pokémon GO and Legends: Arceus. When the game launched internationally, it didn't just cross borders, it united players of all ages and backgrounds through a shared sense of wonder.

As someone passionate about technology and creativity, Pokémon inspires me on a deeper, more personal level. I still remember tuning in every evening at 5PM after school to watch the Pokémon series on my old, static-filled TV, moments which felt magical, like I was entering another world whenever I tuned in. I first played Pokémon Red on my big brother's Game Boy, and I was instantly hooked. Later, I spent countless hours exploring the Sinnoh region in Pokémon Pearl and Platinum on my Nintendo DS. To me these games weren't just entertainment, they were a huge part of my childhood, sparking my curiosity and love for interactive worlds. Pokémon is a powerful example of how storytelling, design, and interactivity can come together to shape not only entertainment but culture. It's also a model of how games can evolve without losing their essence—staying relevant through innovation while preserving their core identity.

Looking ahead, I see the gaming industry continuing to merge with immersive technologies like AR, VR, and AI. The next generation of games will go beyond screens, they'll be experiences that blend the digital and real world seamlessly. As an aspiring game developer, I want to be part of that future. I want to build experiences that are not just fun, but meaningful games that teach, connect, and inspire. Maybe one day, I'll develop a game that brings the same sense of adventure and joy that Pokémon gave me.

## Pokemon Trivia

### Questions:

1. What does the word 'Pokemon,' an abbreviation of the Japanese term 'poketto monsuta,' mean?
2. Which Pokemon has the ability "Static"?
3. What is the only pokemon with a dual fire/water type?
4. What is the first Pokemon ever created?
5. What is the evolution of Charmeleon?
6. Which legendary Pokemon can teleport?
7. What is the name of Ash Ketchum's first pokemon?
8. Which Pokemon is famous for its ability to create Black Holes?
9. Which Pokemon can evolve into five different forms, depending on the method?
10. Who is the creator of Pokemon?
11. What is the maximum level a Pokemon can reach?
12. What is the first Pokemon movie created?
13. What type of Pokemon is Pikachu?
14. Which Pokemon is known as the Guardian of the Seas?



### Answers:

1. Pocket Monsters (encapsulates the essence of the Pokemon series, where creatures are captured and stored in compact Poke Balls - small enough to fit in a pocket)
2. Pikachu (symbolizes its capability to discharge electricity when threatened or attacked)
3. Volcanion (signature move "Steam Eruption," This attack has a high chance of scolding its opponents)
4. Rhydon
5. Charizard (evolves into Charizard, who is known for its fiery breath and ability to fly)
6. Mewtwo
7. Pikachu (Pikachu is not only Ash's first Pokemon but also his most trusted and iconic partner throughout his adventures in the Pokemon world)
8. Giratina (known for its association with the Distortion World and its ability to control antimatter)
9. Eevee (Eevee can evolve into five different forms: Vaporeon, Jolteon, Flareon, Espeon, and Umbreon)
10. Satoshi Tajiri
11. 100
12. The First Movie Mewtwo Strikes Back
13. Electric
14. Lugia (known for its ability to control storms)

# Spotlight: George Georgelis -A Career in Quantitative Finance



One of my earliest academic memories is my dad teaching me how to add and subtract. He was always very keen on making sure my sister and I understood basic math. As I got older, he would give us both blank timetables that we had to fill in every day to memorize basic multiplication. Driving to school every morning, he would randomly ask what's  $9 \times 8$  or what's  $7 \times 4$  for instance. These are not only some of my earliest academic memories, but they are also my earliest memories involving my favorite school subject: math. Math throughout elementary and middle school was always my best subject grade wise, but also the class I would look forward to the most every day. I always found myself going ahead in textbooks just to learn the next topic out of curiosity alone. This continued to high school, where my love for the subject continued to flourish. I always made sure I was taking the highest and most difficult math class at my level, and I strived to excel in them every single time. During my senior year of high school, instead of taking a science course (since science was never my favorite subject), I asked my guidance counselor if I could take two math courses instead. She had

told me it was not recommended, but she trusted me to take them. I took both AP Calculus and AP Statistics during the same year, and I loved every second of it. I was lucky enough to receive AP credits for both classes that I used at Villanova, and one of my biggest accomplishments was receiving the math award at my high school's graduation. This award was given to the top three students in the subject in my graduating class of around 600 students. To this day, I am extremely proud of myself for achieving this.

When applying for colleges, I did not



know what career path I wanted to pursue, but I knew that it needed to involve math. I did not want to major solely in mathematics because I wanted to pursue a major where math was being applied to a broader field of study. When applying to Villanova, I applied to the School of Business honestly because I heard accounting had some math in it, but I went in very blind. No one in my family works in business or accounting or finance, so I honestly did not know what I was getting myself into.

When I started my freshman year at Villanova, I quickly learned about the Applied Quantitative Finance program. Here, I would be able to study a field that I was somewhat interested in, but I could also take the advanced math and statistics classes I wanted to

take. It even included some computer science classes, which I was also very interested in. Therefore, I made it a goal of mine during my freshman year to be accepted in the program, and I was extremely happy when I was.

The next step though was figuring out what career path I wanted to pursue. I originally wanted to find a very quantitative and technical role within the broader world of finance, but after applying and being rejected to those internships for summer 2025, I started applying to some actuarial internships as well. Some people had recommended actuary as a potential career path for myself due to my love of math, but I hadn't looked too much into it. I started applying for actuarial internships, and I was fortunate enough to be accepted as an Actuarial Summer Analyst at Verita CSG, Inc. through its parent company WTW's Corporate Risk and Broking division. Working in this role confirmed to me that this was the career path I wanted to pursue.

My entire academic journey and the beginning of my professional journey all lead back to my love for mathematics, and I have no doubt my love for the subject will continue to grow in the coming future.



# Spotlight: George Georgelis Film

One of my biggest passions outside of academics and my career is film. I am known as the “movie guy” to all my friends and family. Ever since I was a child, going to the movie theater was a magical experience for me, and it is something I always try to incorporate into my life. I love going to Bryn Mawr Film Institute theater near Villanova’s campus whenever I can as a way to decompress myself from the stress that comes from being a college



student and to catch every new film release available of course. Some of my earliest memories involve film. I vividly remember watching the first entry in arguably my favorite movie series of all time, Toy Story, for the first time in my old house’s basement because my mom bought the DVD since she thought I would like the movie. After that, I was hooked and Toy Story became my favorite thing ever – so I was beyond excited to hear about a third movie coming out in theaters in 2010. While my love for movies with Toy Story and other Pixar movies started to grow, my love for movie theaters was not there yet. Even though my father tells me he brought me to the

cinema beforehand, watching Toy Story 3 in theaters opening day in June of 2010 is my earliest memory of watching something in a movie theater... and I will never forget it. My other earliest memory of going to the movie theater when I was young was seeing my first action movie, my first superhero movie, and my first PG-13 movie in theaters: Iron Man 2. I vividly remember going with my dad and my older cousin who was visiting

from Greece at the time. I actually also remember crying at the theater, so my dad had to unfortunately leave early with my 5-year-old self. However, I remember making it a point to try and sit through the whole movie when it came out on DVD at

home, which I later did. This movie ignited my love for superhero and comic book media which coincides nicely with my love for film.

As I grew older, my love only got stronger. Once I learned how to use the Internet, I would look up movie trailers and see when new movies would release so I could tell my parents. I have so many memories of watching so many different kinds of movies with different people in my life throughout elementary school, middle school, high school, and now in college too. Watching a new movie in theaters almost serves as a mental note for me to remember certain months and certain years growing up.

Wanting to express my love for

this art form in a unique way, in March of 2023, I started a blog called TheFilmG where I would write reviews on new film releases. I started with my review of Creed III, and my site would grow to over 2,000 views. I unfortunately am not as active on it as I was in the beginning of college as classes, extracurricular activities, and jobs have gotten in way of it, but one thing I make sure to do on the blog every year is to predict the nominations and then winners of the annual Academy Awards (the Oscars). This is one of my favorite things to do because it combines my analytical and mathematical brain from academia with my passion for film. I tend to be correct around 80% of the time with both nominations and winners, which I see as very impressive. All in all, I love movies, going to the cinema, analyzing themes with narratives, following the news of the entertainment industry, and predicting awards nominees and winners. It is a big part of who I am, so I thought it would be perfect to express it in my spotlight.



# Spotlight: Andrew Wierzchon Brewing Homemade Beer



This past semester, I was lucky enough to be able to get into one of the most coveted Chemical Engineering elective classes, Brewing! This was a very involved course where we learned about the history of beer and how it came to be one of the most popular beverages across the entire world. As well as learning about the nitty gritty sciences behind the different steps of the brewing process and why and how certain approaches are taken. Learning about all of that was pretty cool, however, the biggest attraction of this class was the fact that we get to brew your own beer.

My friends and I were able to form up a group and over



the course of a few weeks, got the opportunity to brew a batch of beer completely from scratch. We first started by going out and purchasing the ingredients needed for our beer, mainly a mixture of different types of malt grains that we would use to get our beer flavor and color. We then took those malt grains, and boiled and mashed them in order to extract as much of the flavor out of the malt as possible. This would give us the best tasting beer profile.

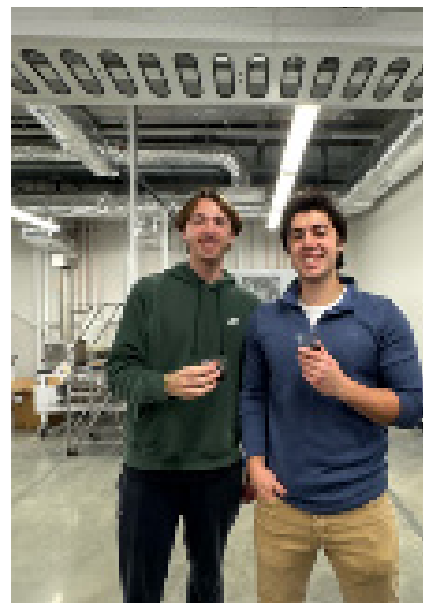


We then filtered the liquid we had created and then continued to rinse the remaining malt grains with hot water to extract even more liquid out of them. Finally, that was all boiled once again and we added hops to give the beer a desirable aroma profile and a slight hop flavor.

Once that had been completed, the next step was to add yeast into our beer to turn the beer alcoholic. Since currently the beer does not have any alcohol in it, the yeast will undergo alcoholic fermentation where it will use compound in the beer to reproduce and produce alcohol as a side

product. We let our beer ferment for a couple of weeks in order to reach an estimated alcohol percent by volume of roughly 5% which is around a typical store-bought beer.

After finishing fermentation, all that was left was to bottle and carbonate our beer. We did this through adding sugar to the beer which would naturally carbonate the beer in the bottles. So we bottled up all of the beer and ended up producing a staggering 44 bottles which was really incredible to be able to produce in class. We ended the semester by getting to taste test all of the beers brewed by the different groups in our class. This was super fun as we got to see how everyone did and all of the cool steps and processes they used to try and produce the best beer they could. And the best part was, we then each got to take the bottles home and share it with our friends and family. All the people who I shared my bottles with loved it and wished that I had more to share with them. So overall I'd say this was a huge success and the most fun I've ever had in a class at college and would totally recommend it to anyone else who could take it.



# Spotlight: Andrew Wierzchon NOVAdance

Every single day 46 kids are diagnosed with pediatric cancer within the United States. This number is absolutely astounding that the youngest and most vulnerable members of society are experiencing the worst horrors of life at such a young age. At Villanova, I have gotten the opportunity to do something about that and make differences in the lives of these children and their families. NOVAdance is a student-run organization on campus that is partnered with the Andrew McDonough B+ Foundation which is the nation's leading provider of financial support to families experiencing pediatric cancer.

My freshman year I found NOVAdance and became involved in the Sidekicks program which is the freshman only chapter of NOVAdance here at Villanova. I instantly fell in love with the mission and purpose and knew that this was something I wanted to continue in the future. At the end of that year, I applied to become a member of the NOVAdance committee which helps to plan and run the entire organization and events throughout the year which led up to the Day of Dance Marathon, a 12-hour fundraiser culminating all we achieved during the year. I was blessed to receive a position on committee for my sophomore year to be one of the



Sidekicks leaders. I couldn't wait to start in my new role and help to introduce the newest class of Villanova students to the NOVAdance family.

That summer, I worked to help get ready for the upcoming school year and plan out informational events and recruitment meetings. Along with my two other leaders, the three of us came back to school and for the first month of the year had meet and greets, info sessions, and events across campus to introduce freshman to NOVAdance. Needless to say, the hard work we'd put in was a massive success and we had the largest Sidekicks class ever of almost 140 freshmen who were ready to become a part of NOVAdance. Every week during the school year, on Monday nights, I helped to lead our Sidekicks meetings to help introduce the freshmen to NOVAdance and the world of pediatric cancer.

During the school year, the Sidekicks helped to fundraise different student-led events like their Jogathon event that I oversaw. This

was an event held on campus where students ran laps around a mile long course to raise money and awareness for pediatric cancer. The Day of the Dance Marathon was one of my favorite days ever seeing everyone on campus come together to support pediatric cancer and our B+ heroes. The B+ heroes are children currently going through pediatric cancer or are in remission and are paired with other groups on campus. We have 17 B+ heroes, and they come to the marathon and show off their skills and have the chance to live their lives like children who can worry about their diagnoses.

Finally, at the end of the night, we get to see the final reveal of what we had raised the entire year and everything that we had worked towards. The most special moment of the night was seeing those numbers being raised and learning that we had raised over \$700,000, the largest amount ever in NOVAdance history. And the group I led, the Sidekicks, also achieved a new fundraising record of contributing almost \$90,000 to that final total. That's a moment that I will never forget in my entire life and I'm excited to continue to be a part of the NOVAdance committee and set our goals to even higher heights as we fight against pediatric cancer.



# Spotlight: Matt Dickerson Choosing Electrical Engineering



From a young age, I always knew I wanted to be an engineer. I enjoyed learning about how things worked, and I would always try to figure out how to fix things that were broken. However, as I came closer to applying to colleges and graduating high school, I initially had no idea which branch of engineering was right for me. In looking back on my decision to pursue a Villanova engineering degree, I have realized a few different events in my life led me to majoring in electrical engineering at Villanova. From a young age, I was particularly interested in prosthetics that leveraged

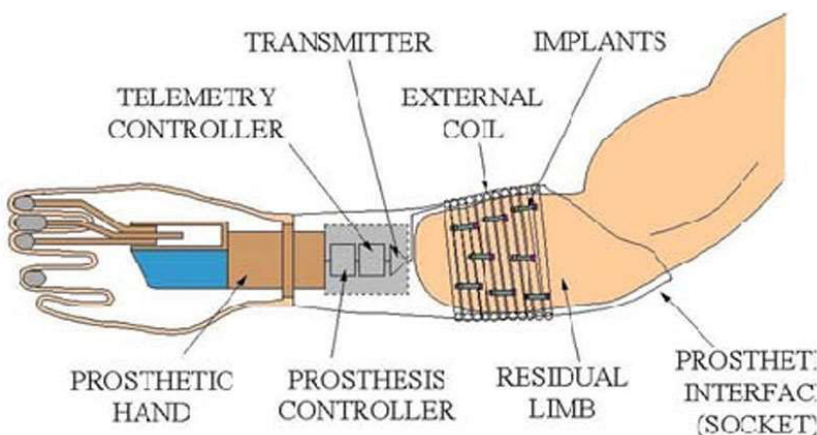
myoelectric controls and implants that stimulated the spinal cord of paralyzed individuals. Seeing how beneficial these technologies were to amputees as well as those with paralysis, I investigated how I could join the cutting edge of developing these devices, which ultimately pushed me to major in electrical engineering.

When I was in fourth grade, I sustained a truly life changing injury during school. When playing on the swing set during recess, the top of my pinky was amputated by getting caught in the metal chain. While recovering from and learning to live with an amputation, I became curious of how other amputees were able to still live their lives to the best of their abilities. I was amazed at how much of an effect my small amputation had on how I operated on a daily basis. In researching cases of amputees, I was equally amazed with the number of individuals who had sustained worse injuries than I had, and how they were still able to

maintain a quality lifestyle. The main reason for the success of these amputees was prosthetics. From that moment on, I dove deep into the world of prosthetics, learning all that I could about how they were made, how different types can be utilized for different conditions, and most importantly how they could be improved.

Electrical engineering principles can be applied to various industries, from energy and power systems to integrated chip development. However, I was always personally drawn to the field of biomedical engineering, as I am fascinated by using devices and developing technologies to create a higher quality of life for those in need. Seeing how beneficial these technologies were to amputees as well as those with paralysis, I investigated how I could join the cutting edge of developing these devices, which ultimately pushed me to major in electrical engineering.

As an electrical engineer, I am now



able to work in the biomedical industry to utilize electrical signals to influence the movement of prosthetic devices. As a freshman, I was accepted to the Match Research Program in which I was able to study how these technologies work, building a robotic arm controlled by a circuit board and microcontroller that could be reprogrammed.

I have also been exposed to academic courses that have strengthened my interest and understanding of the biomedical field. I have recently completed coursework in biomedical instrumentation and biomedical device technology that expanded my knowledge of how medical devices measure important biological signals, and how they are designed to be safe, effective, and efficient.

Now, as a senior, I have been given the opportunity to work part-time with Jefferson's Center for Neurorestoration, a research center dedicated to developing medical devices that positively impact the lives of those with neurological conditions. During my time with Jefferson, I hope to contribute to their live-changing work, helping to develop and build these solutions to improve the quality of life for those who truly deserve it.

While I have since become interested in pursuing the aerospace and defense industry, I still am very interested in the advancement of these devices, and I continue to stay up to date with new research studies, publications, and inventions that progress the field and, most importantly, improve the quality of life of individuals with amputations or other physical disabilities.

## Spotlight: Matt Dickerson Internship with the Government



I have been able to work in the defense industry, developing solutions for our country's military and defense organizations. I worked for the Navy as an intern with the Naval Surface Warfare Center in the Navy Yard. This internship introduced me to a style of government work that is very rare to be able to experience as an undergraduate student. I specifically was able to contribute to real projects that supported our U.S. Navy and gave our sailors the best advantages and materials to protect and serve our country. I also gained insights on how business was conducted on a government level, and how to communicate ideas to build innovative solutions. Above is a picture of me in front of an aircraft carrier that was docked temporarily at the Navy Yard. I am very appreciative of the skills that I learned and the mentors that I gained while at the Navy Yard, as both have helped me to become a better engineer. I have also worked

for the Department of Defense in a slightly different capacity. I was able to obtain an internship at the Penn State Applied Research Laboratory. This gave me insight into the operations of a defense company, through a University Affiliated Research Center, or UARC. There are quite a few UARCs across the country that serve as government contractors for the DoD. Institutes such as Penn State, Johns Hopkins, and MIT have these research centers that are sponsored by the DoD, with Penn State specifically receiving most of its contracts from the Navy. I gained great mentors as well that are continually helping me to improve professionally.

While I may not be able to discuss the projects that I have worked on, I am still very grateful for these opportunities to get hands-on experience in the defense industry. I hope that with all of this great knowledge, I will be able to join the workforce and immediately use my skills to create a direct and lasting impact that will help protect and serve our troops and our country.

# Villanova Alumni and Marine Corps Veterans at the Commissioning of the USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr (DDG-124)

Shown Below: Members of the Villanova University Class of 1962 attending the Commissioning Ceremony of the USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG-124) on April 11, 2026, along with the ship's namesake, Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient, Harvey "Barney" Barnum Jr. Pictured in the top row from the left to right: Ed Fitzmaurice, Jan Garigliano, Harry Tucci, William Hussey, and Joseph Hare. Pictured in the bottom row from the left to right: Harvey "Barney" Barnum and Nancy Spacek.



## US Navy - Villanova ROTC Commissioning Ceremony May 2026

On May 18th, Villanova NROTC commissioned its newest Ensigns and Second Lieutenants into the US Navy and Marine Corps. Our very own President of the Blue White Scholarship Foundation, Rear Admiral Joseph Hare (Ret.), presented a ceremonial sword at the Villanova ROTC Commissioning Ceremony at the Villanova Chapel. Fair winds and following seas to Villanova's graduating officers!



# BW Casino Night Hit the Jackpot!



# News You Can Use: Financially \$peaking

## Don't Waste Your 529

Hopefully, by the end of this article you will better understand the benefits of converting unused 529 plan assets to support your children's or even grandchildren's future, even their retirement.

Over the past 40 years, college tuition rates have increased at a substantially higher rate than inflation. Concerned about these rising costs, states began developing innovative programs to help parents and grandparents save for education. In 1996, 529 plans were officially created by Congress as part of the Small Business Job Protection Act. Section 529 was added to the International Revenue Code to encourage college savings by providing tax-deferred growth on earnings used for qualified higher education expenses. Although state-sponsored prepaid tuition plans began in 1986, 529 plans became widely popular in 2001 when tax-free withdrawals for qualified college expenses were introduced.

Approximately 25 years ago, a client called me from the hospital, overjoyed by the birth of his first grandchild. He wanted to set up a custodial investment account with \$25,000 for his new grandson. I congratulated him and suggested we speak the following week, once things settled down. When we spoke again, I pointed out that since he had four children, he would likely have more than one grandchild, and what he did for one, he might want to do for all. He agreed. Today, he has 13 grandchildren. After discussing various investment options, I suggested opening a 529

plan and contributing annually on each grandchild's birthday and at other special occasions such as Christmas, First Communion, and more. He followed that approach and has contributed uniformly to each account.

The question he and most clients have asked over the years is: What happens if a child or grandchild doesn't use all the funds for qualified education expenses?

As many of you know, 529 plans are a powerful, tax-advantaged college savings tool. However, many families end up with unused funds. This can happen if a beneficiary decides not to attend college, attends at a lower cost than expected, enrolls in a military academy, or receives scholarships.

Fortunately, today's 529 rules offer flexible and tax-efficient options for leftover funds.

### **Change the beneficiary (tax-free)**

The account owner may transfer unused funds to another qualifying family member without triggering taxes or penalties. Eligible beneficiaries include siblings, parents, children, nieces, nephews, cousins, or even yourself.

### **Save the funds for future education**

529 plans have no time limits for withdrawals. Unused funds can remain invested and grow tax-deferred for graduate school, professional programs, community college, or vocational training.

### **Use funds for expanded K-12 education expenses**

Federal rules allow up to \$10,000

per beneficiary annually for K-12 tuition.

### **Cover apprenticeship program costs**

529 funds may be used tax-free for registered apprenticeship programs, including fees, equipment, and supplies. Programs must be registered with the U.S. Department of Labor.

### **Pay down student debt**

The SRCURE 2.0 Act of 2022 allows up to a lifetime amount of \$10,000 per beneficiary to be used tax-free for qualified student loan payments

### **Transfer funds to an ABLE account**

If the beneficiary, or a qualifying family member, has a disability, 529 funds can be transferred to an ABLE account without taxes or penalties. These accounts support long-term financial independence while preserving eligibility for federal disability benefits.

### **Withdraw funds penalty-free for scholarship amounts**

If the beneficiary receives a tax-free scholarship, you may withdraw up to that amount without the 10% penalty. However, income tax on earnings still applies.

### **Take a non-qualified withdrawal (least tax-efficient option)**

You can withdraw leftover funds for any purpose. Keep in mind, the earnings portion will be taxed as ordinary income and subject to a 10% penalty, unless exception applies (such as disability, death, or scholarship).

### **Roll over unused funds to a Roth IRA**

This is a newer and highly valuable option. Beginning in 2024, families can roll over unused 529 assets into a Roth IRA owned by the beneficiary tax- and penalty-free if the following conditions are met:

- Lifetime rollover limit: \$35,000
- Annual limit: subject to Roth IRA contribution limits
- The 529 account must be at least 15 years old
- Funds must have been in the account for at least 5 years
- The beneficiary must have earned income equal to or greater than the rollover amount.
- The rollover must be completed as a direct trustee-to-trustee transfer maintained for the benefit of the beneficiary.

Most families underestimate how flexible 529 plans have become. Today's expanded rules allow unused funds to support education, career development, disability needs, and now even retirement planning. Additionally, you can significantly reduce the value of your taxable estate by funding a 529 plan. Contributions are generally removed from your estate and treated as gifts to the beneficiary. For 2026, the annual gift exclusion is \$19,000 per individual. You may also "front-load" a 529 plan by contributing up to \$95,000 in a single year and averaging the gift over five years without incurring gift taxes. It's truly remarkable how 529 plan rules have evolved. If you have children or grandchildren, consider opening and funding a 529 plan to help secure their future.

**(610)-361-0865**

# Happy Thanksgiving!!

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and the holiday season, the Blue White Scholarship Foundation is incredibly grateful for the generosity of our donors and supporters. Your contributions make a meaningful difference in the lives of our scholarship recipients, helping to ease the financial burden of a Villanova education. Because of your support, our students can spend less time worrying about how they will pay for school and more time embracing all that the Villanova experience has to offer—pursuing their education, building lifelong friendships, participating in the Villanova community, and making memories that will last a lifetime. We are truly thankful for your continued commitment to helping these students thrive.



**Here are some Thanksgiving themed jokes to give you a laugh!:**

**Why did the turkey join the band?** Because it had the drumsticks!

**What did the turkey say after a big meal?** "I'm stuffed!"

**Why did the scarecrow win an award at Thanksgiving?** Because he was outstanding in his field.



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## Students Remembering September 11th

In remembrance of the 2,977 lives lost on September 11, 2001, the brothers of Phi Sigma Kappa came together to climb 110 flights of stairs, honoring the first responders who made that climb 25 years ago. Blue White scholar, Jack Ferry, led the way with his fraternity. We climb so we never forget. Proud to be an American!



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