

## Celebrating Good Character Work

### 20 Years of Wendt Character Scholars

The 20th anniversary of the Wendt Character Initiative offered the chance to celebrate with Character Scholar alumni, current Scholars, and faculty mentors. We came together over breakfast on Homecoming Weekend for reminiscence and community. Alumni from across the years reunited and made new connections.

The Wendt Center created a video of interviews and memories, accessible at [www.dbq.edu/Wendt](http://www.dbq.edu/Wendt) (scroll to the bottom). We also set up a display of the Initiative's highlights over the years, including t-shirts, publications, and photos.



Paula Carlson



Paula Carlson, the Wendt Center's first permanent director from 2006 to 2008, shared her memories of the Character Initiative's first years. It took hard work to begin the programs and to envision how best to help the entire (Continued on p. 3)

### Volleyball Team Plays with C.A.R.E

Behind the scenes during our volleyball team's exciting, winning season, these athletes continued their character work with Anne Funke, Wendt Center representative, striving to be a well team that performs with C.A.R.E.—Compassion, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence. Their sessions together created a space for honesty and vulnerability.

Team members' responses were overwhelmingly positive in the final assessment. They felt their relationships with teammates were strengthened. Several mentioned that their favorite activity was sharing what they admired about each other.



Head Volleyball Coach April Elsbernd attributed much of the season's success to this essential character work. "Utilizing the C.A.R.E. framework of compassion, accountability, respect and excellence as our foundation, this group of young women were able to form deep relationships based on authenticity, trust and love," says Elsbernd. "Winning a conference championship was an exciting and outstanding result, but the culture that was created and maintained is the reason why I feel this season was so special!"

*These sessions helped bind our team so much more. This is truly the closest I've ever felt to my teammates.*

—Volleyball Team Member

# Character on Campus

## Character Behind the Scenes in Advancement/Alumni

Have you ever thought about all the work that goes into putting on a big event such as Homecoming or GradFest? Staff in the Advancement/Alumni Department put extensive care and time into creating masterful experiences and memorable events for the UD community.

Check out these beautiful photos of GradFest!



Taryn Kafer, Director of Scheduling and Event Planning, thoughtfully oversees UD events with an eye to both the big picture and small details.

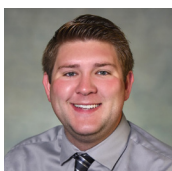
It's all hands on deck, with representatives from Advancement/Alumni, University Relations, UD Dining Service, and more chipping in to make it a great day.

## Character in the Disciplines: Health, Wellness, and Sport

By Josh Thomas and Tyler Ratts



Josh Thomas  
Dept. Chair  
Assoc. Prof. of  
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Tyler Ratts  
Asst. Prof. of  
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Those working in sport encounter people representing diverse backgrounds and experiences. Using character both as a guide in decision-making and during interactions with others cultivates an environment in which individuals from all walks of life can come together and be united behind a common purpose or a shared rooting interest. These actions have wide-reaching impacts and profound effects, which necessitates an approach founded in moral and ethical character.

Throughout the curriculum are opportunities to consider the role that character should play across each segment of the sport industry. From navigating the social issues that exist to effectively leading facilities and events to making timely and necessary financial decisions for a sport organization, courses aim to demonstrate how good character should be a staple in the actions taken by sport professionals. Further, it's important for our students to be able to think critically about evidence and separate the truth from the snake oil. By cultivating this character and providing real-life examples that offer the opportunity to consider how best to proceed in these situations, students are given the space to reflect on moral character and understand its value in shaping sport experiences.

*It is our duty and way to worship God by stewarding our bodies with integrity. We*

*can do this by taking care of them and keeping them healthy and honoring God by the way we use the bodies he gave us. I hope to apply these principles to my career and life.*



—Isaac Hays  
Wendt Character Scholar





## 20 Years of Wendt Character Scholars (continued from p. 1)

campus include character readings and ethics assignments in all programs. Dr. Carlson left UD to ultimately become president at Luther College.

President Bullock received a “Founding Visionary” award for his vision and commitment to founding the Wendt Character Initiative in 2004. He worked with the Wendt family to faithfully help them implement their vision in a way that furthered UD’s *Mission & Values*.

After breakfast, we headed out to join the rest of the Homecoming festivities, hosting a tent at the tailgate. We had a great time with a duck pond memory game and catching up with everyone who stopped by.



## Vocation and Character

Faculty and staff came together in a Wendt discussion group over NetVUE’s campus “Big Read.” They provided the hard copies and we tackled the six feature articles in *Christian Scholar Review*’s theme issue: *Vocation*. Highlights included Nicole L. Johnson’s article, “Liberation From and For: The Vocation of the Educated Person.” She spoke powerfully for the kind of education UD strives to give. The issue included articles aimed at higher education, but also at specific disciplines such as psychology and the sciences.

Anne Funke, Director of World View Studies, enthusiastically shares her takeaway. “Perhaps the most impactful for me was ‘Being On Call, Learning To Love: Why Vocation is Good News for Us All,’ written by Paul Wadell. It spoke to the value of living vocationally—seeking and following one’s call for more meaningful, hopeful, service-oriented living in an unpredictable and often tumultuous world. His writing reminds us that when we live into our vocation, we ‘come more fully to life’ and that in turn inspires others to do the same. Our world needs less indifference, more compassion, and more young people leaning toward rather than away from one another. We have an opportunity every day to model that for our students, and to live out our vocations alongside them.”

*By freeing students **from** myopia, fear, and boredom and **for** curiosity, creativity, and community—all in service to the greater good of others—a liberating education is uniquely situated to transform students toward a deeper sense of calling and purpose.*

—Nicole L. Johnson  
“Liberation From and For:  
The Vocation of the Educated Person”

Access the *Christian Scholar’s Review* issue on vocation at <https://christianscholars.com/issues/summer-2023-volume/>.



# Gratitude Week



Wendt Character Scholars expressed their gratitude to many people during Gratitude week, writing notes of thanks to individual people in their lives and selecting groups at UD and in Dubuque to show special gratitude. Many of those chosen tend to be overlooked and under-appreciated, despite being essential to the well-being of the community.

## *On Campus:*

- TRIO and ASC
- Strength Trainers and Athletic Trainers
- Sylvia's Staff
- Librarians
- Offices of Financial Aid and Registrar

## *Off Campus*

- Multicultural Center
- Night Shift CNAs at Sunnycrest Manor
- Dubuque County Fairgrounds
- Finley Hospital Emergency Department
- Hills & Dales





*I am grateful for the community I have built around me. I know there are so many people in my circle now that truly and genuinely care about me and are there to support me and want to see me succeed in every aspect of life.*

—Vanessa Blake



*I am grateful for my health and for my great friendships I have gained here at the University of Dubuque.*

—Mike Clarke



*I am grateful for many things. To name a couple: family, friends, cross country, and being able to go to college.*

—Jackson Croft

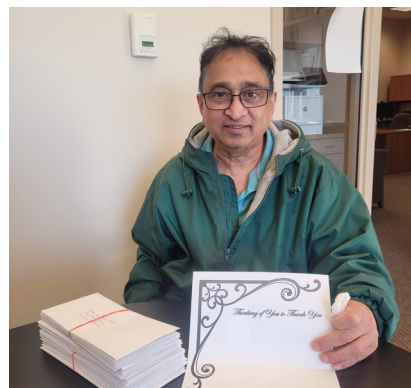
*I am grateful for my teammates, coaches, friends, and staff. All of these people and more make campus feel like home and I am extremely grateful.*

—Katelyn Powell



## Gratitude Letters

Gratitude spread through and beyond the UD campus. Dr. Lalith Jayawickrama handed out gratitude stationery to his classes and asked them to write notes of gratitude to others. That large stack of envelopes pictured went out in the mail, including to a few recipients overseas!





# Character Scholars

## Curriculum

The fall, Wendt Character Scholars dug into the topics of justice and privilege, environmental justice, and difficult conversations.



Adam Hoffman, *Justice and Privilege*

*I will take away that being privileged isn't necessarily a bad thing. Just recognizing where I am privileged and using that privilege to help in unjust situations is the best thing I could do.*

—Ben Bathje



Antonio Mouzon, *Difficult Conversations*

*If an interaction or tough conversation is built upon love, it is much easier to see and acknowledge both sides.*

—Heath Huschitt



Csongor Gedeon, *Environmental Justice*

*There are a variety of different actions that can be taken to combat environmental justice, but there is one that sticks out to me the most: Education. During Dr. Gedeon's presentation he mentioned that uneducated people can be easily manipulated into thinking what people want them to think.*

—Emma Kempel



Scholar fall review session

## Christmas Banquet

The Wendt Character Scholars' Christmas banquet provided food for the body and the soul. After sharing a delicious meal, students helped tell the Christmas story, sang carols, and enjoyed music provided by Adam Smith, Anne Funke, Lizz Tyler, and Mary Bryant.

Rounding the semester out with a celebration creates time for reflection and community, hopefully tiding us over until we are together again in January.





# Service

Look around to catch sight of Wendt Character Scholars serving their community in a variety of ways!



Check-in at the Wendt Celebration during UD's Homecoming



Fall clean-up at the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens



Coat-check at the MercyOne Gala



Set-up for the Wendt Scholar Kick-off picnic

*How do you serve? Send us your photos and stories!*

## Coming Up



## Become a Wendt Character Scholar

Apply now through Jan. 31st



**Applications** for the Wendt Character Scholars Program during the 2024-25 academic year are now open!

Visit [www.dbq.edu/WendtApplication](http://www.dbq.edu/WendtApplication) to learn more and apply.

## SYLVIA'S SERVES INTEGRITea—January



To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Wendt Character Initiative, for the month of January, Sylvia's drink specials will have a character theme developed by a team in Dr. Grace's event planning class! Visit Sylvia's in January for the specials menu. Perhaps you'll choose a cup of *integritea*?

## CHARACTER ART GALLERY—February 5-29

Visit the Bisignano Art Gallery's February exhibit, "Character Explorations: Shaping Character for Lives of Purpose," featuring the Wendt Character Scholars. Mingle with Scholars at the opening reception on February 5th.



## WENDT CHARACTER LECTURE—March 25



Freshta Tori Jan, our Spring Wendt Character Lecturer, will talk about her experience of persecution as a member of both the Hazara and Shia Muslim minorities under the Taliban and her efforts to inform the world of the Hazara genocide in Afghanistan. No tickets required. 7:00 p.m. in John & Alice Butler Hall.

# Director's Note

## Contagious Good



The conference volleyball games were crazy—the clamorous crowd energy bounced off the walls, infecting everyone. A time out saw “the wave” encircle the court several times. Contagious enthusiasm found its reward in a championship match!

These days the word “contagious” comes with a bit more concern over coughs, colds, and Covid. No one wants to get sick, but especially not over the holidays. So we steer a bit wider around the person sniffing. We wash our hands deliberately and often. We fear exposure. We understand how quickly one can catch something. But what about catching something good?

We have big examples of this in our culture as injustices are named. From Civil Rights to #MeToo to Black Lives Matter, these movements only happened because people were willing to step forward and speak out. It's not easy. It's not always safe. But it has the power to be contagious and to make positive impacts.

Whether a part of a broader justice movement or standing up to a bully, making and modeling good choices when it comes to doing what's right has the power to bring justice, to shine the light of hope in challenging circumstances. But it takes someone willing and courageous enough to counter the group, to point to a different way, to model better choices.

As our Wendt Scholars explore character this year, they're looking closely at how justice and sacrificial love working in tandem bring hope to their communities. How can you catch this vision and put it into practice today?

—Annalee

### WENDT CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

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Director

**Mary Bryant**  
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