



# By MEGAN STROUD Photography by ALEXIS HENDERSON Logo by CALEB BRACKNEY

# NSPIRED BY WHAT HE LEARNED IN THE INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAM AT HARDING, Caleb Brackney ('18) converted a school bus into his own tiny home for only \$10,000, utilizing space planning and repurposing unusual materials to create a viral result.

Brackney came to Harding to study interior design as preparation for the dual master's degrees he is currently pursuing at the University of Tennessee — a Master of Architecture and a Master of Landscape Architecture.

"Harding grounded me, taught me fundamental skills and ideas, and introduced me to a lot of concepts that graduate school did not," Brackney said. "I learned a lot about how space affects lifestyle and how materials and textures influence the way you experience life. They sound simple, but studying them really opens the world up to understanding how all those things come into play to form your experience. Landscape architecture deals with textures and patterns in nature while interior design is on the inside. Those honestly go together more for me than architecture and interior design because architecture is about projects where interior design and landscapes are about people."

Brackney decided to be a landscape architect when he was 12 years old while riding in his music teacher's Jeep full of plants. Raised in a family with seven children, playing music

together — whether it be a fiddle, mandolin, bass, banjo or guitar — was their way of bonding and spending time together. In the same way that music is woven into Brackney's decision to become a NO ROOTS, NO LIMITS
Roamer Bus

landscape architect, music also is woven into the space he created for himself in the "Roamer Bus."

When Brackney decided to go for it, he shopped on Facebook Marketplace for about a month before purchasing a 36-foot, 1995 Thomas International school bus for \$3,000. With only \$7,000 left in his budget for a project that typically takes nearly \$50,000 to complete, Brackney focused on repurposing materials, learning things like plumbing, carpentry and sewage on the go, and personalizing the 220 square feet of space to his own lifestyle using space planning.

"Space planning, for me, is about using spaces for as many different purposes as you can," Brackney said. "It's understand-

ing how spaces are used and organizing them in a way to maximize their potential."

Brackney's kitchen, which is home to the mini fridge from his college dorm, utilizes the driver's space for additional storage. His unique skylight allows him to stand up tall in front of his kitchen and closet. His living and bedroom are combined to allow more guests to sit comfortably in front of his swivel television. His bathroom, hidden in the back of the bus behind his headboard, allows the large door in the back of the bus to remain functional for loading and unloading larger items. Other features include a 7-foot closet, queen bed, couch that converts into a second bed, headboard with magnetic cabinet doors, and hammock hooks.

"There is no wrong or right way to do it," Brackney said.
"I think that's why it's so critical to understand your client or yourself when you are doing a project like this."

One of Brackney's favorite aspects of the bus is utilizing optical illusion. The shiplap in the front of the bus is actually wider

> than the shiplap in the back so that when you are in the front of the bus looking backward, it makes it look longer and wider. He created the same effect with the shelves on the

sides, which taper in and become smaller as you move from the kitchen to the bedroom. Brackney used intentional design to make the most out of a small, 7.5-foot-wide space.

"In my head I had this vision for basically what it turned out to be, but I honestly didn't think it would get so viral," Brackney said.

Since its completion, the "Roamer Bus" has gained 2.5M views on TikTok and 52,000 followers on Instagram alone. Because he was getting daily inquiries about different aspects of his project, he created a website and Etsy store where people could use his plans and ideas as resources for their own projects.

Brackney lives in the bus full time with his golden doodle Ivy and plans to take it to Berkeley, California, this summer for a highly



competitive internship with Peter Walker Landscape Architects, known for projects all over the world such as the 9/11 Memorial, Marina Bay Sands Resort and Jewel Changi Airport.

"Walker is arguably the most famous landscape architect alive," Brackney said. "One intern is from India, one is from Harvard and one is me, and the reason I got it is because of the bus. They loved the idea of using what knowledge I have learned in school and figuring out how to do something like this. The bus was my way of getting in. I am no different from anyone else at Harding. My dad is a minister, I am the oldest of seven kids, and I was homeschooled. I think it shows that if you work really hard, you can be bold."

Brackney began this conversion project as a personal case study to apply what he had learned in school and, at the end, gained a full-time home, confidence in his ability and a chance to show off his work to the world. With the "Roamer Bus," he has no roots and no limits, and he encourages others to do the same by finding their passion and sharing it with the world.

### ARCHITECTURE COMING FALL 2022

The 168-hour accelerated program, built on a cohort model, will result in the completion of a Bachelor of Arts in architectural studies and a Master of Architecture in five years. Upon completion of the M.Arch., students will be eligible to sit for the licensure exam. Taught from a Christian perspective and with an emphasis on a liberal arts foundation, the curriculum will support and encourage interactive learning during lectures and studios. Additionally, there are plans to include an internship experience and an international program component to the degree, exposing students to a diverse set of architectural examples around the world. Learn more at harding.edu/ architecture.

"Focus on what is interesting to you in your field. You chose interior design for a reason or business students choose business for a reason, or PT students choose that for a reason. Focus on what excites you about your passion. Your passion is not necessarily just your major. There are so many different aspects of it. If you focus on what inspires you, figure out a way to show that to the world. When you have an idea that you are really passionate about, start acting. I am so thankful I acted and accomplished this dream. If you are passionate about something, don't let other people hold you back from what you want to do, but build off their excitement as it progresses. At the end of this conversion, so many people were excited about it, and it kept me inspired. I led the charge for inspiration and then relied on other people the rest of the way."

Learn more about Caleb Brackney and the Roamer Bus by following him on Instagram and TikTok (@RoamerBus), exploring his website (roameroutpost.com), and watching this Tiny Home Tour at magazine. harding.edu.



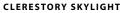
### THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Caleb Brackney made a small space a functional home in which he can thrive. Learn more about some of his favorite innovative ideas utilizing space planning and repurposed items on a budget.



### SLIDE-OUT KEYBOARD

If music is what makes your space feel like home, utilize space to hide it away when it's not being used. A slide-out keyboard from the main eating and studying space offers a perfect opportunity to hide a piano. "Music is special to me, so I intertwined it with my bus because it's my life and home," Brackney said. "I'm not the most accomplished musician, but I enjoy playing with other people and building memories around a campfire with a guitar." Brackney also was a member of Belles & Beaux while he was a student at Harding.



If you are too tall to stand up straight inside a bus, like Brackney, find a way to create more head-room. Acrylic strips let light stream in and fill the center of the bus while adding extra headspace. "I have never seen anyone do skylights like this," Brackney said. "I got the idea from researching sailboats, which have closed, rounded interiors. Some sailboats have a little bit of a skylight above, so I just cut a hole in the ceiling, hoped the bus didn't fall apart and made it work. It makes a big difference."





### TRAILER ROOF DECK

Even with a small interior space, the bus serves as a camping destination for many of his friends, so Brackney created an outdoor space on the top of the bus. After taking the axle off an old trailer, he attached it to the two rails on the roof, preventing leaking that would have occurred from bolting into the sheet metal.

### MULTIPURPOSE MASON JAR LIGHTS

In search of extra light and storage, Brackney used a set of mason jars, half of which serve as storage containers while the other half serve as drinking cups and clear shades on light bulbs. He is an advocate of glass storage, and attaching the tops of mason jars into the shelf makes it a rattle-proof and shatter-proof option on the road. "I had seen the idea about mason jars hanging, but dropping the lights in was one of my little brother's ideas," Brackney said. "I needed some light on my desk area, but I didn't want lamps sitting on the counters. It's so iconic. I've never seen anyone do this before, and it ties in with the lights in the back, which was actually a repurposed light fixture from the Branding Project during my junior year at Harding."





#### **BUTCHER BLOCK COUNTERS**

Countertops are essential but costly. Brackney found these old semi-truck beds made of oak on Facebook Marketplace for only \$40. Knowing it would be durable, he bought them and repurposed them into his butcher block kitchen countertops by planing, sanding and staining them.

### OPTICAL ILLUSION SHELVING

Create an illusion of more space with intentional design. Much like the windows of Cinderella's castle get smaller as they go up to create the illusion of a taller building, the shiplap in the front of the Roamer Bus is actually wider than the shiplap in the back so that it looks longer and wider when looking from the front of the bus to the back. Brackney created the same effect with the shelves on the side of the bus, which taper in and become smaller moving from the kitchen in the front to the bedroom in the back. By utilizing intentional design, he was able to make the most out of a narrow space.



SUMMER 2021 | HARDING | SUMMER 2021





# #STAYSAFE #STAYHOME





WHY HARDING "I was certain I wanted to do ministry, and Harding started sending summer interns to my congregation through Global Outreach. Along with stories from the alumni in my congregation, I realized that this was a good place, the kind of place I want to tell my stories about. So I applied, got the Trustee Scholarship, and found myself for the first time on campus three days before classes began in Fall 2017. I had never seen the place before, and I fell instantly in love with it."

**INVOLVEMENT** On campus, John is a beau for women's social club Delta Gamma Rho, intern for the Original Rock House, member of the SA Chapel Committee, peer guide for Bible professors Gary Jackson and Dr. Phil Thompson, and tutor for University College.

PASSION "My passions revolve around people, worship, ministry and writing. I just love to be where people are. I believe that I have something to learn from everyone I meet and the potential to share something from my own life that will bless them. I keep a blog (thewildernessvoices.org) where I write personal reflections from my experiences. I see my blog as a means to speak life and build up others instead of criticizing and tearing down."

CHAPEL "When I'm on the Benson stage, I look out and take in the thousands of faces staring back at me. I realize that every one of those faces has a story, a joy, a burden, or some combination of them. Ideally, I want to lead a worship where everyone leaves talking about how God rejuvenated or comforted them, or what they heard him say. Ideally, they won't remember the worship leader because they were so enraptured by the God whom they beheld."

GRACE & PEACE "Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" is John's often-heard greeting to those in chapel. "While preparing to share a devotional message when I was studying abroad, I realized that the apostle Paul was always using this phrase in his letters to greet his audience. First, I just love the idea of using a biblical greeting to greet the people of God. Second, grace and peace are things that our college community could use a lot more of. The third reason stems from the history of the phrase. Grace was the word of greeting in the Greek language, and peace was the Hebrew greeting. That the apostle Paul combined these into a single greeting meant that he acknowledged the Jew-Gentile diversity of the church and that both groups were welcomed into one united body. We need to be reminded that we live in this Christian narrative where we affirm our unity and embrace the diversity that gives that unity so much color and vibrancy. That's what I pray something as simple as a greeting can encourage people to think about."

MINISTRY After graduating, John plans to return to his home congregation in Singapore to take on a full-time role as youth, worship and media minister while pursuing a Master of Divinity. He knows he wants to follow God wherever he calls, living his life by the words found in Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." 1 — Megan Stroud

# Everyday STUDENT

JUNIOR JOHN LIM FROM SINGAPORE,
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES MAJOR STUDYING
MINISTRY BY FOCUSING ON BIBLE, COMMUNICATION
AND ENGLISH, IS WELL-KNOWN FOR HIS LEADERSHIP
IN CHAPEL AND AMIABLE PERSONALITY.



PHOTO BY JEFF MONTGOME

## AUG. 15 Commencement

at harding.edu/dailydevo.

MARCH 26, 2020

JAN. 14, 2020

FEB. 17, 2020

MARCH 3, 2020

"I pray that during your time here you will come to

love and respect this chapel hall. I pray that you will

feel the presence and love of God here in a more per-

sonal way. I hope that you will never forget that cha-

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far,

"Things are going to happen that are unexpected. You

never know, really, what is going to happen. I chal-

lenge us to be people who look for opportunities to

serve others and share God's light. No matter where

you go this spring break, these are things you can do."

On March 18, classes resumed after spring break, but

there were no students on campus. Throughout the

duration of the second half of the semester, Dr. McLarty

continued to bring the community together through a

virtual chapel — a daily devotional on social media and

"When we remember who Jesus is, when we lift him

go together. At Harding, we run together."

John Smith, guest speaker

**President Bruce McLarty** 

Grant Fitzhugh,

junior Bible and divinity major

pel is the most important thing that happens here."

# While those who completed graduation requirements in May had their degrees conferred at that time, the late summer physical ceremony allows graduates faculty family and

the late summer physical ceremony allows graduates, faculty, family and friends to celebrate together. harding.edu/graduation

### AUG. 20-22

### Welcome Week: Stampede

Campus welcomes new students to the University with informative sessions, activities and fun in this event formerly known as Impact.
harding.edu/stampede

# "We spend so much time borrowing trouble from an uncertain future. We are anxious because we worry

up and see him in his glory, so many of the things that

about tomorrow. Jesus says stay in the moment and remember how God takes care of his creation. God will take care of you."

### McLarty

McLarty

#### APRIL 1, 2020

confuse us disappear."

MARCH 27, 2020

**HEARD in CHAPEL** 

"We walk on through the night. Jesus walks with us on this journey of faith."

#### McLarty

### APRIL 10, 2020

"The cross was not an accident. The cross was not a failure of the plan of God or ministry of Jesus. The cross was by God's intent and design. Jesus was always moving toward the cross."

#### McLarty

#### APRIL 13, 2020

"It changes everything. The worst day in the history of the world on Friday becomes the greatest day in the history of the world on Sunday. Today, as we begin a new week, we begin this week living in the light of the resurrection."

### **McLarty**

### EVENTS

### AUG. 24

### First day of school

Classes begin for what hopes to be an uneventful fall semester with campus full of life after a quiet spring.

### SEPT. 27-30

### Lectureship



Join us for the 97th Lectureship, Invincible!, as talented ministers and speakers help us delve into the book of Daniel and study courageous faith in troubled times.

harding.edu/lectureship

### OCT. 2-3

### Family Weekend

Experience life with your college student
— attend chapel and classes and see
firsthand what makes Harding so special.
harding.edu/familyweekend

### OCT. 29-31

### Homecoming

Enjoy reuniting with old friends and classmates for reunions, tailgating, the Homecoming musical and more.
harding.edu/homecoming

Events currently scheduled at publishing time may change subject to federal and local guidance on reopening. harding.edu/calendar

# BY THE NUMBERS

### SPRING STATS

### 100

Percent of May candidates in the speech-language pathology master's program who passed licensure exam on first attempt

### 14

Articles in first digital edition of student-run Bison newspaper, published April 2

### 2

Students, faculty and staff who spent spring break helping with Middle Tennessee tornado disaster relief, some of whom joined as a result of an international mission trip cancellation

## 200

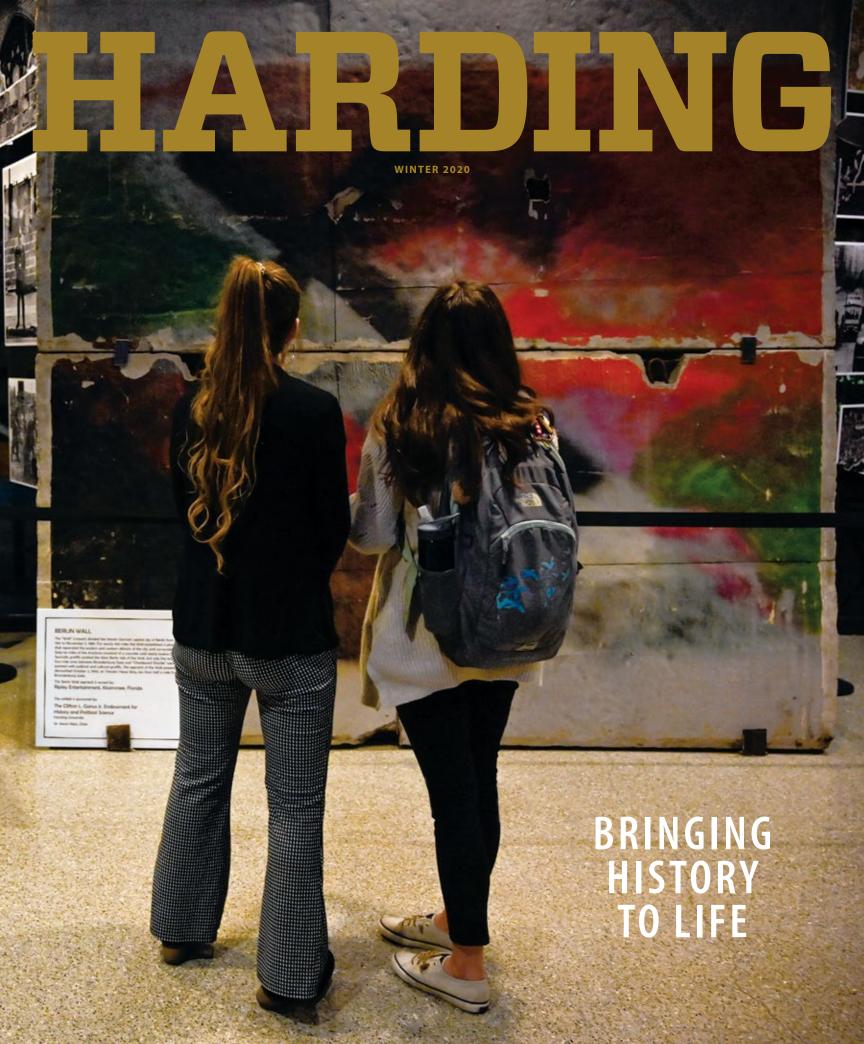
Number of face shields, along with 10 masks, for Unity Health designed and 3D printed by a team led by Rich Wells, assistant professor of engineering

### 20

Members of the information systems and technology team, comprised of IT services, e-learning and multimedia services and Brackett Library, who played pivotal roles in helping faculty and students transition to online instruction

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HARDING | SPRING 2020





HARDING | WINTER 2020



### HE RED DOOR ON THE HOUSE ON MOORE AVENUE IN SEARCY OPENS

to a spacious, naturally-lit room with tall ceilings. Looking past the desks at the front, a large dining table and living room welcomes parents and children, no matter what their backgrounds may be. The house was previously Searcy Children's Home, but, with the help of interior architecture and design students from the University, it is now a renovated space with a new purpose.

The trend of moving away from group homes and toward foster care left the former Searcy Children's Home searching for a new way to stay involved with families in the community. After several years of planning, brainstorming and offering transitional services including a day care, the board of directors, led by chairman Andrew Baker ('98), approved a new concept — Sparrow's Promise.

"We were trying to come up with something that captured our mission, but we needed to get away from the children's home image because we don't have kids that live here anymore," executive director Brandon Tittle ('04) says. "The idea for the name came from Matthew 10 where Jesus talks about the sparrows. He says they won't fall to the ground outside of the Father's care. That promise spoke to us because that is exactly what we are trying to do. We are trying to come alongside people who are going through a hard time and say, 'We care about you, we are going to help you, we are going to fight for you, we are going to support you, and we want to specifically help you get your kids back and get your family back together.' Through that we are able to share the promise that we love you, but even bigger than that, God loves you."

Just changing the name, they realized, was not adequate. The original footprint of the structure did not support the new vision. Baker discussed the project with assistant professor of art Amy Cox ('98), and a specific request from the Department of Human Services revealed the need for a family visit center. With the help of Cox, interior architecture and design students at Harding, Mike Steelman at SCM Architects, and Patrick Connell at Connell Construction, the building is now suited to meet three diverse needs with three wings: the family visit center, a safe haven and an administrative wing.

### THE BEVERLY FORD FAMILY VISIT CENTER

While the new purpose for the building was still being determined, DHS specifically requested a space where foster children and biological families could have more successful supervised visits.

"The visits are the number one indicator of reunification, so we need the visits to be productive and conducive to building a bond between the parents and the children," Tittle says. "The more they can build that bond, the harder they are all going to work for reunification."

Creating a space that encouraged positive family time during these visits became the primary focus of Cox and her students.

"Having had [foster] kids before, I knew the real challenges with that — taking them to McDonald's and then picking them back up, and they didn't really visit," Cox says. "I believe that the physical environment around you has a very direct effect on things, including relationships as well as attitude, memory and connectivity. We take it for granted. It doesn't just look pretty, but our spaces really do physically and emotionally affect us. So to have a visit at DHS where you feel frustration and hurt and anger and trauma, they associate those bad feelings with [the visits at DHS]."

Senior thesis projects for interior design majors at Harding are focused on finding social issues that design can aid in solving. Three groups of seniors over the course of three years helped Cox with phases of the Sparrow's Promise remodel

The first group of seniors focused on design research.

They looked at the impact of the visits on everyone involved

— children, biological parents and foster families — through research in the fields of psychology and social work.



"I think most people don't fully understand the amount of thought that has to go in even before you start laying out a space or picking out colors; you have to get the beginning of it right," Cox says. "You have to fully be able to empathize before you can design a space that has meaning and has a physical or emotional effect."

The research showed need for autonomy and connection. The small kitchenette, indoor rooms and backyard let families pick from a variety of activities. The activities and furniture in the rooms were selected specifically to encourage physical touch, comfort and memory making. The love-seat and rocker allow families to sit together, and the motion reduces stress for both parents and children. The bench seating allows for flexibility with larger family visits, and the games and toys were specifically selected to encourage children to connect with their families rather than playing alone. The mismatched accessories create a comfortable atmosphere; it's not a pristine space they will mess up.

"[Parents] have lost control when they lose their kids, and the courts are looking at them very harshly," Cox says "They've pretty much lost control of everything. If they can kind of choose how they want to spend that visit, we thought that was important."

The role of the caseworker in the room was also given specific attention. Their presence, while necessary, needed to be noninvasive. Cox teaches her students each semester about the eight-foot triangle — you are unlikely to interact with anyone further than eight feet from you in a room. The long, narrow rooms allow the social worker to sit outside this eight-foot range.

The soft, cool color scheme of blues and greens alongside large windows for natural light were chosen to reduce stress, create calm and build a backdrop for memorable children's artwork.

"All those were decisions to create memory moments that, even if they don't go home to their parents, the last places that they visited their parents will be positive places," Cox says.

The second group of seniors who participated in the project worked with architect Mike Steelman to create an as-built floor plan of the existing building, a space plan and a layout. They measured walls, windows, doors and rooms and redesigned the layout to help the building change functions. After the students designed the interior, Steelman and Cameron Sunkel ('18), his intern at the time, worked on the structure and exterior architecture of the building.

sor of art Amy Cox ('98) guides the next group of senior studio interior architecture and design students through the completed Sparrow's Promise administrative wing and common areas, explaining the purpose behind decisions the previous students made throughout the three-year process.

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HARDING | WINTER 2020

Brandon Tittle,

executive direc-

tor at Sparrow's

Amy Cox's cur-

rent senior studio interior design

and architecture

students, demon

strating the concepts that make

the Beverly Ford

Family Visit Center

rooms successful.

Promise, visits with

"It was a team effort on the part of everybody, but I will say that interior design, including students, carried the majority of the load," Steelman says. "Interior design is an amazing program at Harding. They do a great job in terms of educating students."

Toria Adkison ('19), a member of the final senior class to work on the project, worked with Cox on a different level. She played a key role in painting the mural, communicating with suppliers and helping Cox pick the specific materials for the space.

"It was great to work on this project during school because I saw what professional design looks like firsthand," Adkison says. "I met with the clients, negotiated with furniture dealers, and saw our ideas come to life during the course of my last year at Harding. Working alongside Amy Cox allowed me to apply practical design principles taught in our program. Sparrow's Promise provided connections to a wonderful community in Searcy while boosting my confidence in design. It gave me hope that there is purpose in design, and I strive to carry that on as I work in the professional world."

Even in the early stages of hosting visits in the completed center, differences in the visits at Sparrow's Promise are already evident.

"Here you see parents down on the floor playing with their kids, which isn't going to happen at an office or a restaurant," Tittle says. "Seeing that interaction where the parents get down on the same level with the kids — playing with them, sitting in the rocking chair feeding them bottles, it definitely seems more natural, calm and appreciated."

Changes are not only being noticed by the staff at Sparrow's Promise. The DHS workers are also noticing a difference through their interactions with the biological families.

"It has become, as DHS put it to me, the gold standard of the state," Baker says. "I'm not sure we meant to be the gold standard. We just wanted to try to create something better than what was."

### THE SAFE HAVEN & ADMINISTRATIVE WING

In the midst of the trauma of removing a child from their home, caseworkers have no designated place, other than their office, to go until a foster home is found and ready.

The Safe Haven, naturally created from the wing that was a day care, provides a place for social workers in White and Woodruff counties to bring children at any time of day. Donated supplies, a full bathroom and bedrooms are available to ease the transition and provide some comfort until a foster home is ready.

"That act of removal is traumatic, and everything that happens after that is stressful," Tittle says. "They need a place to stay and wait. They used to be able, especially in the middle of the night, to take them to a hotel, but they can't do that anymore, so they are just going back to their office. So we created this space. The initial trauma we

cannot take away, but we can reduce the stress of everything that happens after that by giving them a place that feels like a home."

When the interior design students began laying out the administrative wing, they knew the final need for the building would be common spaces, a training room and a professional environment for the individuals who work at Sparrow's Promise. In addition to helping families have more healthy spaces to connect, research shows that design also affects the workplace culture and worker retention.

"I know in the industry of social work, there's a lot of turnover and burnout," Cox says. "So that was a secondary thing I had in mind. These people, these case workers especially, are so emotionally involved day after day after day, all hours of the night. And so that was another one of my goals, even though they didn't really ask for it. When they walk into work every day for them just to want to be there and feel supported."

Off the main living space there is also a multipurpose training room that can be used to train foster families or for DHS to meet with biological families.

### THE COMPLETED REMODEL

With the completion of the project, Sparrow's Promise is now a house with three wings that function independently.

"We were able to do that building far, far less expensively than it looks, and I think it's important for people to know that we really were good stewards of their money," Cox says.

Interior and architecture design students who were able to put their fingerprint on this development now have a real project in their portfolio and have experience working with professionals like Connell who says he saw no difference in working with them and working with other professionals already in the field.

"Most projects in school they design — it's all hypothetical," Cox says. "It never gets built. Even though three groups of seniors worked on it, they all get to now see it and have contributed along the way. That gets everybody in the program excited to do more community work like that. I couldn't have done it if I didn't have students."

The project, which flowed right into Cox's regular teaching, provided her a sense of pride both in the project and also in her students.

"Other projects that I've worked on I've been proud of, but I felt, when it was all said and done, that this place has a chance to really affect the lives of people," Cox says. "Not every project has that much of an opportunity — that dramatic of an effect that it could. It was more than a building. It really gets at the heart of what they're trying to do as a community."



# Sparrow's Promise Providing Hope for Children and Families



# ROOM 2

### SAFE HAVEN

The Safe Haven will provide a safe and comfortable space for children after being removed from home when an immediate placement is not available. Children will find security, comfort and stability during this traumatic time.

Cox, Baker, Tittle, Steelman and Connell all have been touched by Searcy Children's Home through adoption or foster care, and now all their lives have been touched by helping Sparrow's Promise continue the work began by Searcy Children's Home — bettering the lives of the children in the community.

"Seeing and knowing what these kids go through on a day to day basis and just trying to do anything that we could to help alleviate a little bit of that pulls at the strings of the heart," Connell says. "If you can do something that will give them a little bit of happiness for five minutes in their lives, we will jump through hoops to make that happen. We all wish there was a world where there was not a need for the foster care system, but that is not the case, and it's not going to be the case. So we need places like Sparrow's Promise that have a heart and want to do things for these foster kids to improve their lives and focus on those kids."

three presentation boards, interior architecture and design students created a new layout and space plan based on the as-built layout with changes to the infrastructure made by architect Mike Steelman.

On the first of



# **Connections**

Send us your news! Let us know about your wedding, a birth, job change, promotion, award, retirement, etc. Email your items to alumninews@harding.edu or write Harding University, Office of Alumni Relations, Box 10768, Searcy, AR 72149-5615.



### 1954

**Owen Olbricht** has written a book, *Kingdom of the Messiah*. He has authored numerous other books as well as workbooks, personal worker lessons and articles. He has spent more than 50 years leading campaigns and mission efforts in 30 states and 14 countries. He taught for 10 years at Harding. He is editor of Unique for Christ, a publication for university students.

### 1981

Mike Philpot is the new vice president of economic development for Jonesboro Unlimited. He came to the business development organization from Leland, Mississippi, where he served as the director of economic development for Delta Strong & Delta Council. He is married to Robin Gill ('80).

### 1985

Elizabeth "Liz" Herrel O'Shea was awarded a grant from the R.E.B. Foundation for Teaching Excellence to travel to London, Normandy and Paris for a World War II professional development experience. She has taught English at L.C. Bird High School in Chesterfield, Virginia, for 10 years and became National Board Certified in 2017.

### 1986

**Richard Johnson** became president at Crowley's Ridge College, Jan. 1, 2020. He was formerly vice president for advancement.

### 1992

Christopher B. Pillay is the president and CEO of Semele, formerly the product division of Meridian Technologies, an award-winning IT consulting, staffing and technology company that he cofounded in 1998. He attended executive education programs at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College and The Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. He currently serves on the board of directors of Consulting Solutions International.

### 1993

**Steven Fitzhugh** was honored by Ouachita Christian School with the naming of the football field in his honor Sept. 6, 2019. He is in his 22nd season as the Eagles head coach and his 26th year at the school. His team won the 2019 state title. He and his wife, **Jana Stegall** ('94), have four children, Harding student Grant, Will, Ellie Kate and Maddox.

**Carla Tipton Sumner** was one of seven graduates from Arkansas State University's College of Nursing and Health Professionals recognized as distinguished alumni Oct. 26, 2019. She earned her master's in communication disorders from ASU in 1994. She has practiced as an SLP for 24 years in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals, private practice, outpatient clinics, home health and skilled nursing facilities in Arkansas, Georgia and Tennessee. She has given back to the profession by supervising multiple speech pathologists in their clinical fellowship year and many student clinicians throughout the years. She serves on the advisory council for the graduate communication sciences and disorders program at Harding and has supervised graduate clinicians at Harding's international program in Zambia for three summers. She and her husband, **Ryan** ('96), have three children.

### 2001

**Becky Hackney** married Vassar Davis on Oct. 26, 2019. Becky works as an academic coordinator for K-6 English Language Arts in Dayton, Ohio. Vassar works in inventory control in Cincinnati.

### 2003

**Natalie Smeltzer Fortenberry** is now a shareholder of the law firm Polsinelli PC. Her husband, Zeke, is managing member of the Fortenberry Firm PLLC. They reside in Dallas and have one son, Jack.

It [the naming of Steven Fitzhugh Field] was definitely a surprise and a shock. It was humbling. There were a lot of people involved in making this new turf field happen ... It's a blessing, blessing,

blessing.

### 2008

**Zachary Crow** is director of DecARcerate, a non-profit working to end mass incarceration in Arkansas through education, legislation and community action. The first full-length book of his poetry, *Dancing in the Eddies*, was released in 2018. Written in 34 parts, he describes it as an autobiographical examination of birth, death, love, loss and the danger of being in the wake of dismantled dreams.

### 2009

**Chad Burris** was named one of Dealerscope 40 under 40 DM Parker Lifetime Achievement award honorees. He is a product protection program manager for Nationwide Marketing group. He and his wife, Cristy, have three children, Ava, Lexi and Brooks.

### 2010

Clay Williams completed surgical residency in Little Rock, Arkansas, and is now a board-certified general surgeon at Searcy Medical Center. He is married to Erica Strate ('11), who is a physician assistant in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

J.D. Adams is teaching at the College of Charleston after spending two years at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He has his Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas. His wife, Allison Evins, has her Psy.D. from the University of Denver. They have a daughter, Tate.

### 2011

Robert Cook has been promoted to manager in Draffin Tucker's Resource Solutions division in the Atlanta office. Since joining the CPA and advisory firm in 2012, he has become an integral part of the consulting services practice. He holds a Master of Accountancy degree from University of Alabama and is a member of GSCPA's Young CPAs Advisory Council and is president of the Accounting Alumni Young Professional Board for University of Alabama.

Brian and **Kacey Persaile Eastman** announce the birth of twin sons, Judson Wesley and Roman Dean, Aug. 23, 2019. They also have a daughter, Lorelei Jean.

Sean Simons holds both a master's and doctoral degree in school psychology from Oklahoma State University. He is the school psychology program coordinator at Murray State University, a Kentucky licensed psychologist, a board-certified behavior analyst, and a nationally certified school psychologist.

### Lifelong learner, teacher and artist

N OCTOBER, A LITTLE MORE THAN 50 YEARS after he graduated, Daniel Coston's ('68) paintings were displayed in the Stevens Art Gallery on campus. The collection consisted mostly of Arkansas scenes with the addition of a few southern Delaware landscapes,

several portraits and a painting from his time as a student in 1967 that Dr. John Keller, chair of the art department, pulled from the department's permanent collection.

"He turns the common structures and landscapes into memorable images that do much more than document the places, which he does with considerable skill," Keller said. "His paintings also memorialize these locations as icons of place."

Coston has been drawing since he was in elementary school when he

remembers drawing cartoons on gum wrappers with his mom at church.

"It did more than just occupy me," Coston said. "Drawing was the way I learned. It was how I examined objects. I was not a child prodigy, but I always was drawing and learning."

Coston came to Harding planning to study math and science but was discouraged by the difficulty of certain classes such as physics. When his roommate asked him about switching to art because of his constant drawing, Coston took his Bible and English notebook drawings to the art department and immediately began studying art. Coston graduated with a bachelor's degree in art with a minor

in math, which allowed him to teach. He began his teaching career at Harding Academy even before graduating. After graduation, Coston moved to southern Delaware where he taught art to junior high students for eight years.

While teaching full time, Coston remained a student of art, reading and learning about art history and different artists while exploring his own artistic style

"I am a learner," Coston said. "I always have been and won't stop any time soon. Also, I paint in many different styles and areas. Some of my work is abstract and definitely not representational. I do impressionist paintings and some things that are very realistic. Some of my work looks like covers to science-fiction novels, and some paintings seem to be historical in nature. I love abstract expressionism more than I enjoy extreme realism."

Coston moved back to Arkansas in 1981 and taught high school in Dermott near Monticello.

He constantly maintained and refined his artistic skills by working on whatever projects he could, including illustrating local books and PROFILE | DANIEL COSTON

"If you put your heart into whatever is offered, you actually develop as an artist." Coston said.

painting a collection specifically for a bank in Monticello.

"My favorite place in the world was my grandparent's farm five miles west of Monticello," Coston said. "For many years I have been painting that home place, working from photos I found and drawings I did early on. I regret that I didn't have a camera in those days, and now I have to rely on my memory."

Since many settings from his childhood memories no longer exist, Coston works mostly from memory, rarely creating a detailed, realistic painting but rather taking a snapshot of a memory and filling in the vague details, much like a photo taken from a moving car.

"We don't live at a snail's pace where we can see every detail. We see



the world at a faster pace, and our memory has to do the catching up."

At the end of the day, Coston considers himself a painter of the

At the end of the day, Coston considers nimself a painter of the Arkansas scene and still often finds himself recreating scenes from his childhood memories.

"For me, my proudest accomplishment is that I taught school for more than 20 years and kept working at being a serious painter all that time," Coston said. "It was not easy nor was it a way to fame and fortune. I continue to get better as a painter as each year goes by. I don't ask for more than that. And [on top of that,] I was a serious art educator as well."

After moving to Fayetteville in 1987, Coston is now able to work more on his art full time.

"It's really important to dedicate yourself to putting in the hours needed to improve your natural ability," Coston said. "My feeling is that you have to love what you do in order to improve. You have to believe in yourself and overcome the times when you don't sell work and you don't win awards. Believe, or you will probably give up."

- Megan Stroud

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