

# Life-Changing Advice

Garnett Smith had a special piece of guidance for Keith Bell which sent him on a life-long journey in education



Personal attention. Supportive faculty. Not a number. Sounds like a recruitment brochure, but at Defiance College, these hallmarks of an individualized education are real and have been part of the campus fabric for a long time.

Keith Bell learned this as a Defiance College student in the 1970s. His primary mentor was Garnett Smith who at that time was a faculty member in business.

Bell, now a retired school administrator and close to completing a doctoral degree at The Ohio State University, says it was Smith who took the time to listen to her students and challenge them when she felt it was necessary.

Just a few weeks before graduation in the spring of 1978, Bell returned from an American Marketing Association conference in Chicago with three job offers in hand. “When I returned to share the news with Mrs. Smith, she did not seem as excited as I did,” he recalls.

She told her student that his four years of studying to become an educator were too important to change course so abruptly, and she was instrumental in helping him secure a graduate assistantship at Bowling Green State University. “I proceeded to remain in education for 37 years because of that decision,” he says. “I had never considered graduate school as one of my post-baccalaureate options. I would not have gone to graduate school had it not been for her.”

Because she had paid close attention to Bell and watched his growth, she saw something in him that he hadn’t realized. “Mrs. Smith taught me not only about learning, but about how to teach. She was patient with me as I learned new things and was always willing to listen. I don’t think she would have ever known that I should be an educator had she not listened the way she did.”

Smith, now professor emerita, challenged Bell to take courses that would expand his knowledge and supported him when he struggled. She knew that while he may have found success in the business world, education was where he needed to be.

“She used her connections, expertise and guidance to ensure that a kid from Toledo had an opportunity to show what he could do at the graduate level,” says Bell. “She also ensured that I knew my content when I left Defiance College. I am a reflection of her hard work!”

As an educator, Bell rose in the ranks to several administrative positions in Ohio school districts including

Gahanna, Groveport, Westerville South, Columbus City Schools, and Euclid. He received numerous accolades during his career. He retired as superintendent of Euclid City Schools in 2016 to accept a position in the office of inclusion and diversity at The Ohio State University where he will complete his doctoral degree through teaching, supporting research, and mentoring within the department. He is also a consultant with the Cuyahoga County Educational Service Center and teaches part-time at Cleveland State University.

Garnett Smith was not the only person to influence Bell during his years at Defiance College. Former history professor Randy Buchman inspired Bell to take risks and explore. Though he didn't really enjoy history, Bell says Buchman "probably taught me more about how to look outside of the known and explore the unknown than anyone at the college." Buchman taught him how to learn and what it meant to learn. Many years later when Bell visited Omaha Beach in France, he could still hear Buchman telling the story of the D-Day invasion.

As a student of color, Bell learned that while there is benefit in being around those you know, Defiance taught him how much he could gain by getting to know people who didn't look like him. "I found struggles and challenges to be similar and learned things that I would have never learned had I not opened myself up to that opportunity," he says.

The late Ernie Fowler, head of athletic facilities maintenance, taught Bell to drive a "stick shift" during a student job the summer of his sophomore year. Rod Martin taught Bell about car loans and interest rates and helped him secure his first loan on a new car. "I've been able to understand finance ever since," he says. And, local residents John and Pat Yeoman opened their home to him during the Purple and Gold basketball tournament. "They were so warm and welcoming, and to this day make me feel like I am one of their children whenever I see them."

While he is retired from school administration, Bell is by no means taking life easy. His father often reminds him, "When death catches me, I want to be out of breath." Bell says that pretty much sums up why he remains busy. "I am not at all out of breath, and I told the many students I came in contact with throughout the years that learning never stops. Be a lifelong learner. I want to model that for them."

He appreciates the opportunity to give back to his profession through teacher and administrative preparation in his work at Ohio State. He enjoys being in the classroom and learning from young people. He uses his skills to help the university work toward increasing the number of traditionally marginalized, underrepresented populations of students to gain access to a quality education. "Giving back gives me the drive to keep going, especially when I think about how Mrs. Smith gave back to me. My doctorate will be as much a part of her as it is me."

And, he reminds his college-graduated sons - Keith Jr. and Josh - "that I would not let them catch me, at least not until I am out of breath!" ♦

## A GREAT ASSET

From her picturesque Defiance County farmstead, Professor Emerita Garnett Smith looks back fondly on her days at Defiance College, but the gregarious and stylish lady is too busy to spend much time talking about the past.

Her days are filled with bridge and business, interspersed with playing the piano and computer solitaire, and going out to dinner with friends. She plays bridge several days a week with college friends. "I taught bridge. You don't learn it overnight. It's difficult to get young people interested," she observes. And she is administrator of a trust that takes a fair amount of her time.

Born in Toledo, her family moved to Defiance when she was a young child. She graduated from Defiance High School (at the same time as longtime DC receptionist Lou Joost) and went on to enroll at Defiance College. She and her husband, H. Olan Smith, both graduated from DC, he in 1946 and she in 1951. Olan was a stand-out athlete (inducted into the DC Hall of Fame) and went on to play professional baseball for the St. Louis Browns. Both became teachers, and he coached. The couple spent their summers doing graduate work in Bloomington, Ind.

Garnett began her DC teaching career in business education in 1963. She was also faculty secretary. In 1978 she was promoted to associate professor and later was appointed director of career planning and placement. During her college tenure, Olan died, so looking back, she recalls that the pace and volume of her work filled a void. "I was very busy, and truthfully, it was good for me." She retired in 1987.

Garnett calls the College "a great asset" to the community. "I loved every minute of it."

She taught typing, shorthand, accounting, office machines, office procedures, and business writing. The classroom, plus her position in career planning and placement, put her face-to-face with the vast majority of students who, like Keith Bell, speak of her with great respect and fondness. She remembers them in kind. "A lot of graduates landed in just the right job. We've had some gems," she recalls, adding that the education department produced "good, strong teachers."

Now in her ninth decade, Garnett has a growing family that includes daughter Shayna, three grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. ♦



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

TO KNOW.

TO UNDERSTAND.

TO LEAD.

TO SERVE.

Those core Defiance College values instilled while he was a student set Brian Brutyn, class of 2002, on a solid career path that has allowed him to adapt and succeed in multiple, changing roles.

Brutyn is currently Associate Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for Midland Public Schools in mid-Michigan.

When he entered the education field, Brutyn had every intention of staying in the classroom his entire career. His first job out of college was teaching multiple subjects in a strict discipline academy. He soon moved on to Algonac Community Schools in southeast Michigan where he taught social studies. Within five years, his plan to remain in the classroom went out the window when the opportunity to move into administration presented itself.

At Algonac, he served in multiple roles including athletic director, IB coordinator, assistant principal, high school principal, and interim superintendent. In 2014, he moved to his current position at Midland.

Brutyn first became interested in education as a career during his high school years. “My father was a highly respected teacher, and his enthusiasm and success within the profession piqued my interest,” he recalls. “The choice was solidified when I had a phenomenal high school history instructor, Mr. Nelson. His classroom was ‘electric,’ and he worked tirelessly to make lessons relevant and engaging for students. That experience inspired my passion for history and solidified my choice to go into education.”

He calls the Midland Public Schools “a phenomenal educational organization.” He says it is a great community in which to raise a family.

In his role as Associate Superintendent, Brutyn is in charge of the district improvement plan; selecting text, online and physical curricular resources; directing state and federal programs; coordinating professional development; supervising building principals, curriculum coordinators and specialists; facilitating state and local assessments; and advocating at the state level to shape future curriculum standards, assessments and



Brian Brutyn '02

improvement efforts.

Looking at his career path thus far, Brutyn describes the contrast from teaching to administration. "What I have learned is that when one decides to make the move into educational administration, they have to realize that the connection with students becomes distant," he says. "As this is the reason that most people go into education, it can make one lose sight of impacts that are made.

"Moments of happiness and fulfillment come when I see a program that I have implemented providing a student with an opportunity they may not have otherwise had. The same is true when I see a teacher or administrator having success with a technique or strategy that I introduced in a professional development session. You have to celebrate those successes and realize that even though direct interaction with kids is sparse, the positive impacts on stakeholders can have a broad impact."

His dreams of becoming an educator began to take shape when he first visited Defiance College as a high school senior in 1998. "I was impressed by the campus and faculty. I wanted a small-campus atmosphere where I wouldn't get lost in the masses," he recalls. "The education program had a good reputation, and a review of the reciprocity of the degree in surrounding states was an advantage. The school also offered me the opportunity to play football. The football staff did a great job of selling the school and program during the recruiting process."

His Defiance College experiences – from classes to the playing field to personal relationships – made life-shaping impressions.

"Two professors stand out as having a special impact on me," he recalls, citing Dr. Jason Tetzloff who instructed numerous courses related to Brutyn's social studies major, and Dr. Tom Case, instructor for many education practicum classes. "Both men worked diligently to establish a personal connection/relationship with each of their students. Their passionate presentation of content made me look forward to their courses. I still think of the lessons instilled in me from both of them often when having to make decisions."

During his sophomore year, he met his future wife, Jennifer, in a psychology class. "Eighteen years later, we have two wonderful children and recently celebrated our fourteenth wedding anniversary."

Brutyn grew up in Sterling Heights, Mich., and attended Henry Ford II High School. His wife, Jennifer, DC class of 2002, is an executive assistant for the Clare Public Schools. They are the parents of two children, Autumn, 11 and Bo, 10.

Brutyn earned a Master of Arts in Teacher Leadership from the University of Illinois in 2008 and an Education Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership from Oakland University in 2011. ◆



The website Best Value Schools has named Defiance College as one of the 20 best value colleges in the country for students with autism.

The website ranked Defiance College sixth among the top 20 schools, lauding its ASD Affinity Program. It cited the program's aim of tailoring services to each participant's individual needs supported by yearly evaluations. It also recognized Defiance as offering one of the most robust residential programs on the top 20 list with its apartment-style housing for students on the autism spectrum, supervised by specially trained RAs.

The ASD Affinity Program builds on Defiance College's success with its Hench Autism Studies Program in which high school students with autism receive high school level instruction on the DC campus in coordination with the Defiance City Schools.

The director of the Hench Autism Studies Program and the ASD Affinity Program is Dr. Clarissa Barnes. She notes that the ASD Affinity Program is designed to support students with ASD to have a true college experience so that they can participate in all aspects of college life.

"We are proud to be ranked so highly alongside other successful programs," said Dr. Barnes. "The ASD Affinity Program provides the tools and conditions for students to succeed, but the degrees earned and personal victories celebrated are achieved through the hard work and dedication of the students themselves. We are grateful to be a part of a campus that has fully embraced our program and is dedicated to creating an equitable academic and social environment."

Defiance's ASD Affinity Program supports college students with ASD in reaching their full potential. Varying levels of academic, social and residential support are designed to aid students in meeting their personal and professional goals. Students receive a broad range of comprehensive services to enable them to adjust and succeed in a college environment.

Persons interested in learning more about the College's autism programs can visit the college website at [www.defiance.edu](http://www.defiance.edu). ◆



# Educational Opportunity

Jennifer Davis discovers a better life for her family with the help of Defiance College

by Kathy Panches '96, Director of Public Relations & Marketing

It was a road less traveled that took Jennifer Davis to her classroom at the Defiance Elementary School. The first grade teacher began her journey as a young mother wanting a better life for her family.

After taking classes at a community college, she decided to become a teacher. "I needed a college that would allow me to support my family as well as a school that offered a quality education," she says. "That's when I found Defiance College. There I had many opportunities, including a transfer grant to help financially. DC worked well with the community college, and I was able to transfer my credits with no problems. I was quickly on the path of fulfilling my educational goals."

Davis's spark for teaching was ignited during her own childhood by teachers and experiences at St. Mary's Catholic

School. She has memories of her kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Parrish, taking students on imaginary trips to places like Holland – with wooden shoes and construction paper suitcases, and music. It was hands-on learning, and at a very young age, it was learning through play.

"I believe her teaching philosophy stuck with me as I continued my schooling," Davis recalls. "I needed the hands-on learning experiences to better grasp material and concepts taught to me. I knew there were many more children out there that needed to learn this way, and that's when I found my spark for teaching." She wanted all children to be able to learn through play, to enjoy their learning experience, and to add value to their learning through student choice.

Her Defiance College experience further reinforced her personal philosophy of teaching and learning. Dr. Suzanne McFarland instilled the ideas of age-appropriate concepts,

lessons, materials and delivery. "She often used the term 'developmentally appropriate,' says Davis. "The term is still relevant with me and is evident in my classroom after teaching elementary students for more than 10 years."

Another professor who influenced Davis was Dr. Fred

"I needed a college that would allow me to support my family as well as a school that offered a quality education. That's when I found Defiance College."

-- Jennifer Davis

Coulter. "You always looked forward to attending his class. He had such a vibrant and positive outlook on education. I really admire Dr. Coulter for taking the time to get to know each of his student's personalities and then using their strengths to help teach a concept." Coulter had a knack for getting conversations rolling in the classroom. "He often initiated a debate which led to us all smiling, laughing and creating strategies. He helped cultivate my belief in the importance of teaching lessons using a student led/student choice approach."

During her teaching career, Davis has noticed that more and more students are lacking motor skills. As part of her graduate work, she was introduced to sensory processing disorder which she began to study more intensely. She believes many sensory techniques and strategies can be used in the regular classroom as tools to help with behavior and classroom environment. Last year she started a sensory committee at her elementary school which she says was strongly supported by the administration. "We were able to begin bringing awareness as well as tool kits filled with things like weighted pencil grips, lap pads, liquid timers, picture schedules, social stories, and much more available to all teachers ..." Davis's goal in the next several years is to continue raising awareness. She hopes to start an expo that will include keynote speakers, sensory tools, strategies and education to all area teachers.

She says Defiance College offered her the opportunity to create lifelong friendships – friends with whom she can teach in the real world. She and two of her closest college friends found teaching positions in Defiance, Tinora and Continental. "We stay connected throughout the school year and have even been known to start pen pal letters between our classes."

Davis is grateful for the solid career foundation that she received at Defiance College. "Choosing to stay local was the best thing I could do for my family," she recalls. "I would commute to campus, attend morning classes, meet my daughter and family members for lunch, go back for another class or two that day and still have time to work a couple hours in between. ... I was very blessed to have found DC at the time. If there was no Defiance College, I might not be where I am today." ♦

## Long-time Defiance College Supporter Phyllis Snyder Dies

Phyllis J. Snyder, 90, died October 22 at Laurels of Defiance. She and her husband, the late Vern "Pickle" Snyder, were long-time supporters of Defiance College and DC athletics.

Phyllis was born in Darke County, Ohio, on October 20, 1927. She was the daughter of the late Samuel and Norma (Teaford) Lindamood. She was the widow of Vernon "Pickle" Snyder. They were married June 2, 1951, and he died March 16, 2006.

Phyllis worked as a secretary at the All Star Products from 1951-1980 and then worked at the Maumee Valley Guidance Center until 1990. She was a member of Trinity United Methodist Church and was a hospice volunteer. She knitted socks and gave many away. Phyllis was very supportive and active at Defiance College for more than 70 years. She attended and volunteered at basketball games, sporting and other events at Defiance College. She also attended Defiance High School sporting events.

Everyone at DC remembered her fondly as someone who was always on the go, full of energy, outgoing and friendly to everyone.

Surviving are sisters, Patricia Graham of Greenville, Ohio, Wilma Richards of Hollansburg, Ohio; a brother, Sam Lindamood of Hollansburg, Ohio; and nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 54 years, Vernon "Pickle" Snyder; her parents; and sisters, Juanita Hawkey, Marilyn Meyers and Lois Hines.

Defiance College honored Phyllis with a memorial service on December 3 in the Karl H. Weaner Community Center. Speakers included DC president Dr. Richanne C. Mankey, Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference commissioner Chris Ragsdale, former DC men's basketball coach Kyle Brumett, student-athletes Reed Guerin, Sarah Kaya and Whitney Schalk, alumnus and former assistant men's basketball coach Nate Conley.

Memorial contributions in Phyllis Snyder's honor may be made to the Defiance College Athletic Fund. ♦





# TRADITIONALLY DIFFERENT

by Kathy Punches '96  
Director of Public Relations & Marketing

Even though his stint spent on the Defiance College campus was relatively short – two years of a graduate assistantship – for Steve Sakosits '08, the time was instrumental in preparing him for what has become a highly successful role as a college baseball coach and mentor of student-athletes.

After graduating from DC with a master of arts in education degree and two years of coaching experience, Sakosits went on to Earlham College in Indiana where, in seven years as head baseball coach, he has “rewritten the record books.” In just those seven years, he has become the program’s most successful coach with 146 victories.

According to Earlham’s website, the 2017 team made history with the program’s first Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference regular season title. The Quakers amassed a program-best 30 victories, won the HCAC Tournament to qualify for the NCAA Division III Tournament for the first time, and earned its first NCAA tournament win (the college’s first in any sport). The team broke eight career records and six single season records and led all of D-III in stolen bases during the season.

Sakosits was named HCAC Coach of the Year in 2017, and several of his players received conference and other honors.

Since taking the helm at Earlham, Sakosits has steadily grown the baseball program. In 2015, the team qualified for the HCAC Tournament for the first time in school history. They went on the following year to play in the championship round. In 2014, the Quakers saw their first winning season since 1971.

“We’ve been able to do some special things so far at EC, but I feel we can take the program to an even higher level,” he says. “The goals each year are to compete for an HCAC championship, get into the NCAA tournament, and in the near future, capture an NCAA championship. Sometimes when people speak about these types of things, they can be seen as lofty, but I know we can do these things here.”

In his own college baseball career at Xavier University, Sakosits was a pitcher. A four-year letter winner, he wrapped up his own successful career ranked fourth among Musketeer pitchers in appearances and saves.

When he graduated from Middletown High School South in Middletown, N.J., he chose criminal justice for his undergrad academic major. "I wasn't the most motivated student in high school, so I knew that for me to be successful in college, I had to have an interest in what I was studying," he explains. He was a fan of popular police and court dramas like "Law and Order" and "CSI," hence the criminal justice major. "With enjoying the material I was learning in the classroom, I found success."

But it was his love of baseball that ultimately attracted Sakosits to a graduate assistantship at Defiance College. That, and the opportunity to earn a degree, he says, "from the same great institution my father received his from." His father, Stuart Sakosits, graduated from DC in 1968 and went on to a highly successful career in the finance industry. "What he was able to do with a Defiance degree has been amazing, and I knew I wanted a lot from my education," says Steve.

"I have a lot of great memories about my time at DC," he recalls. Not much older than some of the players, he felt it provided a good working relationship and made it easy to connect on what would make them successful both in the classroom and on the field. He also enjoyed the camaraderie

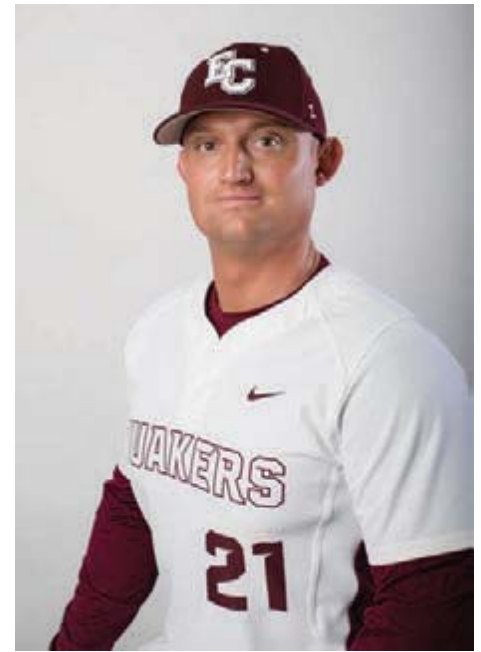
of other graduate assistants, many of whom are still coaching. The best man at his wedding was a DC classmate.

But the greatest influence on Sakosits from his DC experience was working with head baseball coach Derek Woodley. "I would not be here if it weren't for DC and especially Coach Woodley," he says. "Derek taught me how hard work and being prepared can take you a lot of places. What we do at Earlham is based a lot on what Coach Woodley taught me in my time working with him." He calls Woodley "an amazing coach and an even better mentor."

Woodley recalls Sakosits as a great assistant and is not surprised by his success. "I had a feeling he would be a great head coach because his work ethic is unmatched, and he has a passion for learning and developing," he says. "He truly cares about people and the development of student-athletes both on and off the field.

"Even though we compete against each other on the field, I am a huge supporter of what he does with his team and the program he has built at Earlham. The only time I don't cheer for him is when we play them!"

The baseball program at Earlham is centered on the phrase "Earned Not Given." Sakosits adds, "Nothing in life



Steve Sakosits '08

will be handed to you, but if you work hard for yourself and others, great things will happen to you. We want our student-athletes to compete in everything they do, in the classroom, ball field, or whatever."

Coaching at the college level is rewarding for Sakosits because the student-athletes are fully invested in both their academic and athletic success. As for his personal success, Sakosits considers himself a tireless worker and recruiter. "I am internally motivated to be my best, and if I expect maximum effort from my athletes then they should expect me to do the same. I love being the first one in the office and the last one to leave the field. I gained this from my father. No one was going to outwork him, and I want this to be the same for me."

Sakosits also helped orchestrate the donations for construction of the EC baseball stadium. In total, \$2.5 million was raised for the stadium, and \$350,000 in other fundraising avenues.

When he is not working, Sakosits enjoys spending time with his wife, Ashley, and following the WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment). He also likes going to EDM (electronic dance music) festivals, to which he says, "Random, but I am a different dude!"

He may be a different dude, but traditional values of hard work, personal growth, and concern for others are serving him well. ♦





# Creative



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

There's an adage that goes something like ... choose a job that you love, and you'll never work a day in your life.

For Brandon Knott, class of 1997, the saying couldn't be more accurate.

He fell in love with art as a kid and has been an artist all of his adult life. And, for the past 13 years, he's been fortunate to share that love with young people as an art teacher at Bryan High School.

"I feel like I have the best job I could ever have," said Knott. "What other job could you have to be able to be around kids and inspire them?"

Much of his own inspiration came from his undergraduate days in the art studio at Defiance College where now-emeritus professor Steve Smith motivated students to think and act creatively, blending knowledge, tradition, and a strong work ethic.

"Smith was always so caring and concerned. It made me want to be that kind of teacher," Knott recalled. "I wanted to be a mentor for others like he was for me."

And what makes Knott's job even better is that he shares his classroom with an equally talented teacher, Matt Neff, who also attended DC, in a school district where the arts are recognized and appreciated.

Knott was teaching at Oakwood Elementary School when he learned of an opening at Bryan. He said Neff encouraged the administration to hire Knott. He started teaching at the middle school and eventually moved to the high school where he started a ceramics program about nine years ago.

Ceramics has become one of the most popular electives at the school, growing from 75 students the first year to about 200 currently.

The 2016-17 academic year christened a new K-12 school building in Bryan. The campus on the city's north side was designed to be a 21st century learning environment emphasizing openness, collaboration, integrated technology, and project-based learning. What better place to sow the seeds of art in youth? The concept is easily apparent in the art department that features separate labs for ceramics, drawing/painting, and CAD (video production and graphic design).

Neff attributes the state-of-the-art facilities to a community and school administration that has always supported the arts. "It's ingrained in the culture," he said. "Bryan is not afraid to hire the best people with experience. We're very fortunate." Knott added his appreciation to the Bryan community that is so supportive of their efforts.

Knott said it brings him great joy to see how students are integrating art into their lives, through photography, drawing, ceramics, and other media. And, they've had many students who have made a career out of art – through teaching or design – or who have gone on to distinguished graduate programs.

# Inspiration

“I want to thank my administrators who afford me the facilities, materials, and equipment to allow my students to grow, as well as all the people who taught me, not just ceramics and art but lessons about kindness, caring, and compassion. They are too numerous to mention.”

Knott, who also earned his master’s degree at Defiance College, has had his own business, called It’s Knott Pottery, for nearly 20 years. He creates functional, and sometimes whimsical, pottery that he sells online and at numerous galleries throughout the region.

His pottery has also become a staple at the popular Empty Bowls event sponsored by the Defiance College Social Work Organization. The annual supper raises funds for the local PATH Center and features soup served in handmade bowls made by Knott. He also sets up a demonstration ceramic wheel during the event. This year, Knott made more than 650 bowls for the Defiance College fundraiser. He collaborates on a similar event in Bryan.

Knott’s studio is located at his home in Continental. He has a 25x25-foot building dedicated to his creations, and the studio is open by chance or appointment. His website, [www.itsknottpottery.com](http://www.itsknottpottery.com), links to his various social media as well as an ETSY page.

Knott is married to Shelby, his wife of 17 years, and has three children, Chloe, Ian, and Tristin.

Blending the fulfillment of teaching with his love of creating art has been a happy union for Knott these past many years. “I have lots of things that inspire me,” he explained, mentioning Japanese pottery and printmaking, 20th century English pottery, and several contemporary functional American potters. “I take all of the information I gather from these sources and put them through my own personal filter to come up with parts of my style.”

Music also plays a big role in his creative spirit. “I am inspired by music, which I always have playing in my studio. As I am creating, it really helps to keep me going. I love heavy metal’s sheer intensity.” He also appreciates folk, blues and classic rock. “Having music on as I work helps to create a flow to the processes.

“I really get excited by the idea of making technically advanced forms, the discovery of new processes, and working to achieve the best work I can make by pushing myself to get better as a craftsman,” he said. “I feel like clay is the most conducive medium for me to try and achieve that. There just seems to be no limit to what I can do with clay.

“I also always like to think I give my customers their money’s worth, and I hope my pottery is taken home with them, cherished, and used in their daily rituals. For me there is no better compliment than when a customer says, ‘I use your mug every day. It’s my favorite one.’” ♦



# Diverse

# Education

by Kathy PUNCHES '96, Director of Public Relations & Marketing



Genelle Castro graduated from Defiance College in 2015 not only with a diploma certifying that she had fulfilled her academic requirements in teacher education, but with a rich and diverse resumé.

“The thing that shaped my career the most was all of the school placements that I had to participate in throughout the education program,” she recalls. “I had the opportunity to experience a completely different school setting than what I had grown up in and meet incredible teachers who added different perspectives and gave great advice.” Van Wert High School teacher Jeff Hood was “the best mentor teacher any phys ed major could ever ask for,” she says. “He taught me so much.”

Now in her third year of teaching, Genelle spent her first year as a physical education teacher at a charter school in downtown Columbus. She is now health and wellness teacher at Columbus School for Girls, an all-girls private school in Bexley, Ohio.

She loves working with youth. “They are our future, and seeing them learn, overcome adversity, and have fun while doing it is inspiring,” she says. “Being a person that can help them along that path and be a positive role model is really rewarding.”

Genelle had her own role models as a college student. She recalls professors Katie Griffis and Tim Rickabaugh as faculty members who made an impact in her academic experience. Also, Alpha Phi Omega and the Service Leadership program “showed me the hardest-working and most awesome people ever.”

She was fortunate to have several domestic and international travel experiences during her years at DC. She participated in Habitat for Humanity spring break trips every year. “I loved being able to use my hands, learn new skills, and help individuals in need.”

She traveled with the men’s basketball team to Costa Rica where she watched the team compete internationally and took part in a service project to create a basketball court for a local community. The trip also gave her the opportunity to practice her Spanish language skills.

Perhaps most life-changing during her college years was participating as a McMaster Scholar in a McMaster School project in Tanzania. She hosted a rural women’s conference focused on personal and feminine hygiene, entrepreneurship, and women’s empowerment.

Genelle is no stranger to international culture. Her father is a native of Bolivia. She grew up in Westerville, Ohio, with her parents, sister, and a cousin, grandfather and multiple aunts who also immigrated from Bolivia. At Westerville North High School, she played soccer, was a viola player in the orchestra, and was involved in Interact.

She now lives in Columbus with her fiancé, Taylor, and they are planning to be married in June 2018. Genelle hopes in the near future to expand her teaching to more physical education studies and to enroll in graduate school. ♦



# Education is in her veins

**I truly believe teaching is a calling, and no matter where you are or what you're doing, you are always teaching.**

As a Northwest Ohio native, Defiance College faculty member Rachel Eicher is very familiar with area schools and communities. Her family lived in Archbold, and her mother, June, was a teacher in the Fayette school system.

When it came time to choose a college, Rachel knew she wanted an education from a small liberal arts college. "I narrowed my search and ultimately decided Defiance College was for me," she recalled. "It was a natural fit."

Her family attended the United Church of Christ in Archbold, so the UCC affiliation with Defiance College was also a draw.

Knowing she didn't want to teach high school, she chose to pursue the K-8 licensure. Graduating with the class of 1991, she recalls many of the education faculty from that time period – Jim Bray, Dale King, Dr. Bonnie Sloan and Peggy Myles, to name a few. She enjoyed DC's liberal arts education and says it prepared her well for her profession. Classes like philosophy, art appreciation and CORE stretched students' thinking.

She did her student teaching in the first grade at Anthony Wayne Elementary School. "I felt that they prepared me, and I was ready to go," she said.

Prepared to teach, Rachel entered the public school system, teaching in Fayette for several years, the same system where her mother was a teacher.

She decided to enter graduate school, enrolling at Bowling Green State University where she earned a Master of Education in reading. She started teaching as an adjunct professor at Defiance College and Northwest State Community College in 2010 and three years later was hired at DC as a full-time faculty member. Her current title is Assistant Professor of Practice of Early Childhood Education.

Rachel recently completed a Doctorate of Education in teaching and learning at the University of Findlay. Her current classroom focus is early childhood and reading courses. She also supervises student teachers.

"I truly believe teaching is a calling, and no matter where you are or what you're doing, you are always teaching," she said. "The transition from teaching in a public school to here has been rewarding – to watch our students and their growth.

"It's interesting to see them as freshmen and so green, and then as seniors as they cross that threshold. It's so different for each one. They are so individual. That's the reward."

She says today's education students have to be prepared for change. "I believe we [DC] do an excellent job of preparing them for a very demanding profession." ♦