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for Real Understanding P 4

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# MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



WINTER 2023







# MARRIOTT

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◀ **BYU STUDENT PARTICIPATES IN ONE OF MANY ACTIVITIES HELD DURING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK. ACTIVITIES WERE DESIGNED TO HELP BYU STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT AND STRENGTHEN THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.**

Um, incorrect! • I grew up in Utah, but I also served my mission in Canada, where it was like a land of eternal winter. I'm kind of just done with it being cold. • I think it'd be better the other way. • Those are prerequisite classes. You don't have to do those until next year—but you do have to do them. • Didn't expect to run into you here. • Are you in this class? Do you know if it was canceled? • It was very wise advice. I'm just not at that place right now. • I think we did a great job! • I painted my nails because I wanted to feel productive—I think I take better notes when my nails are cute. • The fact that she accidentally airdropped that to you is hilarious. • I think it sounds okay. I mean, it's not as good as mine. • I'm just giving you a hard time. • Why didn't you tell us you started dating her again? • Sometimes I just really want a beard. • I thought I was following you! • I need to get off campus; I'm going crazy. • If I've learned anything from my four years, it's that anything can be procrastinated. • I have an alternative solution. • I'll probably just be working on the tax return most of the day. • I can respect a fat check. • There are a couple things I may have done wrong, but I feel mostly okay about it. • I was such a bougie child. • I expected to make \$70,000 but only got \$8,000. • It made me happy—I might even do it again. Who's to say. • I just want a really good cookie. You know? • Thanks for doing my taxes. • Apparently when you export to a PDF, it doesn't take those out. • I'm so ready for spring. The other day I put away all my winter clothes, and then it snowed—again. • I wish you could see my thought process. • I think this essay actually makes sense. • Did I ever text you back? Nope. • Do you want to do my laundry too? • It doesn't really take a lot of creativity. • I might go take a nap. • Let's make a time lapse of us cleaning our room. • We're probably looking to raise one and a half times. • We're in the Tanner, where are you? • His fingers are only so fast. • If I don't do anything else, I get a B minus. • Everyone else is listening, why aren't you? • You're making freaking bank. • We can do this. We can do this. • I know it's not personal, but how are you not supposed to feel like it is? • Hopefully I didn't get a parking ticket. • That's the problem with this industry, you're never going to make as much as you think you're going to make. • You could be a professional door opener. • I have attractive-parent energy.

**OVERHEARD  
IN THE  
TANNER**



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Cover illustration by Eric Chow

# THE QUEST OF THE QUESTION

By Emily Edmonds  
Illustrations  
by Eran Mendel

*Tips for Improving  
Conversations*

For Richie T. Steadman, founder and a host of *The Cultural Hall* podcast, asking quality questions is crucial.

“If I walk into a situation where I’m not prepared with good questions, it becomes an utter waste of time,” says Steadman, who is also the producer of BYU Radio’s *The Lisa Show*. “If there’s no connection made between me and the other person, no one can learn or become better because of our conversations.”

Using questions to understand others, strengthen relationships, and improve oneself is a meaningful skill in any occupation. “Questions help us engage whole people—their minds, their hearts,” says Aaron Ashby, vice president of innovation at FranklinCovey Education. “A good leader spends more time with a question that provokes thinking and engages the listener rather than handing information to someone.”

Posing earnest questions encourages employees to go below the surface, and that’s beneficial in any job, says Paul Godfrey, the William and Roceil Low Professor of Business Strategy at BYU Marriott.





“To solve a problem effectively, you have to make sure you’re solving the right problem, which is often two or three levels below the surface,” Godfrey says. “Questions are powerful both for getting us to the deep cause of problems and for getting us to recognize the assumptions we have used to frame the problems.”

It’s likely that examining your questioning abilities will leave you feeling uneasy. The good news? A little conscientiousness can go a long way. As with learning other skills, self-awareness, practice, and a willingness to be uncomfortable will propel you on your quest to become a better communicator.

### Creating Curiosity

When it comes to asking good questions, your intent is just as important as the words you choose. “A good question comes from a place of curiosity; it is not an opinion with a question mark at the end,” says Erin Clymer Lessard, chief strategy officer and principal consultant of Lapin International and author of the book *Decision Flow*. “Making a statement with a question mark is not a question.”

Last year, Ashby’s 20-year-old daughter noticed statements disguised as questions in Ketanji Brown Jackson’s Supreme Court confirmation hearings. “My daughter observed that the senators weren’t asking questions to actually find out what the nominee believed—they were posturing to appease their base,” says Ashby, who earned his MBA from BYU Marriott in 2003. “That doesn’t only happen in politics; it certainly happens in business. Questions ought to be seeking to genuinely understand, not to accuse or make a point.”

Steadman says there’s a natural curiosity that exists within every person. “Being a good interviewer is taking that natural curiosity and throwing it back in the form of a question,” he says. “Sometimes that takes bravery; you don’t want to look stupid or seem like you weren’t paying attention. But sometimes you just have to put yourself on the altar of not knowing.”

For Clymer Lessard, who is also a credentialed executive coach, good questions combine this curiosity with respect and humility. “When we ask good questions, there’s a sense that we don’t have to have all the answers,” she says. “Once you start managing people,

you have to shift professionally—not just show up and have all the answers. As you learn to ask better questions, it communicates that what other people are thinking is welcome and critical to doing good work.”

Sometimes very simple questions can be quite profound, Clymer Lessard continues. “If I’m a leader and I see you share a challenge with a coworker, I could fixate on those details, or I could ask, ‘What relationship do

you want to have with this person?’ or ‘How are you getting in the way of the relationship you want?’ Sometimes the bombs come in the simplicity,” she says.

### All Ears

Clymer Lessard says asking good questions is predicated upon good listening. “Often we’re taught—and often we’re rewarded—for listening with our next response in mind,”





# FOUR QUESTIONS FROM THE STRATEGY MAJOR

Five years ago, BYU Marriott's Strategy Department began focusing its teaching on four questions that every business needs to ask:

#1

**Where do we compete?**

#2

**Why do we win with customers?**

#3

**How do we create value for customers?**

#4

**Why can't other people copy us?**

"We always thought about strategy as a very linear process, but these questions make students think in a more integrated, holistic way," Godfrey says. "We use better questions to get better answers."

It's a powerful framework, he continues: "These questions simplify a whole bunch of analytical tools that look like they're separate and unconnected, but those four questions show you a connection between all the different models and frameworks, so they allow you to unify and simplify."

she says. "We think, 'How do I sound smart in the next thing I say?'" That's level-one listening, a term she learned at Co-Active Training Institute.

But a deeper and more meaningful way to engage is to remove the habit of thinking about our response. "Level-two listening is completely focused on the other person. It's curious and empathetic," she says. "Different things come into my mind as I pay attention to you and your story. When I'm present and out of my own head, then I have all kinds of good questions."

Insightful questions help the other person consider something they are wrestling with, Clymer Lessard explains: "Good questions don't make you the problem-solver; good questions make them the problem-solver."

Listening thoroughly is something that Ashby focuses on as a FranklinCovey employee, particularly because of the fifth habit taught in Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

"We spend a lot of time helping people in organizations think about what it looks like to really listen and not impose your autobiography and not advise or probe," Ashby says. "Probing sounds like good questioning, but it's not. If you're truly seeking to understand someone else, you are just asking to clarify what they're saying and repeating back what you hear and what they feel about what they're saying."

Listening is not only a skill—it's also an attitude, says Ashby. "The attitude is 'I'm going to put my own agenda on hold long enough to understand you or to understand this situation,'" he explains. "If someone has taken the time to craft an honest, thoughtful response, you respect that."

## Savor the Silence

A conversational pause might feel clumsy, but using silence is a skill the keenest questioners possess.

"We are so prone to fill the silence because we're uncomfortable," says Clymer Lessard. "People need to know you're not going to fill the space, so they can. We're so conditioned to go fast that we're deeply uncomfortable with silence, even a second, but sometimes that's precisely what you need."

Even if a few seconds feel unbearable, try to extend that time even longer. "Some of the best responses come if you let a question sit there for 10 to 20 seconds," Ashby says. "The brain needs time to process."

One of the things that belies honesty is asking a question and then continuing to talk, Godfrey points out: "The key to open communication is that you actually want the answer you're asking for and are willing to wait for it."

Authenticity is often the reward for awkwardness. "It's perfectly fine to ask a question directly and let it sit. That allows people to finish their statements or answer the question," Steadman says. "You will get a more

authentic response because people will continue to speak. Keep waiting, and then they think of even more."

## Ask Openly and Ye Shall Receive

If leaders want answers that will help their organizations grow, encouraging a culture in which employees can speak without qualms—not just say what they think they should—is paramount.

"The proof has to come before the question," Clymer Lessard says. "Create an environment in which psychological safety is prevalent. Make it okay for an answer to disagree with you."

Responses and actions need to demonstrate that answering openly is invited, she continues: "You want those you're talking with to be able to answer in a way you wouldn't have thought of as a leader. Make space for that."

Steadman believes demeanor is key. "I want to react in a way that's open and not judgmental, so people know they can trust me," he says. "I make sure my body language is not closed off."

Approaching questions from a place of flexibility is also helpful. "There's an element of allowing an answer to change. This conversation doesn't have to be so final that someone is scared to answer. Try instead 'What's your best guess right now?'" Ashby suggests.

Of course, questioning can be challenging for people who are trying to establish

credibility early in their careers. “When people are expected to demonstrate their competence, it can be hard to figure out how to use the right type of questioning,” Clymer Lessard says. When in doubt, she recommends taking a humble, teachable approach. “You could say, ‘I’m seeing it from this perspective. What else should I be considering?’ That demonstrates a teachability. Share what you see and hold it with humility. Invite rather than defend,” she says.

Steadman, who has worked in broadcasting for more than 20 years, says he hasn’t always felt like a good questioner. “I would get nervous, thinking the interview had to go a certain way,” he says. “But I learned you can’t control things, which is the best because you can get into a conversation and think it’s one thing and then have it be completely different. Sincere answers let you see things differently.”

### Improving Inquiries

Some people seem naturally more inquisitive than others, which begs the question: How can someone who’s less inclined to inquire learn to do so?

“You’re limiting the value you add if you can’t find a way to be inquisitive,” Clymer Lessard says. “Find a place to start where the stakes aren’t high. It’s a powerful tool to bring into your home life. How can I be more curious when my child tells me about his day? How can I respond when listening about my spouse’s day and not dive into talking about my work?”

To help someone who might not feel naturally inquisitive, Clymer Lessard suggests, for example, doing a mindfulness exercise, which entails focusing on five things you see, four things you feel, three things you hear, two things you smell, and one thing

you taste. “An exercise like this engages us in being super present. For leaders, it’s stopping the ticker tape in their heads and getting in touch with different ways of noticing,” she explains.

Few people are born good questioners, Godfrey notes. “We get trained to believe that question-asking is some magical skill, but all we need to do is practice,” he says. “One of the things we all learned as little kids was that some of the questions we really wanted the answers to, adults didn’t want to talk about. Very early on we’re told, ‘Don’t ask that’ or ‘How could you wonder about that?’ As kids we pick up quickly what’s out of bounds, and we retreat. Some of us retreat even further and stop asking altogether.”

If the thought of asking questions still gets you queasy, here are a couple of tips. “I’ll introduce myself to someone, and then I’ll ask about something in their office or their Zoom background, like a book or a picture,” Steadman says. “That leads to questions like ‘Is that a photo of your family?’ ‘Why did you choose the starship *Enterprise* for your virtual background?’ Many people get right to the business of a meeting, but I want to know the whole person.”

Godfrey’s favorite icebreaker question is “Where’s your hometown?” “Everybody likes to talk about where they grew up,” he says. “Once I know where they’re from, I can ask follow-up questions about sports or something else that is tied to that place. For example, if someone is from New York City, then my next question might be ‘Are you a Yankees fan or a Mets fan?’”

In addition, open-ended queries are often praised—and rightfully so. But Godfrey says close-ended questions, or those with short, simple answers, also have their place and are particularly helpful in moving things forward.

“In business you have to get to a point: Should we do this—yes or no? Is this a good product—yes or no? Those questions are helpful in getting to a decision and in implementation,” he explains. “Some questions open up discussions; others bring them to conclusions successfully.”

### Avoiding Pitfalls

Sometimes questioning goes awry. One snag is asking too many questions. Godfrey believes that one way you can avoid excessive

## HOMEWORK FROM HAL

Hal Gregersen is a senior lecturer in leadership and innovation at the MIT Sloan School of Management, but before that, he taught thousands of students during his 14 years with BYU Marriott. Gregersen is passionate about understanding and sharing the crucial role of questions. If you’re interested in diving deeper into the quest of questioning, here are a handful of resources from him.

### Watch:

“What Are You Dead Wrong About Today?” (TEDxBYU video)

### Read:

*Questions Are the Answer: A Breakthrough Approach to Your Most Vexing Problems at Work and in Life* (book)

### Listen:

*AFP Conversations*, episode 220, “Navigating Uncertainty Through the Power of Inquiry” (podcast)

*Dear HBR*, episode 57, “Stay or Go?” (podcast)

*Disrupt Yourself Podcast with Whitney Johnson*, episode 124, “Choose Your Questions Well” (podcast)



*In business you have to get to a point:  
Should we do this—yes or no?  
Is this a good product—yes or no?  
Those questions are helpful in getting to  
a decision and in implementation.*



questioning is to ask, “How will the answer help me?” “If the answer doesn’t change anything, then stop asking questions,” he says.

In addition to overasking, there are other ways questions can backfire: they can highlight insecurities or be used as an ego play, Godfrey says. “What we know from sales and marketing is that whoever asks the questions is in control of the conversation. Some people don’t want to give up asking questions because they don’t want to give up control,” he explains.

For Godfrey, the questions that are most likely to flop are rhetorical ones that put people in a box. “You don’t want to use questioning to create superiority over other people or to demean them,” he says.

Additionally, asking questions for the sake of asking questions is simply a waste of time. “If action needs to happen and there’s a predetermined answer, it’s not the time to ask questions. That’s not the moment to lead employees through a discovery process,” Clymer Lessard says. “There’s nothing more annoying.”

### **Inquiring Minds**

Some people avoid posing questions. Others offer trick questions. No doubt the quest of effective questioning boasts numerous pitfalls. Not every inquiry will elicit the conversations you hoped, and sometimes the responses might even unveil information you didn’t want to hear. But when questions create a beneficial result, the journey proves worthwhile.

“You get a better picture of the truth when a lot of people share different angles and are willing to listen to each other on how those angles fit together,” says Ashby. “Sometimes people have relevant experiences or deep thoughts that you didn’t expect. Honor the process of getting answers from everyone.”

That effort is worth the reward both professionally and personally. Like Clymer Lessard says, “It feels pretty great to be asked a question that you’re excited to answer.” **M**

### **About the Author**

*Emily Edmonds is a former editor of Marriott Alumni Magazine and earned her BA and MA in communications from BYU. Her three young daughters ask her approximately 1,317 questions each day.*



# Multi-Generational Momentum

In the last decade, multigenerational living—or residing in homes that include at least two generations of adults or homes that have grandparents living with grandchildren under age 25—has nearly quadrupled in the United States.



6 in 10

**THE NUMBER OF ADULTS LIVING IN MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSING WHO BEGAN OR CONTINUED THEIR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS DUE TO COVID-19.**

The COVID-19 pandemic played a strong role in the recent rise in multigenerational living. Caregiving needs, the economic climate, unforeseen life changes, and cultural or family expectations also contributed to the increase.

Source: [gu.org/resources/multigenerational-families](https://gu.org/resources/multigenerational-families)

79%

**THE NUMBER OF MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLD RESIDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED ENHANCED RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RESIDENT FAMILY MEMBERS.**

Those living in multigenerational homes report improved relations with other members of the household. Other reported benefits include easier care for elders and children, improved finances, increased school or work opportunities for residents, and strengthened physical or mental health.

Source: [gu.org/explore-our-topics/multigenerational-households](https://gu.org/explore-our-topics/multigenerational-households)



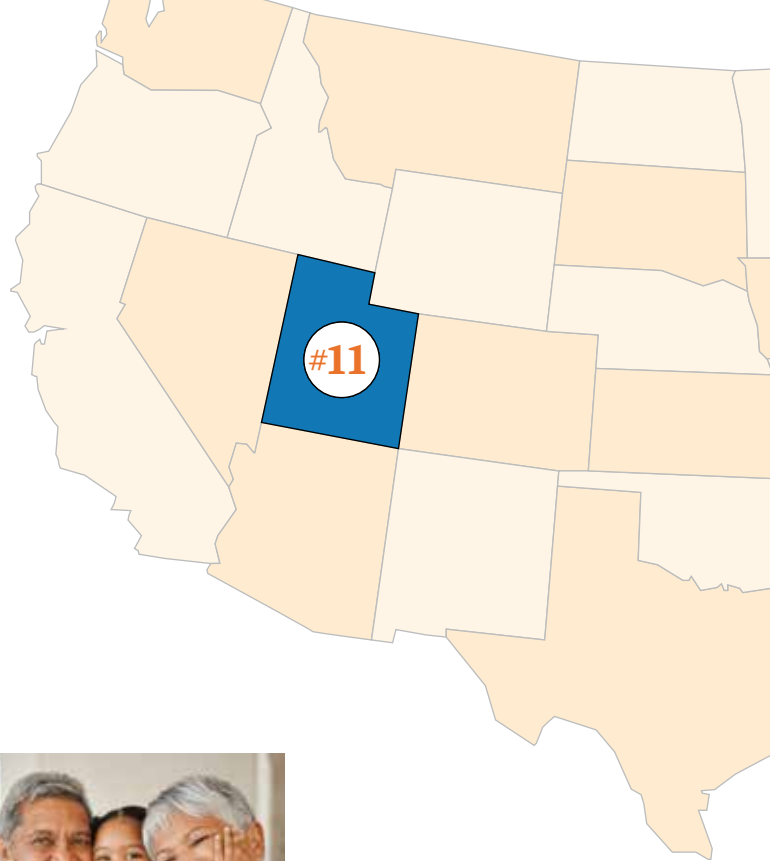
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#### UTAH'S RANKING AMONG STATES WITH THE MOST MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS IN 2018.

About 4 percent of Beehive State residents—or approximately 41,000 households—live in multigenerational homes. Hawaii tops the list at almost

8 percent, followed by California, Texas, and New Jersey.

Source: [businessinsider.com/the-states-with-the-most-multigenerational-households-2020-4#11](https://businessinsider.com/the-states-with-the-most-multigenerational-households-2020-4#11)



66.7 million

#### THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN ADULTS WHO RESIDE IN MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS.

The most common type of multigenerational household includes three generations: grandparents, parents, and adult or underage children.

Source: [gu.org/explore-our-topics/multigenerational-households](https://gu.org/explore-our-topics/multigenerational-households)



26%

#### THE PERCENTAGE OF BLACK AND HISPANIC AMERICANS WHO LIVE IN MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS.

These two demographics are the most likely to live in homes with at least two adult generations; White Americans are the least likely. Housing trends are linked to cultural norms for each group, and the national increase in multigenerational living may be due to increased racial and ethnic diversity in the United States.

Source: [pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/03/24/the-demographics-of-multigenerational-households](https://pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/03/24/the-demographics-of-multigenerational-households)



25%

#### THE PERCENTAGE OF MULTIGENERATIONAL HOME BUYERS IN 2021 WHO BOUGHT PRIMARILY TO FACILITATE ELDERCARE.

Buyers of homes for multigenerational living are most commonly motivated by caregiving responsibilities; other motivators include spending more time with aging parents,

accommodating children 18 years and older who moved back or never left home, and saving money.

Source: <https://www.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2021-home-buyers-and-sellers-generational-trends-03-16-2021.pdf>



**Krislyn Powell**  
RECREATION MANAGEMENT, 2013







# CONNECT- ING THE DOTS

BYU Marriott alumna  
Krislyn Powell has  
a knack for creating  
connections, whether as  
a yogi, an administrator,  
or a volunteer.

BY EMILY EDMONDS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SLADE



birthday party is pretty much the best thing when you're a kid, but when Krislyn Powell was growing up, she loved the prep work as much as the parties themselves. She would carefully select a theme—such as a shopping spree or a luau—and ensure the favors and food aligned.

"I was always looking up different websites for decorations," she recalls. "I would pick party favors, organize messaging for the invitations, and make sure the guest list was all ready."

When it was time for the celebrations to begin, Powell also enjoyed hosting. "As sort of a shy child, I didn't love parties where you showed up and there weren't planned activities," she says. "I liked greeting people, making sure everyone felt connected to others, and offering fun activities."

That fondness for planning and hosting continued into adulthood, ultimately influencing her college education and her professional career. In her position as engagement manager of agent experience for Arizona-based Liveops, a virtual contact center, one of her main responsibilities is creating events and programs for contracted agents who provide customer service to big-name clients. She also manages an online community for 60,000 active agents—along with the correlating communications—from her home in Queen Creek, Arizona. "Our mission focuses on agents, clients, and employees all as customers who deserve an exceptional experience," she notes.

It didn't take long for Powell, who joined Liveops in 2021, to realize that the company's motto—Improving People's Lives—was a serious focus. "That's something I witness every day," she says. "It's at the heart of what we do, and I've never been happier with a team that I've worked with."

Powell's passion for creating community and connections keeps her life in check. "When I feel like my purpose is deviating or I don't feel like I'm fulfilled, I ask myself, 'Where are you cultivating community? Where are you leaning in? How are you finding connections?'" she says.

### STRETCHING HERSELF

During Powell's first semester at BYU, the looming midterm tests weighed heavily on her. She mentioned her stress to a friend as they settled into their seats before a class. Her friend had the perfect response: "Why don't you come to yoga class with me? It's free for students."

Powell accepted the offer and found herself rolling out a mat in the Smith Fieldhouse two days later, hopeful the class would bring some reprieve.

Initially, she was disappointed. "The poses were frustrating, it was uncomfortable, and the breathing was difficult," Powell says. "I like to be good at things quickly, and this was taking a lot of effort."

But by the time Powell uttered "namaste" an hour later, she had a different perspective. "My mindset had shifted, the stress had lifted, and I was feeling so much relief. I realized this was something I had to pursue," she says.

Powell, now a certified yoga teacher, credits the practice for not only helping her connect with others but also strengthening her to overcome challenges. "I've learned yoga is a metaphor for life. Being able to work on holding the poses and keeping a steady breath has helped me. When I feel like things are trying to knock me down or sway me, I'm figuratively able to 'hold those poses.'"

### BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

The oldest of five children, Powell grew up in an athletic family. She was also a talented writer who served as her high school's newspaper editor in North Phoenix, Arizona. When she got to BYU, however, she felt less of a pull to journalism and began college with an undeclared major.

"I felt like there was a missing piece. I wasn't playing basketball anymore, something I'd done my entire life," she says. "I initially chose recreation management because of its focus on finding community and staying active and healthy."

About halfway through her program, the recreation management major moved from the College of Health and Human Performance, where it had been more fitness and wellness related, to BYU Marriott, where it gained a business focus. "I feel like I enjoyed the best of both worlds," Powell says. "My classes became more about how we could make an impact through our careers, whether in corporate, nonprofits, or sports."

### ON POINT

Thanks to her new BYU Marriott connections, Powell began interning at Thanksgiving Point as she finished up





her degree in 2013. That internship proved pivotal in more ways than one. In addition to gaining invaluable experience, Powell met Brittany Loose, a public events manager who would become one of her greatest mentors. “She taught me about the meaning of cultivating community and building a sense of purpose within events,” Powell explains.

In her seven months at Thanksgiving Point, Powell worked a myriad of events, from festivals and exhibits to races and concerts. She also got to plan an event from scratch: the Squealer Kids Fun Run, an outdoor obstacle course and mud race that featured pigs from a local farm and participants outfitted with snouts.

Loose, who now directs marketing and events at Fight Against Domestic Violence, says it was easy to trust Powell with big projects such as the fun run. “Krislyn will not back down from a challenge, as daunting as it may seem,” she says.

Loose also noticed Powell’s talent for connecting with others. “Krislyn has a natural ability to balance professionalism with warmth and empathy when working with clients and colleagues. I learned very early that she is an excellent active listener, and she always asks the most thoughtful questions to ensure that she absorbs and understands what is being taught or spoken about,” Loose says.

## FAMILY CONNECTIONS

After graduation, Powell moved back to Arizona to work as a membership and wellness director at the YMCA in Chandler; she also began volunteering as a middle-school girls basketball coach, which later led to several paid high-school coaching opportunities.

A couple of years later, Loose reached out. She had moved from Thanksgiving Point to Google Fiber, and she talked Powell into returning to Utah and joining her.

While she was working at Google Fiber, Powell was set up with Matt, a medic in the US Army Special Forces. Right

“Krislyn has a natural ability to balance professionalism with warmth and empathy when working with clients and colleagues.”

before their date, however, Matt was deployed to Southeast Asia for a four-month stint; when he returned, they tried again. Dinner at a Park City restaurant provided an ideal environment, and the two quickly connected.

Nine months later, Powell and Matt were married. “We’re both the oldest in our families, so we each like to be the one who dictates what’s going to happen. Matt’s very spur-of-the-moment,” Powell says. “I like to plan and think long-term, but I’ve enjoyed his surprises. Life is boring if it’s planned to a T.”

Marriage wasn’t the only change in Powell’s life; she applied for and landed a job as the event manager for Downtown Tempe Authority, and the couple headed back to Arizona, where Matt had also grown up. “I loved getting to know and serving our Tempe community,” Powell says. “Many of the volunteers and staff that I managed at events were residents who cared deeply about the work.”

In fall 2019, Powell became pregnant and then miscarried, which left her physically and mentally fragile. “It was a difficult path to walk, and it took time to heal,” says Powell, who once again credits mindfulness with helping her through the loss. “Committing to a mindful practice can see you through anything. Sitting on a mat and breathing for even just five minutes shut out the noise and carved out a space in my life where I wasn’t confused.”

Fast forward two years, and the Powells welcomed a son, Cooper, to their family. “Being a mom is the hardest thing I’ve ever done,” she says, acknowledging that she’s grateful for a strong support system and for work-from-home employment. “But it has also taught me so much about time management, getting things done, and being able to connect quickly. I’ve never been so tired—but I’ve also never felt so energized.”

Powell let her yoga and mindfulness practices lapse while she was in postpartum survival mode but recently picked them back up. “I’ve felt strong enough





Powell enrolled in the parks and recreation management master's degree program at Northern Arizona University, initially with the plan to become an administrator much like the TV character Leslie Knope. "My family teased me about that," Powell says with a smile. Her choice of study was interesting

given that in her youth she was a self-described "girly girl" who didn't enjoy going on family campouts. "In college I realized that I needed to find a way to cope with stress and school, so I found yoga and hiking," she says. "My time outdoors is now something I savor."

Powell graduated with her master's degree in 2022 and notes that she was a bit of an anomaly in the program because of her experience in marketing, events, and communications; interestingly, those topics turned out to be a significant focus. "The curriculum was dedicated to experience management—how a person journeys through a program—and that applies to so many industries," she says. "I've realized that working in the recreation industry doesn't mean you need to know everything about the outdoors. There are other elements of recreation."

### COMMUNITY CURATOR

Powell's comfort in navigating grad school as an outlier likely stemmed from guidance she received as a teen. The summer before her senior year of high school, Powell was one of 16 students selected to attend a summer journalism institute at Arizona State University, and the thought of spending two weeks attending classes and living in dorms stirred up some social jitters. "I struggled meeting new people, and I remember telling my mom, 'I won't know anyone.' My mom told me to go find someone sitting alone and be their friend and make them feel comfortable," Powell says.

That advice has stuck with her. "We're all going through this human journey, and however different it may be, we all share points along our journey that are similar," she says. "It's important to find and forge friendships that can serve as support, both being able to lean on other people and also being the shoulder for other people to lean on."

That reciprocity comes into play as Powell utilizes the community service hours Liveops provides her to help at a senior citizen home with her dog Kai. "It's been impactful for me, and Kai gets all the attention and affection he wants," she says. "I've learned so much in such a short time by taking these moments to sit still and listen to the residents we visit as they find joy and peace from simply petting my sweet golden retriever."

Powell, who now calls herself an outgoing introvert, thrives in environments such as these where she can connect with people, and she is working to build her own social community by sharing tips and resources on social media regarding community, professional success, and wellness; she also enjoys networking on LinkedIn. "As I'm finding community and connecting with people, I am seeing the little moments in my life that feel special," she says, "and I am learning more about Christlike love." **M**

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Emily Edmonds is a former editor of Marriott Alumni Magazine. She earned her BA and MA in communications from BYU.*

"I like to plan and think long-term, but I've enjoyed his surprises. Life is boring if it's planned to a T."

mentally and physically to devote an hour to the mat every day," she says. "It's made a world of difference in my energy, stamina, and patience."

The extra boost yoga gives her comes in handy as she balances work and introduces Cooper to the world. "I want to create opportunities where he gets to build strong relationships with the people who love him the most and where I can encourage him to explore," Powell says.

### NEVER SAY NEVER

When Powell graduated from BYU in 2013, she told herself she would never go back to school. However, a couple years before the pandemic hit, she began mulling over the idea. "I think 2020 forced everyone to take deep looks at themselves," she observes. "It hit me that if I wanted to pursue another degree, it was now or never."



# Where Everything Is Awesome

**BY THE TIME THEY GET TO COLLEGE**, most students have gotten rid of their childhood toys. But in BYU Marriott's Experience Design and Management (ExDM) program, professors encourage students to play with toys—in fact, it's a requirement for one class.

When ExDM grad Amanda Everson from Maple Grove, Minnesota, signed up for ExDM 404: Experience Design with associate professor Mat Duerden, she was surprised to see that LEGO® kits were part of the curriculum. "I laughed when I saw a LEGO kit was on our booklist," she says. Turns out, the LEGO projects became one of her favorite parts of class.

Professors have incorporated a teaching practice called LEGO Serious Play® into the curriculum for both undergrad and MBA experience design courses. "Using LEGO bricks, you give people a challenge, you have

them build something, and then you have everybody share their models," explains Duerden. "Abstract ideas change when we build concrete models or prototypes of those ideas; LEGO kits are an incredibly adaptable teaching tool."

Students such as Everson enjoy incorporating LEGO kits in the classroom because the kits let students see their ideas in a different light. "The main reason for using the LEGO Serious Play kits is to inspire innovation," says Everson. "If students can catapult creativity by using physical objects rather than trying to express their ideas with words or draw them on paper, the ideas become more tangible."

One LEGO challenge Duerden posed in class was to find a way to improve an experience. Everson's group redesigned the airline experience. Using blocks, wheels, LEGO®

Minifigures, and other classic LEGO elements, students built rough visualizations of their ideas. Everson's solution included giving passengers a warm cookie before their flight took off. Another idea was handing out goodie bags as passengers walked on the plane. All ideas were shared in rough LEGO form in Duerden's judgment-free classroom.

The class also includes more abstract challenges. One challenge Duerden gives students is to build a physical model of a quality they appreciate in a classmate. After a few minutes of building, students share their models with each other. "Some of the LEGO models were funny, and some held a lot of compassion and reality," says Everson.

Using LEGO Serious Play methodology also helps visual learners look at the design-thinking process from a different perspective. As projects move from ideation to prototypes, visual representations can help teams discover flaws or new ideas. "Once you make an idea in three dimensions, you find yourself realizing, 'That wouldn't work,' or 'This would work well, but let's move it over here,' or 'How can we combine them into one?'" says Everson.

While playing with toys in class may be discouraged in other places across campus, the experience design program's unconventional teaching methodologies prepare students to think differently and embrace going back to the childlike state of mind where creativity flourishes.

"The ExDM program is teaching students things we can apply to any aspect of our lives and helping us come up with solutions to problems in a different way," says Everson. "We're realizing that we can be creative, we can innovate, and it doesn't have to be difficult."

—NATASHA RAMIREZ

***"Abstract ideas change when we build concrete models or prototypes of those ideas; LEGO kits are an incredibly adaptable teaching tool."***









# MAK ING PRE PARED NESS PER SON AL

*In an uncertain world, are you ready for the next curveball? The **FIRST** in a series of articles to help you evaluate and improve your preparedness.*

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BY BRITTANY ROGERS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC CHOW

**A**t the very least, the COVID-19 pandemic gave the entire world a preparedness gut check.

“Those runs on groceries and paper goods and water were so telling,” observes BYU food science professor Laura Jefferies, noting that people certainly didn’t appear ready for that type—or perhaps any type—of emergency.

“The pandemic was definitely a wake-up call,” agrees her colleague, BYU nutrition professor Rickelle Richards.

These two, along with former BYU professor Michelle Call, could have predicted the panic. Just a few years before the pandemic, they embarked on a yearslong project to study US household preparedness across three groups: the general public, those receiving food assistance, and—perhaps of particular interest to the readership of this magazine—members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Their results, published in three papers during 2021 and 2022, reveal preparedness strengths and blind spots as well as some surprising findings about Church members.

Think back to March 2020 and take stock: How did you do? Were you ready physically, financially, emotionally, and spiritually? If you had to run out for an item, if you were worried about layoffs, if FaceTime ever fell short of real human connection, there are readiness action items for you in the suggestions that follow.

In fact, there is one crucial item that these researchers found that nearly everyone had wrong—and it’s not toilet paper. Plus, there’s a financial necessity BYU Marriott dean Brigitte Madrian is worried that alums are underestimating.

In a world where the number of disasters has increased by a factor of five over the last 50 years (according to the World Meteorological Organization) and in which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports the United States is continually setting new disaster records, it’s good to take inventory—again and again—of all your resources. Time to prep.

## ✦ A Frightening Rise

A fascinating—and bleak—chart on [climate.gov](https://climate.gov) breaks down the number of billion-dollar disasters in the United States from 1980 through 2021. It color codes every type of event: drought, fire, cyclone, flood, etc. The upward trend is exponential.

According to statistics and studies from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), one type of event is far outpacing all others: severe storms that are now being “supercharged” by climate change.

As disasters have accelerated, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been encouraging US households to be prepared through its Ready campaign, which includes recommendations for emergency kits and supplies that can last for three days. FEMA’s guides are in step with what Church members have heard for years.

“The best instruction is to follow the prophet,” says Jefferies. The Church has always emphasized self-reliance and emergency preparedness, she notes. That said, the research team began to wonder: With all this effort and emphasis put into preparedness, how are members in the Church of Jesus Christ actually doing?

With funding from a BYU Religious Studies grant, Richards, Jefferies, and Call set out to evaluate how well US citizens are following FEMA guidelines and how Latter-day Saints—with their long history of focusing on emergency preparedness—stack up.

## ✦ The Latter-Day Saint Advantage

“You go into data analysis not knowing what you’re going to get,” says Richards, who thought—even hoped—that members would shine in this area.

She was not disappointed.

The Latter-day Saint advantage was significant. The Church-specific study, published in the *Journal of Religion and Health* in 2022, showed that members of the Church of Jesus Christ are seven times more likely to have a disaster-supplies kit (also known as a 72-hour kit) and five times more likely to have long-term food storage than non-Latter-day Saints. They also were four times more likely to report feeling connected to their neighborhood and community, a boon in times of uncertainty.

What surprised the researchers was that Latter-day Saints did not *think* they were prepared, even though they were more ready than the public at large. Church members’ readiness perceptions were about the same as the general public’s or, in some categories, even lower.

“We talk about preparedness so much inside of the Church that maybe we perceive it differently,” suggests Richards, noting that perhaps members’ expectations are higher. This can’t hurt, she observes. “We are doing well in many areas. But do we have room for improvement? Yeah.”

## ✦ The Universal Weak Point: Water

Oddly, the most indispensable item for survival is also the one everyone struggles with most.

“No question,” says Richards, “in all of the studies, water storage is the weakest aspect.” That’s across Latter-day Saint populations, those on food assistance, and the US population at large.

**“WE ARE IN  
A BETTER POSITION TO  
SERVE THE LORD  
IN ALL THE DIFFERENT WAYS  
HE CAN USE US  
IF OUR FINANCIAL HOMES  
ARE IN ORDER.”**

Richards and Jefferies’s US household study, published in *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* in 2021, showed that only 53 percent of respondents had a three-day supply of water; however, among those who had water stored, about 72 percent had water stored for more than three days. The Church, for the record, recommends storing two weeks’ worth of water at a minimum, which equates to 14 gallons per adult.

“The easiest thing for people to do to get started is to buy a case of water for each person,” says Call, a coauthor on the BYU studies.

FEMA now recommends storing only commercially packaged water, says Richards. Per the BYU studies, containers that are personally filled aren’t being properly sanitized (only 20 percent of those storing water this way even attempted sanitization), and most people are not writing dates on the containers, which makes it hard to replace the water every six months, as advised. Commercially packaged water comes dated.

That said, Call’s own research, in which she sampled water from people’s real-life food stores, did not prove the six-month rotation imperative. “Our research suggested that rotation may not be necessary,” she says, “although there is always room for further research.” She noted that 91 percent of the water she tested, including some that had been stored for years, was safe for consumption. Further, the water she tested that had been stored in clear soda bottles—which are FEMA approved for storage (milk jugs and juice bottles are not)—even when stored for more than 18 months, did not exceed EPA limits for antimony, the chemical of concern in the plastic.

“Having some water stored is better than none, even if you don’t do it perfectly,” says Call. That water can be boiled or treated with bleach before consumption, or put to secondary use, such as washing.

Call laughs as she recalls visiting one home during the study and asking the homeowner where his stored water was. “The guy just pointed to his kitchen sink,” says Call. “We are fortunate to have a consistent, clean water supply, but you never know what’s going to happen.” Infrastructure ages and municipal treatment plants can fail. Just this past year, residents in Jackson, Mississippi, went without clean water for seven weeks.

The bottom line? Store water. Have some in amounts you can carry; giant drums are not portable. And don’t rely on Pinterest for proper protocol, she cautions. For the best info on container choice, cleaning, sanitation, and shelf life, the experts point to [ready.gov/water](https://ready.gov/water).

## ✦ *Adequately Insured, Cash on Hand*

A cash reserve is a staple of emergency preparedness, and the Church encourages members to work toward saving up enough to meet six months' worth of expenses. Per the BYU research, though, only a quarter of US households—and one-fifth of the Latter-day Saints surveyed—had that; around 40 percent of households (both Latter-day Saints and others) didn't have even one month's worth set aside.

"We as a society have made it really easy to spend money," says Madrian. "Think of how easy it is to get and use a credit card or a debit card relative to the time involved to open up a new savings account. It actually takes a lot of effort to save."

Prior to joining BYU Marriott, Madrian codirected the National Bureau of Economic Research's (NBER) Household Finance working group, which hatches policy ideas to help families make better financial decisions. In an NBER piece published in *Behavioral Science & Policy*, she proposed leveraging "fresh-start moments" to begin a new saving habit. These moments, such as tax time or the start of a new job, provide a perfect opportunity to automatically deposit a portion of a refund or a paycheck into a savings account. Similar opportunities could be seized at pivotal life moments, such as the birth of a child, a promotion, or a deployment.

Deciding ahead of time to save, Madrian emphasizes, eliminates the burden of the choice in the moment. Her rule of thumb: save three to six months of your current *compensation*, not just expenses, "so if you get laid off, you have resources to cover you for a period of several months, because that's how long it could take to find another job," she explains.

A car repair, a skiing accident, a tornado tearing off your roof—countless unexpected expenses can pop up at any time that could become financial emergencies. "I'm guessing a big blind spot is being adequately insured," says Madrian. You want a rainy-day account plus college and retirement savings, she says. "And then you want the right kind of life insurance, health insurance, and car insurance."

A big mistake Madrian sees is the tendency to procrastinate financial decisions, such as what insurance to buy or when to draw Social Security. "A lot of these financial decisions are not easy, even for people who have a lot of expertise," she says. "And there's no deadline for getting it done. So too often, it's just put off." She has seen years of employer-matching contributions to a 401k forfeited or families left vulnerable from a parent unexpectedly passing, all because of procrastination.

Looking for a saving opportunity in your budget? Check the tab on your media consumption, says Madrian. "We're purchasing a lot of that on automatic renewal. I can watch less, but Netflix still bills me." Similarly, small expenditures people make every month, in isolation, may not seem like much, "but the cumulative amount you spend eating out, on entertainment, things like that, add up," she notes.

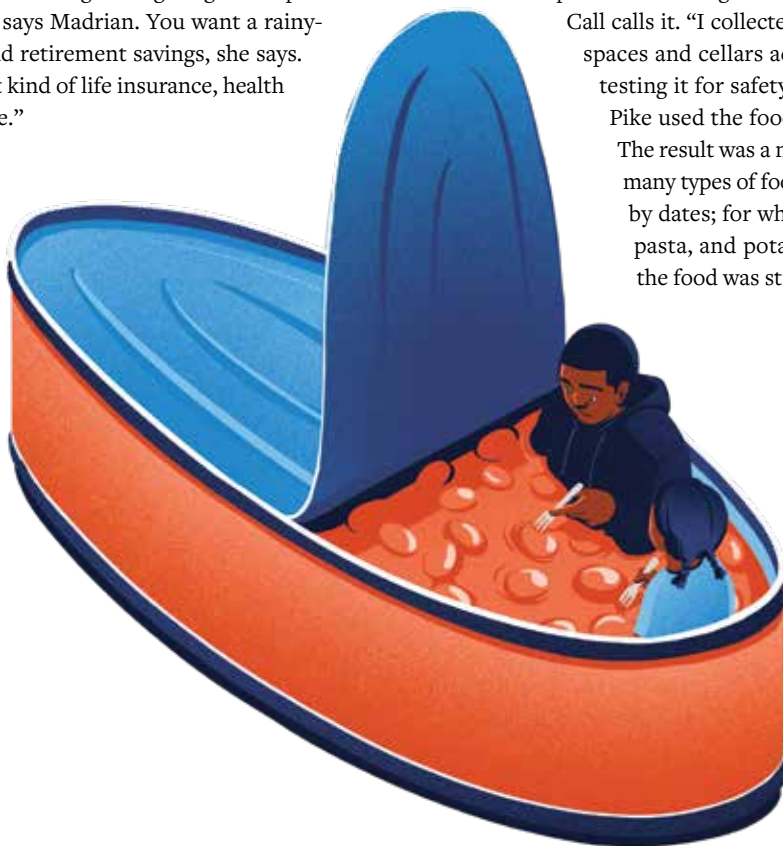
Prudent saving not only insulates you and your family from certain hardships, it also allows you to seize unexpected opportunities that may enrich your lives, says Madrian. She shares the example of her own parents: because they lived within their means, they were able to accept a mission president call when her father, 44, was the sole breadwinner for a family of seven.

"If I was going to say something particularly relevant for this readership, it's that we are in a better position to serve the Lord in all the different ways He can use us if our financial homes are in order," she states.

## ✦ *Take Stock of Pantries*

The number one question Call is asked when she presents her findings: Is my old food still good?

It's a question she and BYU professor Oscar Pike took up two decades ago in their "ancient food project," as Call calls it. "I collected oodles of old food from crawl spaces and cellars across the state," she says. After testing it for safety and nutritional value, she and Pike used the food in recipes and ran taste trials. The result was a new "life-sustaining shelf life" for many types of food that extends well beyond best-by dates; for wheat, rice, cornmeal, beans, oats, pasta, and potato flakes stored in sealed cans, the food was still acceptable even 30 years later.





“Nutritional value may drop off, but it’s still calories in a survival situation,” says Call.

Proper storage is necessary to maximize shelf life. Pike coined the acronym HALT, a reminder to keep food away from humidity, air, and light, and in stable, cool temperatures. Of these considerations, temperature is the most crucial.

“You don’t want to keep food in the garage,” says Call, who is constantly looking for ways to better utilize her storage space. “If you’re short on space, consider finding a place for a shelf or making space under a bed to store food and water.”

Most people, even 90 percent of households that receive food assistance, according to the BYU research, have enough food on hand to meet the FEMA-recommended three-day supply. The Church, however, encourages maintaining a three-month supply. “And the Church’s counsel on knowing how to use your food storage is so important,” says Richards. “That’s part of preparedness too—not just having it but knowing how to use it, how to prepare it in ways that are palatable.”

One item the researchers found is often overlooked: fuel to run alternate cooking sources such as propane stoves or grills. Better campaigns are warranted, they emphasize, to encourage citizens to stock fuel; care should be taken to check with local fire departments about how much fuel is approved to store and how to store fuel safely.

As for what food we store, the researchers found that most people are not storing some basic FEMA-recommended items, namely liquid or powdered milk and juice.

“Since starting this research,” says Richards, “I have made sure, looking at my food storage, that I have all food groups.”

Finally, says Jefferies, remember the food you store for longevity is not always accessible during or after a disaster; for instance, refrigerated food could spoil with a power outage or get contaminated in a flood. “You’re going to want lighter-weight things that are higher in calories in a situation where you have to flee or can’t access your storage. There are different needs. Being prepared for one situation doesn’t make you prepared for all situations.”

## ✦ *Start a Kit or Two*

Some 60 percent of Latter-day Saint respondents in the study said they had a disaster-supply kit. The flip side: some 40 percent do not.

Kits can be crucial in emergencies. And in fact, experts keep multiple kits ready—one at home and one at work, along with varied supplies in the car.

What goes in a kit, besides food and water? “The Church and different government agencies have multiple lists of recommendations that can be slightly different, so it can be a little confusing,” acknowledges Jefferies, “but they’re not grossly inconsistent.” In addition to consulting these lists, she suggests “just thinking of when you’re on a trip, and you go, ‘Oh, I forgot my . . .’ That should probably be in your kit.”

Those types of items include a supply of necessary medications, contact lenses, and a first-aid kit, says BYU nursing professor Blaine Winters. “You can ask your physician to write a script for an extra five-day supply for an emergency,” he suggests.

Check and replenish kits every six months. “Find some kind of reminder, some trigger,” says Call, such as every time general conference comes around.



When stocking your kits, Call has a word of advice: imagine the world without your phone. “Cell service may be down, and power may be out,” she says. Things to consider might include packing a portable phone-charging bank, exporting and printing phone contacts, and printing pertinent maps. Pack these in addition to copies of important documents. Another tip: print pictures of family members to keep in your kit. “If you got separated, you’d want a picture to show people,” she says.

Finally, she notes, try to always keep your gas tank at least half full. The last thing you want to do in an emergency is to be stranded in a line at the pump.

## ✦ *Run Drills*

There’s one no-cost emergency prep step everyone can take, says Winters: make a family emergency plan and practice it.

“In emergency medicine, we do a lot of simulation. The muscle memory of practice is important,” says Winters, who worked for years in an ER and continues to volunteer for the Red Cross and to help oversee a mass-casualty training event on BYU’s campus every year.

“Parents, practice with your kids what to do in an earthquake, or whatever the likely calamity is in your region,” he continues. “Practice often enough that you’ll remember.” Do the physical actions. Drive the alternate routes. Assign a designated meeting place, and have everyone make their way to it.

# “JUST THINKING OF WHEN YOU’RE ON A TRIP, AND YOU GO, ‘OH, I FORGOT MY....’ THAT SHOULD PROBABLY BE IN YOUR KIT.”

Planning can make all the difference: When the 2021 Marshall Fire in Colorado, driven by high winds, ripped through their neighborhood, the Gourgouris family knew what to do. They had lists of what to grab, broken up by room and based on different time frames: a 15-minute, 30-minute, or one-hour evacuation order. “My wife handed a copy to every member of the family, and we divided and conquered,” says Elia Gourgouris. “If it weren’t for this list, our evacuation would have been haphazard at best.”

Winters also advocates taking CPR and first-aid training classes through the Red Cross, which offers courses regularly, and learning how to prevent the spread of infection, which is a big problem in emergency shelters. “The huge thing to remember is handwashing,” says Winters. That’s a lesson we all relearned in 2020. “We want to keep it up,” he says, noting that physical health is part of preparedness too. “If you had to leave your house, could you do it? Could you carry your kit and carry a child?”

## ✦ *Build Emotional Resilience*

Food and water—physiological needs—make up the base of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the ones we’re told to attend to first. But there’s more essential preparedness that needs to be done.

“What I see,” says Derek Hagey, a program manager for the Church’s Family Services, “is if I’m not healthy emotionally, I may not be taking care of myself physically.” He suggests that all of our needs—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual—are interconnected.

The isolation of COVID-19 exposed this, he says, pointing to the wide range of responses exhibited as individuals grappled with uncertainty, loss, anxiety, loneliness, and more. “You might have expected that all citizens would respond roughly the same way, that they’d wear masks, that they would want to get vaccinated,” says Winters. “A big takeaway from this pandemic is that in a stressful situation, there are going to be a lot of people acting differently than one might expect they would.”

Hagey agrees. “Maybe you saw some people kind of lash out at others who disagreed with them,” he points out. When people are struggling emotionally, this kind of intensity is often a yearning to feel in control of their lives. Much of emotional resilience, he continues, is learning to control what you can and accepting what you can’t—which is often “easier said than done,” he acknowledges.

To better prepare for life’s challenges, Hagey and Winters recommend identifying the coping strategies that work best for you, preferably *before* a disaster, diagnosis, or crisis. “These are actual skills you can build,” says Hagey—skills Church leaders have seen such high demand for that they created a new manual and free self-reliance course, *Finding Strength in the Lord: Emotional Resilience*. Hagey, who

helped write the manual, likens it to an emotional first aid kit, with tactics such as gratitude writing, relaxed breathing, and mindfulness as well as identifying people you can rely on or going through exercises to think differently about a situation. The course is offered through stakes nationwide.

If a higher level of care is needed, Hagey says, reach out to a therapist. “You can do a needs assessment with a therapist just to see where you’re at and what you can work on. It’s an opportunity to take stock, to ask, ‘Am I where I need to be for myself and for others around me?’”

## ✦ *Seek Spiritual Safety*

For decades members of the Church have been asked to store food, water, and financial reserves; preparedness has always been a hallmark of the Latter-day Saints. President Russell M. Nelson acknowledged this in his October 2020 general conference address “Embrace the Future with Faith.”

“But I am even more concerned about your spiritual and emotional preparation,” he observed.

In this midpandemic address, the prophet made the plea, first, to create places of security where you can feel the Holy Ghost, starting with your home.

President Nelson also pointed to “the stakes of Zion” as a refuge and to the temple as “a place of security unlike any other.” The spiritual fortitude to weather life’s storms, it seems, must be forged in the right environments and under the right conditions.

Second, President Nelson asked us to prepare our minds, namely by immersing ourselves in the Book of Mormon, calling it “our *latter-day* survival guide.” We can stock our spiritual shelves with each reading.

In every aspect of preparedness, experts and Church leaders encourage starting small. Call suggests doing something every day, even if it’s just cleaning a bottle, making a list, or, as the prophet asks, reading the scriptures.

“The future is always uncertain,” said President Nelson in his closing address at the April 2022 general conference. “Weather changes. Economic cycles are unpredictable. Disasters, accidents, and illness can change life quickly. These actions are largely beyond our control. But there are some things we *can* control, including how we spend our time each day. . . .

“Now,” said the prophet, “is the time.” **M**

## ✦ *About the Author*

*Brittany Rogers, a freelance author, lives in American Fork, Utah, with her husband and three children. There is a ridiculous amount of Nutella in her food storage.*

# School News

## Mick Berry Honored as MPA Alumna of the Year



**Mick Berry**, retired manager of Catawba County in North Carolina, was honored at the BYU Marriott MPA Alumna of the Year dinner on November 10, 2022. He spoke during the event and emphasized the importance of changing the world through Christlike leadership.

“Our faith gives us the capacity to envision a better future, the confidence to make that future happen, and the courage to act in the face of challenges,” Berry said during his remarks.

Berry, who grew up in Reno, Nevada, graduated from BYU with a bachelor’s degree in economics. He originally planned to study in BYU Marriott’s MBA program but ultimately made the switch to the MPA program after talking with a city manager. “I had no idea what a city manager was. I just sat and listened, and I ending up having an epiphany moment,” he says.

The MPA program prepared Berry to be a viable candidate for jobs after graduating, and his classmates played a big role in his education. “One thing I loved about the program and BYU Marriott in general was the connections I had with the other students. Those friendships and relationships became invaluable, and I feel the same way about the professors,” he says.

Berry thinks highly of the program as a whole. “The Romney Institute is, to me, a world-class institution. To be recognized as a successful product of the program is humbling and a great honor,” he says.

After he graduated from the MPA program, Berry and his family moved to North Carolina. They expected to live in the state for only a few years but ended up staying in the same community for the entirety of Berry’s career. He started in Catawba County in 1990 as a budget analyst, and in 2004 he became the city manager of Hickory, North Carolina. In 2016, Berry returned to work for Catawba County, this time as county manager. Each new job came with a steep learning curve, but Berry was surrounded by people who were interested in his success. Although he retired in early 2022, he continues to work part-time for the county.

At the award dinner, Berry shared stories from his career with the group, emphasizing the importance of faith, respect, excellence, and integrity. He then spoke to those in attendance as fellow disciples of Christ and encouraged them to understand their potential to make an impact in their own corner of the world. “All of you in this room are uniquely qualified to teach people how to foster harmony and transform communities,” he said.

Because working as a public servant requires sacrifices, Berry admires those who choose that line of work. “When you choose a career of public service, you can still have a fulfilling career and provide for your family, but you most likely won’t be wealthy,” Berry says. “I’m in awe of people who choose that.

“The people going back to school for an MPA degree are literally saying they’re willing to roll up their sleeves and take on some of the hardest work known to man—encouraging people to agree and to make decisions that will move a community forward,” Berry continues. “The work is extremely difficult, but dedicated public servants are stepping up and doing it successfully.”

To those gearing up for a career in public service, Berry offers this piece of advice: Work hard to make a change. “It’s not going to be easy, but it’s going to be worth it,” he says. “The work is tough. You need thick skin. You’re going to take

a lot of criticism. But when you accomplish goals in a community and see things change, nothing is better than that.”

## New Healthcare Leadership Minor Prepares Students to Tackle Industry Challenges



If you’ve ever waited for hours to be seen in the ER or been surprised by a sky-high medical bill, you’re probably familiar with

the shortcomings of the US healthcare system. As BYU Marriott professor **Bill Tayler** explains it, “the healthcare crisis our world faces is not a medicinal crisis—it’s a business crisis. The industry itself needs healing.”

The list of problems is long, including supply chain issues, inaccessibility of care, skyrocketing pharmaceutical costs, and labyrinthine insurance policies. Luckily, there are people—including many at BYU—working on viable solutions.

Tayler is the academic director of BYU’s burgeoning Healthcare Leadership Collaborative (HLC), a cross-campus organization that connects BYU students to an extensive network of healthcare industry experts, providing them with valuable experiential learning opportunities. Now, a newly approved minor in healthcare leadership that is offered by BYU Marriott will help students be more prepared to successfully tackle healthcare industry challenges.

“The US has a first-rate healthcare delivery system on the clinical side, but we desperately need people behind the scenes to help orchestrate exceptional care on the business side,” says **Britt Berrett**, who was recently appointed the first managing director of the HLC. “BYU has an amazing business school, and I would love to see mission-driven BYU alumni improve the way we care for God’s children.”

The healthcare leadership minor will be available to all students and will offer



an overview of the business aspects of healthcare, including healthcare finance, information systems, and government regulation. Though the new minor is based in the BYU Marriott School of Business, it is designed to serve students from a wide range of majors.

“Healthcare involves hospitals and insurers, medical technology and

pharmaceutical companies, consulting, law, data analytics, public health, IT, policy makers, retail firms, doctors, nurses, and more,” says Tayler. “If we want to solve the problems of healthcare, we need to look outside our functional silos and see the big picture.”

Courses in the minor will involve virtual and in-person visits from alumni

and others who work in these fields. “In our program, it’s not just theoretical or textbook. It’s the real deal,” Berrett says. “We connect students with healthcare industry leaders who can teach from experience and show them how to apply smart business practices to healthcare.”

Berrett, a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives who

## Bulls Named BYU Marriott’s 2022 International Executive of the Year

BYU Marriott School of Business and Brigham Young University honored Herman E. Bulls with its 2022 International Executive of the Year Award. Bulls is a vice chairman, Americas, for JLL, and is also an international director, founder, and former chair and CEO of the firm’s highly acclaimed Public Institutions business unit.

Bulls received the award during BYU Marriott’s annual National Advisory Council conference held during the fall semester. BYU president Kevin J. Worthen and BYU Marriott dean Brigitte C. Madrian presented the award, and Richard E. Marriott, chairman of the board of Host Hotels & Resorts, introduced Bulls as a keynote speaker. In his introduction, Marriott outlined five principles of success—putting people first, pursuing excellence, embracing change, acting with integrity, and serving others—noting that Bulls “exhibits all of these values and has pursued excellence and service throughout his life.”

Established by BYU Marriott 40 years ago, the International Executive of the Year Award is the most prestigious award given by BYU Marriott and is designed to honor outstanding executives who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and high moral and ethical standards. Previous recipients include Gail McGovern, CEO of the American Red Cross; Leon Panetta, former Secretary of Defense and CIA director; and James S. Turley, chairman and CEO of Ernst & Young.

During his acceptance remarks, Bulls talked about how his mother, who was pregnant with her seventh child—him—when her husband died, instilled the importance of education in each of her children. Bulls noted that he and his siblings earned 11 degrees among them.

In addition, he shared a pivotal experience he had about 20 years ago when he took an introspective look at his life. “I realized there was a difference between networking and connecting,” he observed. “Networking is important. However, at its base, it is very transactional: you do something for me, I do something for you. When you connect with someone, you are willing to do something for them and with them without regard for what you will receive in return. If you are able to do that authentically,



consistently, it is amazing. That ability to connect helped me develop deep relationships, which contributed to my success.”

Bulls also noted that when “much is given, much is expected. As a business and academic community—those of you in this room tonight—we have truly been blessed,” he stated. “We have the responsibility to teach the next generation. This is done when we have the courage to speak up with dignity, strive to be on the right side of history, and are motivated to make a positive difference.”

During his more than three decades at JLL, Bulls has worked in areas of development, investment management, asset management, facilities operations, and business development/retention. He has served in courts of law as an expert witness on real estate matters and has testified on real estate issues before congressional committees. In addition, he cofounded and served as president and CEO of Bulls Capital Partners, a multifamily financing company, and founded Bulls Advisory Group LLC, a management and real estate advisory firm.

Prior to joining JLL, Bulls completed almost 12 years of active-duty service with the United States Army, including working in the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management at the Pentagon and as an assistant professor of economics and finance at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has completed the army’s Airborne, Ranger, and Command and General Staff College courses and served overseas in the Republic of Korea. He retired as a colonel in the US Army Reserves in 2008 and received the Legion of Merit Award. Bulls serves on several public, private, and not-for-profit boards.

# 12 Professors Join BYU Marriott Faculty



*Britt Berrett*



*Barry Brewer*



*Brant Christensen*



*Zack Fox*



*Chris Hair*



*Jon Kerr*



*Jonathan Liljegren*



*Travis Ruddle*



*Jacob Steffen*



*Sheri Smith Thomas*



*Breck Wightman*



*Dave Wilson*

BYU Marriott welcomed 12 new professors this fall.

**Britt Berrett**, a professor in the Department of Management and the first managing director of BYU's new Healthcare Leadership Collaborative, graduated from BYU Marriott with a BS in business management with an emphasis in finance. His expertise is healthcare administration. Berrett served as a hospital administration executive for 30 years.

**Barry Brewer** is an associate professor of global supply chain management. Previously, Brewer was a professor at New Mexico State University, the University of Wyoming, and the United States Air Force Academy—his undergraduate alma mater. Many of his journal articles focus on procurement, and his most highly cited work addresses sustainability in supply chain.

**Brant Christensen**, a new associate professor of accounting, received his MAcc from BYU Marriott's School of Accountancy in 2009. Christensen has previously taught at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Missouri. He performed auditing when he was an associate at PwC, and he now primarily teaches auditing classes. Christensen, a CPA, has also received several awards for his teaching and competitive research grants.

**Zack Fox**, an assistant professor in the SOA, received his master's degree from BYU Marriott. In 2021, Fox completed his PhD at the University of Oregon, where the school awarded him the Doctoral Fellowship for Outstanding Doctoral Student. Fox taught at Texas A&M before joining BYU Marriott; the main focus of his research is tax policy.

**Chris Hair**, assistant professor of finance, returns to BYU after receiving both a BS in applied mathematics and a BA in economics from BYU in 2016. Hair earned his PhD in finance from Northwestern University in 2022. Real estate and urban economics are two of his areas of expertise.

**Jon Kerr**, an associate professor in the SOA, received his MAcc from BYU Marriott in 2006 and then completed his PhD at Columbia University. Kerr previously taught at both The Ohio State University and Baruch

College—City University of New York. He researches taxation, specifically at the international level. Kerr's research has been published in prominent business and accounting journals.

**Jonathan Liljegren**, an associate professor of accounting, graduated from BYU Marriott with his MAcc in 2008. Liljegren worked for Amazon and was an associate at PwC before he began his teaching career. He taught at George Mason University as an adjunct faculty member before coming to BYU Marriott.

**Travis Ruddle** is an assistant professor with the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics. He earned his BA, MPA, and PhD from the University of Oklahoma. Ruddle's research focuses on accountability, citizen experience with sectors, ethical behavior, misconduct, and corruption.

**Jacob Steffen** is an assistant professor of information systems who received his MISM from BYU Marriott in 2017. Steffen completed his PhD in management information systems at the University of Georgia in 2022; while there, he published several journal articles on virtual and augmented reality.

**Sheri Smith Thomas**, an associate professor in the School of Accountancy, received her MAcc from BYU Marriott. Afterward, Thomas worked at PwC for several years and then served as vice president of accounting for Coherex Medical for more than a decade.

**Breck Wightman** is an assistant professor at the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics. Wightman, a 2018 BYU Marriott MPA graduate, now teaches economics, public policy, and public administration classes for MPA students. Wightman's work has been published in several leading journals.

**Dave Wilson**, an assistant professor of information systems, is a 2010 BYU Marriott MISM graduate. He completed his PhD degree at the University of Arizona. He previously taught at the University of Oklahoma and then spent five years in the private sector.

holds a PhD in public administration, has been involved with the HLC since its inception. He brings extensive experience to his new role. Prior to his career in education, he served for more than 25 years as president and CEO of several large hospitals. BYU graduates have already benefited from mentorship by experienced leaders such as Berrett.

“Britt’s visit to BYU in 2007 gave me the idea of going into healthcare in the first place,” says BYU alumnus **Ben Smalley**, who traveled to Texas as a student and shadowed Berrett at a hospital for a day at Berrett’s invitation. Smalley is now CEO of Intermountain Healthcare’s Cassia Regional Hospital. “Britt has continued to be a mentor and resource to me for the past 15 years,” Smalley adds.

For other BYU Marriott alumni, the HLC’s coursework, which will now be organized into the new minor, has already been invaluable.

“I came back to school knowing almost nothing about the healthcare industry,” says **Michal Washburn**, who served as the graduate president of the HLC’s student association before completing her MBA in April. “Taking classes about specific business healthcare topics prepared me to work in that field. I feel like solving problems in healthcare is part of my life’s mission, which I wouldn’t be able to fulfill without the HLC.”

As these opportunities and experiences attest, the lessons students learn at BYU will have wide-ranging effects. “The HLC is helping us take our impact on this industry to the next level,” Tayler says. “And when we improve the healthcare industry, we improve—and save—lives.”

### A Community of Creators



Attracted by the sound of live music and the smell of free pizza, hundreds of students gathered to enjoy the Creators’ Kickoff, hosted by the Rollins Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology.

Aside from the fun atmosphere and free food, students learned about the excellent resources and benefits available to them through joining Creators, the new student association connected with the Rollins Center, which is part of BYU Marriott.

More than 1,000 students attended the event, which was “a testament to the success of and enthusiasm for what Creators offers,” says **Jade Rogers**, the creative and product manager at the Rollins Center.

Great ideas form both inside and outside of the business school, which is why Creators membership is open to any BYU student across campus, regardless of major. “We want all students to recognize that they are creative and can participate in entrepreneurship,” Rogers says. The purpose of Creators is to provide valuable resources and cultivate a greater

community of students who rely on and help each other develop their ideas.

By joining Creators, students have increased access to mentors and to like-minded students who can become dedicated team members. The staff in the Rollins Center assists in directing association members to resources and projects they will find most fulfilling, whether that means becoming a cofounder in a business or contributing their skills to existing teams.

Additionally, member-exclusive events, such as the Idea Jam sessions, provide participants with chances to riff on various business ideas together in a low-pressure environment. Other learning events and opportunities to receive funding for startups are some of the additional perks of membership—not to mention the free sodas available in The

## Undergraduates Receive Paul Morris Marriott Scholarship



Fourteen undergraduates received this year’s Paul Morris Marriott Business Management Scholarship, given to undergraduates who demonstrate a strong work ethic and a dedication to service.

The scholarship was founded by Rebecca Marriott Champion in 2010 to honor her father, Paul Morris Marriott, who was a vice president at Hot Shoppes Inc. (which later became Marriott International) and who helped grow the In-Flite catering division of the company.

Recipients include (listed in order, from left) **Natalie Brown, Hunter Greenhalgh, Sierra Williams, Tyler Gregory, Donovan Chin, Jason Myler, Caroline Searing, Lucy Davis, and Alayna Hansen**. Recipients not pictured include **Call Butterfield, Rachel Peterson, Jalayne Russell, Jessica Searle, and Brooke Taylor**.



Slab, the new hangout place for Creators' members. Interested students can sign up through [creators.byu.edu](https://creators.byu.edu).

"The idea is that association members gain exposure to new ways of thinking and opportunities to start working on ideas," Rogers says. "We've found that students who didn't know they could be entrepreneurs are coming in, hearing people's ideas, and realizing that developing business ideas is not actually that scary."

Built on BYU Marriott's mission and values, Creators seeks to distinguish students from various majors by giving them a unique mindset and skill set. "We hope that students look at the world differently because of their involvement," says **Jeff Brown**, associate director for operations of the Rollins Center. Rogers adds, "We're in the business of teaching students all over campus how to create value by bringing diverse skill sets together. We believe business-minded people and non-business-minded people can collaborate to solve big problems."

Members discover that the strong community and connections make all the difference for those who involve themselves in Creators. **Aaron Christiansen**, a manufacturing engineering major who participated in Creators' beginning stages last year, enjoys being part of this unique community. "I've learned so much by talking to people in the same boat as me. I also feel that sharing my ideas with others gives me more motivation to stay focused and move forward with my projects because I am more accountable after having shared my plans," he says.

**Kaylia Lundgren**, an entrepreneurship major, spent time during the kickoff encouraging people to join the unique program. As one of only a few female entrepreneurship students, she knows that it takes encouragement to become involved. "We want more women to see that they can and should take part in the opportunities promoted through Creators," she says.

In addition to joining Creators, students interested in other Rollins Center resources can enter the Sandbox program, which allows students to earn credits toward their major for developing a business. Startups can also participate in the Seed program and receive special grants and other funding by pitching their ideas to a group of board members. The Rollins

Center seeks to provide opportunities for students to succeed in every phase of entrepreneurship.

"We want to encourage more connections where you pursue an idea you care about, whether it comes from you or from someone looking for help," Brown emphasizes. "Those connections are invaluable and will pay dividends in the future."

## STUDENT NEWS

### GSCM Juniors Offer Polaris a Flurry of Solutions



For nearly a week during the busy 2022 Halloween season, 24 teams of global supply chain management (GSCM) juniors from BYU Marriott took on a blizzard of additional work by competing in a case competition hosted by snowmobile giant Polaris.

Due to pricing and backlog issues with current suppliers, Polaris is exploring different routes to acquire parts in quicker and more affordable ways. For the competition, the company provided six new suppliers as possibilities and asked teams to determine which option would save Polaris the most money and how long the transition would take.

On November 3, 2022, after less than a week of preparation, the student teams presented their final solutions to a panel of judges comprised of BYU Marriott GSCM faculty and seven Polaris employees from a variety of departments. The judges selected six teams as finalists and announced the winning team at the awards ceremony held later that evening.

The first-place team consisted of GSCM juniors **Hunter Palmer** from Tucson, Arizona; **Sloane Wheeler** from Phoenix, Arizona; **Sophie Goulding** from Elko, Nevada; **Jared Martinez** from St. George,

Utah; and **Ahmad Alnasser** from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

**Morgan Shurtleff**, a BYU Marriott GSCM alumna and current Polaris employee, played a key role in coordinating and organizing the event. "We were extremely impressed with the presentations," says Shurtleff. "The students offered a fresh perspective. Since our problem doesn't have a clear-cut solution, we were interested to see how different teams analyzed the situation and used data to back up their proposals."

Shurtleff says Polaris valued the students' insights; in fact, the company requested the slide decks of the six finalist teams for company use.

GSCM professor **Scott Webb** was pleased with how the students performed. "The students did an excellent job in the case competition," he says. "The presentations were phenomenal."

Though a formidable test for the students, this case competition bolstered their confidence and strengthened their abilities.

To prepare, Palmer and his teammates explored countless ideas, calculated numbers, and frequently reformulated their plans to match Polaris's vision. Palmer shares that the opportunity was useful for him and his teammates to apply what they learn in classes and to gain more real-world experience. "Projects like this teach me more than any test could," he says.

On top of providing the priceless experience, Polaris presented the team with a \$4,000 check and a trophy at the awards ceremony. Team members were both humbled and thrilled with their finish. "Our plan wasn't perfect," says Palmer. "But we matched our strategy to meet the needs of Polaris, evenly divided participation between each member of our group, and dove the deepest."

Shurtleff says the students gave Polaris more than supply chain solutions. "My colleagues and I walked away feeling rejuvenated and revitalized from our time with the students," she says. "We left feeling excited again for our own work."

She says the company hopes the partnership can become long-term. "Everyone at Polaris keeps talking about the event," says Shurtleff. "Polaris would love to sponsor another case competition at BYU Marriott in the future because our time with the students was incredibly valuable."

# Alumni News

## CLASS NOTES

1975



**Marilyn Boyce Lane**, a 1975 business education alumna, spent four years teaching junior high and high school in Wyoming, southern Utah, and Hawaii. After moving to Arizona, she took a temporary position as a subcontractor in Honeywell Aerospace's word processing group while she

looked for a teaching job. That temporary position led to a 25-year career with Honeywell, where Lane worked for a division that engineered and manufactured the starters and valves used on almost all commercial and military aircraft. Lane was a technical writer for 19 years, then a senior configuration management analyst for another 6 years. In her analyst assignment, she was responsible for drawing changes for specific programs and for setting up and monitoring approval routes via computer. Now retired, Lane enjoys

reading, painting with watercolors, and serving as a missionary in the Church's local bishops' storehouse. She lives in Mesa, Arizona, with her husband, Glenn, and has two children, four stepchildren, and ten grandchildren.

1995

**Michael R. Hopkin** fell in love with computers while studying accounting at BYU Marriott, so he took computer classes on the side and graduated with both a BS in accounting and a master's degree in

## From Crayons to Clothing

Even as a young child, **Darci Schurig** had a love for entrepreneurship. In elementary school, she remembers riding the school bus and selling bracelets and Play-Doh to her classmates. In fourth grade, she started her first official business, Coloring Express, where she sold melted crayon creations that she made in cupcake tins. After earning a degree in management with an emphasis in entrepreneurship in 2008, Schurig moved to her next venture: founding her own modest clothing and swimwear company named Pink Desert.

"I've always loved the creative process of entrepreneurship, including coming up with new ideas and creating things that other people want," Schurig explains. While she was at BYU Marriott, Schurig noticed a need in the market for trendy, modest swimwear.

After her graduation, Schurig and her husband moved to southern California. She worked full-time in the fashion district and took classes to learn more about designing her own collection. "At the time, my husband and I could not afford to start a company, so I put my dreams on hold," Schurig explains. "After we moved to Las Vegas, I finally started Pink Desert."

In 2017, when her company was four years old, Schurig fulfilled her dream to design her own collection. However, the road to make this dream a reality was not an easy one. She recalls driving to Los Angeles to talk to a manufacturer—the sky was pouring rain, and she initially got lost. "I remember driving down the freeway and thinking, 'Oh, my gosh, this could sink my company. What if no one likes my designs?' Taking that step was so scary, but I knew that I would never find success unless I tried."

Once Schurig showed the manufacturer her ideas—which he loved—many of her fears were calmed, and she got to work making her collection a reality. "Sometimes when you have your sights set on something you want to pursue, reaching that dream feels unattainable," she says. "I had to put one foot in front of the other and keep working toward my goals."

Another goal Schurig reached was opening her first brick-and-mortar store in 2019. "I put a lot of thought and prayer into the decision, and I had a good feeling. I am always prayerful about my business ventures because

God has helped me along this entire journey and aided me in becoming successful," she explains. "I'm so grateful we decided to open the store, because doing so elevated our brand and built brand awareness."

For Schurig, an important aspect of the Pink Desert brand is making sure that the company can build a community of women who feel confident and comfortable wearing Pink Desert products. "Our vision statement is 'By women, for women, empowering women through fashion,'" she says. "This vision drives everything we do in our company. I've tried to build a culture of positivity and community, and I sincerely want our team to feel like family."

Schurig's company is run solely by women committed to creating a stylish brand and working hard. "I remember once when I was going through a hard trial, my mom said, 'Darci, you can get through this, because women can do hard things,'" she shares. "That statement has been ingrained in the foundation of my company because building this business from the ground up was so difficult, and my team experiences challenges every day. However, I continue to remind the women on my staff that we have the strength to accomplish hard things and create an amazing company together."





## True Blue CEO

"Go, Cougs!" is still **Adam Vandermyde's** enthusiastic cheer more than a decade after graduating from BYU Marriott's MBA program in 2008. Through the years, Vandermyde has continued to support his alma mater by cheering for BYU sports and by hiring more than 150 BYU graduates to work at his companies.

Vandermyde's newest position is president and CEO of Petro West, a company that installs, maintains, and upgrades fuel and energy systems in 17 states. Vandermyde purchased the company in 2020 and says that his favorite part of the job is putting "the right people in the right positions with the right incentives and focus."

He believes his previous jobs prepared him to become a CEO. Before purchasing Petro West, Vandermyde gained leadership experience at other companies, including as a manager of strategy and operations at Deloitte, a director at PwC Consulting, and an executive vice president at Ansira.

"In those past positions, I learned how to connect with and motivate all types of people. I also learned how to effec-

tively think through and solve problems. Although I'm still learning in my current role, when I was first presented with immediate, significant problems here at Petro West, I felt comfortable attacking and solving them," he says.

Despite his previous preparation for this position, Vandermyde still finds his new job challenging. He admits that being a CEO comes with significant pressure. "When the company has a big problem, I often feel the weight on my shoulders," he says. "I have 70 employees and their families who depend on our company being successful. Although my executive team is extremely supportive, smart, and helpful, many decisions are left for me to make, which can be daunting."

Vandermyde isn't one to balk at pressure though. As someone who played sports in high school and college, he is used to competition and striving for improvement. "I am accustomed to using a scoreboard as an indicator of progress and success," he says. "I feel satisfied when our numbers improve in a specific area or when a new idea is successful."

An important indicator of success for Vandermyde is whether his employees feel supported, and he prioritizes being attentive to their needs. "Connection to your employees is everything as a leader," he says. "I tend to put my head down and focus on doing my work quickly and well so I still have time for other important parts of my life, such as my family and hobbies. However, I make an effort to be present with my employees and take time to walk around to compliment them and thank them for their contributions to the company."

One specific group of employees Vandermyde loves supporting is BYU alumni. "BYU produces so many wonderful students and is a fantastic source of talent that has contributed to the success of every company I've worked with, which is one reason I've hired so many BYU alumni," he says. "Also, I just love BYU. I love what the institution stands for, I love BYU sports, I love BYU's life-changing cookies and cream milk, and I'm grateful for what BYU has done for me. I want to give back by providing other BYU graduates with the same opportunities I received."

Vandermyde lives in St. George, Utah, with his wife, Michelle, and their four children. In his free time, he enjoys playing the piano, wake surfing, "getting dunked on" by his oldest son, and spending as much time with his family as possible.



information systems in 1995. Hopkin spent the first years of his career as a software programmer, then worked in product management roles for more than a decade. In 2015 he started his own product management consulting company, Hopkin Creations LLC, which specializes in helping

companies implement best practices for software product management and build out their product management teams. Most recently, he also became director of product management for Cayuse. In addition, he writes a blog about leadership and product management that has run for 13 years. Outside of work, Hopkin is an avid runner who has completed four marathons and many half marathons. He

and his wife, Debbie, recently moved from Lindon, Utah, where they raised their family, to Gilbert, Arizona. They have four children and three grandsons.

### 1996

After graduating from BYU Marriott in 1996 with a BS in management, **Mike Woolley** went on to earn a JD from the University of Utah in 1999. He then





served as a judicial clerk for a US District Court judge and the Utah Supreme Court. After entering private practice, he became

a partner with Salt Lake City law firm Richards Brandt. Since 2009, Woolley has served as counsel for several companies, including as general counsel for Cardinal Logistics. He is currently an attorney for XPO Logistics, one of the largest transportation companies in the United States. Outside of work, Woolley has been passionate about playing and coaching soccer for more than 35 years, obtaining his coaching licenses after playing at BYU. He and his wife, Katrina Hansen Woolley, a 1995 BYU elementary education grad, reside in Glen Allen, Virginia. They have five children, a daughter-in-law, and a son-in-law.



Shortly after the birth of her second child, **Stacey Millett Tippetts** received a phone call from a relative that changed her career

path forever. After graduating from BYU Marriott in 1996 earning a degree in management with a marketing emphasis, Tippetts had worked as an assistant marketing manager for Provo Craft and Westrim Crafts. After a few years in the workforce, she decided to stay home and raise her children. However, a family member called in 2013 to say that she was starting a company, and she asked if Tippetts would be interested in working from home. Tippetts is now an ebook designer for E.M. Tippetts Book Designs and has formatted more than a thousand books for authors across the world. Tippetts lives in the small town of Cowley, Wyoming, with her husband, Joshua, and their two children. She enjoys embroidery, cross-stitching, crocheting, and sewing.

## 2002

**Debra Foutz Gibbons** graduated from BYU Marriott in 1990 with a bachelor's degree in business management with an emphasis in finance. She returned to school to earn a master's degree, which she completed in 2002, from the Romney Institute's executive MPA program. In the



ensuing years, Gibbons and her husband, Scott, have built a successful business, BridgeTower Chiropractic, in Meridian, Idaho. Scott is the

chiropractor while Gibbons manages the office. She is responsible for scheduling patients, filing insurance claims, keeping the books, promoting the business, and keeping things running smoothly overall. Gibbons, who has two biological children and one stepdaughter, resides in Meridian with her family. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, baking cookies, and visiting with extended family in Arizona.

## 2005



During his time at BYU, both as an undergraduate economics student and a graduate student in the MPA program at BYU Marriott, **Ether**

**Simoncini** learned the fundamentals of how people can best prepare to find employment. While living in Milan, Italy, before attending BYU, Simoncini volunteered with Church employment services and was the first member of the Church in Italy to be trained on the Church's new employment program. After graduation, Simoncini was working for an investment banking company in Switzerland when a position for a self-reliance manager opened in Italy. Making the decision to turn his earlier volunteer work into a full-time job was easy. He has worked for the welfare and self-reliance department of the Church for eight years and was recently promoted to area field operations manager. He currently lives with his wife, Alessia, and their four children in Verona, Italy.

## 2011



**Chad M. Darlington** knew he wanted a career that would help make businesses more efficient and directly impact the

bottom line, which is why he chose to pursue a bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in global supply chain management. After graduating in 2011, Darlington worked at 3M as a supply

chain manager, where he was part of a team that aimed to empower individuals, improve processes, and enhance company morale. In 2015, Darlington left 3M to continue his education, and he earned an MBA from Penn State University. He currently works as the senior manager for Protiviti, a global consulting firm that provides consulting in internal audit, risk and compliance, technology, business processes, data analytics, and finance. He resides with his wife, Deborah, in Winchester, Virginia. Together they have three children. Darlington's main priority is his family; in his free time, he enjoys playing board and card games, trying new donut and ice cream shops, and flying kites with his wife and children.



Although **Allison Herzog** loved her job in hospitality as a hotel manager, she wanted to transition to corporate life. During this transi-

tion, Herzog felt impressed to return to BYU, her alma mater, and earn her MBA, which she completed in 2011. She knew that marketing was the right fit for her because she loves understanding "what makes people tick." She chose to focus primarily on digital and social marketing, which allows her to use both her creative and analytical talents. She is currently senior director of global brand and digital at Visa. Herzog feels grateful for her previous mentors, including one who advised her to take an unpaid internship that led to valuable experiences and connections. Herzog and her husband, Chris, reside in Austin, Texas, with their three children.

## 2012



Working in quality assurance (QA) is a perfect way to use her "how can I break this?" mentality, says **Rachelle Hawkes**,

who earned a BS in information systems and an MISM in 2012. Hawkes began her career in QA when she was hired by cloud software company Domo the summer after she graduated. A decade later, she is still working for Domo as a part-time QA engineer while raising her three children. Hawkes belongs to a development squad

that works primarily with code for rendering charts and graphs. Her responsibilities include testing new features, writing manual tests, and writing automated tests in Domo's Python testing framework. Hawkes, along with her husband, Bryant, and their family, have lived in four different states since 2012, and currently reside in Madison, Alabama. In her free time, Hawkes enjoys collecting and playing strategy games, doing handwork projects, and serving as ward organist at church.

## 2016

**Eric Volmar** is living a longtime dream of working for the United States



Department of Defense (DOD). "It's been remarkable to learn what it means to serve from members of the military," says Volmar, who recently became chief strategy officer in the DOD's Office of Strategic Capital. "You can't help but change because of who they are." Before moving to the Office of Strategic Capital in December, Volmar served as chief of research for AFWERX, the innovation unit for the US Air and Space Forces, where he was part of a team that explores new ways to strengthen

America's national security by working with tech startups and private capital investors. Those efforts were an extension of Volmar's doctoral research, in which he spent years studying how startups pursue big missions while also creating successful business models. Volmar graduated with a BS in accounting in 2010 and then started his career at Accenture's management consulting group in Silicon Valley. He returned to BYU Marriott to earn an MBA in 2016 and completed a PhD in strategy, innovation, and entrepreneurship at Stanford University in 2021. He currently resides in Washington, DC.

# Undeterred by Windy Paths

When **Yara Anabtawi** was a student at BYU, her insatiable curiosity and her love for a wide variety of subjects made choosing a major difficult. Eventually, she decided to study information systems. "Information systems was a fairly nascent sector at the time," she says. However, Anabtawi knew that the analytical, technical, and problem-solving skills she learned in the program would be invaluable in the ever-expanding world of business and would help her forge her own path forward.

Following her graduation from BYU Marriott in 1994, Anabtawi earned a master's degree in business and systems management from the Florida Institute of Technology in 2007 and an executive certificate in international management from the Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University in 2010.

After moving back to her home country of Saudi Arabia, Anabtawi discovered a place in the world of business that piqued her interest: capital markets and their formation in emerging economies. She also recognized the viability of renewable energy and pursued a position at ACWA Power, a developer and operator of power generation and desalinated water production plants.

"I wanted to join this relatively young company and have a hand in making renewable energy accessible and commercially feasible," says Anabtawi, who successfully landed a job at the company and is now the chief people, culture, and communications officer for ACWA Power. Her position brings her immense joy.

"I love driving business by nurturing a happy environment and an ecosystem where people are empowered and feel free to do their best," she says. "I also communicate everyone's accomplishments internally and externally, which brings feelings of immense pride to our organization."

By pursuing two new sectors—capital markets and renewable energy—Anabtawi ventured into what she calls "unknown territories." She has never shied away from moving out of her comfort zone and says that in many situations she was either the only woman or one of only a few women in the room. "I enjoy the challenge of going to new places. I am rarely deterred by windy paths, which has made me resilient and strong enough to face all types of challenges," she says. "I try to steer the

discussion from my gender to personal merit, which is how a person can truly make a difference."

In addition to prioritizing personal merit, Anabtawi also cares about having personal integrity. "I want to sleep soundly at night, and for me that happens by acting with integrity and not letting myself doubt if my decisions were the 'right' thing to do," she explains. Anabtawi holds herself accountable to her team members. She wants her coworkers to know that no matter what, she will not "compromise her integrity and will always stand up for what is right."

Outside of work, Anabtawi volunteers with women empowerment initiatives and encourages women to venture outside what is comfortable. She works with Women Empowerment Global Outreach, a Salt Lake City-based nonprofit that she cofounded in 2010, where she focuses on encouraging, training, educating, and empowering disadvantaged women. She also mentors women.

"I especially enjoy challenging those I work with to break the glass ceiling that we often build for ourselves," she says. "I frequently share in my discussions with other women that the challenges they face are not as insurmountable as they initially appear."

Anabtawi's curiosity, integrity, and personal merit have helped her overcome her own challenges and meet her goals throughout her career. "My values are integral to my decision making and have helped etch my life path," she says. Anabtawi resides in Saudi Arabia with her husband, Wout. The couple has five children and one grandchild.









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