Fall 2009

The Classic, Fall 2009

Public Relations

Northwestern College - Orange City

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Choosing Family
Alumni share the challenges, heartaches and joys of adoption

Also
Music Maker Retires
Clash of the Classes
Raider Rivalries
An anonymous $250,000 gift led to record fundraising for the Northwestern Fund in 2008–09. Without those annual gifts, tuition would be $1,255 higher per student.

**Music Maker**
Kimberly Ude Sevacec logged more than 50,000 miles and traveled to 24 states and four countries while serving as the conductor of Northwestern’s touring A cappella Choir. This spring she retired after teaching music at Northwestern for 33 years.

**Class Pride**
A weeklong competition gives Northwestern’s freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors a chance to bond with classmates while battling for class bragging rights.

**Family Tree**
Welcoming children into their homes from China, Ethiopia, India and across the U.S., Northwestern alumni are experiencing the joys and struggles of adoption.

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**On the Web**
Add your comments to any article in this issue and share your adoption stories.

visit classic.nwciowa.edu
A year ago the stock market took the largest one-week dive since the Great Depression and a major financial crisis began rocking the country. Colleges and universities were affected too and wondered what impact the economic downturn would have on efforts to recruit and retain students.

We got our answer this fall when we welcomed a strong class of new students: 370 would have on efforts to recruit and retain students.

Last year the names of over 300 students were referred to our admissions office. Thank you valued.

Don’t Keep It Secret

Secret is not. Together let’s change that.

A new initiative for this year is our Legacy Grant, which offers financial aid to students with a family or church connection to Northwestern.

Students are eligible for a Legacy Grant if:

• A parent or grandparent attended Northwestern for at least three semesters in her or his lifetime.

• The student attends a Reformed Church in America congregation

Students receive a $1,500 Legacy Grant if they meet one of the above criteria, $2,000 if they meet two, or $2,500 for meeting all three.

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Green Pea Reactions

I sense a lack of balance in what Dr. Sleeth seems to be championing. Washing dishes by hand and drying your clothes outside (even in the winter) may impart some perceived benefit to the environment, but the combined similar efforts of even a billion people can be completely wiped out in a single washing machine engine.

I think some of us have an unexamined view on just how much influence we can have on the global environment. God does not want us to worship or admire the earth or any of his creations. He didn’t even ask us to preserve the earth.

In Genesis 1:28 God commanded man to “subdue” the earth. That is, to understand it and gain the mastery of it; to put it to work in our own best interests. Certainly there is stewardship implied, but preserving a “pristine” earth may not be in man’s best interest. Focus on saving souls.

Evan Mortenson ’80

I hope you will agree with me that as Christians we are called to a much higher standard than the world at large, that we are to be the light of the world, like a city set upon a hill. As such, we shouldn’t stop at polluting less than China or keeping our litter inside our cars. We should, for example, be aware of purchasing items that are made in China and contribute to the pollution problem, regardless of whether or not those purchases are “within our means.”

And Dr. Sleeth addresses the point about saving souls when he notes in the interview that fewer resources used by Christians in the production and consumption of material goods means more resources for the work of the church. Thank you, Classic, for printing this kind of interview that encourages conversation about how we can live and move and have our being in the one who is creator of all.

Clariice (Deoan ’80) Reinecke

Unsung Heroes

Yay for the maintenance people! I worked with them a few summers and think back with great fondness. [They] all have touched my life.

Teena (Rodner ’06) Driefout

We love getting mail! Send letters to: Classic, Northwestern College, 101 7th Street SW, Orange City, IA 51041; e-mail: classic@nwciowa.edu; fax: 712-707-3730. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please include an address and daytime phone number.
Executive Decisions

The Northwestern College Board of Trustees approved building a suite-style residence hall and endorsed new mission and identity statements at its fall meeting in October.

“The style of residence is something between a traditional residence hall and an apartment building,” says President Greg Christy. “Suite-style halls are very popular, so we’re excited to be able to provide this new option for our students.”

“The most important thing is that we’re living out the mission each day to the best of our ability, with God’s grace, and that the mission is the basis for all decisions we make.”

Official hope to begin construction next spring and have it completed by the end of 2010. The residence hall, to be located in what is now a parking lot north of Stegenga Hall, will provide needed housing for students following the closing of 60-year-old Hermonita Hall after this school year. Hermonita will remain on campus temporarily and will be available for other uses.

The new mission and identity statements were approved after much input from faculty and staff over the past year.

Missions Statement:
Northwestern College is a Christian academic community engaging students in courageous and faithful learning and living that empowers them to follow Christ and pursue God’s redeeming work in the world.

Identity Statement:
Northwestern College is a Christian college in the Reformed tradition, founded in 1882 by the Reformed Church in America. We are committed to providing a Christian liberal arts education in an undergraduate, intercultural and residential environment. We offer bachelor’s degrees in a variety of traditional and professional programs.

Christy says the new mission statement is a fresh way of stating what Northwestern’s mission has been throughout its history. “This isn’t a change in our mission, but a new way of articulating it,” he says.

“The new mission statement and the Vision for Learning that was adopted in 2006 make a very strong statement about who we are and what we desire to have happen in the lives of our students,” says Christy.

Campus Enhancements

Improvements completed this summer made a difference in student classrooms as well as in the center of the college’s campus green.

A new chemistry lab was added to Van Peursem Hall when a classroom was gutted and given new cabinetry, work stations and vacuum pumps. Workers also renovated the chemistry storage room—including new vented cabinetry—and added a faculty office.

Remodeling also took place in the nursing department facilities in Orange City’s former hospital building. Four patient rooms were converted to a classroom, conference room and human patient simulator lab.

A gift from Leonard and Marjorie Maas of Holland, Mich., paid for the installation of a large awning for the college’s word mark. The Maas’ donation also paid for a new campus directory sign that was placed south of Zwemer Hall between the visitor parking lot and Highway 10.

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Spanglish Hoops

Coach Earl Woudstra discovered this summer how hard it is to conduct a basketball clinic when you don’t speak the language. In June he and 11 members of Northwestern’s women’s basketball team spent a week in Mexico on a missions trip.

“With a mission trip, you conduct a basketball clinic when you don’t speak the language. In June he and 11 members of Northwestern’s women’s basketball team spent a week in Mexico on a missions trip.

“A team mission trip to Mexico in June gave Northwestern basketball players Randa Holstein (right) and Becca Hurley the opportunity to teach proper shooting technique to schoolchildren in Mazatlan.

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You in Context

Class
Human Behavior and the Social Environment

Instructor
Mark DeRuyter
Assistant Professor of Social Work

“Take no fame; I take no blame,” says social work professor Mark DeRuyter, quoting advice he once heard. “It’s advice he shares with students so they remember they are not responsible for future clients’ successes—or failures. Potential areas for failure are explored in Human Behavior and the Social Environment (HBSE).

Social workers don’t work just with individuals,” says Dr. DeRuyter, “but just with groups. We work within the dysfunction that sometimes arises between those two.”

HBSE focuses on families as a central influence on behavior and development. De Ruyter calls at his “frying pan course” because it covers crisis at every life stage, from child abuse and teen pregnancy to infertility and divorce.

In this class, as in nearly every one he teaches, De Ruyter tells students, “It may not be fun, but it is interesting.”

Texts and Assignments
Exploring Human Behavior and the Social Environment, by L. Allen Furru
A Child Called It, by Dave Pelzer

In addition to reflecting on Pelzer’s child-abuse autobiography, students write two other papers:

• A “Self as a System” paper that answers “Who are you and why?” from the perspectives of biology, sociology, psychology and spirituality.
• A family research project that explores generational changes within the context of social changes

Mission Minor

Northwestern is now offering a minor in Christian mission. The program replaces the career concentration in mission service.

The minor requires 24 credit hours of courses in such areas as theology, intercultural communication, missiology and world religions, as well as an experiential component.

“Mission is about both knowledge and the application of that knowledge,” says Dr. Red Spidahl, associate professor of religion and a former missionary in Cameroon. “You’ve got to be able to apply it—to learn how to engage people where they live. This program will enable students to translate what God has done through Jesus Christ into whatever culture they’re in.”

Spidahl says the minor is pertinent for students no matter what their major. “The phenomenal rise of short-term mission participants and the increasing interaction of congregations with other religions and cultures make the program very relevant in helping to prepare students who will bring clarity, depth and informed passion to the mission of Christ’s church.”

Teaching Leader

Just a year after receiving the highest honor given by the Iowa Writing Project, Barbara Tummulii has again garnered statewide recognition from her peers. The assistant professor of English received the Distinguished Service Award from the Iowa Council of Teachers of English (ICTE) in October for being an instructional leader, an advocate for English language arts teaching and learning, and active in professional development and service.

A member of Northwestern’s faculty since 1996, Tummulii has served as an advisory board and steering committee member for the Iowa Writing Project (IWP). She has also directed numerous IWP workshops and given presentations at meetings of the ICTE, National Council of Teachers of English, and Council for Christian Colleges & Universities.

In collaboration with the Iowa Writing Project, Tummulii began Northwestern’s Pedagogy Project in 2000. Through the program, more than 70 NWU professors have come together for a year of focused study to reflect on and discuss their teaching practice and to experiment with new strategies in their classrooms. The program has spawned Pedagogy Project II, which engages faculty members in a yearlong focus on integrating writing more effectively into the learning process.

One of Tummulii’s latest ventures has been directing the Hispanic Story Project, which has gathered, translated and published stories of northeast Iowa’s Hispanic immigrants. Some of the stories have been published bilingually by IWP and provided to area teachers for a variety of uses, including curriculum materials and sensitivity training.

Dona Niday, executive director of ICTE, nominated Tummulii for the award. “Perhaps greater than all of her named accomplishments,” says Niday, “is Barb’s enthusiasm for teaching and learning. She embraces the challenges of the classroom energetically and joyfully and goes beyond talking by acting upon her beliefs to provide faculty professional development.”

Mission Minor

Northwestern’s minor in Christian mission includes a credit-collecting examination program that can be fulfilled by participating in the Summer of Service program, a mission internship, or an approved study abroad program.

Studying a Family Tree’s Growth Rings

HBSE students interview extended family members, gathering information about relatives’ education, occupations, religion, marriages/divorces, children, physical/mental health, life spans, and causes of death. They then create family genograms and ecomaps. Both diagrams go beyond a typical family tree, depicting relational connection and function.

Genograms and ecomaps are used by social workers to help clients identify physical, psychological and social patterns that enhance or inhibit familial development.

Northwestern’s new mission minor includes a credit-collecting examination program that can be fulfilled by participating in the Summer of Service program, a mission internship, or an approved study abroad program.

Barbara Tummulii is the 2009 Distinguished Service Award recipient from the Iowa Council of Teachers of English.
Courses Online

Northwestern made its first official foray into offering online courses this summer. Dr. Michael Kenkau, English, and Dr. Lisa Sibon, education, were the professors for the pioneering effort. Kenkau previously offered an online course on a one-on-one basis. Kenkau and Sibon have used the online courses as a service Northwestern needs to provide for students and other constituents. Sibon taught two courses that lead to the unified early childhood endorsement, a program that is in demand by experienced teachers. One of Kenkau’s three courses is only offered every other year in the class.

In addition, one of this summer’s students was a Northwestern senior who was deployed in Afghanistan at the time.

The two professors plan to offer online courses again next summer, and they may be joined by others. Kenkau is preparing a distance education manual for NWC and will give a presentation to faculty next spring about how to provide a distinctly Christian approach to online education that builds community.

"From my experiences, I think online courses can improve learning outcomes if they are taught in a thoughtful manner," says Kenkau. "In a typical classroom you can have three students answering more than half of the questions and 75 percent of the students not talking during the discussions. In online courses, everyone answers every question. In my literacy studies courses, I asked every student for an original contribution and a response to someone else’s comments. Everyone was involved in doing literary analysis."

By lecturing less and involving students in more problem-solving and discussion, Kenkau and Sibon see the online courses as a service Northwestern needs to provide for students and other constituents. Kenkau taught two courses that lead to the unified early childhood endorsement, a program that is in demand by experienced teachers. One of Kenkau’s three courses is only offered every other year in the class.

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On Board

Six new members have joined Northwestern’s Board of Trustees. Appointed to four-year terms and attending their first meeting in October were the Rev. Carl Boersma ’75 of Sioux City, Iowa; Lori Scott of Omaha; Merlyn De Vries ’88 of Edmond, Oklahoma; Bryan De Vries ’91 of Rapid City, South Dakota; Marty Guthmiller ’82 of Orange City, Iowa; and Lori Scott of Omaha.

Boersma, a longtime substitute teacher for MOC-Floyd Valley, served as a trustee from 1995 to ’97 when she was president of the National Alumni Board. She has been a community leader and co-producer of the forthcoming Winning Favor movie. De Vries has been an orthopedic surgeon at the Black Hills Orthopedic and Spine Center since 1995. He earned a medical degree at the University of Iowa and completed a residency in orthopedic surgery at the University of Kansas. He served on Northwestern’s board from 1999 to 2007.

De Vries has been the senior vice president of finance and chief financial officer of Mascon International Corp. since 1985. Recipient of Northwestern’s Distinguished Professional Achievement Award in 2006, he earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting from the University of South Dakota.

Guthmiller, CEO of Orange City Area Health System since 1991, received Northwestern’s Distinguished Professional Achievement Award in 2007. He earned a master’s degree in health administration from the University of Colorado.

Scott has spent more than 25 years as a leader for local community service organizations. She earned a master’s degree in public administration from Eastern Michigan University and a bachelor’s degree at the University of Northern Iowa.

K imberly Utke Svanoe was just 22 when she signed her first teaching contract with Northwestern College. Fresh from graduate school on the East Coast, where she’d earned a master’s degree in choral conducting, she was hired to direct the A cappella Choir after Professor Lawrence Van Wyk retired.

“It’s uncommon to have a female conduct a touring Christian college choir in the Midwest. They’re predominantly conducted by men,” says Svanoe, who retired in May after 33 years at NWC. “I think it’s a distinctive of Northwestern College that they weren’t afraid to put a woman in that capacity.”

Svanoe wasn’t afraid to accept the job either. Born into a Norwegian-German family in Maddock, North Dakota, she credits her prairie girl background with her forthright way of getting to the heart of the matter. That background also helped her win the choral position at Northwestern. The dean who hired her told her that, although she had concert experience in Boston, she could understand the rural student who has talent because she herself was from North Dakota.

Svanoe’s own musical talent was evident at an early age. She started piano at age 5 and cello when she was 9, adding voice lessons in high school. Originally interested in becoming a concert pianist, she switched her emphasis to choral conducting after her first year of graduate school.

“If I realized I wanted to make music with people,” she says of the hours alone in a practice room that a career as a pianist would require.

Svanoe credits God’s call with bringing her to Northwestern—and keeping her at a place she deeply loves: “Next to raising my son, Will, Northwestern has been my life,” she says.

During Svanoe’s years at the college, she helped coordinate music for campus worship services; supervised more than 50 vocal music student teachers; gave voice, violin and cello lessons; and taught conducting, music methods and music survey courses. She also directed the Symphonette and Women’s Choir for more than three decades and the A cappella Choir from 1977 to 2000, visiting 24 states and four countries during national and international tours.

Now retired from Northwestern, Svanoe is embarking on a new phase in her career: teaching music at Sioux Falls Christian School, where she will continue discovering and developing musical talent—this time in what will, in some instances, be the children of her former students.

Relive your gridiron glory with the purchase of digital-format film of games from 1960 to the present. Request a specific game or games from 1960 to 1970 for $25 or a DVD with 2 to 4 games for $50.

Contact Karen in the athletic office, 712-707-7280 or karen@nwciowa.edu, for a list of available games or to place your order.

Proceeds support the Red Raider Club.

**RAIDER REWIND**

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It’s a tradition as old as Northwestern: Students battling each other for class bragging rights. Since 2004 those battles have taken the form of Clash of the Classes, an elaborate competition held at the start of each school year. Beginning with the Slime Fight and including everything from human foosball to tricycle races to synchronized swimming on land, the weeklong event allows students to test their physical and mental prowess, practice teamwork and bond with classmates.
Class Warfare

by Duane Beeson

Across sloughs, ditches, fences and alfalfa fields they ran, young men and women leaving a trail of chalk and paper—and sometimes blood—behind them on a dark October night. They were the seniors of Northwestern Classical Academy, and they were looking to prove their supremacy over the junior class.

During the 1920s and ’30s, the junior class. . .

The percentage of alumni giving to Northwestern was 23%. Twenty-six classes increased their participation percentage, compared with only 13 classes that increased their participation the previous year.

The Tower Society ($1,000+) totaled 231 members; 41 gave at the silver level ($2,500+), and 24 gave at the gold level ($5,000+). (In 2007-08, only two Tower Society members gave at the gold level.)

The Heritage Society (donors making planned gifts) grew by 16 members to 630.

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Funding Northwestern’s Mission

2008–09 giving spurred by $250,000 gift

Invest in the Independent 529 Plan, and lock in tomorrow’s tuition at less than today’s price. Northwestern and more than 270 private colleges participate in this prepaid tuition plan. It could be the key to your child’s or grandchild’s higher education.

www.independent529plan.org

888-718-7878

Northwestern Fund

2007–08  2008–09

Alumni $420,653 $485,881
Friends $506,916 $812,947
Foundations/grants $112,878 $150,168
Corporations $130,216 $131,299
Churches $371,815 $350,365
Other $49,671 $25,300
Subtotal $1,392,149 $1,955,960

Northwestern Classic

Imagine Campaign

Learning Commons $20 million $6,992,727
Academic Innovation (new and improved programs) $5 million $1,454,365
Rowaness Student Center renovation $3 million $523,597
Scholarships $2 million $3,977,839
Undesignated gifts $277,228
Subtotal $30 million $13,211,746

Paying for college? It’s a LOCK

It's a LOCK on your future

by Gary Hofmeyer (foreground), now a pastor in St. Petersburg, Fl., says he was checking when this photo of the seniors tug-of-war team was taken in 1969. “I was in the river and still pulling when I was supposed to stop. We cheated and we still lost!”

Falling behind

Alumni Giving

Best giving percentage

Class of 1944  63%
Class of 1949  60%
Class of 1946  60%
Class of 1956  56%
Class of 1952  52%

Best giving overall

Class of 1975 $116,219
Class of 1972 $112,799
Class of 1982 $83,929
Class of 1981 $64,083
Class of 1965 $61,840

Best giving to the Northwestern Fund

Class of 1965 $46,202
Class of 1972 $41,620
Class of 1975 $33,704
Class of 1968 $26,108
Class of 1955 $21,970

Capital and Endowed Gifts

2007–08  2008–09

Alumni $496,335 $279,433
Friends $736,260 $529,019
Foundations/grants $262,300 $259,750
Corporations $62,745 $81,179
Churches $1,101 $2,225
Estates $683,379 $289,006
Other $95,000 $50,300
Subtotal $2,337,120 $1,491,112
Grand total $3,729,269 $3,447,072

Subtotal $1,392,149 $1,955,960

Planned Giving

Bequests received $455,318
Gifts for endowed scholarships $560,987

Alumni Giving

Goal Total Raised

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Academic Innovation (new and improved programs) $5 million $1,454,365
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It's a LOCK on your future

by Gary Hofmeyer (foreground), now a pastor in St. Petersburg, Fl., says he was checking when this photo of the seniors tug-of-war team was taken in 1969. “I was in the river and still pulling when I was supposed to stop. We cheated and we still lost!”
On Saturday, April 21, 2007, Stephanie (Ells ’03) and Nathan Huisman ’02 were standing in the parking lot of the Bismarck, N.D., Hobby Lobby when Stephanie’s cell phone rang. They had been shopping for supplies for a baby book, where Stephanie was recording their process of adopting from Vietnam.

The Huismans were 150th on a waiting list, which would likely mean another 12 to 18 months until a referral came, and then another four to six weeks before they’d travel. After years of dealing with infertility, this would be one more test of patience for the Huismans, but they stayed positive and had even purchased nursery bedding they’d been eyeing—a brown, green and white fleece blanket with a smiling elephant motif.

A friend from church was calling. Someone she knew in Ohio had given birth to a baby boy the day before and planned to abandon him at the hospital under the state’s Safe Haven laws. Would the Huismans consider adopting him?

By the next afternoon they were driving to Ohio, an infant car seat installed securely in back.
Northwestern Classic

If you want to make God laugh," begins the film Bells, which won the Excellence in Adoption Media Award, "tell him your plans." Couples plan to expand their families naturally. Women expect to become pregnant in good and convenient timing. A young girl playing with her dolls never guesses that one day, when she bears her own children, she might not be able to afford diapers or even enough food.

Adoption is simply this: A child whose birthparents are unable to provide care finds a new family. The playing out of this act of societal redemption, however, is as varied as the faces and personalities of the children themselves; laws, processes and costs differ from state to state and country to country. Just as diverse are the reasons why people choose to adopt, and how children come to be found.

Leanne De Vos '78 was 39 and single when The Rocky Mountain News had been receiving on a free six-month subscription ran a photograph of people returning from China with girls they had adopted. China’s one-child policy, instituted in 1979 to cap population growth, results in fines for urban families with multiple children, leading to high abortion rates and a preference for male babies.

De Vos, a Denver attorney who taught in Taiwan for a year after graduating from Northwestern, had never previously entertained the idea of adoption nor felt the push to have children. She managed her life as she did a lawsuit waiting to be filed—with careful planning and forethought. When she saw the newspaper photo, however, she knew instantly she should adopt a daughter from China.

"I felt a certainty I didn’t have any facts to base on," De Vos says. "Empirically, this was not a rational decision at all."

In Sioux Center, Iowa, Sheila (Born ‘94) De Jong and her husband, Kelly, were hoping to expand their family. Sheila had had difficult pregnancies with their two boys and a miscarriage in between; when the concept of adoption began weaving through the Bible study she was attending at the time, she took notice.

Jesus was raised by an adoptive father. Moses’ mother gave him up so he could have a better life. Romans 8:23-24 says, “We wait eagerly for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.”

In 2001, she De Jong traveled to Guatemala to meet their new daughter, Maria. “She likes to tell the story,” Sheila says. “‘You put out your arms and I touched your face and you were crying.’”

A woman had given birth to her sixth daughter and was forbidden by her husband to return home with another girl; the mother and child were temporarily staying just a few miles from Ajay’s parents’ house. Ajay, an Indian citizen, assumed he could easily adopt the girl and bring her back with him to the States. In February, he flew to India to meet the baby and begin paperwork to adopt her; Lindsey joined them a month later.

“In Sioux Center, Iowa, Sheila (Born ‘94) De Jong and her husband, Kelly, were hoping to expand their family. Sheila had had difficult pregnancies with their two boys and a miscarriage in between; when the concept of adoption began weaving through the Bible study she was attending at the time, she took notice.”

B

y definition, adoption is a legal process by which the rights of a child toward the birthparents are ended and a new set of rights established toward the adoptive parents. The act of adopting starts with a series of decisions and a pile of papers, making it difficult to ignore that the forging of family bonds must necessarily begin as a transaction.

Stephanie Huisman remembers being handed a list of 80 medical conditions and asked to check those she and Nathan would accept in a child adopted from Vietnam. No choices on their part would ultimately matter—they eventually halted the international proceedings, and only en route to Ohio did they realize they hadn't even asked the baby's race. But earlier, working down the checklist, choosing a child felt like selecting a china pattern.

“You battle within yourself,” Stephanie says. “If I was having a biological child, I wouldn’t have these choices. Some of the decisions in the adoption process seem selfish, but you’re trying to make the best choice for you and your child.”

She admits it was helpful to think through these decisions, to face the shock of events not following an expected course: marriage, pregnancy, kids. Of not having a daughter with curly hair, just like Stephanie’s. Bonnie (Adkins ‘83) De Jong, former director of the Southern California branch of Bethany Christian Services, agrees these thorough first steps are essential. The current trend for birthparents and adoptive parents to bypass agencies’ counseling and screening services, usually through online social networking sites, doesn’t protect the child’s best interests, she says.

“Our such choice is open adoption, in which contact between the adoptive and biological parents is maintained at some level. In 1974, research indicated that psychological problems experienced by adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents were a direct consequence of the secrecy maintained in adoptions up to that point. Open adoptions became more common in the following decades, but...”

Adoption Facts

• Over 500,000 children are in foster care in the United States.
• There are at least 130 million orphans worldwide.
• More than 15 million children in Africa have become orphaned due to AIDS.
• A study by the Dave Thomas Foundation showed that 48% of people seriously considering adoption look first to their church to find information.

“If one out of three churches in the U.S. would find just one family to adopt, the domestic orphan problem would be solved.”

Source: Marc Andreas, vice president of marketing and communications, Bethany Christian Services

“We dreamed of having a family that looked like the family of God, full of different colors and cultures.”

Bonnie (Adkins ‘83) De Jong, former director of the Southern California branch of Bethany Christian Services, agrees these thorough first steps are essential. The current trend for birthparents and adoptive parents to bypass agencies’ counseling and screening services, usually through online social networking sites, doesn’t protect the child’s best interests, she says.

With the Internet, people just find each other. The screening process has been removed from adoption as a whole," says De Jong. “When you foresee that front part, a lot can go wrong. There's a huge emotional piece of this that needs addressing before, not after.”

Some agencies, like Bethany, post prospective adoptive family profiles online to be browsed by birthparents before they begin the standard process. But when families and birthparents make their own matches and pay agencies for limited legal services, organizations like Bethany obligate but often do so without their stamp of approval, recognizing that perhaps there is still grief to be lived through and choices to be made.

“One such choice is open adoption, in which contact between the adoptive and biological parents is maintained at some level. In 1974, research indicated that psychological problems experienced by adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents were a direct consequence of the secrecy maintained in adoptions up to that point. Open adoptions became more common in the following decades, but...”

Cover Story

Cover Story

Cover Story

Cover Story

Cover Story

Cover Story

Cover Story
Northwestern Classic

21

NWC Named “Adoption-Friendly”
Northwestern College ranks alongside Ivy League and Big Ten institutions as one of the leading adoption-friendly workplaces in higher education. Northwestern is fifth—behind Cornell University and New York University (tied for first), Harvard (third) and Ohio State (fourth)—on the Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces in America education list released in May by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

Northwestern offers financial assistance of up to $2,000 per adopted child to faculty and staff, with an additional reimbursement of up to $1,000 for the adoption of a special needs child. Adoptive parents receive up to seven days of paid leave in addition to accumulated sick leave, vacation and personal leave.

Since its start in July 2007, the policy has benefited several employee families, including Sherri (Do Zeeuw ’95) and Ben Langton; Dave and Jodi Nonomacher; and Laura (Dykstra ’84) and Steve Heitritter ’87, whom The Wall Street Journal mentioned in a July story on employee benefits. The Langtons and Heitrittters each have two children from Ethiopia; the Nonnemachers’ two daughters are from Liberia.

many adult adopters still find themselves lobbying policymakers just to learn where they came from. Only eight states currently allow access to birth records, with legislation being considered in 10 other states to remove the need for a court order to open sealed records.

Linda (Vanderhorst ’68) Van Beek can point to only a handful of times when she considered finding her birthparents. She always knew she was adopted—“picked,” not “had,” her parents told her—but it wasn’t until her own daughter was pregnant and asking about the family’s medical history that she began sleuthing out her past.

On Sept. 9, 1995, her 49th birthday, Van Beek decided to make the call. “I weighed my words very carefully; I wrote them down,” she says. She used her birthmother’s maiden name to arouse curiosity and to be sure she wasn’t mistaken for a telemarketer.

Van Beek replied, “I believe you are my mother.”

“Do you know from a long time ago?” the woman asked.

Van Beek replied, “I believe you are my mother.”

The National Council For Adoption maintains on its website that "policy and practice should not empower one party to adoption to receive identifying information or unilaterally impose contacts without the consent of another party." The media likes to sensationalize these issues of identity arise often in discussions of transracial adoptions. In 1985, William Merritt, then president of the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), told a Senate committee, “Black children who grow up in white families suffer severe identity problems.” Just 10 years before, the NABSW had helped reverse the position of most state agencies on transracial adoptions, stating that minority children should, when at all possible, be placed in homes that share their racial origins in order to preserve their culture and sense of themselves.

Around that time, the parents of Mary Ann (Anker ’77) Pals were welcoming home their 26th foster baby. Rachel, an African-American girl, had osteomyelitis, an inflammation that settled in just after birth in the bone and marrow of her hip.

The agency asked the Ankers to keep Rachel through her first surgery at 15 months, during her six weeks in a body cast, and while she learned to walk. By then, the Ankers thought of Rachel as their child, and when they began the process to adopt her, they had to stop and ask themselves if this was best for the girl.

Their hometown of South Holland, Ill., was, at that time, occupied primarily by white families with roots tracing back to the Dutch immigrants who settled there in the early 1800s; black faces were rarely seen. When Rachel was two, the family was at a restaurant with their five girls, including Kim, who is also adopted and is deaf. As they began eating, Kim, age 12, grew increasingly angry. She stuck out her tongue at a family sitting at another table:

“Kim!” her mother exclaimed, horrified. “What are you doing?”

Kim had been reading the lips of the other family. “They’re saying mean things about us because we have a black baby.”

Their agency, which had placed dozens of diverse foster children with them, wouldn’t process a transracial adoption. A friend who was a social worker advocated for them, and the Ankers became, to their knowledge, the only white family in their region at that time to adopt a black child. Rachel was four, and life went on as it had before the papers made it official—she had been part of the family since she was two days old.

Pals, Rachel, their mother and two other sisters were featured in a series of books by Rita Simon and Rhonda Rooda on transracial adoptions into white families.

“Sometimes transracial adoption is a good thing,” says Rachel in the first book, In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptions Tell Their Stories (Columbia University Press). “A lot of children of different ethnic backgrounds are in the foster care system without any possible adoptive family.”
adoptive families. 

Since that 1997 interview, Rachel has married an African-American man, had a son and secured a teaching job in a Christian school. She met her birthmother a few years back, and, according to her sister Lynn in the third book, In Their Sibling’s Voices, she came home the same day and said, “Mom, Dad, thank you! They led totally different lives without you.”

Adoptions have concluded that white families are indeed able to raise children of other races in a psychologically healthy way, provided they stay realistic about racism and open to the individual needs of the children of other races in a psychologically healthy way, provided they find themselves devastated.

Studies conducted since the 1970s movement against transracial adoptions have concluded that white families are indeed able to raise children of other races in a psychologically healthy way, provided they stay realistic about racism and open to the individual needs of the child. The federal government stepped in with the 1994 Multiethnic Placements Act and the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act, which essentially removed race as a barrier for agencies placing children into adoptive families.

Perhaps Rachel is still a “black Dutchman,” as she once called herself, but she appears to have found a balance in her life between the culture she comes from and the one she calls home.

The challenges for these families remain numerous, but success rates of transracial adoptions are quite comparable to those of interracial adoptions, according to the books by Simon and Roorda.

International adoptions carry their own set of similar trials as well, says the families interviewed for this article, but the joys and trials are uniquely situated within the dynamics of a given family, and not necessarily a product of race or culture. “Love cuts across all racial boundaries,” says Pals.

The De Jongs traveled in October 2005 to bring home Elizabeth, now four, who is as bouncy and exuberant as her curly black hair. The experience birthed Katelyn’s Fund, a ministry that provides emotional and financial support for Christian families looking to adopt. Over the past three years, they’ve awarded 82 grants of $3,000 each.

“It’s taught our family lots about trust and not holding things so tightly,” says Sheila. “Knowing all things are God’s. God is beyond us.”

On March 22, 1996, Leanne De Vos walked into a modest orphanage in the southern province of China. A uniformed worker brought out a thin, five-month-old girl dressed in traditional Chinese garb and handed her to De Vos. The two stared at each other. In that moment, an act that once seemed impulsive and irrational made all the sense in the world.

The concept of adoption evokes the word “grafting” for Lindsey Eshcol; a baby born half a world away becomes a family, just as a young, severed branch can, after a period of time, grow from a new tree.

At little Adrian Huisman’s two-year checkup, a new doctor inquired about his family medical history. His parents went on and on about grandpa’s heart condition, grandma’s glaucoma, until it occurred to them that they had forgotten, briefly, that their son was not related by blood.

“We’re just a normal family,” Stephanie says. “Just like with biological children, Adrian was meant to be in our family, and we were meant to be his parents.”

Horticulturists say the formation of a successful union—the juncture where grafting takes place—depends on a complex series of events; the parent tree must be bound to the young shoot, which is working to draw nutrients from a foreign root system.

Eventually the two will grow as one and, on these Northwestern family trees grafted through adoption, the union’s faint scar disappears in the shade of strong, healthy branches.

The winter Classic will feature Northwestern love stories. If you’d like to share yours, e-mail classic@nwciowa.edu or call 712-707-7116.

Northwestern Classic
23
FALL 2009
Red Ties

Jennifer Neuhouser ’00
Director of Alumni Relations

Have you ever been without your family? I remember my mom’s teary goodbyes as she and Dad drove away from Ferris Smith Hall after dropping me off as a freshman. It made my stomach hurt; I was truly alone—well, for about 30 months. Then in 1992, I met this wonderful person Jane at a class reunion in Iowa. Jane was the only person who knew my family. We met again in 1995, and by 1997, Jane and I were married and are now the proud parents of two children, Brice (16) and Jordan (14).

As I watched our newest family enlargement, I was one of the few who knew about this special place and community. Northwestern enlarged my family when I started here, and those relationships have so far been as lasting as the bonds I have with my wonderful relatives. Like in any family, sometimes we have a lot of contact and other times we’re out of touch, going about our lives. Still, when we’re together again, it’s like we never were apart. Long has it been since you connected with your NWC family? Visiting campus is a great way to get back in touch. Or, attend a regional alumni gathering and join our Facebook page (facebook.com/NWCAlumni). Remember: We’re related—maybe not by blood, although Raider red runs through all our veins, right? We’re bonded through shared experiences. I’m grateful to have that in common with you.

Terry Gazdikowski, Scottish Rite, Elk, is the vice president of educational services at Western Nebraska Community College.

Marcie (Walker) Suozzo is a medical billing for CVSCarenet in Gurnee, Ill.

Sarah (Walters) Stillion, Edmonds, Wash., is a freelance theatre artist. Her newest play, Christmas Moon, will be performed Dec. 3–22 at the Baylight Dinner Theatre in Scandin, Wash.

Lori (Barrie) Van Beek, China, Calif., went on a summer mission trip to Kenya with her two sons: Griffin (7) and Ethan (5).

Jordan Walker recently finished building a recording studio. He has played in a band, Conrad Ford, for five years. He is a life skills assistant at Parkview Services in Seattle.

Curt Dallong works in Internet sales for York-Eide Motorcars in Sioux Falls.

Cheryl (Van’t Hof) Hieronymus of Altoona was recently named a regional extension education director for Iowa State University Extension. Her region covers six counties in northwest Iowa. She served most recently as an ISU Extension education director in Sioux County.

Brett Voder, Sioux Falls, S.D., is an agent for farm bureau financial services.

Kyle Lewis has been named head wrestling coach at Lawton-Bronson (Iowa) High School. He served most recently as an assistant coach at Sioux City West.

Elise (Hana) Bledsoe, Blaine, Minn., is a part-time family practice physician at the Fairview Clinic near Minneapolis. Her husband, Charlie, is a stay-at-home dad.

Kristi (Kraayenhof) Van Der Weide was named chief executive officer of good Samaritan Nursing Home in Sioux Falls.

The Rev. Henry Schoon ’56, former pastor of First Reformed Church in Chakati, N.Y., has retired from the pulpits.

John Johnson, Marion, Iowa, has retired from the pulpit.

Timothy Westcott visited Italy and Greece in June with students from a Kauau City High school for which he has taught a correspondence history course.

He is an associate professor of history and chair of the department of social sciences at Park University in Parkville, Mo.

Stacey Luthres, Madison, Wisc., is an elementary school counselor for the Oregon School District. Her husband, Ron Wik, is a library services assistant at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Gary Browerow, Minneapolis, Jeffers, Minn., provides law services for Zehn Storied Software in Cedar Rapids.

Shelley (Andrews) Hewett, Andover, Kan., received a master’s degree in special education from Southwest Minnesota State University in Fergus Falls, S.D.

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The Review

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How have you ever been without your family? I remember my mom’s teary goodbyes as she and Dad drove away from Ferris Smith Hall after dropping me off as a freshman. It made my stomach hurt; I was truly alone—well, for about 30 months. Then I was engaged by Ron, Marla, and Orientation staff members who welcomed me off to a lazy and engaging 4th semester of college. My family wasn’t expanded; it was expanding. My “family” no longer includes just the wonderful people who make up the tribe into which I was born. I love that people who were once complete strangers can love us unconditionally—whether we have everything in common or nothing, whether we speak the same language or have the same color skin. It doesn’t matter.

As I watched our newest family members—NWC freshmen—move in, it made me nostalgic for my own introduction to this special place and community. Northwestern enlarged my family when I started here, and those relationships have so far been as lasting as the bonds I have with my wonderful relatives. Like in any family, sometimes we have a lot of contact and other times we’re out of touch, going about our lives. Still, when we’re together again, it’s like we never were apart. Long has it been since you connected with your NWC family? Visiting campus is a great way to get back in touch. Or, attend a regional alumni gathering and join our Facebook page (facebook.com/NWCAlumni). Remember: We’re related—maybe not by blood, although Raider red runs through all our veins, right? We’re bonded through shared experiences. I’m grateful to have that in common with you. Leadership, which specializes in strategic vision and executive leadership in business and industry economic development, education, health care, human services and private foundations.

Charlie Linhart, owner of the Paragon Personal Training in Urbandale, Iowa, has been appointed to the Iowa Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Nutrition. In that role, he helps to design curricula for K-12 PE teachers to fulfill the Healthy Kids Act and the Iowa Governor’s Challenge.

Susan (Van Menteren) DeJong teaches math and physics at Northwest High School in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Rachel (Koetzer) Floyd and her husband, Armond, are planting a church called Bridge of Hope in Waterloo, Iowa. They also work together with troubles.

Ted Schulte was named recipient of the 2009 Iowa High School Athletic Conference’s annual media award for excellence, which he received at the state boys’ basketball tournament in Des Moines last March. He was in the newspaper business for nearly 20 years and won numerous statewide awards while serving as sports editor of the Clinton Herald. He now is the sports information director at Greenland College.

Paula Wanken, San Antonio, serves as administrative assistant to the director of the Beaver County Area Agency on Aging.

The Rev. Vickey (Colby) Bartland is pastor of First Reformed Church in Cadall, N.Y.

Kelly McKeevor is a child abusing investigator for the Iowa Department of Human Services in Edsibelle.

Dave Riemersma is business manager of Trimble, a new British company in Sioux Center dedicated to improving the science of vaccinations.

Pen Pal

Though some think writing letters is a thing of the past—replaced by phone calls, e-mails, text messages or social networks—Jennifer (’49) Klamper is still a believer. From her home in Edgerton, Minn., she writes to a group of classmates every four months as part of a round-robin that has been circulating for 40 years.

“We are known as the Dorm girls.” We lived so closely together that we get to know each other very well. We had deviations together every evening. We just had a longing to keep in contact,” she says.

“We have a bond in Christ,” adds Luetta (Friese ’48) Weeldreyer.

“Our children were little, we met in a park for a picnic so the kids could play,” Klamper explains.

As the visits continued, a round-robin letter was started. In it the women write about their health, family, traveling—they even share jokes about aging they get from the Internet.

The group now includes alumni from Sheldon, Iowa, to Ferndale, Wash. Despite the development of new communication technology and habits in postage costs, the round-robin letters still fly.

By Teri Elderika

Northwestern Classic

class Notes

14 ‘41

The Rev. Henry Schoon ’56 has recently become a resident of Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Marvin Minn (Kern) Utech ’78

The Review

Marvin Minn (Kern) Utech ’78

And her husband, Bob, of Spirit Lake, Iowa, recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

Dr. Kella Klinker-Walsh ’77

The Review

Dr. Kella Klinker-Walsh ’77

of Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Randy Oostra has been named chief executive officer of Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Mariann (Kraai) Utech has recently become a resident of Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Sioux Falls, S.D.

The Rev. Henry Schoon ’56 has recently become a resident of Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Her husband, Ron Wiecki, is a library services assistant at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Gary Browerow, Minneapolis, Jeffers, Minn., provides law services for Zehn Storied Software in Cedar Rapids.

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Thomas Helman, Baldwin City, Kan., is a member of the play selection committee for Region V of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. He is an associate professor at Baker University.

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ViRGiL MOORE's interest in architecture started from looking at house plans in the newspaper and redesigning them with his brother. Years later, Helkema’s own designs are featured in magazines like Better Homes and Gardens.

As a board member for three greater Des Moines government organizations, Helkema advises the city council on neighborhood planning and revitalization programs, as well as economic development. He was recently designated as a national and state participant in the American Institute of Architects Citizen Architect Program, which recognizes architects for service to their community.

“Architects are uniquely qualified for city government because of the way they view society,” Helkema says. “They realize the context in which they’re building. Each structure is a piece in the fabric of the town.”

Helkema earned master’s degrees from Iowa State University in architecture and community and regional planning. His civic involvement, however, was inspired by his parents—particularly his father, Art, director of Banske Library from 1909 to 1996 and an Orange City councilman for 12 years.

For me, this is where I can use my skills and talents to help better my community.
Faith, Hope and Laura

Laura Ferguson '98 doesn't buy the American dream. "The American dream says we have the right to store up treasures on earth and isolate ourselves from others if we choose," she says. "I don't believe that's from God." Instead, Ferguson, a director of development with Urban Impact in New Orleans, believes her life—including her earthly possessions—is not her own.

"If this is not my house, that means it's not just for my pleasure," she says. "If this is not my house, it means it's not just for my pleasure. It's for God." Ferguson became close to Hope and her family—including Hope's grandmother, Lilly, and sister Faith—when she began work as a intern at Operation Backpack in Dallas. Hope, now 15, moved in with Laura two years ago. Faith, 17, "From the beginning I felt very much like I was responsible for Hope," says Ferguson. "It was something God had given me to tend to my hearts for people who are suffering."

Three years ago, God called Ferguson to open her home to Hope's grandmother, Lilly, and sister Faith—when she began work as a intern at Operation Backpack in Dallas. Hope, now 15, moved in with Laura two years ago. Faith, 17, "From the beginning I felt very much like I was responsible for Hope," says Ferguson. "It was something God had given me to tend to my hearts for people who are suffering."

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by Sarah Adol '03

2005

Kelli Andersen teaches kindergarten at Elk River Elementary School in Lincoln, Neb. She is pursuing a master's degree in education at the University of Nebraska.

Marie Christianson moved to Tanzania in July to teach special education at Haven of Peace Academy.

'06

Alexis (O'Grady) Ammerman, Norfork, Ark., is a family support worker for Better Living Counseling & Consulting.

Andrew Bandalas is an associate pastor of First United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Iowa. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from the University of Dubuque in May.

Dena (Jennings) Blaney works as a charge nurse at Vanderbilt Medical Center. Her husband, Jonathan, now recently deployed to Iraq as a member of the Tennessee National Guard.

Rose De Haan is a site supervisor for YMCA of Greater Des Moines.

Duotrin Steiner, Strasburg, Colo., is a casualty claims representative for Allstate Insurance in Denver. Her husband, Stary (Faulkner '97), is a laboratory scientist at the Medical Center of Denver.

Michael Holm is pursuing a Ph.D. in urban planning at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His wife, Hannah (Vander Heiden '99) Holm, teaches math at Lincoln High School.

Sarah (Grose) Jackson teaches elementary vocal music at Omaha Public Schools.

Casey Weerheim of Woodbury, Minn., named a Doctor of Chiropractic degree from Palmer College of Chiropractic in February.

Nathan Williams, Chico, Calif., is the youth minister at the Chinese Bible Church of Greater Lowell.

Erin (Beard) Wilson, Paducah, Iowa, and her husband, Terry, form a ministry with his parents. She also does organic farm improv.

Amanda Vranesh earned a master of Fine Arts degree in costume design from Minnesota State University. She is now a costume designer and head of Cal's College, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Elizabeth Zinkula is a remedial support provider for A New Beginning, a counseling center in Des Moines.

Sara (Kuzma) Newell, Orange City, is the textbook buyer and assistant women's soccer coach at Northwestern.

Kevin Ulmer is pursuing a master's degree in exercise physiology at the University of Kentucky. He previously taught health and physical education and coached varsity volleyball at Chattanooga Christian High School in Tennessee.

Avery (Eckert) Bleske has begun a master's degree in English at the University of Rochester.

Daryn Dockter is pursuing a master's degree in environmental science at Taylor University. His wife, Chandann (Stine '08), is working as a school psychology intern in the Mississippi River (Ind.) Community Schools.

Rachel Foulkes is pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree in directing at the University of South Dakota.

Dusty Meyn is the new head girls’ basketball coach at Fort Custer (Mich.) Community College.

Melanie (Algood) Soper is an admissions counselor at Nebraska Christian College. Her husband, Adam, is a club manager at 24 Hour Fitness in Omaha.

Mollie (Hills) Waitt is pursuing graduate studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to become a registered dietitian.

Rachael Witti is pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

2007

Beth Cloth is a research and design intern at Marianne Industries in Omaha.

Mandi (Finn) Clover is an external studies coordinator at AdultLink in Clifton, Iowa.

Heath Rippman touches fourth grade for Bedsworth (Wyo.) Public Schools.

Jaclyn Kleinheksel, Omaha, is a psychology technician at Children's Hospital.

Jesse Nusswitz is a public health microbiologist with the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Sarah (Wysong) Smith recently completed her Ph.D. in physiology at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Audrey Van Sloten teaches physical education at Holts Elementary School in Holts. She recently received a master's degree in education at the University of Nebraska.

Emily (Martis) Martin of Veros Beach, Fla., teaches first grade at St. Lucie County Schools.

Mindy (Staeddinger) Buckley, Watsonville, Calif., teaches art for Sylacauga City Schools.

Talissa Landegent is continuing her education at Rogers College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She is pursuing a certificate in worship and music ministry.

Kristin (Nikles) Lewes teaches kindergarten and first and second grades at Sully (Iowa) Christian School.

Mark Millbrodt, Springfield, Ark., serves as international accounts sales manager for Tyson Foods.

Trevor Stavold, Grimes, Iowa, is pursuing a master’s degree in social studies and language arts at Simpson College.

Jeremy Van Stiel teaches sixth grade math at Highfield Middle School in Ault, Colo. He also serves as girls’ basketball coach and assistant high school football coach. His wife, Melanie, coaches and teaches sixth grade language arts at the same school.

April (Uselman) Weaver works as a registered nurse at Sanford Clinic in West Des Moines, Iowa.
Roses are red
Send us your love story for the next issue
If you met the love of your life at Northwestern, let us know. Your romance might warm our winter Classic.
classic@nwciao.edu +710-707-7116

Memorial

Ralph Mousse ’56, 78, professor emeritus of mathematics, died Aug. 14 in Orange City at the age of 80. After graduating from Northwestern, he earned a bachelor’s degree at Hope College and a master’s degree at the University of Iowa. A captain in the Army during World War II, he served as a Northwestern mathematics professor from 1947 to 1981. He volunteered for many years as a referee for Red Raider games. A Sunday school teacher at Trinity Reformed Church, he served as an elder and deacon. Active in the community, he was an M.B.A. from Central Michigan University and a Master of Social Work degree from Michigan State. A stock analyst and investment specialist, he served most recently as vice president of sales and marketing at Xilinx, a California-based semiconductor testing firm. Among his survivors are his parents, Ruth and Henry Schoss ’41; his wife, Ery, four children, a sister, Susan Haaggen ’77; and a brother.

Susan Palo ’75 died of cancer at his home in Orange City on Aug. 18 at the age of 56. After graduating from Northwestern, he earned a master’s degree in education at the University of Northern Iowa and spent her entire career as an educator and librarian for the Davenport school system. She was an active member of St. John’s United Methodist Church. Ruth (Vande Garde ’52) Meendering ’64; Donna VanPeursem ’09; Jenni Sybesma ’09 and three brothers.

Debbie Kempema ’81; and two brothers. Among his survivors are his wife, Nell; four sons, Jim ’75, Ross ’70, Randy ’82, two sisters; and a brother.

Sarah Korver ’08 and Jonathan Dykstra, Trinity Reformed Church, he served on the board of directors. potatoes, Inc. and Missionary Alliance Church, he served on the board of directors. potatoes, Inc. and Missionary Alliance Church, he served on the board of directors.

Tammy Van Pham ’61; and two brothers.

Robert Wing, a program specialist at the Ruby River, a sister, and teacher at Central Reformed Church. John Wiberg ’03, daughter, Brooke Henrietta, and two brothers. Audrey Christopherson ’70 Boevers died of cancer on Aug. 14 in Dell Rapids, S.D., at the age of 61. She taught elementary music for more than 30 years, the last 15 in Dell Rapids. She served as a volunteer in the public defender’s office in Woodbury County. She was also involved in the Paramount School District literacy program; her survivors include two children and a brother, Harold 48.

Evelyn Mullinax ’43, age 86, died Aug. 17 in Davenport, Iowa. She taught grade school for a few years. She later worked as a certified nurse’s aide for 15 years at a local nursing home. She taught elementary music for more than 30 years, the last 15 in Dell Rapids. She served as a volunteer in the public defender’s office in Woodbury County. She was also involved in the Paramount School District literacy program; her survivors include two children and a brother, Harold 48.

Bindi Sells ’01 die Aug 24 in Sioux Center. After graduating from Northwestern, she taught school for a few years. She later worked as a certified nurse’s aide for 15 years at a local nursing home. She taught elementary music for more than 30 years, the last 15 in Dell Rapids. She served as a volunteer in the public defender’s office in Woodbury County. She was also involved in the Paramount School District literacy program; her survivors include two children and a brother, Harold 48.

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We live in different worlds. Most likely she lives in a small dirt hut in southern Ethiopia. I live in a four-bedroom, one-and-a-half bath house in northwest Iowa town. Her education is basic, at most. I've earned a master's degree. Her employment is petty trade. Until recently, I served as a pastor in a local congregation. We are different.

I don't know much of her story—what her upbringing was like, what hopes and dreams she holds. But I do know on a spring day she gave birth to a baby boy in her parents' home. She named him Dawit, which means beloved and translates to David. His second name was Desalegn, which means I am happy, I am proud. I can guess she was proud of this boy of hers. I can guess she was delighted with her beloved son.

Dawit was nurtured by his mother for a few months as they lived with his grandpa and grandma. But with circumstances too difficult to bear and an abundance of love, she placed him into the care of others. I can guess her love for him must run deep.

On another spring day, my husband and I stood over the boy's crib in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. With his arms stretched above his head, he slept peacefully, as though he didn't have a care in the world. The nannies said he had fallen asleep while lying in the sun, part of the morning routine to boost the children's vitamin D.

We had traveled more than 24 hours, halfway around the world, to hold this child in our arms. We had endured adoption's paperwork, waiting and unknowns. We were forced to give up control and patiently discover the wonder of God's plan. At that moment, when the nanny handed this droopy-eyed little guy into my outstretched arms, the differences I once had with the woman vanished. We are both deeply in love with this same beloved boy.

When I rock David to sleep, I often look into his big brown eyes and wonder: What other world has he seen? What other eyes has he looked deeply into? What other kisses has he felt? What ballbobs did she hum? What stories did she tell her son? What hopes and dreams does she hold for the one she gave in love?

I can't help but recall what the psalmist wrote: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

Now, as David's mom, I sing, tell stories, and hope and dream for his future too.

In the Reformed tradition, baptism is the sign and seal of God's promises to God's people. It is God saying yes to us before we say yes to God. Sometimes, when I've struggled to hold a kicking and screaming infant while trying to sprinkle water on the little head, I've thought about the poignant symbolism when a child kicks and screams into the kingdom of God. As much as we don't always want to follow, God continues to say yes, yes, yes. I wonder if, in adoption, baptism is also something more. When I baptized him, I uttered these words to my child: “David Jacob, it was for you that Jesus Christ came into the world, for you he died and for you he conquered death; yes, for you, little one, you who know nothing of it yet. We love because God first loved us.”

I wonder if God has whispered into his little ear: “Dawit Desalegn—David Jacob, even while you were in your mother's womb, I loved you and I loved your mother. Even before your mother called you beloved, you were mine. Whomever you are with, you are mine. You are adopted into my family and you are marked as Christ's own forever.”

Perhaps we don't have so many differences after all. In fact, we're pretty much the same—a adopted children of God. Yes, we may live worlds apart. I could never imagine what her life is like, and I suppose she could never imagine mine. But we both love. And we are both God's beloved.

Liz Moss and her husband, Jon '99, adopted David Jacob from Ethiopia this past March with assistance and support from Holt International. As an ordained pastor in the Reformed Church in America, Liz was blessed to baptize her own son.
Moving Day

Northwestern welcomed 331 freshmen and 39 transfers to campus this August—the largest numbers for each group since 2006. Freshman-to-sophomore retention also improved. At 77.5%, it is the highest since 2005.

Total enrollment stands at 1,206 students, down 20 from last fall. College officials, however, are encouraged that a three-year drop in the number of new students was reversed. This year’s freshman class includes more men and has the highest average ACT score of any class in NWC’s history: 24.6.

Mark Bloemendaal, director of admissions, attributes this year’s success to a campus-wide prioritizing of recruitment. Even President Greg Christy contacted prospective students.

“Recruitment is led by the admissions staff,” Bloemendaal says, “but it takes significant buy-in. Everyone—including alumni—can make a difference.”