



NORTHERN MICHIGAN  
UNIVERSITY

# FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES NEWS

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## Reflections from a Father

By Michael Smith, Milwaukee WI

Four years ago my daughter, after visiting several colleges, chose NMU. I, for the life of me, could not figure out why. "You want to go that far north? Where they get four feet of snow?" Little did I know that can happen over a long February weekend. Still, her mind was made up and I knew better than to debate. NMU has a good nursing school and was at least a 5-6 hour trip by car. Plus, she had a friend who would be entering freshman year at the same time.

After helping her move in, I got my first tour (my wife had done the tour previously.) The campus was beautiful, with a quad, residence halls scattered on the outskirts, and academic buildings aplenty. The residence halls were definitely structured differently than back in my day (the '80s) with nice size and a bathroom shared with a sister room instead of one big bathroom down the hall as was my experience. We left her to finalize room set up and wished her well; reminding her we are only a phone call (or text) away if needed.

After a month or so she called to say she no longer wanted to go into nursing and wanted to switch majors. I expected to have to head back up and bring her home. Instead, she worked everything out with NMU and picked a new major, and immediately was enrolled in classes that cater to her new chosen field for the very next semester.

I was quite impressed with the speed and ease NMU implemented and assisted with the change of major, as my daughter did not miss time or credits.

During her first year, she made new friends, took advantage of campus activities, and got good grades. Some kids struggled, got homesick, partied too much, or "forgot" to study. That,

unfortunately, is a normal part of the college experience. But thankfully my daughter kept good habits while still having fun.

At times during those first two years, she would share the results of her work. Articles and papers she wrote, pictures she took, experiences she had. As someone who pays attention to grammar, I found myself making suggestions or proof-reading her work. I enjoyed her allowing me to assist in some small way. Her grades remained great, making the Dean's List multiple semesters. She took an on-campus job in the Admissions department and NMU helped her secure an internship.

My wife and I visited a few times and enjoyed the beautiful surroundings of Lake Superior. My wife visited a few times in winter and experienced a 17-inch snowstorm which caused her to unexpectedly extend her stay an extra two days until it was safe to drive back home. My daughter moved off-campus which brought its challenges. (Parents, I suggest assisting your child in reading the lease terms and perhaps getting a video tour of the potential housing.)

Still, things were going well. But then the pandemic hit. While I was not thrilled that classes were moved virtually the students and my daughter muddled through. She continued to make the Dean's List and made the best of a very challenging time.

My daughter caught the attention of several professors who took a strong interest in seeing her succeed. One professor, Dr. Shevy from the Communication and Media Studies department, became one of her greatest cheerleaders and really guided her growth and development within her field. I watched my daughter's confidence grow and her quality of work improve. I recently read two articles she wrote and instead of finding myself correcting errors, I realized there are none and am genuinely entertained by them. These are informative pieces that are publication-worthy.

And now that she is ready to graduate (within 4 years) I am proud of the woman she has become. She has confidence, is engaging and people like to be around her. While as of this writing we are not sure what the future holds, we know it is a bright future where she will find a career that challenges her and that she enjoys. NMU took her under its wing and she accepted it. She gave back to the campus as much as she received. And another year on the Dean's List to boot.



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# DEPARTMENT NEWS



## NMU Students Use Social Media to Promote Hepatitis C Awareness

### Why Hepatitis C?

Katreena Hite has been working on an integrated care team at NorthCare Network, one of Michigan's ten Pre-paid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs), for almost six years. During her time, hepatitis C treatment had historically not been accessible in the state of Michigan due to a shortage of infectious disease physicians and high treatment cost. Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). It is spread through contact with blood from an infected person. While people commonly associate hepatitis C with intravenous drug use, it can be spread in many unexpected ways. Most cases are medically acquired from being born to someone with hepatitis C, or are acquired through sexual transmission. (Source: CDC.org)

Prior to the pandemic, the State of Michigan had plans to focus on eliminating hepatitis C. According to Hite, the state has seen an increase in cases among young adults, where typically the disease occurs in those born between 1945 and 1965. The statewide push was put on hold due to the pandemic related public health crisis. Recently, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) began directing resources and promotion efforts towards advancing the hepatitis C initiative.

"Once the state started putting that pressure back on, I jumped at it," Hite said. "Hepatitis C has been a condition that I care about because it can be cured in 99% of cases, and there's a lot of stigma around the condition. We, as a society, have not put forth a lot of effort into treating individuals who have hepatitis C. There was an opportunity to increase awareness with other resources, but I didn't have a massive systemic backing to push what I was hoping for. Now, I do!"



Katreena Hite

Getting tested for hepatitis C is essential because treatments can cure most people infected within

8 to 12 weeks. The CDC now recommends one-time testing of adults and during every pregnancy for women. For people with risk factors, regular testing is recommended. Recently, a new medication was released that is much more affordable than its predecessor. Treatment is available through outpatient services, and it is in pill form with low side effects and a 99% cure rate. Primary physicians are now able to order testing as well as monitor treatment. As new resources for the disease began appearing, Hite began brainstorming ways to get the word out to Michigan's rural areas.

"An important thing for people to understand is when you look at a heat map of the infection rates across the state of Michigan; the rural communities have the highest per capita rates of hepatitis C infection," Hite said. "When you look at that map, the U.P. is much darker, indicating high rates of prevalence, than almost all of the state. It's more prevalent per person in a rural area than in an urban area."

### Enter SP 320...

SP 320 New Media Literacy is a course taught at Northern Michigan University where the overall goal is to examine relationships between communication technologies and society along political, economic, cultural, psychological, and physical dimensions. When Bur introduced professor Shevy to Hite's need for hepatitis C awareness, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to incorporate service-learning and community health into the mission of his course.

"A combination of factors made it a good topic for our class at this time," Shevy said. "These include new treatments that are low-cost and effective, a change in legislation that allows for more health clinics to treat it, and the spike of cases in college-aged students," Shevy said.

To begin the project, Hite presented to Shevy's class. She touched on the basics: What hepatitis C is, how people acquire it, how it can be treated, and the current trends that make it a timely topic for the university. Then, the class "ran with it."

Through research and data collection, Shevy and the students of SP 320 found that the overall knowledge of hepatitis C among NMU students was low. The class created a cartoon character in the form of a liver named Lenny. The goal of Lenny the Liver was to educate people about hepatitis C in an organic way over a short period of time. Lenny has his own Instagram page, where he can be seen sharing stories and symptoms about hepatitis C and encouraging people to get tested.

The class was broken up into groups, and each group had to consider theories of new media literacy. While coming up with a strategy, one group created Lenny the Liver. The intention behind this approach was to find something that will grab people's attention and hopefully make them want to share. This led to the idea of creating a series of three-panel stories where Lenny would start off as a normal, healthy liver. On the second panel, he would be yellow, because jaundice is a symptom of hepatitis C. The third panel would encourage action.

Each group created a story about Lenny the Liver. In the first panel of each story, Lenny would describe something that he did, which happened to be an activity that causes hepatitis C. In the second panel, Lenny revealed that he was experiencing a symptom of hepatitis C. The last slide of every story would have the phrase, "Lenny should get tested for hepatitis C and so should you."

"The main objectives were to increase NMU students' awareness of hepatitis C causes and symptoms, and to let them know they should get tested," Shevy said. "This led to some surprising class discussions. After Katrenea told us that unregulated tattooing is a source of hepatitis C, the students in class began talking about tattoo parties that they'd heard about. This resulted in a Lenny story in which Lenny got a tattoo from a friend in the dorm. It became the most-viewed story on Lenny's Instagram account." All information used in Lenny the Liver storylines are hypothetical.

Other than some baseline information and education that she provided to the class, Hite said it was the students that really took control and ran with the project. She believes the project in Professor Shevy's New Media Literacy class is an example of the potential that social media has to impact health care awareness in the Upper Peninsula.

"We all have platforms that can reach all of our social networks simultaneously. Instead of having individual conversations, we're able to go out and mass produce," she said. "There's a lot of misconceptions about

hepatitis C and it's easier when you see information from somebody that you know. It is the increased reach that we have and how inexpensive it is. We don't have to spend advertising dollars on TV spots or newspaper ads; it's free to create something on social media and push it out."

## A Win-Win Situation

In the end, this connection made by Bur turned out to be a beneficial situation to both parties. As Hite continues spreading hepatitis C awareness throughout the Region, Lenny the Liver has opened her mind to different ways of approaching populations who may not believe they are at risk for the disease.

"Testing and identification of cases are the most important pieces. The other crucial piece is eliminating

the stigma around how people acquire hepatitis C. People tend to think it's because of IV drug use, but most cases are not," Hite said. "It doesn't just impact people with a history of IV drug use; it impacts people from across the spectrum.

That's a crucial piece in eliminating that stigma and educating physicians that they need to be referring patients for testing."

For Professor Shevy and his SP 320 class, it was a way to apply new media literacy theories to a real-life situation and think about how they could lead to innovation.

"We took it as an experiment to test new ideas developed from media theories. If we succeed in increasing hepatitis-C awareness far beyond our class, then we've learned something about media and done some good. If our strategy fails to reach a lot of people, then at least the students in our class know more about hepatitis C, and we've learned something to help make better strategies next time. It's a win-win situation."

You can follow Lenny the Liver's journey of educating the public about hepatitis C on Instagram @lennytheliver21.

[Campaign Link](#)





# ALUMNI NEWS



## Northern Michigan Hometown Heroes

Jessie Selissen was in 10th grade when a service member from her hometown of Boyne City was killed during an insurgent attack overseas. She vividly recalls residents lining the streets in silent tribute during the funeral procession. Now Selissen is an Air Force veteran who graduated this spring with a degree in multimedia production from NMU. She recently put her military background and academic experience to work producing a "Northern Michigan Hometown Heroes" podcast highlighting veterans and reputable nonprofits that assist them.

Selissen successfully proposed the podcast idea to 9&10 News in Cadillac early in her summer internship as a digital content producer. The final episode aired in late November, but the series launched, appropriately, with Selissen interviewing the parents of the Boyne City man whose death had rocked her hometown years earlier.

Private First Class Jackie Lee Diener II died a decade ago in Afghanistan's Kandahar Province, after insurgents attacked his unit with small arms fire. He was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal for his service during Operation Enduring Freedom. Selissen said the residual impact of the tragedy, combined with her own family's military heritage, contributed to her decision to enlist.

"It was difficult and emotional to interview his Gold Star Family," said Selissen, as tears pooled in her vibrant blue eyes. "I knew there was nothing I could say or do to take away the pain; it was just my way of

remembering their son or sharing his story with others. It turned out well and the family was very happy with it. The podcast was the highlight of my year and it's definitely not done. My hope is that veterans will learn what resources are available to them and might be inspired to give back."

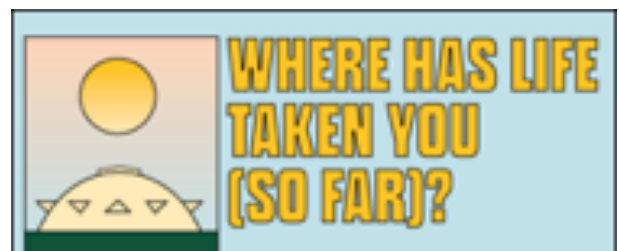
Another episode featured Ron Oja, administrator for D.J. Jacobetti Home for Veterans in Marquette, where Selissen volunteered while attending NMU.

In addition to interviewing relevant individuals from all over the state and beyond, Selissen said she did "a lot of digging and filtering" to find reputable resources for veterans. These included Ultimate Veteran Adventures, whose mission is to provide healing through hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities; and Brave Hearts Estate, a ranch located 15 miles south of the Mackinac Bridge where veterans and their families can relax in a country setting.



"When you leave active duty, the joke is that you go through a week-long 'death by PowerPoints,' with so much information that it's overwhelming," said Selissen, who has transitioned to the Michigan Air National Guard. "Then they throw a giant VA benefit book at you and wish you goodbye and good luck. With all the benefits and organizations out there, my podcast was my way of doing something for veterans, whether it's finding really good nonprofit organizations that genuinely give back or sharing veterans' inspiring stories."

Selissen used her GI Bill benefits to attend NMU, allowing her to earn a debt-free bachelor's degree.



**What are you doing?  
Did NMU help you get there?  
How can we support you now? And what can  
we do better for current and future Wildcats?  
Let us hear from you!  
caps@nmu.edu**

## Dream Job

Tara Baker had fulfilled her goal of working for ESPN, the dream job she once wrote about for a high school English class assignment. But about a decade into her employment, while serving on the production team for the sports network's first nationally televised Special Olympics competition, she had a self-described "aha" moment that launched her career in a different direction.



"That experience got me thinking that maybe I could take what I learned at NMU and applied at ESPN, but do something for the greater good and work in a more meaningful capacity for a nonprofit," said Baker '05 BS. "My stepbrother, who came into my life when I was in high school, is a Special Olympics athlete. I started as a spectator supporting him. All it took was one swim meet to see the immense joy on the athletes' faces. After that, I volunteered whenever I could. I developed a real affinity toward people with intellectual disabilities and felt a strong desire to give back."

Baker applied to be the director of marketing and communications for Special Olympics, despite knowing that the responsibilities extended beyond her credentials. She said the organization "took a chance" in hiring her, and she quickly expanded on her video storytelling skills with on-the-job learning in website design, social media, PR and crisis management.

Special Olympics entrusts Baker to coordinate communications, marketing and partnership teams throughout North America, and to set and manage their strategic direction. She also oversees external and internal communications, and serves as the media liaison for major events.

Baker was well-aware of Special Olympics' mission to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition.

She said it was not until after securing her position that she fully realized its scale and scope. Special Olympics has a presence in 290 countries and serves 6 million athletes. In North America, more than 500,000 athletes from the United States, Canada and the Caribbean participate in 32 sports.

"It's rewarding to know that every second I put into this, I'm impacting millions of people's lives for the better," Baker said. "I could work on a one-minute piece

of content for ESPN all week long that may or may not run, be viewed or move someone. It's hard to get creative when you're covering the same athletes and teams over and over. Special Olympics is a treasure trove of inspiring content, from athletes overcoming obstacles to parents who've adopted children with disabilities to volunteers who devote their time and talents. It's a pleasure to share these stories. No matter what I put into this job, I get so much more back."

One notable story that recently caught Baker's attention revolved around Special Olympics athlete Chris Nikic of Florida.

In November 2020, he became the first person with Down syndrome to complete an Ironman triathlon, a feat verified by Guinness World Records. The event consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and a 26.2-mile marathon. Baker said doctors and other authorities had told Nikic he wouldn't be able to physically compete at anywhere near that level, but he adopted the mantra of getting better 1% at a time. "He is one of the best ambassadors for spreading the message of inclusion, and what people with disabilities can accomplish, given the right tools and support," she said.

Nikic also conquered the Boston Marathon in October. He will compete at the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games June 5–12 in Orlando, an event Baker began preparing for three years ago. She oversees the Orlando organizing committee's marketing and communication efforts. She will also support global broadcast partner ESPN's production of the event. Baker said it creates "perfect synergy" with her former job, which she left on good terms.

In August 2022, Detroit will host men's and women's soccer/football teams from up to 31 nations for the Unified Cup, a competition held every four years. Baker's role is to serve as a liaison between Special Olympics Michigan and global headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Her enviable positions with ESPN and Special Olympics have allowed Baker to combine personal passion—she was a three-sport-a-year athlete in her hometown of Wauconda, Illinois—with her strengths in "writing, talking a lot and creating home movies growing up." Her original goal was to become an ESPN SportsCenter anchor, but Baker's Northern experience convinced her that she would rather work behind the scenes in production than in front of the camera.

Baker selected Northern based partly on previous

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family visits to the Upper Peninsula, where her paternal grandparents were born and raised. She also wanted to attend a school that had an electronic journalism program, was out of state within a six-hour radius of her hometown, and offered her the potential to become a walk-on soccer player. She not only succeeded at the latter, but went on to serve as team captain her sophomore and junior years and received the most valuable defense award after her sophomore season.

The knowledge Baker gleaned in the classroom and the skills learned through practical experience at NMU proved pivotal to her future. She said the smaller class sizes allowed for one-on-one attention, and professors like Dwight Brady and the late Chuck Gantz gave students the tools, resources and direction they needed.

"I was using cameras my freshman year and Final Cut Pro editing software as a sophomore. Participating in the student-run Public Eye News show on the campus PBS affiliate was extremely valuable, as was helping with televised broadcasts of NMU athletic events. I also had internships at local radio and television stations. All of that provided me with more hands-on experience coming out of college than most of the people I was up against for jobs; even those from bigger, well-known broadcasting programs."

Baker's preparation was certainly valuable, but serendipity also intervened to open a door at ESPN. She decided to enroll in an extra course in field production in the final semester of her senior year. The class was working on a documentary about the UP 200 sled dog race. It turned out an ESPN production company, Red Line Films, was in Marquette for the same purpose.

Networking opportunities surfaced and Baker provided her contact information, but it wasn't until July that she heard anything. The company invited her to interview in New York City and offered her a production associate job on the spot.

Baker worked for Red Line out of ESPN headquarters in Bristol, Connecticut. About a year later, in 2006, she shifted to ESPN Classic as a production assistant. The role involved coordinating interviews and writing

scripts, obtaining footage, and adding music and graphics to programs. When ESPN decided to cancel Classic's original programming, she was reassigned to live event and game coverage as a production assistant.

Over the next decade, Baker's titles and responsibilities escalated. She became an associate producer who developed, shot, scripted, and edited high-end elements such as teases and features. Then she worked her way up to post producer, managing creative content for ESPN's premier properties such as NCAA football and basketball, Grand Slam tennis, World Cup and Euro soccer tournaments, MLB, NBA, X Games and more.



The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was significant for a couple of reasons. It was there that Baker met fellow ESPN employee Jean-Luc LaDouceur, who later became her husband. She also said the event was a major highlight of her time at the network because she got to produce a piece that aired just before the final game. Baker said ESPN's coverage also transformed the way soccer was

viewed in America and gained many fans.

"Another amazing opportunity was working on the Australian and U.S. Opens in tennis because I got to travel to Australia four times and we were given the freedom to take chances creatively. I oversaw content for the women's NCAA national basketball championship and the tourney leading up to it. That gave me a growing managerial role and allowed me to elevate the women's coverage to make it look just as good as the men's. I was also lucky to work on the college football playoffs and national championship for a number of years before I left ESPN."

While grateful for the experience to ascend the production ranks at ESPN, Baker has no regrets about seeking the coveted position with Special Olympics. She is skilled at telling others' inspirational stories, but hers is also impressive and worth sharing. After all, Baker has achieved something that eludes most people: the chance to land not one, but two dream jobs. The second was unscripted right up until her "aha" moment, but she said it is proving to be immensely rewarding and meaningful.



## Connect Marquette awards Scholarship

The Tom Baldini Scholarship was created in 2018 to recognize local individuals who have shown an interest in community and civic engagement. Tom Baldini, who passed away in 2017, was an active supporter of Connect Marquette, formerly 40 Below. In the spirit of his commitment to Marquette County, the organization seeks to foster leadership and civic engagement among its membership by awarding this annual scholarship, the group said.



*Megan O'Connor*

The award also aims to develop award recipients' leadership abilities, encourage engagement with the community and expand their networking opportunities. The recipients receive a one-year Connect Marquette membership, attendance to the 2022 Professional Development Conference, a ticket to one Economic Club of Marquette County dinner and Connect Marquette merchandise.

O'Connor is the outreach coordinator for the Lake Superior Community Partnership. O'Connor, originally from Midland, attended Northern Michigan University from 2015–2018 and fell in love with the Marquette community, according to Connect Marquette. During her time at NMU, she was heavily involved and has held various leadership positions on campus. Some of her greatest accomplishments at NMU include playing a major role in starting the NMU Food Pantry and raising \$1,200 for the Jacobetti Home For Veterans, earning her a "Director's Coin" for excellence from the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and a "Presidential Recognition Coin" for outstanding service.

After graduating with a bachelor's of science in communication studies, O'Connor was a weekend anchor/journalist for WLUC TV6/Fox UP, Connect Marquette said. From O'Connor's position with the media, she was offered an opportunity to work for her current employer, Lake Superior Community Partnership.

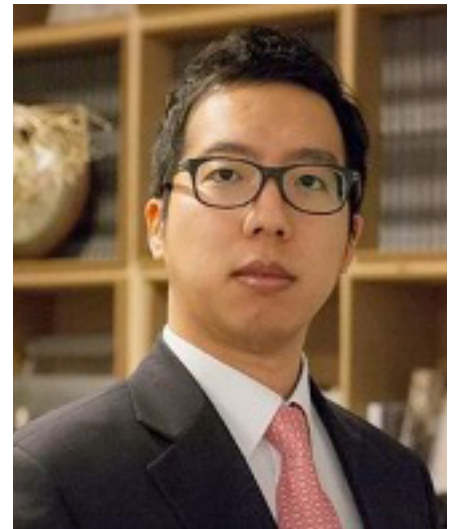
In her free time, O'Connor enjoys yoga, being outdoors and volunteering, Connect Marquette said. She is a singer for St. Peter Cathedral, a member of Connect Marquette, a Big Sister with the Big Brother Big Sister program and a member of the Marquette County Veterans Alliance. Volunteering plays a big role in O'Connor's life and she loves to volunteer for Marquette County events such as Blues Fest, the Lip Sync Battle and the Iron Range Roll, among others.

"I am honored to receive the Tom Baldini Scholarship," O'Connor said in a news release. "It is an even greater honor to be compared to past honorees and community leader, Tom Baldini, all of whom have made such important contributions to Marquette County. It is a privilege to give back to a community that has given so much to me."

## Campaigns in South Korea

The outcome of the March 9 presidential election in South Korea might depend in part on the work of Northern Michigan University alumnus YoungJong Lee.

The 2012 media production graduate spends nearly every waking hour working on the campaign for the leading candidate in the race, Lee Jae-myung.



As the deputy director for citizenship strategy, Lee organized more than 20,000 supporters for Jae-myung, who is the former governor of Gyeonggi Province. He has now shifted to a new role as director of sustainable development for the campaign.

After the presidential election, Lee plans to pursue his own political aspirations by running for state senator in South Korea.

"I expect that it will take almost two years getting my supporters first," Lee said. "Through work on this campaign, I have learned how to organize supporters and connect with political colleagues. Regardless of the results of the presidential election, I would love to help more Korean students experience the value of NMU in the near future."

"NMU professors and staff are open-minded and kind to international students. It is significant that NMU makes advances into the world and the global community by understanding humanity and diversity." Lee was a student at Seoul Institute of the Arts when one of his Korean professors, NMU alumnus JiHung

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Chang, introduced him to Northern. Lee decided to finish his bachelor's degree in America. He went on to become the first international student speaker at NMU commencement.

"What I liked the most as a student is the NMU community," Lee said. "Professors, staff and citizens in Marquette were always very kind and thoughtful to me, and without any barriers, I was able to adapt to a new adventure: studying abroad. It was a great time, communicating and studying with NMU people."

"Above all, NMU is the best place to experience American culture and learn English. When I was there, Korean students were not there except me, so I could have many international friends, including the U.S. and China. Based on this experience, currently I am doing global business very well."

Lee decided to study media production at NMU, and said the field studies course was particularly important to his profession. He credits Communications and Media Studies Professors Dwight Brady and the late Chuck Ganzert for their valuable help with academics and the graduate school application process.

Brady recalls introducing Lee to a Supreme Court case in a media law class that changed his career trajectory.

"The Court's decision in the 2010 Citizens United case is one of the most important First Amendment cases in the last 50 years, because it radically changed American politics," Brady said. "It basically allowed unlimited amounts of money, that cannot be traced back to donors, to flow into our political races. Lee became very interested in this case and made it the topic of his master's thesis at Northwestern University."

Brady says that, despite a bit of a language barrier, Lee did exceptionally well in his classes and developed a keen interest in politics. Upon completing his masters at Northwestern, Lee returned to Korea. He became a key part of Lee Jae-myung's campaign against his main rival, Yoon Suk-yeol.



*YoungJong Lee (right) with a colleague in front of a banner featuring the presidential candidate.*



## NMU's Top Gun

The long-awaited sequel to Top Gun has hit movie theaters, treating viewers to another round of visually engaging and intense flying sequences. NMU alumnus and U.S. Navy Lt. Zach Fini (2010) put his media production degree to use creating videos that project a similar feel, but in an authentic context depicting actual Navy Growler pilots, not actors. Assembling live footage from jet cockpits and the flight deck, along with musical backdrops, he produced some of YouTube's most popular Navy cruise videos.

"The moment the guys in my fleet squadron found out I was a media production major in college, I instantly became 'the movie guy' and was talked into making all of our cruise videos," said Fini, whose call sign is "DirJ," short for Dirty Jersey, a reference to his home state.

"I grew up watching similar cruise videos and found them to be inspirational. Hopefully mine have had the same effect on others. I continued to use techniques I learned in my audio and video production classes at Northern when I did this work, but I'm taking a break from it because there are plenty of other people in the community making cool videos. I'm looking forward to this year's Growler Ball video, which will be made by one of our more junior instructors."

Fini has five videos to his credit on YouTube. The content has been well received by both the public and his squadmates. His Growler Ball 2020 piece has proved most popular, generating more than 1 million views, while his most recent was Growler Ball 2021. When he was not strapped into the rear cockpit of an EA-18G Growler, Fini sometimes spent up to three hours a day editing footage sent to him by fellow pilots.

The short video chronicles were designed to encapsulate the sights, sounds and experiences of pilots during deployment on aircraft carriers. All of them were scru-



tinized to protect operational security and to ensure that they had entertainment value.

During his time at Northern, Fini was a member of the Wildcat football team. He said that prepared him for his career in a number of ways.

"Playing football taught me how to take on a leadership role, as well as the humility of being a part of something larger than myself. My teammates and coaches were, and continue to be, some of the most supportive people in my life. And my experiences at Northern helped me develop a thick skin and a sense of humor about myself, which would pay dividends in flight school and throughout my Navy career. I still jokingly brag about the fact that we didn't have ice tubs in the training room, because we had the world's biggest ice tub in Lake Superior right outside."

Fini graduated with a media production major and communications minor in 2010. He credits NMU for helping him to emerge from his "bubble." He had lived in New Jersey his entire life until he transferred to Northern in 2009.

"Starting fresh in a new environment set me up for success in the Navy in terms of keeping an open mind, meeting new people, and getting out of my comfort zone. Even my academic adviser, Dr. Mark Shevy, continues to stay in touch and send his encouragement." Fini said that he is still flying and is an instructor training new Growler pilots and electronic warfare officers, but he resigned from active duty in September of 2021 after about nine years. He is now in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Read a previous Forbes magazine feature story on Fini's video work [here](#).

## Champions!

Dylan Ranguette (2017) moved to Green Bay after graduation knowing he always wanted a career in sports and hoping he could eventually land something with the Green Bay Packers. It was extremely challenging getting my foot in the door, so he eventually decided to join Corporate America working for United Healthcare in sales. While working for United Healthcare, he was never truly happy, so I kept pushing and pursuing my dream job of working in sports. Dylan was lucky enough to meet his eventual coworkers at a golf outing where he learned all about the Wisconsin Herd and their amazing culture. Basket-



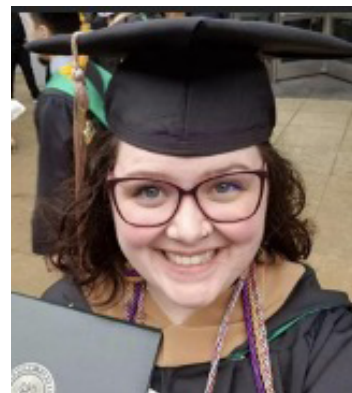
ball has always been my passion, so when he applied, his experience in sales and his Communications Degree from NMU was exactly what they were looking for!

Since landing my dream job working for the Wisconsin Herd, he was able to attend game 6 of the NBA Finals for free, where the Milwaukee Bucks claimed their title after 50 years. Since then, He was able to hold the Larry O'Brien (Championship Trophy), participate in Milwaukee's only championship parade in the city's history, and meet countless legendary and current NBA players. The hours are long and there's a ton to learn, but he absolutely loves his career and couldn't have gotten there without the help of NMU!



## Graduations

Victoria Penny, class of 2016 in Communication Studies, just graduated from Roosevelt University with her Master's in Training and Development. She graduated with a 4.0!



Lillian Harmon Graduated 2018 with a Communication Studies degree. She went on to law school and just graduated from the Toledo law school this spring. Lillian will be completing her bar exam this summer.

At NMU, Lillian was a freshman fellow of Dr. Sara Potter's. For her fellowship she wrote a paper that she presented at a regional conference on students' perceptions of political messaging through social media.



# FACULTY ACCOLADES



## Advisor of the Year

Dr. Mark Shevy has been awarded this year's Adviser of the Year!

Mark has gone above and beyond to help MEH and NMU as a whole be the best they can be. He is not only passionate about our members but has a deep passion for the cause. He wants to help those in need and practices this in his everyday life.

Not only does Mark work hard to support MEH but he also gives his time to other student organizations such as @wupxradiox and @nmu\_av.



## Potter wins Excellence Award

Thirteen Northern Michigan University faculty members, including a team of five, were selected to receive 2020-21 awards for teaching, scholarship, leadership and technology innovation. The annual celebration was canceled by COVID-19, but here are the recipients and their awards.

- Excellence in Teaching Awards: Weronika Kusek, Earth, Environmental & Geographical Sciences; and Tracy Wascom, Art & Design
- Excellence in Part-Time Faculty Teaching Award: Cameron Contois, English
- Excellence in Scholarship Award: Sarah Mittlefehldt, Earth, Environmental & Geographical Sciences
- Faculty Leadership Award: Brian Zinser, College of Business
- Faculty Emerging Leadership Award: Evan Lucas, College of Technology & Occupational Sciences
- Technology Innovation Awards: Gordon Xu, Library & Instructional Support; and the

Counseling & Consultation Services team: Shelley Brandow, Mary Etchison, Christina Hartline, Jennifer Gorton and Jean Kupper.

- Excellence in Online Teaching Award: Sara Potter (pictured 2nd from the left), Communications & Media Studies





## Faculty featured in Shenandoah Valley

*"The time for moving to Virginia happened upon the couple quickly. It seemed that way even to Dan, who induced relocation by accepting a full-time supervisor position at Dogwood Vineyards in the Shenandoah Valley.*

*He loved almost all of his work in Michigan: pruning vines in the summer, harvesting in the fall, and then pruning again through late winter. His childhood had been spent picking strawberries on his grandparents' and uncle's farms, and he always wondered if he wore that tradition on his face, if Marie could read it. However, he also knew that a laborer's pay created challenges for the family budget and constantly worrying about finances exhausted Marie. He felt it too. So, when the owner of Dogwood Vineyards approached him about the position, circumstances compelled him to accept. Moreover, since she offered him the job after only a single weekend of watching him showcase wines at a convention, she must have been impressed.*

*He hadn't been sure how Marie would respond. She would probably be upset that he didn't ask her first, and she was. "You could have called from the hotel room before accepting, Dan. I'm sure she would have waited a day," she told him. Whether or not Marie wanted to move, however, remained a mystery long after Dan informed her of the decision. She spent significant time in bed the week following his return from the convention, yet the prospect of moving seemed to have excited her. She couldn't restrain that look of hers: the one where you could take her green eyes and insert them onto the body of a matador and everything would seem perfectly in place. Dan became especially optimistic one week before the family's move, as they sat together watching news coverage of the miner's strike in Britain. Their daughter Iris placed her head against Marie's brown dress. With an atlas in hand and Marie's long fingers gliding across colored roads, they traveled through Virginia together, inventing stories about the place they would soon encounter."*

Above is an Excerpt from a piece by Joshua Ewalt, an Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Studies at NMU. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His work explores human beings' relationship with place through academic prose and creative fiction.



Another recent publications is: *Oscillating scale and articulating regions: Power geometries and multi-scalar publics in People's Tribune's coverage of Benton Harbor, Michigan* by Joshua P Ewalt , first Published January 29, 2022

### Abstract

This essay explores the mapping of power geometries as public rhetoric within People's Tribune's coverage of Benton Harbor, Michigan. In doing so, the essay demonstrates three techniques for mapping power geometries: that they (a) oscillate between spatial scales, thereby managing a tension between framing place as unique and common to a broader geography; (b) articulate regions so as to locate the power dynamics of the nation; and (c) connect the place to a power geometry of resistance. Mapping power geometries also enables the production of a multi-scalar public: a set of strangers who understand their relationship to each other through a shared, yet differentiated, connection to variously scaled issues. The analysis consequently contributes to existing literature regarding spatial scale, the use of place-based argument in social movement rhetoric, and the formation of multi-scalar publics. [Read more.](#)

## Sara Potter earned her PhD in Rhetoric, Theory and Culture earlier this year.

Her Dissertation was:

WHEN DARKNESS  
DESCENDS: A NARRATIVE  
ANALYSIS OF MATERNAL  
RESILIENCE FOLLOWING  
HURRICANE MARIA

It has been nominated for an award through the Organization for the study of Communication, Language and Gender.

A chapter of it was presented at the Michigan Science, Arts, and Letters Conference.

Dr. Potter has another chapter to present at the National Communication Assoc. Conf., along with a pending paper to the journal Women and Language.

Sara is hoping to take her work from this project and bring students to Puerto Rico in May 2023.

See the full dissertation [here](#).





# RETIREMENT NEWS



## Happy Retirement

Evelyn Massaro received a wonderful parting gift shortly before retiring July 1 as station manager at WNMU-FM at Northern Michigan University. She was selected as the 2021 Public Media Impact Professional Award recipient by the Michigan Association of Public Broadcasters. The prestigious award

recognizes an MAPB radio or television professional who provides "lengthy and exceptional service."

"It's quite an honor because I didn't do anything single-handedly; others contributed to everything that happened," Massaro said. "It's been said the more challenging your job is, the more rewarding it is. I've had the most rewarding career ever. After 42 years in the same field—including almost 30 spent over two separate stints at NMU—it's nice to be recognized."

Massaro said she was first hired by WNMU-FM as a work-study student at Northern. She helped the traffic department generate the daily programming logs of programming and public service announcements.

"When I graduated [in 1982], the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was handing out grants to organizations because it wanted to elevate more women to management roles," she said. "I went to the station manager and said we could get two years' worth of pay and benefits with this grant. He told me to fill it out and send it in, saying 'If we get the grant, you get the job.' I became promotions and marketing director for radio and then shifted to a similar role at WNMU-TV. I was promoted to development director at the TV station before moving to Tampa, Florida."

Massaro spent nearly a decade as the membership director, or main fundraiser, for WUSF-FM at the University of South Florida. When former WNMU-FM station manager Susan Sherman retired, Massaro was encouraged to apply for the position. She was hired and has served in the role since 2002.

Tammy Wixtrom Johnson, who has been promoted to WNMU-FM station manager, wrote a letter in support

of Massaro's nomination for the award. She said university budget reductions in 2003 threatened the public stations' survival, but Massaro stepped up to keep them on the air.

"Evelyn stood up and said that 'it should be up to our viewers and listeners to determine if we are able to continue to broadcast,'" Johnson said. "She took the campaign to the community in order to save WNMU. The community responded in droves. Evelyn has given her all to WNMU-FM through her management and fundraising efforts. Each year, each month, each day can be a challenge to keep the station's donations coming in, yet she did it year after year."

Eric Smith, WNMU-FM/TV general manager, agreed that Massaro's "can-do" spirit and leadership talents were instrumental during that challenging period. "She developed fundraising plans, worked with station donors, assisted the general manager with staffing changes and provided impressive follow-through that made their plan successful. She modernized station fundraising with updated computer systems, deployed better automation systems that allowed staff to make more efficient use of their time, provided new broadcast translators to improve listener reception in remote communities, and developed local content that resonated with listeners. Simply put, without her knowledge and abilities, the station would not have survived, much less thrived."



"In pursuing Multimedia Journalism, I hope to be around sports in any capacity that I can, whether it be reporting from behind a desk, on the field, or in the locker room. I found a major that utilizes my speaking and writing skills and allows me to deliver positive messages to others about the importance of sport and competition at all levels."

*Kobe Manzo, Multimedia Journalism major and NMU Football student-athlete from Lake Orion, Michigan*

# CONGRATS GRADS

Northern Michigan University graduating senior Hannah Smith of Waukesha, Wis., will be the student speaker at NMU's April 30 commencement. She will earn a bachelor's degree in multimedia journalism with a double minor in public relations and photography.

It is somewhat ironic that Smith will be addressing fellow Northern graduates from the podium on a stage in the NMU Superior Dome. She was originally set on attending a university in Missouri.

"I had toured that one and decided right away that's where I wanted to go," Smith said. "My mom and I had planned to tour Northern after that. I didn't want to make the trip because my mind was made up, but my mom had a hotel reservation that she couldn't cancel and said we should follow through. I'm so glad we drove up here. I completely fell in love with the beauty of Lake Superior and the Marquette area, and with how nice and welcoming everyone at Northern was."

Smith not only revised her selection of which university to attend, but also her academic major. She started out in the nursing program, but soon realized she doesn't like blood. Seeking "more of a connection with the people I'll be working with," she made the shift to journalism, and tacked on relevant minors in PR and photography.

Her extracurricular involvement has included NMU's nationally recognized Student Leader Fellowship Program, which requires a community service internship. Smith fulfilled hers as a social media intern and vlog editor for Camp One Step, which offers summer camps and other programs for childhood cancer survivors in the Midwest. It is a cause close to her heart, as she was a camper with the organization from age 8. Smith was born with stage 4s neuroblastoma.

"I had a softball-sized tumor in my left adrenal gland and around 800 micro tumors in my liver," she said. "I joke that I was more tumor than baby. They did a few different surgeries and were able to cut them out. They removed 25% of my liver, but it regenerated. I didn't require chemo or radiation. When I was 10, I was cancer free forever."

Other activities Smith participated in were Marquette Ending Hunger, the NMU chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), the university's Superior Edge program and club volleyball. She credits Communications and Media Studies Professor



Mark Shevy, the faculty adviser for Marquette Ending Hunger, with pushing her to be a better student and convincing her to venture beyond her comfort zone.

"I've loved my time at Northern, and I'm going to miss it. This university has prepared me well, not only in terms of what I've learned in classrooms, but the connections I made with faculty and staff. I feel like I have a whole team rooting for me and that I'll have these connections for a lifetime."

Smith said her desire to audition for commencement speaker was inspired by television shows and movies she grew up watching.

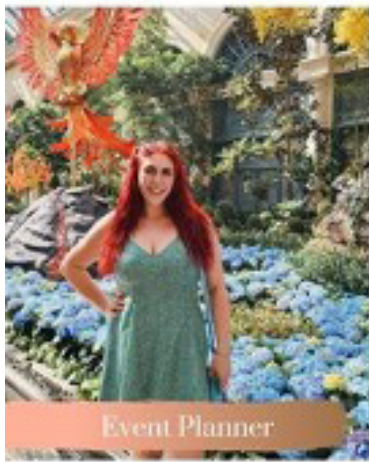
"I was a fan of Gilmore Girls and the Twilight series and saw a lot of graduation speeches—some good, some cheesy. I wanted to apply my own words and voice to Northern's commencement. I'll talk about how resilient we are as students, pushing through to get our education during a pandemic, and how the faculty and staff pivoted for us. We're one of the last classes to have started college under normal circumstances and have it completely changed. I'm happy we can celebrate our graduation in person. I'll also emphasize holding on to memories of good times here and the relationships that formed here."

Smith plans to take the summer off to visit National Parks and do some backpacking trips. She will also volunteer for Camp One Step. Her career goal is to work in public relations for a health or outdoor recreation entity.

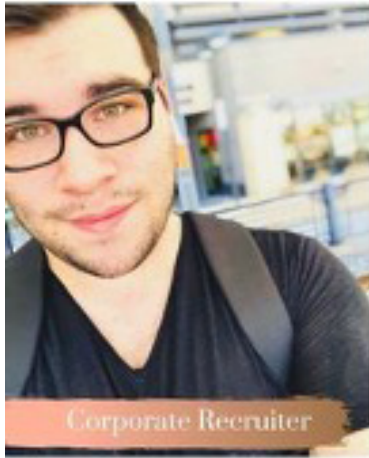
## Outstanding 2021/22 Graduating Seniors in CAMS

Madeline Voltz  
Communication  
Studies





Event Planner



Corporate Recruiter



Inclusion Program Advisor

## COMMUNICATION STUDIES MAJOR

4 DIFFERENT CONCENTRATIONS

### HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT 16 CREDITS

BC 430 Health Communication and Media  
SP 422 Crisis Communication  
SP 432 Environmental Communication or  
PR 432 Environmental Campaigns  
1 Cross-Disciplinary Elective

### INTERPERSONAL & INTERCULTURAL 12 CREDITS

BC 415 Intercultural Communication  
SP 410 Advanced Interpersonal Comm.  
1 Cross-Disciplinary Elective

### ORGANIZATIONAL 12 CREDITS

SP 421 Organizational Communication  
PR 332 Corporate Social Responsibility  
1 Cross-Disciplinary Elective

### PUBLIC COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL INFLUENCE 12 CREDITS

SP 401 Persuasion  
SP 422 Crisis Communication  
1 Cross-Disciplinary Elective

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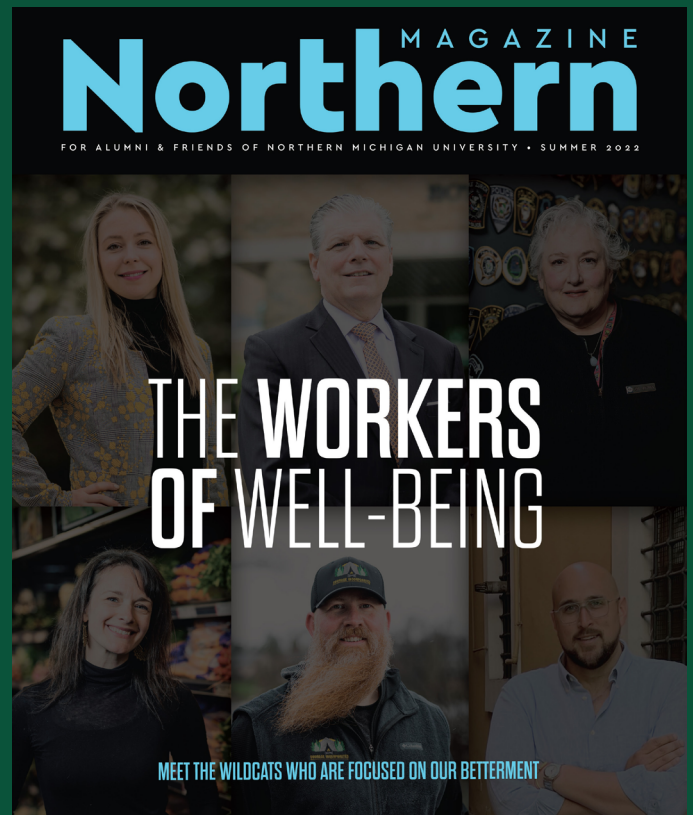
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# Keep in touch!

Update your contact information at [nmu.edu/alumni](https://nmu.edu/alumni) to receive Northern Magazine and stay updated on alumni events, university programs, Wildcat successes and more.



*It's Natural Here.*  
**AND IT'S NATURAL TO GIVE BACK.**

Give Back to  
Communication  
and Media Studies  
[Here](#)

