

MONMOUTH



THE BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
CENTER FOR AMERICAN MUSIC
OPENS AT MONMOUTH » P. 24

Looking In



Welcome to the Music Issue

With the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music now open, we decided there was no better time to capture the frequency of Monmouth. What follows is a sampling of the noise, nuance, and brilliance happening here. It's not the full playlist; there's more to it than we could fit on these pages.

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The Sound of a School on the Rise

From the launch of a world-class music center to National University recognition, Monmouth is stepping into a new chapter.

On June 13, the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music officially opened its doors. Alumni and friends returning to campus will not find a shrine to a single artist, but something far more ambitious: immersive exhibitions, archival collections, performance space, and programming that make the case for American music as one of the great art forms of human expression. As Bob Santelli '73, '14HN, puts it: Springsteen is the narrator—not the story itself. And what a story it is, spanning 250 years of American history, from Colonial-era ballads to hip-hop, from spirituals born in the crucible of slavery to the folk anthems that carried working people through the Great Depression.

This issue of Monmouth magazine reflects the richness of that story and the many ways music threads through life at this University. Music appreciation abounds in our classrooms and research, in the Tuesday Night Record Club's decade of album conversations, and in the personal stories of students and faculty for whom music is not background noise but an academic lens and a way of understanding our interconnected world.

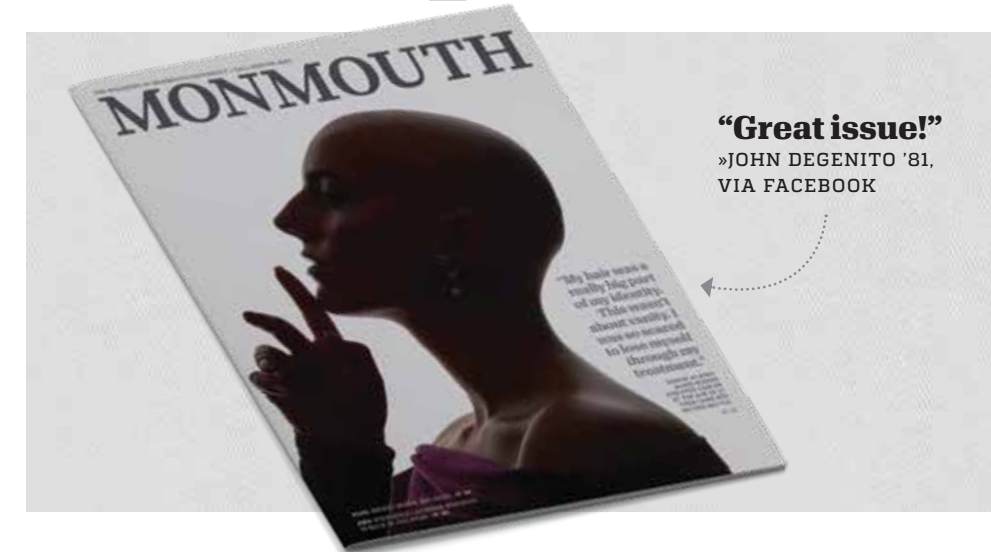
The opening of the Center coincided with another milestone. This year, for the first time in our history, Monmouth University has been recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a National University—joining Princeton, Stevens, and Seton Hall as the only private universities in New Jersey on that list. Together with our Carnegie Research College and University designation, our Middle States reaffirmation with 12 commendations, and a fundraising campaign that has far exceeded its \$175 million goal, these milestones tell a clear story: Monmouth has entered a new chapter in its institutional history.

The Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music is, in many ways, the most vivid expression of this chapter. It was built entirely through private philanthropy, with no long-term debt, and with no tuition dollars. Its grand opening was preceded by two extraordinary concerts at the OceanFirst Bank Center that brought together some of the most globally recognized artists—a signal of what this Center, and this University, are now capable of attracting to our campus in West Long Branch.

I am so proud to usher in this new era at Monmouth alongside so many deeply committed alumni, friends, and community partners. None of this happens without you. Thank you for your enduring support of our University.

»PATRICK F. LEAHY, ED.D.
PRESIDENT

Correspondence



Springsteen on the Sofa

Monmouth was such an unforgettable, happy time in my life. I could walk into a friend's party and find Bruce Springsteen sitting on the sofa. Another time, I turned around and caught my reflection in Walt Frazier's belt buckle (the New York Knicks used to practice on campus too).

I majored in Spanish and minored in French, so I was saddened to read of the passing of my favorite professor, Alicia Portuondo (In Memoriam, Fall 2025). She was a tremendous influence and had a gift for making lessons fun.

Since graduating, I've lived in more than a dozen places around the world—from Latin America to Europe and Asia—so I really did use my major! Thank you, Sra. Portuondo. You were awesome!
»DIANE (OGONOWSKY) FERRIER '75

Hello, Future

It was either fall '84 or spring '85 when PC labs popped up on campus, bringing salvation for those of us who weren't typists ("The Original Upgrade," Fall 2025). People still lined up outside the mainframe room carrying stacks of punch cards bound with rubber bands. But just down the hall from there, I came upon a room with 20 to 30

brand-new Apple II computers. I tracked down someone who handed me a key and two floppy disks and said, "Go ahead—I'll let you in."

I had to learn it on my own, but before long, I was typing my final term paper. What a relief to make corrections without White-Out or retyping entire pages. It was a small step at the time but a sign of what was to come.

»TOM MITCHELL '85

I used an Apple IIc for the economics and finance classes I had with Professor Donald Moliver. Because of that experience, I purchased one for my own use at home—and I still have it today!

»MARK MASCARI '86

In the mid-1970s, before there were PCs, I used an Execuport terminal to access the ARPANET and connect to a computer located in California from my bedroom in northern Virginia. All my work at the time was done remotely via the ARPANET on that computer in California. The internet would not be what it is today without the ARPANET. It was where the capabilities of today's internet, and PCs, were first experienced.

»ED VON GEHREN '64



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[SPRINGSTEEN]

Bruce at Full Volume

In 1992, a Monmouth freshman blasted Springsteen from his Elmwood Hall dorm room, waiting for someone else to hear it. Thirty years later, his daughter found that audience.

BY JULIAN GARCIA '96

One of the things I looked forward to most about going off to college in 1992 was something I had been missing since my older brother left for the University of Scranton six years earlier: late-night conversations with someone lying awake in the bed across a darkened room. Often, our chats focused on the music of Bruce Springsteen, with a heavy emphasis on the two cassettes we were listening to most in the early '80s: "Born to Run" and "Nebraska." →

But I spent my entire first year at Monmouth with no roommate. It might sound like a dream scenario for someone who was—and still is—a bit of a loner, but it wasn't.

The morning after my first night on campus, I woke up in my room in Elmwood Hall and saw that the bed across from mine was empty. I assumed my roommate had crashed elsewhere, but when that bed stayed empty night after night, I realized he wasn't coming back. No one else ever moved in.

For the next eight months, I had no one.

What I did have, though, was one of the best stereos on the first floor of Elmwood. Silver with metallic red accents, the stereo held six CDs. I filled each slot with a Bruce album, including the two that had been released together toward the tail end of my senior year of high school: "Human Touch" and "Lucky Town."

I might have had no one to talk to every night, but I did have the only person I really wanted to listen to: Bruce. And I made sure that everyone else on my floor could also hear what he had to say. I'd sit back in my bed reading the album's liner notes as I blasted whatever album I happened to be into that week, sometimes with my door pulled closed, sometimes with it wide open.

To my surprise, I never got much of a reaction from the other Elmwood occupants. For the first few weeks I lived there, I waited for someone, anyone, to enter and say, "Hey man, I'm a big Bruce fan too. Turn that up!" But as Bruce says on track 11 of "Tunnel of Love," "When you're alone, you're alone." And I was alone—not only in my room, but also as a huge Springsteen fan at Monmouth in the early- to mid-'90s. The place that is now the worldwide headquarters for all things Bruce was a much different place 30 years ago. It was, to me at that time, a town full of losers.

Like many, part of the reason I attended Monmouth was its location. But what separated me from many of the other students who enrolled there was that its proximity to the beach was merely a bonus. I wanted to be in the middle of Bruce country, and I had assumed I wouldn't be the only one there for the same reason.

Pushing play on my CD player and turning the volume up until "Badlands" echoed



"I might have had no one to talk to every night, but I did have the only person I really wanted to listen to: Bruce. And I made sure that everyone else on my floor could also hear what he had to say."

down the hallway, I waited for someone to walk into my room playing the air drums. I even made the now embarrassing assumption that blasting "Man's Job" would draw young women into my room, like seagulls flocking to the washed-up carcass of a crab on Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park. Boy, was I wrong about that. In fact, I had to recruit people to entertain my love of Bruce.

On Nov. 11, 1992, a friend joined me on a walk across campus to the Student Center to watch "Bruce Springsteen in Concert/Plugged," an electric version of the popular "Unplugged" acoustic series MTV aired back then. I expected to have to fight for a seat close to the television that hung from the wall near what is now a Dunkin'. Instead, my friend and I had our choice of seats and could turn the TV up as loud as we wanted to. There was no one around to disturb.

Two years later, as a junior with my own three-hour show on WMCX, Monmouth's student-run radio station, I knew I had at least two listeners. One was the friend who had watched that show with me. The other was a senior who had the nerve to tell me, on more than one occasion, that I was "losing listeners" by taking 15 minutes out of my three-hour show to play three Bruce songs in a row, something I did regularly.

Maybe that guy had a small point when you think about the songs that were popular on college campuses at the time: "Gangsta's Paradise" by Coolio, "Waterfalls" by TLC, "You Oughta Know" by Alanis Morissette.

When we went to bars and clubs in Long Branch and Asbury Park, the most popular song was House of Pain's "Jump Around," a rowdy hip-hop/dance track with a

25-second intro that partygoers responded to the way a stadium full of Bruce fans react to the opening notes of "Rosalita."

Much of the music of the day seemed silly and meaningless to me. But that's what most college kids wanted—not deep, heartfelt songs, even if the guy writing them used to play right here on campus.

Still, there I was pushing Bruce's stuff upon an audience that didn't really exist on campus. With 1,000 watts of power behind me, I kept doing what I wanted to from the third floor of the Student Center, my silly senior friend be damned.

Like that imaginary audience, another thing that did not exist at the time was the internet, at least in the form we know it today. Had it, I might have known about the little house about a block from the beach on West End Court in Long Branch where Bruce wrote a good portion of his "Born to Run" album.

On mild fall and spring nights, when no one wanted to listen to Bruce with me, I would strap a Walkman to my hip and jog from campus to the beach, finishing my run on the boardwalk directly across from a set of apartment buildings that are now Monmouth residence halls. My route took me right past 2nd Ave., a street that intersects West End Court, and would have, had I veered off instead of staying straight toward the ocean, taken me directly past rock 'n' roll history.

But I had no idea the "Born to Run" house existed. Of course, someone from campus could have educated me, but unfortunately for this Bruce fan, I showed up about 30 years too soon—long before the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music opened its doors and Monmouth offered courses such as Bruce Springsteen's America: Land of Hope and Dreams.

After surviving my first year without a roommate, and spending some very loud but lonely nights in my room, I eventually did end up sharing living space with others, first in a suite in Cedar Hall and then on the far side of campus in the Great Lawn apartments. I lugged my stereo and growing collection of Bruce CDs to each stop, always expecting the music—and my interest in the man who created it—to be received the way I thought it would be when I first arrived on campus in 1992. It never was.

At least not for me.

But this story took a dramatic turn in 2020, when my daughter, Abigail '25, enrolled at Monmouth and got to live out the Bruce dream that had eluded me.

A two-time president of Blue Hawk Records, the student-run record label on campus, Abby spent several springs and summers interning at the Stone Pony, the Asbury Park rock 'n' roll bar Bruce helped make famous. She was a student employee at the Springsteen Center, where she spent time surrounded by artifacts that, had I had access to when I was in college, would have made my head explode.

And in moments that would have been unimaginable for the Elmwood Hall freshman who spent many lonely nights finding companionship in Bruce's music, my daughter eventually got the chance to spend some time with the actual man—multiple times, right there on campus.

The most personal encounter followed an American Music Honors event inside Pollak Theatre. In a selfie Abby took, she and Bruce lean into each other, smiling, as Bruce looks into the camera while aiming his right index finger in her direction, as he's known to do while posing with fans.

I smiled when that photo popped up on my phone a few minutes after it was taken.

And then, I thought back to all those nights I spent in my dorm room at Monmouth and in the WMCX studio—a Bruce fan on campus with no one to share my love of his music with.

Now, 30 years later, that campus is where fans from all over the world will gather to do just that.

As an old college friend of mine once said, "It's been a long time coming—but now it's here." 🎧



7 1/2 West End Court

Marilyn Rocky '65 bought it as an investment; her first tenant turned it into music history.

For years, people passed by 7 1/2 West End Court in Long Branch without realizing what had happened inside.

In 1974, Marilyn Rocky '65 was working in real estate when she and her mother bought the small house as an investment property for \$20,800. Just days later, a young Bruce Springsteen walked into her office looking for a place to rent. He wanted Asbury Park, Rocky recalled, but she steered him instead to West End, a "pretty funky, psychedelic" neighborhood back then. The rent: \$200 a month.

He moved in that April and stayed about a year and a half, writing much of "Born to Run" in the house.

Springsteen, then in his early 20s, was "very shy, very reticent, really, really nice," says Rocky. He paid rent in cash and left handwritten notes when he'd be late or away on tour. (One, addressed to Rocky as "Dear Landlordess," is now on display in the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music.) Otherwise, he kept to himself.

When Springsteen moved out in 1975, the house was in good shape, aside from a scattering of cereal boxes and fast-food wrappers.

He also left behind a piano.

For years, Rocky says, it remained in the house as little more than a piece of furniture, used by later tenants as a plant stand or makeshift bookshelf. It wasn't until she ran into Clarence Clemons decades later that she learned the full story: after finishing "Born to Run," Clemons told her, the band had lifted the lid and signed it.

By then, though, the piano had been thrown away.

Only later did the small house gain widespread recognition as a site of music history. For Rocky, it remains something simpler: a place that, for a brief moment, held the early work of a young musician who had not yet become an international star. »TONY MARCHETTI

The View from Here

One Night Only

From Dionne Warwick to Dr. Dre, American Music Honors again turned campus into the center of the music world.



In addition to Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, musical greats as wide ranging as Flavor Flav, Steve Earle, Patti Smith, and John Densmore of the Doors were part of the festivities.

ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE HAS CALLED THE AMERICAN MUSIC HONORS “A live event on par with the annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony.” The fourth annual installment, held April 18 on campus, lived up to that billing. Hosted by the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music, the sold-out event once again transformed Monmouth’s 700-seat Pollak Theatre into a stage for music icons—an intimate setting for an evening that felt anything but small.

This year’s honorees spanned genres and generations: Dionne Warwick, celebrated for her elegant phrasing and emotional precision; Patti Smith, whose work fused punk, poetry, and rock; Dr. Dre, a pioneering force in hip-hop; the E Street Band, one of rock’s most enduring and influential ensembles; and the Doors, a defining late-’60s band that fused blues, psychedelia, and literary ambition. The evening also included a posthumous tribute to The Band.

With the Disciples of Soul serving as the house band, the evening moved seamlessly between tributes, live performances, and spontaneous collaborations. Highlights included Warwick’s duet with 2023 honoree Darlene Love on “That’s What Friends Are For,” Bruce Springsteen taking on “Light My Fire” with John Densmore behind the drums, and a high-energy performance of Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power” by Chuck D and Flavor Flav. The night ended with a full-stage finale of “People Have the Power,” led by Smith and Springsteen, that featured many of the honorees and guests joining in.

Proceeds from the event support the Center’s exhibitions, educational programming, and public outreach, extending the reach of a night that once again placed Monmouth at the center of the American music story.



This One Goes to 11

Clocking in at under 12 minutes, Blue Hawk Records’ latest release might be brief—but it still rocks. “From the Basement,” the student-run label’s 27th compilation, features three original tracks from students across the University. The EP, which got a live debut at Springfest, dropped in April and is available on all streaming platforms.



STEPPING ONTO THE NATIONAL STAGE
Monmouth has been designated a National University by U.S. News & World Report, a milestone that reflects the University’s expanded academic scope, growing research activity, and breadth of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. The classification follows Monmouth’s 2025 Carnegie designation as a Research College and University and more than two decades of steady gains in academic profile, student outcomes, and national reach.

BREAKING NEW GROUND
Bryana Ruiz didn’t just earn a Gilman Scholarship; she made institutional history. In January, the junior biology major became the first Monmouth student to receive the program’s STEM Supplemental Award, building on the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship that took her to London this semester. A first-generation college student eyeing a career in medicine, Ruiz said the study abroad experience will help her better understand the social and cultural factors that can shape patient care.

A STRONG FIRST SHOWING
Competing in its first National Cyber League Capture-the-Flag tournament last fall, Monmouth’s Cyber Hawks team made an immediate impact. Junior Ikey Sasson finished No. 1 overall among more than 7,800 participants, earning a perfect 3,000-point score with 99.34% accuracy, and 10 additional students placed in the top 500. The team closed out 2025 at No. 2 in the national power rankings, trailing only the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

PERFECT PITCHES
Senior business majors Ashley Bento and Matt Fries split top honors at the Center for Entrepreneurship’s annual HawkTank competition for concepts that couldn’t be more different. Bento’s “The A Grain” is a flavor-forward superfood bowl concept built around bold, signature granolas, while Fries’ “StriperLog” is a data-driven app designed to help anglers fish smarter by tracking conditions and outcomes. Their pitches rose above a competitive field of ventures that included AI-powered learning tools, real estate tech, and a diabetic-friendly bakery concept.

48 HOURS.
BIG RESULTS.

Monmouth’s sixth annual Giving Days, held March 24–25, reached new heights.



\$500,000+
raised



2,600+
gifts

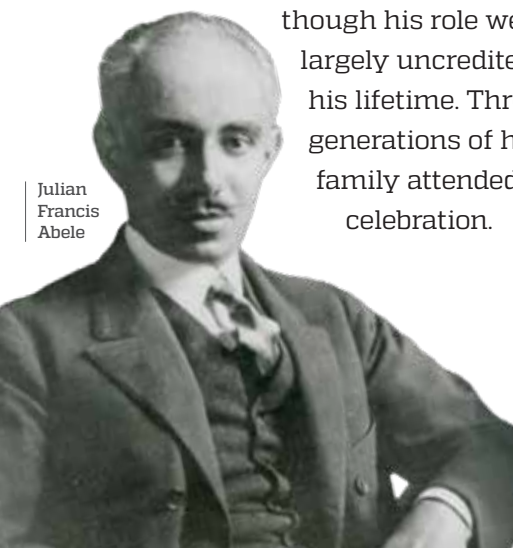


50
states represented
(first time ever)

Honoring Abele

Monmouth recently honored Julian Francis Abele, the chief architect behind the Great Hall, with the official dedication of Great Hall 104 as the Julian Abele Room. During the ceremony, the University also announced the acquisition of the Julian Abele Special Collection and the Great Hall’s inclusion on the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail.

Abele (1881-1950), the first African American graduate of Penn’s School of Architecture, was the lead designer of the University’s most iconic building, though his role went largely uncredited in his lifetime. Three generations of his family attended the celebration.



Julian Francis Abele

Lakehouse Studio North

Where classroom meets control room.

LOCATED IN THE HEART of Asbury Park's storied music scene, Lakehouse Recording Studios is a multi-studio facility where artists such as Jon Bon Jovi and Lorde have recorded. Co-owned by Jon Leidersdorff and his wife, Monmouth University Trustee Nancy Leidersdorff '97, the studio also serves as a hands-on classroom for students in the Music Industry program, who produce professional-quality tracks through the University's partnership with Lakehouse. Joe Rapolla '90M (far right), chair of the Department of Music and Theatre Arts, gave us a tour. »TONY MARCHETTI

STUDIO MONITORS

Unlike typical speakers, studio monitors are designed for accuracy, not enhancement. They allow students to hear recordings in their truest form, which is essential for mixing and producing professional-quality tracks.

DIGITAL AUDIO WORKSTATION

Using Pro Tools, the industry-standard recording software, students set up sessions, record tracks, and begin shaping a song from the ground up. Here, a session is being set up for recording.

LIVE RECORDING ROOM

This isolated space is where students and outside artists record vocals and instruments. By separating it from the control room, student engineers can hear exactly what the microphones capture, free from the natural sound of the room.

MIXING CONSOLE

This Neve 8024, a vintage 1970s analog console from the renowned Neve 80 Series, is the centerpiece of the studio. With only a few still in operation, producers travel from around the world to record on it. Students learn to manage a professional studio workflow on the same board.

KEYBOARDS

Used to create and layer sounds during the recording process, these instruments are housed in the control room so they can be adjusted on the fly—allowing students to fine-tune tones while hearing results immediately through the studio monitors.



One Decade. 100 Albums. Endless Conversations.

A statistical snapshot of Tuesday Night Record Club.

COMPILED BY BREANNE MCCARTHY

Led by Professor Ken Womack, Monmouth's "book club for records" brings listeners together to unpack landmark albums and the stories behind them. The series marked its 100th album discussion last year.

QUICK HITS



First album featured: Nevermind — Nirvana (September 2016)



100th album milestone celebration: Off the Wall — Michael Jackson (May 2025)

Songs that haven't aged well, like "Run for Your Life" from the Beatles' Rubber Soul, have sparked some of our strongest discussions.



Most requested album to cover: Bat Out of Hell — Meat Loaf (coming on Aug. 4)

Album that surprisingly resonated: To Pimp a Butterfly — Kendrick Lamar



Album that sparked the most spirited debate: Rubber Soul — The Beatles



Longest album discussed: Live/1975-85 — Bruce Springsteen (3.5 hours long)

To Pimp a Butterfly is hardly a nostalgia piece, yet our audience gamely gave it a chance.

The first 100 sessions drew a total of **13,955 attendees**

Bruce Springsteen had the most albums in the first 100, with **10 albums**

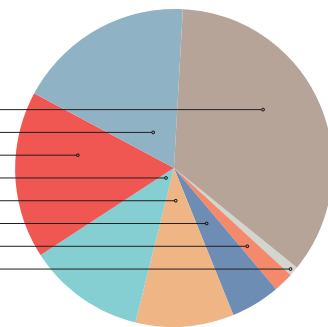


Among the first 100, there were a total of **9 concept albums**

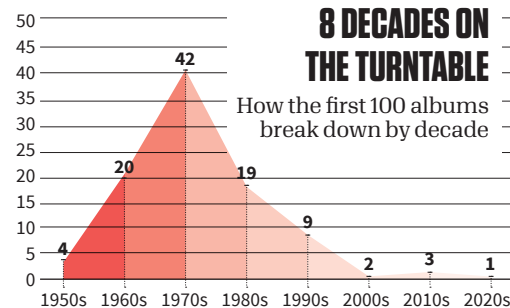
Selections spanning multiple LPs in the first 100: **5 albums**

THE SOUND OF TNRC

- 35% Rock, Classic Rock
- 18% Pop, Pop Rock
- 17% Alternative, Indie
- 12% Folk, Americana
- 10% R&B, Soul, Funk
- 5% Jazz
- 2% World
- 1% Hip-Hop



8 DECADES ON THE TURNTABLE



THE FULL CATALOG

1. Nevermind — Nirvana
2. Blonde on Blonde — Bob Dylan
3. Parallel Lines — Blondie
4. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band — The Beatles
5. Nebraska — Bruce Springsteen
6. Are You Experienced? — Jimi Hendrix
7. Rumours — Fleetwood Mac
8. Kind of Blue — Miles Davis
9. Purple Rain — Prince
10. OK Computer — Radiohead
11. Darkness on the Edge of Town — Bruce Springsteen
12. The Dark Side of the Moon — Pink Floyd
13. A Love Supreme — John Coltrane
14. The White Album — The Beatles
15. The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars — David Bowie
16. Tracy Chapman — Tracy Chapman
17. London Calling — The Clash
18. Aja — Steely Dan
19. Tunnel of Love — Bruce Springsteen
20. Abbey Road — The Beatles
21. Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J. — Bruce Springsteen
22. What's Going On? — Marvin Gaye
23. In the Wee Small Hours — Frank Sinatra
24. Time Out — Dave Brubeck
25. Let It Be — The Rolling Stones
26. Let It Be — The Beatles
27. The Joshua Tree — U2
28. Lemonade — Beyoncé
29. Tommy — The Who
30. Revolver — The Beatles
31. Jagged Little Pill — Alanis Morissette
32. Girlfriend — Matthew Sweet
33. Wish You Were Here — Pink Floyd
34. So — Peter Dinklage
35. Horses — Patti Smith
36. Remain in Light — Talking Heads
37. The River — Bruce Springsteen
38. Songs in the Key of Life — Stevie Wonder
39. Celia — Angélique Kidjo
40. Blue — Joni Mitchell
41. Double Fantasy — John Lennon and Yoko Ono
42. Crosby, Stills, & Nash — Crosby, Stills, & Nash
43. All Things Must Pass — George Harrison
44. Love Letters — Anoushka Shankar
45. Zenyatta Mondatta — The Police
46. Violator — Depeche Mode
47. Graceland — Paul Simon
48. Pet Sounds — The Beach Boys
49. Who's Next — The Who
50. Sweet Baby James — James Taylor
51. Look Sharp! — Joe Jackson
52. Live/1975-85 — Bruce Springsteen
53. Bridge over Troubled Water — Simon and Garfunkel
54. Band on the Run — Paul McCartney & Wings
55. The Velvet Underground & Nico — The Velvet Underground
56. Sign o' the Times — Prince
57. Tapestry — Carole King
58. Low — David Bowie
59. Physical Graffiti — Led Zeppelin
60. The Wild, the Innocent, & the E Street Shuffle — Bruce Springsteen
61. Beauty and the Beat — The Go-Go's
62. Pretenders — The Pretenders
63. The Rising — Bruce Springsteen
64. Days of Future Passed — The Moody Blues
65. To Pimp a Butterfly — Kendrick Lamar
66. American Beauty — The Grateful Dead
67. Young, Gifted, & Black — Aretha Franklin
68. Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J. — Bruce Springsteen (revisited for a 50th anniversary symposium)
69. Murrur — R.E.M.
70. There's a Riot Goin' On — Sly & the Family Stone
71. Exile in Guyville — Liz Phair
72. The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society — The Kinks
73. Close to the Edge — Yes
74. The Cars — The Cars
75. Thriller — Michael Jackson
76. Odyssey and Oracle — The Zombies
77. The Stranger — Billy Joel
78. Goodbye Yellow Brick Road — Elton John
79. Tracks — Bruce Springsteen
80. Fleetwood Mac — Fleetwood Mac
81. The Pretender — Jackson Browne
82. Hotel California — The Eagles
83. Meet the Beatles! — The Beatles
84. Ella & Louis — Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong
85. Back to Black — Amy Winehouse
86. Breakfast in America — Supertramp
87. A Hard Day's Night — The Beatles
88. Surrealistic Pillow — Jefferson Airplane
89. Ram — Paul McCartney and Linda McCartney
90. Imperial Bedroom — Elvis Costello
91. Sticky Fingers — The Rolling Stones
92. Tea for the Tillerman — Cat Stevens
93. The Ghost of Tom Joad — Bruce Springsteen
94. A Night at the Opera — Queen
95. The Doors — The Doors
96. The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill — Lauryn Hill
97. Dusty in Memphis — Dusty Springfield
98. IV — Led Zeppelin
99. Cheap Trick at Budokan — Cheap Trick
100. Off the Wall — Michael Jackson

Before Office Hours

Meet the professor who fronted a band that recorded with Dave Grohl and toured with the Foo Fighters.

BY TONY MARCHETTI

When Ralph Cuseglio's students Google him, they find the usual items: syllabi, research interests, office hours. Dig a little deeper, and they uncover what the associate professor of social work calls his "former life as a musician."

That's a modest description. Long before he taught at Monmouth, Cuseglio fronted Rye Coalition, a New Jersey-based post-hardcore band that seemed destined for stardom—until the music industry shifted beneath them.

Cuseglio was 17 when he formed Rye with high school friends. The band's music drew from early '90s grunge, metal, and punk and, later, classic rock of the '60s and early '70s. Its shows were loud and intense. Onstage, Cuseglio was kinetic and unfiltered, "a stark contrast to day-to-day Ralph," he jokes. But being the frontman offered him a release valve. "Rye was catharsis."

That was equally true for his bandmates, all fellow teenagers and several of whom were navigating broken homes. The band provided structure; it was family.

By 2000, Rye had graduated from basements and VFW halls (and once, memorably, the trailer of an 18-wheeler) to relentless touring across the U.S., sharing stages with the White Stripes, the Strokes, and Queens of the Stone Age. Cuseglio put his graduate studies on hold to focus full time on music.

In 2002, the band signed with DreamWorks Records and headed to Los Angeles to record its major-label debut. Dave Grohl



of Nirvana and the Foo Fighters produced. Actor and musician Jack Black hung out with them in the studio. It all felt surreal.

Then DreamWorks Records was sold amid industry shakeups tied to the shift to digital downloads.

Rye finished the album, but its release stalled due to the corporate reshuffling. "Suddenly we had an A&R guy who hadn't signed us and whom we didn't know," says Cuseglio. Years passed, lawyers got involved, and eventually, the band regained control and released the album independently.

Soon after came a full European tour opening for the Foo Fighters, playing 25,000-seat arenas—gigs most bands only imagine. But by then Rye was "running on fumes," says Cuseglio. "We were so heartbroken and disillusioned by the experience ... and we started taking that out on one another." They went their separate ways.

Cuseglio resumed his graduate studies, earned a doctorate in social work, and

Counterclockwise from top: Frontman Cuseglio; with Dave Grohl; now, a professor.

built a private practice he maintains today. Since joining Monmouth in 2016, he has taught advanced clinical courses that prepare graduate students for real-world work with children and families.

The connection between his two careers isn't as unlikely as it seems. Years of performing taught him how to read a room and manage energy. They also gave him a better understanding of how emotion shows up in words, behavior, and creative work. That informs both his clinical practice and teaching, he says.

For years he kept that early chapter close to the vest. Now, when students discover it online, he makes it a teachable moment. One day, he reminds them, their clients will Google them, forming impressions before they ever meet. ☺



Roll Camera

As Monmouth develops new film programs and Netflix builds a \$1 billion production hub near campus, Jake Yuzna sees opportunity for students.

BY TONY MARCHETTI

Jake Yuzna caught the filmmaking bug early. “I was interested in many different art forms, but it was always film and this, or film and that,” says Yuzna. “Eventually, I realized there was one constant.” As a child, that meant frequent trips to video stores, midnight movies, and weekend matinees. One week it might be a 1930s monster movie, the next an international drama, sci-fi epic, or arthouse release. “I watched everything.”

Yuzna moved quickly from fan to filmmaker. Shortly after graduating from college, their first feature, “Open,” premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival, where it became the first American film to receive the Teddy Jury Prize. Making that film reinforced a philosophy that still guides Yuzna’s work: learn by doing and begin even when the path ahead is uncertain.

Last fall, Yuzna brought that mindset to Monmouth as an assistant professor of communication. What drew them here was the opportunity to help build something new. The University is developing a filmmaking and cinema studies major that will emphasize hands-on production alongside the study of film history, theory, and how filmmaking shapes individuals and society.

Before that program launches, Monmouth will begin offering a new minor in sci-fi, fantasy, and horror filmmaking this fall. Often referred to collectively as “genre” film, these stories include elements outside accepted reality, everything from superheroes and space epics to ghost stories and psychological thrillers. Yuzna says the program is the first of its kind in North America.

The timing is notable. Netflix is constructing a \$1 billion production hub roughly four miles from campus, part of a broader expansion of film and television production across New Jersey. For Yuzna, the development represents a renewed chapter for film production in the state.

“New Jersey really was the birthplace of the film industry in this country,” says Yuzna. “It’s exciting to see that come back almost 150 years later.”

Large studios rarely operate in isolation, says Yuzna. They tend to attract post-production houses, sound and mixing studios, marketing firms, and other supporting businesses. The result is an ecosystem that extends well beyond the set.

For students, that expansion creates more opportunities. Whether they hope to direct, edit, manage productions, or work in marketing or finance, a grounding in how films are made—the kind emphasized in Monmouth’s new programs—provides a shared foundation. “Being able to understand each world is really vital,” says Yuzna. 🎬

Cue the Score

Some movies are inseparable from their music. Film professor Jake Yuzna highlights five influential scores and why they matter.

“Forbidden Planet” (1956)

Bebe and Louis Barron’s score is widely recognized as the first entirely electronic film score. Emerging from New York’s avant-garde scene, they created a radically new approach to film sound that still resonates today.

“Psycho” (1960)

Few film scores have shaped popular culture like Bernard Herrmann’s for Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho.” Written for a stripped-down orchestra, its shrieking strings are so iconic they’re recognizable after a note or two.

“Suspiria” (1977)

Composed by Italian progressive rock band Goblin, the score for Dario Argento’s horror classic blends

whispers, haunting melodies, and synthesizers into an atmosphere that remains one of the genre’s most influential.

“Blade Runner” (1982)

Vangelis’s score opened new territory for mainstream science fiction. Improvised and recorded while watching scenes from the film, its moody electronic sound helped define the genre’s modern tone.

“Akira” (1988)

Katsuhiko Otomo’s “Akira” helped introduce Western audiences to anime while redefining science fiction. Its score, by Geinoh Yamashirogumi, fuses traditional Japanese music with synthesizers and progressive rock.

Read more about these selections and others at monmouth.edu/magazine.



FIRST-PERSON DISPATCHES

A Blessing from the Dead

WHILE WORKING ON my second novel, “Makoona,” I created the character Molo, an octopus named in honor of the drummer John Molo, whom I had seen play with iterations of the Grateful Dead. John Molo is 6 feet, 6 inches tall, and when his long arms wave behind the kit, he resembles an octopus.

Molo became a very special character to me: loose, psychedelic, a little burnt out, and speaking entirely in repurposed Grateful Dead lyrics. I had so much fun writing him that it never occurred to me, until the book was finished, that I might need the band’s permission.

A reader in Germany connected me with Alan Trist, who oversaw Ice Nine Publishing, the company that handled the Dead’s song rights. When I explained to Alan what I’d done, his response wasn’t encouraging. He felt the story sounded political, which the band was not (by design), but he invited me to send him the manuscript with the lyrics highlighted and agreed to give it a look.

A month later he called me back.

“Professor!” he said. “I’ve read your book, shared it with the band, and we’ve come to a decision.” I braced myself. “You’ve identified the one cause we all care about: protecting the planet. There is no better place for our lyrics than in an octopus on a coral reef.”

Then came the words I never expected.

“You can use any and all of our lyrics—for free!” It was like a sloppy kiss from the band that played the music of my soul.

It’s rare and reaffirming when the band that makes the music that lives inside you turns out to be exactly who you thought and hoped they’d be. It’s something I’ll always cherish. »JOHN MORANO

If My Research Had a Soundtrack...

Their research is serious. The soundtrack? Not always. Eleven professors pair their scholarship with a song—and reveal why it captures the spirit of their work.

COMPILED BY BREANNE MCCARTHY



Charles Willow, Ph.D.

Management scholar exploring how AI adapts across industries

"I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT"—BUSTA RHYMES & MARIAH CAREY

"This song showcases the versatility, compatibility, and applicability of AI. It moves from a reggae groove to R&B to contemporary rap—much like AI, which evolves across a diverse range of industries."



David Hamilton Golland, Ph.D.

Historian of 20th-century America exploring race, labor, politics, and pop culture

"DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'"—JOURNEY

"As the author of a history of Journey, the choice was easy. At every stage of my career I've faced hurdles, but I've never stopped believin' in myself, and that's what I try to instill in my students."



Anne C. Deepak, Ph.D.

Social work scholar focused on human rights and climate justice

"ENDLESS TREE"—VALERIE JUNE

"It reflects the idea that we're all connected—even when we disagree—and the possibility of building 'a world where we could all be free.'"



Débora Machado Nunes, Ph.D.

Macroeconomist studying gender inequality and public policy in Latin America

"PAGU"—RITA LEE & ZÉLIA DUNCAN

"'Pagu' honors a Brazilian artist and activist who challenged injustice and rejected limiting stereotypes about women. That spirit reflects my work: using data and policy to confront inequality. The song is also upbeat and danceable—and that matters to me. If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution."



Michael Phillips-Anderson, Ph.D.
Rhetorical theorist studying how public discourse shapes active citizenship

"TALKIN' BOUT A REVOLUTION"—TRACY CHAPMAN

"My teaching and writing examine how people make arguments to change their worlds. This song is a reminder that we need to listen to the voices of people working for social change, and work to make the world more just."



Sheri Anderson, MFA

Theater director and scholar focused on Broadway musicals

"WHAT I DID FOR LOVE"—A CHORUS LINE

"The song isn't about romantic love, but a love of performing. Despite 'the sweetness and the sorrow' of life in the theater, there are no regrets in pursuing that passion."



Erik X. Raj, Ph.D.

Speech-language pathologist exploring how games and technology support communication and learning

"GROUND THEME" (SUPER MARIO BROS. THEME)—KOJI KONDO

"It's playful, energetic, and instantly recognizable, which feels like a perfect match for my work at the intersection of gaming and education. It's just so rad—and reflects how games can spark smiles, engagement, and meaningful learning."



Nikita Burrows, Ph.D.

Chemistry education researcher studying hands-on, project-based labs

"WORKOUT"—KES FEATURING NAILAH BLACKMAN

"When you listen to 'Workout,' you get into a rhythm—and that's the feeling I want students to have when they're doing chemistry."



Susan Marshall, Ph.D.

Mathematician studying number patterns hidden in geometric shapes

"OPALITE"—TAYLOR SWIFT

"In 'Opalite,' things seem like they'll never work out—and then suddenly they do. That's what research can feel like: You hit a wall, and then everything finally clicks."



Pedram Daneshgar, Ph.D.

Plant ecologist studying how climate change and invasive species shape coastal forests

"VACATION"—DIRTY HEADS

"The lyric 'I'm on vacation every single day 'cause I love my occupation' perfectly sums up how I feel about teaching and research."

ATHLETICS

SPRING/SUMMER 2026: THE MUSIC ISSUE



[FOOTBALL]

The Next Chapter

Six months after Jeff Gallo was named head coach of Monmouth football, we sat down with him and his predecessor, Kevin Callahan, the man who built the program, to reflect on the transition.

INTERVIEW BY MARK GOLA

In 2024, the Monmouth football team visited Florida International University in search of its first-ever Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) win. The game was played at Pitbull Stadium, and as the team entered, Head Coach Kevin Callahan asked his players and staff, “Who [in the heck] would name their stadium Pitbull?”

Callahan’s son, Kevin Jr., quickly explained that Pitbull was one of the most popular recording artists in the world and that he purchased the naming rights to the stadium. The senior Callahan dusted off the pop culture gaffe and led the Hawks to a thrilling 45–42 victory. The FBS triumph marked yet another program milestone since its inception in 1992. →

There is a truth (and innocence) to that story that only college coaches fully understand. Knowing the likes of Pitbull and many other pop culture references is a privilege that Callahan surrendered long ago. Building a college football program from scratch, leading it to 197 victories, and capping his tenure with a 6-2 conference record in the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA) can require tunnel vision. And now, standing in the light just outside of that tunnel, Callahan can look back with pride and perhaps amazement. No one—not even Coach Cal—could have envisioned the growth and success of a program that had no field, staff, or players when it began in 1992.

For decades, the title “only head coach in the history of football at Monmouth” belonged to Callahan. That changed last December, when Callahan stepped away from coaching and into a role as special advisor to the athletic administration, and Jeff Gallo '05, '12M, was named the program's second head coach.

The two men are far from strangers. Gallo played under Callahan from 2000 to 2003 and was a highly decorated offensive lineman. He joined the coaching staff in 2005 and has paced the sidelines with Callahan for 21 seasons.

Change is never easy, but this transition is rooted in familiarity. Six months into it, we asked both coaches (separately) a series of the same questions to better understand what's changed, what hasn't, and where the program is headed.



Callahan (left) coached Gallo as a Hawks offensive lineman from 2000–2003.

What is a character trait that a football player must possess to succeed at Monmouth?

KC: Discipline is the number one thing. When the program started, we didn't have what other programs had—no scholarships, attractive facilities, or even tradition. What we did have were guys who were disciplined and had a belief that, “Yes, we can do this.” Discipline and work ethic have been the driving force behind this program.

JG: You need disciplined people with a great work ethic. The players who are successful here are disciplined and hold themselves accountable.

Team chemistry is coveted but difficult to capture. What component do you feel is essential to developing it?

KC: The entire group needs to believe that no single player is more important than the team. The roles may differ, obviously, but once you establish an attitude where everyone feels a responsibility to excel at their role and compete as one group, that's when you can experience something special.

JG: You need to trust each other and hold each other accountable, and you need to celebrate each other. I'm Italian, and when we sit down and eat together, we celebrate each other's successes and pick each other up when we're down. When teams have that trust and look out for each other, it's a beautiful thing.

What have you enjoyed most about coaching?

KC: I enjoyed the interaction with players. You have 100-plus players on your football roster and not a day goes by that a player doesn't have an issue. It might be personal, football-related, or academic, and you may not have all the answers. But the athletes take comfort in knowing someone is there to listen and look out for them.

JG: I love helping people set goals and working with them to reach their goals and potential. And I love the brotherhood that forms when a group of people are dedicated to a common goal.

When I started as an assistant, I was living in a basement. My parents came to me and said, “What are you doing?” and I just told them, “I've

got it.” You don't really worry about the struggles when there is so much fulfillment from the work and everything that comes with it.

What has changed about college football—and what is the same?

KC: The biggest change is the athlete's expectations. We're in a world today where we're talking about sums of money; we're talking about NIL [name, image, and likeness]; we're talking about facilities. It wasn't too long ago that athletes were simply grateful for an opportunity to play college football. That still exists in many cases. But there's so many people involved now who influence the athletes and how they approach college football.

The championship mindset is still the same. And that is, if we play together and pull for each other, we can accomplish something great.

JG: There have been a lot of changes. The transfer portal and NIL money are at the top of the list. But what's stayed the same is that it's all about the people. If you have the right people in your program, you can build a winning culture. I don't think that will ever change.

What is something you enjoy in your spare time that might surprise people?

KC: Well, I'm still figuring out what to do with spare time [laughs]. But I do a lot of reading. I like doing crosswords. There hasn't been much downtime for me over the years, so I'm just now trying to figure out what my niche is.

JG: I love all kinds of music—Jimmy Buffett, Metallica, Kenny Chesney, Madonna—my taste is very eclectic. I grew up outside of the amphitheater in Camden, so we went to concerts constantly.

What about Monmouth football do you hope gives alumni pride?

KC: The continued growth of the program from where we started through today, from fielding a team of non-scholarship players, to competing in the CAA, to hopefully contending for a national championship.

JG: I hope they're proud of how we represent the University. I hope they're proud of how we maximize what we have and compete at a national level as a smaller, private university.

The transition is still fresh, but how have things been different?

KC: The day used to travel 100 mph, and now

it hovers around five mph. Coaching college football is a 24/7 job, so the biggest change has been having more time on my hands. I'm developing a greater appreciation for things that exist outside of football.

JG: It's a different role, but I've been here and know the people here. I know the players, coaches, University staff, and the processes. There will be some challenges and a learning curve for sure, but it's not like I'm a new coach who's drinking from a fire hydrant.

If you had one final game ball to give to someone, who would it go to?

KC: That's a tough question. There are so many people who have influenced and helped me that deserve that game ball. Obviously, my wife, Ann Marie, immediately comes to mind, along with my son, Kevin, and daughter, Julia. Dr. Marilyn McNeil had such a major influence on my coaching career and how we developed as a program. I think I'd need to pass that ball around to a different person each week for a year.

Prior to your first game as head coach, if you could give out one game ball to someone who helped you get to this position, who would it go to?

JG: That would be Coach Cal. I met him when I was 17 years old. I've played for him and coached alongside him. He's taught me so much and has been an incredible person in my life and career.

What advice do you have for Jeff as Monmouth's new head coach?

KC: Follow what's in your heart. Do what you feel is best for the program. You know, today is not yesterday and this game constantly changes, so you need to adapt as a head coach. Jeff is extremely intelligent, and if he follows his heart and trusts his instincts, he'll always do what's best for Monmouth football.

What is the best advice Coach Cal has given you about becoming Monmouth's new head coach?

JG: He told me how important it is to just be myself. Don't try to be someone I'm not. Be genuine, be honest, and put forth a great effort. He and I are different personality wise, but we have the same core values and beliefs. Deep down, we love Monmouth football. 🏈

SPORTS SHORTS

MAKING A SPLASH

First-year student Izan Arroyo Lopez del Castillo was named the Coastal Athletic Association Men's Swimming Rookie of the Year—the program's first honoree since joining the league. He earned All-CAA honors with a third-place finish in the 1650 free at the conference championships.

HALL CALL

Women's soccer head coach Kylee Flynn was inducted into the University of Tennessee Athletics Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2026. A former Southeastern Conference Player of the Year and four-time All-SEC selection, she totaled 43 goals and 102 points during her career in Knoxville.

NO FLY ZONE

Women's lacrosse goalkeeper Katie Sullivan was named the CAA Goalkeeper of the Year, becoming the program's first player to earn a major CAA postseason award. The junior also earned All-CAA First Team honors for the second straight season.

A NEW HOME FOR

American Music

The Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music brings the sounds, stories, and influences that shaped the country into one place.

BY TONY MARCHETTI



Before the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music's new home opened this spring, a select group got the first look inside. But it wasn't famous musicians or even industry insiders who walked through the doors first. It was K-12 teachers.

That was deliberate, says Bob Santelli '73, '14HN, the Center's executive director, because it reflects what the new building was always meant to be. Although Springsteen's name is on the façade, the 30,000-square-foot facility that opened on campus in June was never meant to serve as a shrine to a single artist but as something bigger and more ambitious. It was envisioned as a place where exhibitions, archives, scholarship, and public programming come together under one roof, connecting the study of American music with a broader public audience.

"This marks a new chapter for Monmouth University," says President Patrick F. Leahy. "It positions us at the center of the study and celebration of American music and expands the opportunities we can offer to students, scholars, and the broader public."

For Santelli, the focus is on what the Center represents.

"American music is our most precious cultural commodity," he says. "It's our most precious cultural export, and it's the best art form that reflects what America is."

This idea has guided the Center's work for years. What's changed is the scale. With the new facility, the Center can present exhibitions, expand programming, and provide greater access to its collections while also hosting performances, screenings, and classes that weren't previously possible. In turn, it can better serve the campus community while welcoming visitors from around the world to explore American music and the story it tells about the country.

Springsteen's presence is unmistakable, and there is plenty here his fans will love, but his story is presented as one thread in a much larger narrative.

As Santelli puts it: "This is not a Bruce Springsteen museum. It is a Center for American Music with Bruce serving as the narrator of the story."

TELLING THE STORY OF AMERICAN MUSIC

The story of American music is anything but linear. It spans regions, generations, and genres, from Colonial-era ballads and marches to the gospel and blues of the early 20th century to the popular music heard today. Each era builds on what came before it, shaped by the people and moments that defined it.

For visitors, that interconnectedness is introduced through a short film narrated by Springsteen and created by Emmy- and GRAMMY-winning filmmaker Thom Zimny. Shown to guests before they enter the galleries, the film sets the tone for what follows. In it, Springsteen describes himself as "a student and a practitioner of American music" and invites visitors to join him as "another musical messenger, another link in the chain, carrying on its rich traditions."

From there, the story unfolds across 10,000 square feet of immersive exhibits that trace the roots and reach of American music.

The first floor features a permanent exhibition that uses music as an entry point to explore 250 years of American history, touching on such themes as race, class, and gender. Artifacts range from instruments and costumes to archival materials tied to some of the most influential artists across eras.

Interactive elements show how music is shaped by both place and time. A large, touch-enabled map of the United States lets visitors tap through regions and hear how different sounds took hold



ABOVE: The Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music brings exhibitions, archives, education programs, and performances together under one roof.

RIGHT: The Center's interactive "Song Bar" allows visitors to explore musical genres and discover how artists and styles have influenced one another across generations.



across the country and how geography shaped their development. A “Song Bar”—part jukebox and part learning tool—lets visitors jump between musical genres, hearing how styles shift and build on one another.

Other displays focus on specific elements of American music. One traces the evolution of the electric guitar, from the one-stringed diddley bow to innovations by Leo Fender and Les Paul, revealing how its sound came to define much of American music. Another explores Springsteen’s decades-long connection to Monmouth University (see sidebar, p. 31).

The first floor also houses a rotating gallery that will allow the story to evolve with the music. The inaugural exhibition, “Chimes of Freedom,” examines how artists across the political spectrum have used music to advocate for causes they believe in, highlighting how music has served as both a form of protest and patriotism through the years, says Director of Curatorial Affairs Melissa Kozlowski ’04, ’07M.

SPRINGSTEEN IN CONTEXT

The second floor brings Springsteen’s story into sharper view.

The songwriter gallery traces his career through handwritten lyrics, notebooks, and recordings, offering insight into his creative process. Nearby displays highlight the members of the E Street Band and feature instruments, outfits, and artifacts the musicians themselves contributed.

There are also exhibits that allow visitors to experience Springsteen’s music more directly. In one, a studio-like environment allows visitors to stand among instruments while hearing from band members how songs take shape, how they are recorded, and how they evolve. In another, visitors get a simulated experience of Springsteen live. The room is wallpapered in crowd scenes and includes bleacher-style seating, with footage of the artist’s live shows playing throughout, capturing the energy that has long defined him and the E Street Band on stage.

There are quieter moments too. A photography gallery features a rotating selection of images of Springsteen, offering an intimate look at the artist through the years. “The Education of Bruce Springsteen” exhibit highlights how books, ideas, and current events shape his work.

The floor also includes dedicated research and archival spaces that make the Center’s growing collections accessible to both visitors and researchers.

Bruce Springsteen performs during Music America: The Songs that Shaped Us at the OceanFirst Bank Center. The two-night concert event, part of a weeklong series of celebrations leading up to the Center’s opening, featured artists spanning genres and generations, including Jon Bon Jovi, Kenny Chesney, Mavis Staples, Public Enemy, Jackson Browne, and Darlene Love.



COMING FULL CIRCLE

BOB SANTELLI '73, '14HN has spent decades helping shape institutions that take music seriously, from the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame to the GRAMMY Museum to the Experience Music Project in Seattle. By his count, the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music is the 10th museum or cultural institution he has been part of. It’s also the first time he has guided a project from idea to opening.

He’s clear about what the new facility is and is not. “We’re not a museum,” says Santelli. “We throw that term around internally because it’s easier to say, but we’re an archives with exhibition space and a public program theater.”

A GRAMMY Award winner, Santelli has worked as a music historian, curator, and journalist. But he tends to describe himself more simply: a teacher. He taught at both the middle school and university levels, and that perspective still shapes how he thinks about institutions like this one.

He sees the Center as a place where people can learn in different ways, whether they are students, scholars, or music fans. It reflects his long-held belief that American music deserves to be studied and understood with the same depth as any other art form.

For Santelli, the project is also personal. As a student at Monmouth, he was part of Springsteen’s earliest audiences and has watched the musician’s connection to the area endure for decades. Helping bring the Center to campus, he says, is both a professional milestone and a way to give something back to the University, his home state, and the artist who has entrusted him with his legacy.

“I want people to walk out with more information and more inspiration than what they came with,” says Santelli.





BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AT MONMOUTH

Even before visitors reach the galleries, they are met with a reminder of why the Center is here. A lobby display highlights Springsteen's long connection to the University, where he performed regularly between 1969 and 1974 for students who became his earliest fan base.

The exhibit traces those early campus shows, from his days with the bands Child and Steel Mill to his 1974 performance with the E Street Band to his more recent appearances. In 2017, Springsteen rehearsed his critically acclaimed one-man show, "Springsteen on Broadway," in Pollak Theatre, and he still performs at the annual American Music Honors awards show on campus.

Positioned at the entrance, the exhibit serves as both a welcome and a starting point, connecting Springsteen to the broader story of American music. It also reinforces why his name is on the building. Springsteen, says Santelli, is in many ways the perfect representative artist of American music today.

A BUILDING SHAPED BY ITS INFLUENCES

Situated across from the Beaux-Arts-style Guggenheim Memorial Library, the building, which was designed by COOKFOX Architects and constructed by Torcon Inc., strikes a modern presence opposite one of the campus's most historic landmarks.

Rising out of a meadow of native grasses, the facility's exterior is clad in weathering steel, a material chosen in part for its connection to the working-class communities that Springsteen often writes about, says Zach Craun, associate partner at COOKFOX.

Inside, portions of the mass timber structural system are left exposed, allowing visitors to see how the building is put together and how different elements rest on and build upon one another. It's a design approach that subtly parallels how American music itself develops, with each generation building on what came before, says Craun.

The materials and colors used throughout the interior were inspired by Springsteen's iconic Fender Telecaster. The mass timber frame evokes the guitar's wood body; black millwork elements reference the pick guard; and steel details, such as staircases and guardrails, echo the instrument's strings.

Other nods to Springsteen can be found in the building's design elements. A series of mosaic tile installations in the gender-inclusive bathrooms spells out "Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J." when put together. The boardwalk-inspired entryway ties to the singer's Jersey Shore roots. The seats in the Dolby Atmos-certified soundstage aren't just blue, they're "blue jeans blue," says Craun.

Both the wood interior and steel exterior of the building are left unpainted, which will allow them to weather and develop a patina. Craun says that was intentional, creating what he describes as an "authentic expression of material," so that over time, the building will be shaped by the elements and the people who move through it. He sees that approach as connected to the qualities that have long defined American music.

Craun emphasized that sustainability and accessibility were paramount to

the design process. The building is fully electric, tied into the University's photovoltaic system, and is LEED Gold certified, with a heating and cooling system that reduces energy use while allowing for flexible gallery spaces. Outside, the native plantings that surround the entryway help with stormwater management. Inside, the layout prioritizes the principles of inclusive design, clear wayfinding, and ease of movement, ensuring visitors of all abilities can navigate the building comfortably.

A BIGGER STAGE FOR THE WORK AHEAD

The new facility expands what the Center for American Music can do, both on campus and for the audiences it can now reach.

For years, the Center operated out of a tiny house on the edge of campus, limiting how much of its work could be shared with students and the public. Santelli says those constraints inevitably shaped the scope of its exhibitions and programming. The new building changes that, creating room for more ambitious exhibitions, expanded programming, and deeper integration into academic life, including coursework and research tied directly to the Center's collections.

It also brings something new to the region. Funded entirely through external philanthropic support, the building establishes a cultural resource on a scale not previously found at the Jersey Shore, one that connects local history, including Springsteen's roots, to the broader story of American music. Kozlowski estimates the Center will draw tens of thousands of new visitors to campus each year.

That dual role, as both an academic space and a major tourist destination, was the vision from the beginning. And it was reflected in who walked through the doors first.

Before the building's grand opening and weeklong series of concerts and celebrations that preceded it, the Center welcomed K-12 teachers to experience what this new facility makes possible. It was a fitting debut for a facility built not just to display American music, but to deepen the understanding of it. ☺



ABOVE: Visitors begin their experience in the 241-seat soundstage, where a film by Emmy and GRAMMY-winning filmmaker Thom Zimny introduces the story of American music.

LEFT: The Center's second-floor galleries explore Bruce Springsteen's life, work, and creative process through artifacts, recordings, photographs, and interactive exhibits.

FROM REVOLUTION

Ten defining moments across 250 years of American history, told through music.

BY MELISSA KOZLOWSKI '04, '07M
PHOTOS BY MATTHEW GELLER

REMEMBRANCE

AT KEY MOMENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY, music has done more than entertain. It has helped people understand the world around them. Songs express emotion, solidarity, protest, grief, and hope in ways speeches or documents sometimes cannot. From wars and social movements to cultural turning points, music has often become the soundtrack that both captures a moment and helps later generations interpret it. These touchstones illustrate how music has shaped, reflected, and preserved the American story—as the exhibits in the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music will do.



The American Revolution

(1775-1783)

Music played a powerful role during the American Revolution. Songs like “Yankee Doodle,” originally sung to mock colonial soldiers, were reclaimed by Americans as an anthem of defiance. Ballads and marching tunes spread political ideas and boosted morale among troops and civilians alike. For a budding nation at war, music helped turn resistance into shared identity and carried the emotional force of independence.

“Yankee Doodle,” originally British mockery, was embraced by Americans as a patriotic Revolutionary War anthem. Courtesy Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music (BSCAM).



The Civil War

1861-1865

During the American Civil War, songs traveled with soldiers and across divided communities. The “Battle Hymn of the Republic” became a moral rallying cry for the Union, while “Dixie” symbolized Confederate identity. Music expressed grief, patriotism, and longing for home, while helping people interpret the war in moral and spiritual terms.

This Civil War bugle once called soldiers to battle, signaling maneuvers and morale. Courtesy New Orleans Jazz Museum.



Emancipation and the Birth of Spirituals

1860s

As slavery ended, formerly enslaved people brought spirituals into public view—songs such as “Go Down Moses” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” These works carried coded meanings of resistance, faith, and liberation. They also laid the foundation for later American genres.

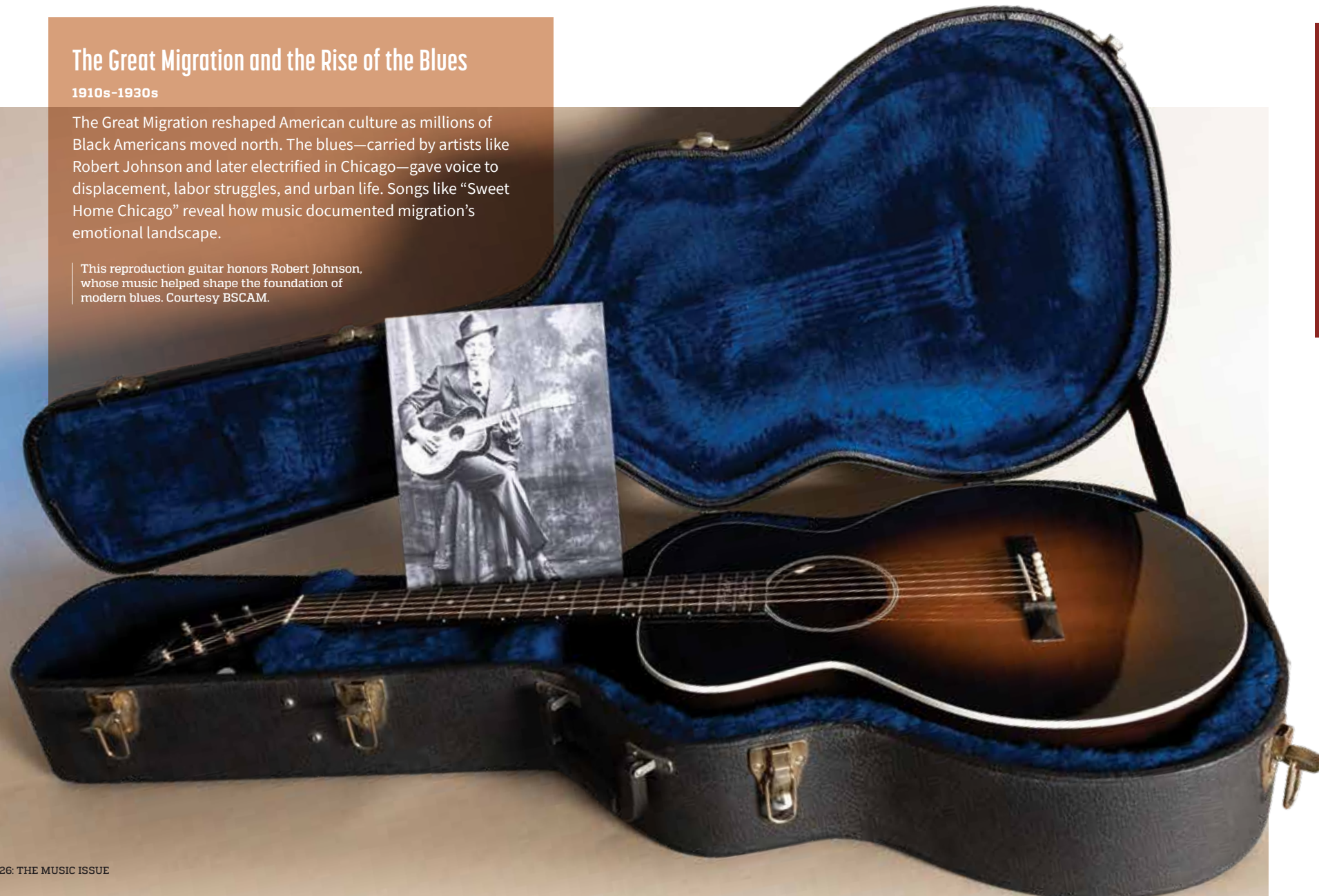
This wax cylinder preserves a Fisk Jubilee Singers recording, capturing the pioneering African American choir that brought spirituals to global audiences. Courtesy Charlie Horner.

The Great Migration and the Rise of the Blues

1910s-1930s

The Great Migration reshaped American culture as millions of Black Americans moved north. The blues—carried by artists like Robert Johnson and later electrified in Chicago—gave voice to displacement, labor struggles, and urban life. Songs like “Sweet Home Chicago” reveal how music documented migration’s emotional landscape.

This reproduction guitar honors Robert Johnson, whose music helped shape the foundation of modern blues. Courtesy BSCAM.

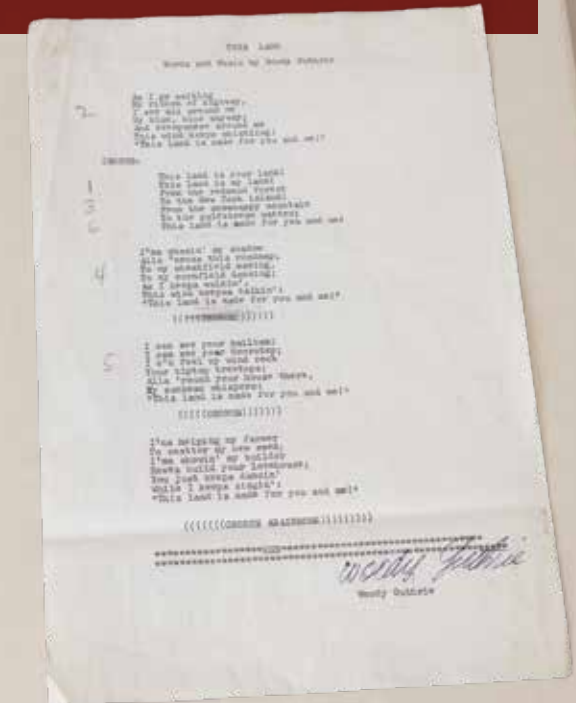


The Great Depression and the Folk Revival

1930s

During the Great Depression, folk musicians chronicled hardship and inequality. Artists like Woody Guthrie wrote songs such as “This Land Is Your Land,” blending populist politics with everyday storytelling. These songs captured the frustrations and hopes of working Americans.

Woody Guthrie’s “This Land Is Your Land” champions equality and shared American heritage, blending folk music with social and political commentary. Courtesy Barry Ollman.





World War II and the Homefront Soundtrack

1941-1945

Music helped Americans process fear and separation during World War II. Songs like “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy” by The Andrews Sisters and “White Christmas” by Bing Crosby blended patriotism with nostalgia for home. They unified civilians and soldiers while revealing the emotional toll of wartime life.

The World War II V-Disc program brought music and morale to troops overseas, connecting them to home. Courtesy BSCAM.



The Vietnam War and the Protest Song

1960s-1970s

Opposition to the Vietnam War produced one of the most politically engaged periods in American music. Songs like Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Fortunate Son” and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young’s “Ohio” voiced anger, grief, and generational conflict. They remain among the clearest cultural windows into the era’s turmoil.

Bart Haynes, drummer for Bruce Springsteen’s first band, The Castiles, earned this Purple Heart in Vietnam. Tragically, he was killed in action in 1967. Courtesy NJ Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial Foundation.

The Civil Rights Movement

1950s-1960s

Music was central to the moral and emotional force of the Civil Rights Movement. Protesters sang “We Shall Overcome” during marches and mass meetings, transforming a gospel-rooted song into a powerful collective anthem. Artists like Sam Cooke captured the era’s urgency in songs such as “A Change Is Gonna Come,” helping frame the movement’s demand for justice.

In the 1960s, Joan Baez used her voice and guitar to champion civil rights and anti-war causes. Courtesy Joan Baez.



Hip-Hop and the Voice of the Inner City

1970s-1980s

Born in the Bronx during the urban crisis, hip-hop became a new language for storytelling and protest. Early recordings like “The Message” by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five vividly described poverty, policing, and city life. The genre reshaped how Americans understand urban experience and youth culture.

DJs like Kool Herc and Run-D.M.C. transformed turntables into instruments, creating hip-hop’s signature sound. Courtesy Hard Rock International.



September 11 and National Mourning

2001

In the aftermath of 9/11, music helped Americans mourn and search for meaning. Songs like Bruce Springsteen’s “The Rising” captured grief, resilience, and collective healing. These works gave voice to a nation struggling to process tragedy and reaffirm community.

“The Rising” tour program reflects the album’s themes of loss and resilience. Courtesy BSCAM. ©

Melissa Kozlowski is director of curatorial affairs for the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music and an adjunct professor of public history.

THE Sound OF Student Life

Twelve students share how music shapes their Monmouth experience.

COMPILED BY TONY MARCHETTI & BREANNE MCCARTHY
PHOTOS BY MATTHEW GELLER

Music is everywhere on campus. It leaks out of classrooms and dorm rooms, off stages and into late-night conversations. It shows up in majors that have nothing to do with it—and everything to do with it. These students offer a glimpse of that. A lead singer chasing a chorus. A DJ reading a room. A songwriter starting with nothing and seeing what sticks. No single path, no single sound. Just a campus where music keeps finding its way in.



◀ The Room Sang Back

HANA MCKINNEY WAS performing long before Monmouth. By her early teens, her band Hana and the Sisters was playing venues across the country, including one gig where they opened for the Plain White T's.

Now a senior music industry major and Division I tennis player, McKinney is balancing life on the court with plans to pursue a career in music law. She also still performs—these days as co-lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist for Corine Rose, a band she formed with fellow Hawk Sarah Fedak.

It was with that group that she experienced one of her most memorable Monmouth moments at the University's Battle of the Bands.

"When we hit the chorus of 'Shut Up and Dance,' we pointed our mics toward the crowd, and they screamed it back at us," she says. "For a moment, everyone in that room felt like part of our band. It was unforgettable."

► Keys to Cues

SENIOR MUSIC INDUSTRY major Jeffrey Mendez is both a producer and pianist, leading projects for Blue Hawk Records (BHR), overseeing studio production, and collaborating with artists through his company, SPVTIAL STVDIOS. Performing live “sharpens my instincts as a producer,” he says. “It strengthens my sense of arrangement, dynamics, and storytelling.”

That focus on storytelling drives his interest in pursuing a career in sync licensing—the art of placing music in film, television, and video games. He’s already created opportunities for other students through The World of Sync, a panel series that connects emerging creatives with industry professionals and offers insight into how music is placed and experienced at the highest level.

“The best sync placements ... become part of how we remember moments in culture,” he says. “What excites me is the opportunity to be part of those cultural moments.”



◀ In Sync Since the Fourth Grade

BESTIES SINCE ELEMENTARY school, seniors Daphne Valenzuela (left) and Camryn Moschitta have been making music together just as long—through band, choir, musical theater, and now as four-year members of Monmouth’s Pep Band. Health studies and computer science majors, respectively, the duo says music is central to their Monmouth experience: a creative outlet, a stress release, and a shared connection that carries into everything they do together. “Often the best part of my day is performing with my best friend,” says Valenzuela.

▼ Writing Her Own Verse

JUNIOR SAMI KHATRI uses music and performance to create spaces where others like her feel seen. A musical theater major with a minor in leadership communication, Khatri founded and leads the Shadow Writers Songwriting Club, performed with MU Players, choreographed productions, and contributed an original song to a BHR release.

“As a little girl, all I wanted was to see someone who looked like me on my TV,” says Khatri. “Every time I walk into class or step on stage, I’m reminded that I am putting in the work to make my dreams come true because I know there are people out there who need to see it. We deserve to see people who look like us chasing their dreams, and I hope to be a part of that.”



▲ A Stroke of Luck

WILL HORN AND his indie rock band, the Blackouts, took a chance. About a year after forming, the group cold-emailed producer Gordon Raphael, best known for his work with the Strokes. To their surprise, he responded, inviting them to record in Leeds, England. In four days, they tracked 12 songs, an experience that pushed them to refine everything from arrangements to collaboration.

But it was in the classroom where things clicked for Horn. The senior music industry major says what he’s learned about licensing, marketing, and artist development has enabled him “to better protect my work, advocate for myself, and navigate an industry that can often be complex and challenging.” After graduation, he plans to work in artist management, supporting and guiding artists as they build their careers.



◀Turning Ideas into Sound

KYLENSKY MIRACLE'S INTEREST in how creativity and collaboration turn ideas into something real led him to create the SongWriter Series, a BHR-affiliated competition that challenges students to write original songs in 30 minutes. Groups are given a theme, build something from scratch, and see it through to a finished track, with the winning song released as a single.

A junior finance major and honors student, Miracle is drawn to projects where he can contribute both creatively and analytically, something he's found as BHR's vice president. "I never would have thought that such a variety of majors could come together to cultivate a community that celebrates and produces music we love."

▶His "Thoughts Arrive in Symphony"

SINGER-SONGWRITER ELIJAH ELIAS writes by instinct. "I start with chords and a melody off the top of my head. And I've found that if I don't start singing as soon as I have my chords down, then I won't come out of it with a song."

At Monmouth, he's learned to share those songs more openly. "I used to be afraid of performing or showing people my music," says the sophomore music industry major. "Now, I have friends who push me to share and continue my musical journey."

Never was that clearer than at a recent BHR release show, when the crowd sang along to his performance of his own song, "Save My Soul."

"That was my 'Why I'm here' moment," says Elias.



◀She Picks the Songs

KAITLYN SULLIVAN GREW up surrounded by music, from classic rock (dad's fave) to yacht rock (mom's preference). Now, as music director of Monmouth's student-run radio station, she decides what others hear.

In the role, Sullivan helps build the station's music catalog, charts new tracks, liaises with record labels, hosts shows, and plans events, gaining hands-on experience in both media and the music industry.

"WMCX exposes students to music they might not have heard before," says the senior communication major. "It's a good mix of old and new."

Beyond the day to day, Sullivan enjoys sharing music with others and introducing listeners to something new. Lately, that's meant keeping Megan Moroney's "Wedding Dress" on repeat.





◀ When It Lands

ONSTAGE OR BEHIND the scenes, Julianna Chesla does a bit of everything with the student-run theater club, MU Players: actor, costumer, director. But the junior English and education major says one of her most memorable Monmouth moments came last fall while performing in the music and theatre arts department's production of "Into the Woods," when she was cast as one of her dream roles: the Witch. "I used the emotions I felt in my own life to express the Witch's grief—and it worked," she says about drawing on the loss of her mother. "The audience reaction to 'Witch's Lament' was palpable. By the end of the show, there wasn't a dry eye in the house."

▼ Just Play

AS A DOUBLE major in political science and music industry, sophomore Leo Hernandez has little downtime, but music keeps him going. "It's the backbone to my mental health," he says.

The aspiring entertainment lawyer loves performing onstage with his death metal band, Paradigm NJ, but says the quieter moments are just as meaningful. During a recent dorm room jam, he played electric guitar while a friend was on acoustic and another drummed on a pizza box using jazz brushes.

"It was one of those moments where I realized, 'This is exactly why I love music so much,'" says Hernandez. "None of us were talking; we just played and were completely present in that moment." 🎸

▶ Mixing it Live

VICTOR DAVIDSON, AKA DJ Vic, doesn't script his sets. Playing shows from Baltimore to New York City, he reads the room in real time, scanning the crowd and adjusting on the fly. The goal is simple, says the senior music industry major: "Make people dance."

Online, he's built audiences across TikTok and SoundCloud, landing partnerships with McDonald's and Twitch. There's no crowd to read. Instead, it's about "showcasing your creativity," he says. Still, it's the connection that matters most.

"I think the reason my community consistently shows up is because ... I treat people like people, not like fans. That goes a long way."



| For more, visit monmouth.edu/magazine

CLASS NOTES

SPRING/SUMMER 2026: THE MUSIC ISSUE

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Launchpad

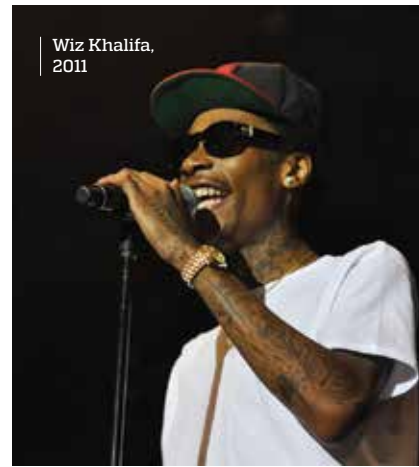
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Alumni Awards

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Owning the Sound

»PLUS: Alumni Roundup, p. 48 • Celebrations, pp. 51 & 52 • Remembrances, pp. 61 & 62 • In Memoriam, p. 63

Bruce Springsteen,
1969Peter, Paul,
and Mary, 1968Wiz Khalifa,
2011All Time Low,
2013

Ray Charles, 1969

Martina McBride,
2012Johnny Mathis,
1967

[LOOKING BACK]

Soundtrack of Your Years

For decades, music has been part of campus life at Monmouth—from Springfest stages to touring acts, student shows, and the songs that carried through dorm rooms, car rides, and late-night hangs.

So, what was your show? The one that surprised you, shaped your taste, or stayed with you?

Or just as important—what was your soundtrack? The song, artist, or album that takes you right back to your time here?

Tell us about it—and if you've got a ticket stub, photo, or program to go with the memory, we'd love to see that too. Email us at magazine@monmouth.edu or write to Monmouth Magazine, 400 Cedar Ave., West Long Branch, NJ 07764. 📧

Alumni Roundup

Listed by graduation year.

1960s

» **Larry Schatzman '66** was honored as grand marshal of the annual Veterans Day Parade in Highland Park and New Brunswick, New Jersey. A U.S. Army veteran, Schatzman served at Fort Meade in Maryland as a computer operator before beginning a lifelong career in technology. He remains active in supporting veterans' causes and was joined by his children and grandchildren for the parade honoring those who have served.

1970s

» **Richard E. Carmichael '70** has released an updated edition of his book, "Common Sense Economics 2025," featuring the most recent available economic data, including international trade, Federal Reserve, and GDP figures through the second quarter of 2025. The book offers an accessible overview of core economic principles and the evolution of economic thought, with an emphasis on the United States. Carmichael has extensive experience in academia, government, and financial services and previously served as a professor of business and finance and also held executive roles in the banking industry. The updated edition is available on Amazon in paperback and electronic formats.

» **Barbara J. McMorrow '70, '76M** has been appointed vice chair of the Board of Trustees for CentraState Healthcare System for the 2026–2028 term. McMorrow joined the board in 2020 and most recently served as secretary/treasurer. A longtime educator and public servant, she retired as principal of Howell High School and has held numerous leadership roles in Monmouth County government.

» **Ronald L. Caparro '74A** is the author of "The Little Book of Buying Precious Metals the Right Way and Why?" available on Amazon. The book, which draws on Caparro's more than 40 years of experience across financial brokerage, accounting, insurance, securities, real estate, banking, and precious metals, serves as a practical guide to buying and selling gold and silver. Caparro is retired and resides in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his wife and has two daughters and four grandchildren.

» **Howard Levine '76** continues to practice law at Sussman Shank LLP in Portland, Oregon, where he has worked since 1982. His practice focuses on representing major creditors and lenders in Chapter 11 reorganization cases nationwide, advising large religious organizations on bankruptcy strategy, and handling complex commercial litigation. Levine has been recognized by Best Lawyers in America since 2014

and was named Lawyer of the Year for Litigation–Bankruptcy in Portland in 2015, 2019, and 2024, among other honors. He and his wife, Jan, live in Lake Oswego, Oregon, and have two daughters and two grandchildren.

1980s

» **Carol Weshnak '82** has dedicated more than 40 years of service as a volunteer with Contact of Ocean & Monmouth Counties, a 24/7 crisis helpline providing free, confidential crisis intervention, resource information, and community referrals. Weshnak, who served as the organization's executive director from 2005 to 2019, continues to volunteer while assisting with training, scheduling, and fundraising at the nonprofit, which receives approximately 24,000 calls annually.

» **Guy Pedelini '84M**, during his tenure as president of the board of directors for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties, helped secure the organization's first permanent headquarters. Pedelini and his wife, Julie, provided a leadership gift that enabled the nonprofit to purchase the building. The Clark Family Foundation and Pedelini Family Building was dedicated in May 2022.

» **Kim Cuny '88** has been honored with the Thomas Undergraduate Research Mentor Award and the Gladys Strawn Bullard Award for mentoring, leadership, and service—two once-in-a-career awards that are rarely received simultaneously. A senior lecturer in communication at UNC Greensboro, Cuny is recognized for her work in storytelling and disability activism and for mentoring undergraduate

researchers through coursework, internships, and independent studies. Her students have produced 24 publications and 18 conference presentations. Cuny previously received the 2021 Anna Maria Grove Award for Teaching Excellence and the 2018 College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Award.

1990s

» **Robert Nicholas Frank '94** married Alicja Konior in 2023. The couple celebrated with two wedding ceremonies—one in Las Vegas followed by a destination wedding in St. Martin surrounded by family and friends.

» **Kristine A. Brown '95, '99M** has been appointed vice president for strategic communications and marketing at Bucknell University. Brown brings more than 20 years of experience across higher education, health care, government, and the nonprofit sector and most recently served as vice president of external affairs at Rider University, where she led award-winning communications and marketing initiatives. Prior to joining Rider, Brown directed communications for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families where she managed long-term public relations planning and spearheaded a departmental rebrand and major awareness campaigns. In addition to her professional accomplishments, Brown serves on the Board of Trustees for the American Repertory Ballet/Princeton Ballet School and has taught as an adjunct instructor at Rider.

» **Gene Surmacz '95M** retired in December after more than 40 years of distinguished military

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 50



Jenaé Louis-Jacques

MUSIC CLEARANCE, "AMERICAN IDOL"

Jenaé Louis-Jacques '23 grew up wanting to be the next Beyoncé. A talented singer, songwriter, and performer, it wasn't until a high school program at New York University introduced her to the business behind the music that she realized there was more to the industry than just the spotlight. As a music industry major at Monmouth, she merged both worlds—an experience that prepared her for opportunities with the NFL, DreamWorks Animation, and Warner Music Group. Today, she's working in music clearance at "American Idol" while continuing her work as a singer and performer.

HOW I GOT HERE

At Monmouth, I took every opportunity I could—working with Blue Hawk Records, performing with the Blue Hawk House Band, organizing a first-ever sync panel on campus, and collaborating across campus to bring music into student projects. Those experiences gave me real, hands-on skills, so that by the time I was applying for internships, I could show I'd already done the work.

MY MONMOUTH MENTORS

Professors Rashida Scott-Cruz and Mike Flannery really supported me and helped me explore music supervision when there wasn't a clear path for it, encouraging me to ask questions, build connections, and create opportunities.

MY ADVICE TO FUTURE HAWKS

Your experience is what you make of it. Go beyond just showing up to class—get involved, explore every interest, and build relationships. The more you do now, the more prepared you'll be when the right opportunity comes along. »BREANNE MCCARTHY

and civilian service, most recently as chief of staff for Defense Logistics Agency Distribution. A retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, Surmacz also held senior civilian leadership roles within DLA, including director of acquisition. His service has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and multiple Army Meritorious Service Medals, reflecting a career defined by leadership, dedication, and impact.

» **Kelly Berfield '98** has been recognized nationally by GlobeSt. as a 2025 Woman of Influence in the Commercial Real Estate Industry. The award honors women whose outstanding achievements, leadership, and innovation have significantly advanced the commercial real estate industry across the country. Berfield serves as chief operating officer of NAI Summit in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where she oversees strategic management and operations across the firm. Spanning more than 27 years, her career has included roles as a real estate attorney, broker of record at Dietrick Group, senior vice president at Colliers International, and adjunct professor of real estate at Lehigh University. Berfield was recognized at GlobeSt.'s national Women of Influence Conference in July.

» **Al-Rahim Burke '98** is the subject of a new short documentary, "Mr. Pro Sé: A Boss & A Worker," which follows his work building Pro Sé Boxing & Athletics while remaining deeply engaged in community outreach in his native Newark, New Jersey. The film highlights Burke's mission to promote fitness, mentorship, and empowerment through boxing, including the impact of the Pro Sé Mobile Boxing Unit. Mr. Pro Sé was released on Sept. 28, 2025,

and is now available to stream on YouTube.

» **Thomas G. Farrell '98, '20Ed.D.** has been named 2025 Region III Superintendent of the Year by the New Jersey Association of School Administrators Education and Research Foundation. A proven district leader, Farrell has served as superintendent of Brick Township Schools since 2020 and has held roles including high school principal, assistant principal, director of technology, and assistant athletic director. He also serves as president of the Ocean County Superintendents' Roundtable and is an adjunct professor at Monmouth.

» **Gary McGeddy '98M** has been named a 2025 NJBIZ Executive Excellence honoree in recognition of his leadership, vision, and impact. McGeddy serves as president of Crum & Forster's Accident & Health Division, which is marking its 25th anniversary and has surpassed \$2 billion in annual gross premium written under his leadership. He has been with Crum & Forster since 2000 and is recognized as a leader in New Jersey's insurance industry.

» **Vincent Sasso '98, '20Ed.D.** has been appointed superintendent of schools for the Old Bridge Township Public Schools. Sasso previously served as principal of Old Bridge High School and has spent more than 20 years in the district in a variety of leadership roles. He earned his doctorate in educational leadership from Monmouth in 2020 and has also served as an adjunct professor in the University's Department of Special Education.

» **Vincent Mileto '99** has been recognized as one of New Jersey's People to Watch in Health Care for 2025 and received his second U.S.

patent and first European patent in the pharmaceutical industry last year. Mileto is co-founder and chief operating officer of Orcosa, a clinical-stage life sciences company based in Ewing, New Jersey, focused on improving drug delivery through its Rapid Infusion Technology platform. The company's fast-acting tablet is designed to enhance drug absorption and offer an alternative to opioids for treating moderate to severe pain. He has more than 20 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry and previously held leadership roles at Catalent Pharma Solutions.

2000s

» **Maureen M. Lawrence '01** has been named chair of the Board of Trustees for CentraState Healthcare System for the 2026–2028 term. Lawrence joined the board in 2017 and previously served as vice chair. She is assistant vice president of finance at Pratt Institute and has held senior leadership roles in higher education finance, including chief financial officer at St. Francis College.

» **Deirdre Rood '01** has been appointed principal of Saint Rose of Lima Elementary School in Haddon Heights, New Jersey. A lifelong Catholic educator, Rood brings more than 23 years of classroom and leadership experience to the role. She most recently served as partnership-wide assistance principal for Catholic Partnership Schools, supporting multiple schools across Camden and leading efforts in curriculum development, classroom innovation, and student-centered learning. Rood holds both a master of education and an educational doctorate from William Paterson University.

» **Edwin Urrego '02** is an executive loan officer at Kennedy Funding, a nationally recognized direct private real estate lender that has closed more than \$4 billion in loans across the U.S. and internationally. Urrego specializes in structuring fast, flexible financing for time-sensitive acquisitions, pre-development projects, and complex real estate deals that fall outside traditional lending parameters. Fluent in English and Spanish, he works with borrowers throughout the U.S. and Latin America and has helped close high-impact transactions, including a \$5.1 million land acquisition loan in Maryland.

» **Corey Lowell '03M** has been named School Business Administrator of the Year by the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO). The honoree is selected from six Distinguished Service Award recipients across the state and was presented at NJASBO's annual conference in June. Lowell has worked in school finance for 23 years and has served as business administrator for the West Long Branch School District since 2016. Her work includes expanding pre-school programs, securing grants for major facilities projects, and obtaining funding to replace outdated playground equipment. She is also active in professional leadership roles at the state and national levels—most recently serving on the Vision 35 Task Force for the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International, where she collaborated with business administrators from across the country to ensure the organization continues to be a valuable resource to the business administrator profession.

» **Staci M. Gullotta '04, '09M** has joined Informa TechTarget

as chief marketing officer. She brings more than two decades of experience in global B2B technology marketing, most recently leading demand marketing at ARIS, where she helped build and scale a high-performance global demand framework. Gullotta has also held senior marketing roles at FocusVision, contributing to its merger into PG Forsta.

» **Brian Woltman '04** has been promoted to senior vice president at Embrace Home Loans and inducted into the company's Hall of Fame, an honor reserved for its most accomplished employees. Woltman manages Embrace's Basking Ridge, New Jersey, branch and is the company's top-producing originator, holding the record for the highest annual loan volume in its 40-year history. Since joining Embrace in 2016, he has led his branch to more than \$1.15 billion in funded loans and earned multiple Chairman's Club, Founders Club, and President's Club honors.

» **Phil Dunn '05** and his band, The Modbeats, released their debut album, "Ballad of a Starving Artist," on Sept. 5, 2025. The album was recorded at Lakehouse Studios in Asbury Park and released on Mayleen Records. The Modbeats released their debut single in 2024 and were named one of Music Connection magazine's "Hot 100 New Artists." The band has also been featured on radio stations nationwide, including SiriusXM's Little Steven's Underground Garage and WXPB in Philadelphia.

» **Suraya Kornegay '05** is engaged to **Elford Rawls-Dill '06M**. The couple first met as colleagues in 2012 at Gregory Elementary School in Long Branch, New Jersey, where they bonded over a shared love of education.

They stayed in touch through social media, and after reconnecting by chance at a fundraiser at Bradley Beach Bowl on Dec. 14, 2024, the two quickly grew close. Rawls-Dill—who says their connection was "heaven sent"—proposed at Bradley Beach Bowl in Bradley Beach, New Jersey, on Jan. 31, 2025.

» **Joe Lizza '05, Ed.D.**, has been promoted to senior director of student centers and campus activities at Rowan University. In this role, he is responsible for the administrative vision, leadership, and management of the Student Centers and campus activities, including student programming, facilities, services, and auxiliary operations, in support of the Division of Student Life and the university's mission and core values. His work helps foster a culture of quality, involvement, and service excellence across the campus community.

» **Melissa Hindle '07M** has founded Hindle Consulting LLC, a marketing consultancy focused on helping local business owners achieve strategic growth through data-informed planning. With more than 20 years of experience in marketing and marketing operations, Hindle works with clients across health care, finance, manufacturing, wellness, and nonprofit sectors to develop practical, measurable marketing strategies. Her work emphasizes collaboration, community, and the thoughtful integration of AI tools to support business objectives.

» **Rebecca Policastro '07** captured an award-winning photograph that helped the Freehold Regional High School District earn an Award of Excellence—Best in

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 54

Celebrations



ACCOLADES

1. **Kim Cuny '88** received the Thomas Undergraduate Research Mentor Award and the Gladys Strawn Bullard Award for mentoring, leadership, and service.
2. **Kelly Berfield '98** has been recognized nationally by GlobeSt. as a 2025 Woman of Influence in the Commercial Real Estate Industry.
3. **Gary McGeddy '98M** has been named a 2025 NJBIZ Executive Excellence honoree in recognition of his leadership, vision, and impact.
4. **Raymond Cooper '11** joined Fox Rothschild in Morristown, New Jersey, as an associate in the firm's litigation department.

ENGAGEMENTS

1. **Suraya Kornegay '05** is engaged to **Elford Rawls-Dill '06M**.
2. **Kailah Gittleman '14** is engaged to Andrew Wagoner.
3. **Allie Wilson '18, '19M** is engaged to **Bernard Rebecchi '18, '19M**.
4. **Gianna Cusanelli '18, '22M** is engaged to **Matthew Moor '16**.
5. **Katie Baron '18, '19M** is engaged to **AJ Farris '20, '22M**.
6. **Mikaela Deleasa '18** is engaged to **Russell Piekarsky '15**.
7. **Erika Ruscil '20** is engaged to **Michael Mendillo II '20**.
8. **Alexis Rita Krempa '21** is engaged to **Tyler Aportela '19, '20M**.
9. **Arianna DeCaro '21** is engaged to Nicholas Piquero.
10. **Elise Brogan '22** is engaged to **John Askin '22**.

WEDDINGS

11. **Taylor Bernosky '16** married Daniel Harris on Nov. 9, 2024.
12. **Grace Francesca Ward '17** married **Kevin Francis Summonte '17** on June 26, 2025.
13. **Gina Geletei '18, '20M** married **David Glass '18, '20M** on June 6, 2025.
14. **Christina Nicole Anzalone '19** married **Michael Marinos '19** on Sept. 13, 2025.
15. **Katie Burkert '19, '22M** married **Kevin Zielaznicki '18** on Aug. 24, 2024.
16. **Amanda Durante '19** married Ethan Vogel on Oct. 18, 2025.
17. **Holly Anne Ryan '19** married **Inan Sikel '18** on Oct. 2, 2025.
18. **Sakshi Bhatia '21M** married Vivek Kumar on Nov. 22, 2024.

BIRTHS

19. **Bridget Marie Dougherty '09** and Christopher Dougherty welcomed a son, Andrew Dougherty, on July 3, 2025.
20. **Kaitlyn (Kanzler) DiSpigna '10** and Aniello DiSpigna welcomed a daughter, Beatrice DiSpigna, on Sept. 17, 2024.
21. **Maria Anne Walling '11** and Darren Mileto welcomed a son, Joseph Mileto, on Nov. 3, 2024.
22. **Alexandria Fitzgerald '14** and Gregory Taus welcomed a daughter, Sophia Isabella Taus, on Dec. 7, 2024.
23. **Annie Marian Siegel '16** and Rohit Gudi welcomed a son, Bruce Gudi, on June 24, 2025.
24. **Jennifer Nicole Zuczek '16** and Michael Mento welcomed a son, Michael Mento, on Dec. 6, 2025.
25. **Kristen Magner '17, '20M** and **Kenneth Magner '17** welcomed a son, Nolan Magner, on Oct. 31, 2025.
26. **Sarah Marie Meyer '17** and **Bradley Meyer '16** welcomed a son, Owen Meyer, on Oct. 18, 2025.
27. **Morissa Schwartz '17M** welcomed a daughter, Maven Schwartz, on June 20, 2025.
28. **Vanessa (Garces) McCue '18** and **Anthony McCue '16** welcomed a son, Luca Joseph McCue, on Dec. 22, 2025.
29. **Kaitlyn Nicole Palumbo '20** and Nicholas Palumbo welcomed a son, Cole Murray Palumbo, on Aug. 13, 2025.



Class in the Photography category from the New Jersey School Public Relations Association's 2025 School Communication Award Program. Policastro, the district's communications and projects coordinator, took the photo on graduation day at Freehold High School. The annual awards recognize outstanding school communications work across New Jersey and drew a record 140 submissions from 53 districts.

» **André J. Richburg '08M** has been appointed vice president for strategic enrollment at Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he serves as a member of the president's cabinet. In this role, Richburg provides leadership for student recruitment, admissions, and retention strategy. He brings extensive experience in higher education enrollment management, having previously held admissions leadership roles at Monmouth University, Centenary University, and multiple community colleges, as well as serving as executive director of graduate marketing and admissions at West Chester University.

» **Taylor Bythewood-Porter '09** has been named director of exhibitions at the Armory Center for the Arts. A New Jersey native, Bythewood-Porter is a curator and writer whose work centers on Black feminist thought, material culture, and the aesthetics of the African Diaspora. In this role, she will lead the Armory's exhibitions program, overseeing curatorial strategy and implementation in alignment with the organization's mission to advance equity and social justice through art. Bythewood-Porter most recently served as curator of history at the Museum of Riverside and previously held curatorial roles at the California African American Museum.

» **Tom DeFelice III '09M** was named to Automotive News' 2025 Retail 40 Under 40, recognizing top emerging leaders in the automotive industry. DeFelice is vice president and general counsel of Circle Motor Group and earned his MBA from Monmouth University after completing undergraduate and law degrees at Boston College and Seton Hall University. After practicing law in automotive mergers and franchise matters, he returned to his family's dealership group in 2020 and has since helped lead record sales growth and dealership expansion across New Jersey.

» **Bridget Marie Dougherty '09** and Christopher Dougherty welcomed a son, Andrew Dougherty, on July 3, 2025.

» **Margaret (Maggie) Long '09M** has been appointed vice president and chief development officer for athletics development at Rutgers University. In this role, she will lead fundraising efforts in support of Rutgers Athletics, including initiatives benefiting student-athlete excellence and scholarships. Long previously served as executive director of corporate partnerships and annual giving at the Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation and held earlier roles within Rutgers Athletics development.

2010s

» **Chris Collazo '10** has been named head baseball coach at The College of New Jersey. A former standout at Monmouth, Collazo makes his head coaching debut after more than a decade as an assistant coach at the Division I level, most recently at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Delaware. During

his career, he has been part of multiple 30-win seasons and conference championships and has helped develop numerous all-conference and MLB-drafted players. As a student-athlete at Monmouth, Collazo was the program's all-time leader in hits and helped lead the Hawks to two NCAA Tournament appearances.

» **Kaitlyn (Kanzler) DiSpigna '10** and Aniello DiSpigna welcomed a daughter, Beatrice DiSpigna, on Sept. 17, 2024.

» **Lindsey Specht '10** joined Dickinson Wright's Washington, D.C., office as of counsel. With more than a decade of experience in state and federal campaign finance and lobbying law, Specht advises clients on government affairs and political law, including compliance with campaign finance, lobbying, ethics, and gift rules. She also guides nonprofit organizations on political activity and government engagement. Specht previously served as a senior attorney for Stand Together and Americans for Prosperity and as counsel to the Republican commissioners at the Federal Election Commission. She now represents clients before state and federal regulatory agencies. Specht, who is admitted to practice in Maryland, New Jersey, and Virginia, also serves as secretary of the Republican National Lawyers Association Board of Governors and is a member of The Federalist Society and the CUA Law Alumni Council. She earned her J.D. from The Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law in 2013.

» **Raymond Cooper '11** joined Fox Rothschild in Morristown, New Jersey, as an associate in the firm's litigation department. He advises clients on complex commercial disputes, representing

them in court as well as in mediation and arbitration, and works with clients in highly regulated industries, including payment processing and gaming. Cooper regularly appears in state and federal court and has experience handling matters involving fiduciary duties, contract disputes, and governmental investigations. He earned his J.D., magna cum laude, from Rutgers Law School in 2020 and was inducted into the Order of the Coif.

» **Maria Anne Walling '11** and Darren Mileto welcomed a son, Joseph Mileto, on Nov. 3, 2024.

» **William Dennis '12M** has been appointed assistant professor of dentistry at the Kansas City University College of Dental Medicine in Joplin, Missouri.

» **Ireneusz Dariusz Ekiert '12M** marked the silver jubilee of his priestly ordination in 2025, celebrating 25 years of service. Ordained in 2000, he has served in pastoral, educational, and humanitarian roles in the United States and abroad, including as chaplain for the Diocese of Trenton at Monmouth University and later as an adjunct professor of philosophy, religion, and interdisciplinary studies, where he also earned a master's degree in mental health counseling.

» **Alli Matz '12** is based in London and serves as a global business development manager at Amazon Web Services, working with education customers around the world. She has more than a decade of experience in strategy, partnerships, and business development, supporting innovation across the government, health care, and education sectors. She earned an M.S. in comparative political economy from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The alumni tailgate will take place on Saturday, Oct. 3, before the football team takes on the Towson Tigers! Join us as we celebrate all alumni, with a special focus on graduates celebrating milestones (class years ending in 6 or 1).

Visit monmouth.edu/homecoming for all of the latest details!



"One of the reasons I chose Monmouth was how early students begin working in real classrooms. By my second semester, I was already placed in a school, and since then, I've had three different placements building the skills and confidence I'll need to succeed as a teacher. Having access to these opportunities has truly changed my life."

NICO VARTOLONE, CLASS OF 2028
Secondary education major, journalism minor



Make your gift today and help students like Nico achieve their dreams.



DON'T MISS OUT! Visit monmouth.edu/stayconnected to receive exclusive event invitations, information on new alumni benefits, the alumni e-newsletter, and more.

Alumni Awards 2026

The University's biennial Alumni Awards honor graduates who exemplify professional achievement, leadership, and service. The 2026 honorees were recognized this June in the Great Hall.



Distinguished Alumni Award

Deborah "Dee" Baker '00 is the founder and chief empowerment officer of Beyond the Uniforms LLC, an identity-centered leadership development company that helps women lead with clarity, purpose, and authenticity. A U.S. Air Force veteran, she has decades of experience in high-stakes environments and a deep understanding of the challenges women navigate in leadership. Her work is grounded in the belief that leadership begins with identity. Through speaking and experiential programs, she helps women strengthen their self-confidence, reclaim their voice, and lead from the inside out.



Outstanding Alumni Service Award

Fred Williams '04 is the founder and CEO of Hawkeye Search Group, a boutique recruiting firm specializing in digital media and e-commerce leadership roles. A former Monmouth football student-athlete and member of the 2003 Northeast Conference Championship team, he remains deeply engaged with the University as a mentor and donor, and is a co-founder of The Yarak Fund, which supports Monmouth football. Williams is also active in his community, supporting initiatives such as the Salvation Army's Angel Tree Program and Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation for Childhood Cancer.



Recent Alumni Award

Kimberly (Kravitz) Bukowiec '13 is an award-winning television journalist and anchor/reporter with experience in the New York and Philadelphia markets. She has worked with outlets including WABC, FOX5, and News12 in roles ranging from producer to on-air host. Her work has earned two New York Emmy Awards, two "Best of the Best" News TV Awards, and honors including Athena recognition and Phenomenal Women Under 40. She also owns KJ Media and Consulting LLC, helping clients build their brands through strategic media and content consulting.

» **Brandon Rospond '12** is co-owner of On Military Matters, a specialty bookstore and publishing business focused on military history, wargaming, and modeling. In 2025, Rospond and his father, Vincent, relocated the decades-old business to Point Pleasant, New Jersey. Together, they also co-founded Winged Hussar Publishing, and Rospond recently authored "Rebirth of Courage," the first novel in his fantasy series The Dragoon Clan.

» **John Shjarback '12M** published "Chasing Change in Camden: Police Reform in One of America's Most Violent Cities" with Temple University Press. The book examines the Camden County Police Department's reform efforts following the dissolution of the city's police force—the Camden Police Department—in 2013. Shjarback investigates how Camden's police department re-formed and questions whether it can serve as a model for other cities. "Chasing Change in Camden" received the 2026 Best Policing Book of the Year award from the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Shjarback is an associate professor in the Department of Law and Justice Studies at Rowan University.

» **John Bothner '13** has joined Bennett Realty & Development as an associate with the firm's Holmdel-based leasing and commercial sales team. A licensed New Jersey real estate salesperson, Bothner brings a background in technical sales from the industrial computer design and manufacturing sector.

» **Alexandria Fitzgerald '14** and Gregory Taus welcomed a daughter, Sophia Isabella Taus, on Dec. 7, 2024.

» **Kailah Gittleman '14** is engaged to Andrew Wagoner. The couple met in Boston while living in the same building, and their friendship quickly grew into something more. They later relocated to New Jersey with their beloved Puerto Rican pup. Wagoner proposed in Deal at the former condo property where Gittleman's grandparents lived and where she spent summers growing up. "Andrew knew just how special it was to me—making the moment even more meaningful," she said.

» **Lauren Osbourne '14** has been appointed assistant principal of Tohopekaliga High School in Osceola County, Florida. Osbourne previously served as a dean at Celebration High School, where she held multiple instructional and leadership roles, including Multi-Tiered System of Supports and graduation coach. She earned her master's degree in educational leadership from Stetson University.

» **Rachael (Brady) Micucci '15** and Victor Micucci welcomed a son, James Micucci, on Sept. 14, 2025.

» **Russell Piekarsky '15**. See note for **Mikaela Deleasa '18**.

» **Taylor Bernosky '16** married Daniel Harris on Nov. 9, 2024, at Kirkpatrick Chapel in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Fellow classmates Amanda Glatz '16, Violeta Pietronico '16, '17M, Alyssa Maurice '16, and Alyssa Riley '16 were members of the bridal party. Following their wedding, the couple celebrated with a honeymoon in London and Paris. Bernosky is a senior associate at PGIM, and Harris is chief of staff and deputy executive director for the New Jersey General Assembly Majority Office. The couple resides in Colonia, New Jersey.

» **Daniella (Rivera) Betancourt '16** and CJ Betancourt welcomed a son, Kai Betancourt, on June 23, 2025.

» **Annie Marian Siegel '16** and Rohit Gudi welcomed a son, Bruce Gudi, on June 24, 2025.

» **Jennifer Nicole Zuczek '16** and Michael Mento welcomed a son, Michael Mento, on Dec. 6, 2025.

» **Bob Davies '17** was named head football coach at Hamline University in December 2025. He brings experience across Division I, II, and III football and is known for building high-performing offenses. Davies previously served as an offensive coordinator at multiple institutions, including Carleton College, where he helped lead the program to its first winning season in 13 years and contributed to the winningest stretch in school history. A former Monmouth quarterback, Davies resides in Minneapolis with his wife, Stella.

» **Kristen Wagner '17, '20M** and **Kenneth Wagner '17** welcomed a son, Nolan Wagner, on Oct. 31, 2025.

» **Sarah Marie Meyer '17** and **Bradley Meyer '16** welcomed a son, Owen Meyer, on Oct. 18, 2025.

» **Morissa Schwartz '17M** welcomed a daughter, Maven Schwartz, on June 20, 2025.

» **John Sorce '17** joined The Leaven after spending two and a half years as sports editor of The Emporia Gazette. A Staten Island native raised in Central New Jersey, Sorce has written for several Garden State outlets, including the Asbury Park Press and NJ Advance Media. A lifelong Kansas City Royals fan, he is excited to

put down roots in the Kansas City area. Outside the newsroom, he has visited more than 20 current and former MLB stadiums, with Kauffman Stadium and PNC Park among his favorites.

» **Grace Francesca Ward '17** married **Kevin Francis Summonte '17**. The couple celebrated with two wedding ceremonies—the first on June 26, 2025, at the Church of Precious Blood in Monmouth Beach, New Jersey, with close family and friends, followed by a trolley ride to campus for photos and dinner at Birravino in Red Bank, New Jersey. The second ceremony was held on June 27, 2025, at Tillinghouse at Suneagles Golf Club in Eatontown, New Jersey, where many alumni were in attendance and several served in the bridal party.

» **Victoria Agosta '18** has joined commercial law firm Sills Cummis & Gross as an associate in its Newark office. She concentrates her practice on land use, zoning, and redevelopment matters, and has experience in commercial real estate transactions including property acquisitions and sales, leasing, joint ventures, and development financing. Agosta earned her law degree from New York Law School and is admitted to practice in New Jersey and New York.

» **Katie Baron '18, '19M** is engaged to **AJ Farris '20, '22M**. The couple met while attending Monmouth, where Farris played football and Baron competed in softball and later golf while completing her graduate studies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they spent time together at the beach by the University Bluffs, a place that became meaningful to them. Farris proposed at the same beach on June 28, 2025.

» **Gianna Cusanelli '18, '22M** is engaged to **Matthew Moor '16**. The pair connected through mutual friends after graduating. They met in Asbury Park in 2018 and spent many years as close friends before finally getting together. They bonded over their shared love for music and the beach. They became engaged on Aug. 26, 2025, and are looking forward to their shore wedding next August in Point Pleasant, New Jersey.

» **Mikaela Deleasa '18** is engaged to **Russell Piekarsky '15**. The couple first met as students at Monmouth, where Deleasa was a member of Delta Phi Epsilon and Piekarsky belonged to Theta Xi. Though a few years apart, they stayed in touch through social media and later reconnected in New York City. After six years together, Piekarsky proposed on April 18, 2025, during their third trip to St. Barths, where the couple celebrated with an "engagement-moon." They plan to marry in Spain in the summer of 2027.

» **Gina Geletei '18, '20M** married **David Glass '18, '20M** on June 6, 2025.

» **Nikoletta Innocenti '18** married **Andrew Moser '18** at Tillinghouse in Eatontown, New Jersey, on Nov. 8, 2025, where several alumni were in attendance and members of the bridal party.

» **Vanessa (Garces) McCue '18** and **Anthony McCue '16** welcomed a son, Luca Joseph McCue, on Dec. 22, 2025.

» **Gillian Ober '18M** has been named the 2025–26 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in the Freehold Borough School District, Ober

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 60



Owning the Sound

Meet the two alumni helping artists take control of their music in the streaming era.

BY STEVE NEUMANN

Before the emergence of digital streaming platforms, music artists relied on record labels to promote their work through radio airplay and the distribution of physical products such as albums, cassettes, and CDs. In return, labels typically required artists to give up the rights to the master recordings of their songs, while the artists retained the rights to the lyrics, melodies, composition, and arrangements.

Control over those recordings meant labels dictated when and where music was played—a perennial point of contention between artists and the companies that helped them become successful.

Vydia serves as a counterweight to that dynamic. The music technology platform handles distribution, rights, royalties, and analytics for artists ranging from independent acts to global names like Snoop Dogg and Usher, while giving creators a path to succeed without surrendering ownership and control.

Two Monmouth graduates—Jenna Gaudio '09 and Mark Gorman '09—now serve as co-presidents, overseeing the company's day-to-day operations and helping guide its role in a rapidly evolving industry.

“We came onto the market as a solution for people to choose an alternative to the major labels and retain ownership of their music and content by using the tools that even the playing field,” says Gaudio, who oversees operations. “We provide the infrastructure, technology, and services to power the back end of the music industry.”

FOUNDED IN 2013 BY NEW JERSEY NATIVE

Roy LaManna, Vydia has grown into a one-stop shop for artists navigating a fragmented digital landscape. Today, the company supports both digital and physical distribution, manages rights and royalties, and provides tools for merchandising and e-commerce across more than 200 global audio and video platforms.

“We operate like a B2B [business-to-business] company,” says Gorman, who leads the company's work with artists and labels. “We supply tools for the independent record label sector to distribute their music so they don't have to rely on the big three of Warner, Sony, or Universal.”

Today's artists are expected to act as both creators and business operators—managing distribution, analytics, and audience growth alongside making music. While uploading a track is relatively easy, ensuring that every stream or video play generates revenue requires a sophisticated backend. That's where Vydia's platform comes in.

“We came onto the market as a solution for people to choose an alternative to the major labels and retain ownership of their music and content by using the tools that even the playing field.”

Its system tracks how and where content is used, ensuring that monetization flows back to the rights holder—an especially critical function for independent artists without the legal and administrative infrastructure of major labels.

“We do all the distribution,” says Gaudio. “Once the music is published, we collect performance data—are people streaming it, saving it, skipping it? We track all of that, along with the royalties that come from those streams or purchases.”

In a digital ecosystem where songs are endlessly remixed, reposted, and reused, that level of tracking is essential.

“If somebody is about to drop a new album, they might put a block policy on it so that nobody can leak it or upload it,” says Gaudio. “But once it's live and they want people to share it, it identifies the rights owner and ensures they're paid every time that content is streamed. We make sure all that's captured.”

THOUGH GAUDIO AND GORMAN GRADUATED from Monmouth the same year, they didn't formally connect until they both arrived at Vydia. That shared experience has helped shape a growing relationship between the company and the University.

Since 2021, Vydia has supported global distribution for Monmouth's student-run record label, Blue Hawk Records, giving students hands-on experience using the same professional-grade tools and infrastructure used to manage releases across platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and TikTok. The partnership reflects the realities of a digital-first industry, where artists—and the teams behind them—must understand not just how to create music, but how to distribute, track, and monetize it.

It has also created a pipeline, with more than a dozen Monmouth alumni now working at Vydia—a connection that continues to deepen as the company expands. For Gaudio and Gorman, that relationship is a natural extension of Vydia's broader mission: providing the infrastructure for a new generation of creators while helping shape the talent entering the business.

They see that work as part of a larger shift—one in which Vydia represents a new kind of music company built for the digital era, equipping artists with the tools and real-time insights needed to refine strategy, reach audiences more effectively, and plan releases with greater precision.

“Our tools are set up to be able to support the business end of paying out writers and producers, and distributing the content,” Gorman says, “allowing artists to focus on what they do best: creating music.”

was previously recognized as Monmouth County Teacher of the Year. In her role as State Teacher of the Year, she will work with the New Jersey Department of Education to advance the teaching profession through statewide presentations and classroom visits, and will also take part in national conferences with other State Teachers of the Year.

» **Allie Wilson '18, '19M** is engaged to **Bernard Rebecchi '18, '19M**. The couple met during their freshman year as members of the track and field team and got engaged on the beach in Sea Bright, New Jersey, on Nov. 15, 2025. They plan to wed in Philadelphia on Jan. 8, 2027.

» **Kevin Zielaznicki '18**. See note for **Katie Burkert '19, '22M**.

» **Christina Nicole Anzalone '19** married **Michael Marinos '19** on Sept. 13, 2025, at The Estate at Florentine Gardens in River Vale, New Jersey. The couple first met as students at Monmouth during their freshman year in 2016—after Marinos spotted Anzalone having a catch on the quad and says it was “love at first sight”—and they have been together ever since. Anzalone says having so many Monmouth alumni at their wedding felt like a “true family reunion,” with several alumni serving in the bridal party. The couple became engaged in February 2024 before celebrating their marriage on a memorable September evening surrounded by family, friends, and fellow Hawks.

» **Kenji Bahar '19** has signed with the Rhein Fire of the European League of Football for the 2026 season. A former Monmouth quarterback, Bahar finished his collegiate career as the program's all-time leader in passing yards and touchdown passes and was named Big South Offensive Player of the

Year. His professional experience includes time with the Baltimore Ravens organization, the Canadian Football League, the USFL, and the Indoor Football League.

» **Katie Burkert '19, '22M** married **Kevin Zielaznicki '18** on Aug. 24, 2024, in Long Branch, New Jersey. The couple first met at Monmouth, where they bonded through Greek life, and returned to the Jersey Shore seven years later to celebrate their wedding. The day was shared with family, friends, and fellow alumni who helped make the celebration especially meaningful.

» **Amanda Durante '19** married Ethan Vogel on Oct. 18, 2025, at The Mill Lakeside Manor in Spring Lake Heights, New Jersey. Durante's maid of honor, Kaitlyn McClintock '19, and matron of honor, Dena Capparelli '19, '21M, are fellow Monmouth alumnae, and several of Durante's sorority sisters from Alpha Sigma Tau joined in the celebration.

» **Holly Anne Ryan '19** married **Inan Sikel '18** on Oct. 2, 2025, at the Farmhouse in Hampton, New Jersey, on a beautiful fall day surrounded by family and friends, including many they met at Monmouth. The couple first connected as students at Monmouth in 2018 and became engaged on Oct. 15, 2024, during a trip to Florence, Italy, where Sikel proposed.

» **Amber Christine Stratz '19** married **Ryan Mitchell '20** on March 8, 2025, in New Hope, Pennsylvania. The celebration included many Monmouth cross-country and track and field alumni in attendance.

» **Angello Villarreal '19M, '22Ed.D.** has been named to The Educator's Room 2026 Top 50 Educators Around the World, recognized for

his work redefining leadership and inclusive learning in the modern classroom. A Spanish teacher at Freehold Township High School, Villarreal was selected from a competitive pool of more than 500 applicants worldwide. In addition, Villarreal received a Fulbright Teacher Exchange Award for the 2025–26 academic year and will participate in the Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program, supporting his continued research in global education. He is the award-winning editor of “Hispanic Perspectives on Student Support and Community Empowerment” and “Hispanic Scholar Perspectives on Education and Wellbeing.”

2020s

» **AJ Farris '20, '22M**. See note for **Katie Baron '18, '19M**.

» **Colleen Moretti '20** married **Robert Luke Golebieski '20** at Nanina's In the Park in Belleville, New Jersey, on July 3, 2025. There were dozens of fellow Monmouth alumni in attendance including those in the couple's bridal party.

» **Tori Rose Olsen '20** completed a Doctor of Acupuncture with Chinese Herbal Medicine degree in August and recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of opening a private practice, House of Shen LLC, in Red Bank, New Jersey. She began her academic journey in Health Studies at Monmouth, which she credits with helping launch her career. She hopes to offer internship opportunities to Monmouth students in the future.

» **Kaitlyn Nicole Palumbo '20** and Nicholas Palumbo welcomed a son, Cole Murray Palumbo, on Aug. 13, 2025.

» **Erika Ruscil '20** is engaged to **Michael Mendillo II '20**. The couple met in high school and began dating in 2014 before attending Monmouth, where they made lifelong friendships. They became engaged at Anjelica's in Sea Bright, New Jersey, on Aug. 8, 2025. They recently bought their first home in Monmouth County, just 10 minutes from campus, and plan to wed on April 23, 2027.

» **Sakshi Bhatia '21M** married Vivek Kumar on Nov. 22, 2024, in Parma, Ohio, in an intimate ceremony with close family and friends. Fellow alumni Vivek Reddy Bheemreddy '22 and Satya Sai Tarun Muthina '22 were in attendance.

» **Arianna DeCaro '21** is engaged to Nicholas Piquero. The couple met online while pursuing their graduate studies and dated for nearly three years before getting engaged at the New Jersey Botanical Garden on Memorial Day 2025. They plan to wed at Nanina's In the Park in Belleville, New Jersey, on April 18, 2027.

» **Alexis Rita Krempa '21** is engaged to **Tyler Aportela '19, '20M**. The couple first met as undergraduate students at Monmouth, where they became friends before beginning a relationship after graduation. Aportela proposed in front of the castle at Magic Kingdom on Nov. 16, 2025, and the couple is now excited to continue their journey together as fiancés.

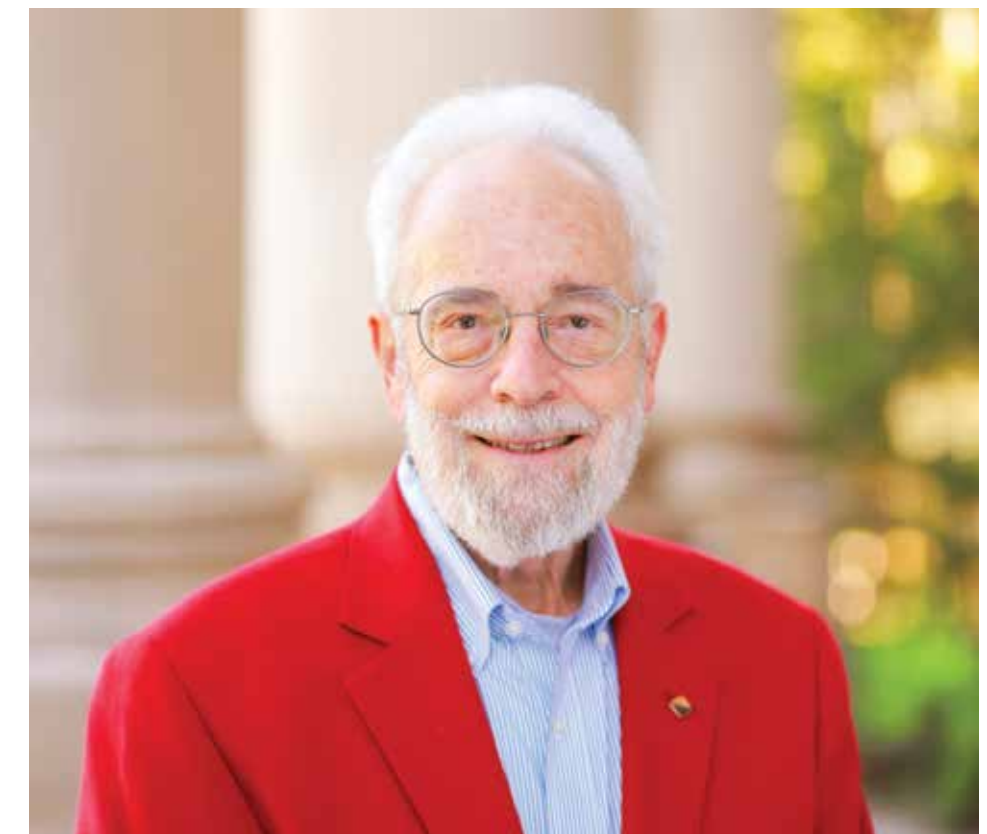
» **Cristina Wolf '21M** published her debut romantic comedy novel, “How to Write a Rom-Com” (Bloomsbury), last spring. A middle school English teacher and former publishing professional, Wolf earned her master's in teaching at Monmouth after working at literary agencies and publishing houses in New York.

Her debut follows an editor at a romance publisher who heads to a small town in search of inspiration and instead finds unexpected love. Wolf's second novel, “The One Where They Fall in Love,” is scheduled for release in August 2026 and centers on two reluctant neighbors brought together by a dog-sitting arrangement that sparks late-night conversations, chemistry, and the possibility of love.

» **Elise Brogan '22** is engaged to **John Askin '22**. The couple first met during their freshman year at Monmouth in a health sciences class—by coincidence, as Askin was briefly considering switching his major to health studies. Despite sticking with a degree in finance, he says it was still “the most worthwhile class” as he got to meet the person he will spend the rest of his life with. Nearly six and a half years after their first date at Playa Bowls in Pier Village, Askin proposed on the beach in Long Branch on Sept. 27, 2025. The couple plans to wed at Clarks Landing Yacht Club on Sept. 9, 2027.

» **Eliana Vasquez '22** welcomed a son, Maximus Silva, on May 12, 2025.

» **Aaron Williams '22, '24M** has been elected to the Neptune City Borough Council in Neptune, New Jersey. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Williams' work bridges service, inclusion, and opportunity. He leads the Asbury Park Tennis Initiative and serves on the community advisory board for Project REAL of the Visiting Nurses Association in Asbury Park. He has also been recognized for his advocacy for LGBTQ+ inclusion, including participating in the U.S. Marine Corps' first Pride Panel, where he spoke on diversity and respect within the military. 🇺🇸



William “Bill” Schreiber, Ph.D.

Former Chair and Lecturer, Department of Chemistry and Physics, 1943–2025

Bill Schreiber began his third career when he joined Monmouth University in 2002 as an adjunct professor in what was then the Department of Chemistry, Medical Technology, and Physics. He became a full-time organic chemistry lecturer in 2006, a role he held for 18 years, and returned to teaching as an adjunct following his retirement in 2024. Over his tenure, he served as interim and department chair for a combined 10 years.

A dedicated teacher and campus leader, Schreiber was an undergraduate advisor and active in student recruitment, volunteering at countless Accepted Student Days and Mondays at Monmouth. He also contributed to University governance as a member of the Faculty Council executive committee and was recognized as a candidate for the Distinguished Teaching Award. In 2024, he received the FAMCO Donald Warnke Award, honoring his longstanding service to the faculty and University.

Prior to Monmouth, Schreiber built a

distinguished career in industry, retiring from IFF as vice president of research and development before founding Chemlumina, where he served as executive vice president and technical director.

Known for his signature red blazer and active presence across campus, Schreiber remained deeply engaged with the University community. Whether teaching, advising students, or performing on euphonium at Employee Talent Showcases, he brought energy, dedication, and personality to his work.



Grey J. Dimenna

President Emeritus, Former Vice President and General Counsel, 1953–2026

For decades, Grey J. Dimenna was a steady and trusted presence at Monmouth University, helping guide the institution through a period of sustained growth and transformation.

From 1995 to 2015, he served as vice president and general counsel, the first to hold that role at Monmouth, and established the framework for the Office of the General Counsel. A trusted advisor on matters of governance, policy, and long-term planning, he also mentored dozens of student interns in his office, many of whom went on to careers in law.

Following his retirement in 2015, Dimenna returned to Monmouth in 2017, at the request of the Board of Trustees, to serve as president, a role he held until his second retirement in 2019. His presidency was defined by a focus on student welfare and institutional stability, with an emphasis on student outcomes that reinforced a culture of support and opportunity across campus.

In a 2019 interview with this publication, Dimenna pointed to several initiatives he was especially proud of: a scholarship campaign that generated more than \$19 million in support of student aid; the completion of “Waves of Change,” a permanent exhibit honoring Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1966 speech on campus; and the creation of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Speaker in Social Justice series.

Dimenna often described Monmouth as a family, a sentiment reflected in his leadership style and relationships across campus. He took pride in the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff, and remained personally invested in the University following his 2019 retirement, including serving on the board of directors of the Bruce Springsteen Center for American Music.

Known for his sense of humor as well as his leadership, Dimenna believed in fostering a positive and welcoming environment across campus. “I think humor is really important, because it makes for a more comfortable and positive working environment,” he told this publication in 2017. He often referred to himself as the “funniest man on campus,” a reflection of the warmth and personality he brought to his work and to the Monmouth community. He will be remembered for his decades of service, his dedication to students, and his lasting impact on the University.

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Monmouth University encourages alumni to share news regarding career changes, awards and honors, marriages, anniversaries, births, and other life events for inclusion in Class Notes. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and length. We welcome submissions of high-resolution digital images for possible inclusion with your class note; however, we reserve the right not to print submitted photos due to space limitations or issues with image resolution.

In addition to the news items sent by alumni, the University receives press releases from businesses and organizations announcing alumni achievements and subscribes to an online news clipping service that provides news items about alumni. These items are edited and placed in the appropriate class section.

Monmouth magazine staff members try to verify the accuracy of this information; however, the University cannot be responsible for incorrect information contained herein. If you would like us to correct any inaccuracies that have been printed, please contact the magazine at magazine@monmouth.edu.

In Memoriam

Alumni

- » Ivan Ware '43A (Sept. 12, 2024)
- » Rosemarie Strong '53A (Dec. 8, 2025)
- » Dr. Donald D. Patterson '60 (July 29, 2025)
- » John A. Ernst III '61 (March 3, 2025)
- » Horace V. Grant Jr. '61 (Jan. 3, 2026)
- » John F. O'Donnell '61 (Dec. 6, 2012)
- » Lawrence D. Sorcher '61 (Jan. 22, 2026)
- » Ellen McFadden Stefanelli '61A (Sept. 29, 2025)
- » Aaron Kawut '62 (Jan. 20, 2021)
- » Alice R. Kirby '62A (Nov. 21, 2025)
- » William J. McGowan II '62 (Dec. 23, 2025)
- » Bernard L. Smith '62 (Jan. 8, 2026)
- » Eleanor Williams '62, '81M (Oct. 6, 2025)
- » Eugene C. Bray '63 (Oct. 4, 2025)
- » Paula F. Kowzun '63 (Jan. 19, 2026)
- » Robert D. Bray '64 (Aug. 6, 2025)
- » William M. Dambach '64 (Dec. 12, 2025)
- » William G. Marriott '64 (Aug. 14, 2025)
- » Clifford P. Reeves '64 (Sept. 29, 2025)
- » Jennie Jordan Ambrosio '65 (Sept. 13, 2025)
- » David R. Oksen '65 (Sept. 22, 2025)
- » Carole A. Trafford '65 (July 22, 2025)
- » Lynn A. Debbs '66 (Sept. 22, 2025)
- » Mary A. Schmenkel '66 (Oct. 25, 2025)
- » John R. Fiore '67 (Aug. 4, 2025)
- » Gloria G. Goodman '68A (July 31, 2025)
- » Lucille A. Petillo '68, '70M (Feb. 4, 2025)
- » Bruce P. McMoran '69A (Oct. 1, 2025)
- » Richard Anderson Jr. '70 (Nov. 13, 2025)
- » Robert J. Hirshfield '70 (Oct. 13, 2025)
- » Susan G. Karetzos '71 (Jan. 21, 2026)
- » Louis A. Lorenzo, Jr. '71 (Nov. 8, 2025)
- » Cecilia K. Mazza '71 (Nov. 22, 2025)
- » Betsy Goldsmith-Krohmer '72 (Aug. 24, 2025)
- » Barbara A. Paul '72 (Oct. 13, 2025)
- » Edward J. Stominski '72 (Nov. 20, 2025)
- » Richard J. Thompson '72 (Oct. 28, 2025)
- » John R. Westgate '72 (Sept. 10, 2025)
- » Richard B. Lubitz '73 (Aug. 4, 2025)
- » Maureen R. Penta '73M (Dec. 9, 2025)
- » Lila M. Singer '74M (Sept. 17, 2025)
- » Johanna Beres '75 (Feb. 6, 2019)
- » Linda Boxer '75M (Oct. 5, 2025)
- » Dianne L. Russell '75 (May 12, 2022)
- » Ilene B. Skolnik '75M (Sept. 8, 2025)
- » Lt. Col. Vincent F. Byrnes '76M (Jan. 17, 2026)
- » Gerdi E. Dorso '76 (Oct. 13, 2022)
- » Warren I. Epstein '76, '85M (Aug. 14, 2025)
- » Glenna K. Foulkes Rosenthal '76 (Nov. 3, 2025)
- » Kevin B. Harris '76 (Nov. 4, 2023)
- » Janet K. Wallace-Massaró '76 (Oct. 1, 2025)
- » John Bruce Blackburn '77 (Aug. 10, 2025)
- » Judith Mary Moran '77, '97M (Aug. 8, 2025)
- » Lynn R. Steneck '77 (Aug. 1, 2025)
- » Edward N. Blackwell '78 (Nov. 9, 2025)
- » Edward J. Raslowsky '78M (Oct. 25, 2025)
- » Edith A. Ryan '78 (Jan. 23, 2026)
- » Martin S. McCue '79 (Nov. 4, 2025)
- » Carroll Broten '80M (Oct. 30, 2025)
- » Richard J. Gross '80 (Sept. 16, 2025)
- » Barbara N. Kaplan '80 (Dec. 18, 2025)
- » Sherlene J. O'Donnell '80 (Aug. 17, 2025)
- » Algimantas N. Setikas '81M (Aug. 11, 2025)
- » Robin A. Thompson '81 (Aug. 2, 2025)
- » Brian P. Allard '82 (Dec. 24, 2025)
- » Janice H. Hamilton '83M (Oct. 18, 2025)
- » Arthur J. Libertucci '84M (Dec. 24, 2025)
- » Eileen H. Block '85 (Oct. 9, 2025)
- » Patricia Rose DeLeonardo '85 (Oct. 14, 2025)
- » William W. Arden '88M (June 20, 2025)
- » Charles R. Ruhl '88M (Sept. 28, 2025)
- » Robert H. Denton '90M (Jan. 14, 2024)

- » Patti G. Kotusky '90 (Nov. 9, 2025)
- » Danny Bryan '93 (Dec. 19, 2023)
- » Allan B. Horvath '94 (Sept. 17, 2025)
- » Anne J. Gregory Sarao '95M (Oct. 19, 2025)
- » Virginia K. Samaras '97M (Sept. 11, 2025)
- » Lisa G. Lukas '98M (July 31, 2025)
- » Janet M. McInerney '00M (July 30, 2025)
- » Stephen M. Peton '01 (April 27, 2025)
- » Travis A. Wetzel '01 (Dec. 27, 2025)
- » Michael D. Valentino '02 (Dec. 6, 2025)
- » Derek D. Smith-Winnes '05M (Aug. 10, 2020)
- » Mary E. O'Donnell '08M (Jan. 12, 2020)
- » Ian R. Silakowski '13 (Dec. 13, 2025)
- » Jacqueline C. Flynn '22, '23M (July 30, 2025)

Faculty & Staff

- » Dorothy M. Cleary '19M, director of the Tutoring Center (February 2026)
- » Grey J. Dimenna, president emeritus, former vice president and general counsel (March 26, 2026)
- » Sandra G. Epstein, former administrator in the Guggenheim Memorial Library (Dec. 6, 2025)
- » Cary B. Harr, former adjunct professor in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (Sept. 14, 2025)
- » William Schreiber, Ph.D., former chair and lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Physics (Nov. 4, 2025)

Friends

- » Linda J. Brockriede (Sept. 21, 2025)
- » Joel Fleming (March 16, 2025)
- » Marie Gray (July 26, 2025)
- » Scott Timothy Sanczyk, student (March 28, 2026)
- » Anthony Tamburello (July 10, 2025)
- » Carl V. Wendelken, former student (Nov. 16, 2025)

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Looking Out





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SPRING/SUMMER 2026:
THE MUSIC ISSUE

4 Things You'll Learn from This Issue

1. Which Monmouth professor went from playing basements to touring with rock's biggest bands. »P. 15
2. Why good economic policy should be something you can dance to. »P. 18
3. When music helped define America's biggest moments. »P. 32
4. How two alumni are helping artists take control of their music in the streaming era. »P. 58