

# UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## Annual Letter 2017

### Campus-Based and Regional Alumni Events

Given how far and wide the USSYP alumni network spreads, regional events outside of our annual reunion in Washington are an exciting opportunity to meet alumni from different years whose paths may cross your own.

Over the past year, we have been working with students at some of the universities with the largest concentration of alumni to continue to momentum of Washington Week into the college experience. In 2018, we are excited to reach out even further.

If you are interested in hosting an event on your college campus or in your city, we can help to plan the time and venue, purchase light refreshments, invite alumni who have addresses listed in your area, and send out communications for planning. Please reach out to any member of the board to get the ball rolling.

**Jordan Cozby (AL 2015), Ben Sorkin (NY 2016), and Katie Jo (Baumgartner) Lunningham (KS 2006)** hosted events this year and wanted to share the experience with you! **Catherine Zhang (PA 2015)** would like invite all alumni to a reunion event on January 27 in the Boston area. More details are provided below.

### Yale

This March USSYAA hosted a study break for alumni attending Yale University. The students participated in USSYP in 2014, 2015, and 2016. In the midst of midterm season, we gathered over Indian food and discussed our experiences during Washington Week and in college. While some of us are close friends see each other often, many attendees met each other for the first time. It was a great opportunity to unite with old friends and make new ones!



For an event like this, the alumni association contributes up to \$200, which goes a long way in getting students together to build on our lifelong bond. Thank you for all your contributions!



### Harvard

For Harvard's annual accepted students' weekend in April, the alumni at Harvard wanted to give the most recent USSYP delegates a warm welcome to the campus. We had 30 people roll through over the course of the two hours, went through a ton of pizza, and had a great time sharing our Washington Week and Harvard experiences. We even got some verbal commitments to Harvard out of it as well! Huge thanks from everyone to the alumni association for helping us organize such a nice welcome and reunion event.

### Chicago

On June 27, several USSYP alumni gathered in Chicago for an informal summer networking event. The happy hour, which took place at The Commons Club at the Virgin Hotel, brought together a mix of young professionals, graduate students and undergraduate students. More than a dozen alumni attended, and notably, three members of the class of 2006 reunited for the first time since their time in Washington D.C.!

### Boston

There will be a USSYAA reunion for Boston alumni at Harvard University on January 27 at 6:30PM. All are welcome to attend, and just like Washington Week, there will be food. We are excited to keep this organization alive within the area! If you are interested in attending, please reach out to Catherine Zhang (PA 2015) or Communications Director James Brown (CO 2008) for more information.

## **President's Letter**

**Michael Gonzales (NM 1973), USSYAA President**

Fellow U.S. Senate Youth Alumni:

As I complete my second year, as the President of the U.S. Senate Youth Alumni Association (USSYAA), I would like to wish all of you a beautiful and Blessed Holiday Season! We all have much to be grateful for, during the past year, and I am grateful to each, and every, Board Member, Regional Director, and to the membership at large, for your hard work, dedication and commitment to the Alumni Association, as we continue to carry on "Mom" Hearst's vision and her mission, in supporting our youth and our Nation, by promoting programs and supporting efforts on behalf of our Alumni and youth.

We continue to reach out to all members in our data base, we are continuing to make a special effort to reach further to those via conventional mail, even if the only addresses we have are those which we, or the Hearst Foundation, has provided us from their archives. We welcome all of our Military Mentors, to be members of our Association. Our intent is to reach out to all former delegates and military mentors, from all year groups, as hallmarks of our recruiting campaign.

The composition of our Alumni Association Board reflects this diversity, as we have former delegates from various States, year groups, regions, ages, races, ethnic groups, religions, genders and political persuasions, represented and our intent is to expand this even further, so that our Association, clearly reflects the composition of our Nation. I am proud to say that this diversity has helped us to expand our vision and to be more inclusive, both in the selection of those that we honor each year with the Rosalie Wynn Hearst Distinguished Public Service Award and the James T. Molloy Alumni Service Award, as well as those who we have selected to receive the U.S. Senate Youth Alumni Association Scholarships and we are looking for ways to recognize recent alumni who are just now starting their careers, as well.

As we move forward one of our objectives is to expand our relationships with the William Randolph Hearst Foundation to share data and efforts to reach out to former delegates, support them in promoting the U.S. Senate Youth Program in our States and in our communities and to strengthen our visibility and ties with other Distinguished Alumni, who may not be aware of our efforts and who may be willing to join and support our organization. The closer we work together, the more successful our organization will be and the better we will be able to carry out Mom Hearst's charter to us.

I would like to extend you a personal invitation to attend our Twentieth Annual U.S. Youth Alumni Association Annual Reception and Dinner on the evening of Friday, March 2nd, 2018, at the Mayflower Hotel and our Annual Alumni Meeting at noon on Saturday, March 3rd. The meeting will be immediately followed by our mentoring session with the new delegates that afternoon, at the Mayflower and our Social that evening, all here in the Washington, D.C. area. More details, will be provided to you as they become available. We sincerely hope that you can join us, but if for ever reason, you cannot attend, we ask that you continue to be engaged with us by communicating your thoughts, becoming a member of our Regional Planning Committees by contacting one of our Regional Directors and contributing what you can, to our fundraising activities.

This is your Association and we welcome your input and participation! As President, I am open to your ideas and your suggestions. Please let me know if you have any questions, or concerns. We look forward to having you join us in promoting the efforts and programs of our organization and in participating in our National and Regional events, including our Twentieth Annual Alumni events, as a precursor to the 2017 William Randolph Hearst's Foundation's Washington Week. On behalf of the U.S. Senate Youth Alumni Association Board of Directors, I would like to thank you allowing us the honor and privilege of serving as your voice as we attempt to take this organization to another level and ask for your continued confidence, guidance and support.

Very Respectfully,

Colonel (USA, Ret) Michael R. Gonzales (NM – 1973)  
President, U.S. Senate Youth Alumni Association

*The President's Letter has been reproduced, unedited, in its entirety.*

## **Alumni Weekend 2017 in Review**

On March 3, alumni reconvened at the Mayflower Hotel to continue our annual reunion tradition. Hosting the dinner at our USSYYP home was a great success, in large part thanks to the expert event planning of **Bryce Carson (OH 2009)**. During the dinner, alumni and their guests heard from the recipients of two USSYAA awards.

One of Washington Week's most popular repeat guests, Brian Lamb, the founder and executive chairman of C-SPAN, received the Rosalie Wynn Hearst Distinguished Public Service Award. His unique perspective on Washington and its politics always provides unparalleled insight and wit. **Bob Middleton (DC 1966)** received the James T. Molloy Alumni Service Award in recognition of his lifelong commitment to community, including his native Washington and the USSYAA.

On Saturday, alumni reconvened at the Mayflower Hotel for mentoring tables and the annual meeting, where alumni get to meet the incoming class of delegates and share career advice as they wait to begin an unforgettable week. Later that evening the group of nearly 40 alumni went over to the Daily Grill, a more recent tradition where the alumni association hosted an informal gathering with drinks and appetizers.

## **Alumni Association Scholarships**

The Rosalie Wynn and George Randolph Hearst Sr Alumni Scholarship offers \$5,000 to graduate studies for our incredibly talented and ambitious alumni. The majority of this funding comes from wise investment of our endowment and alumni donations. The scholarship committee has been discussing expanding the scholarship program to offer more awards. We can't do this without your help. If you'd like to donate, please visit [ussyaa.org](http://ussyaa.org) and fill out our easy donation form. With your support, we can fund post-graduate studies of more people who are committed to public service.

If you are interested in applying, applications are accepted every October, and Alumni Programs Director **Vicki Cundiff (CO 1973)** can provide more information on the application and submission requirements.

## **Updating our Website**

The current USSYAA website, generously donated by **Dan Brown (MS 1987)** has been our repository for alumni membership information and news for more than ten years. Earlier this year, we encountered some technical issues with our hosting provider, and had to take the site offline for a brief time in order to assess our options for moving forward. Our site is back online, but we're using this outage as a call to action to move our [ussyaa.org](http://ussyaa.org) presence into a more member-focused and member-driven site. We are also reevaluating our technology practices with regards to email, events management, and fundraising.

Making it as easy as possible for members to interact with us, and our volunteer board and committees to publish content, is critical for our success as an organization. If you are interested in helping with platform selection, content creation, or content migration from the current site, please contact **David Zavadsky (WI 1990)** at [technology\\_director@ussyaa.org](mailto:technology_director@ussyaa.org).

## **Treasurer's Report**

USSYAA operates on a cash basis and for the period January 1, 2017 through October 31, 2017, the year-to-date ("YTD") expenses were \$32,810.89 and consist of scholarships, the Washington week annual event dinner, regional events, and various operating & administrative costs.

Assets of the USSYAA are held at Fidelity Investments and consist mainly of mutual funds, exchange-traded funds and common stocks. The YTD rate of return is 22.02 % and includes dividends/interest, realized and unrealized capital gains/losses.

USSYAA's Finance Committee manages its investments with goals to maximize the portfolio assets and to support the organization's Mission Statement. Contributions from members are a critical part of the alumni's goals to increase its scholarship awards and programs to ensure future success. Tax returns are available online at [ussyaa.org/about/taxreturns](http://ussyaa.org/about/taxreturns).

## **Donations that Matter**

As the year comes to a close, we want to thank you for the support you've shown to the United States Senate Youth Alumni Association. Whether you attended one of our regional gatherings, participated in our Town Hall teleconference, provided an update for this newsletter, or supported us with a financial contribution, your activity has helped us to accomplish Mom Hearst's goal of keeping Senate Youth Program alumni connected.

Contributions from our members are the most critical component of our funding structure. The USSYAA has an all-volunteer Board of Directors, with people from all walks of life serving in both advisory and working capacities to bring scholarships, news, and events to past delegates to the United States Senate Youth Program. Your contributions don't pay stipends to directors—they pay the very real expenses of our mission to build avenues of communication among alumni and to provide financial assistance for the professional educational needs of alumni.

To make donations to the alumni association as easy as possible, we have established an online donation portal at [www.ussyaa.org](http://www.ussyaa.org) to facilitate your contribution and will e-mail you a receipt. Donations mailed to our post office box will receive a confirmation letter from our Treasurer. The USSYAA is a 501(c)(3) public charity; please inquire with your tax professional as to whether your donation to our organization is tax-deductible and with your workplace as to whether matching funds are available.

In addition to traditional donation channels, the USSYAA is registered to accept donations from the Amazon Smile Foundation. If you make purchases via [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you can designate the United States Senate Youth Alumni Association as the recipient of the Amazon Smile Foundation's donations. This is a painless way to help the USSYAA receive funds, without doing anything different in your daily life.

Again, thank you for your participation in our activities, whether it be financial, logistical, or by your presence at our events and meetings. You truly can and do make a difference.

### **Meet the Board**

The USSYAA Board of Directors meets monthly to coordinate our scholarship, awards, alumni weekend, and other opportunities related to the alumni association. Ideas for how to improve alumni relations and communications are always welcome! We want to make the organization a useful resource for all alumni. Thank you to the members of the board for their commitment to the alumni. All board member email addresses are available on the Board of Directors webpage at [ussyaa.org](http://ussyaa.org).

President: Michael Gonzales (NM 1973)  
President-Elect: Andrew Bradley (IN 1996)  
Vice-President: Elaine Sedenberg (TX 2006)  
Secretary: Amanda Patarino (CO 2012)  
Treasurer: John Blakley (MI 1976)  
Liaison Officer: Rawle Andrews (TX 1983)  
Parliamentarian: André Gonazles (NM 2016)  
Communications Director: James Brown (CO 2008)  
Technology Director: David Zavadsky (WI 1990)  
Alumni Programs Director: Victoria Cundiff (CO 1973)  
Immediate Past President: Chad Robinson (DE 2001)  
Executive Director: Michael Sundermeyer (MO 1969)  
Deputy Executive Director & Special Advisor: John Spisak  
Special Advisor: Antonella Blanco (WV 2017)

Eastern Regional Director: Gil Valadez (DE 1997)  
Central Regional Director: Katie Jo (Baumgardner) Lunningham (KS 2006)  
National Capital Regional Director: Rustin Fakheri (IL 2008)  
Northern Regional Director: Josh Hanson (WI 2012)  
Southern Regional Director: Dallas McCash (TN 2015)  
Western Regional Director: Ryan Montgomery (OR 2012)

### **Alumni News**

Class of 1970

**Chandini Bachman (AZ 1970)** lost her father and frequent USSYAA event attendee, Charlie Bachman, on July 13. Chandini became a licensed DC tour guide and was accepted as a member of the Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, DC, and graduated from the International Tour Management Institute (ITMI) as a certified ITMI Tour Director/Guide. Senator Ben Cardin invited Chandini to walk with him in the Montgomery County, Maryland, Labor Day and Thanksgiving Day Parades. She will be working on his re-election campaign in 2018 and welcomes any alumni interested to contact her. She keeps in touch with Margo (Green) Jackson (DC 1970).

Commander (retired) **Tom Holmes (MS 1970)** retired to Oxford, Mississippi, earlier this year to be near their twin grandsons. They will be splitting time between Oxford and their place near St. Pete Beach, Florida.

**Bob LaRochelle (CT 1970)** recently had his seventh book published. [Christian Faith for Adolescents](#) was released by Energion Publications in August. Bob is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.

#### Class of 1973

**Rex Gale (NH 1973)** organized TEDxHiltonHead this year. The first year for the day-long event, TEDxHiltonHead featured 17 speakers, TED videos, and musical performances to a sold-out audience. If you are not familiar with TED, TED is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks.

Colonel (retired) **Michael R. Gonzales (NM 1973)** is the President of USSYAA. Following a successful military career as an Army Air Defense Artillery Officer, Michael is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Three Towers Strategic Consulting, LLC. He is a member of the National Board of Directors of the Army Scholarship Foundation, the National Security Task Force of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Guard Association Homeland Security Task Force. He is also a Sir Knight in the 4th Degree of the Knights of Columbus, where he serves as the Faithful Navigator of the Saint Thomas Manor Assembly and a member of the Ancient Order of Saint Barbara. Michael, his wife Christine, and their two children, Gabrielle (19) and Michael, II (16), reside in Waldorf, Maryland.

#### Class of 1974

**Marc S Komisarow (GA 1974)** continues to work as an investment advisor in Atlanta.

#### Class of 1982

**Joseph Perkins (IN 1982)** joined the Legal Department of Allison Transmission. In the new role, Joseph will handle regulatory compliance (Clean Air Act Title II), global trade compliance, government contracting (including defense products), data privacy and cybersecurity, and I will provide legal support to the company's global operations. Joseph's family will relocate to the Indianapolis area in the coming months. This career move follows 20 years as a corporate attorney at Cummins Inc.

#### Class of 1985

**Michael Buckley (MA 1985)** is currently the Vice President, Public Affairs for the BrightFocus Foundation, a nonprofit funding research and public awareness on Alzheimer's disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma. He lives in Silver Spring MD with his wife and two children.

**Steven Rice (WY 1985)** continues to live in Northern Virginia, supporting his three school-aged daughters and U.S. diplomacy, working at the Department of State.

#### Class of 1987

**Lucie Schmidt (MA 1987)** is a Professor of Economics at Williams College, and her research focuses on the social safety net in the United States. From July 2018 through June 2020, she will be the Faculty Director of the Williams-Exeter Programme at Oxford University.

#### Class of 1988

**Willie J. Epps, Jr. (MO 1988)** was sworn in as a United States Magistrate Judge in Jefferson City, Missouri, on November 17. He is the first African-American to ever serve as a Magistrate Judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri. Willie began his legal career over 20 years ago as a U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate and Assistant Special Counsel for the Waco Investigation. He was later named Chief Compliance Officer at a Fortune 500 company and partner at two prominent Missouri-based law firms. Willie served as Head of Litigation for a leading financial services company. He is a graduate of St. Louis Country Day School, Amherst College, and Harvard Law School.

**Tim Riffe (VA 1988)** is a Principal with the law firm of Fish & Richardson P.C. in Washington, DC. He has been with Fish for 15 years and has been practicing patent law since 1997, following a stint as an engineer with Michelin Tire Corporation. His practice includes patent litigation, post-grant matters, and prosecution/patent-portfolio management. He is also a member of the Advisory Board for The Children's Law Center of Washington D.C., and provides pro bono services through The Children's Law Center in the areas of guardianship and adoption. He lives with his wife, Lisette, and step-daughter, Caitlyn (13), in Oakton VA, and has a son Davis (14).

Class of 1990

**Peter Wolanin (DC 1990)** finished a post-doc in biophysics and molecular biology at Princeton University in 2005. He became involved with the local Democratic Party. From 2010 to 2012, Peter was the Democratic Municipal Chair for Princeton Borough. In 2011 he led the political campaign to pass a consolidation ballot measure for Princeton Borough and Township. After that passed, Peter was elected Democratic Municipal Chair for the consolidated municipality in 2012 and 2014. Peter recently moved to Philadelphia. He is a software engineer for BioRAFT and develops software for laboratory safety and compliance that is used by a number of universities and research organizations.

Class of 1991

**Winston Sakurai (HI 1991)** received his Doctor of Education degree from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa this summer.

Class of 1992

**John Blair (NM 1992)** left his job with the Obama Administration and moved home to New Mexico where he is now the Deputy Secretary of State. John and his husband, Billy Black, have settled in Santa Fe.

**Josh Friedman (MA 1992)** and his family have been based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for four years. Josh changed jobs last year to work for Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, which is the German government's development aid implementer. For GIZ, he is a Regional Coordinator for the Better Migration Management (BMM) program in Ethiopia and Djibouti. Josh's wife, Ursula, is working for the European Union on nutrition policy in Ethiopia, and their two kids, ages 6 and 4, are in preschool.

**Kimberly Hamlin (NY 1992)**, PhD, received a 2017 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Public Scholar Award to support the writing of her second book, Woman Citizen: Helen Hamilton Gardener and Women's Suffrage in America. Hamlin is Associate Professor of American Studies and History at Miami University in Oxford, OH.

Class of 1994

**Josh Feigelson (MI 1994)** was appointed Dean of Students in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago.

**Fernando Saldivar (CA 1994)** is a second-year novice at the Jesuit Novitiate of the Three Companions in Culver City, California. For eleven years prior to entering the Jesuits, he practiced law in Southern California as a civil litigator. In his first year as a Jesuit novice, Fernando served apostolates and as a hospital chaplain in the Los Angeles area. In April, he made a pilgrimage to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where he worked with children. This fall, Fernando worked at the Blanchet House of Hospitality in Portland, Oregon, and will spend the first five months of 2018 at St. Ignatius Parish in Sacramento. Fernando served for several years on the USSYAA Board of Directors.

Class of 1995

**Joy Blanchard (LA 1995)** was promoted to associate professor with tenure in the School of Education at Louisiana State University.

Class of 1998

**Tarun Chhabra (Louisiana 1998)** is a fellow in the foreign policy program at the Brookings Institution. He recently joined Brookings after serving as a director on the National Security Council staff at the White House and, before that, a speechwriter to the Secretary of Defense. Tarun graduated in 2011 from Harvard Law School, where he was a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow for New Americans, and also completed a graduate degree in international relations at Oxford as a Marshall Scholar. He lives with his family in Washington.

**Rachal (Chance) Kramar (LA 1998)** joined the law firm of Wilson Elser Moskowitz Edelman & Dicker LLP last year and is based in the New Orleans office. In June 2017, she was married to Mark Ian Kramar in New Orleans.

Class of 1999

**Jake Rodenbiker (ND 1999)** is now back in his native Fargo where he is a federal prosecutor. After college at Notre Dame and law school at the University of Minnesota, he prosecuted criminal cases in Miami, Florida, and Bismarck, North

Dakota, and spent time in private practice doing civil litigation and criminal defense. Just prior to Jake's appointment as Assistant US Attorney, he had been the elected State's Attorney for McKenzie County, in the heart of the Bakken oil patch where he wore the hats of top criminal prosecutor for State offenses and general counsel for the County. His wife, Molly, a special ed teacher by trade, stays at home with their son and two daughters, all four and under.

**Virginia Suveiu (CA 1999)** signed a contract to edit a handbook on risk management for Routledge with an estimated publication date of late 2019/early 2020.

Class of 2002

**Jennifer Chudy (CT 2002)** received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Michigan in April. Her research focuses on American politics, with a specific emphasis on race and ethnicity in elections, public opinion, survey design, and political psychology. In September, she became an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College, where she teaches courses on these topics as well as the Introduction to American Politics class.

Class of 2004

**Seth Bowers (IN 2004)** practices law in Washington, DC with the firm of Williams & Connolly LLP, where he focuses on pharmaceutical and biotech patent litigation. Seth welcomes the opportunity to reconnect with alumni in the DC area.

**Elizabeth (Kurtz) Thottam (DC 2004)** and her husband welcomed a daughter into the world in July. Shortly after, Elizabeth left her job leading communication and change management on a government contract. She now works as an independent contract editor and also teaches Pilates with a prenatal/postpartum focus in northern Virginia. She would love to hear from anyone needing an editor or wanting to connect on women's wellness issues, which are the focus of her fitness work.

Class of 2005

**Jamarr Brown (SC 2005)** was elected unanimously as National Committeeman for the Texas Young Democrats. He will represent Texas on the National Committee for the Young Democrats of America. Jamarr is the first African American to be elected as National Committeeman for Texas. Over the past ten years, Jamarr has served as a member of the Democratic National Committee, National Vice President of the College Democrats of America, Third Vice Chair of the South Carolina Democratic Party, and National Training Director for the Young Democrats of America.

**William Haun (CT 2005)** completed a clerkship for Judge Janice Rogers Brown on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and joined the Washington, D.C. office of Shearman & Sterling LLP. There, he has rejoined a number of his former partners and associates from Hunton & Williams LLP that joined Shearman's antitrust and litigation practices earlier in the year. William's practice focuses on complex trial and appellate litigation. He lives with his wife and two young children in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and is always eager to meet with other USSYP alumni.

**Suchita (Shah) Sata (WI 2005)** is an academic hospitalist physician at Duke University Hospital in Durham, NC, balancing time taking care of patients, teaching medical students and residents, and working with teams on improving the quality of care delivery. She is also volunteering with the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM) and was elected the President-Elect of the NC Triangle chapter of SHM. With husband Sid, Suchita loves to travel and will travel far for good food. She would appreciate connecting with any USSYP alumni in the area and also any who are in the medical field!

Class of 2006

**Chanda Choun (CT 2006)** works as the Federal Program Manager of Securonix, a cybersecurity software company specializing in Big Data Security Analytics. He currently resides in Arlington, Virginia, and continues to serve in the U.S. Army Reserve part-time at Fort Meade, Maryland.

**Kaitlin Irvine (WV 2006)** was promoted in May 2017 to College Access & Success Manager at Summer Search Philadelphia, a youth development nonprofit focused on equity and closing the educational opportunity gap for low-income students, particularly students of color. This is her fourth year at the organization. She is neighbors with her neighbor from Washington Week, **Allison LaFave (SD 2006)**, who also works in college access and higher education. She has also enjoyed reconnecting with **Ben Esparza (DE 2006)**, now a Philadelphia-based Delaware lawyer who also previously worked in the higher education. She welcomes connecting with USSYP alums who are in Philly and/or work in education.

**Alex Stroman (SC 2006)** recently joined TransCanada as Manager for Government Relations. He previously served as the Deputy Communications Director for the 58th Presidential Inaugural Committee for the inauguration of President Trump and Vice President Pence.

Class of 2007

**Evan Egger (NE 2007)** deployed to Afghanistan and helped rebuild a base that his team closed in 2014 on his previous deployment. He enjoyed catching up with some old friends and seeing positive changes in familiar places. This fall, he is separating from the Army, moving home to Nebraska, and entering the private sector.

Class of 2008

**Ben Farber (NJ 2008)** is currently the Head of Product and Operations at BioStream Technologies, a startup working with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to develop a video game to help children on the autism spectrum improve their social skills. Ben is living in Boston, MA and would love to hear from anyone who wants to get in touch at [bfarber@biostreamtech.com](mailto:bfarber@biostreamtech.com).

Class of 2009

**Benny Becker (WV 2009)** has been living in the coalfields of Eastern Kentucky, reporting and producing public radio stories. This past year, Benny was part of an NPR investigation into the unprecedented resurgence of severe black lung disease among Appalachian coal miners, which won national awards from the Society of Professional Journalists, Investigative Reporters and Editors, and the National Institute for Health Care Management. Benny currently reports from Whitesburg, Kentucky, for the Ohio Valley ReSource, WMMT, and Appalshop, but he is looking to move to Los Angeles within the next year.

Class of 2010

**Markus Batchelor (DC 2010)** completed his first year as an elected member of the District of Columbia State Board of Education, becoming the youngest-ever member to serve on the board.

**Abbee Cox (OK 2010)** graduated from Stanford Law School in June with high pro bono distinction, with the generous support of USSYAA's Rosalie Wynn & George Randolph Hearst, Sr. Alumni Scholarship. She is currently serving as a law clerk to the Hon. Pamela Harris on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

**Grant Davis (TN 2010)** graduated from the University of Tennessee, College of Law in May 2017, and passed the Texas bar exam. He is an associate at Patterson and Sheridan, LLP in Houston, Texas. Patterson and Sheridan is a boutique intellectual property firm with five offices around the country and one in Japan. His current practice is focused on patent preparation and prosecution. Grant is on the University of Tennessee College of Law's Alumni Council.

**Christopher Liebold (OH 2010)** was elected to the Fremont, Ohio, City Council with a nine-point margin. He is the second-youngest person ever elected to the council and the first Democrat elected from his Ward in more than 30 years. He was married to Erin Messerly on November 11 at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Fremont, Ohio.

**Josh Rubin (NY 2010)** began his first year as J.D. candidate at Yale Law School.

Class of 2011

**Chase Blasi (KS 2011)** is the Legislative Policy Director for Kansas Senate President Susan Wagle.

**Khayree Duckett (IA 2011)** graduated from Iowa State University in May with a BA in Political Science. Since May, he has served as the Public Affairs Director for the Greater Burlington Partnership, managing the communications and government relations efforts for southeast Iowa's primary chamber, economic development, tourism, and main street organizations. He is also engaged to be married to his college sweetheart, Brittany Westendorf, in June.

**Robbie Lauf (ND 2011)** is Policy Advisor to North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum.

**Alex Lichtenstein (VA 2011)** began studying at Yale Law School after wrapping up her work in the Department of Justice under the Obama Administration.

**Megan MacInnes (NH 2011)** joined the NYC Mayor's Office for International Affairs in May and serves as the Communications Manager and Assistant Press Secretary.

**Hasher Nisar (CT 2011)** graduated from Middlebury College with a Political Science major and Religion minor. He is now reading for an MPhil in Islamic Studies and History at the University of Oxford on a Marshall Scholarship.

**Jordan Rasmusson (MN 2011)** moved to Boston in July to start a new role as a private equity investor at Bain Capital. This follows two years as a consultant at McKinsey & Company in Minneapolis.

Class of 2012

**Ben Bogard (MN 2012)** was nominated for a 2017 Regional Emmy award for Outstanding Commercial Production.

**Ryan Montgomery (OR 2012)** accepted a full time job at Accenture after he graduates in April 2018. He will be a management consulting analyst in San Francisco.

**Amanda Patarino (CO 2012)** is the secretary of USSYAA. She works in DC at the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, tracking presidential appointments and working on the presidential transition.

**Kristina Pedersen (KS 2012)** has been working as a photojournalist and writer, regularly contributing to The Fullest Magazine and Pitchfork. She has been covering cultural and environmental wellness. This year, she received a Luminous Endowment Grant to continue this research and documentation. In January 2018 she will be writer-in-residence at 100 West Corsicana, compiling this research into a series of essays. While in Texas, she will also be teaching a workshop on experimental documentary media.

**Scott Syroka (IA 2012)** moved to San Francisco to work on Google's Brand Narrative marketing team. He would love meeting up with USSYP alumni, so if you live in the Bay Area or are visiting the Bay Area, feel free to reach out and grab a coffee: srs242@georgetown.edu.

**Brandon Wagner (AL 2012)** will be Patron Services Assistant Manager at the Woodruff Arts Center in Atlanta.

Class of 2013

**Logan Brown (KS 2013)**, a senior at Vanderbilt University, was recently named a Marshall Scholar.

**Josh Dillinger (WY 2013)** graduated from Colorado Mesa University with a major in K-12 Art Education and moved to Kayenta, Arizona to teach high school art on the Navajo Nation. He is finishing the first semester at Monument Valley High School.

**Natasha Greene (NV 2013)** recently graduated with honors from Columbia University in the City of New York with a degree in Cellular Neuroscience. She is currently on staff at the University of Utah, School of Medicine as a researcher in the Department of Orthopaedic and Spine Surgery with plans to attend medical school.

**Justin Korth (NE 2013)** graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in May 2017, and passed the CPA exams. He will be a licensed CPA in January 2018.

**Margaret Lie (LA 2013)** graduated from Rice University with a B.S. in Biochemistry and Cell Biology. In August, she completed her M.A. in Biochemistry and Cell Biology at Rice University. She is currently pursuing an M.D. at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

**Avni Nahar (VT 2013)** graduated college in the spring and is working as an Urban Fellow in the NYC Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity, focusing on anti-poverty program design, management, and evaluation.

**Makayla Palazzo (DoD 2013)** received her bachelor's degrees in French and Economics in May this year while simultaneously finishing the first year of her Master of Public Policy. She is in the second and final year of her master's degree and looking to enter the field of humanitarian aid following graduation next May.

**Julian Pecora (WV 2013)** is in his first year at the West Virginia University, College of Law.

**Sarah Rudasill (PA 2013)** graduated summa cum laude from Wake Forest University in May 2017 with a degree in economics, and she started medical school at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

**Sasha Shilko (MN 2013)** is transferring to the Johannesburg office at Bain & Company for six months.

Class of 2014

**Jesse Austin (NH 2014)**, a junior at the University of New Hampshire and recent Pi Sigma Alpha inductee, completed an internship with the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation for the summer of 2017, serving as the Virtual James W. Foley Freedom Run Coordinator, helping raise money to further the mission of the Foundation: to advocate for the safe return of all Americans detained abroad, to protect independent conflict journalists, and to educate regarding these threats to our freedom. He conducted a formal threat assessment for the New Hampshire Fusion Center on the vulnerability of the state's ground transportation system. Jesse will intern at the US Marshals Judicial Security Division in the spring of 2018.

**Nathan Lilly (LA 2014)** was accepted into the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law and will be attending ASU Law as part of the Class of 2021. He will be moving to Phoenix in July 2018 to pursue his J.D. as part of the O'Connor Honors Program at ASU.

**Tyler Mansfield (UT 2014)** was recruited to be on the competitive mathematics team at Brigham Young University and began studying applied mathematics. After attending for a year, he put his studies on hold to serve a full-time two year mission for his church and was assigned to the Southern California area. He gained a love for the Hispanic culture as he served the second year as a Spanish-speaking missionary.

Class of 2015

**Gerald Fraas (SD 2015)** co-founded and now serves as the president of a 501(c) 3, Students for Opioid Solutions. Please find out more about the organization at [opioidsolutions.org](http://opioidsolutions.org).

**Muna Mohamed (ME 2015)** will intern with Good Morning America next summer with ABC News.

**Catherine Zhang (PA 2015)** was elected student body president of the Harvard University College.

Class of 2016

**Elyssa Vondra (WI 2016)** has trained in Applied Behavior Analysis and conducted therapy with kids who have autism. She has been a teaching assistant and later a lead teacher at daycare facilities. She also got certified as a power yoga instructor and ran her own business teaching classes, and she has volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House Charity. She is a volunteer ESL/ELL tutor and is studying political science with Pennsylvania State University online. In June, Elyssa interned for her local newspaper. She was hired with a permanent position as a journalist two months ago, so she is planning on transferring to Arizona State University online next semester.

Class of 2017

**Grace Belize Anderson (WY 2017)** was elected the National President for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) during her senior year in high school. She was also selected as a semi-finalist for the Coca-Cola Scholarship.

**Carmen Madison Cline (KY 2017)** volunteered with the National Immigrant Justice Center. She visited a jail where Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) jails undocumented immigrants to educate them on their rights and speak with them in order to get them connected with legal assistance. She plans to major in Spanish language.

**Ricky Cooks (TX 2017)** is a Longhorn Legislative Aide in the University of Texas Student Government. He is in the Forty Acres Scholars Program and pursuing a degree in Business at the McCombs School of Business. He will study abroad in Buenos Aires this summer.

**Heather Weller (MN 2017)** expanded her "Thank a Veteran" service project to Chicago now that she is attending the University of Chicago. She still maintains the project in Minnesota as well. Heather worked with the Maroon Veteran's Alliance on campus to collect even more messages and then delivered these to local veterans.

*Alumni news has been edited for brevity, clarity, and relevance.*

## **From the Editor's Desk**

Thank you for all the wonderful contributions for the alumni newsletter! Alumni are the reason we do this newsletter and other programming throughout the year. Your continued engagement with the alumni association is key.

If you haven't attended our annual reunion weekend in Washington, DC, before, I would strongly suggest you join us for a memorable time at the Mayflower Hotel in March 2-3. Please consider making a year-end donation to the alumni association to enable us to continue our work with reunions and scholarships. Additionally, if you have ideas for how we can improve and increase programming, I would encourage you to reach out to any member of the board.

Also, if you're looking to reconnect with someone you met during Washington Week, please feel free to reach out directly at [communications\\_director@ussyaa.org](mailto:communications_director@ussyaa.org). I would love to help you.

I look forward to meeting more of you at events in Washington and around the country. Happy new year, and hope to see you all in 2018!



Please consider joining USSYAA's Official Facebook group named

**United States Senate Youth Alumni Association**

and LinkedIn group named

**United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) Alumni Network**

A digital version of this newsletter may be retrieved online at <http://ussyaa.org/news>