

DECEMBER 2021

UNITED STATES SENATE  
YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



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POST OFFICE BOX 1798 | WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-1798

*Photo Credit: Jakub Mosur*

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (2020-2022)

President.....	Gil Valadez (DE 1997)
President-Elect .....	Amanda Patarino (CO 2012)
Vice-President.....	James Brown (CO 2008)
Secretary .....	Taylor Oster (ND 2012)
Treasurer .....	John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)
Liaison Officer .....	Katie Jo Lunningham (KS 2006)
Communications Director.....	David Zavadsky (WI 1990)
Technology Director .....	Ryan Gavin (ME 2009)
Alumni Programs Director .....	Victoria Cundiff (CO 1973)
Central Regional Director.....	James Kinsky (IL 2011)
Eastern Regional Co-Director .....	Johnson Elugbadebo (IL 1998)
Eastern Regional Co-Director .....	Nicholas Hanson (IL 2007)
National Capital Region Co-Director.....	Sarah Lanford (TX 2014)
National Capital Region Co-Director.....	Jordan Rippey (TN 2006)
Northern Regional Director .....	Mary-Margaret Koch (IL 2014)
Southern Regional Co-Director .....	Victor Agbafé (NC 2015)
Southern Regional Co-Director .....	Andrew Abreo (LA 2004)
Western Regional Co-Director.....	Ryan Montgomery (OR 2012)
Western Regional Co-Director.....	Nina Boyko (CA 2012)
Immediate Past President.....	Andrew Bradley (IN 1996)
Executive Director.....	Michael S. Sundermeyer (MO 1969)
Deputy Executive Director .....	John Spisak

# INCORPORATING MEMBERS

## OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)  
Wendy Jo Peterson (WA 1978)  
Michael S. Sundermeyer (MO 1969)

# FOUNDING MEMBERS

## OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Wendy Jo Peterson (WA 1978)	David F. Zavadsky (WI 1990)
Jonathan Lee Morton (AL 1990)	Robert R. Middleton (DC 1966)
Megan Nelson (WA 1998)	Randy L. Brantley (NC 1981)
Scott Shapiro (WA 1988)	Chandini Margaret Bachman (AZ 1970)
Norman L. Fortenberry (LA 1979)	Christine Drager (AK 1988)
Craig W. Hulvey (ID 1968)	Nathan J.A. Humphrey (CA 1990)
Kirby Lee (IN 1993)	Christopher Trott (FL 1999)
Michael S. Sundermeyer (MO 1969)	John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)
Michael Buckley (MA 1985)	James T. Molloy
Dan Brown (MS 1987)	Gladys S. Hundley



# PRESIDENTS

## OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

### 1999-2004

John Selmon Blakley, Sr. (MI 1976)

### 2004-2006

Robert R. Middleton (DC 1966)

### 2006-2008

Randy L. Brantley (NC 1981)

### 2008-2010

Norman L. Fortenberry (LA 1979)

### 2010-2012

David F. Zavadsky (WI 1990)

### 2012-2014

Rachel M. Lowe (OR 2000)

### 2014-2016

Chad Robinson (DE 2001)

### 2016-2018

Michael Gonzales (NM 1973)

### 2018-2020

Andrew Bradley (IN 1996)

### 2020-2022

Gil Valadez (DE 1997)

# ★ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ★

GIL VALADEZ (DE 1997), USSYAA PRESIDENT

Dear United States Senate Youth Alumni and Friends,



*Gil Valadez (DE 1997)  
Photo by Jakub Mosur*

As 2021 comes to an end, on behalf of the USSYAA board and representing our nearly 6,000 alumni across the globe, we wish you a warm and safe holiday season and the brightest hopes for 2022. Our hope is that the new year brings an end to the pandemic and that as life returns to normal, we give thanks for the opportunity to engage and serve in our community and country.

In 2022, we celebrate 60 years of the United States Senate Youth Program. Given the decision by the Foundations to once again hold the program virtually, we will match and hold our annual awards program virtually on Thursday, March 10, preceded by virtual mentoring tables. While we cannot wait to be in person again hopefully in 2023, the mentoring tables and awards program were wildly successful last year and will be so again with the leadership of our board and support of our friends at the Foundations and BCom. Please make plans to join us!

As I reach the end of my two-year term, I am so thrilled that **Amanda Patarino (CO 2012)** will take the mantle, as it is our tradition of electing our next President an administration ahead to ensure continuity. She of course will need an incredible team, so please consider throwing your hat in the ring for any one of the key roles on the Board. All roles are open and you can reach out to any board member, or email Andrew Bradley, our Nominating Committee chair, at [PastPresident@USSYAA.org](mailto:PastPresident@USSYAA.org) to learn more or declare your candidacy. The Nominating Committee will submit its slate for the next Board in January 2022, with elections held at our annual meeting, tentatively scheduled for March 12. If you are interested, please reach out as soon as you can.

I want to close by first thanking our esteemed outgoing Executive Director, **Michael Sundermeyer (MO 1969)**, for many years of service and dedication to the Association. We are thankful to him for his leadership, support, and engagement; and I am personally thankful that we can count him as an engaged alumnus moving forward.

Finally, I want to close by recognizing all of our alumni who are serving our country in military, foreign service, public service, and civil organizations. We honor those who ran for office no matter the outcome. As a strictly nonpartisan, civic focused, alumni organization for the USSYP, we are very proud of our alumni base across the entire political spectrum. In an era of hyper-partisanship and division, I for one am very proud to count myself among the ranks of our alumni that I know work to bring our country together both through service and leadership.

In service,

Gil Valadez

“Nobody cares how much you know,  
until they know how much you care.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



(left to right, top to bottom) Janelle Kuroda, Jen Tutak, Amanda Patarino, Nicholas Hanson, Cara Sindir, and Johnson Elugbadebo.

# THE IMPLICATIONS OF COVID: PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

JOHNSON ELUGBADEBO (IL 1998)

In February, we held a panel discussion on navigating personal and professional development opportunities against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Panelists **Jen Tutak (FL 1998)**, **Janelle Kuroda (HI 1997)**, **Cara Sindir (AK 1998)**, and **Amanda Patarino (CO 2012)** shared their perspective with around 25 young USSYP alumni. The panelists covered considerable ground, offering thoughts on education and career planning, from taking time off from school to pursuing professional development in a remote, work-from-home environment, to taking risks. The panel was coordinated by Eastern Regional Co-Directors **Nicholas Hanson (IL 2007)** and **Johnson Elugbadebo (IL 1998)**.

**NEW YORK  
MEET-UP:  
COMING THIS FEBRUARY!**  
JOHNSON ELUGBADEBO (IL 1998)  
AND  
NICHOLAS HANSON (IL 2007)

We are currently in the planning stages for an alumni meet-up in New York in February 2022. Be sure to update your contact information at [ussyaa.org](http://ussyaa.org) to stay "in the loop" as this event unfolds!





# DC HOLIDAY PARTY:

## CELEBRATING USSYAA

SARAH LANFORD (TX 2014)

As the Capital Region Director, I'm excited to host USSYAA's first in-person event since our 2020 Alumni Dinner – an event that hit its registration limit less than a week after being announced! We're getting together on Monday, December 13, to celebrate each other and the amazing USSYP program. I'm eager to meet alumni who live in the area – especially the 2020 and 2021 delegates. I look forward to fostering relationships among alumni and hope that those who live in the area are able to attend! Please do not hesitate to reach out by email to [capitalregion@ussyaa.org](mailto:capitalregion@ussyaa.org) if you have an idea for a regional event or would just like to grab coffee or a drink!

## TREASURER'S REPORT

JOHN S. BLAKLEY, SR. (MI 1976)

USSYAA operates on a cash basis, and for the period January 01, 2021 through October 31, 2021, the year-to-date ("YTD") expenses were \$31,625.12. The expenses consisted of scholarships, our Virtual Awards Annual Event, regional events, and various operating and 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 22.12% as compared to the S&P 500 Index of 42.91% for the same period. The rate of return includes dividends/interest, realized and unrealized 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 <https://ussyaa.org/bylaws-tax-info/>.



## THANK YOU CAREER MENTORS!

As part of our virtual Washington gathering, an amazing group of alumni and friends staffed our first-ever virtual career mentoring tables. We would like to thank Sean Farrell (MA 1996), Megan MacInnes (NH 2011), Joseph Tordella (NJ 1997), Nina Boyko (CA 2012), Hunter Brunwald (OK 2010), Connor Rubin (MI 2012), Joshua Duden (KS 2012), Michael Tappel (AK 2012), Zhan Okuda-Lim (NV 2010), and all of the board members and their colleagues who helped make this first-ever virtual mentoring event a positive and rewarding experience for the 2021 delegates.

# ★ AWARDS PROGRAM ★



## JOHN SELMON BLAKLEY, SR.

RECIPIENT OF THE NINTH JAMES T. MOLLOY ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD



John Selmon Blakley Sr. (MI 1976) is the Founding President of the United States Senate Youth Alumni Association. He received his B.B.A. in Financial Services from Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan; a J.D. from the Fordham University School of Law; and a William Edwards Deming

Scholar Honors M.B.A. from the Fordham University Gabelli Graduate School of Business Administration.

John's interest in business administration started in his hometown during his early childhood as a paperboy for *The Flint Journal* newspaper while living on Buick Street in Flint, Michigan. Coincidentally, he then landed summer employment with GM's Buick Motor Division while a student at University of Michigan.

After college, John began a global financial services and tax career in New York City. He first audited brokers and dealers in securities and commodity futures for PricewaterhouseCoopers. In 1990, he joined The MTA/Long Island Rail Road Company's Finance Division, serving over time as Special Assistant to the Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Controller, and Director of Regulatory Financial Internal Control. In 1996, he joined

Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC's in-house legal and compliance division as their Antitrust Regulatory Compliance Officer. He also addressed compliance with regulations of the New York Stock Exchange, Securities & Exchange Commission, Federal Reserve Board, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, National Futures Association, and Financial Industry Regulatory Authority.

After surviving the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack while working at Morgan Stanley's Two World Trade Center location, John joined the U.S. Department of the Treasury as a tax law specialist with focus on tax-exempt securities. Among other roles, he has served as the Treasury's Liaison Officer to the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board, which coordinates special audit review assessments for Field Operations examiners.

In April 2020, John became a Supervisory Team Manager in Treasury's Large Business and International Division in the Northeastern Compliance Practice Area, which focuses on tax compliance by major domestic U.S. businesses, as well as individuals and businesses engaged with international interests.

John is married to his lovely wife, Dr. Gale Blakley. They have two wonderful sons: John Jr., a Chemical Engineering graduate from Howard University; and Samuel, a sophomore Business Administration major in Accounting and Finance at Xavier University of Louisiana. The family resides in Scarsdale, NY.

“Today, I think the attitude is that governing is not necessarily good politics, and the result is that it’s much more partisan and much more divided.”

LEON PANETTA



## SECRETARY LEON E. PANETTA

RECIPIENT OF THE TWELFTH ROSALIE WYNN HEARST  
DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD



A Monterey native and Santa Clara University School of Law graduate, Secretary Leon E. Panetta began his long and distinguished public service career in 1964 as a First Lieutenant in the United States Army, and upon discharge went to work in Washington as a legislative assistant to United States Senate

Minority Whip Tom Kuchel of California. In 1969, he was appointed director of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare’s Office for Civil Rights, where he was responsible for enforcing equal education laws. Later, he served as executive assistant to the mayor of New York City. He then returned to Monterey, where he practiced law until his election to the United States House of Representatives in 1976.

Serving in Congress for 16 years, Secretary Panetta was a key participant in agriculture, healthcare, ocean, and federal budget issues. From 1989 to 1993, he chaired the House Budget Committee. He authored a wide range of legislation, including the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988, Medicare and Medicaid coverage for hospice care for the terminally ill, and numerous measures to protect the California coast, including creation of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

In 1993, Secretary Panetta left Congress to serve as director of the Office of Management and Budget for the Clinton administration. There, he was instrumental in developing the policies that led to a balanced federal budget and eventual surpluses. In 1994, he accepted appointment as the president’s chief of staff, and immediately brought order and focus to White House operations.

Upon leaving the Clinton administration in 1997, Secretary Panetta joined with his wife Sylvia to establish and co-direct The Panetta Institute for Public Policy, based at California State University, Monterey Bay. Reflecting Secretary Panetta’s own ideals and personal example, the nonpartisan, not-for-profit study center seeks to attract thoughtful men and women to lives of public service and prepare them for the policy challenges of the future.

Returning to public service in the Obama administration as director of the CIA, he ran the operation that brought Osama bin Laden to justice, and, as Secretary of Defense, led the effort to develop a new defense strategy, helped bring two wars to an end, and opened up opportunities for everyone to serve in the military.

Secretary Panetta returned to the Panetta Institute as chairman on February 27, 2013, and resumed his role as moderator of the renowned *Leon Panetta Lecture Series*. He chronicles his life in public service in his best-selling memoir *Worthy Fights*, which was published in 2014.

# ★ ALUMNI NEWS ★

## *Class of 1966*

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**Allyn Brosz (SD 1966)** retired from the Department of Defense in March, after a civilian career supporting the office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He was awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Career Civilian Service. Continuing his genealogy hobby of more than 50 years, Allyn keeps busy in retirement with presentations to genealogy conferences in the US and Canada and research in the National Archives.

## *Class of 1970*

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It has been a bittersweet year for **Chandini Bachman (AZ 1970)**: “Three and a half years into a stage IV metastatic breast cancer diagnosis, I am thankful to say I am still alive by God’s Grace and with modern medicine. Since March 2020, I was a COVID hermit in Bethesda, Maryland. Finally, this October, I went to spend time with family and walk barefoot on the beach in Westport, Massachusetts. While up there, I visited with librarians at Harvard Divinity School Library which will receive my contemporaneous collection of materials relating to my 43 years as a direct student of the modern teacher Sri Chinmoy (1931-2007). The Zoom boom has been a boon helping me stay connected. I learned helpful coherent breathing techniques from the Breath-Body-Mind Foundation. I am participating in a new model of spirituality and health research, the Pain and Prayer Project, led by my friend the Reverend Dr. Marta Illueca of Brandywine Collective Ministries in Delaware. And, I Zoomed into plenaries and presentations of Parliament of the World’s Religions and focused on the many soulful perspectives on stewardship of mother earth. I passed the torch of class contact to **Thomas Holmes (MS 1970)** and hope you all will help him out by creating a profile for yourselves in the new USSYAA website. I thank our USSYAA leadership who are doing a great job. I am confident we, as a community, will continue to help each other and bring our country together as **Mike Sundermeyer (MO 1969)** has so eloquently described at many of our reunion dinners. America needs our oneness with each other.”

**Margo Jackson (DC 1970)** and her husband, Glen, now are Delawareans. They live in Lewes, Delaware, down the road from President Biden’s vacation home in Rehoboth Beach, and maintain a home in Fort Washington, Maryland. She adds, “We’re looking forward to Thanksgiving at my oldest son’s home and Christmas at my youngest son’s home. Both holidays will include my six grandchildren, including my

youngest grandchild, who turns 2 years old in December. I’m hoping that my twice-postponed nine-night food and wine tour of Athens, Mikinos, and Santorini, Greece will happen in May. Of course, everyone must be fully vaccinated before traveling. I hope everyone is doing well and will have a happy New Year!”

## *Class of 1973*

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From **Rex Gale (NH 1973)**: “It’s been 48 years since my USSYAA experience. Time flies. My career was spent in Management Consulting, Human Resources Management, and Health Care consulting. Now retired, I am involved with a number of nonprofit endeavors, and am the Organizer for TEDxHiltonHead. We travel often between our homes on Hilton Head Island and Ajijic, Mexico, with stops throughout the year in Austin, Texas, where our two grown, married children live, along with three grandchildren. It is an honor to be part of the USSYAA family. Keep the spirit alive!”

## *Class of 1987*

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**Bob Martin (KS 1987)** continues to practice law in Salina, Kansas, as well as serve as the head softball coach at Sacred Heart High School. In addition, he recently retired as the head softball coach for Kansas State University’s club softball team. As a highlight of the summer, he was able to reconnect with **JW Penland (ID 1987)** in Chicago for a couple of days.

## *Class of 1993*

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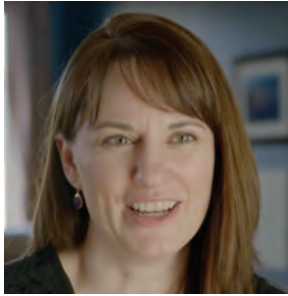
**Trasa Robertson Cobern (DoDDS 1993)** was an award-winning U.S. history teacher, but sought to widen her impact. She is now the Senior Director of Development for 6 Stones Mission Network, a faith-based nonprofit based in the “most diverse school district in Texas,” Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD, where their work to alleviate poverty is vital to the community.

## *Class of 1995*

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This summer, **Kathryn Royster (TN 1995)** and her family moved cross-country from Nashville to Los Angeles, where she is now working as a marketing and communications manager at the University of Southern California. Though she lived in Nashville for more than 20 years, she spent most of her childhood in the San Gabriel Valley, and is excited to be back on home turf. Congrats Kathryn!

## Class of 1996



**Heidi (White) Sipe (WA 1996)** has recently been featured in the documentary *Big Dreams in Umatilla*, the story of the robotics team in her school district in Oregon. From the press kit: "Heidi moved up the ranks in the small school district, from teacher to federal programs director to assistant

superintendent, then to district superintendent in 2007. Heidi's leadership skills didn't go unnoticed – she was named 2016 Oregon Superintendent of the Year. In Umatilla, Heidi saw that kids were stuck and had few opportunities. The town offered very little in terms of extracurricular activities. Heidi figured if the kids had some options, they'd choose to rise to the occasion. And that's why she started the robotics team." The documentary will be airing on PBS stations through March 2022. Congratulations, Heidi!

## Class of 1998

It's been a busy year for **Ian Quinn (AZ 1998)**. He and his wife, Sarah, welcomed their son Luke into the world on May 29. He is their fourth and "evens the score" at two boys, two girls. On November 1, Ian's law firm, Quinn Law PLLC in Phoenix, celebrated its tenth anniversary. And, finally, Ian recently opened Camelback Vista Development, a business engaged in developing mixed-use real estate projects in metropolitan Phoenix.

## Class of 1999

**Jake Rodenbiker (ND 1999)** served an abbreviated assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2021. He was a Senior Legal Advisor in the Embassy's Office of the Justice Attaché, on detail from the U.S. Department of Justice. Jake otherwise holds the position of Assistant United States Attorney in his hometown of Fargo. He has a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame and a J.D. from the University of Minnesota.

**Kevin McAdam (CO 1999)** had the following to share: "The highlight of the year for the McAdam family was welcoming a new addition: Sophia Ann Lawrence McAdam, born on July 9. She joined older siblings Philippa (4), Finnean (7), Eleanor (11), and Christopher (13). Work remains stimulating for me at Holland & Hart, where I'm a partner in the commercial litigation group. Even busier, though, is my wife Christine, who has the laboring oar homeschooling our kids in conjunction with a hybrid program they attend at Regina Caeli in Denver."

## Class of 2000

**Sarala V. Nagala (ND 2000)** was nominated by President Biden to serve as U.S. District Judge in the District of Connecticut in June of 2021, and was confirmed by the Senate in October of 2021. She received her commission on November 3, 2021, and currently sits in Hartford, Connecticut. Judge Nagala and her husband reside with their two children at Pauli Murray College, Yale University, where her husband serves as Dean.

## Class of 2002

Since 2010, **Ross Mankuta (NY 2002)** has worked at Milken Community School in Los Angeles, CA, in several capacities, currently as Director of College Counseling, Alumni Relations, and Strategic Partnerships. Beginning July 1, 2022, Ross will become Milken's very first Director of Alumni Engagement and Career Development, focusing on expanding Milken's alumni relations program and creating a leading program to benefit Milken's students and alumni in their careers. He will continue to have a role in the College Counseling office as well, working with a select cohort of students each year.

## Class of 2005

**Patrick Martin (IL 2005)** has had a very eventful year. In 2020, he was named to the annual "40 under 40" list published by *Crain's Chicago Business*, recognizing his professional, civic, and charitable contributions. In addition, he was honored by the University of Illinois with a 2020 Outstanding Young Alumni award, celebrating alumni who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement and leadership. In 2021, Patrick was named to the Board of Directors of Rainbows for All Children, a national nonprofit organization based in suburban Chicago, focused on providing support for children navigating trauma or loss. And, to cap it off, Patrick was promoted to Managing Director at Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies, LLC. Managing Directors are the equivalent of Shareholders at the law firm, and this promotion made Patrick, at age 34, the firm's youngest shareholder. He currently resides in Glen Ellyn, IL, with his wife Caitlin and their two children, Lucy and George.

**Dr. Kaitlin Spak (CA 2005)** continues to work for Exponent, now as a senior managing engineer with a growing team. She reports that she is traveling extensively for engineering consulting work, but also loves every minute at home with her fiancé and pets. She adds, "Thanks so much for wonderful memories and a great experience with USSYP!"

## Class of 2006

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**Kaitlin Irvine (WV 2006)** started a new role in March as an Assistant Director of Advising Services & Academic Support at the University of Pennsylvania, where she supports undergraduate students. She loves living a 5-minute walk from her Washington Week hotel neighbor **Allison LaFave (SD 2006)**!

## Class of 2007

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**Nicholas Hanson (IL 2007)** is currently on a leave of absence from the Harvard Kennedy School MPP/Harvard Business School MBA joint degree program. He has joined Vannevar Labs, a defense technology startup that combines Silicon Valley software engineering talent with decades of experience in the Department of Defense and intelligence community to solve the most critical national security challenges using the most advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms available.

**Kathryn Hedgecock (AZ 2007; Military Mentor 2015, 2017)** remains on active duty in the U.S. Army. In June 2021, Katie earned her doctorate in Political Science from Stanford University. She is now serving as an Assistant Professor of International Affairs at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Katie and her husband welcomed their first son in November 2020.

**Sean Dzierzanowski (MD 2007; Military Mentor 2019)** was promoted to Major in the United States Marine Corps in June 2021 and selected as a Department of Defense Legislative Fellow. As part of his Legislative Fellow duties, he moved to the DC area and will begin work on Capitol Hill in January 2022. While on Capitol Hill, Sean will be attached to a member of Congress's office to advise on Defense or Marine Corps-related issues. Sean is also a Master of Public Policy candidate at George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government. He adds, "I will be in the DC area for the next three years and would love to meet up with any USSYP alums (especially from 2007 and 2019)!"

## Class of 2008

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From March 2018 to July 2021, **Ivan Kanapathy (Military Mentor 2008)** served on the White House's National Security Council staff as director for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia and deputy senior director for Asian affairs. In this capacity, he staffed and advised the president and national security advisor and led U.S. government

interagency policy development and implementation on relations and engagement with China and Taiwan – including shepherding the most comprehensive and significant U.S. policy shift toward the People's Republic of China in four decades. Ivan also reports that he served with **Joe Riley (TN 2008)** during his tenure with the National Security Council staff.

## Class of 2009

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On October 17, 2021, **Andrew Connery (OK 2009)** was married to Tara Kuruvilla, a Ph.D. candidate in Art History at Columbia University. Andrew also began a new job as law clerk to the Hon. Alvin K. Hellerstein in the federal district court for the Southern District of New York.

After five years in the Air Force and two years at an edtech startup in San Francisco, **Eric Deng (UT 2009)** recently moved to Boston to pursue his MBA at Harvard Business School. Eric would love to get in touch with any USSYP alumni in the Boston/Cambridge area, particularly those interested in frontier tech and social impact. He can be reached at [eric.h.deng@gmail.com](mailto:eric.h.deng@gmail.com).

## Class of 2010

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**Zhan Okuda-Lim (NV 2010)** has been focusing on education this year: "This fall, I started my second year pursuing my Ph.D. in Policy Analysis at the Pardee RAND Graduate School, part of the RAND Corporation, the research organization and think tank headquartered in Santa Monica, California. In July, after a week of tests and papers, I passed my qualifying exams and officially advanced as a Doctoral Candidate! My research interests at RAND focus on K-12 education policy and equity, especially the effects of and lessons to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic on school systems, educators, families, and students. These interests are informed by COVID-19 response work at my former job to close the digital divide and support educators, families, and students when Nevada school buildings were closed in March 2020. My passion for public policy and service remains grounded in my experiences from a decade ago, including USSYP!"

## Class of 2011

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**Megan MacInnes (NH 2011)** has had an eventful 2021. After getting legally married on Zoom in 2020 to her college sweetheart, Brandon Fleischer, they finally celebrated their marriage in October 2021 with family and friends. Earlier this year, they bought their first home and moved to Beacon, New York (in the Hudson Valley). They also adopted a black lab puppy, Coda, who keeps their lives interesting. Megan started a new job last fall as the first digital marketer for Boston-based investment consulting firm NEPC, and continues to enjoy working remotely. Give her a shout if you're visiting NYC, Boston, or the Hudson Valley and would like to meet up!

After serving the Washington, D.C., office of Rep. David Price (D-NC) for more than two years, **Neel Mandavilli (NC 2011)** returned to his home state of North Carolina in 2018. He currently works as an Associate Director with the Caldwell Fellows, a servant-leadership development program at North Carolina State University.

## Class of 2012

A quick update from **Bailey White (NC 2012)**: "After 5 years of government consulting in DC & LA, I've just begun my first year of graduate school pursuing my MBA at the University of Michigan. Hope to connect with other Michigan alumni within USSYAA!" Congrats, Bailey!

Over the summer, **Brett Biebelberg (NJ 2012)** moved to Philadelphia and started medical school at Jefferson. Be sure to let him know if you're in the area!

**Kristina Pedersen (KS 2012)** is living in Montreal, finishing up her last year of graduate school. This fall she is teaching Foundations in Photographic Vision to first- and second-year Studio Arts majors, which involves analog color photography and darkroom printing. She is excited to be a resource to students as they learn and unlearn the apparatus of history, how images function in society, and how to tell their own stories with their own tools. She is also happy to share that her first major biennial exhibition, as a member of the collective Group C, was well-received by the Montreal public. This collective asks: "What is successful togetherness? How can we expand and abstract the possibilities of family, or even group relations? Is collective (art) making even possible?" Kristina would love to see you if you're ever in Montreal! Feel free to drop her a line at [kristinapicture@gmail.com](mailto:kristinapicture@gmail.com).

## Class of 2013

**Sarah Rudasill (PA 2013)** earned her medical degree from the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine in 2021 and started her general surgery residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. She intends to pursue a career in academic surgical oncology.

In May of 2021, **Margaret Lie (LA 2013)** graduated from medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. Since then, she moved to Boston, Massachusetts, and began residency in Internal Medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

## Class of 2014

**Caroline Tervo (NC 2014)** moved to Durham to start at Duke University School of Law as a first-year J.D. candidate. She reports that she is grateful to be back home in North Carolina. Congrats, Caroline!

It's been an eventful year for **Daniel Carter (MO 2014)**. This past year he graduated from the Washington University School of Law, was admitted to the Missouri Bar, and married the love of his life, Clare Martin Carter. Congrats Daniel!

**Garrett Kalt (NV 2014)** proposed to his college best friend Amethyst Friebott at Zion National Park in March 2021. They both live in Boise, Idaho, with their beloved Teardrop TAB trailer Tabitha. Garrett continues to contribute to the nonprofit sector and the vulnerable populations they serve. At the start of the year, he assisted hundreds of nonprofits as Training and Program Manager of the Idaho Nonprofit Center. He now serves as Director of Development for CATCH (Charitable Assistance to Communities Homeless), a nonprofit committed to ending homelessness for families in Idaho's Treasure Valley by inspiring stable housing, financial independence, and resilience. Each year, CATCH houses 75+ families who are experiencing homelessness using a Housing First philosophy. Garrett is responsible for raising private funding for CATCH through individual, corporate, and foundation contributions. He also continues to volunteer for LEAD On, a nonprofit he founded in his hometown of Fallon, NV, dedicated to preparing Churchill County youth for life after high school. Garrett hopes his fellow 2014 delegates and everyone affiliated with USSYP are experiencing good health, happiness, and joy.

**Matthew Thomas (KY 2014)** joined the firm Haynes Boone, LLP, in their Houston, Texas office as an associate. His practice focuses on commercial litigation. Please reach out to Matt ([matthew.thomas@haynesboone.com](mailto:matthew.thomas@haynesboone.com)) with any commercial litigation inquiries or if you want to grab coffee or lunch in Houston.

**Sarah Lanford (TX 2014)** spent the first half of 2021 with family in Texas before moving back to Arlington, Virginia, in August. Sarah continues to work as a health policy analyst at the National Academy for State Health Policy and remains involved in local politics. She's coming up on five years in the DMV area and is excited to connect with other alumni in the DC Capital Region.

## Class of 2015

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Since April, **Justin Shapiro (NY 2015)** has been living in Tallahassee and working for Governor DeSantis, writing speeches, talking points, and press releases. Before moving to Florida, Justin completed a master's degree in Political Science & International Relations at Columbia and worked at *National Review* where he was Rich Lowry's research assistant. He adds, "If you happen to be in Tallahassee (though I'm not sure why you would be), let me know!"

We received the following update from **Kristen (Tomjack) Bantam (NE 2015)**: "In September of 2021, I got married to my husband, Jarrod. We continue to live in Lincoln, Nebraska, with our dog Atlas. This past year I have navigated COVID-19 as medical social worker within Madonna Rehabilitation Specialty Hospital where I serve on the traumatic brain injury unit." Congrats, Kristen!

In November 2020, **Serene Singh (CO 2015)** was selected from more than 700 women in the world's largest pageant as National All-American Miss. In addition, she wrote and published *The Queen Machine*, a children's book meant to empower and give tools to build confidence in kids across the globe. She has started her Ph.D. at the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, and is currently focusing on interviewing women on death row in the U.S. She adds, "Any help the community might be able to offer is greatly appreciated as I continue my studies!"

## Class of 2016

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**Avery Allen (OR 2016)** moved to Bogota, Colombia in July as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant. She is volunteering with an NGO in northern Colombia that collects stories from Venezuelan migrants crossing the border into Colombia. She plans to begin law school next fall, where she hopes to focus on immigration law. If you'd like to connect, please reach out at [averyallenrose@gmail.com](mailto:averyallenrose@gmail.com).

## Class of 2018

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**Commander Desmond Walker (Military Mentor 2018)** reports that he is the prospective Executive Officer of *USS Bainbridge*, a guided missile destroyer (DDG 96). In addition, he has been selected to receive the Career Achievement in Government Award at the 2022 Black Engineer of the Year Award STEM Conference. He writes, "At this point in my career, serving in the

Navy means I have the opportunity to be an example of leadership for the officers and sailors who are coming up the ranks behind me. I did not see a lot of Black officers when I was enlisted, but I believed it was possible. Now, as a senior officer, I'm in a position to help anyone, regardless of their demographic, become the best version of themselves as part of the world's greatest Navy."

## Class of 2019

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**Kirsten Kraske (MT 2019)** is now a junior at Montana State University-Bozeman studying both accounting and finance. Throughout the summer, she began applying for internships with some huge corporate offices such as Goldman Sachs, BlackRock, and JP Morgan, and as of the end of September, officially accepted an offer to work with JP Morgan in their Plano, TX office next summer. She will be on the Global Finance and Business Management team representing Montana.

**Shane Rose (MA 2019)** is a junior at Georgetown University and began working in August 2021 as a Staff Assistant for House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

**Eli Blaufuss (KS 2019)** is currently a second-year at the University of Virginia and is double majoring in history and government. Eli and his parents recently moved to Virginia from Kansas and have been enjoying the change in scenery. Eli is currently serving as a resident advisor in first-year dorms and was elected as secretary of his fraternity. Eli reports that he is also eagerly awaiting the arrival of his first nephew come December. Congrats, Eli!

Next semester, **Scott Sawaya (KS 2019)** will be traveling to Dubai to work for the State Department as a Youth Ambassador for Expo 2020, the World's Fair that was postponed due to the pandemic. While there, he plans to engage with guests from across the world and, specifically, the Middle East, including foreign heads of state. The goal of the engagement is to promote cooperation and support international development goals focused on sustainability, opportunity, and mobility.

**Catherine Daniel (AL 2019)** is currently a senior exercise science – pre-health professions major at Troy University. This past year, she assisted Dr. Teresa Johnson with two of her research projects concerning the effectiveness and safety of blended tube feeding. Catherine is still a contributor to *The Bipartisan Post* and is also the president of her college's chapter of Phi Epsilon Kappa. She tutors Troy University's athletes as well as the dual enrollment students at the Center for Advanced Academics and Accelerated Learning. She has just been accepted into the occupational therapy graduate program at the University of South Alabama and will begin classes next fall.

Wow, how a year flies! 2021 brought immense opportunities for growth for **Emmalyn Pykles (UT 2019)**, currently a sophomore at Brigham Young University. January to August was spent in the Seattle area for her mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, where she was assigned to speak Spanish and work with the Hispanic population. Meeting people from all over the world, listening to immigrant struggles, learning to work and live with companions of all backgrounds, and growing her personal faith was not an easy experience, but the best thing she has ever done. Returning home in August, Emmy enjoyed a week with her family in Hawaii and then was off to school again. She has recently switched her major to Experience Design and Management, with a minor in Nonprofit Management, and feels that she has truly found her passion. She hopes to work for an organization providing humanitarian and faith-building experiences for teenagers this coming summer.

**Patrick Chappel (GA 2019)** writes: "I have returned to Yale to continue my junior year. Over the summer I worked on the government affairs team at the Partnership for Public Service. It has been wonderful coming back to a campus that is far more normal after COVID. During the time I took off from school I worked in my home state as an organizer for the Ossoff/Warnock Senate races."

**Emma Waring (TX 2019)** is attending the University of Texas at Austin, studying public relations and naval science, with a minor in business administration. This fall, she received an advanced standing contract from the US Navy and will commission upon graduation in May 2023. Hoping to be a public affairs officer, she plans to join the surface warfare community first and learn technical skills while serving. She credits her motivation to join the armed forces to the Military Mentors who accompanied her throughout Washington Week. She is excited to begin her career in the fleet while learning from incredible officers and their experiences in leadership.

## **Class of 2020**

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**Eleanor Covington (AL 2020)** is currently a student at Auburn University pursuing a double major in English Literature and Anthropology. This year, she represented Auburn on the NBC trivia game show College Bowl hosted by Peyton Manning. Serving as team captain, she and her two teammates made it to the semifinals round and walked away with \$15,000 worth of scholarship prize money. Eleanor continues to be involved on Auburn's campus by serving as a prose editor for *The Circle*, Auburn's literary and arts magazine, and as a member of the Honors Congress, the student government of the Honors College. Eleanor is hopeful that she might have the chance to meet her fellow 2020 delegates in person next year and is excited for what 2022 has in store.

## **Class of 2021**

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After completing the virtual Washington Week this year, **Natalie DeLaCruz (CT 2021)** graduated from high school. She spent the summer continuing her advocacy work with the Herren Project and was selected to be their President of Youth Ambassadors. In September, she started school at Northeastern University studying Political Science & Human Services and reports that she has been really enjoying her experience.

**Sarah Frank (FL 2021)** reports, "I started my freshman year at Brown University and began work as a Social Media Strategist at a company called Pangea." You can learn more about Sarah at [www.sarahfrankwrites.com](http://www.sarahfrankwrites.com).

We received the following note from **Alainn Hanson (MN 2021)**: "My year has been quite the whirlwind since Washington Week Online in March. I've moved halfway across the country to Washington, D.C. to attend American University. I'm majoring in political science with a minor in women's and gender studies. I'm loving D.C. life and university so far. My favorite thing to do in D.C. is going to the Smithsonian Museums and discovering the city with my friends. Just recently I went to the Library of Congress for the first time and I was amazed by the design and architecture and I can't wait to take my friends from Minnesota there when they visit. I also have been lucky enough to have a single room at university and this is my first time having my own room! My classes have been so interesting and engaging and I can't wait to start the spring semester."

**Emma Romano (WV 2021)** had the following to share: "Currently, I am residing at the University of Arizona where I focus on my double major of Environmental Science and Anthropology: Human Biology with a minor in Health and Human Values. I have recently accepted a job for the Office of Sustainability as an Outreach and Communications Specialist. Throughout my short time in Arizona, I have become a part of many different organizations including the Honors Service Club, AZ Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Students for Equity, Environmental Science Club, and PATH Mentorship."

**Nyche Andrew (AK 2021)** is currently a first-year student at Yale University studying Political Science. Since Washington Week Online, Nyche graduated from Service High School in the top 5 percent of her class, and was invited to give a land acknowledgment at the graduation ceremony. Nyche was also named Alaska's first Princeton Prize in Race Relations winner, a recognition administered by Princeton

*continued on page 14*

University to honor youth's work in advancing racial equity. During the summer of 2021, Nyché was an intern for Bering Straits Native Corporation where she assisted in gathering proposals for government contracting. Nyché is currently a research assistant for Yale School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry, a member of Yale Undergraduate Legal Aid Association, and part of the Native and Indigenous Student Association at Yale.

**Hamilton Sprawls (SC 2021)** writes, "So much has occurred since my time in the United States Senate Youth Program! I am now attending Clemson University in the upstate of South Carolina pursuing a degree in Architecture. I am still in the process of deciding on my minor but have looked into Nonprofit Leadership after enjoying the first class. In my spare time I am working toward a pilot's license that I hope to use on missions in the future. Although the transition to college life was difficult at first, I have made countless new friends in my classes, clubs, dormitory, and church, and look forward to growing closer with them. Looking to the future, I hope to study abroad in Italy through the Architecture program and experience the beauty of Europe. I also plan to intern with a nonprofit organization in the construction field to provide transitional housing for the homeless. I am so thankful for the United States Senate Youth Program and the education opportunities it has opened for me!"

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**"If your actions inspire others  
to dream more, learn more, do  
more, and become more,  
then you are a leader."**

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

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# ★ ALUMNI DINNER REWIND ★

Ten years ago, on March 4, 2011, the United States Senate Youth Alumni Association honored **Senator Robert J. Dole (R-KS, 1969-1996)** as its second annual Rosalie Wynn Hearst Distinguished Public Service Award recipient. Though he was unable to attend in person, his wife, **Senator Elizabeth Dole (R-NC, 2003-2009)**, graciously joined us at the Phoenix Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., to celebrate her husband's accomplishments.



*Event photos by Don Tanguilig.*





# YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS OUR LIFEBLOOD

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. With most of 2021's events in the virtual space, we know it's been more convenient than ever to interact with your fellow alumni. Your activity has helped us to accomplish Mom Hearst's goal of keeping Senate Youth Program alumni connected in ways that we know she couldn't have imagined.

Contributions from our members are the most critical component of our funding structure. Direct financial support of the association is the only consistent way we have of raising new money, and though it may seem cliché, even a small donation of \$10.00 goes a long way when combined with other, similar donations. 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 of 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 streamlined as possible, we have established an online donation portal

at [ussyaa.org](http://ussyaa.org) to facilitate your contribution, which you can make in convenient installments charged to your credit card if you so choose. (Look for the "pledge" option.) If you prefer the tangibility of writing a check, 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 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 (virtual) presence at our events and meetings. You truly can and do make a difference.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

DAVID ZAVADSKY (WI 1990)

Even though it sometimes appears we're in a pandemic that just won't end and seconds away from the next constitutional crisis, there is always hope. That was abundantly clear as I collected your alumni news submissions and put together this edition of the annual holiday newsletter. Carrying on Mom Hearst's tradition of publishing this letter – albeit with a slightly more modern look than the carefully typewritten pages of old – is one of the highlights of my year, as I can see both impressive accomplishments and heartwarming stories from all corners of our association.

As I write this, I am making plans to fly to Washington for Sarah Lanford's USSYAA holiday party event, which is that sorely-needed happy island in a sea of challenges. I hope to see (or to have seen) many of you there. And, in the spirit of hope, I wish you and yours the best in this coming holiday season.