2016 Alumni Volunteer Service Awards

October 28
Science Museum of Virginia

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY Alumni
VCU Alumni’s 2016 Alumni Volunteer Service Awards recognize alumni and friends of Virginia Commonwealth University who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment, dedication and invaluable support in advancing the mission of the university. With pride and gratitude, VCU Alumni acknowledges these deserving volunteers.

2016 Recipients

Elaine and W. Baxter Perkinson Jr. and Vickie and Thomas Snead Jr. Alumni Award for Extraordinary Service

William M. Ginther (B.S. ’69/B; M.S. ’74/B) and Marsha C. Ginther

Awarded to alumni who have shown extraordinary leadership and who have made outstanding contributions to the university

Eugene H. and Rosalia C. Hunt Alumni Pride Award

Michelle Turner (B.S. ’93/H&S)

Awarded to a graduate who has shown outstanding service in one of VCU Alumni’s constituent organizations

Edward H. Peeples Jr. Award for Social Justice

David A. Gallagher (B.S. ’97/B)

Awarded to an alumnus for leadership in humanitarian contributions in combating inequality and social injustice

VCU Alumni Service Award

Timmy Nguyen (B.S. ’11/B)

Awarded to a graduate who has made significant contributions to VCU Alumni
VCU Alumni Outstanding Program Award

Alumni Charity Challenge
Awarded for a successful and innovative program that has furthered the mission of VCU Alumni

VCU Alumni GOLD Award

Joseph R. Stemmle (B.S.’13/B)
Awarded to a graduate of the last decade for commitment to VCU and to VCU Alumni

VCU STAT Award

Sarah Kilmon, creative and strategic advertising major, Class of 2017
Awarded to a member of Students Today Alumni Tomorrow for outstanding leadership and service

MCVAA Outstanding Alumnus Award

Paula Saxby, Ph.D. (M.S.’85/N; Ph.D.’92/N)
Awarded to a graduate of the MCV Campus who is nationally recognized and who has made distinguished contributions to health care

MCVAA Hodges-Kay Service Award

Tammy Swecker (B.S.’93/D; M.Ed.’05/E)
Awarded to a graduate of the MCV Campus in recognition of service to the MCV Alumni Association and participation in activities of the association, their school and/or the university
William M. “Bill” Ginther believes VCU took a chance accepting him as a student in the mid-1960s. “I was no scholar,” he says. “I was the first in my family to go to college.”

VCU has been repaid in spades for the so-called gamble on Ginther. Not only did he receive bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the School of Business and go on to a lengthy, successful banking career, but he has also returned to campus to take on numerous volunteer tasks. Most significant is his service on the VCU Board of Visitors since 2010, elected as its rector in 2013 and 2014.

Ginther became president of the business school alumni association in the late 1980s and VCU Alumni in the late 1990s. In the early 2000s, he was part of a team that spearheaded fundraising for Snead Hall and became a member of the VCU Foundation and School of Business Foundation boards. He also has served on the VCU Health System Authority board of directors and the MCV Foundation board of trustees.

Ginther and his wife, Marsha, support the Ginther Family Merit Scholarship at the School of Business, Massey Cancer Center, VCU Athletics and the School of Business and made a recent gift to the Markel Center at the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art. The couple also serve on the steering committee for the Make It Real Campaign for VCU.

“None of what I have done at the university would have been possible without the support of my wife,” he says. “Her personality and flair have made a quiet but incredible difference in all of my volunteer positions.”
The heart of VCU beats strongly in the Big Apple, six hours up I-95 from VCU’s campus. Michelle Turner, a project manager for Barclays Investment Bank, keeps the black-and-gold blood pumping in those New York veins as president of the VCU Alumni New York City Chapter. She loves wearing her spirit gear around the city and hearing numerous shout-outs, “Go Rams!”

As chapter president, Turner has organized road trips to Richmond and more than 20 basketball watch parties in the city over the past couple of seasons. With the success and national exposure of VCU men’s basketball and Turner’s efforts, the parties draw sizable numbers of alumni, providing a networking opportunity and avenue for grads to stay engaged and energized about the university. She also coordinated a VCU social for alumni and fans attending the Atlantic 10 tournament in Brooklyn, taking the initiative to include RVA GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) in the planning of the event.

In addition, Turner and leadership members of the New York City Chapter are working on starting a scholarship fund for a future VCU student located in the tri-state area. Her passion for VCU runs deep because the university, she says, “provided an amazing educational background and foundation for my career along with friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.”

Meeting people in New York can be very challenging, she adds, so it’s heartening to connect with someone who shares the common bond and love for VCU.
Cameron Gallagher had been treated for depression and anxiety at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children at VCU for two years when she decided that running races would not only be therapeutic but would also give her a platform to combat the stigma about mental illness among teens. Tragically, she died from an undiagnosed heart condition shortly after finishing her first half-marathon in March 2014. Her grieving family honored her memory by becoming ambassadors for the cause that was so personal to their 16-year-old daughter.

David Gallagher and his wife, Grace, established the Cameron K. Gallagher Memorial Foundation and gave $50,000 to support a new VTCC Children’s Mental Health Resource Center facility, scheduled to open in 2017.

“When we created the foundation, most of its energy was sourced from an intense grief from losing Cameron,” David Gallagher says. “Yet VCU Health really supported our cause and stood by us as we shifted to an organization that truly delivers on Cameron’s dream to attack teen mental health challenges.”

The Gallaghers’ foundation sponsors SpeakUp5k runs throughout the country to raise awareness about mental health issues and to encourage conversations between adolescents and their families. Gallagher credits his daughter with solidifying his ties to his alma mater.

“I have been a volunteer in VCU community events since my graduation, but it was Cameron who really forged the community relationship with VCU,” he says.
Timmy Nguyen’s recognition level on VCU’s campus is just slightly below that of Rodney the Ram. He spends almost as much time at VCU events as he did during his years as a student. He is an ambassador, a cheerleader, a fan, a dedicated champion and a generous donor of time, talent and money.

“My roots are deeply attached to the ongoing success of this marvelous institution,” he says. “It is great to be a Ram and to bleed black and gold everywhere. At the end of the day, I am proud to say that ‘I AM A RAM!'”

Giving back is at the core of Nguyen’s motivation. The list includes the Alumni Charity Challenge to raise donations for an area food bank, YMCA Bright Beginnings back-to-school shopping and Friends Association for Children. His board service includes VCU Alumni, VCU Alumni’s RVA GOLD (Graduates of Last Decade) Chapter, VCU Ram Athletic Fund and the VCU Business Alumni Society.

Nguyen has been recognized locally and nationally for exceptional volunteer service. His honors include a 2014 VCU Alumni GOLD Award, 2015 VCU Alumni 10 Under 10 Award, The Wall Street Journal Award from the School of Business, U.S. Secretary Volunteer of the Year and most recently 2016 Richmond Hometown Hero.

By example, he seeks to encourage graduates to become involved in VCU Alumni and university activities. “I was taught that ‘to whom much is given, much is expected in return,’” he says. “I wanted to continue to give back to VCU because of the opportunity it provided me when I was a student there.”
The perfect philanthropic event benefits donor and recipient, unites often-diverse groups for one worthy cause and makes a lasting positive impact that benefits the community. If everyone has a good time, all the better. The Alumni Charity Challenge, established in 2013 by VCU Alumni’s RVA GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) Chapter, accomplishes all of those objectives.

The Alumni Charity Challenge engages alumni chapters from more than 26 universities in Virginia as well as several out-of-state institutions. The groups gather at Hardywood Park Craft Brewery in Richmond, Virginia, one evening each fall for a food drive competition to see which school can donate the most canned goods (by weight) for FeedMore, the Central Virginia Food Bank. In 2016, for the second year in a row, VCU Alumni took home the trophy with 3,632 pounds donated.

“It is a great opportunity for alumni groups to come together to fight food insecurity in Central Virginia,” says Joseph R. Stemmle (B.S.’13/B), a School of Business alumnus, co-chair of the challenge and a member of the RVA GOLD Chapter’s executive board.

During the past four years, the Alumni Charity Challenge has collected more than 16 tons of canned goods with the support of schools such as the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, James Madison University, George Mason University, Penn State, the University of Michigan and Auburn University.

The challenge’s success earned it a Grand Award in the 2015-16 District III CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) awards competition, and the event has been recognized by the mayor of Richmond, the governor of Virginia and the U.S. Congress.
Joseph R. “Joey” Stemmle grew up watching his mother put others’ needs above her own. His mom’s generous spirit and contributions to society served as a model for Stemmle, and the VCU community is richer for it. Stemmle has volunteered for almost a dozen university organizations, with the most time invested in the VCU Alumni RVA GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) Chapter and the VCU Business Alumni Society.

“A new generation of students is learning at VCU and needs the experienced advice, counsel and support only alumni can provide,” he says. “We need to be motivating each other, bettering each other, making each other smarter and making each other stronger.”

Since 2014, Stemmle has served as director of volunteering and secretary/treasurer of the RVA GOLD Chapter, helping to plan and execute numerous events. Among his favorites are Operation Veterans Appreciation, in which members spend time playing games with area Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Alumni Charity Challenge, which pits VCU against other universities to collect canned goods for the Central Virginia Food Bank.

Stemmle is helping to resurrect the VCU Business Alumni Society as a member of its board. He also has served as vice president of engagement, which allowed him to work in the business school’s Ram to Ram Mentoring Program as a mentor to students. The Ram to Ram program has grown from 90 participants to close to 400 participants over the past two years. In addition, he is a member and active promoter of Rainbow Rams, a new VCU Alumni constituent organization that connects LGBTQ and ally alumni for social events, networking and raising funds for scholarships.
When Sarah Kilmon left her home in Easton, Maryland, to enroll at VCU, she brought along something not immediately visible to her new friends and professors: a desire to be a campus leader. It wasn’t long before it became obvious to everyone around her that she possessed strong leadership qualities, a passion for all things VCU and a desire to share enthusiasm for her goals with a widening circle of peers.

“When I chose to attend VCU, I had never planned to just attend class and just graduate,” says Kilmon, who is on track to earn a Bachelor of Science dual-degree in creative and strategic advertising in May 2017. “I feel that it is my duty as a student leader to help the university become an even better place for each and every student.”

Kilmon immersed herself in VCU Alumni’s student organization, Students Today Alumni Tomorrow, or STAT. She served on the STAT leadership council in 2014, was director of membership and education in 2015, was the state representative for District III CASE ASAP (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Affiliated Student Advancement Programs) in 2015 and hosted the Virginia state CASE ASAP conference in 2016.

In 2016, Kilmon served as STAT’s director of networking and alumni relations. Upon graduation, she plans to continue to advocate for her university.

“I feel it is important to support our alma mater because we want other students to have the same experience, if not better, than we did,” she says.
As president of the MCV Alumni Association of VCU from 2011-13, Paula Saxby, Ph.D., made it her mission to involve more graduates in the organization, not just to recruit members but also to encourage alumni to become engaged with the students, the School of Nursing and VCU as a whole.

Saxby, a registered nurse since 1978, has consistently modeled the School of Nursing’s tradition of educating leaders. Her service with MCVAA began as vice president of the nursing division for two terms and as a board member at-large for two years. After two more years as president-elect, she took the top position, a voluntary role. In 2012, she received the VCU Alumni Pride Award for working with both campuses to bring alumni together.

In 2013, she was honored as one of 120 visionary leaders among alumni and faculty at the 120th anniversary of the VCU School of Nursing.

Saxby serves as deputy executive director of the Virginia Board of Nursing, overseeing the approval for all registered nurse, practical nurse and nurse aide education programs in the state. She also works with the Virginia Nurses Association and the Virginia Action Coalition on nursing education progression. On the national level, she serves as liaison between the state board and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing regarding licensure exams and nurse aide certification exams.

She is married to Stephen Saxby, Ph.D. (B.S.’73/H&S; M.S.’79/H&S; Ph.D.’82/H&S), a three-time alumnus of the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences.
In 2007, an employee in the VCU School of Dentistry development office asked dental hygiene alumna and faculty member Tammy Swecker why none of her peers returned for Reunion Weekend. She explained that dental hygiene graduates had no voice in alumni relations. Later that year, Swecker was named a trustee on the board of the MCV Alumni Association of VCU and worked to plan a dental hygiene alumni reunion.

Since then, she has spent countless hours forging connections between alumni and students. “As an alumna, I have walked in the same hallways, taken the same classes and know [students] have chosen the absolute best place to learn dental hygiene,” she says. “VCU is a family that loves its community and each other.”

Swecker is a full-time faculty member in the VCU School of Dentistry’s Department of Oral Health Promotion and Community Outreach and serves as a dental hygienist at VCU Health. She has received numerous awards, fellowships and honors for teaching excellence, including the 2014-15 VCU Service-Learning Faculty Fellowship, and was appointed by the governor to the Virginia Board of Dentistry.

As an MCVAA trustee, Swecker plays a significant role in the annual MCV Campus Reunion Weekend. Her lengthy tenure on the board ensures that the dental hygiene program always has a voice in important decisions.

“I feel it is important to support my alma mater because funding helps support student learning,” she says. “Having alumni active with the students fosters a sense of responsibility. The alumni association helps students think about the next generation of students while they are still enrolled in their academic program. It builds a foundational model of giving back.”
Universitywide VCU Alumni and Friends Service Awards

In recognition of alumni and friends from 2015 and 2016 who have received awards and recognition throughout the university for their devoted service.

Richard M. Bracken (M.H.A.’77/AHP)
Department of Health Administration
Lifetime Service Award 2015

Shelly Buck (B.S.’96/N)
Outstanding Nurse Alumna Award 2015

Shelly G. Caudill (B.S.’05/D)
VCU Dental Hygiene Program
Outstanding Young Alumnus Award 2015

Martha Clendenin, Ph.D. (B.S.’65/AHP; M.S.’70/AHP; Ph.D.’72/M)
Department of Physical Therapy Lifetime Achievement Award 2015

Gary C. Cupit (B.S.’70/P)
Distinguished Pharmacy Alumnus Award 2015

Cerina W. Fairfax, D.D.S. (D.D.S.’05/D)
Outstanding D.D.S. Graduate of the Last Decade 2015

Stephanie Ferguson, Ph.D. (M.S.’87/N)
Outstanding Nurse Service Award 2016

Dr. James H. Revere, Jr. Outstanding Service Award 2015

Peter Glessman (Cert.’01/E)
Service to the Education Alumni Council 2016

Sara Via Haroon (B.S.’06/D)
VCU Dental Hygiene Program
Outstanding Young Alumnus Award 2016

William Haugh (M.H.A.’08/AHP)
Department of Health Administration
Young Professional Award 2015

David A. Lanning, M.D., Ph.D. (M.D.’95/M; Ph.D.’00/M; H.S.’02/M)
Outstanding Medical Alumnus Award 2015

Arthur “Art” Layne (B.S.’72/H&S; M.H.A.’76/AHP)
Department of Health Administration
Outstanding Alumnus Award 2016

Gary C. Cupit (B.S.’70/P)
Distinguished Pharmacy Alumnus Award 2015

Margaret Ellen Martin (B.S.’71/D)
Dr. Franci Stavropoulos Outstanding Dental Hygiene Alumnus Award 2016

Trula Minton (B.S.’79/N; M.S.’88/N)
Outstanding Nurse Practice Award 2016

Outstanding D.D.S. Graduate of the Last Decade Award 2016

D. Fay Parpart (B.S.’87/N; M.S.’90/N; Cert.’95/N)
Outstanding Nurse Practice Award 2015

Carrie Owen Plietz (M.H.A.’00/AHP)
Department of Health Administration
Outstanding Alumnus Award 2015

Dr. Harry Lyons Outstanding Dental Alumnus Award 2016
R. Brent Rawlings (M.H.A.’04/AHP)
Department of Health Administration
Young Professional Award 2016

Elizabeth Reynolds, D.D.S.
(D.D.S.’91/D)
Dr. James H. Revere, Jr. Outstanding Alumnus Service Award 2016

Eric Rowsey (B.S.’13/B)
VCU Alumni Business Society
CONNECT: Young Mentor Award

Mel Sandlin (B.S.’61/B)
Service to the RPI Alumni Council 2016

Patricia W. Slattum, Ph.D. (B.S.’85/P;
Ph.D.’93/P; Cert.’92/AHP)
Outstanding Pharmacy Alumnus Service Award 2015

Deborah A. Southall (B.S.’95/D)
Dr. Franci Stavropoulos Outstanding Dental Hygiene Alumnus Award 2015

Pinkney “Pete” Sowers III, M.D.
(M.D.’70/M; H.S.’73/M)
Caravati Service Award 2015

Kit Tucker Sullivan, D.D.S.
(D.D.S.’83/D)
Dr. Harry Lyons Outstanding Alumnus Award 2015

Marilyn Tavenner (B.S.’83/N;
M.H.A.’89/AHP)
Department of Health Administration Lifetime Service Award 2016

Tracy Williams, D.N.P. (M.S.’88/N)
Outstanding Nurse Alumnus Award 2016

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