

# WAYNE STATE

Spring/Summer 2022

FREE  
FENSTER



# Share your words of wisdom

## You left Wayne State with much more than a degree.

### RON SHELL '66, M.S. '72

Years later, you will realize that your college experience was one of the best experiences in your entire life. Don't rush through this time of freedom, growth and fun!



### MARIA E. PEREZ '80

Be open to every opportunity that comes your way, and always remember that chance favors those in motion.



### YOUNGKEY CHUNG '10, M.A. '11, M.D. '15

Be kind and make friends everywhere you go — you never know when your paths will cross in the future!



Participate at [alumni.wayne.edu/connect/advice](https://alumni.wayne.edu/connect/advice).





ALUMNI.WAYNE.EDU

# LOOKING AHEAD TOGETHER

When I first realized that I would be writing this letter as both the executive director of the Alumni Association and managing editor of Wayne State Magazine, I thought it would be strange to be wearing both hats. But then I realized it isn't strange at all. It's an opportunity.

As managing editor, I have been sharing alumni stories for many years. Those stories come to us in a number of ways — from alumni, from family members, from co-workers, from professors who keep in touch with their former students. Now, as executive director, I have the opportunity to go right to the source — to personally meet more alumni locally and across the country. I have no doubt I will be hearing many more stories than the magazine can hold.

Wayne State Warriors are an impressive bunch. They are pet attorneys, sports social workers, athletes, engineers and researchers. They create apps. They have survived shipwrecks and deadly viruses including Ebola. They are makers, urban farmers, beekeepers and animators. They are VPs of Fortune 100 companies, local activists and educators.

I am excited to continue to share how WSU alumni are answering a calling personally or professionally, making an impact on others and our planet. The common denominator is a shared pride in their alma mater. The experiences from your time on campus have been formative — whether you were here in the late 1960s and witnessed the Detroit uprising or attended WSU during a different kind of crisis — the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. That tie to Wayne State is one that I hope the Alumni Association can maintain and strengthen. We strive to be a resource for the entire community of more than 294,000 alumni.

The dedication and perseverance of Wayne State alumni to make the world a better place is seemingly endless. I know there are many more stories to tell, and I sincerely look forward to hearing yours.



**Annessa Morley '90**  
Executive Director  
WSU Alumni Association



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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Dear Alumni,

I am pleased to report that Wayne State University navigated the pandemic, learned a lot, adapted and is now moving forward in big and exciting ways.

Construction on the \$69.5 million Hilberry Gateway — a major project for theater, music and dance — is expected to be completed at the end of this year. The former Hilberry Theatre will then be renovated and become the home of the Gretchen Valade Jazz Center. I hope you will join me soon in taking in a show.

We also have exciting plans for our oldest classroom building, State Hall, which was built in 1947. Construction begins this month on a \$70 million renovation that will overhaul 69 classrooms and add student lounges and collaboration spaces on each floor. Given that 78% of undergraduate students have at least one class in State Hall, this will greatly enhance the student experience. State Hall will reopen for classes in Fall 2023.

Of course, student success remains our top priority. We made tremendous strides over the last five years. We know how to do this, and we are excited to keep improving. When our students do well, our city, state and the world do well. This is a goal worth getting up in the morning for.

To that end, Wayne State does very well on social mobility indexes — which measure how colleges help students rise through education and opportunity. In fact, we are

ranked in the top 10 in the nation in providing social mobility among major research universities, and we plan to become number one. This is a key reason we exist, and we have an opportunity to help even more people become productive and prosperous citizens.

We have also been very successful in increasing our research grants. Research awards and sponsored research agreements totaled more than \$320 million in fiscal year 2021, a \$79 million — or 33% — increase in research awards over the last five years. We plan to continue rising in those rankings as well while prioritizing research and engagement that tackle real-world problems in our community.

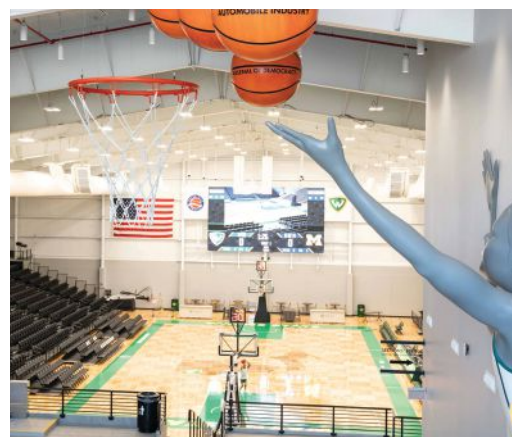
Finally, I have a request of you. Whether you are talking to colleagues or advising a friend on where their child should attend college, we all have an opportunity to help build the reputation of our university. Please share the good news about Wayne State and encourage those in your circle to give us a look, to tour our beautiful campus and to apply to become Warriors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Roy Wilson".

**M. Roy Wilson**  
President, Wayne State University









# FREE FENSTER

*By Annessa Morley '90*



On May 24, 2021, Danny Fenster went from waiting to board a plane from Myanmar to Detroit, dreaming of a hometown coney island Greek salad, to being shackled and ultimately detained for six months. Likening it to a scene out of a movie, Fenster describes the arrest at the airport as surreal. For this journalist, it only became real when months later prison guards took away his pen and paper.







“A large group of police walked up and made an announcement that they were looking for Daniel Jacob Fenster. I look around, and then meekly raised my hand,” Fenster said. “They started leading me away. I wasn’t resisting but they still had their hands on me, on my shoulders, and led me to another part of the airport, where they started asking me questions.”

The questions centered around his time spent working as a journalist in the country.

Fenster earned a bachelor’s degree from Columbia College Chicago and a master’s in creative writing at Wayne State in 2016. After working in journalism in Detroit and Louisiana, the Michigan native landed in Myanmar as an editor for the online news agency Myanmar Now. When the military seized power of the country in a coup d’état on Feb. 1, 2021, they denounced the news outlet as anti-military. But Fenster had already moved on to a different job with the independent magazine Frontier Myanmar.

“I only worked at Myanmar Now for six months in 2020, and I was an editor not a reporter; I was in the background. But I think they genuinely thought I still worked there. It was part of their larger media

crackdown trying to silence critics by either detaining them or force them to flee the country,” Fenster said.

He was angry at the thought of missing his flight and could not understand why he was being detained. But it was a familiar story he had edited many times — and while it usually consisted of interrogation and torture, he kept faith that his story would end differently.

“In the stories I had been editing, when they would arrest protestors and demonstrators they would torture and interrogate them at one location and then drop them off at the prison,” Fenster explained. “They blindfolded me, handcuffed me, put me in a van and drove me to another location. There were metal shackles in the floor. They handcuffed my feet to the floor and my hands to the chair and started interrogating me again. I knew that if something very painful was going to happen, it would be there. But I was still mostly angry at them and not scared. I explained several times that I did not work for Myanmar Now. But the bureaucratic process had started, and they were following orders.”

By the end of that day Fenster sat in front of a judge who said he was being charged and would have to wait in jail two weeks for a hearing. He was taken to



*"They blindfolded me, handcuffed me, put me in a van and drove me to another location."*

Yangon's Insein Prison, which has housed political prisoners for decades.

"At that point I realized that I was going to be there for two weeks," Fenster said. "Then it started setting in: 'wow, I might I might actually be pretty powerless here.'"

Fenster admits he is still trying to go through the chronology of the details in his head, because in prison the concept of time became very confused.

"Early on I kept making two-week calendars, because that is when the trials were supposed to come and I thought each calendar was my chance to go home," he said. "Then I started making one-month calendars, and after a while I would look at that first day of the month and think, 'I'm not going home this month.'"

"After several ups and downs, I got into this mindset of thinking about each day. I had little routines that marked weeks: We would order food items from prison commissary on Tuesday and get it on Sunday — that was one way to mark time.

He had managed to text his wife, Juliana, at the airport before the interrogators took his phone, and had told her to alert the U.S. embassy. But unable to tell her

his whereabouts, he had no clue if she knew what had happened to him until he received a message from the outside.

"The military was not releasing names of those they had jailed, so if family members suspected somebody had been arrested, they would show up with a food package and give the name. And if that person was there they would accept the package. Within a week, I received a package from my wife. Then I realized she knew where I was. But then it took another month before I could talk to the embassy."

Later, he got caught trying to send notes to his wife. Guards raided his room and took all the pens and paper.

"That was a particularly demoralizing thing, because it was the one thing I was holding on to — being a journalist, being able to take notes, thinking I would get out and tell this story and this will all have had a purpose."



## THE SYSTEM

Hearing about all of the news coverage upon his release, Fenster said he is not surprised the U.S. media was just as confused by the charges as he was.

“These are sedition and incitement charges that stem from the British penal code and have been used for so long just for political repression,” he said. “And in the wake of the coup they started adding new fake-news laws. I understand why the coverage in the U.S. glossed over most of the legal stuff. Even when the charge is filed, you are on pre-trial, and not actually charged until judge accepts the charges. It is very confusing, but that is a distinction that I don’t think most media was making. The entire process is extremely drawn out.

“Who is going to help me?”

“During the times when nothing was progressing, I was thinking ‘the U.S. has no relationship with the military, who is going to help me?’ I thought I had probably become a symbol for the military to show that they would not be bossed around by the U.N. or U.S. So, then I started thinking, I am not a special case here. Now I am in the Myanmar legal system. And then I started feeling pretty desperate and depressed.”

Just when he was at his low point, things were starting to happen back home. From Day One, his brother and parents had engaged in a concerted effort to raise awareness of Fenster’s situation, with legislators, the embassy and the media. His older brother designed Bring Danny Home t-shirts, and lawn signs soon dotted metro Detroit neighborhoods. His family was granting interviews to CNN, the BBC and other news outlets around the world. The wheels were turning and, for Fenster, hope was on the horizon.

Rose and Buddy Fenster, parents of Danny Fenster ►







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"Then they shackled me  
and fingerprinted me  
as a convict.  
I once again did not know  
what to think."





## CHANGING FOR THE BETTER

One day a government newspaper given to prisoners featured a picture of Bill Richardson, former governor of New Mexico. An English-speaking inmate told Fenster, “Your governor is here trying to get you out.” His trial dates went from every two weeks to one week, and then every day. But Fenster was careful not to get his hopes up too high. What he did not realize is that Richardson had a history of frequently acting as an intermediary for families of Americans kidnapped, detained or killed abroad, particularly in Myanmar.

“Sure, it’s probably a good sign, but I don’t know how to read the tea leaves in Myanmar,” he said. And he was right to be cautious. On the last day of the trial, an immigration officer appeared. The police and Fenster’s attorney took it as a good sign. But during the trial a new charge was brought — an immigration charge. He now faced charges of incitement, contacting illegal organizations and visa violations carrying a sentence totaling 11 years with hard labor. The judge swiftly ruled for conviction on all three counts.

“Once a judge accepts the charges in almost any case the verdict is already understood. It’s not an actual trial — the decision is already made,” he said. “Also, everyone at the prison was saying if they held a foreigner for six months and then declared them innocent it would look really bad. So the thought was they are going to find you guilty to save face and then say because you committed this crime you are being kicked out the country. You are going back home.”

But the atmosphere in the courtroom was not reassuring.

“The judge wouldn’t look at me, and the police would no longer talk to me,” Fenster said. “The mood completely changed. Then they shackled me and fingerprinted me as a convict. I once again did not know what to think.”

Fenster was convicted on a Friday and sent back to prison. On Monday morning, prison officials woke him earlier than when they usually opened the doors, told him to pack a bag and then put him into an SUV, seated between armed guards. As they drove in silence past the airport and toward the capital, Fenster assumed he was being transferred to another prison. He was taken to a police station where, after several hours, they informed him he was being given a pardon.

“I let out such a massive sigh of relief,” Fenster recalled. “I was exhausted at that point, so the reaction was joy and excitement, but more of just a feeling of leaning back and finally being able to rest.” And then he was whisked away to the airport where a private jet and Bill Richardson were waiting.

“I was very worried that because we were in the capitol, they were going to have some kind of ceremony where I would have to thank the leaders for my release. I was really worried about that, but now I realize that’s probably where Bill Richardson was the whole time.”

Richardson, a former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. had indeed been negotiating Fenster’s release. He was the one person who met Fenster outside the capital and accompanied him on a private jet headed home. When asked during the flight if he wanted chicken, steak or lobster and preferred champagne or beer, Fenster said, “I’ll have all of that.”

While on board Fenster called his brother, his parents and his wife. With Wi-Fi access for the first time in months, it was the first time he saw the impact of his story. “Reading how much coverage there had been around the world was surreal,” he said. “When we landed in Qatar there was a bunch of reporters shouting at me — it was all very shocking to me, and then I realized this was covered; this was a story.”

"It was very bizarre - it felt great - every emotion attached to it was gratitude, appreciation and just sheer happiness that I was back home."









"We were representing  
the people of Myanmar,  
helping them to tell  
the story of their  
country. Even if it  
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still worth doing."





The press was waiting when he returned to his parents home in Huntington Woods, as well: “When I first got home local reporters were in our driveway. I unloaded the car and talked to the reporters for a couple of minutes and then we got carryout from the Coney Island and had lots of people over.”

The next morning, he went for a jog and was surprised at the outpouring of well wishes from the neighbors. “There were yard signs with my face on them all over,” he said. “It was very bizarre – it felt great – every emotion attached to it was gratitude, appreciation and just sheer happiness that I was back home.”

The journalist did not stay home for long. A few months after his return home in November, he was off to Brazil with his wife, a consular official with the Brazilian embassy. Fenster continued to work for Frontier Myanmar remotely. The entire staff of the news outlet had fled Myanmar and are now centered in the city of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, a hub for Myanmar refugees, displaced people and exiled media. At the time of this interview, Fenster was also living there.



When asked if he gets nervous about once again living in a foreign country, he said he is not worried.

“I did research before I came here with the State Department, and I feel safe here,” he declared. He also still carries the passion for his work.

“When I was detained, I had already been in the mindset of wrapping up my time in Myanmar. There was an election in 2020 and we covered it and did a lot of really good work, and I thought that was a nice capstone,” he said. “And then the coup happened, and I thought I would try to stay as long as I could. I thought I was safe and pretty low key. I thought I might be able to stay longer than most journalists which would have been a unique opportunity. I guess in a sense I did — I just wasn’t reporting for most of that time. But now I feel very connected to the place and the people that I was working with, so I can’t walk away from it completely.”

He has applied for journalism fellowships at Harvard and at University of Michigan, through which he hopes to explore freedom of the press using his Myanmar experience as a case study.

“There is an easy cynicism that a lot of people adopt about journalists as activists, but there are distinctions between the two,” he said. “A journalist working in a country that does not have a free press is in a sense an activist for free expression. But people tend to think you are just idealistic. They may say, ‘hey, he decided to go there, he knew what he was getting into,’” Fenster said. “I agree that I decided to go there — but it was not a naïve decision, and I would still do it again. We were representing the people of Myanmar, helping them to tell the story of their country. Even if it had gone worse, it was still worth doing.” ♡







# CAP CREATIONS

*By Rebecca Kavanagh*

In 2018, nurse anesthetist Donna Dzialo took a closer look at the colorful drug-vial caps she'd been throwing away at work, and began saving them instead.

Dzialo, who earned a bachelor's in 1996 from the WSU College of Nursing and a master's in 1999 from the Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice program (as it is now known), said, "The caps have a unique beauty that I appreciated as a nurse, a scientist and an artist."

A hospital colleague suggested she create a mosaic version of a Monet painting, "but when COVID came and changed the world, it also changed my design plan."

Dzialo spent hours upon at home in her basement workspace, ultimately piecing together more than 6,000 caps in nearly 400 different colors, sizes, shapes and textures. Using IV tubing and needle covers along with the caps, she created "COVID Time CAPSule," representing infected cells, blood cells and antibodies.

"Viruses are smaller than a grain of salt but have an astounding impact on us all — on our health, mental wellness, work, travel, and community and family relationships," Dzialo said. "The caps shown here, with different colors, shapes, sizes, finishes and all their different potential combinations, make this work as unique as we are."

The 8-by-4-foot project earned a coveted spot on display at the downtown JW Marriott hotel during last fall's ArtPrize, an international art competition held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, since 2009. ArtPrize celebrates artists working in all mediums from anywhere in the world, and is open to anyone with artwork to enter and a venue willing to host it.



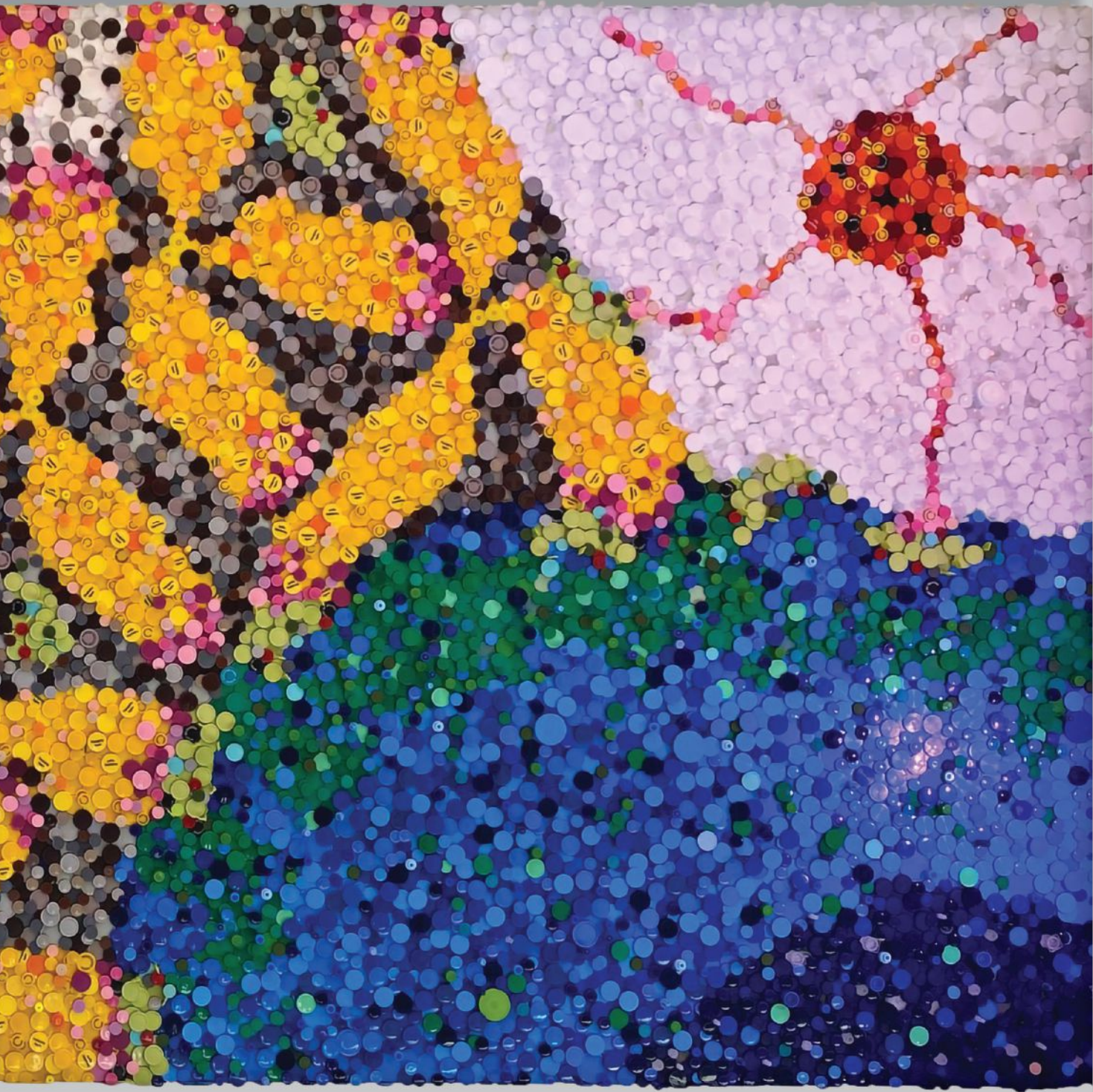




*“COVID Time CAPSule”, which represents infected cells, blood cells and antibodies.*













## COVID TIME CAPSULE INCLUDES

**COVID virus** (4 in upper left corner)

**Infected cell**

- COVID entering (top of cell)
- ▼ 7 Infectious Globules: Grey, Green, & Red
- 4 Replicated COVID particles: Lime green with Red & Black
- ▶ 1 mRNA Chain (COVID's replication and transmission machinery)

**White Blood Cells**

**Antibody Producing Cells**

**Antibodies:** Windmill shape (with pink COVID recognition tips)

**Natural Killer Cell:** Top right corner cell (with the long, skinny arms)

**Healthy Cells:** Lime green with Red & Black (with 6 replicated COVID particles attaching)

For three weeks each autumn, art is exhibited throughout the city in parks and museums, in hotels and storefronts, in bars and on bridges, and even in the river that runs through town. Visitors from around the world gather to view the art, engage in meaningful discussions, and vote for their favorite entries, with cash prizes and grants awarded to select artists in the end.

“While displaying this piece at ArtPrize for 21 days, I found that people were really attracted to it,” said Dzialo, “especially those who had gotten infected or lost a loved one to COVID, and of course all of those with medical backgrounds.”

During conversations about the creative project with ArtPrize attendees, Dzialo was quick to share credit with her support team.

“Health care professionals have been on the front lines during this pandemic, and I would be remiss if I didn’t mention how many nurses, assistants, techs and pharmacists at work helped by saving me caps. Everyone from pre-op to recovery pitched in to get me a certain color I was low on, or a special size and shape I needed more of,” Dzialo said. “For two years, our wonderful scrub techs saved any caps I had left behind in operating rooms and made sure I got them! And then my 16-year-old daughter Stephanie sorted everything I brought home by color, shape and size. I’m grateful for the combined support.”



DETROIT  
-VS-  
EVERYBODY

DETROIT  
-VS-  
EVERYBODY



# THE AMAZING RACE


*By Annessa Morley '90*

**Natalia Kumar grew up watching  
*The Amazing Race* with her father  
and dreaming of competing someday.  
She got the chance to achieve her  
dream not only once, but twice. And  
she did it with her dad.**







A man with a shaved head, wearing a red t-shirt, black leggings, and grey sneakers with orange soles, is running up a wide stone staircase. He is carrying a very large, dark-colored backpack that covers most of his torso. The staircase is made of light-colored stone blocks and has a metal railing on the left side. In the background, there are buildings, trees, and other people walking. A sign on the right side of the staircase reads "INVLI. IZIPIZI" with a "40" speed limit sign below it. The overall scene suggests a physical challenge or a race.

**“We were running  
around London  
with these huge  
backpacks on the  
first leg –  
we were dying.”**



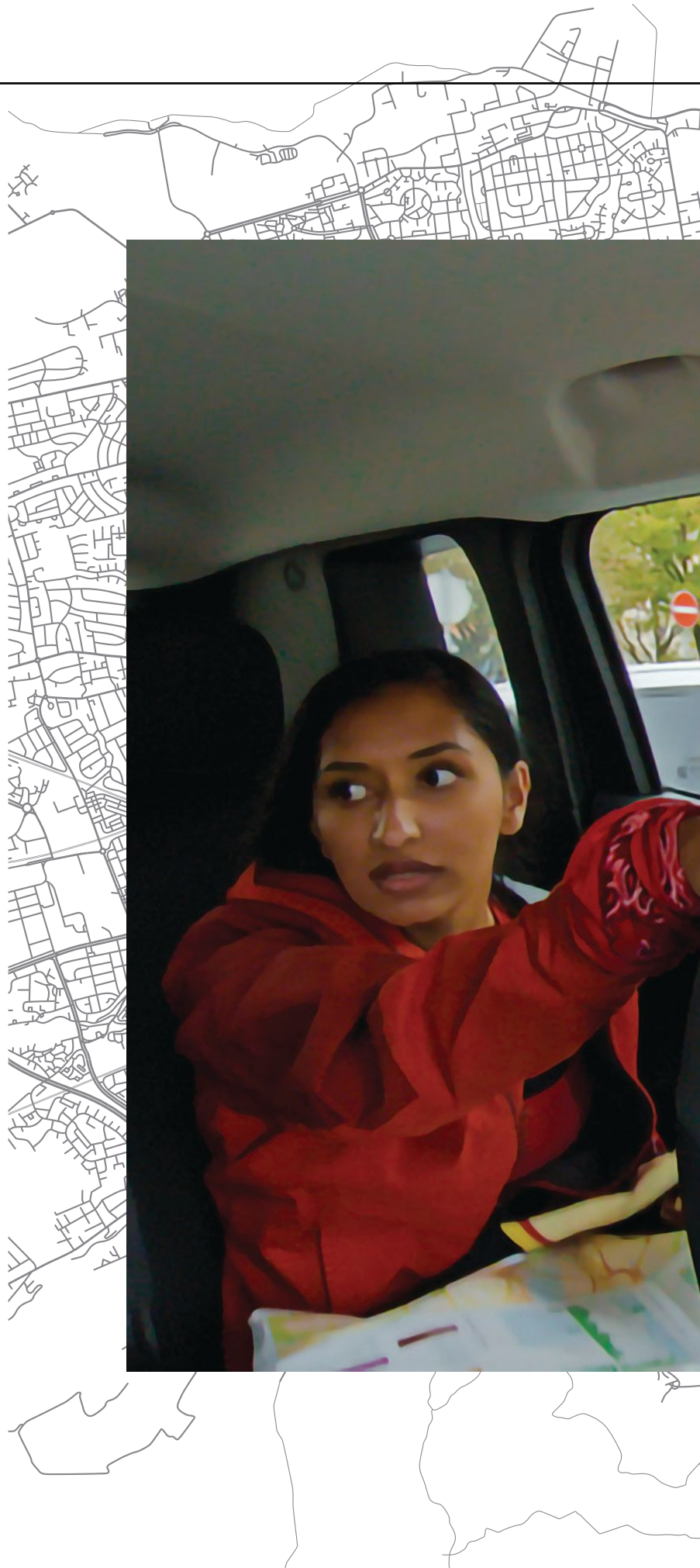
**I**t was 2016 when Kumar, a 2015 graduate of the Mike Ilitch School of Business, and her fiancé sent in an audition tape to the reality TV show. Three years later, the show contacted them to come to the West Coast for a final audition. With her fiancé unable to go due to his medical school residency, she turned to her dad, Arun Kumar. The two were selected and then had one month to get ready.

“We tried to get in shape, but honestly the most time was spent trying to pack — you get to bring one backpack for a month and you have no idea where you are going,” Kumar said. “They don’t give you any guidance, only a short list of what you cannot bring — maps, navigation tools of any kind. And they take your phones. I packed and unpacked every day until we left.”

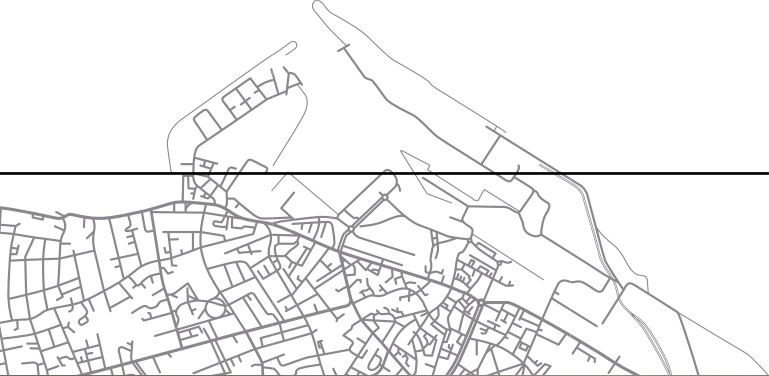
With no clue where they were headed, the teams were whisked away on a charter plane to their first unknown destination — London, England.

“From Day One it was so much more physical than we thought. We were running around London with these huge backpacks on the first leg — we were dying,” she said. “On TV it looks easy but what you don’t see is our 30-minute run through the streets. I was so proud of my dad. At 56, he was the oldest contestant, but he kept up from the physical standpoint.”

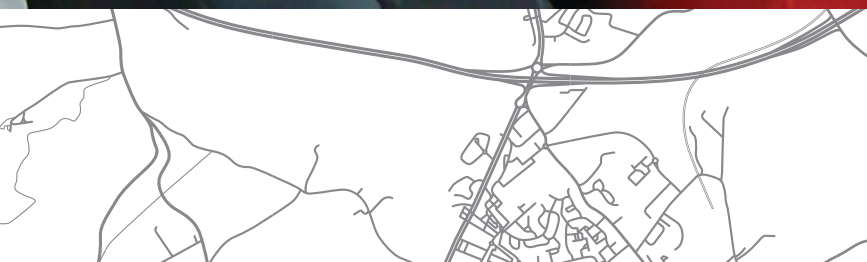
As the teams arrived at their next stop in Scotland, the Kumars were in third place, which would turn out to be their highest ranking of the season. One of the challenges there was taking the stage to sing a Scottish nursery rhyme, “Donald Where’s Your Troosers”. For Natalia, it is a key moment that she will always remember.







**"They give you a map  
and say 'here you go',  
and you are driving a  
stick shift on the other  
side of the road."**





## 'how did they not see this?'

"My dad's biggest fear is singing, especially in English, which is not his native language. But he faced his fear and he did it," she said. "That was a rough date for us, but it was an emotional moment between us and something I will never forget."

The father-daughter team was eliminated because of that challenge. Although they went out on a low note, the fan-favorite duo would be granted a reprise.

After filming just three episodes, the production of Season 33 was halted as the COVID pandemic spread across the globe. Teams were sent home after just two weeks. A year and a half later, taping resumed — but things looked very different: Kumar and her father had been invited back to the show and were soon off to another mystery destination.

Once again navigation tools were not allowed, and that became the pair's ultimate downfall. The new COVID-accommodating route drastically increased the amount of self-driving, which Kumar admits proved to be the most challenging aspect of the entire experience. They were plagued with navigational issues throughout the rest of the season which consistently sent them to the back of the pack.

"Normally one or two legs you are navigating in a car, but this time it was almost every leg. They give you a map and say 'here you go', and you are driving a stick shift on the other side of the road."

COVID continued to impact the race in other ways as well.

"You could not approach strangers in the towns and ask for help," Kumar explained. "And, because we were mostly in our own vehicles, it was hard to keep track of where you were in relation to other teams."

Each team had a camera operator and sound technician with them at all times. Kumar said that











Los Angeles

**When the season was complete, the teams had traveled through seven countries and over 22,000 miles.**





**Switzerland**

**Greece**

**Scotland**

**England**

**France**

**Portugal**

**Corsica**



## **‘Don’t give up; we just have to keep going.’**

eventually, she would forget they were on camera as adrenaline took over.

“I was surprised at how much I was running on adrenaline and how much it affects you. It can mess with your judgment, and you make hasty mistakes,” she said. “When you are on the couch watching it’s easy to judge and say, ‘how did they not see this?’ But when you are caught up in the moment, the adrenaline is pumping and you have blinders on.”

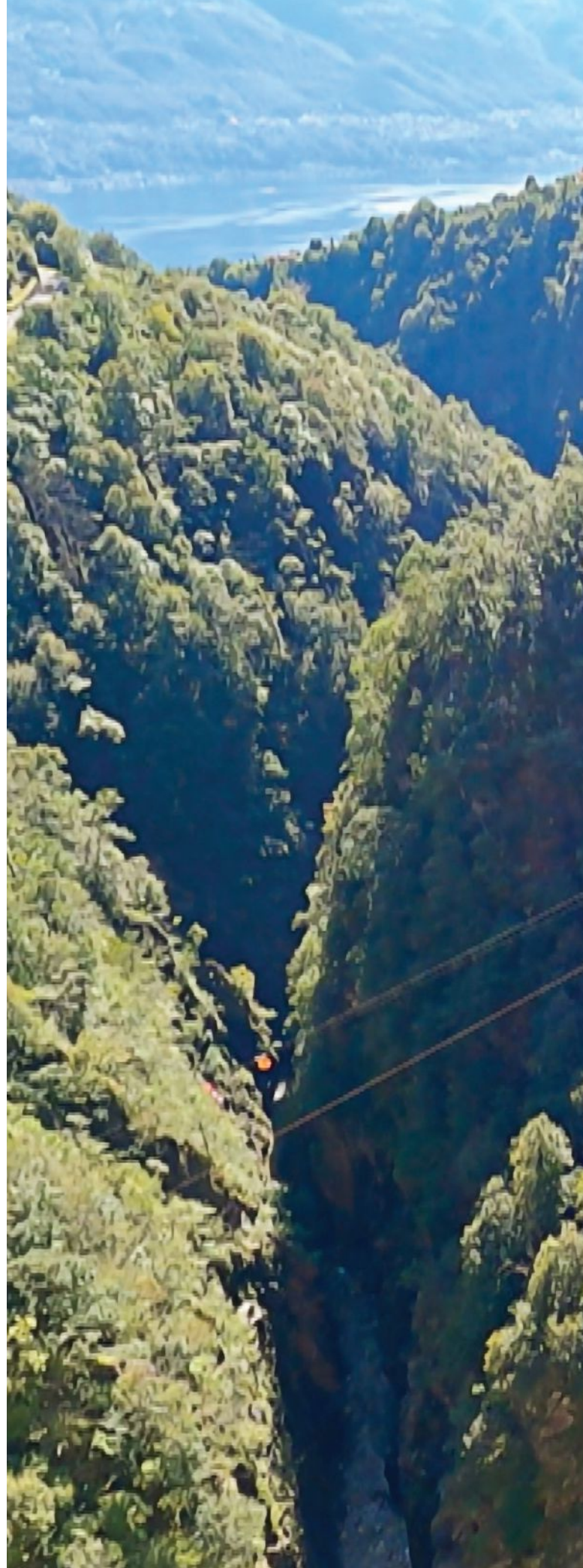
When the season was complete, the teams had traveled through seven countries and over 22,000 miles. They pushed on through Europe, with stops in Corsica, Switzerland, France, Greece and Portugal.

There was no time to stop and grab souvenirs, but the Kumars did try to savor the moments — and the views — whenever they could.

“When we were filming, no one was traveling because of the pandemic. Travel had essentially been put on pause for the entire world,” Kumar recalled. “When we were in Switzerland on top of a mountain, we said we just need to pause for a second and appreciate where we are right now. We were grateful that we had this opportunity.”

The Kumars finished fourth overall but the experience was more valuable than any prize money. For Natalia, it was eye-opening to see how resilient her dad was. The elder Kumar became a social media fan favorite for his positive attitude, which his daughter said was not an act.

“The thing that everyone saw in him and he became known for is that he was just so positive all the time,” she said. “He motivated me so much, even behind the scenes. He was telling me, ‘Don’t give up; we just have to keep going.’ Him being able to give that to me was just a life-changing experience. It’s cliché, but it does bring you closer together.” w













# Dale Carnegie Pivots to the Future

*By Annessa Morley '90*

When you think of companies that have reached their 100-year anniversary and are still thriving, Dale Carnegie is probably not top of mind. It may come as a surprise to know that the company, born out of one man's idea to teach people how to develop interpersonal skills not only still exists, but is a global training powerhouse.





**D**ale Carnegie CEO Joe Hart '93 is making sure the company continues to stay relevant while it builds for the future.

"I have no doubt that the company today is bigger and brighter than Dale Carnegie ever thought it would be when he started it 110 years ago," said Hart. "Today, we have 200 operations in 86 countries, we deliver programs in 32 languages — in-person, online and hybrid. It may look a little different in the technology, but it is true to the founder's mission."

That mission, Hart went on to explain, is to develop people at all levels. The company offers a wide range of programs focused on interpersonal skills, leadership sales, presentation skills, and creating high-performing teams. Dale Carnegie clients range from 400 of the Fortune 500 to tens of thousands of small to midsize companies around the world to individuals seeking self-improvement. The company says more than 9 million people have taken a Dale Carnegie course.

"We help people unlock the potential that they have inside of them," Hart said. "I talk to people who took a course decades ago and they say, 'this program changed my life.' There are not too many things that we buy that we are talking about decades later as transformational."

Hart speaks from experience. When he graduated from Wayne Law in 1993 he joined a large law firm. Two years later he took a Dale Carnegie course.

"It truly changed the trajectory of my career," he said. "It got me thinking about how I was interacting with others. I started practicing the principles and people noticed."

It also got him thinking about a career change. "I was a lawyer, but not a happy lawyer," he quipped.

Hart had a vision for an e-learning company and in May 2000 Dale Carnegie became his first client. Well before many universities and educational outlets were online, and well before the Zoom revolution, Hart saw the opportunity for delivering training and education digitally. He sold that company in 2005 and started Asset Health, a national company focused on corporate wellness programs. While president of Asset Health he was recruited by Dale Carnegie and became CEO in 2015.

"I was blown away by the possibility of becoming CEO because Dale Carnegie meant so much to me. The Dale Carnegie principles, the books, are what guided me as I started my very first company," Hart said.



11:18 AM Sun Aug 22

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"Our life is what our  
thoughts make it'. I  
started thinking about  
where the opportunity  
lies in crisis."





“That first [e-learning] business was grueling. I started it right before the dot-com bubble, and right before 9/11. There were times when I was paralyzed and terrified that we weren’t going to make it,” he said. “I learned how to work with people through crisis, remain confident and positive through harrowing times. In January 2020 when we were faced with a new crisis, I found myself reliving some of those lessons.”

Hart brought many lessons from his previous companies with him to Dale Carnegie. And they would come in handy with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020 almost all Dale Carnegie courses offered around the world were in person. Only a small percentage of courses in the United States had been moved online. As CEO, Hart knew he had to make more changes quickly.

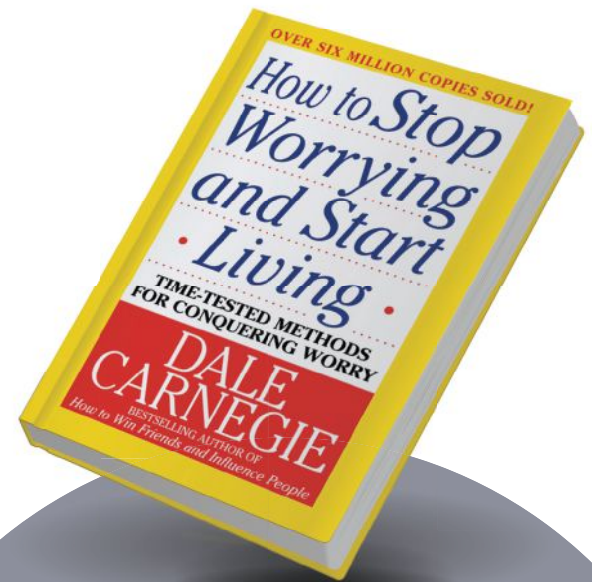
“Our operations in China started to shut down, and then other countries — it was catastrophic,” he said. “One of the things that enabled me to lead through that is a quote from Dale Carnegie’s ‘How to Stop Worrying and Start Living.’ It consists of eight words: ‘Our life is what our thoughts make it. I started thinking about where the opportunity lies in crisis.’”

The opportunity was not in changing the product itself, but instead in transforming the way it was delivered.

In less than six months, Hart was able to retrain the nearly 1,000 certified trainers around the globe to deliver the full range of the company’s programs online.

“There was such a wind at our back pushing us to get it done quickly. Our trainer certification process is among the most rigorous anywhere in the world. It can take a year or two to become a Dale Carnegie certified trainer and we needed to

retrain them quickly,” he said. “I am grateful to those teams all over the world. I give them all the credit because they were agile, they were resilient. They were struggling with all of the challenges around COVID, but they embraced a new way of operating.”



"If you can't sleep, then get up and do something instead of lying there and worrying. It's the worry that gets you, not the loss of sleep."

*Dale Carnegie*





"If you are not in the process of becoming the person you want to be, you are automatically engaged in becoming the person you don't want to be."

*Dale Carnegie*



## PIVOT

With the digital transformation underway, Hart is now turning his attention to a potential new client base.

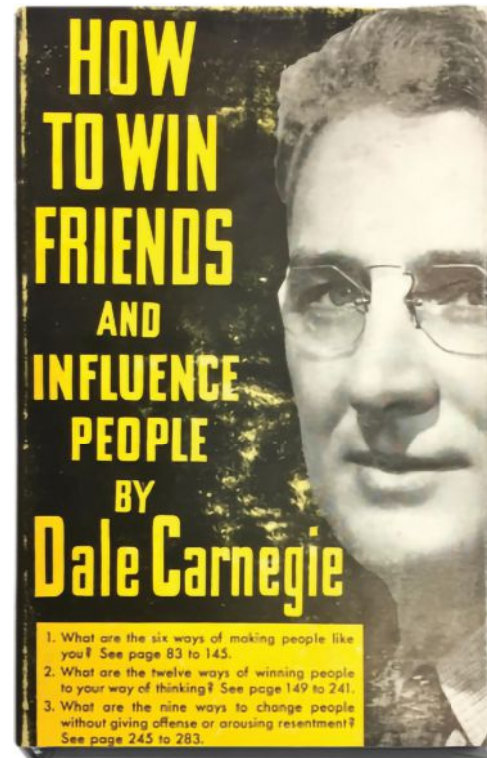
“One of the main reasons I came to Dale Carnegie is because I really believe in the brand. And one of my goals is to expand that brand to reach people who do not know us,” Hart said.

Much of the brand's material was written decades ago, and Hart knows that a common misconception, especially among young people, is that Dale Carnegie is outdated.

“The book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has been a bestseller for 85 years,” he said. “The principles that Dale Carnegie developed are every bit as relevant today for younger people. For this generation that is so connected to their cell phone, to tech, the reality is that they can benefit from what we are doing as much, and maybe more than anyone.”

Dale Carnegie has always offered courses for younger people — four of Hart's kids have taken a course. The result, he said, was a tremendous increase in confidence. Today, he is at work co-authoring a book for the younger generation. Called *Take Command*, it is a book, he says, that will prove that Dale Carnegie lessons are timeless and global.

“The principles work globally. Because they connect people on a human level, it transcends culture,” Hart said. “I think about all that the entire world has gone through over the past couple years regarding COVID, lockdowns and now the crisis in Ukraine. One of the things I feel really good about is helping people learn how



to manage and deal with stress and anxiety. As leaders it is our responsibility to think about our teams and help them be as successful and healthy as possible.”

Hart is confident that Dale Carnegie will continue to flourish in the digital space. He is continuing to invest in the digital learning platform, microlearning and video-based content. He is also excited to launch a “transformative” program around diversity, equity and inclusion.

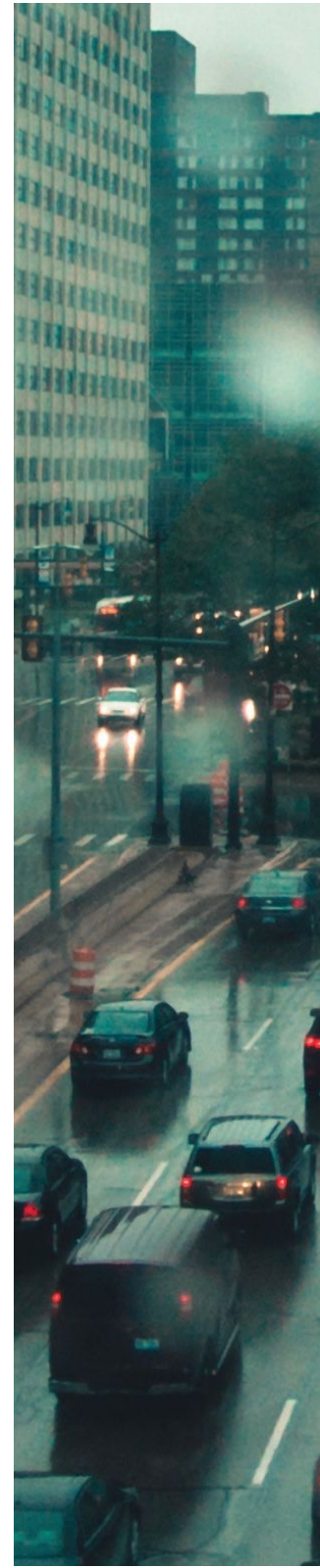
“We are building for the future, and we are also leveraging the things that have been so effective in the past,” he said. “We are taking the things that made this company awesome and building on those so that we can take this company to an entirely new place in the future.”



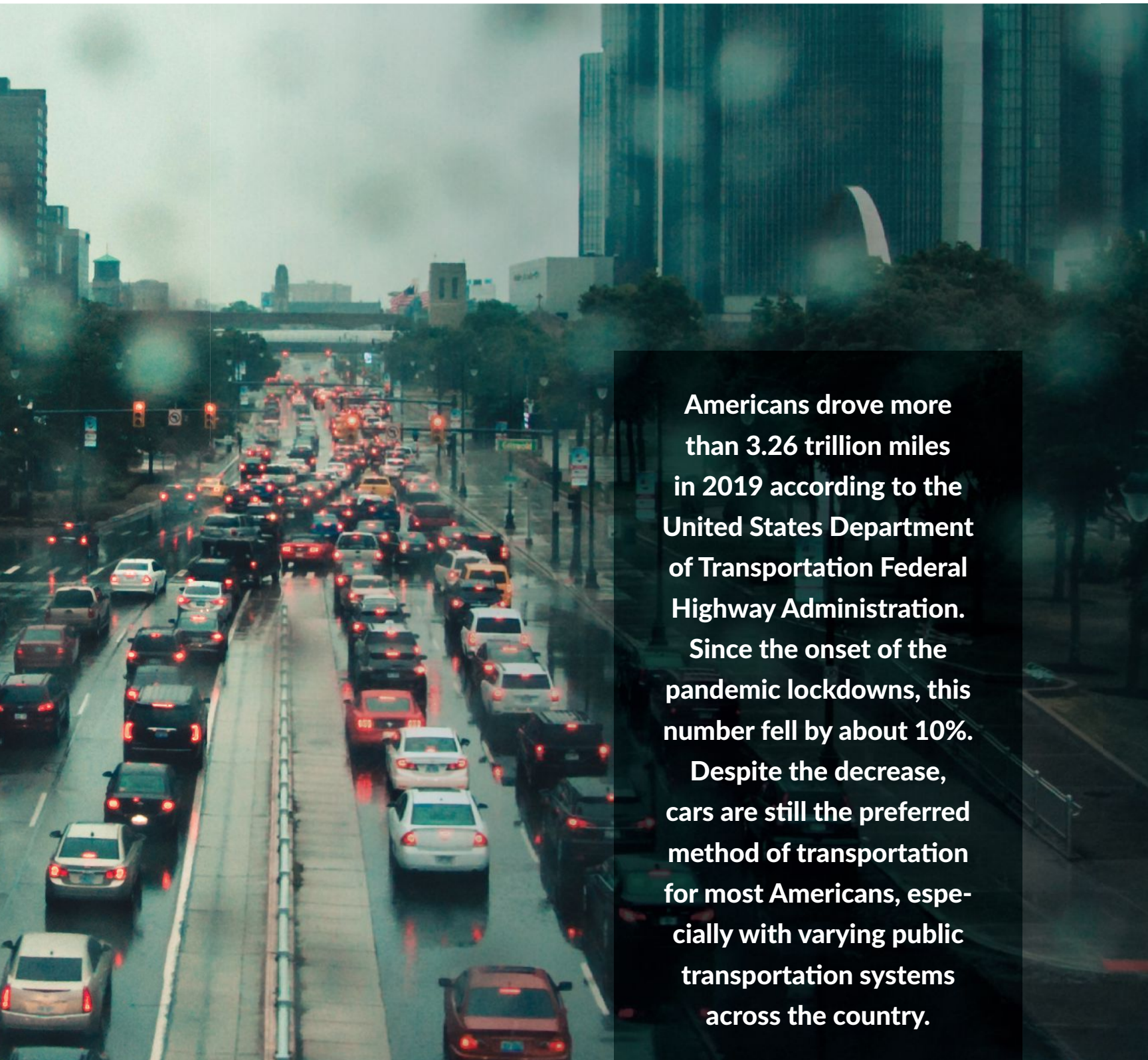


# KEEPING OUR ROADS SAFE

*By Jacqueline Lee*







Americans drove more than 3.26 trillion miles in 2019 according to the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.

Since the onset of the pandemic lockdowns, this number fell by about 10%.

Despite the decrease, cars are still the preferred method of transportation for most Americans, especially with varying public transportation systems across the country.

Americans drove more than 3.26 trillion miles in 2019, according to the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. Since the onset of the pandemic lockdowns, that number fell by about 10%. Despite the decrease, cars are still the preferred method of transportation for most Americans, especially with varying public transportation systems across the country.

With numbers like these, a comprehensive and safe-system approach to oversee those who design, build, operate, and use the road system is obligatory. This job is handled by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and one component of the organization is the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI), which happens to be led by Wayne State University alumnus Dr. Stephen Ridella '90.

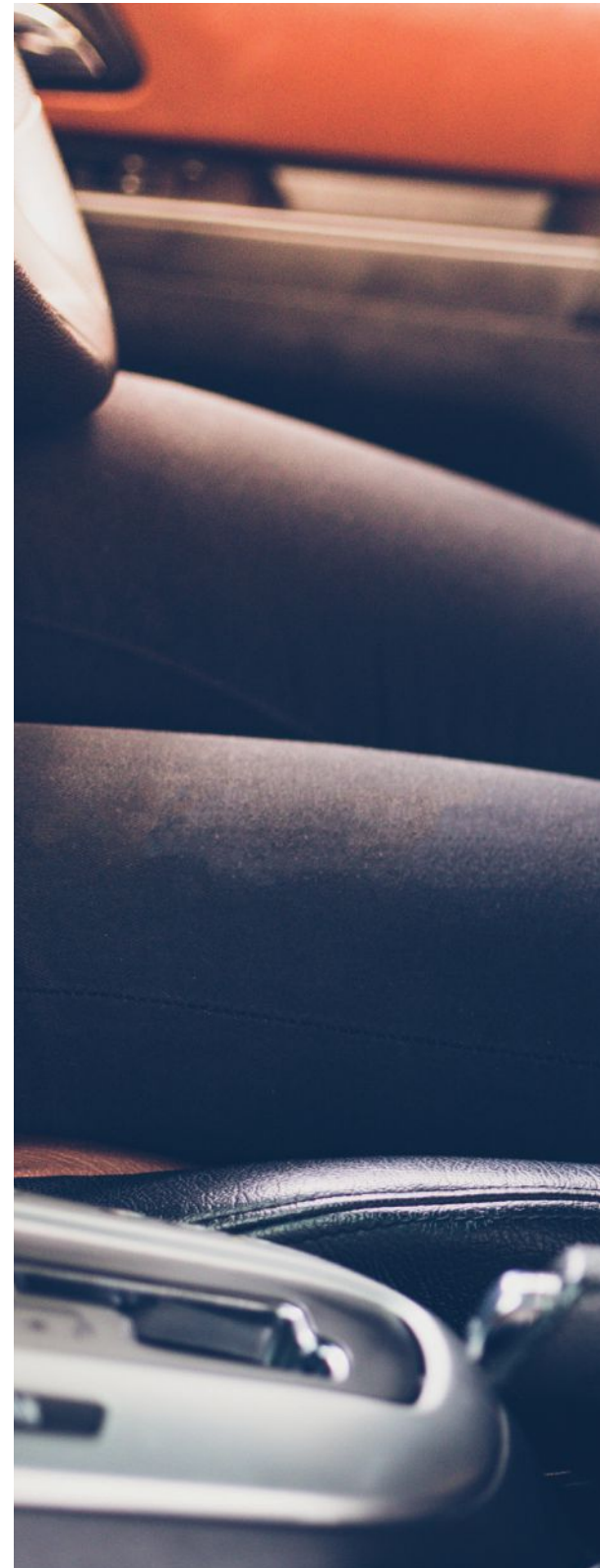
“Saving lives and reducing injuries is our goal,” said Ridella. “We are a smaller department within the Department of Transportation, and we are responsible for every vehicle on the road, practically.”

Ridella’s office is responsible for the investigation, inspection and testing that identifies and corrects safety-related defects in motor vehicles and equipment. ODI also oversees and manages all motor vehicle and equipment recalls from notification through completion.

“The safety of vehicles is a large part of my work,” Ridella shared. “We’re responsible for setting the safety standards for dozens of vehicles, and we’re responsible for updating them as necessary based on technology. We also enforce to ensure they’re actually happening in cars.”

Safety standards are the preventative portion of Ridella’s role, but it doesn’t end there.

“More than 1,100 vehicle and equipment recalls took place in 2021 alone — the biggest year yet,” said Ridella.









**“50,000 to 70,000  
complaints come in a  
year and we read each  
one and follow up.”**





The ODI investigates and manages these defects and is responsible for communicating the information to the public. Recalls can affect anyone at any time, and car companies are responsible for fixing defects in design, manufacturing or performance at no cost to the buyer.

The Takata airbag defect was one of the largest and most complex safety recalls in ODI history, Ridella said. The recall was in response to exploding airbags caused by ammonium nitrate-based propellant without a chemical drying agent. A variety of conditions and circumstances increased the risk that the airbags would defectively inflate, and according to the organization, led to more than 27 deaths and 400 injuries.

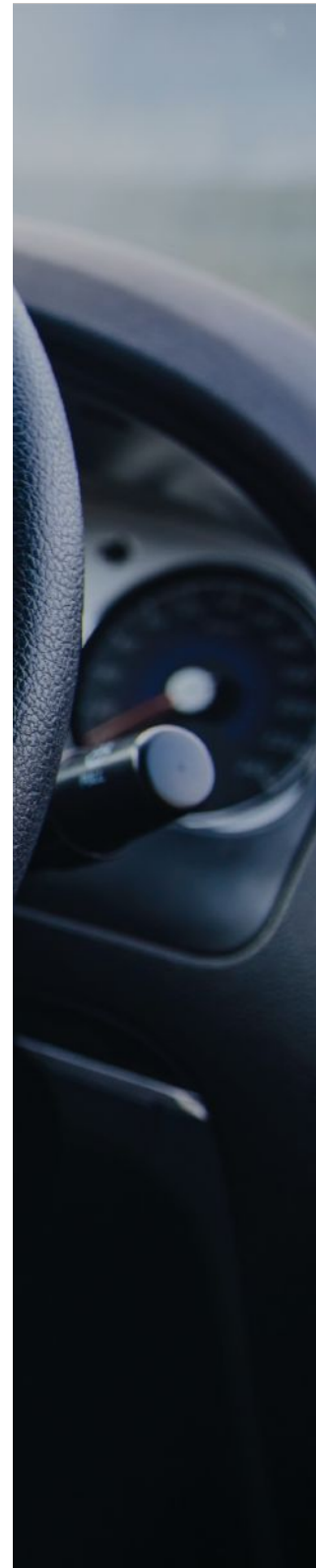
“We implemented everything in a very coordinated way so that all of the airbags could get replaced,” said Ridella. “The demand was high and there weren’t enough materials readily available, so there had to be a prioritization process. More than 67 million pieces of equipment were replaced around the country and world,” he continued.

Ridella said the recall process often begins with consumer complaints.

“We read consumer complaints and we actually encourage them; 50,000 to 70,000 complaints come in a year and we read each one and follow up. We use this information in pre-investigative methodology, testing and analysis.”

More data and analysis are the key to saving lives, according to Ridella. Although the number of recalls is higher than in past years, he explained why that may not actually be a bad thing.

“Millions of vehicles are produced every year, so sooner or later there will be an issue — and we expect it,” said Ridella. “With more data and





better data analysis, between us and the manufacturers, we're finding better ways to identify and recall. This leads to more recalls overall, but fewer numbers of recalls per vehicle."

There are several other factors that affect the way the NHTSA views vehicle and road safety, including considerations like the pandemic and technology.

"The fatality rate during the pandemic increased a lot in 2020 and '21 even though people drove less. People's behavior changed a lot," said Ridella. "Fatalities decreased a lot in the early 2000s due to better vehicle technology, more seat belts and helping eliminate distracted driving — mainly with cell phones."


Ridella shared that one way to help lower fatalities and increase the recall response rate is through the organization's awareness efforts.

"We share messages online, through social media, radio tours, ads and billboards, [Vehicle Safety] Recall Awareness Week and more," he said.


The NHTSA leads many recognizable efforts and major marketing campaigns to educate consumers on road and vehicle safety, including Don't Drink and Drive ads, the proper use of child seats, daylight savings time changes, and its well known "Click It or Ticket" campaign.

"Overall, we're working to raise awareness and to give people access to the tools they need to be safe," said Ridella. "From research to communications, manufacturers and legal, there is never a dull moment."

He said that while research is a passion of his, his work at the NHTSA is most rewarding.

"We have a great mission that is improving the future of mobility and safety from a holistic perspective," said Ridella. "It's truly gratifying when recalls are fixed — you're making a real impact right away." 



A photograph of a person with glasses driving a car, looking down at a smartphone held in their right hand. The image is partially obscured by blue geometric overlays. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

**“The fatality rate during the pandemic increased a lot in 2020 and '21 even though people drove less.”**



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# KEEP STUDENTS MOVING FORWARD

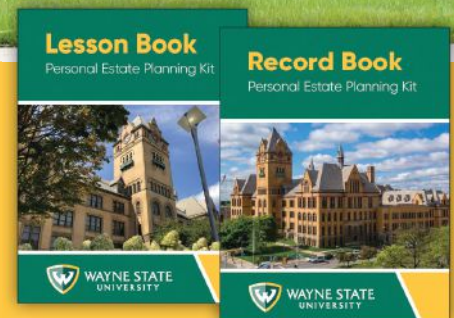


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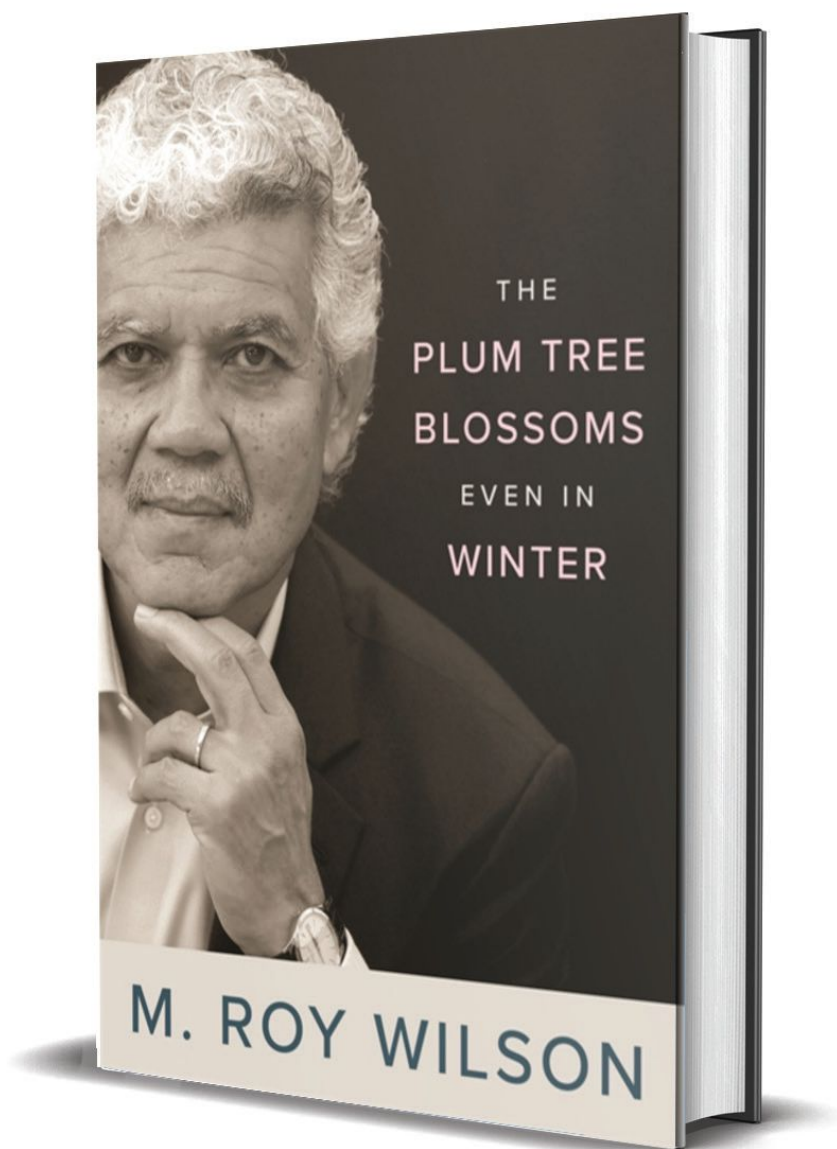
*A leader's journey of identity,  
resilience, and triumph.*

# THE PLUM TREE BLOSSOMS EVEN IN WINTER

M. ROY WILSON

*"The plum tree serves as a reminder that out of darkness and bleakness can emerge hope, strength, and transcendent beauty."*

Wayne State University President M. Roy Wilson uses this metaphor to describe his life's journey. From a childhood marked by loneliness and want, Wilson forged an extraordinary life of accomplishment and acclaim. His accomplishments include the presidencies of four universities, dean of two medical schools, and deputy director of one of the National Institutes of Health's twenty-seven Centers and Institutes. Through this inspiring and deeply personal story of struggle and success, he shares insights gleaned through his life experiences, many of which helped others reach their highest potential as students, faculty, physicians and people.



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# The Nedra Tawwab Story

*By Jacqueline Lee*

Modern-day therapy is shifting from cookie-cutter couch conversations to a variety of methods and mediums that meet a broad range of needs and considers self-care, boundaries, eating habits, exercise, mindfulness, meditation and more. Today, people are using all of their resources to find balance and peace — especially since the onset of COVID-19.

In a world full of Instagram gimmicks and TikTok hacks, there are a few trailblazers who break the mold on social media while backing their work with proven methodologies, licensing and education. One of these leaders is Wayne State University's very own Nedra Tawwab '05, '07, who is redefining the way we approach our mental health and making her expertise more accessible by using Instagram to reach out to her followers and potential clients.

"Instagram has become a platform for me to advocate for mental health," said Tawwab. "It's helpful to know you're not alone, and Instagram allows others to be in a community with people across the world with similar everyday life issues."

Tawwab has leveraged her popular Instagram account, @nedratawwab, to meet her 1.5 million supporters in a comfortable and familiar space. She shares practices, tools and reflections on mental health and hosts weekly live sessions about relationships and setting boundaries.

"Social media is an entry point for many," said Tawwab. "Mental health resources must be readily available and present in spaces where people are, and if people are on Instagram, then mental health resources need to be present in that space."

The ongoing work to make therapy more accessible has many layers: financial, economic, societal and assumed perspective. In general, mental health care remains prohibitively expensive and moderately stigmatized in the United States, and less than half of the adults who need mental health services actually receive them.



## **A little secret from a therapist:**

Emotional neglect is the most common form of abuse in relationships. Unfortunately, it's common to ridicule people for experiencing certain emotions, reject how they feel, and encourage people to unfeel. The complicated thing about feelings is the tendency to encourage disconnection from them.

## **Repeat After Me:**

Feelings are healthy, and I do not need to disconnect from my feelings when others don't validate them.

## *Repeat After Me*

For my peace, I'm allowing myself to evaluate my relationships with people and things that leave me feeling drained. I'm noticing when my body is physically reacting. And instead of ignoring it, I'm taking action toward a more peaceful existence. I suffer when I dismiss what my body is trying to get me to notice.

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### **I don't know who needs to hear this, but:**

You have so many things to wonder and worry about. So many things to fix and explore in your relationships. Minding your business is a full-time job. And if done correctly, you won't have time to focus on what others are doing.

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## **SOME PEOPLE CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH**

*Nedra*  
GLOVER TAWWAB



We may be uncomfortable because a new position or new phase of life is pushing



Expecting people to read your mind will ruin your relationships.  
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## STOP PRETENDING TO BE OKAY

*Nedra*  
GLOVER TAWWAB

### Respecting Boundaries Can Look Like

- Waiting for someone to return your call instead of calling them repeatedly
- Allowing someone to be upset without trying to make them get over it
- Accepting "no" as a final answer
- Giving people space when they've demonstrated it's what they want
- Following stated and posted rules
- Not doing things your way when someone has stated a different preference
- Not convincing others to think like you or do as you would do

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### When You Don't Know The Answer, Practice Saying:

- "I'm not able to answer that question."
- "Let me look into the answer before saying more."

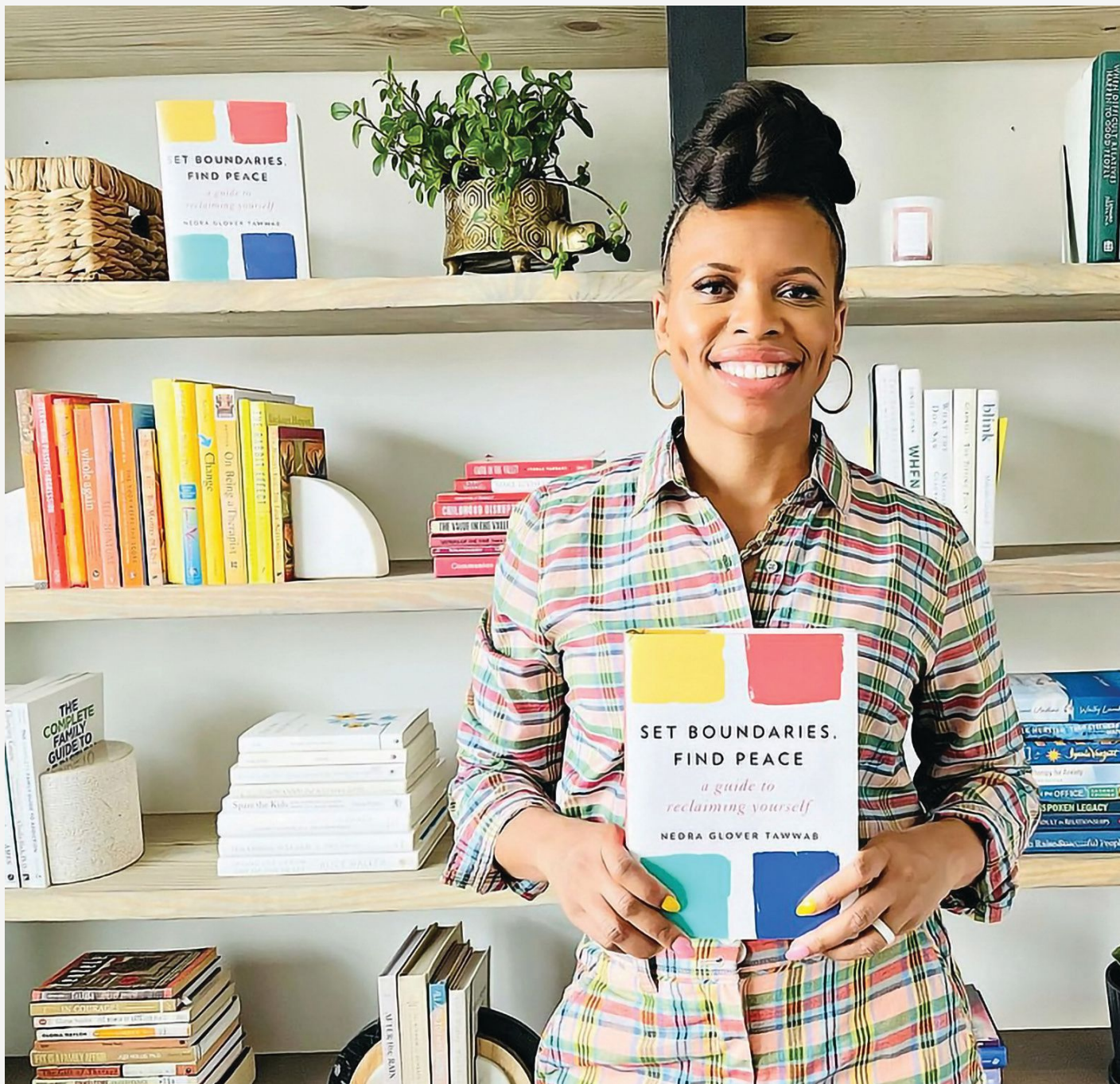
### *Repeat After Me*

"To protect my peace, I am not

when you're from a dysfunctional family, it can be hard to trust people because if the people closest to you mistreat you, the world seems scary. Healing can look like letting your guard down and allowing yourself to develop healthy relationships outside your family. You are not alone, but you will be if you resist allowing people into your life.

---

@nedratawwab





to learn to  
at you, the  
guard down  
with people  
alone if you

“Mental health resources must be readily available and present in spaces where people are.”

“I’m creating free and low-cost resources to make mental health more accessible and support people in their journey towards wellness,” said Tawwab. “My book, *Set Boundaries, Find Peace*, is available as support, and I plan to have more books as well.”

The piece is a New York Times bestseller and a practical guide to “reclaiming yourself.” Tawwab offers simple yet powerful ways to establish healthy boundaries in all aspects of life.

Her #nedranuggets — small bites of information designed as immediate tools — are another way Tawwab works to provide accessible insights into relationships and other challenging mental and emotional issues. She also uses Instagram Live and blogs to explore various topics and share resources such as journaling prompts and suggestions for reading and viewing.

“We can work through some issues on our own, and the resources on social media can be a support and offer different perspectives. I hope that when people see mental health content, they dig into their issues deeper by establishing a relationship with a therapist,” said Tawwab.

The rise of the wellness industry significantly helps with the destigmatization of therapy as a whole. Beginning with the COVID-19 lockdowns, rising levels of stress, anxiety and depression, led to an increased need for therapy across the world





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and called for new ways to reach people beyond standard in-person interaction. This created an opportunity for therapists and creators like Tawwab to continue their critical work to a new audience that was ready to receive it.

“I love watching people change in ways that they didn't know were possible and equipping them with the tools to create the life they want.”

“More people started therapy during the pandemic, and therapists managed their reactions to the pandemic alongside their clients,” said Tawwab. “Therapy has become more socially acceptable. However, we still have lots of work to do to make sure therapy is seen as a resource and that the services are accessible.”

Tawwab is still practicing traditional therapy and has for 14 years as the founder and owner of the group therapy practice Kaleidoscope Counseling. In *Vogue*, *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, *NBC's Today show*, *Red Table Talk*, *Good Morning America*, *The Guardian* and *CBS Morning Show* to name a few.

The licensed therapist and relationship expert is clearly achieving her mission as her Instagram community has tripled since 2020 and continues to grow every day.

“I love watching people change in ways that they didn't know were possible and equipping them with the tools to create the life they want,” said Tawwab. ♡



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