

BY SUZANNE WENTZEL

EVERYWHERE YOU TURN

SEARCH FAR AND WIDE, OR JUST AROUND THE CORNER, AND YOU WILL FIND VILLANOVANS DOING EXTRAORDINARY WORK

A TV commercial features the CEO of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. You nudge your spouse. "That's a Villanova nurse." A friend posts photos of the new Shanghai Disney Resort. After liking, you comment, "BTW, designed by a VU engineer." Your phone chirps with a breaking headline from a global news service. You read it to your co-worker, adding, "A top producer at this network is a Nova grad."

These did-you-know remarks are increasingly common. Alumni turn up in a plethora of places and professions. They thrive in jobs traditional and exotic, along paths linear and winding, with titles significant and singular. They fill positions that are often prominent, yes, but also offbeat, risky, hard to find, hard to get or hidden from the limelight.

For Villanovans, accomplishment is not a matter of wealth, fame or power, although these outcomes often ensue. Alumni succeed because, by uniting mind and heart, they find meaning in their lives and purpose in the world. They use their gifts, embrace their journeys and trust in the rightness of their callings.

Here are glimpses of a few of the many alumni who inspire the reaction, "Wow. You're a Villanovan?"

MARK REDMOND '79 VSB

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPECTRUM YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
Master of Public Administration, New York University



After 36 years as an advocate for young people traumatized by homelessness, substance abuse and domestic violence, Mark Redmond, the executive director of Spectrum Youth and Family Services, a nonprofit based in Burlington, Vt., still learns as he goes.

A recent epiphany came courtesy of a 19-year-old woman excited at the prospect of working at a small business

that Spectrum was launching. Speaking on behalf of fellow youth at Spectrum, she told Redmond, "This is our first chance to do something that will let people believe in us."

Her words opened for Redmond another window into the way life is for the several thousand teens and young adults who come to Spectrum each year for a meal, a place to sleep and the

skills to embark on the way life can be. "It really hit me," Redmond says. "I've had tons of people believe in me. These kids have had no one. It's so important to believe in people's goodness and potential, and to communicate that."

Redmond has been gaining and sharing similar insights since a pivotal weekend in 1980, when a Villanova friend took him to a campus fair on postgraduate volunteer opportunities. Within a year, Redmond left his Madison Avenue job and salary to put his degree in Business Administration to work in a series of directorial positions at agencies serving at-risk youth. In addition to authoring *The Goodness Within*, in which he shares advice on outreach to troubled teens, Redmond has published articles on youth and family issues in *Forbes*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and been featured on "The Moth" podcasts.

The heartaches of the job—recidivism, violent crime and senseless death—don't deter Redmond. "God called me to work with those who are poor, broken and homeless," he says. "I believe that is why I was put on this earth."

HEATHER WEST '10 CLAS

PUBLICITY ASSISTANT, LUCASFILM
Master of Fine Arts, Emerson College

Heather West is a self-professed Star Wars nerd. While countless fans share her devotion to the mythic film series, few get to work for the company that created it.

West moved to San Francisco to join Lucasfilm in 2016, just in time to organize screenings ahead of the release of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. Soon she had her first Star Wars convention under her Jedi belt; was helping to plan a tour of Lucasfilm for the *Hamilton* cast; and was fielding business, press, licensing and fan inquiries.

Although intrigued as a child by what happens off-screen, West never considered the movie industry as a career until she studied film analysis at Villanova. "With that course, I realized that my hobby could be my profession," she says.

Majoring in English and Communication, West seized opportunities Villanova offered to learn about filmmaking. She was on the crew of the first social justice documentary produced by students. She interned at the Vatican, spending many a night on her back holding a camera in the Sistine Chapel doing a virtual reality shoot. She was immersed in the rhetoric and performance of the classical world during a summer session in Greece.

After graduating summa cum laude, West moved to Boston to pursue a master's in Media Art. She continued the habit begun at Villanova of landing internships that expanded her repertoire. She edited rough cuts for a PBS show, analyzed scripts for the indie Goldcrest Films and worked as a postproduction temp at HBO in



Los Angeles. That gig morphed into full-time work, and she stayed at HBO until 2016.

West is living and loving the dream. "Getting my first job at a top TV network was almost too good to be true," she says. "Then again, so is being at Lucasfilm."

JOHN SPITZER '78 CLAS, '86 MS, MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

MANAGING DIRECTOR, EQUIPMENT STANDARDS, US GOLF ASSOCIATION

Each year, thousands of pieces of equipment—and tens of thousands of golf balls—undergo measurement, testing and evaluation at the US Golf Association's premier Research and Test Center in Far Hills, N.J. From a ball's initial velocity to the size of the grooves on a club face, no detail eludes the inspection of research engineers and technicians.

Overseeing them is John Spitzer, who blends his love of golf with his engineering expertise. Spitzer and his staff in Equipment Standards develop and apply state-of-the-art methods to determine if equipment, especially as it becomes technologically more advanced, conforms to the rules set by the USGA, one of the two bodies that govern the game worldwide.

"The USGA is not against these advances," says Spitzer, noting that innovations can lead to rule revisions. "But it doesn't want them to de-skill the game or destroy its historic traditions." Spitzer and colleagues also



study player performance, analyzing statistical data gathered from tours. "For example, today's golfers are driving the ball farther," he says. "Is that due to skill or a disruptive technology?"

The lead inventor on two USGA test-procedure patents, Spitzer brings to his current position the same passion for problem solving he showed in previous ones. At General Dynamics Electric Boat, which builds subs for the US Navy, Spitzer did research and development in structural acoustics. He then moved

to the Department of Energy's Princeton Plasma Physics Lab, a national center for researching fusion energy as a source of power. There, his many projects included verifying the seismic capability of a test reactor.

"My education has been a blessing," says Spitzer, whose fondest memory of campus is meeting his wife, Kathleen Hickey '79 CON. "Villanova made me think critically. It enabled me to adapt to the different challenges I have faced throughout my career."

SISTER JOCELYN EDATHIL, SIC, '00 CLAS

INTERNIST, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
MD/PhD, Penn State College of Medicine

The inquiry from friends and clergy echoed through the first two decades of Jocelyn Edathil's life. "Do you feel called to be a sister?" She did, and by the time the Presidential Scholar and Chemistry major graduated from Villanova, she knew her answer. But 13 years would elapse before she began her formation in India with the Sisters of the Imitation of Christ. Other vocational business needed tending to first: the completion of a double doctorate and an internal-medicine residency.

The journey through an MD/PhD program covered deserts and mountaintops. "I used to go to bed crying, wishing I could take my vows," Sister Jocelyn recalls. "But I'm also scientific, so I loved doing my research on antiviral drug design. Now I have the greatest joy—being a physician and a sister."

At Temple University Hospital, Sister Jocelyn treats admitted patients. Clad in her habit, veil and

lab coat, she shows in word and deed that she is as dedicated to her charges' spiritual well-being as she is to their physical. "I treat them medically, but I also pray with them and listen to their stories. Therapeutic listening is crucial." Her approach earned her an award for humaneness in medicine from the Philadelphia County Medical Society.

Sister Jocelyn also pours herself into her congregation of sisters, an order affiliated with the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. She is the first American-born woman to profess vows in this Eastern Church, which is in full communion with Rome, while her brother Father Michael '06 VSB is its first American-born priest. When not at the hospital, she travels extensively promoting vocations and serving the needs of women, especially Indian-Americans.

The schedule would daunt many, but not Sister Jocelyn. "Whatever Jesus calls me to, he will give me the grace to do it."



SAMANTHA PITTS-KIEFER '04 JD

SENIOR DIRECTOR, GLOBAL NUCLEAR POLICY PROGRAM, NUCLEAR THREAT INITIATIVE
Master of Public Administration, Harvard Kennedy School

Samantha Pitts-Kiefer may not live to see a world rid of nuclear weapons. But that doesn't stop her from working to reduce the global threats they pose. One of the biggest: nuclear terrorism.

Close to 2,000 metric tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium, the materials used to make nuclear weapons, are stockpiled worldwide. In many places, these materials, as well as nuclear facilities, are vulnerable to theft, cyberattack and sabotage.

Pitts-Kiefer and her team at the Nuclear Threat Initiative collect and analyze data to assess global security conditions. She confers with experts at NTI's office in Washington, D.C.; tracks treaty talks at the United Nations; and attends conferences at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. Much of her work pertains to recent nuclear security summits.

"It's rewarding to engage with others in analytical thinking about global problems," Pitts-Kiefer says, "and to see our work become policy."

Pitts-Kiefer discovered her affinity for foreign policy and national



security when she was taking courses in international law. "After I'd been working in a law firm, I wanted to redirect myself into policy and public service," she says. "I only had to look back to Villanova to realize what inspired me."

At Harvard Kennedy School, Pitts-Kiefer assisted *New York Times* correspondent David Sanger with research for his best-seller *Confront and Conceal*. "One of my most exciting assignments was interviewing

Hillary Clinton about China policy," she says. Such opportunities prepared Pitts-Kiefer for the high-level interactions that are part of her job.

No less critical is the ability to size up events unfolding daily, whether in Russia, North Korea or the Middle East. "Current events have a big impact on our work," Pitts-Kiefer says. "We have to be nimble in how we approach and talk about issues in real time."

TOM PICARDO '63 CLAS

SINGER, SONGWRITER AND RECORD PRODUCER



Tom Picardo was happy recording doo-wop songs with high school classmate Tim Hauser when Picardo's dad gave him some advice. "Apply to Villanova. It's in the Catholic Ivy League."

Picardo and Hauser entered Villanova with the Class of 1963. They joined the Villanova Singers and the smaller, a cappella Spires—a group for which Picardo later auditioned Jim Croce '65 CLAS. "Those years were the best any guy could spend," he recalls. "We sang every day."

The three friends forged into the music industry. Croce, who was killed in a plane crash in 1973, achieved stardom as a singer and guitarist. Hauser, who died in 2014, founded the Grammy-winning Manhattan Transfer. Picardo made his mark in the studio.

After graduating, he was available 24/7 as a session singer, laying down tracks for Coke jingles and Sinatra numbers. "The studio would call at midnight," Picardo says. "We need backup. C'mon over."

He also composed. Using the name Tommy West, Picardo teamed with songwriter Terry Cashman on a string of albums in the late

'60s and early '70s. Their elegiac single "American City Suite" hit the charts. "I'm proud of that song," Picardo says. "Cashman's voice still makes me cry."

Other voices, too, made their songs familiar. Picardo recalls attending a showcase for a new sitcom about a bus-traveling family band. "We got an idea of what the scripts were like and, a few days later, submitted several songs." Eventually, the duo contributed eight titles to *The Partridge Family* discography.

Picardo excelled at the recording process. With Cashman, he produced three Croce albums. For Picardo, "every minute with Jim was a highlight." He also cherishes the many cuts he did with Canadian icon Anne Murray. "I'd never heard a voice like hers," says Picardo, who lives with his wife on their New Jersey farm with its barn-turned-studio. "It was love at first listen."

DEBORAH AFFONSA '89 CPS

VICE PRESIDENT, CUSTOMER SERVICE, PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC CO.
MS, Organizational Dynamics, University of Pennsylvania

Wherever Deb Affonsa goes in northern and central California, she runs into customers. That's not difficult. Pacific Gas & Electric Co. has 16 million of them. What is more difficult, and always a priority for Affonsa, is making sure that customers are satisfied with their experiences with one of the largest combined natural gas and electric energy companies in the US.

"That is the challenge of working in the utility sector," says Affonsa, vice president, Customer Service. "We supply 100 percent of the people in our territory with a product that is the modern economy's lifeline. It is gravely important that we be reliable."

This awareness energizes Affonsa, who oversees nearly 2,000 employees, five contact centers and 75 local customer service offices.

Her responsibilities also include new revenue development, consumer education and relations with third-party energy service providers.

Affonsa has built a long, successful career in the energy pipeline. Before she was recruited by the San Francisco-based company, she held executive positions at Exelon and a wind energy startup. Fueling her progress was the bachelor's in Business Administration she had earned at Villanova as a part-time student.

For five years, Affonsa, a young mom, zigzagged between work, home and school, becoming adept at time management. "I counted every minute," she says, "and every minute counted."

Graduation fell on the same weekend as Mother's Day and was especially memorable. Affonsa received a medallion for academic excellence and, surrounded by her three children, was



interviewed for a local news broadcast.

Affonsa regularly flies to the East Coast to visit her growing family. She also advises the Villanova School of Business' Center for Global Leadership. It's one more opportunity for her to achieve the outcome that matters most to her. "I want to have a positive impact on people in their professional and personal lives."



As a safety, Jin Kim knew what it was like to be the last line of defense on the football field. "The aches and pains in my body still prove it!" says the former varsity Wildcat. Now, more than 27 years after he graduated from Villanova with a degree

in Sociology, "safety" is not about a position but a mission. Kim is one of the FBI's experts in active shooter and mass attack survival.

This role is not one Kim had envisioned when he applied and was accepted to the bureau. Newly married to Julie Baumgartner '90 CLAS, he reported to the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., and was then assigned to the New York division, where he focused on tactical resolution. But after mass shootings like Columbine and Sandy Hook chilled and changed the nation, the FBI was tasked with training law enforcement officials on how to respond to these tragedies, as well as equipping the public with survival strategies.

Kim excels at doing both. He is the active shooter coordinator in the New York division's Crisis Management

JIN KIM '90 CLAS

SPECIAL AGENT, FBI
MA, Public Safety Management, St. Joseph's University

Unit and the manager of its Tactical Training Program. He has trained thousands of agents and officers, and has presented to workforces in almost every industry, including higher education, health care and hospitality, about the current outlook on active shooter attacks and individual survival techniques.

"By teaching people how to take ownership of their safety and that of their loved ones, I truly believe I'm helping them save their lives," he says. Once he retires in 2018 after 23 years with the bureau, Kim plans to share his expertise as a consultant.

"I want to continue preparing people to survive the horrific events that, unfortunately, seem endemic to society and occur during normal, everyday moments," he says. "No one is exempt."

RICHARD WALKER III '71 CLAS

RETIRED SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF BOSTON

When Richard Walker joined the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's nascent Regional & Community Outreach Department, which promotes the economic growth of low- and moderate-income communities in New England, he had carte blanche to decide which issues to address and how. He never lacked for ideas.

Walker's 28-year legacy at the Boston Fed attests to the good those ideas yielded. In the early '90s, in response to a study showing that race was a factor in the approval and denial of mortgages in the Boston area—and, likely, nationwide—Walker and colleagues at other feds compiled "Closing the Gap," a resource on best practices in equal opportunity lending.

"It became the bible for fair lending in the banking industry," Walker says. "I was honored to lead the team that published it." He also co-developed a curriculum to educate lending officers about the complexities—and importance—of community development lending.

Walker was instrumental in the development of one of the Boston Fed's signature programs—one designed to help smaller cities, such as Springfield and Lawrence, Mass., whose economies plummeted after their base industries closed. Through research, analysis and visits to cities on the upturn, Walker and his team determined that having a cross section of community leaders who endorse a shared vision is key to recovery. His group's findings bore fruit in the innovative Working Cities Challenge, a grant competition for urban areas committed to this model of revitalization.

In 2016, Walker, then a senior vice president, retired from the bank. In December, he will be a fellow at Harvard's Advanced Leadership Initiative.

"Public service and addressing inequality have always driven me," says Walker, who, at Villanova, focused his studies on Sociology, Philosophy and African-American Studies; and advocated for student governance. "My father inspired me to want to contribute to the betterment of society and identify ways to bridge differences."



MARY BETH APPEL, RN, '81 CON

CO-FOUNDER, HOUSE OF GRACE CATHOLIC WORKER
*MS, Nursing, University of Maryland
Certification, Family Nurse Practitioner, University of Virginia*

As she walks from her row house in the Kensington section of Philadelphia to the nearby free health clinic, Mary Beth Appel stops to talk to the people sitting on front stoops and waiting outside a soup kitchen. They know Appel, and they trust her with their stories—of facing eviction, of needing help getting into recovery, of finding the means to bury a loved one. For 26 years, she has stood in solidarity with them and with a neighborhood blighted by crime, drugs and poverty.

In 1991, Appel and Johanna Berrigan co-founded House of Grace Catholic Worker. It consists of two buildings. Through the clinic, those living on the margins can get medical treatment, a hot shower, and the support of volunteers who listen and accompany them as they navigate the bureaucratic system for social services. The second is a hospitality house, which provides free lodging.

House of Grace creates community among patients, guests, volunteers and

supporters. "We don't pass the buck," Appel says. "We do what we can to be present and to respond to people on a personal basis."

Abiding by the spirit of the Catholic Worker movement, which was started by Dorothy Day in the 1930s and has about 150 independent communities worldwide, Appel lives simply, serves the poor, and embraces activism and nonviolence. These convictions were nurtured at Villanova, where the nursing student involved herself in campus ministry and undertook social causes.

Appel's influence extends to Haiti. She sits on the board of Kay Lasante, a Haitian-staffed clinic in Port-au-Prince. Both Kay Lasante and House of Grace exist on donations, and Appel collects no paycheck for her labors of love. "These projects are run with the help of God and the support of the community," she says. "Good things happen all the time. That's what keeps us going."

