



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
College of Aviation

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February 2022 Newsletter

Love is in the Air!



Hello Aviation Alumni and Friends,

With the arrival of Valentine's Day, it is hard not to notice that a passion for aviation wasn't the only type of love that was found at Western Michigan University. Not only did many of you find your career desire, a lot of you also found your heart's! While I'm sure the list is much longer, here are a number that responded to last month's request:

- Jillian Higgeson and Evan Risinger
- Philip and Sophia McCain
- Brian and Amanda Theisen
- Dave and Sarah (Tower) Wagner
- Eric and Laura (Kohler) VanDonkelaar
- Jennifer (Jakubiec) and Ian Alexander
- John and Andrea Whittner
- Abby (Raymond) and Matt Ragsdale
- Justin and Brittany (Sliecher) Guth
- Megan (Linnen) and Adam Turner
- Maya (Thornley) and Cameron Bainbridge
- Shelbi Satkowiak and Ben Egan
- Jennifer (Wright) and Greg Duff

- Kyle and Nicole (Young) Johnson
- Reina Cooke and Ryan Sewell
- Brandon and Jenny Christy
- Daniel and Iana Skoda
- Stephanie (Kimball) and Josh Lindquist
- Suzie Targosz and Andrew Chmielewski
- Megan (Voisard) and Andrew Marvin
- Sheby (Beauregard) and Ben Hastings

Honorable mention (or maybe dishonorable, depending on your loyalty to the Brown and Gold 😊) goes to Marty and Emily Coaker, even though Emily is an aviation grad from Ohio State. And I have to mention Joe Lesko, who married a CMU Chip. By his own admission, they have been happily married for 26 trips around the sun and only fight once a year!

As we celebrate the month of love, we would be remiss if we didn't mention this month's alumni spotlight: Katie (Vena) and Aaron Monhke. The two WMU alumni graduated in 2015 and 16 and are now at Spirit Airlines and Delta Air Lines. Click on the link below for the "Paul Harvey" version to get the "Rest of the Story!" Don't forget, scroll all the way down for additional stories of College of Aviation students, faculty and staff.

As I mentioned in last month's email, this year we will be awarding prizes to our alumni who engage with us through the newsletter. **The winners from last month are: Daniel and Iana Skoda and Stephanie and Josh Lindquist!** They were randomly selected from all of the submissions. Just like the NFL Draft – the Skodas and Lindquists are on the clock! Email tom.thinnes@wmich.edu and I'll get your gift shipped out to you ASAP. For this month's opportunity, read below about the Aviation Alumni Reunion that we have planned on March 4 and 5.

News, Events and Save the Dates!

WMU Aviation Alumni Reunion and Get-Together – we are planning a weekend to bring as many of you back to campus as possible. The weekend will start on Friday night with the nationally ranked Bronco Hockey Team. It will be followed up on Saturday, with a tour of the new Aviation Education Center and a Pub Crawl in downtown Kalamazoo

- Dates: March 4 and 5
- Bronco Hockey Game – Friday, March 4
 - Tickets cost \$13 each and are in Section 22, Rows 1-5

- Purchase your tickets by [clicking here](#)
 - Use Promo Code: AVIATION
 - Tickets are limited, so purchase them today!
- New Aviation Education Center Mix and Mingle – Saturday, March 5
 - Tour the new building at the College of Aviation, hang out with old friends, and meet some new ones!
 - Noon to 3 p.m.
 - Guided tours will begin at 1 p.m.
- Downtown Kalamazoo Pub Crawl – Saturday, March 5
 - Come relive and explore the great places in downtown Kalamazoo. The Pub Crawl will include stops at Old Dog Tavern, Bell's Brewery, Tin Can, Green Top and others!
 - Starting time: 7 p.m.
- We have blocked out rooms at two downtown Kalamazoo hotels
 - Hilton – Home2 Suites
 - Rooms have been blocked out for Friday and Saturday night
 - Cost \$149 per night
 - Radisson Plaza Hotel at Kalamazoo Center
 - Rooms have been blocked out for Saturday night
 - Cost \$189 per night
- Sign up below and we'll send you information on how to register for the rooms.
- **Interested or Not? Let us know by signing up [here](#).** By filling out the form, you will also be entered into this month's gift drawing!

The 2022 Annual Aviation Golf Outing

- Registration is now open!
- Sign up before May 20 and receive the early bird discount of \$125 per golfer. After that, registration will increase to \$145.
- For more information and to get registered, [please visit our website](#).
- Use Promo Code: **EarlyBird2022**
- Check out the new items in [Captain Dave's Aviation Emporium](#). Show your College of Aviation pride by wearing the latest and greatest from our very own aviation spirit shop!

Thanks for being great supporters! Please let us know how you are doing. Send updates to tom.thinnes@wmich.edu!

Go Broncos!

Tom

Tom Thinnes

Western Michigan University

College of Aviation

Recruitment, Marketing and Outreach

Love Aviation Style: Katie Vena and Aaron Mohnke Take Off and Tie the Knot!



Pilot-spouses Katie and Aaron Mohnke (pronounced Monk) might assess their aviation careers so far as being "the best of times and the worst of times" -- with a majority emphasis on the former. Since their graduation from the WMU College of Aviation with degrees in aviation flight science in 2016 and 2015, respectively, there

has been a period or two when they wore the same airline uniform; but other times -- including right now -- they have been flying for different enterprises.

[Read More](#)

From Northside to North Star—Alumna guides community to more equitable future



As a little girl growing up in Kalamazoo's Northside neighborhood, Hon. Alisa Parker-LaGrone had big dreams. She built her professional prowess rising through the ranks at Legal Services of South Central Michigan, finding purpose in public interest work. At the same time, she enrolled in Western's Haworth College of Business MBA program. "Having my master's was incredibly helpful when I managed the legal aid office in Battle Creek for several years," says Parker-LaGrone, who earned her master's in 2011. In addition to practicing law, a large part of her professional work involved management, writing grants and meeting with community partners.

[Read More](#)

A WMU love story: Justin and Alexis Black



Stability is a sanctuary, and for the first time in their lives, Justin and Alexis Black have found it. Both overcoming insurmountable odds as kids navigating the foster care system, they discovered love—and purpose—at Western. "Being former foster youth, we never really had examples of healthy relationships around us," says Alexis, who survived years of abuse by her biological father and later her boyfriend. "We went most of our lives not really understanding what that looks like."

Read More

- [Hints from Helmer – Charles Culminates Marine Tenure with Aviation Technical Operations Enrollment](#)
- [Lessons Learned by Aviation Technical Operations Faculty Nate Lisak](#)

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