

MOVING

FORWARD

AHS YEAR IN REVIEW 2025

CELEBRATING
100 Years
OF HUFF HALL

I

ON THE COVER

For a century, Huff Hall has stood as a cornerstone of academics and athletics at the University of Illinois. While athletics has certainly had an illustrious history in the building, Huff Hall has functioned as the first and primary home for the College of Applied Health Sciences and two of its current academic units in Health and Kinesiology and Recreation, Sport and Tourism.

As we mark the 100th anniversary of Huff Hall, we celebrate not just a building, but a legacy—a place where history has been made and a place of tradition, excellence and Illini pride. The cover image is a blending of Huff Hall in 1924 and today.

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A Message from the Dean

CHERYL HANLEY-MAXWELL

*This year represents a significant milestone for our college and campus community: **the 100th anniversary of Huff Hall**. For a century, this iconic building has stood as a symbol of excellence, resilience and innovation at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. It is not only a cornerstone of our College of Applied Health Sciences but also a landmark that embodies the spirit of learning, discovery and community.*



When Huff Hall first opened its doors in 1925 as Huff Gymnasium, it quickly became a hub for athletics, fitness and student engagement. Generations of Illini have gathered within its walls to cheer on their teams, build friendships and create lasting memories. While its role in athletics remains a proud part of its identity, Huff Hall has also grown to serve as the academic heart of the College of Applied Health Sciences, housing our classrooms, faculty offices and research spaces.

Over the years, Huff Hall has adapted to the evolving needs of our college. What was once primarily a gymnasium has transformed into a vibrant environment where scholarship, teaching and innovation flourish. Our students study in its classrooms, our faculty conduct research that improves lives and our community comes together to share in the achievements of AHS. The building itself has become a living example of how we honor our history while continually looking toward the future.

As we celebrate this centennial, we reflect not only on Huff Hall's legacy but also on the generations of people who have walked through its doors. Alumni who began their journeys here now serve communities across the globe as leaders in health, wellness, rehabilitation and human development. Their stories remind us that Huff Hall has always been more than brick and mortar—it has been the foundation for futures built on knowledge and service.

Looking forward, we remain committed to ensuring that Huff Hall continues to inspire and empower those who learn and work here. As we honor its first hundred years, we also embrace the opportunities ahead, confident that the next century will bring even greater achievements for the College of Applied Health Sciences.

Happy 100th, Huff Hall. Here's to the next hundred years of impact, innovation and Illini pride.

Cheryl

Happy Birthday

By ANNA FLANAGAN

Many people still think of the home of the College of Applied Health Sciences as Huff Gym. The building opened in 1925 as the New Gymnasium, giving the University of Illinois men's basketball team what was then state-of-the-art facilities for home games. Renamed for longtime athletic director and coach George Huff in 1936 after his death, Huff Gym later became Huff Hall to better reflect its significant role in the academic life of the university.

The four hallways on the first floor of the building surround the gym, which is still used for volleyball, wrestling and gymnastics events. But faculty associated with Huff have cemented its scholarly reputation as the site of pioneering research and groundbreaking advancements in health and leisure studies.

THE FATHER OF PHYSICAL FITNESS

The early academics residing in Huff Gym were the faculty of the School of Physical Education. They included Seward Staley, who served as director and dean from 1936 to 1960. Staley was a strong advocate of building physical education programs around a sport-based curriculum and conducted extensive research on physical education and sport throughout his career. He guided the School of Physical Education to prominence as a leader in health-related research.

Staley's own commitment to research-based practice influenced his faculty recruitment. In 1941, Thomas "T.K." Cureton, known as the "father of physical fitness," joined the School of Physical Education. He established the Physical Fitness Research Laboratory in Huff Hall, one of the first of its kind in the nation. He conducted cutting-edge research on what he called the six primary components of physical fitness—endurance, flexibility, agility, strength, power and balance—and revolutionized existing knowledge about weight and fitness, oxygen's role in athletic performance and the role of exercise in cardiovascular health, among other things.

As Jack Berryman, then the official historian of the American College of Sports Medicine, observed in a 1996 article in *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, Cureton was the only fitness

enthusiast of the 1950s (a group that included Charles Atlas and Jack LaLanne) "who produced the research to substantiate his beliefs regarding the positive influence of physical activity on health." Cureton's work helped to elevate the reputation of physical education and led to the establishment of research labs in departments across the country.

In addition to the hundreds of papers, books and research monographs published during his career, Cureton shared his beliefs widely through numerous lectures around the world, called Cureton Clinics, and frequent appearances in magazine and newspaper articles and on television programs focused on health and fitness. His son, Kirk Cureton, who himself had a long and distinguished career in kinesiology at the University of Georgia, said he wasn't aware of his father's reputation in the field of physical fitness science as a child. He participated in the Sports Fitness Experimental School that his father established in 1950 to improve the physical fitness of youth, still running today as the Sports Fitness Program, and recalls going to his father's lab where Cureton and his graduate students assessed such things as cardiovascular health and muscle endurance.

Kirk Cureton's knowledge of his father's stature grew as he did, and he feels it played a positive role as he established his own career.

"My father was known, and it helped me with networking," he said, adding that T.K. was "a good model."

"What I learned from him was persistence and the value of hard work," Cureton said. "He was devoted to his field. He loved what he did. He thought working at a university was the best thing you could do."

"It's a campus landmark and I'm proud that it's the heart of AHS. But in the end, what really makes a building special are the people who work within it, our students, faculty and staff."

—Dean Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell

ay. **HUFF!**

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF HUFF HALL

POISED FOR THE FUTURE

Many outstanding scholars walked the halls of Huff as the School of Physical Education evolved into the College of Applied Health Sciences. They established the first driver education teacher training program in the Midwest, created the first K-12 sex education curriculum that was adopted throughout the country, conducted a groundbreaking study on driving and alcohol consumption that resulted in the lowering of the DUI threshold from .15 to .10, conducted a comprehensive anti-smoking education study of youth that resulted in the first academic contribution to the annual Surgeon General's Report on smoking and health, and put sport psychology on the map as a legitimate academic discipline, among many other contributions.

Kim Graber, Shahid and Ann Carlson Khan Professor and head of the Department of Health and Kinesiology, said the influence of these giants can still be felt.

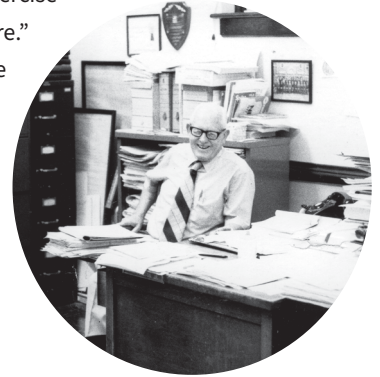
"Our current faculty engages in research that, in a lot of ways, wouldn't have been possible without Cureton and the other pioneers," she said. "We still focus on issues related to physical fitness and health, cardiovascular health, for example, which was so important in Cureton's work. But we have developed a more discipline-focused approach, looking at biomechanics, exercise

physiology, brain health or exercise psychology, and so much more."

Graber noted that while the department has expanded far beyond its early focus on training school health educators, teacher training is still an important part of its mission as evidenced by its Physical Education Teaching Licensure program.

Huff Hall is still an important hub for the department, she said, serving as the home of its three professional degree programs—Master of Public Health (MPH), Master of Health Administration (MHA) and Master of Science in Health Technology (MS-HT). Many health and kinesiology faculty have their offices and laboratories in Huff, where they are addressing current and emerging health challenges such as the role of technology in successful aging, gut health and chronic disease in underrepresented populations.

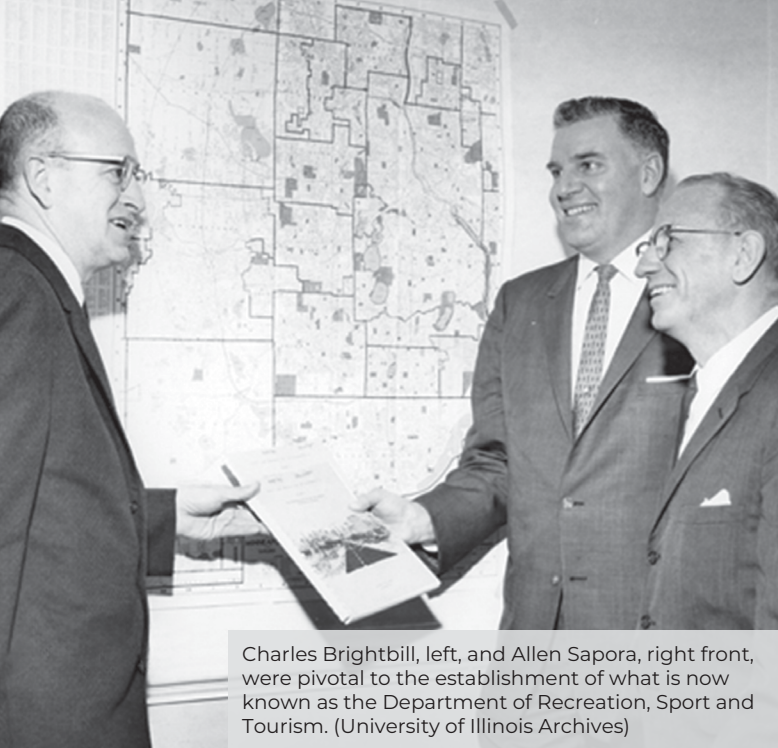
"Our research is cutting edge," Graber said. "It's innovative. It's futuristic. We're in a good position to tackle the problems of the next generation."



Huff Hall in 1928. (University of Illinois Archives)

Above: T.K. Cureton





Charles Brightbill, left, and Allen Sapora, right front, were pivotal to the establishment of what is now known as the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. (University of Illinois Archives)



George Huff's great-granddaughter, Sarah DeMaris, holds a picture of Red Grange that was near the top of a time capsule that was opened Nov. 6, 2025 at Huff Hall. (Ethan Simmons)

GIANTS OF LEISURE

Huff Hall also is the home of the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, which had its beginnings in the Department of Physical Education for Women. That department, which included recreation in its curriculum, joined the Department of Physical Education for Men to form the School of Physical Education. The school began offering a Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation in 1948, thanks to the efforts of Allen Sapora. The curriculum he developed became a model for programs around the country. Sapora believed strongly in the importance of applied research and was one of the first scholars to integrate research into recreation education.

Charles Brightbill joined the Illinois faculty as a professor of recreation in 1951 and, working together with Sapora, built the program into one of the leading park and recreation education programs in the world. Brightbill had a well-established national reputation in the field of recreation by the time he joined the Illinois faculty, having served as the executive secretary of President Harry Truman's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces, among other positions. In 1957, he became the inaugural head of the Department of Recreation, which was created when the School of Physical Education was reorganized and renamed the College of Physical Education. His advocacy of cooperation between citizens and professionals in the parks and recreation field played a significant role in the formation of the National Recreation and Park Association.

After Brightbill's death, Sapora served as department head and created the Office of Recreation and Park Resources (ORPR) in partnership with University of Illinois Extension. He hired Joseph Bannon, who had completed his master's degree in recreation at Illinois, to lead the new initiative. Like Sapora, Bannon firmly

believed that practice in the parks and recreation field needed to be informed by scientific research, and that research needed to address real world issues. His own research focused on the development of recreation organizations. Laura Payne, professor of recreation, sport and tourism and Joseph J. Bannon Director of the Office of Recreation and Park Resources, said Bannon's contributions are still relevant today.

"He was the expert in public parks and recreation organizational development, leadership, management and administration," she said. "His work addressed policy and practice, and how organizations relate to one another."

Bannon, who became head of what was then the Department of Leisure Studies in 1973, was instrumental in strengthening the interdisciplinary nature of the department's research, hiring faculty with backgrounds in such fields as psychology and sociology. He was a co-founding editor of the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* and, along with Allen Sapora, a founding Fellow of The Academy of Leisure Sciences. Fellowship in TALS is a prestigious honor, one that many RST faculty and Ph.D. graduates have earned since the organization's founding in 1980. Among them are John "Jack" Kelly and Lynn Barnett, also giants in the field of leisure studies.

Kelly, in fact, played an instrumental role in establishing the field of leisure studies. He believed that knowledge of leisure theory would help practitioners make informed decisions and design more relevant and effective programs. He wrote the first textbook in the field of leisure studies, appropriately titled "Leisure," and encouraged scholars to address the sociological and psychological aspects of leisure.

"Jack Kelly is a legend in our field," Payne said. "He was ahead of the curve on many societal issues and trends in the 1970s and early '80s, anticipating and working on healthy aging, work and

leisure, socialization and leisure and family leisure. He really catapulted us forward by making our research more relevant and increasing our visibility to people outside of parks, recreation, sports, tourism and leisure studies.”

Barnett studied the role of play and playfulness in the lives of children and adults for more than 40 years. As a doctoral student in educational psychology, she became convinced that children learned as much or more outside of the classroom as they did within it. Over the years, she found that playfulness is a fairly stable construct that is related to cognitive functioning. Her research showed that playfulness was linked to flexibility in thinking, enjoyment, positivity and social skill, and that it was often used to deal with anxiety.

“Lynn brought education, human development and play together in a way that hadn’t been done before,” Payne said. “She inspired generations of scholars and practitioners to look at play as being integral to learning, socioemotional development, physical development and cognitive development.”

THE COMMITMENT REMAINS

Scholars in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism continue to believe in practice-based research and research-based practice. RST faculty still examine leisure’s role in the healthy development of individuals, families and communities, focusing on such contemporary issues as the role of sport in community development, equity in access to green spaces and agritourism. As RST Department Head Carla Santos put it, “We keep our ears to the ground, listening and observing and staying connected to what’s going on in recreation, sport and tourism in order to be responsive to needs and priorities. That has been true of this department throughout the nearly 70 years we’ve been in Huff Hall.”

The College of Applied Health Sciences has grown beyond the walls of Huff, now also occupying Freer Hall and the Speech and Hearing Science Building. But 100 years after its opening, Huff Hall remains the nerve center AHS, and that’s just fine by Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, dean of AHS.

“With the addition of the Khan Annex and modernization of instructional spaces, Huff wears its age well and is a comfortable academic home,” she said. “It’s a campus landmark and I’m proud that it’s the heart of AHS. But in the end, what really makes a building special are the people who work within it, our students, faculty and staff. We are blessed in AHS to have exceptional students, creative and dedicated faculty and skilled and supportive staff. I’m proud of all of them.”



A Community Good

In addition to athletics and academics, Huff Hall has been a community good, home to a visit by a sitting first lady and dance marathons. In 1942, during World War II, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited Huff to plead with local and state officials to speed up their work to aid in the conflict with Nazi Germany and its allies.

“War goods must be produced in a hurry,” Roosevelt said, according to the Daily Illini on Feb. 6, 1942. “We were not mentally prepared for war ... now it is up to each and every one of us at home to build up a greater strength in people.”

A number of jazz legends also played Huff starting with Duke Ellington in 1937 and including Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis and Count Basie, who appeared with his orchestra in October

1966. In the 1970s and '80s, Huff was home to less-historic-but-also-impactful events: dance marathons.





A LEGACY OF FITNESS: THE INFLUENCE OF T.K. CURETON ON ILLINOIS' HEALTH AND WELLNESS REVOLUTION

By VINCE LARA-CINISOMO

In the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, there is a legacy of one man's unwavering dedication to physical fitness. That man is Thomas K. Cureton Jr., better known as T.K. Cureton, but probably best known as the "father of physical fitness."

Long before exercise guru Jack LaLanne began hosting his syndicated TV fitness program in the 1950s, Cureton established the Physical Fitness Research Laboratory in 1944 at Illinois. Cureton's research and commitment to physical education and fitness laid the foundation for the fitness movement that is so widely recognized today. From the athletic fields to university classrooms, the impact of his work extends far beyond the realm of physical education.

Born in Florida, Cureton had a diverse academic and professional journey before arriving at the University of Illinois. Growing up in the South, he initially attended Georgia Tech before transferring to Yale University to finish his undergraduate degree. From there, he found himself coaching swimming and

directing research at Springfield College in Massachusetts. But it was his arrival in 1941 at the University of Illinois, after being recruited by School of Physical Education Dean Seward Staley, that would shape the future of fitness research and practice.

At the time, physical education as an academic discipline was still in its infancy, and there were few established research foundations. Cureton's appointment marked the beginning of the transition from physical education to a more comprehensive study of physical fitness. He worked to establish research programs, recognizing the importance of physical fitness for overall health long before it became a popular societal trend. This vision, paired with his extensive background in athletics, allowed him to bridge the gap between the two worlds—combining sports with research-driven methodologies to better understand how fitness impacts human health.

But what exactly sparked Cureton's passion for fitness and wellness? His son Kirk recalled how his father's interest in athletics and fitness developed early.

“He was a good athlete at Georgia Tech and Yale, participating in varsity athletics, especially swimming,” Kirk Cureton said. “The influence of people like Yale’s swimming coach, Bob Kiphuth, and other experts in biology and hygiene inspired him.”

Through his exposure to these environments, T.K. Cureton was drawn to physical education and ultimately pursued further education in the field, earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in physical education and a Ph.D. degree in educational research, cementing his position as one of the foremost authorities in the field.

In the early 1930s, as the concept of physical fitness was still gaining traction, T.K. Cureton was one of the first researchers to publish significant works on the subject. One such milestone came in 1935 when the Research Quarterly journal published a supplement titled “Physical Fitness,” which included a series of articles on the components of physical fitness, including those authored by Cureton himself. “He’s often credited as one of the primary contributors to defining the concept of physical fitness,” Kirk Cureton said. “That idea was radical at the time.”

Before figures such as LaLanne, who later became synonymous with the fitness craze of the 1950s and beyond, Cureton was already working tirelessly to raise awareness of fitness as an integral aspect of health. His contributions were not only academic but practical: he worked on initiatives that showed how physical activity could improve long-term health outcomes, including cardiac rehabilitation—a field that was revolutionary at the time.

Cureton didn’t just focus on academia. He brought his expertise to the public through clinics and talks, often conducting sessions for professionals such as dentists. As Kirk Cureton recalled, “On weekends, he’d often be away doing clinics, and then come home and talk about it.” His commitment to fitness permeated his life to the point where even vacations became opportunities for exercise. “We’d go on family trips, and my dad would just decide to run behind the car while my mom drove,” Kirk said with a laugh. “Of course, as kids, we were embarrassed, but that’s just how he lived it.”

Growing up with a father deeply invested in physical fitness, Kirk Cureton was naturally exposed to these ideas from an early age, though he admits he didn’t fully appreciate them at the time. It’s clear, though, that his father’s dedication left a lasting impression. “He would talk about it all the time,” he said. “He would give us lectures and discussions about fitness, especially when he came home from conferences or testing. We got an earful.”

It was in Huff Hall, the hub for the University of Illinois’ physical education and health sciences departments, where much of T.K. Cureton’s academic life took place. Though Huff Hall was nominally home to athletic facilities, it also housed classrooms, labs and faculty offices, reflecting the integral role that academia played in physical education. For Kirk Cureton,

Huff Hall was a frequent stop. “Growing up, we’d often drive to Huff Hall to pick (T.K.) up after classes,” he said. “It was a central part of his work life.”

Even after his retirement, T.K. Cureton’s legacy lived on, particularly through his influence on graduate students. Many of these students—a who’s who of kinesiology—went on to distinguished careers of their own in the discipline, furthering the work of their mentor.

As Kirk said, “His teaching was crucial to graduate students, especially during the summers when he’d teach two classes every year. That was a lot of work, especially considering he was running a large research program at the time.” This hands on mentorship continued for many years, ensuring that T.K. Cureton’s impact extended far beyond his time at the university.

Though Kirk Cureton was undoubtedly influenced by his father’s work, he did not initially plan to follow in his footsteps. He went on a different path, studying pre-med and spending time in medical school before returning to Illinois to pursue a master’s degree in the field his father helped pioneer. His eventual return to Illinois marked the beginning of his own academic career, one that would honor the legacy his father established.

Today, the impact of T.K. Cureton’s work is still felt, particularly within the College of Applied Health Sciences. His contributions to the understanding of physical fitness, exercise, health and wellness laid the foundation for future generations of researchers, educators and practitioners. His work, often ahead of its time, helped to redefine what fitness meant to society and has left an indelible mark on the world of physical education, now Kinesiology. As the University of Illinois celebrates the centennial of Huff Hall, the memory of T.K. Cureton’s vision continues to shape the future of health and fitness research.

“It’s never too late to begin getting into shape but it does take daily, sometimes painful, perseverance. After all, you can’t expect in a week’s time to make over a body that took years to wreck.”

—Thomas K. Cureton Jr.

Illinois Sport Psychology

APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

A 'Once in a Lifetime' Reunion

By ETHAN SIMMONS





Today's Department of Health and Kinesiology once hosted the nation's foremost researchers of sport psychology. Nearly 50 years on, these pioneers reunited at Huff Hall for a weekend on campus.

When Rainer Martens arrived at the University of Illinois in the summer of 1966, he stepped out of his blue Mustang and bounded up the steps of George Huff Hall to see the university's Sport Psychology Laboratory with his own eyes.

What he found on the third floor of Huff initially disappointed him: old equipment piled up in the corner of a room with just enough space to seat a class. "We thought we'd come to the wrong place," Martens said.

Turns out, he wasn't in the wrong place—maybe just a little early.

What followed was the explosive growth of sport psychology research at Illinois. With help from the university's world-class Department of Psychology, a group of like-minded doctoral students—including Martens, Glyn Roberts and the late Dan Landers—began building a formal sport psychology graduate program at Illinois to study the mental aspects of athletic success, motivation and performance.

Dozens of doctoral students went on to matriculate in the program and bring their discoveries to institutions across the globe. By the late 1970s, Illinois had become the torchbearer for modern-day sport psychology in the U.S., with a vibrant group of researchers at the helm.

Five decades later, a group of those same students and faculty returned to campus to catch up with their former colleagues and take a tour of their old academic home. The guest list left an indelible mark on the field of sport psychology as it stands today. Read more at go.illinois.edu/SPLegends.

Guests of honor

- **Rainer Martens**, a professor of kinesiology at Illinois until 1984 and co-founder of Human Kinetics, leading publisher of books and journals on physical activity
- **Julie Martens**, Ph.D. in sport psychology and the first employee of Human Kinetics, who retired as executive vice president in 2009
- **Glyn Roberts**, professor emeritus at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences and former professor of sport psychology at Illinois
- **Tara Scanlan**, professor emerita of psychology at UCLA, and her husband, Larry Scanlan
- **Diane Gill**, kinesiology professor emerita at UNC Greensboro
- **Dan Gould** and **Marty Ewing**, professors emeriti at Michigan State. Both earned a Ph.D. at Illinois, and Gould taught here until 1991;
- **Penny McCullagh**, professor emerita at Cal State, East Bay
- **Damon Burton**, professor of sport psychology at the University of Idaho
- **Robin Vealey**, professor of kinesiology and health at the University of Miami, Ohio
- **Linda "Bump" Harrison**, a publisher who got her Ph.D. in the program in 1987
- **Marc Lochbaum**, professor of kinesiology at Texas Tech who went to Illinois for undergrad and was mentored by several sport psychology greats
- Absent were **Joan Duda**, professor of sport and exercise psychology at University of Birmingham; and **Dan Landers**, a professor of sport and exercise psychology and co-founder of the Journal of Sport Psychology, who passed away in 2023



Malandraki

Named New Head of Speech and Hearing Science

By VINCE LARA-CINISOMO

The College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is pleased to announce the appointment of Georgia A. Malandraki as the new head of the Department of Speech and Hearing Science, effective January 2026. Malandraki brings with her an exceptional record of scholarly achievement, clinical innovation and academic leadership that will advance the department's mission in education, research and service.

Malandraki succeeds Pamela Hadley, Ph.D., who was appointed department head in 2020. Hadley will continue serving as the Charles and Kay Stenberg Endowed Professor in Disability Research. Amy Woods is serving as interim SHS head until January 2026.

“Since earning my Ph.D. in Speech and Hearing Science from Illinois in 2008, I have been fortunate to have a deeply fulfilling career—one that has been profoundly shaped by the training and mentorship I received during my doctoral years,” Malandraki said. “It is an incredible honor to return to my alma mater to serve as head of SHS. As I step into this role, I am beyond humbled and filled with excitement.

“I follow in the footsteps of professor and current head, Dr. Pamela Hadley, whose compassionate leadership and dedication have strengthened the department through growth and challenges, including during the pandemic. I first met Dr. Hadley during my final year as a doctoral student, and her warmth and generosity have left a lasting impression—one she has carried into her impactful tenure as head. I am deeply grateful for her example and the foundation that she, along with her distinguished predecessors, has built. As I take on this role, I do so with humility, gratitude and a strong commitment to inclusive excellence, innovation and collaboration. I look forward to working alongside the exceptional SHS faculty, students and staff and under the inspiring leadership of AHS Dean Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell as we continue to advance impactful research, education and service in the field of communication sciences and disorders at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Go Illini!”

Malandraki joins the University of Illinois from Purdue University, where she served as a professor in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, with a courtesy appointment in the Weldon School of Biomedical Engineering. At Purdue, she directed the I-EaT Swallowing Research Laboratory and Clinic and played a pivotal role in interdisciplinary research and education focused on the neural mechanisms of swallowing function.

Malandraki earned her Ph.D. at the University of Illinois in 2008 after earning her master’s at Ohio University and her undergraduate degree from the Technological Educational Institute of Patras, Greece.

An internationally recognized expert in dysphagia, Malandraki is a certified speech-language pathologist, a board-certified specialist in swallowing and swallowing disorders and a fellow of the American

“Since earning my Ph.D. in Speech and Hearing Science from Illinois in 2008, I have been fortunate to have a deeply fulfilling career—one that has been profoundly shaped by the training and mentorship I received during my doctoral years,” Malandraki said. “It is an incredible honor to return to my alma mater to serve as head of SHS. As I step into this role, I am beyond humbled and filled with excitement.”

Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Her groundbreaking work has focused on the development of neurophysiologically driven interventions and telehealth solutions to expand access to care for individuals with swallowing disorders, particularly in underserved populations.

Malandraki is a founding member of the Purdue CEREBRAL Center and a faculty associate with the Purdue Center for Aging and the Life Course. Her contributions to the field have earned her numerous accolades, including the NIH NIBIB R21 Trailblazer Award in 2019, the Purdue Early Career Research Achievement Award and the 2021 ASHA Fellowship. Her team also received the 2021 Editor’s Award from the Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research (JSLHR), and she was honored with the 2022 Honors of the Indiana Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

In addition to her research accomplishments, Malandraki is widely respected for her commitment to excellence in teaching. Since joining Purdue in 2014, she has been recognized with eight departmental teaching awards and received the 2018 Patsy J. Mellott Teaching Innovation Award from Purdue’s College of Health and Human Sciences.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Malandraki to the University of Illinois,” Hanley-Maxwell said. “Her visionary leadership, collaborative spirit and unwavering dedication to advancing the science and practice of communication and swallowing disorders make her an ideal choice to lead our Department of Speech and Hearing Science into its next chapter.”

AHS INVESTITURES

Hadley Appointed as Stenberg Professor

Pamela Hadley was appointed as the inaugural Charles and Kay Stenberg Endowed Professor in Disability Research in a ceremony in spring 2025.

The appointment is a testament to Hadley's decades-long dedication to advancing the science of language development in young children, particularly those with developmental language disorder, said Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, dean of the College of Applied Health Sciences.

"Pam Hadley has made significant contributions to language science through highly regarded translational research, mentored numerous students into clinical and academic careers and benefited the department, university and profession at large through a variety of service activities," Hanley-Maxwell said. Read more at go.illinois.edu/HadleyInvestiture.



Graber Named Khan Professor

Kim Graber, the head of the Department of Health and Kinesiology in the College of Applied Health Sciences, was appointed as the Shahid and Ann Carlson Khan Professor in AHS in spring 2025.

Graber, who grew up in Barrington, Illinois, said she did not think about becoming a professor because, at that time, "Career opportunities for women were limited, and girls were taught to dream about a career in teaching, nursing or secretarial work."

So, when she started college at Valparaiso University, she began as a student in home economics.

"That, however, lasted only a year because I didn't enjoy cooking and wasn't very good at it, as my family will attest," she said during her investiture ceremony.

AHS Dean Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell highlighted the significance of an endowed professorship.

"Endowed professorships enable us to recognize, reward and retain outstanding scholars whose work brings renown not only to them but also to the college and the university," Hanley-Maxwell said. Read more at go.illinois.edu/GraberInvestiture.



IN MEMORIAM



Jack Kelly

Jack Kelly, a professor in the Department of Leisure Studies at Illinois for many years, died on Feb. 10, 2025, at the age of 94.

Professor Emeritus Jack Kelly was a trailblazer in the field of leisure studies and was instrumental in establishing the field of leisure studies. Kelly anticipated many societal issues and trends in the 1970s and early 1980s that advanced knowledge of healthy aging, the study of work and leisure, socialization and leisure and family leisure. Read more at go.illinois.edu/JackKelly.



Ron Dodd

Ron Dodd, former director of the Joliet Park District and an RST alumnus, died on July 31, 2025, at the age of 84.

Dodd was a leader and educator in public parks and recreation and the embodiment of a true servant leader who cared about the communities he served and was instrumental in advancing the parks and recreation profession nationally and internationally. Read more at go.illinois.edu/RonDodd.



Laurence Chalip

Laurence Chalip, former head of the Department of Recreation Sport and Tourism and a Brightbill/Sapora professor, died on Sept. 5, 2025, at the age of 74.

Chalip was a global leader and visionary in the field of sport policy and sport management. He championed the integration of the recreation, sport and tourism field and encouraged the RST faculty and students to emphasize the commonalities among their sub-fields. Read more at go.illinois.edu/LaurenceChalip.

Faculty members of the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism collaborated to write these remembrances.

RESEARCH IN AHS



Black Travel and ‘Online Allies’

In summer 2020, as protests for racial and social justice filled U.S. streets, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) took an unprecedented stand. Their Instagram grids turned black, feeds filled with solidarity hashtags and captions spoke of inclusion and equity. It was striking for an industry not known for inclusivity—but did these gestures matter to Black travelers, the audience they aimed to support? That question drove a new study, “Online Allies? Exploring Black Travelers’ Perceptions of DMO Social Advocacy Statements,” published in the *Journal of Travel Research* by Charis Tucker, assistant professor in Recreation, Sport and Tourism at the University of Illinois. Read more at go.illinois.edu/BlackTravel.



Supporting Adults with Down Syndrome

Marie Moore Channell, associate professor of Speech and Hearing Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, is the lead investigator on a new study funded by the National Institutes of Health, which will collect the direct perspectives of young adults with Down syndrome and develop community resources to support their social, mental and physical well-being.

Unlike any previous study on the topic, this one has a 12-person steering committee of adults with Down syndrome who have helped develop the direction of the study “every step of the way.” Read more at go.illinois.edu/DownSyndrome.



Tattoos and Transformative Travel

At the intersection of body art and travel lies a fascinating phenomenon: tattoos serving as anchors of transformative experiences. A new study from RST faculty members Toni Liechty and Joelle Soulard, along with recent RST graduate and current Western Michigan University Assistant Professor Xin Du, sheds light on how travelers inscribe their journeys into their skin—quite literally—turning fleeting moments into enduring symbols of change. Drawing on the theory of aesthetic reflexivity, Soulard and her team examined how tattoos reflect not only personal transformations but also the broader cultural contexts in which they are created. The study earned a Silver Award at the TTRA International Conference. Read more at go.illinois.edu/Tattoos.



Segregation, Parks and Physical Activity

In U.S. cities, physical activity is promoted as essential to public health, yet disparities in access and participation persist—especially in racially segregated areas where systemic inequalities shape outcomes. RST faculty members Mariela Fernandez and Miki Sato examined how racial residential segregation affects leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) and how park availability influences this relationship. Focusing on Chicago's stark racial divides, the researchers found complex dynamics that question whether simply increasing the number of parks leads to greater physical activity across all communities. Read more at go.illinois.edu/ParksSeg.

Words That Bind

In the days following her stroke, all Mary Moore could remember was two phrases: her name and Dec. 26, the day she was born.

A short five months later, Moore was in the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Clinic, leading a lively conversation with students at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She's now a regular attendee of the Aphasia Weekly Communication Group, a new initiative in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science at Illinois.

"It's very accommodating to people, and it's just so, so much fun," Moore said. "It helps your ability to socialize and get out there when you go back home afterwards." Read more at go.illinois.edu/Words.

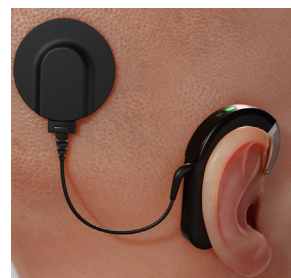
Machine-Learning Model and Cognition

A new study led by Health and Kinesiology Associate Professor Naiman Khan identifies key health and lifestyle factors—such as diet, physical activity and weight—linked to healthy brain function across the lifespan. Using machine learning, researchers pinpointed which variables best predicted quick, focused task performance. Published in *The Journal of Nutrition*, the study found that age, blood pressure and body mass index were the strongest predictors of success on the flanker task, which measures attention and focus. Diet and exercise also influenced performance, sometimes mitigating the negative effects of high BMI or other risk factors, highlighting the interconnected role of physical and cognitive health. Read more at go.illinois.edu/MachineLearning.



Advancing Cochlear Implants

Justin Aronoff, associate professor in Speech and Hearing Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, received a subaward on a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research grant from the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. The project, led by Vortant Technologies, explores "spatially transparent binaural beamforming," a novel noise-reduction approach for cochlear implant processors. Cochlear implants restore hearing for many, but noisy environments remain challenging. Aronoff's collaboration with Vortant aims to improve signal processing without distorting spatial cues, enhancing users' ability to navigate complex listening situations. Read more at go.illinois.edu/Implants.



Measuring Pain in Postpartum Women

Bringing a new baby into the world is often described as joyful, overwhelming and exhausting all at once. But what's less often talked about is how the postpartum body—and brain—handle pain, especially for mothers dealing with postpartum depression. A team of researchers led by Sandraluz Lara-Cinisomo, an associate professor in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Illinois, recently took a bold step to explore that question. They asked, "Can we measure how new moms' brains respond to pain using fMRI? And would moms even be willing to do it?" It turns out the answer is yes. Read more at go.illinois.edu/Pain.



Developing More Realistic Hearing Tests

Imagine sitting in a busy café, struggling to follow a conversation as voices and background clatter blend together. For many people with hearing loss, this is a daily challenge—yet traditional hearing tests in silent rooms fail to reflect these real-world difficulties. At the University of Illinois, audiologist and Clinical Assistant Professor Sadie Braun is leading research to create more accurate hearing assessments that simulate everyday listening environments. Supported by a \$30,000 pilot grant from the Center for Health, Aging, and Disability, Braun and colleague Dan Fogerty aim to better understand and improve speech-in-noise testing used in clinical settings. Read more at go.illinois.edu/Tests.



Ukrainian Refugees and War Trauma

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Recreation, Sport and Tourism Professor Monika Stodolska sat face-to-face with refugees who had fled to Poland, asking a question few had considered: What do you do in your leisure time?

She sought to understand how leisure might help them cope with trauma and stress. But she wasn't prepared for their reactions—or how deeply they'd affect her.

"The look on their faces stuck with me," Stodolska said. "How can you ask about leisure when my family is on the front lines?"

As a researcher, she knew leisure could help—but they did not. Read more at go.illinois.edu/Refugees.



Examining Exercise, Protein Efficiency

About 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day supports muscle maintenance and daily function in healthy adults. However, for adults with type 2 diabetes—affecting about one in 10 Americans—protein requirements are less defined, and likely higher. As individuals with diabetes age, they often become more resistant to the muscle-building effects of exercise and protein intake. Researchers in the Department of Health and Kinesiology are recruiting participants for a clinical trial to study the protein needs of older adults with type 2 diabetes and examine whether regular exercise improves the body's ability to use protein efficiently. Read more at go.illinois.edu/ExerciseProtein.



Nitrous Oxide Misuse Deaths on Rise

Nitrous oxide, or "laughing gas," commonly used in medical settings has long been misused recreationally through whipped cream chargers, or "whippets," like those pictured at right. Research led by Department of Health and Kinesiology Assistant Professor Rachel Hoopsick and published in JAMA Network Open reveals a sharp rise in nitrous oxide-related deaths over the past decade, possibly linked to mass marketing targeting younger users. The study, co-authored with University of Mississippi Assistant Professor Andrew Yockey, analyzed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data from 2010 to 2023, identifying increasing fatalities tied to misuse of the gas. The findings highlight growing public health concerns surrounding this easily accessible substance. Read more at go.illinois.edu/Nitrous.



STUDENT RESEARCH



Health and Kinesiology faculty gave graduate students and doctoral candidates the opportunity to present their own research during the Illinois Physical Activity Symposium in April. To mark International Physical Activity Day, the group also took a celebratory walk to the Main Quad and back.

Cutting-edge research lives at the University of Illinois, but the rigors—and achievements—aren't limited to our faculty.

Every spring, dozens of Applied Health Sciences students from all three academic departments take part in the Undergraduate Research Symposium, where they present studies, surveys and literature reviews they contributed to with faculty throughout the college.

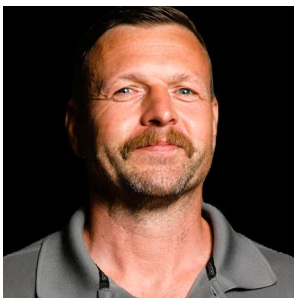
In 2025, more than 120 AHS undergraduates, several pictured below, presented on a variety of recent studies, with topics ranging from health technology acceptance among older adults to hearing health and tinnitus, athlete advocacy groups, postpartum depression and much more.





Promotion, Tenure and New Faculty

Seven faculty at the College of Applied Health Sciences received promotions prior to the 2025–26 academic year. Here are their new faculty titles.



Nicholas Burd, Professor,
Health and Kinesiology



Andiana Schwingel,
Professor, Health and
Kinesiology



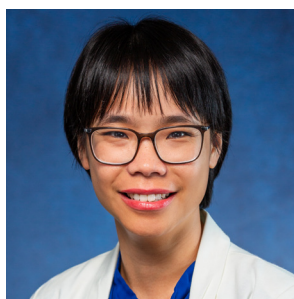
Susan Aguiñaga, Associate
Professor, Health and
Kinesiology



Jacob Allen, Associate
Professor, Health and
Kinesiology



Mary Flaherty, Associate
Professor, Speech and
Hearing Science



Sharon Zou, Associate
Professor, Recreation, Sport
and Tourism



Kristen DiFilippo, Teaching
Associate Professor, Health
and Kinesiology

AHS also announced the hire of nine faculty members:



Georgia Malandraki,
Professor/Department Head,
Speech and Hearing Science



Jaime Bauer Malandraki,
Clinical Professor, Speech
and Hearing Science



Jonathan Cerna, Assistant
Professor, Health and
Kinesiology



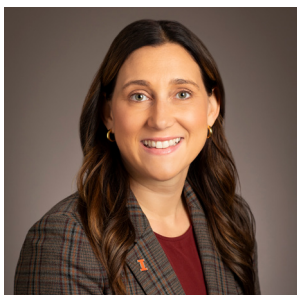
Sarah El-Azab, Assistant
Professor, Health and
Kinesiology



Megan Huibregtse,
Assistant Professor, Health
and Kinesiology



Amy Brummel, Clinical
Assistant Professor, Speech
and Hearing Science



Alana Harris, Teaching
Assistant Professor, Health
and Kinesiology



Jerri Seremeth, ASL
Instructor, Speech and
Hearing Science



Lesli Williams, ASL
Instructor, Speech and
Hearing Science

KHAN ANNEX



Jack Groppel, left, with Dean Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell and fellow award winners Adrienne Albrecht and Brandon Buchanan (Photo by Craig Pessman)

Alumni Awards Celebrate Leadership, Resilience and Service

By VINCE LARA-CINISOMO

The College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign once again shined a light on extraordinary alumni at its annual Alumni Awards celebration, held during Homecoming weekend. This year's honorees—Jack Groppel, Adrienne Albrecht and Brandon Buchanan—embody the college's enduring mission of advancing health, equity and human potential.

Distinguished Alumni Award: Jack Groppe

Few careers demonstrate the power of seizing opportunity quite like that of Jack Groppe, recipient of the 2025 AHS Distinguished Alumni Award. An internationally recognized scholar in the science of human performance, Groppe has been a professor, tennis coach, entrepreneur, author, corporate consultant and motivational speaker.

And yet, none of that would have happened without the University of Illinois.

"If the leaders in this college hadn't given me a shot, I'd be counting wolves in Wyoming," he said.

Groppe credits the University of Illinois with giving him the scientific foundation and teaching passion that shaped his career.

"AHS molded me into a person who can do quality research," he said. "It all began with leaders in AHS taking a chance on me. It started in that small town and on those small farms where young Jack dared to dream big."

Harold Scharper Award: Adrienne Albrecht

If Groppe's story is about breaking down doors, Adrienne Albrecht's is about perseverance and the power of access. Recipient of the Harold Scharper Award, presented by the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services, Albrecht retired in 2024 as a justice of the Third District Appellate Court of Illinois, capping a distinguished legal career.

Born in Kankakee as the eighth of 10 children, Albrecht was diagnosed with Marfan syndrome, a connective tissue disorder that severely impaired her vision. In the 1960s, long before disability rights laws provided protections, her mother fought to secure accommodations like front-row seating and access to blackboards. "My mother was extraordinary," Albrecht said. "She understood what I needed and made sure I got it."

DRES founder Tim Nugent also played a vital role. Several of Albrecht's siblings, who also had Marfan syndrome, attended Illinois with the support of DRES scholarships.

"I can't tell you what a profound effect the University of Illinois had on my entire family. Imagine this family of 10 children, thinking they could all go to college and have great careers. The University of Illinois was just so crucial to my family," she said.

Dean Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell said Nugent would be proud to see how Albrecht carried forward his legacy of inclusion and access.

"(Nugent) would join all of us in AHS and DRES in saying that you are richly deserving of this award," Hanley-Maxwell said.

Young Alumni Award: Brandon Buchanan

Brandon Buchanan was honored with the AHS Young Alumni Award for his leadership in health equity and hospital administration. Buchanan is now associate chief operating officer of Orlando Health Dr. P. Phillips Hospital, but his path began in Champaign with a shift in academic focus.

Originally a journalism major, Buchanan found his calling while volunteering at Smile Healthy, a clinic providing dental care to underserved populations. "Community health took a holistic approach to how society looks at health and well-being," he said. Inspired, he switched majors and pursued graduate training in health administration.

Hanley-Maxwell praised Buchanan's blend of leadership and compassion: "You cannot go wrong when you are committed to improving your community through service, fairness and respect."

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: AHS ALUMNI AWARDS

The College of Applied Health Sciences is excited and proud to celebrate alumni who have distinguished themselves nationally and/or internationally. Each year during Homecoming weekend, AHS recognizes alumni whose successes are highlighted and honored during a collegewide ceremony in the following categories: Distinguished Alumni Award, Young Alumni Award and the Harold Scharper Achievement Award. Please visit go.illinois.edu/Nominate to learn more about each award and consider nominating yourself or someone you know. Nominations are due by Jan. 26, 2026. For more information, don't hesitate to contact the AHS Office of Advancement at (217) 244-8408.

AHS BOARD OF VISITORS

The College of Applied Health Sciences invites alumni and friends to submit an application to serve on the AHS Board of Visitors (BOV), a volunteer advisory board that helps advance the college's teaching, research and service missions. The BOV meet twice annually (fall and spring), and members serve on one of three committees (Advancement, Engagement or Nominating and Governance) that convene in between the biannual meetings. Applications are due by March 1 each year, and the three-year service term begins on July 1 (coinciding with the university's fiscal year). For more information, please visit go.illinois.edu/BOV or contact the AHS Office of Advancement at (217) 244-8408.

Chez Sees Success with New Student-Centered Model

By ADELYN MUI

The Chez Veterans Center showed an increase in military-connected student engagement in the first year after implementing a comprehensive case management model.

The number of unique students Chez served increased by 25.89%, meaning that the center has expanded its reach to more students while focusing on more targeted, individualized care. Andy Bender, director of operations and services at Chez, said that the focus of this initiative was putting the person back into what they do.

The initiative was spearheaded by Ingrid Wheeler, Chez's assistant director for behavioral health programs, who took the concept of the new model and made it into a practical application. Wheeler said that the shift began during the pandemic and evolved as the Veteran population changed.

Her background in social work and case management helped her recognize that "a more individualized plan has to be in place to really support the ever-changing needs," she said. "It's about seeing it through a different lens that maybe we wouldn't have if we weren't seeing them as an individual." Read more at go.illinois.edu/PeopleFirst.





At 10 Years, **Chez Veterans Center** Honors its Family and Friends By ETHAN SIMMONS

After long journeys to Urbana-Champaign, the Chez family, pictured above, gathered at the campus center that bears their name, beaming with pride.

Thirteen years ago, Ron Chez—a 1962 University of Illinois graduate and Army Veteran turned investor and philanthropist—provided a lead gift to build the Chez Veterans Center. Since then, the campus hub has assisted the transition to higher education and beyond for many hundreds of student Veterans and military-connected students since its opening a decade ago.

Though Ron couldn't be there for its 10-year anniversary, his son Eric, daughter-in-law Julie and granddaughters Ilyse and Eden traveled from locations across the country to attend on his behalf and see the center's community reflect on its first 10 years.

As they mingled with students and recent graduates who have benefited from the Chez Veterans Center, the family was moved to see Ron's commitment realized before them.

The Chez Veterans Center has evolved since its doors first opened in 2015. Initially named the Chez Center for Wounded Veterans in Higher Education, the center's scope has expanded to support new generations of student Veterans who didn't see combat, as well as students from military families. The name was shortened to the Chez Veterans Center in 2019, after students and staff supported the change.

"The Chez Veterans Center is more than a building—clearly," said Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, dean of the College of Applied Health Sciences, the center's home college. "It's a space for healing, discovery, growth and empowerment. Every day it opens doors to Veterans who are reshaping their lives through educational service." Read more at go.illinois.edu/ChezHonors.

A few key supporters were recognized for making the work of the **Chez Veterans Center**.

- **Joe Rank**, an Illinois alumnus, Vietnam War Veteran and member of the Chez advisory board, was presented the center's inaugural Guidon Award for his continued partnership with the center.
- **Susan and Michael Haney**, alumni and longtime educators whose Ronald D. Paulsgrove Student Support Fund, named for Susan's cousin who served in Vietnam, covers the non-academic costs of college for student Veterans.
- **Naomi Winslow**, who decided to honor her late husband, Wayne, an Army and Air Force Veteran, by providing a named gift to the Chez Veterans Center. The center's common area kitchen is now named after the couple.
- **Tanya Gallagher**, previous dean of the College of Applied Health Sciences who championed the Chez Center's creation while she worked for Illinois. Gallagher was presented with a flag that had flown over the center.

Basketball Tournament Allows Illinois to Showcase its Adaptive Sports Programs

By VINCE LARA-CINISOMO

The University of Illinois and Illinois Wheelchair Athletics played host in spring 2025 to the 47th Annual National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball Tournament and even though neither Illini team took home a title, the event at the State Farm Center was still an opportunity to showcase Illinois as a trailblazer for disability resources and adaptive sports.

This year marked the 76th anniversary of the first NIWBT, which was hosted in 1949 at a University of Illinois satellite campus in Galesburg, Illinois. The tournament was organized by Tim Nugent, the first director of Disability Resources and Educational Services, also known as DRES. In honor of the man known as the “father of accessibility,” the tournament winner is awarded the coveted Timothy J. Nugent Championship Trophy.

This season’s NIWBT featured 11 men’s teams and 6 women’s teams competing in 21 total games across four days, from March 26–29.

In terms of results, the Illini women’s team reached the semifinals after beating City University of New York 72-19, but lost to Texas-Arlington 59-40. The Illini women did defeat Arizona, 62-37, for a third-place finish.

Women’s coach Stephanie Wheeler praised the fans for making their voices heard.

“You could hear their screams, you could hear their I-L-Ls, you could hear them say the names of the players,” Wheeler said. “It’s that kind of energy that translates on court.” Read more at go.illinois.edu/DresNIWBT.



Elshorbagy Overcame the Odds with Help from DRES

By JONATHAN KING



In her home in southern Egypt, Hoda Elshorbagy glanced at the TV, then turned to her father with clear-eyed conviction and said, “One day, I’m going to do that.”

Without missing a beat, he said, “Yes—you need to be one of them.”

Elshorbagy, pictured at left, and her father were glued to the 2016 Paralympic Games that day in their rural village when they saw for the first time a sport that would become Hoda’s passion: wheelchair racing.

Only eight years later, Elshorbagy—now a member of the Illinois wheelchair racing team—finished 10th in the women’s wheelchair division of the 128th Boston Marathon. The timing seemed improbable, but for those who know Elshorbagy and her determination, it was no surprise.

Read more at go.illinois.edu/Elshorbagy.



A 1924 issue of The Daily Illini, found in a time capsule sealed inside a column during Huff Hall's construction, offers a **glimpse** into campus life and national headlines from the early 20th century.

Huff's neoclassical design features intricate stonework, decorative reliefs and symmetrical brickwork that reflect early 20th century collegiate architecture and the enduring **legacy** of campus craftsmanship.



Huffy, the unofficial mascot of the Huff centennial celebration, was originally used by the Illini wrestling team in Huff Hall to simulate matches.

The windows of Huff Hall have witnessed a **century** of Illini history. Their distinctive design, part of the original 1925 architecture, continues to illuminate generations of students, athletes and scholars.





College of Applied Health Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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Making moves? Tell us about it!

We know you're out there making the world a better place. Keep the AHS connection strong by sharing your latest accomplishments, a new role or updated contact info. Scan the code to get in touch; we'd love to catch up and loop you into what's happening on campus.