

**THE VALLEY CONNECTION**  
ALUMNI MAGAZINE

**SUMMER 2014**

**COMING  
TOGETHER**



*CNN Hero Advocates for Female Veterans*  
**“NEVER LEAVE A FALLEN  
COMRADE”**



- Dr. James H. White



## THE VALLEY CONNECTION ALUMNI MAGAZINE

Valley Connection Magazine is published once a year by  
Mississippi Valley State University.

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or group affiliation, age, disability or veteran status.

On the cover: John H. Johnson, MVSU National Alumni Association President;  
Dr. Walter Roberts, MVSU Foundation Chairman;  
Derrick Jones, Student Government Association President; and  
Dr. William B. Bynum Jr., MVSU President

MVSU Alumna Jaspen Booth '99

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# from the president



Dear MVSU Alumni:

First, I would like to thank you for your support since becoming president of your beloved institution. Mississippi Valley State University is a jewel to the Mississippi Delta and beyond. With all great treasures, it must be preserved through advanced planning and forethought so it can withstand the test of time.

MVSU graduates hold a great sense of pride in their hearts; this has been evident to me since the day I arrived. Continue to let the world know what your Valley degree has done and continues to do for you. There are six charges ("Say It Loud, I'm Valley Proud!") I am proposing to all alumni.

1. Prominently display your Valley degree at home and work.
2. Purchase a Valley license plate (\$32.50 of your purchase comes back to the University).
3. Invite me to speak at large gatherings (social clubs/civic organizations, churches, high schools, etc.).
4. Devote time to recruiting students and helping to retain students; the V.A.R.T. training manual will be available in late spring.
5. Mentor a Valley student from your hometown or career field. We will call for mentors in the summer with implementation set for the Fall 2015 new student class.
6. Support the 1950 Annual Fund Campaign. There are several levels in which you can contribute. When seeking funding or support from corporations and foundations, one of the key questions asked is the percentage of alumni who contribute. They are more interested in the percentage rather than amount, because they are interested in investing in universities whose alumni give back. So, the important thing is that alumni start or continue to give - regardless of amount.

My vision for MVSU is to uplift six powerful words that are already deeply rooted in "The Valley" culture. The vision is ONE GOAL. ONE TEAM. ONE VALLEY. The ONE GOAL is Student Success (increased enrollment, retention and graduation; holistic student development and career advancement). The ONE TEAM is University and Community Working Together. And, the ONE VALLEY is students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends actively demonstrating School Pride and Spirituality that is second to none!

Become actively involved in YOUR university. The Valley needs YOU to invest your time, talent and treasure so WE can make sure MVSU thrives and not just survive.

Sincerely,

*William B. Bynum, Jr.*  
Dr. William B. Bynum, Jr.  
President

## BY THE NUMBERS

### CABINET AND EXTENDED CABINET COMPOSITION DIVERSITY & BALANCE

#### GENDER

Cabinet

2 Male



6 Female



Extended Cabinet

9 Male



17 Female



#### TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED

Cabinet

HBCU 6



PWI 2



Extended Cabinet

HBCU 19



PWI 7



#### STAFFING

Cabinet

New 4



Existing 4



Extended Cabinet

New 9



Existing 17



Alumni Cabinet

MVSU Alum 3



Non- Alum 5



Extended Cabinet

MVSU Alum 12



Non- Alum 14





## BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, SBA HOSTS TEEN SUMMIT

Over 100 high school students filled the business education auditorium to attend the Teen Entrepreneurship Summit hosted by the Department of Business Administration in collaboration with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

SBA and MVSU (SBA-MVSU Initiative) recently joined in a strategic alliance with the objective of enhancing small business development within the Mississippi Delta region. The summit introduced high school students to ways to start their own business and the four elements to starting your own business - competence, character, capital and credit.

"The summit was educational and inspirational in focus," said Dr. Jay Kim, chair of the Business Department. "This event allowed us to recruit students to become future MVSU students."

Schools in attendance were Amanda Elzy High, Gentry High, Greenwood High and Leflore County High. The summit introduced entrepreneurship to the students as an alternative career path. According to Instructor Ladd Simms, the primary purpose of the summit was to inspire, educate, and to support teens.

"My expectations were that students be open to learning entrepreneurship," said Simms, Instructor of Business. "I must say our expectations were more than fulfilled."

To end this year's summit, high school students received encouraging words from current undergraduate and graduate students of the MVSU Business Department. They shared with them their goals, aspirations, and ways to succeed in college.

## MVSU STUDENTS WIN TOP AWARDS AGAIN AT THE UWF MOCK TRIAL TOURNAMENT



**Above:** Members of the Mock Trial Team, from left, are Mildred Michael, Na'kaila Sandidge, Lonell Macon, Arlinda Carter, team captain; Dr. Larry Chappell, coach; Rickyta Mallett, Jeana McGee and Justin Robinson. Not pictured are Courtney Boyd, Kaitlyn Horton and David Fletcher, coach.

Mississippi Valley State University competed in the University of West Florida - Argo Invitational Mock Trial Tournament sponsored by Stetson College of Law in Pensacola, Fla. The team continued its strong tradition by winning two individual awards.

Arlinda Carter, a junior Criminal Justice/ Political Science major from Greenville, Miss., won an Outstanding Attorney award. She received a rare perfect score on the ballots and was the top attorney at the competition. Rickyta Mallett, senior Sociology/Political Science major from Greenwood, received honorable mention as a witness. She played accountant Haley Floyd. Other team members for MVSU included Courtney Boyd, Kaitlyn Horton, Lonell Macon, Jeana McGee, Mildred Michael and Justin Robinson.

"Mock trial requires students to perform as attorneys and witnesses competing against teams from around the country," said Dr. Larry Chappell, MVSU Pre- Law Advisor and Professor of Political Science. "The tournaments are sponsored by the American Mock Trial Association

(AMTA). Teams consist of 10 members who must compete in four, three hour trials – two on prosecution and two on defense. Team members must learn affidavits, analyze and utilize numerous pieces of evidence. A trial consists of opening statements, direct examinations, cross examinations and closing arguments. Students must be skilled and focused to succeed."

The invitational tournament attracted teams from around the region including Auburn University, The University of Alabama, Kennesaw State University, The University of South Florida, Mississippi University for Women, The University of West Florida, Houston Baptist University, Georgia State University, The University of Louisiana at Monroe, Mercer University and Millsaps College.

Dr. Chappell was assisted by David Fletcher, second year law student at the University of Mississippi, who is an alumnus of MVSU and a former captain of the MVSU Mock Trial Team. The trip was funded by the Office of Academic Affairs.



**Above:** Pictured front row from left are Damion Ray, Daniel Kibet, Victor Cheseng, Theodore Johnson, Earl Winters, Jose Serrano, David Pulliam, Felix Kiprop, Juan Perez, Head Coach Danielle Douglas, Athletic Trainer Robert Long; back row, Romella Nalepa, Assistant Coach Belden Ferguson, Compliance Specialist Hakim McClellan and Associate Athletic Director Lee Smith.

## MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY TEAM CAPTURES 2ND CONSECUTIVE SWAC CHAMPIONSHIP

The Mississippi Valley State men's cross country team captured the SWAC Cross Country Championship for the second straight year at the Watson Cross Country Course of Choctaw Trails.

It marked the fourth overall championship title for the Delta Devils, including their third in the last four years. MVSU's Danielle Douglas was tabbed Coach of the Year for the second straight year.

MVSU had three runners to finish in the top 10 totaling 66 points. Valley's Daniel Kibet won the individual crown in the men's 8k for a second consecutive year, crossing the finish line at 26:28.16. As a result, he earned the SWAC Cross Country Male Athlete of the Year. His teammate, Felix Kiprop, finished second with a time of 26:28.16.

Jose Serrano came in 6th place with a time of 27:29.02 while Romello Nalepa captured the 15th spot with a 27:57.94 finish.

Other Valley athletes include: Juan Perez (42nd, 30:17.60), Victor Chesang (30:43.18) and Earl Winters (58th, 37:49.17).

## DEVILETTES WIN 2ND PLACE IN THE SWAC CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP

For the second consecutive year, the Mississippi Valley State women's cross country team came one place short of capturing a SWAC title.

The Devilette squad finished second with 99 points at Watson Cross Country Course of Choctaw Trails behind Alabama State for the second straight year.

Just like in 2012, MVSU's Joyce Chumo finished in first place and was named SWAC Athlete of the Year with a time of 17:56.15.

Valley's Keimara Davis placed 18th with a time of 20:43.45 while Tamara Gillard was behind her with a time of 20:47.31.

Savannah Gillard placed 24th with a time of 20:57.94 and Jovanna Peterson took the 37th spot with a 22:01.83 finish.

Aliah Benson placed 60th with a time of 25:28.71 and Mercy Lagat placed 64th with a 28:37.86 finish.



## WANG SELECTED AS COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR IEEE SYMPOSIUM

MVSU Associate Professor Dr. Lidong Wang has been invited to serve on the program committee for the 2014 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) International Symposium on Computational Intelligence in Biometrics and Identity Management. Dr. Wang is a faculty member in Automated Identification

Technology. The Symposium will be held December 9-12, 2014 in Orlando, Fla. The committee members are from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Singapore and India.

## GOLI AND PANDE COLLABORATE WITH USDA

Dr. Mudlagiri Goli, professor of chemistry, along with his colleague Dr. Manju Pande are collaborating with Dr. Bellaloui Nacer, USDA, Stoneville, Miss., and have recently published two papers on soybeans. Currently, Dr. Goli's research is on soybeans; the purpose of the study is to measure the impact of macro and micro elements on the protein, oil, fatty acids and mineral composition of soybean seeds. Three MVSU students of Drs. Goli and Pande presented their findings on February 2-4, 2014 at the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS) Conference in Dallas, Tex.





## BYNUM NAMED 7TH PRESIDENT OF MVSU

*Above: Dr. William Bynum gives remarks after being named the 7th president of MVSU. He is accompanied by his wife, Deborah.*

The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning announced the unanimous decision to name Dr. William B. Bynum, Jr. as president of Mississippi Valley State University. With more than 25 years of experience in higher education, Dr. Bynum served most recently as Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

"Dr. Bynum has extensive experience in higher education," said Trustee Shane Hooper, chair of the Mississippi Valley State University Board Search Committee. "He understands the most pressing issues in higher education today and has the knowledge and leadership skills necessary to address them. With demonstrated leadership skills and a proven track record of increasing enrollment, he is the right person to serve as president of Mississippi Valley State University at this point in the institution's history."

While at Morehouse College, Dr. Bynum recruited students and implemented programs, initiatives and activities to support them and help them succeed in the classroom and beyond. In addition to serving as a faculty member in the Morehouse College Leadership Center and the Sociology Department, Dr. Bynum was responsible for 18 programmatic units, including Project Identity, a pre-college program, and the first Morehouse College Parents Council, which was formed under his leadership.

Throughout his career, Dr. Bynum has led special projects and initiatives related to enhancing retention and graduation rates and developed academic policies to help students achieve and shorten their path to completion. Prior to joining Morehouse College, Dr.

Bynum served as Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Lincoln University in Chester County, Pennsylvania. During his tenure there, he implemented an Enrollment Management Model, recruited the four largest classes in the university's 150-year history, and increased the overall student enrollment.

"I am humbled and honored that the Board of Trustees has selected me to lead Mississippi Valley State University," said Dr. Bynum. "I grew up in a rural area of North Carolina that is very similar to the Mississippi Delta and understand the power that education has to change the lives of students and their families for generations to come. I look forward to working with the campus and community to enhance opportunities for students to pursue their dreams and fulfill their potential at Mississippi Valley."

A native of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Dr. Bynum holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Davidson College and both a master's degree and a doctorate in sociology from Duke University, where he was a Duke Endowment Fellow. In addition, he was selected as one of the first 13 inaugural members of the National Association For Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)-Kellogg Leadership Fellows Program in 2003. Funded through a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, the program is designed to train the next generation of college/university presidents for minority serving institutions.

Dr. Bynum has served as the Covington Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Davidson College, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students at Clark Atlanta University and Assistant Dean of Students at Davidson College. He has also served as an adjunct professor at Morehouse College in the Sociology Department and the Leadership Center. The Leadership Center trains students to be global, ethical leaders by teaching them leadership concepts and theories and then providing real life experiences where they can hone their leadership skills and abilities.

"Dr. Bynum was an effective leader at Morehouse," said Dr. John Silvanus Wilson Jr., president of Morehouse College in Atlanta. "I expect that he will be a student-friendly president with an impressive vision and execution strategy for Mississippi Valley State University."

Dr. Bynum met with campus constituency groups on the Mississippi Valley State University Campus in Itta Bena. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members were able to pose questions to him and share their thoughts and concerns with him. Attendees were able to provide feedback to the Board of Trustees. This feedback was reviewed during the Board Meeting on campus.

# RICK COMEGY NAMED 16TH HEAD FOOTBALL COACH



*Above: Coach Rick Comegy gives remarks during the January 21 press conference.*

When a search committee of 15 alumni and friends of The Valley embarked on the search for Mississippi Valley State University's head football coach, they were given the charge by MVSU President William Bynum to find a person who would enhance the athletic program though high academic standards.

The committee included Al Rankins Sr., Archie Tucker Sr., Carver Randle, Corey Holmes, Dr. Walter Nichols, Robert Smith, Maurine Gray, Preston Ratliff, Dr. Roy Hudson, Tommy Verdell, Troy Wesley, Willie Gregory, Arthur Moore, Dr. Hellon Keys and Vincent Copeland.

On January 21, MVSU announced Rick Comegy as the 16th head football coach.

Comegy has a career record of 156-82 and a record at Jackson State University (JSU) of 48-31. During the 2007 season at JSU, he added a SWAC championship to his stellar career.

While at JSU, he produced six winning seasons. Under Comegy's leadership, the Tigers produced 39 All-SWAC selections, the 2012 SWAC Offensive Player of the Year, the HBCU Offensive and SWAC Player of the Year the SWAC Defensive Player of the Year, AFCA All-American SBN All-Americans, SWAC Championship Game Offensive Player of the Game and Defensive Player of the Game, Wide receiver Jaymar Johnson was drafted by Minnesota in the sixth round of the 2008 draft and Domonique Johnson, Marcus Benard (with Denver and Cleveland respectively), Donovan Robinson, Rico Richardson and Joseph LeBeau signed NFL contracts.

In 2010, the Tigers bounced back from its first losing season under Comegy, to finish the season with an 8-3 record. In his inaugural season, he opened with a 44-20 victory over Paul Quinn and went on to post a 6-4 overall record. The following year, he led the Tigers to a SWAC Eastern Division title and the schools 16th conference championship with a 42-31 victory over Grambling State. He was named the SWAC Coach of the Year, Coach of the Year by the Pig

Skin Club of Washington, D.C., and Coach of the Year by the 100% Wrong Club. City of Jackson councilman Kenneth I. Stokes named him "Man of the Year" at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards Dinner. In 2008 his Tigers finished with a 7-5 overall record (6-2 SWAC), as the Tigers won their second consecutive SWAC Eastern Division title. In 2009 JSU posted its first losing season under Comegy, posting a 3-7 record.

Comegy went to JSU after serving as head football coach for the Tuskegee University Golden Lions, where he compiled a 90-26 overall record in a ten-year span. He captured four Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championship titles (1998-2001, and 2004) and three-of-five bowl games from 1998 to 2004. The Golden Tigers led the SIAC in both scoring offensively and defensively in 2001. In 2000, he finished the season with a perfect 12-0 record and went on to win the National Black College Football Championship.

His coaching career began as a defensive back coach at Millersville University in 1975. After a three-year stint with Millersville as the defensive and receiver coach, he joined the coaching staff at Colgate University as the defensive coach and assistant track coach.

In Comegy's seven years at Colgate, he would hold the title as head baseball coach for four years as well as the defensive coach and quarterback and receiver coach. After serving as defensive line/coordinator at Central State University from 1985-1993 he left for the head coaching position at Cheyney State. After two years, he returned to Central State as head coach and led the team to consecutive NAIA appearances and one championship in 1995. In two years as head coach, he posted an 18-3 overall record. During his career, Comegy has helped send many athletes to the National and Canadian Football leagues. Some of his athletes are: Eric Williams, Jacon Shelly and Teka Brown of the Dallas Cowboys; Hugh Douglas of the New York Jets (1995 Rookie of the Year); Vince Buck of the New Orleans Saints; Marvin Pope of the San Francisco 49ers; Milton Jones of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers; Kervin Wardroup of the Detroit Lions; Marvin Coleman of the Washington Redskins; Russell Meeks of the Calgary Stampeders; Jim Williams of the Chicago Bears; Drayton Florence of the San Diego Chargers; Frank Walker of the New York Giants; Kelvin Powell of the CFL's Edmonton Eskimos; Roosevelt Williams of the Chicago Bears; Bennitte Waddell of the Minnesota Vikings; Anthony Mitchell of the 2001 Super Bowl Championship Baltimore Ravens. In 2008, Jackson State's Jaymar Johnson was drafted in the seventh round by the Minnesota Vikings and Lavarus Giles signed with as a free agent running back for the Jacksonville Jaguars.

The Pennsylvania native is a 1976 graduate of Millersville University of Lancaster, Pa., where he was a three-year letterman and an all-conference defensive back. With the opportunity to play for the Philadelphia Bells of the WFL, he left school for a year but returned in 1975 as a part-time student and coach, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology.



## MVSU SELECTS GAINES AS DIRECTOR OF BANDS

Mississippi Valley State University selects seasoned music professional Blake Gaines to lead the Mean Green Marching Machine along with other auxiliary bands.



Gaines joins MVSU after serving as a member of the Morehouse College music faculty and Director of Bands. He began his tenure at Morehouse in 1990. While at Morehouse, his teaching responsibilities included conducting the Morehouse College Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, the Marching Maroon Tigers, History of Jazz, Intro to Jazz Improvisation, Orchestration and Arranging, and Applied Brasses.

Under his direction the Morehouse Marching Band has performed the Pre-Game Show at Super Bowl XXI, The Today Show, NFL Owners Ball, Jack the Rappers Convention, and the Olympic Flag Installation. The Morehouse Jazz Ensemble has performed in concert with such names as Kent Jordan (Flutist), Wes Anderson (former lead saxophonist with the Lincoln Center Jazz Band), and Delfeayo Marsalis (at the worlds famous "Snug Harbor" in New Orleans).

As an arranger/composer, he arranged the music for the Pre-Game Show at Super Bowl XXI, wrote horn parts and performed on the first Byron Cage Gospel Project, arranged two selections that were played in the movie "Drumline," and wrote the music for the Outkast hit "Morris Brown".

Gaines continues to perform locally and nationally as a jazz bassist. He has shared the stage with artist such as Bob Baldwin, Buddy Williams, Chuck Lobe, Will Downing, Tom Brown, and Steve Oliver. To add to his credits, he is a producer and has been named to the Executive Board of Trustees for The American Society of Young Musicians Atlanta Chapter. He is also a member of the Georgia Music Educators Association, Phi Mu Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Gaines holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Jackson State University and Masters of Music Education from the University of Central Oklahoma located in Edmond, Okla.

their accomplishments in academics, leadership, and civic engagement. Currently enrolled at 62 HBCUs, the All-Stars were selected from 445 students who submitted completed applications that included a transcript, resume, essay, and recommendation.

"I am grateful that God granted me the opportunity to represent my HBCU," said Rice. "I look forward to meeting and working with the other campus all-stars to help promote HBCU's and the importance of continuing your education beyond high school. This will also be a good way for me to help recruit future students to the Valley."

Rice graduated from Eupora High School in 2008. In May, he will graduate from MVSU with a Bachelor of Arts degree in speech communication. In the future, he plans to pursue his master's degree in either public administration or political science.

"Engaging with the next generation of leaders who will graduate from HBCUs and go on to make meaningful contributions to society is crucial to the success of our community, our country and our global competitiveness," said George Cooper, executive director of the WHIHBCUs. "It is a privilege to announce these 75 students who have demonstrated a commitment to both their own academic achievement and making a difference in their communities, and we look forward to working with them as partners in advancing President Obama's college completion goal."

Over the course of the next year, the HBCU All-Stars will serve as ambassadors of the White House Initiative by providing outreach and communication with their fellow students about the value of education and the Initiative as a networking resource. Through social media and their relationships with community-based organizations, the All-Stars will share promising and proven practices that support opportunities for all young people to achieve their educational and career potential. In addition, the 45 female and 30 male All-Stars will participate in regional events and web chats with Ivory Toldson, deputy director of the WHIHBCUs, other Initiative staff and professionals from a wide range of disciplines. They will also have opportunities to engage with other scholars to showcase individual and collective talent across the HBCU community.

## MVSU SOFTBALL TEAM GPA ONE OF BEST IN NATION

The Mississippi Valley State softball team has defined itself as one of the most successful teams on the field over the last decade.

But not only do the Devilettes succeed on the diamond, but also in the classroom, as well. And, that was proved recently as MVSU was ranked No. 32 in the nation in team GPA, the highest in school history, as released by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA).

Valley completed the 2012-13 academic term with a team GPA of 3.378. The Devilettes were one of only two SWAC teams on the list.



## RICE NAMED WHITE HOUSE HBCU ALL STAR

MVSU student Rodney Rice of Eupora, Miss. was named to the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (WHIHBCU) All-Stars, recognizing 75 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students for



# R.W. HARRISON COMPLEX RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY



Fences are up and bricks are coming down as the R.W. Harrison Complex at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) steps into the 21st century with renovations and expansions underway.

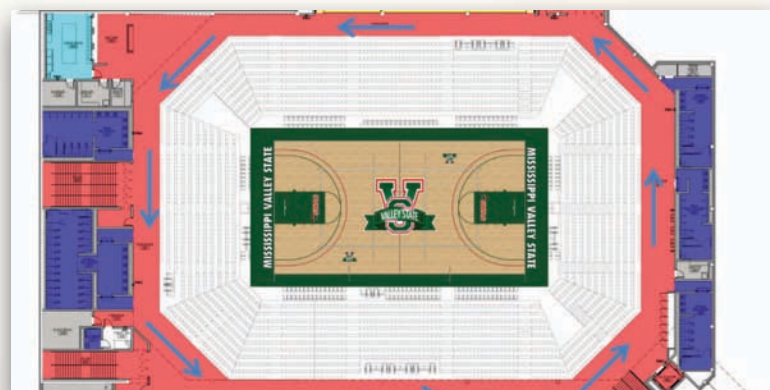
MVSU is committed to creating a student-centered environment that will positively impact the lives of its students. Upgrading the Harrison Complex is just one of many projects to come at Mississippi Valley State University. The two year project will bring a new feel of indoor sports for the Delta Devils. The newly renovated facility will hold 1,200 more people than the original facility.

Expanding over 100,000 square feet, the new facility will include digital classrooms, offices, locker rooms, new digitized score boards, a concourse level that doubles as an indoor track, a team store, an aerobics area, club room, trophy cases and a state of the art wellness center.

"The facility will provide the campus with a more student-centered showcase building that will definitely enhance school pride amongst students, faculty, alumni and friends," said Tommy Verdell, Director of Facilities Management.

The R.W. Harrison Complex was built in 1977 with dual purposes of hosting indoor sporting events and physical education courses. Since then, the facility hasn't seen any major renovations.

The \$17.5 million dollar project was designed by Pryor and Morrow Architects of Columbus, Miss., in association with Vernell Barnes Architect. The newly renovated facility is expected to reopen spring 2016.







## J.H. WHITE LIBRARY GETS UPLIFT

After a little over a year of construction, the James Herbert White Library located at the heart of the Mississippi Valley State campus has stepped into the 21st century with new renovations.

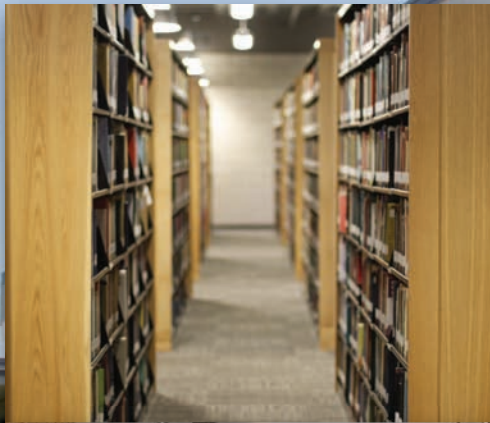
"The J. H. White Library serves as a critical student support area to further the University's mission," said Tommy Verdell, Director of Facilities Management.

The library facility is named after the University's first president, Dr. James Herbert White, making it a cornerstone to the University's history.

The newly designed library has amenities such as study areas and computer labs. Collections are organized and interspersed with computer kiosks and information desks on both floors. New furniture and equipment support the library collections, functions and student meetings. A coffee shop will occupy the first floor of the enlarged front lobby, and new archival displays occupy the second floor. Renovations have also added two-story bay windows giving students expansive views across the campus which helps to bring nature into the renovated facility.

"The goal of the renovation was to reinvigorate the center of the campus with its more open and inviting exterior and its engaging interior spaces that overlook every quadrant of the campus," said Verdell.

This project was designed by Duvall/Decker Architects of Jackson, Miss. The complete renovation cost approximately \$13 million and is funded by a combination of Ayers and state appropriated funds.





# MVSU ALUMNI CHAPTERS: MAKING A DIFFERENCE



*The Bolivar County Alumni Chapter presented a check for \$10,000 to Dr. Bynum and the MVSU family during half-time of the 2013 Homecoming game. The funds were raised to provide scholarships for MVSU students.*



*Members of the Washington D.C. Metro Alumni Chapter welcomed Valley's seventh president, William B. Bynum, Jr., Ph.D., during a special dinner at Bobby Van's Steakhouse in Washington, D.C. As a result of the meeting, the chapter has since collected over \$5,000 toward their annual contribution to the University. Pictured from left are Floyd Williams, Tyra Covington, Fannie Thompson, Erika Hall, Dr. Bynum, Karen Martin, Tyresia Howard, Gredia Hubbard and Richard Freeman; back row, James Moore, Jr., Rickey Harrington, Jonathan Brown, Eddie Ragland, Dwayne Jones, Rothley Howard, Aubrey Thagard and Cephas Franklin.*





*Mary Crump, president of the Jackson Hinds Alumni Chapter, presents MVSU President William Bynum with a check for \$11,000 during the Jackson Hinds Alumni Scholarship Business Luncheon.*

### ATLANTA METRO ALUMNI CHAPTER

Atlanta Metro Alumni Chapter is currently making tremendous strides to assist with the recruitment and retention efforts for Mississippi Valley State University. The Chapter recently collected over 500 applications from prospective students in the Atlanta area. The Chapter's goal is to collect a total of 1,000 applications in the next two years, says Recruitment Chair Earl Townsend Jr. '70. In addition, the chapter made a generous contribution for \$4,000 during homecoming to provide scholarships to deserving students at MVSU.

Chapter President: Oscar Stokes '64

### BOLIVAR COUNTY ALUMNI CHAPTER

Students of Mississippi Valley State University will be reaping the benefits of a generous gift provided by the Bolivar County Alumni Chapter of the MVSU National Alumni Association, Inc. The Chapter presented the gift to the University totaling \$10,000 during the University's Annual Homecoming Celebration in October 2013.

Chapter President: Maurine Gray '68

### HARRISON COUNTY ALUMNI CHAPTER

The Harrison County Alumni Chapter assembled and disseminated personalized care packages to MVSU students from the Mississippi Gulf Coast counties. Each package contained a personal letter from the chapter, a mixture of personal care items, school supplies and snacks. The purpose of a care package is to build a connection between the local alumni chapter and MVSU students from the Harrison County area. "It is an opportunity to reach out to these students, to recognize their efforts and to encourage their future membership in an alumni chapter," said Kirk Higgins, Chapter President.

Chapter President: Kirk Higgins '88

### JACKSON HINDS ALUMNI CHAPTER

The Jackson-Hinds Alumni Chapter recently adopted John Hopkins Elementary School in Jackson, Miss. As part of this initiative, chapter members read to students, provide school supplies, and occasional visits to talk about MVSU. According to Mary Crump, Chapter President, "If we begin the pipeline early we will be able to get students early on to think about and plan to attend the Valley."

Chapter President: Mary Crump '67

### NORTHEAST MISS. ALUMNI CHAPTER

Northeast Miss. Alumni Chapter is vigorously involved in the recruitment efforts at MVSU. The chapter recently co-sponsored an ad with the University in the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal College Prep Guide. This guide is a special tabloid edition that helps high school students choose their paths for continuing education post-high school. The College Prep Guide was distributed to 35,000+ households and high schools in neighboring 16-county coverage area. "This is an excellent opportunity promote Mississippi Valley State University to prospective students," said Samuel Buchanan, Chapter Member.

Chapter President: Russell Brooks '88

### SUNFLOWER COUNTY ALUMNI CHAPTER

The Sunflower Alumni Chapter gave over \$3,000 in book scholarships to students from the Sunflower County Area.

Chapter President: Emma Golden '72

### WASHINGTON D.C. METRO ALUMNI CHAPTER

Members of the Washington D.C. Metro Alumni Chapter welcomed Mississippi Valley State University's seventh President Dr. William B. Bynum, Jr. during a special dinner service at the Bobby Van's Steakhouse in Washington D.C. At the meeting, President Bynum shared his vision/goals for the institution (One Goal-One Team-One Valley) as well as opportunities for the alumni chapter to become more involved with the University both locally and nationally. As a result of the meeting, the chapter has since collected over \$5,000 towards their annual contribution to the University.

Chapter President: Gredta Hubbard '97



# UP FROM A COTTON PATCH: ALUMNUS OF FIRST CLASS REFLECTS ON FIRST DAYS OF MVC

Story by Maxine Greenleaf '07

Mississippi Vocational College (MVC) was barely a college campus during Alumnus W.A. Williams '53 matriculation at the 437 acre school. The first classes were held in a shop building owned by the Leflore County Training School in Itta Bena.

He funded his education working a part time job managing the local theater in Itta Bena. His check paid for transportation from his home in Itta Bena to class and tuition. He did not have the luck of attending college on scholarship. "I recall one (tuition) bill being \$21, but I think that was half of tuition at that time," Williams said.

Williams remembers the first instructors at the small school as 'very nice and encouraging.' "They helped us land jobs after graduating and fill out applications. Not only did I graduate, but I got a job right after graduating."

"The student body consisted of teachers who had been working on their teaching credentials for years and World War II veterans under the G.I. Bill," said Williams. "Most of the students were old enough to be my parents at that time. There were only a few young adults."

Students were expected to perform at a high level to attain their degree. They were expected to be leaders and role models. "We were highly respected once we got our degrees," he said.

As a student, at the newly created institution there weren't many extracurricular activities. Students had the option of attending dances and movies or playing basketball outside of going home. "During this time, the university didn't have any organizations, but I was active on campus," he said. "Dr. (James) White personally charged me with different tasks. So I was like the university's first unofficial ambassador. I showed students around, made them feel at home and welcomed and helped Dr. W.A. Butts find a place to stay."

Williams describes Dr. White, MVSU's founding president, as an excellent president. "He was very polished in his dress and speech. He once told me he could make five speeches in one day and they all would be different."

His favorite memory of the school was the announcement of a black school being placed in Itta Bena after Greenwood and Greenville didn't want it. "It was like Santa Claus coming to me on Christmas," said Williams.

Valley played a vital role in the life of alumnus W.A. Williams and 15,000 alumni around the globe. "I received so much intellectual training from Mississippi Vocational College," he said. "Valley taught me to be a productive citizen. It opened my eyes to the world. I learned a lot outside of my major. In turn, Valley allowed me to express myself freely."

*W. A. Williams was born in Clarksdale, Miss. but, moved to Itta Bena, Miss. in 1936, where he grew up. He attended Stone Street High School in Greenwood, Miss. because Itta Bena did not have a black high school at the time. He graduated from Stone Street in 1949.*

*He has been married to his wife, Dorothy for 53 years. He currently resides in the San Francisco Bay area. He and his wife have two daughters, Attorney Gayle Williams, of Huntsville, Ala. and Dr. Kevin T. Williams, of Atlanta, Ga. They have two grandchildren, Diamond and Anthony.*

*Williams served in the Army from 1954 to 1956. He's a retired teacher and administrator after 25 years of service. He retired from the Richmond Unified School District in 1990.*

*Photos courtesy of  
the Annie M. Payton Archives*





# VALLEY SINGERS MAKE THEIR MARK IN BOSTON TOUR

Story by Glenn Perkins '13

**Above:** Front row, from left, Kerri Forrester, Dontè Plunkett, Destiny Bradley, Jayla Lang, Jamahl Cotton, Mildred Michael and Kristen Credille; second row, Amanda Ronning, Percy Stephens, Maritza Johnson, George Dugger-Briggs and Breunka Kimbrough; third row, Kenée Kewis, Shadonn Jenkins, Shauntel Tard and Kashiwa Simmons; back row, Rodney Rice, Michael Lawson, Justin Blackson, Toney Williams and Choir Director Dr. John Weiss. Not pictured is Elawrence Blackmon.

During Spring Break, MVSU's Valley Singers traveled to Boston, Mass. for a concert tour. The five day - four night trip consisted of sightseeing, touring, singing engagements and more.

"This tour provided our students with an experience that will have a lasting effect on their personal and professional lives," said Dr. John Weiss, Choral Director. "It also ensured their commitment to a society in which the arts are essential."

Valley Singers is the premier touring choir for the university. As a smaller and more select group, Valley Singers is known for performing more challenging chamber choir repertoire. The choir has traveled to St. Louis, Vancouver, Brazil, Chicago, Cincinnati, Jackson, Memphis, New Orleans, Omaha, Seattle and most recently to Canada.

The Boston tour was a first time experience for many of the choir members. On the first day, Valley Singers visited Boston's oldest surviving church building and most visited historical site, the Old North Church. They also visited the USS Constitution Visitor's Center and the Freedom Trail. The Freedom Trail is a 2.5 mile, brick-lined route that leads you to 16 historically significant sites—each one an authentic treasure.

Day two of the trip included Valley Singers transferring to the JFK Presidential Library, a library and museum dedicated to the memory of our nation's thirty-fifth president and to all those who through the art of politics seek a new and better world. The museum portrays the life, leadership, and legacy of President Kennedy, conveys his enthusiasm for politics and public service and illustrates the nature of the Office of the President.

Later in the tour, the choir participated in services and brief concerts, visited two top Boston-area high schools and concert performances, a workshop on Ethnic/World Music and a visit to the New England Conservatory of Music. The New England Conservatory of Music, founded in 1867, is the oldest private institution for music in the United States.

"With a group of amazingly talented students here at MVSU, I had to choose a tour that would showcase our many singing styles to a different group of people," said Dr. Weiss. "But this tour wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the contributions made by supporters of MVSU."

After a little over a year of fundraising, Valley Singers raised over \$32,000 to attend the concert tour. Valley Singers received donations from MVSU alumni, the MVSU Foundation and local churches.

"MVSU has a very supportive alumni base throughout the state," said Weiss. "In addition, the choir has an excellent reputation so much so that area churches, alumni chapters and just friends were financially supportive." "Financial support made this trip possible and we want to thank everyone from the bottom of our hearts."

Following the choir's annual Christmas Program 2013, O' Holy Night, Valley Singers received three major donations. The city of Greenwood and the Leflore County Board of Supervisors gave a donation in the amount of \$2,500 and Harlow's Casino and Resort donated \$5,000.

The group also serves as a recruiting tool for the university.



CNN Hero Advocates  
for Female Veterans

# “Never leave a fallen comrade”

Story by Glenn Perkins '13

*Photos courtesy of  
CNN Heros and Alimond Photography*

As the founder of Final Salute, Incorporated, Jaspen Boothe '99 dedicates her life to serving female veterans who are at risk or have become homeless.

Final Salute was founded in November 2010. This nonprofit organization meets the unique needs of homeless female veterans and their children.

“Not every veteran is living under a bridge,” Boothe said. “Not all veterans have mental issues. Not all veterans have experienced substance abuse. Some veterans have just fallen on hard times.”

Since 2011, Boothe and Final Salute have provided transitional housing or financial assistance to more than 150 female veterans

and their children. In addition, Final Salute has offered assistance with child care, employment placement and accessing benefits or counseling through the Veterans Administration.

Before founding Final Salute, Boothe was a single parent Army woman with a civilian job in New Orleans. In the spring of 2005, she received orders that she will be deploying to Iraq. When Boothe left her job, her life was soon torn apart by two significant events. In August 2005, her personal residence received a direct hit from Hurricane Katrina and she lost everything. Later, she was diagnosed with head, neck and throat cancer. Her options were limited and posed some very hard choices for her. Because of her illness, the military discharged her. But, Boothe still needed full-time medical care, a job and a place to live.





While searching for assistance, she learned that there were no existing programs for female veterans with children. She was told that she should explore welfare and social services as an option, just like every other single mother. It was at that point, she realized that America had forgotten about the women who have served, fought, bled and died for their country.

She found these options unacceptable for a woman who had honorably served her country and after extensive cancer treatment, including radiation therapy that left life-long side effects, at Brooke Army Medical Center, she was able to stay in the Reserves and immediately began looking for full time employment and a place for her and her son to live. In 2006, she relocated to Missouri with her aunt, where she accepted a job offer from the Army National Guard. Later in the year, she received an opportunity to return to full-time duty in Washington, D.C.

Boothe will never forget what she and her son had been through and is determined to ensure her fellow sister veterans have the resources in their time of need.

"As a soldier, you raise your right hand - with that comes certain responsibilities," Boothe explained. "One of those is to never leave a fallen comrade. So whether they're in or out of uniform, they have me if they need me."

The youngest of three children, Jas, was born in Chicago, Ill., but moved to Mississippi as a young girl. After graduating from Gentry High School in Indianola, Miss. she entered Mississippi Valley State University on a basketball scholarship under Head Coach Jessie Harris.

"Jas was the type of person I didn't have to work too hard with," said Coach Harris. "She was a coachable young lady and always kept a positive attitude."

During her time at MVSU, she was also a member of the softball team.

"I am grateful for my experience at Valley," said Jas. "I enjoyed the friendships I gained while at Valley, I felt safe at Valley and I'm proud to say Valley provided me with what I needed to be successful."

Jas completed her undergraduate studies in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in mass communication. She holds dual master's degrees in human resources management and management and leadership from Webster University in St. Louis, Mo.

Over the years, the advocate has received many awards for her leadership and community involvement - 2014 First Lady of Virginia's FLITE Award - Opportunity Hall of Fame Inductee, 2013 CNN Hero, 2013 Woman of the Year (non-profit/government) - Stevie Awards for Women in Business, 2013 Event of the Year (Miss Veteran America) - Stevie Awards for Women in Business, Distinguished Service Award - University of the District of Columbia, 2013 Toyota

I am grateful for my experience at Valley," said Jas. "I enjoyed the friendships I gained while at Valley, I felt safe at Valley and I'm proud to say Valley provided me with what I needed to be successful."

Tribute to Working Women Honoree, 2013 Woman of Distinction - National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women (NOBEL-Women), 2013 Who's Who in Black DC Honoree, 2013 Newman's Own Top Awardee, 2013 Soroptimist Ruby Award for Women Helping Women, 2013 National Coalition of Homeless Veterans Unsung Hero, 2013 Dulles Regional Chamber Small Non-Profit of the Year and many more.

She is a mother of two, Brandon, who is currently serving in the United States Air Force, and Jammell Jr., and wife of a former Marine combat veteran, Jammell R. Boothe Sr.

Boothe is determined to help as many female veterans as she can. One way or another, her ultimate goal is to make organizations like hers obsolete.

"I don't have a blueprint, but I'm going to figure it out," she said. "It's my duty as a soldier."

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## ADVANCING OUR STATE TOGETHER

Alcorn State University | Delta State University | Jackson State University | Mississippi State University  
Mississippi University for Women | Mississippi Valley State University | The University of Mississippi | The University of Southern Mississippi





*Pictured front row,  
from left are  
Jacques, Mary, mother;  
Marilyn, and Martha;  
back row, Myron, Ravin  
Sr., Thomas Sr., father;  
Johnny, Marcus S*

## THE VALLEY: A BYRD FAMILY AFFAIR

### *In the words of the Byrd family*

Family, there are very few things that warrant the attention or aspirations of the love for one another than that of family. Mississippi Valley State University is just that, "A Family Affair."

As children, we all have dreams and desires to be better than our surroundings or those individuals before us. This determination was instilled in us at an early age by our parents, Thomas Sr. and Mary Woods- Byrd. Rooted in each of their surviving seven children was the drive to be the best we can be.

Our brother, Thomas Jr., passed away from complications of cancer previously at the hospital now known as St. Jude Research Hospital in Memphis.

As a first generation college student, Ravin Sr. set the tone for the rest of the siblings to follow. After graduating from Ruleville Central High School in 1975, he applied and was accepted into Mississippi Valley State College. As a biology pre/med major, he was also a candidate in the infancy of the ROTC program at the institution. Ravin went on to receive degrees in biology and history as well as a master's degree in criminal justice. He was also one of the first class of commissioned officers in 1981.

His dedication to others in the civic arena is only matched by his outstanding military career, for which he retired at the rank of captain. He was also one of the founding members of Youth Working with a Changing Society (Y.W.C.S) in his younger years. He also is an active member of Phi Beta Sigma Inc., and other organizations today.

Marilyn soon followed suit in 1977 receiving a degree in social work and a certificate in gerontology. She was active in numerous activities on campus.

In keeping with tradition, Myron began his tenure in 1978 at the age of 17 and received a Bachelor of Science degree in biology. He is heavily active within the communities in the Delta and is everyone's "go to" person in times of need.

In 1983, Johnny was accepted on an academic scholarship and received a degree in computer science and with minors in business and mathematics. While attending college, he became a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated - Zeta Phi Chapter. In keeping with the fraternity's motto and the family's tradition of "First Of All, Service To All, We Shall Transcend All," he later received a master's degree in science education teaching from Jackson State University.

After receiving a high score on the ACT Test, Marcus Sr. decided to attend Tougaloo College, Alcorn State University and Jackson State University before coming home to the Valley where his heart was. He received a degree in biology from MVSU. During this time, he was commissioned as an officer in the Army National Guard and Reserve. He retired at the rank of major.

Jacques was the last of the siblings to attend Valley. He went on to complete his studies receiving a degree in criminal justice and was commissioned an officer in the Army National Guard and Reserves. During his training, he received the coveted "Patton Award" given to elite soldiers during basic training. Currently, he holds the rank of lieutenant colonel in the United States Army Reserve. He also has a master's degree in business administration from the University of New Orleans. He along with our brother Marcus, also crossed the "Burning Sands" not only as true brothers, but fraternal brothers within the Zeta Phi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

Luke 12:48 states "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

The formal education Mississippi Valley State University has afforded our family to obtain has successfully taught us to not only to dream, but to reach and surpass any obstacles that the world has thrown at us.

Thank you from the Byrd family to the MVSU family.

## MVSU NAA OFFICER INDUCTION

The Mississippi Valley State University National Alumni Association installed its newly elected officers today during a swearing in ceremony. Former Judge Johnny Collins, '69 conducted the ceremony. Pictured from left are John H. Johnson, '68, President; Kurt Higgins, '88, 1st Vice President; Charlie Tolliver, '68, 2nd Vice President; Navie Lloyd, '70, Secretary; Lee Frison, '63, Treasurer.



## SAVE THE DATE

# MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY NATIONAL ALUMNI SUMMIT

JUNE 26 – 28, 2014 | BEAU RIVAGE RESORT AND CASINO | BILOXI, MISS.  
HOST CHAPTER: HARRISON COUNTY ALUMNI CHAPTER



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE  
UNIVERSITY





Photos by Derrick Hicks,  
Carlyn Photography

# COMING TOGETHER

Story by Maxine Greenleaf '07

Valley State enters a new era with leadership changes and a refreshed look at what is really important, Valley has a rejuvenated focus on students first.

The University, alumni and student leaders have joined forces to reinvigorate the small campus.

Under President William Bynum's vision, One Goal. One Team. One Valley., a laser sharp focus has been placed on the mission to make sure The Valley is meeting the needs of the student population.

Each of the leaders have shared a vision of moving MVSU forward. Encompassing themes of working together, fundraising and collegial spirit, the University is well on its way to greater heights.

## University President

In the beginning, newly appointed president William Bynum set his sights on making students the number one priority at Valley. "I want to make Valley the most student centered University in the nation," he said.

President Bynum started by flipping the entire project construction list to place high traffic student buildings in the forefront. The next building which will face renovation is the 45 year old eye sore that sits in one of the most prominent areas of the campus, College Hall I dormitory. This action is a major part of the One Goal tenet. "Renovating the facility wasn't in the university's plan for another year, but we are committed to significantly improving high traffic, student spaces on campus," said Bynum.

The new president wants to make sure students receive the highest return on their investment while attending MVSU.

Improving town/gown relations has been a major function of college presidents around the globe. Dr. Bynum has frequently visited churches, schools, alumni chapters and community organizations to spread awareness of the many accomplishments of Valley students, faculty and staff and build relationships. "Our One Team involves forming more partnerships with community stakeholders, town/gown relations

**I want to make Valley the most student centered University in the nation.**

*-Dr. William B. Bynum Jr.*



will be significantly enhanced as it relates to Itta Bena, Greenwood and Greenville,” said Bynum. “As it relates to One Valley, school pride will be enhanced. We will have consistently winning athletic programs. Our band and choir will continue to represent us in outstanding ways and significant enhancements will be made in the spiritual life of the campus.”

New initiatives have begun with alumni to bring them into a closer working relationship with The Valley. Valley Alumni Recruitment Team (VART) and a new mentorship program are a couple of those programs. VART coordinates efforts between the MVSU National Alumni Association, Inc. and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Recruitment in the recruitment of prospective students. It is an opportunity for alumni to meet prospective students and parents and share the strengths and traditions of their beloved alma mater.

The Alumni Mentor Program will assist in improving the retention and graduation rates of students upon their arrival to the campus by providing positive growth experiences through mentorship opportunities. This program will foster meaningful and productive one-on-one relationships between alumni and students of MVSU through the sharing of professional and life experiences. The goal of the program is to strengthen alumni connections with the University as well as placing students on the path to success. The mentoring pact involves an initial year-long commitment that may be renewed throughout the student's undergraduate career.

#### **MVSU National Alumni Association President**

John Johnson took the reins of the National Alumni Association in January. Since taking office, he has been actively building a reenergized organization.

“I’ve visited several different alumni chapters and shared with them my goals as the new president of the NAA,” said Johnson. “We’ve generated applications for anyone interested in chartering their own alumni chapter. We are visiting chapters that may have died to get them back up and running. We are also developing new policies and procedures. Right now, we are trying to reclaim our alumni participation with the University to remain viable. One big project we are working on right now is the Summer Summit which will be held in Biloxi on June 26-28. We will also be doing some social media campaigns.”

The mission of the alumni association is to engage and retain alumni while promoting the University. “The association and University work closely together to help increase enrollment and revenue,” Johnson said. “And, we keep the alumni informed about what's going on at the University.”

MVSU has a major impact on the Mississippi Delta region. The University currently has a student population of over 70 percent that reside in this region. “MVSU is definitely a major player in the Delta” said Johnson. “The University is capable of addressing several issues in the Delta through our academic programs. MVSU is one of the largest employers in the Delta.”

MVSU NAA began in 1954. It also assists the University with fundraising and recruitment efforts. MVSU NAA currently has 32 chapters in the United States with 12, 000 active members.

#### **MVSU Foundation Chairman**

MVSU Foundation's charge has been to raise money for the University and

**It's a great feeling to know that what you're doing is helping a student be successful. We understand the impact education has on a person's life.**

*-Dr. Walter Roberts*





**Right now, we are trying to reclaim our alumni participation with the University to remain viable.**

*-John H. Johnson*



aid the University in support of its mission. “We offer financial support for athletic programs, music and scholarships,” said Roberts. “We also aid the president financially when he can’t use state funds.”

Dr. Walter Roberts has served as chairman of the board for over 20 years.

Universities have foundations to help secure and steward private gifts that benefit MVSU. “It’s very important for the University to have a Foundation, said Roberts. “We offer financial support that the state can’t provide. We help make the school better than what it is.”

The organization began under Dr. James White as The College of a Million Friends. It was in 1988, under President William Sutton, that the MVSU Foundation was formed.

Assisting the University on its quest to enroll and retain students, the group, provides scholarship money that can be awarded to students from all over the world. “It’s a great feeling to know that what you’re doing is helping a student be successful,” said Roberts. “We understand the impact education has on a person’s life. So it feels good to be able to provide financial support for a student to attend school.”

Working together to advance the University has its perks. Presenting a unified effort from the alumni association, foundation and university, potential donors will easily buy into the vision for Valley’s future. “It’s very important that we work together. It becomes difficult to get money from potential donors if they don’t see any efforts from the alumni association and foundation,” said Roberts.

MVSU serves a large population of students in the Mississippi Delta. “MVSU is capable of turning its students into profound leaders in their respective fields,” Roberts said. “Anyone that attended MVSU would know this fact. We haven’t lost our mission, but we have to go back to the mission that our Founding President set for us. We have to find our ‘What does MVSU do best?’ MVSU can take a piece of charcoal and turn it into a five carat diamond- I and many others are diamonds, and we credit MVSU for our success.”

#### **Student Government Association President**

Next year, Derrick Jones will enter into his second term as leader of the student body. Since his time in office, he has been actively working with the administration to improve student life on the campus. “Along with Dr. Bynum and the new administration, we have developed many ideas to improve the institution,” said Jones. “I think communication is the key and we have been doing just that. We have been presenting issues and have been solution oriented to solve our problems. The SGA has a host of activities planned for the 2014-15 school year.”

“The mission I have set for the student government is to increase Valley pride,” Jones said. “It is our goal to create an environment where students, faculty and alumni can come together and enjoy MVSU.”

The young leader has a deep devotion to Valley. “MVSU is dear to my heart because it has given me a start on my great career,” said Jones. “It has given me opportunities to better myself and the tools to be a productive citizen.”

**As the Student Government Association, it is our goal to create an environment where students, faculty and alumni can come together and enjoy MVSU.**

*-Derrick Jones*



# CLASS NOTES

## **ELMUS STOCKSTILL '96**

Elmus was elected Leflore County Circuit Clerk in Greenwood, Miss.

## **SEDRICK SMITH '97**

Smith was elected the first African American mayor of Charleston, Miss.

## **MONROE GOLDEN '05/'07**

Monroe Golden has been promoted to principal of Amanda Elzy High School in Greenwood, Miss. He was recently selected for Top 30 under 40 by the Greenwood Commonwealth.

## **LAKEITHA JOHNSON '05**

Lakeitha Johnson graduated from MVSU in 2005. She is currently the office manager for the West Tallahatchie Utilities Association and the founder/executive director of Tallahatchie Rising, a nonprofit organization in Tallahatchie County, Miss.

## **HALEIGH B. EUBANKS '10**

Haleigh B. Eubanks is a native of Cleveland, Miss. In 2010, Eubanks proceeded to obtain her master's degree at Jackson State University, also in biology. Currently, she is seeking a Doctor of Philosophy degree in interdisciplinary biomedical research with a concentration in molecular cell biology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, Ark. Her task at UA is to elucidate the molecular mechanism of liver fibrosis/cirrhosis and uncover a potential therapeutic target.

She aspires to return home and become a physician scientist in the Mississippi Delta. She believes with the grace of God, lofty goals can be achieved with the educational foundation from Mississippi Valley State University! Go Delta Devils!!!

## **BRITTANY JO FRANKLIN '10**

Brittany Jo Franklin is a 2010 graduate of MVSU. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and played for the MVSU softball team while at the University. Currently, she serves as the Minority Admissions Recruiter/Counselor at Valley.

## **JAMES HUDSON '10**

James is a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi studying higher education administration. Also, he is an instructor of speech at Pearl River Community College.

## **LISA TJORVEN JANSEN '10**

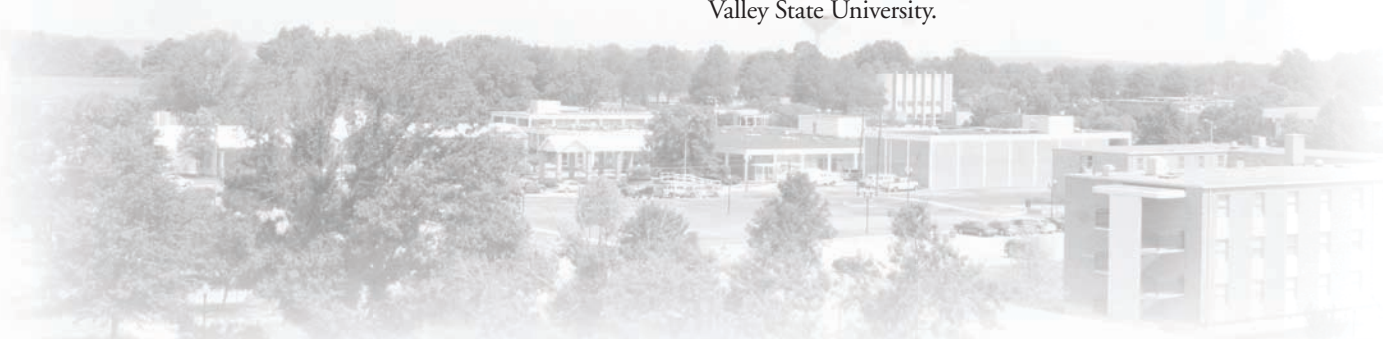
After graduating from Valley, she followed her, then, pitching coach Trena Peel to Hampton, Va., where she served as a full-time assistant with the Hampton University Lady Pirates for two seasons, 2010-2012. After her stint in Virginia, she relocated to Canyon, Tex. where she is finishing the semester to attain a Master of Science in Exercise Physiology. After graduation, she plans to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Cologne - Germany. She is heavily involved in research and her thesis project is currently receiving funding from the Gatorade Sports Institute and has been awarded with the Student Research Development Award of the Texas Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine. Her ultimate goal is to become a thermoregulatory researcher and to help soldiers and athletes.

## **LEARNALL MONTGOMERY '10**

Learnall Montgomery is the director designee at ELOHIM Child Care & Learning Center in Webb, Miss.

## **CHRISTOPHER THOMPSON '12**

Thompson has begun work as a financial aid counselor at Mississippi Valley State University.





# GIBSON RETURNS TO ALMA MATER

Story by Maxine Greenleaf '07

Returning home to a small, rural town is not usually the aspiration of most accomplished, seasoned professionals, but coming home to Mississippi Valley State University was a calling for Morgan City native, Dr. Jacqueline Gibson.

The former student-athlete and honor student, always knew if the opportunity presented itself, she would drop everything and return to her alma mater.

Gibson grew up on a small plantation about 15 miles from The Valley. She was raised by her mother, Johnnie Mae Gibson and maternal grandmother, Alberta Douglas. The newly appointed vice president of student affairs is the oldest of nine siblings.

Given the close knit community MVSU has been since its inception, several faculty and staff members played a role in nurturing and guiding Gibson while at the University. "Early on, even before becoming a matriculating student, there were several staff members who worked with me in the Upward Bound Program at Valley," Gibson said. After enrolling as a student, Gibson was groomed for life after Valley by individuals through her extracurricular activities such as Band, the Modeling Squad, basketball, track, Miss MVSU competition and the Upward Bound College Bridge Program. Her greatest influence was her English professor, Barbara J. P. Washington. "I became actively engaged as an honor student in the Department of English and as a member of Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society," said Gibson. With the help of many faculty and staff members, "I graduated magna cum laude with a degree in English/Mass Communications."

MVSU prepared Gibson for a career of working with others to improve their life. "I was groomed early in my academic career by the University to work in my professional career, and Valley equipped me with the skills and abilities to help transform and develop the students at Valley as they also seek to be educated."

In the Student Affairs role, she plans to keep students first when implementing projects. "With the help of competent professionals in the Division, I plan to engage students in meaningful ways in and out of the classroom," Gibson said. "Some of the projects include the implementation of strong leadership development programs, residence hall learning communities and programming, new and innovative approaches to student development and co-curricular experiences that promote holistic learning - all with the mission of developing a well-rounded individual who can be successful as a professional in any field of study in any part of the country or the world."

Gibson's esteem for MVSU sits very high for the four-year educational institution. "Valley is an oasis of learning, the gateway to success for the students in the Mississippi Delta and surrounding areas, and hope for Mississippi's tomorrow," said Gibson. "When I walked through its gateway as a freshman right out of high school, Valley embraced me as a first generation college student with wide open arms. Every aspect of my tenure as a student at the Valley was supported by caring faculty and staff. The Valley is my foundation, my beginning, and for that reason alone, it is very dear to my heart. I am unapologetically indebted to Valley for the quality of learning, growth, and opportunity availed to me inside its gates."

# ALUMNI ON THE MOVE



## **NATHANIEL A. BOCLAIR III '79**

Nathaniel A. Bocclair, III, is a 1979 graduate of Mississippi Valley State University with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Computer Science. Bocclair has completed course work at Alabama A & M University and University of Alabama in Huntsville to obtain the NASA engineer job classification. He joined Marshall Space Flight Center in 1977 through

the Cooperative Education Program at Mississippi Valley and worked within the Data Systems Laboratory until transferring to the Systems Analysis and Integration Laboratory in 1982. Since that time, he has served within the In Flight Operations Branch of the Systems Analysis and Integration Laboratory and Data Management Branch, where he was responsible for end-to-end data management planning and Payload Operations Control Center requirements, analysis, integration, and implementation. Subsequently, Bocclair has supported each Spacelab Payload mission in operational positions.

He has received awards including the NASA Exceptional Service Medal, NASA Achievement Medal, and NASA Special Service. Also, he has received numerous NASA Group Achievement Awards for Payload Operations Control Center support of various Spacelab, Payload and ISS Missions. He was recommended by NASA Headquarters for the Astronaut Candidate Program.

Bocclair has been a resident of Huntsville, Ala. for 26 years. He is married to the former Sharon Denise Benford of Itta Bena, and is the father of two sons, Alex Mathis and Nathaniel IV. As a dedicated member of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, Bocclair serves as the director of the "Gift Bearers." He is also an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and the community service organization "Vets for Vettes."



## **ALBERT EDWARDS '87**

Albert Edwards is the Founder and Managing Director of Corporate Environmental Risk Management, LLC (CERM), a regional engineering, environmental and program management firm. As managing director, Edwards' responsibilities include chairing CERM's Management Committee, and providing day-to-day leadership and strategic direction to the firm's business

management, project delivery and client management functions.

He has more than 20 years of experience in the environmental and engineering industry assisting organizations manage environmental, engineering, infrastructure and capital projects throughout the United States.

Edwards holds a Master of Business Administration in Technology Management from Southern Polytechnic State University, a bachelor's degree in industrial technology from Mississippi Valley State University and has received specialized environmental, engineering, and business management training through various organizations to include Georgia Tech Research Institute and Dartmouth College Tuck School of Business. Edwards also served in the U.S. Army Reserve as a Quartermaster Officer for eight years. Also, he is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated.



## **ANGELA Y. CARSON '91**

Angela Y. Carson earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Mississippi Valley State University and her Master of Education degree in student personnel from the University of Mississippi. She is the founder and executive director of the Pine Grove Association, a nonprofit organization, promoting community development through youth and senior citizen

programs in Canton, Miss.

She currently serves as the business coordinator with the Center for Education Innovation in Jackson, Miss. working with early childhood entities to improve quality and promote greater child outcomes. She also volunteers as the state director of faith-based initiatives with the General Missionary Baptist State Convention of Mississippi. She is an active member of the Madison County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and serves as a board member for the Notre Dame Education Center.



## **CHARLIE "CHUCK" THOMAS**

In 1999, Thomas joined AT&T as a Global Account Executive with AT&T's Signature Client Group. He served for 10 years in the capacity as a National Account Manager, providing solutions in network design as well as managing large customer global networks. Chuck managed major, national & global accounts



using innovative telecommunications solutions for a broad range of businesses; from financial services, healthcare, transportation, education, municipalities as well as professional services organization. Since 2008, Chuck has served as the Regional Director of External & Legislative Affairs representing AT&T Tennessee in Memphis, Shelby, Tipton & Fayette Counties. In this position, he acts as the liaison between AT&T, the community and business leaders in these areas. He attended MVSU from 1976-1978. While attending MVSU, Chuck majored in Criminal Justice and was a member of the MVSU Marching Band.



#### ARCHIE TUCKER II '04

A graduate of Mississippi Valley State University and Delta State University, Archie Tucker II serves in the capacity of Interim Vice President of Advancement at Alabama A&M University. In this role, Tucker is responsible for managing and expanding the University's private funding, which includes providing leadership and oversight for major gift/donor support, planned giving,

corporate and foundation relations, annual giving, advancement services and development-related communications.

Also, Tucker served as interim executive director of university advancement at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU). He also served as annual fund officer at MVSU.



#### EMMITT Y. RILEY III '08

Emmitt Y. Riley III is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the department of political science at the University of Mississippi. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and English literature from Mississippi Valley State University in 2008. Afterward, Riley earned a master's degree in political science from Jackson State University in 2010.

His research and teaching interests parallel. It is the intersection of the two that drives his desire to engage in scholarly activity as a mean of contributing to the "knowledge" base of political science, while simultaneously remaining abreast of the contemporary developments in the field. Riley's research agenda contributes to the field by uncovering the dynamics of race in American Politics. Specifically, his dissertation examines the factors that permit race to be an influence in the behavior and attitudes of White Americans. A reoccurring theme of his work investigates the degree to which experience with African-American leadership can either enhance or alleviate White negative views toward African-Americans generally.



#### WILLIE "SATELLITE" TOTTEN '84

Willie Totten brought his knowledge and experience to the Bulldogs team as the quarterbacks coach. Last season, Totten held the same position at Albany State University, winning the 2013 SIAC Championship.

Totten is no stranger to the Southwestern Athletic Conference. He earned the nickname "Satellite" by passing himself and MVSU into the NCAA national record books. During Totten's career at MVSU, he helped the Delta Devils to a 28-11-1 record as the captain of "The Satellite Express" offense and passed for over 50 NCAA records. In 1984, he was the national leader in total offensive yards per game, having gained 4,572 yards in 10 games (457.2 per game average). In addition, in 1983 and 1984, he was the NCAA annual champion in passing with efficiency ratings of 167.5 and 163.6, respectively.

Totten was inducted into the Black College Football Hall of Fame this year during the Fifth Annual Enshrinement Ceremony presented by the Atlanta Falcons Football Club.



#### DARRYL GAINES '88

Darryl Gaines has worked for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for the past 23 years and prior to NASA, three years with McDonnell Douglas Aircraft. His experience includes a broad spectrum of areas including developing Avionics and Software for Aeronautics Flight and Ground computer systems, Network Systems Integration, International

Space Station (ISS) Computer Systems, Mission Integration and Operations, and Program Planning and Control (PP&C). He has working relationships within the U.S. with multiple Commercial Space businesses including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Booz Allen, Space X and Orbital Sciences Corporation and also with international partners in Russia, Japan, Canada, and Europe.

Gaines is a former National Football League professional football player for the Kansas City Chiefs and Canadian Football League player for the Edmonton Eskimos. He was selected by NASA to participate in a fellowship at The University of Michigan School of Business, where he completed Business Acumen for High Potential Leaders. Gaines also received his certification as a Project Management Professional (PMP) in 2013 from the Project Management Institute. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Communities in Schools - Bay Area and is a Houston chapter member of the NFL Players Association.

Gaines is the owner of Dimensions Business Development Strategies, a small business developed to provide strategic planning and business advocacy for up and coming business owners.

While attending MVSU, Darryl majored in computer science and was a member of the football team, Beta Theta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and James Herbert White Masonic Lodge.



## JACQUELINE V. CARSON '87

Jacqueline V. Carson began her career as an electrical engineer, however, in October 1999 her desire and focus changed to health and wellness. Since that time Jacqueline has been a leader in the industry for over 13 years.

In April of 2001, Jacqueline began a faith journey and founded Temple Fitness II Corporation ([www.templefitnessinc.com](http://www.templefitnessinc.com)).

Through this endeavor, she has brought to fruition her belief that taking care of the physical body and mind creates a healthy community and better world.

She has worked various organizations, corporations, and government agencies to increase the awareness of health and wellness through training, workshops, and program facilitation and implementation. She has held numerous management positions including fitness center management and health and wellness program management

She currently serves as a consultant for Advocate Trinity Hospital as a Health and Wellness Liaison for the Community Health Department. In this position she works closely with community members including faith organizations and schools to increase their knowledge about the importance of health.

She is an active member of the Schaumburg Hoffman Estates Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.



## LEROY RILEY '71

Riley's Bookkeeping Service is owned and operated by LeRoy Riley. Riley's Bookkeeping Service has served its customers for more than 30 years. It has provided over 30 years of income tax preparation and currently offers bookkeeping service, full processing of payroll checks, along with quarter report forms and also batch provider for EFTPS.

Riley began his business as a side service to help people. While at MVSU he was a math major. Before starting his business, Riley had

more than 35 years as a public school educator, including serving as an assistant principal. He is also a certified notary, a hunter educator and gun safety instructor for the State of Mississippi.

Lexington business Riley's Bookkeeping Service was recently honored by U.S. Congressman Bennie G. Thompson in their Jan. 13 session.

Thompson's comments, as recorded in the Congressional Record, were: "Mr. Thompson, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a well-established rural town minority owned business, Riley's Bookkeeping Service.

"Through his bookkeeping services, Mr. Riley says he roughly serves more than 400 people per year. "Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Leroy Riley and the Riley's Bookkeeping Service for his steadfast dedication to serving his community with great, dependable and compassionate service."

Riley currently serves as president of the Holmes County Alumni Chapter of the MVSU National Alumni Association.



## DR. JOHNNY JONES '96

Dr. Johnny Jones graduated in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance. He received a Master of Education in Recreation and Leisure Management in 1998 and also completed a Ph.D. program in Education Administration and Supervision at Jackson State University in 2013. Dr. Jones completed the Management Development program at Harvard in 2007.

He was selected to serve as president of Little Priest Tribal College in 2013.

Prior to his appointment, he served as vice president for Student Affairs and Diversity at Mississippi Valley State University, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer at Arkansas Baptist College.



## PARNELL DICKINSON '76

Parnell Dickinson has been the sole owner/manager of the Parnell Dickinson Insurance Agency for 30 years. The agency is a full service insurance agency selling group and individual plans including health, life, disability and retirement annuity investments. He analyzes client needs, create appropriate plans, make



presentations and negotiate contracts.

Parnell was the owner/president of The Payment Center, Inc. one of the largest payment location in Hillsborough County where they processed over 70,000 utilities payments and other payments per month which total collection in five years exceeded over \$210 million in deposited funds. He was responsible for total operation of the business along with 2 managers and 6 other staff members.

Winning and team work follow Parnell everywhere he has landed. His record of winning three championships while at Tampa Catholic; Rookie of the Year, Presidents Club and Millionaires Club at Independent Life; All-SWAC for four consecutive years at Mississippi Valley State University; Player of the Year, Mutual Black Network Sports Player of the Year and MVP 1976; Mississippi Valley State University Football Hall of Fame; his #18 jersey was retired at Mississippi Valley State University; voted Mississippi Valley State University Alumnus of the Year, 2002; National Sports Foundation Unsung Hero Award; Onyx Magazine Sport Award in 2006, invited to Washington D.C. to speak to members of congress about SBA programs and problems that they present for small business when accessing funds; Child Development Association consultant as well as being a Life Underwriting Fellow and spoke at the Florida Senate Select Committee on Social Service/Child Care Reform. Dickinson has earned many other leadership and management honors.



#### PORTIA WEEKS '10

Portia Weeks is a 26 year old native of Grenada, Miss. Portia received her high school diploma with honors from Grenada High School in 2006. After graduating from Grenada High School, Portia enrolled at Mississippi Valley State University, where she majored in political science. Portia was active in many extracurricular activities and received numerous academic and service awards throughout her collegiate career.

Portia was very active in the Student Government Association, the MVSU Mock Trial team, and the Model United Nations. In addition, Portia unveiled her passion for attaining and promoting a quality education by working with various tutoring and peer mentoring groups such as Upward Bound and Student Support Services. Portia graduated summa cum laude from MVSU on May 8, 2010.

While Portia is very passionate about education and career development, she is especially passionate about sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Portia is very active in many ministries at New Green Grove Church of Faith (NGGCOF). At NGGCOF, Portia serves as a youth Bible study teacher, a member of the choir and she is also active in the church health ministry. Portia is also equally involved in many online ministries. Portia is a former contributing writer for Whole Magazine,

an online Christian women's magazine. She is also an active supporter of Empowering Women for Battle, a faith-based organization that focuses on discipleship. In her spare time, you will also find Portia frequently posting on various social media outlets as well as blogging about life as a Christian woman at [www.dailydivineintervention.tumblr.com](http://www.dailydivineintervention.tumblr.com).



#### DR. PATRICIA ANN WILSON HIGGINS '75

Dr. Patricia Higgins received a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science Degree in elementary education from Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU).

Higgins is the daughter of Mrs. Henrietta Wilson and the late Mr. Rowland Wilson of Charleston, Miss. Since graduating from MVSU, she has served on the MVSU National Board of Directors. During her tenure on the Board, she hosted a summer MVSU Alumni Conference in Frankfort, Ky. She is a life member of the National Alumni Association, and in 2007, she was inducted into MVSU Hall of Fame.

She is a full time distinguished associate professor in the School of Education at Kentucky State University. She is the recipient of two continuing grant awards. The grants are NASA/STUDIES (Students and Teachers Using Data from Investigations in Earth Systems) and the Kentucky Reading Project (KRP). During the summer, Higgins provides several mini NASA STUDIES science and literacy fairs for elementary and middle school students. She recently, assisted with the changes for the School of Education Program Review and NCATE/CAEP documents. Higgins is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions including the 2008 Distinguished Professor Award from Kentucky State University. She serves as the Kentucky Education Association Student Program (KEA/SP) Advisor.

Higgins is involved in several Community Outreach Projects. For example, Clothes to Clothes through Glen Arvin Church of Christ, Literacy Week, and Delta Academy for the Frankfort Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She is a Golden Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a member of Alpha Epsilon Lambda Honors Society, and Pi Lambda Theta. Dr. Higgins also volunteered at Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Centennial Celebration in Washington, D.C. in July 2013.

# MVSU ALUMNI FEATURED ON POPULAR GAME SHOW



Two MVSU Alumnae Lora Rance-Evans '88 and Lt. Col, USAF, Marcia Evans '91, appeared on the popular TV game show Family Feud.

Since leaving The Valley, Lt Col. Evans has served 22 years in the United States Air Force and is currently a Communications Officer. Lora is the managed care director of the Greenwood Leflore Hospital in Greenwood and Executive Director of the Delta Hills Health Corporation.

*Family Feud is a game show in which two families compete against each other in a contest to name the most popular answers to a survey given to 100 people. Pictured from left are Fred Cornell, Marcia Evans '91, Amina Evans, Steve Harvey, host; Lora Evans '88 and Kennie Edwards.*

## ONLINE GIVING NOW AVAILABLE

Mississippi Valley State University is excited to provide our constituents with an online giving feature to increase our fundraising efforts. Online giving offers users a secure, convenient, and easy to use method of giving. Users are able to donate to multiple designations with the click of a mouse. Upon completion of your contribution, a gift receipt is immediately sent to your email account. Online giving also provides users with an opportunity to send an email to a friend or family member asking them to give to Mississippi Valley State University as well. All donations are tax deductible.

Please visit our website at [www.mvsu.edu](http://www.mvsu.edu) and click on "Donate to MVSU" to begin the online giving experience. Online giving was designed and established at the request of our alumni and friends who desired a simple and convenient method of giving.

-Your information will not be given or sold to any third party organizations.-





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## HOMECOMING AT A GLANCE

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2014

Worship Service

Valley's Sunday Best/Gospel Concert

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2014

All Sports Pep Rally & Campus BBQ

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2014

"Rumble in Full House" Part III

DJ Battle

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2014

Crowning of the Royal Court  
(Mr. and Miss Senior, Junior, Sophomore, and Freshman)

Community Service Projects

Clothing/Canned Food Drive  
Reading and Tutor @ Area Grade and High Schools  
Greenwood Interfaith Ministries Community Kitchen

Students, Staff and Faculty  
Motown Revue Talent Show

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2014

First Lady's Scholarship Luncheon

Coronation of Miss & Mr. MVSU

Coronation Ball

President's Alumni Scholarship Reception

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2014

Alumni Baseball League Game

Homecoming Golf Invitational

Prayer Service

Inaugural Ceremony

Inaugural Reception  
*Immediately following the Inaugural Ceremony*

National Board Meeting

General Body Meeting

MVSU Day Party *(Free Refreshments)*

SGA, Classes, Miss MVSU & Mr. MVSU  
Alumni Reunion

SGA Car Show

MVSU NAA, Inc. Green  
and White Luncheon

Campus Parade

Valley Rally

Alumni Mixer on the Block

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2014

2014 Homecoming Parade

2014 Homecoming President's Tailgate

Homecoming Pre-Game Brunch

Football Game: MVSU vs. Prairie View

Alumni Cook-Off Contest

Homecoming Greek Show

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2014

Farewell Scholarship Breakfast



DISCLAIMER

EVENT DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE, FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.MVSU.EDU](http://WWW.MVSU.EDU)



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