

INDIANA UNIVERSITY KOKOMO



# LEGACY

## BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY

From Innovation Hall  
to Impactful Faculty





# LEGACY

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY KOKOMO

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# In this Issue

In this issue, we'll take a look back at the grand opening of Innovation Hall, and hear from the campus, community, and state leaders who joined us to mark the occasion.

We'll share highlights from Homecoming, and the events that brought Cougars from across the decades together to celebrate our shared legacy.

We'll introduce (or reintroduce!) you to beloved faculty member Joann Kaiser, whose retirement at the end of the spring semester was preceded by a special final performance of *Pride and Prejudice* including returning performing arts alumni from the original IU Kokomo cast.

We'll meet our new alumni scholarship recipients, and the Cougars receiving our highest alumni honors.

And finally, we'll share thrilling updates from our Cougar athletics teams and their fall competitions, including taking a closer look at our eSports program as it expands with new games, new teams – and a dynamic new space.

# It's what you leave behind when you go.

I may be the first chancellor to quote from a Randy Travis song, but those words from "Three Wooden Crosses" perfectly capture the theme of this issue: legacy.

I'm proud of the legacy we leave at IU Kokomo. We do more than merely educate students; we transform lives. As you know from your own experience, education empowers people with knowledge and skills while also expanding their horizons. An IU diploma opens doors to careers in healthcare, business, criminal justice, education, and more, turning the impossible into the possible. In fact, on one measure of economic mobility, IU Kokomo ranks second in the state!

As for expanding horizons, you need look no further than the KEY (Kokomo Experience and You) initiative, which has provided hundreds of students with priceless (and often free) opportunities to get hands-on learning through projects, travel, and more. When they complete projects for our KEY Center for Innovation, collaborate with professors on research projects or creative works, or travel to educational destinations around the world, IUK students experience more. They see what's possible for themselves and for all of us.

As the lyrics to the Travis song remind us, though, sometimes we can't even see where legacy will lead. The transformation we make possible at IU Kokomo extends beyond the individual alumni to affect their families, friends, and communities. That's because each of us is connected in direct and indirect ways to many other people and to the economic, social, and cultural forces in the communities we occupy.

Positive change has what is sometimes called a "ripple effect," but the impact can be much larger than any ripple can create. New knowledge, skills, horizons, and connections can be nothing short of revolutionary.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue. As you encounter all the various forms of legacy, please also reflect on your own legacy and the impact of IU Kokomo on your life. I would love to learn what legacy means to you.

Mark Canada, Ph.D.  
Chancellor

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## VIEWPOINT WITH DENNIS QUAID

IU Kokomo is sometimes referred to as a "hidden gem." But in November, this gem shone in a national spotlight on "Viewpoint with Dennis Quaid."

Actor and host Dennis Quaid, star of the Hoosier classic *Breaking Away*, introduced and narrated the segment, which highlighted IU Kokomo's outstanding work in experiential education – specifically, the impact of the IU Kokomo Experience and You (KEY) in a liberal arts environment.

"Viewpoint" aired numerous times throughout the month on public television stations. In case you missed it, you can watch IU Kokomo's segment (without Dennis Quaid, due to licensing rights) by scanning this QR code.







# What do we need? **YOU!**

Greetings, my fellow alumni;

What a fall it has been! As most of us may remember, the fall semester is full of activity across the campus with guest speakers, athletic games, and Homecoming. Homecoming has been a tradition we have been doing for the past few years. It's an opportunity to come back to campus, see how things have changed, meet with former classmates, and interact with current students, faculty, and staff.

During homecoming, we inducted four IU Kokomo alumni into the Alumni Hall of Fame and awarded the first Outstanding IU Alumni Partner award, which honors an IU alum from one of the other campuses. We had a fantastic turnout at the Alumni Hall of Fame event and all the recipients were grateful to have received the highest alumni award IU Kokomo offers.

The evening after Alumni Hall of Fame we had the Homecoming tailgate and volleyball game, where our nationally ranked volleyball team beat Alice Lloyd College in three straight sets. Alumni had the opportunity to get a free long-sleeved T-shirt and some snacks before the game.

Chancellor Mark Canada has also started a new opportunity to connect with campus, while disconnecting from technology. Join him from 3 – 5 p.m. the fourth Thursday of each month at the Kelley House for *Screenless*. Attendees are invited to put their phone or other devices down and read, color, work on an art project, or write for the first hour, then enjoy a program with an author, artist, or other expert.

There are so many ways to engage with IU Kokomo as alumni, and we want to be sure we provide options for all of you to do just that. Coming up in early February, we will host Business After Hours, which is sponsored by the MBA Association, the School of Business, Rozzi's, and the IUAA Kokomo Region. Come and network with current students, other alumni, and Kokomo community members, and then stay to hear from a representative of the Federal Reserve.

Come and watch our men's and women's basketball teams play on February 15 at a doubleheader, with lunch beginning at 11:30 a.m. and free admission into the games. Supporting Cougar athletics is a fantastic opportunity to see how the addition of athletics has changed the student experience at IU Kokomo.

As always, I love meeting with our alumni, whether it's virtually, for lunch, for coffee, or just having a phone conversation about your time at IU Kokomo. I hope to meet with as many of you as possible, and to see you at upcoming events.

Benjamin Liechty, B.A. '06  
Director of Alumni Relations

**UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO**

*Don't miss important updates from us! Please take a moment to make sure the IU Alumni Association Kokomo Region has your most current contact information.*



Scholarships provide students many opportunities in college. They can offset costs associated with tuition, help with books, living expenses, travel, and more.

At IU Kokomo, we are fortunate to award two alumni scholarships to students each year; the IUKAA scholarship and the Kokomo Region Alumni scholarship. Both were generously created by alumni and donors to benefit students from any major at IU Kokomo. Since 2013, 54 students have been awarded one of these scholarships.

September 26, we recognized four of the six recipients for the 2024-25 academic year at the annual alumni scholarship reception. Current and former alumni board members, former scholarship recipients, faculty, and campus leadership came together to meet the recipients and hear more about their goals, the impact of receiving one of the alumni scholarships, and what it has been like to be a student at IU Kokomo.

The three recipients of the IUKAA scholarship are **Bailey Harness, Allison O'Brien, and Natalie Cole**. Harness is an occupational therapy assistant major, and her mother, Charlotte Harness, is an IU Kokomo alumna, which makes Bailey a part of a legacy family. O'Brien is a biological and physical sciences major, and her mother, Andrea Foreman-O'Brien, is also an IU Kokomo alumna, which makes Allison a part of a legacy family as well. Cole is an MBA student, and her father, David, mother Jessica, and sister Katherine, are all IU alumni, making Natalie a member of a legacy family.

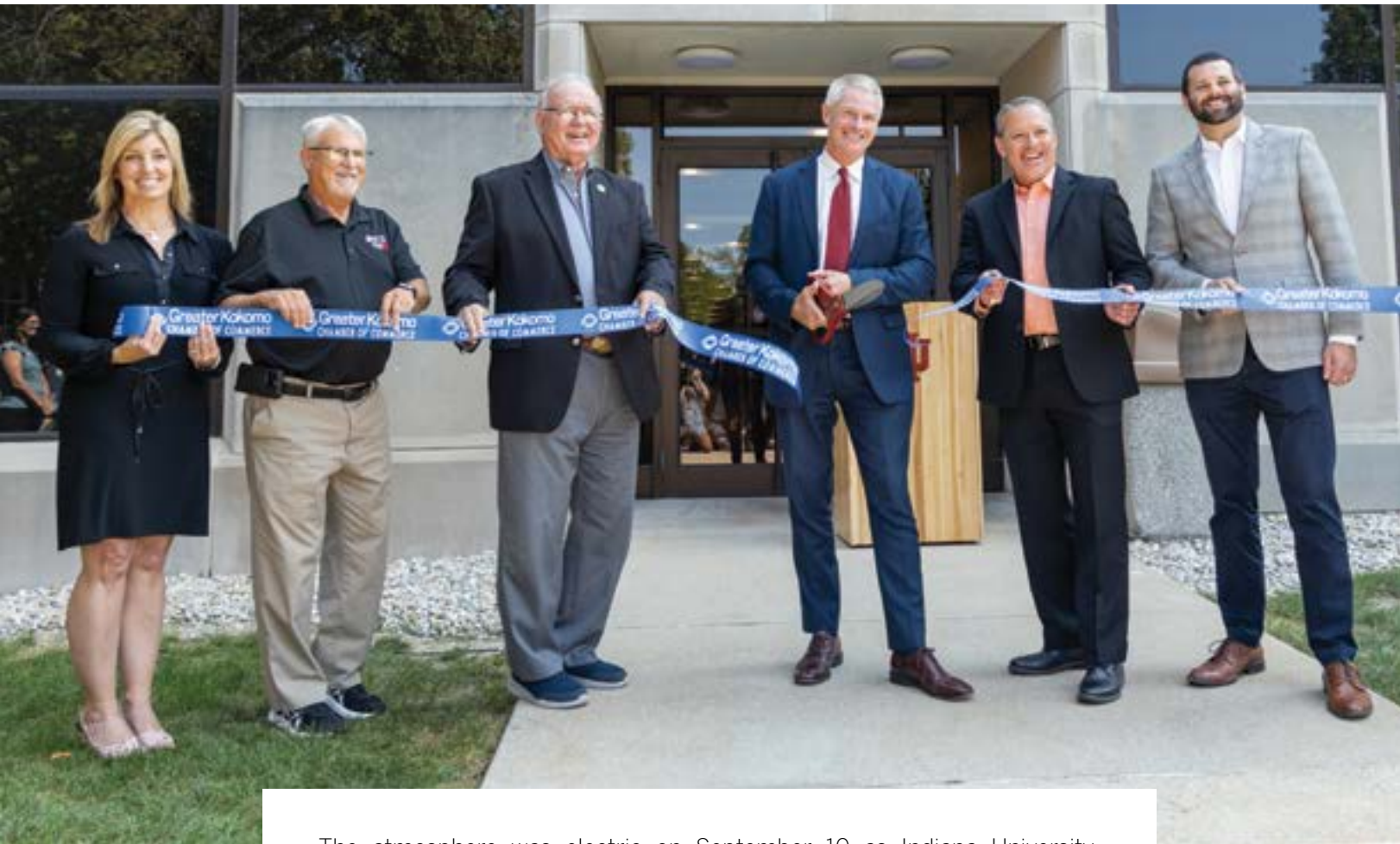
The three recipients of the Kokomo Region Alumni scholarships are **Makayla Clark, Sonny Rosetto, and Justin Dyer**. Clark is an occupational therapy assistant major, Rosetto is a biology major, and Dyer is an education major.

The financial support of these scholarships makes a massive impact on current and future IU Kokomo students.





# A NEW ERA FOR IU KOKOMO



The atmosphere was electric on September 10 as Indiana University Kokomo celebrated the grand opening of Innovation Hall, a state-of-the-art facility set to revolutionize campus and the greater Kokomo community. The ribbon-cutting ceremony, held on a bright autumn day, marked a significant milestone in the university's journey toward becoming a hub of innovation and experiential learning.

## A Vision Realized

Innovation Hall, located in the west wing of the Kelley Student Center, is a testament to IU Kokomo's commitment to providing cutting-edge educational opportunities. Funded in part by a \$1.5 million Indiana READI grant, the hall features a new multicultural center, an eSports arena, a technology studio, dedicated space for the KEY Center for Innovation, a business analytics lab, professional offices, and various training and gathering spaces for students.

Chancellor Mark Canada expressed his excitement about the new facility, saying, "For the last decade, we have been steadily rising as a destination campus, thanks to our new designation as a public liberal arts college, our growth in athletics, and, of course, the KEY, our campus-wide experiential learning initiative. Innovation Hall allows us to take our work and our reputation to an even higher level. We have state-of-the-art learning spaces specifically designed for dynamic, hands-on, transformative learning. This is a place where things will be happening, both for our students and for members of the community."

## A Community Celebration

The grand opening was attended by notable figures, including Indiana Secretary of Commerce David Rosenberg and Kokomo Mayor Tyler Moore, who joined Chancellor Canada and Ken Iwama, Indiana University vice president for regional campuses and online education, in cutting the ceremonial ribbon.

Secretary Rosenberg highlighted the significance of the project, saying, "This project is exactly what READI set out to do – to provide funding to projects that will prove transformational to communities and assist them in becoming places where Hoosiers can learn, play, and live."

Mayor Moore echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the broader impact of Innovation Hall.

"This continues to show not just the importance and the value that IU Kokomo has within the IU family, but the value that it brings to Kokomo, Howard County, and this region. It is such an asset and economic development draw for our region. This hall and the effect it will have on future generations is phenomenal, and I'm looking forward to all it continues to give," he said.



Indiana University President Pamela Whitten shared a video message welcoming guests to the grand opening, saying Innovation Hall will serve "as a hub of creativity and collaboration." She said IU believes in providing environments that nurture talent and turn ideas into reality.

"Innovation Hall, where every corner is filled with potential and possibilities, embodies this spirit," she said. "As IU Kokomo approaches its 80th anniversary, we celebrate the many ways the campus is paving the way for a brighter future, a future driven by innovation shaped by our students and led by Hoosiers," she said.

Scan the QR code to watch President Whitten's message.



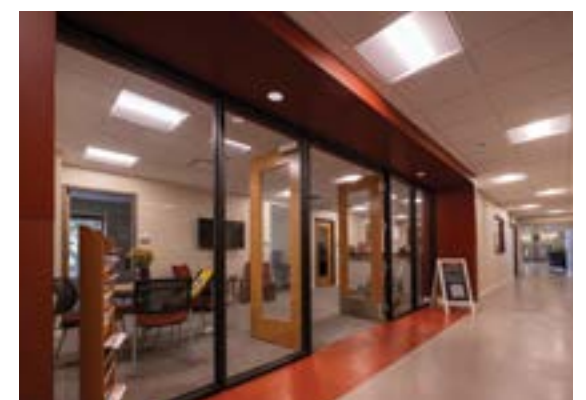




## Spaces Designed for Innovation

Innovation Hall is more than just a building; it is a vibrant ecosystem designed to foster creativity, collaboration, and learning. Each space within the hall serves a unique purpose and caters to different stakeholders within the IU Kokomo community.

- **eSports Arena:** This cutting-edge facility is a haven for gamers and eSports enthusiasts. Equipped with high-performance gaming PCs, consoles, and a spectator area, the arena is designed to host competitive gaming events and tournaments for IU Kokomo's Cougars, as well as casual play. It provides students with opportunities to develop skills in teamwork, strategy, and digital literacy.
- **Business Analytics Lab:** This lab is a hub for students pursuing careers in business and data analytics. It features advanced software and tools that allow students to analyze real-world data, develop business strategies, and gain hands-on experience in a rapidly growing field. The lab supports coursework, research projects, and collaborations with local businesses.
- **KEY Center for Innovation:** Dedicated to fostering entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking, the KEY Center for Innovation provides resources and support to help students develop and launch projects to impact the community and local businesses. The new collaborative workspaces are paired with mentorship and access to funding opportunities. The center is a cornerstone of IU Kokomo's experiential learning initiative, encouraging students to turn their ideas into reality.
- **Multicultural Center:** This inclusive space is designed to celebrate diversity and promote cultural understanding. It offers programs, events, and resources that support the university's commitment to inclusivity and equity. The center serves as a gathering place for students from diverse backgrounds to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. It is also home to the Dr. Herbert C. and Lillian M. Miller Lobby, named in honor of the campus's first Black full-time faculty member. The lobby is decorated with photos of Miller and selections from the Dr. Herbert Miller Special Collection – souvenirs gifted to him by friends and colleagues around the world that are displayed, and labeled with the country they represent and the individual who gave them to Miller.
- **Technology Studio:** A versatile space equipped with the latest technology, the Studio is where NMAT and other students can engage with cutting-edge tools and software. This studio supports a variety of projects, from digital media production to software development, providing a hands-on environment for students to hone their skills.
- **Professional Offices:** These offices provide dedicated space for faculty and staff, fostering collaboration and productivity. They are designed to support the administrative and academic functions of the university, ensuring that faculty and staff have the resources they need to support student success.
- **Training and Gathering Spaces:** These versatile spaces are designed to accommodate a range of activities, from workshops and seminars to social gatherings and study groups. They provide a flexible environment where students – and staff – can learn, collaborate, and build community.
- **Study Spaces:** Quiet, comfortable, and well-equipped, the study spaces in Innovation Hall are designed to support student learning and academic success. These areas provide a conducive environment for individual study, group projects, and collaborative learning.



## The Impact of the Indiana READI Program

The Indiana READI (Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative) program has played a crucial role in bringing Innovation Hall to life. Launched by Governor Eric Holcomb and led by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, READI aims to encourage regional collaboration and long-term planning to attract and retain talent in Indiana.

READI 2.0 builds on the success of the initial READI program, which allocated \$487 million to various projects across the state. The \$500 million READI fund, part of the 2023 Next Level Agenda and approved by the Indiana General Assembly, continues this mission by supporting projects that are transformational for communities.

The READI program's impact extends beyond IU Kokomo. It has funded numerous projects across Indiana, fostering economic development, enhancing quality of life, and creating opportunities for residents. By supporting initiatives like Innovation Hall, READI helps build vibrant, thriving communities that attract and retain talent.

## A Bright Future Ahead

The opening of Innovation Hall marks a new chapter for IU Kokomo. It is a hallmark of the university's dedication to providing a private school experience at a public school price, and creating spaces for Cougars to learn and grow. The facility not only enhances the student experience but also strengthens the university's ties to the local community.

As Chancellor Canada aptly put it, "Innovation Hall is a place where things will be happening, both for our students and for members of the community." The hall is poised to become a beacon of innovation, drawing students, faculty, and community members together to learn, create, and grow.

## Looking Forward

The grand opening of Innovation Hall is just the beginning. The facility is expected to host a variety of events, workshops, and programs that will engage the entire IU Kokomo community. From eSports tournaments to business analytics seminars, the possibilities are endless.



# A LEGACY of LEADERSHIP

Past Chancellors Reflect on Their Impact

"A lot of people who simply would not have been able to get any college at all have walked away with baccalaureate degrees, and gone on to master's degrees and even doctorates. It just would not have happened without [IU Kokomo]."

— Chancellor Emeritus Victor Bogle

"You know you impact a lot of people's lives when you sit in this seat. You want to

move the organization in the right way. You want to leave it better than you found it, so you question your decisions. It weighs on you, and it's with you 24/7... You want to find people who buy into the campus vision, but also will challenge you so you make good decisions. That was my blessing, to have those people. I wanted people who were visionary, who looked to the future, weren't afraid to make decisions, and could collaborate and communicate."

— Chancellor Susan Sciamè-Giesecke

"It's fulfilling to see the growth of the arts on this campus, the growth of the degree, the fact you have art students now being educated by a younger group of faculty, and that I can still be a part of that when I'm no longer in a teaching position."

— Chancellor Stuart Green

"Just think! For nearly 80 years, IU Kokomo has been providing an opportunity for residents of North Central Indiana and beyond to get a wonderful education close to home for many. I am proud to be a part of that legacy—especially in building enrollment and providing new and distinct academic programs, always focusing on student success.

For me, commencement was always the "best day ever." Seeing students graduate who came directly from high school is a testament to IU Kokomo's efforts to enhance the education pipeline. Watching "Project Complete" students, who returned to complete degrees after (often) many years away from higher education was a special pleasure. Initiating that program with my campus colleagues was a real moment of pride!

Soon we will celebrate our success as we approach the BIG 80. Let the legacy continue!"

— Chancellor Ruth J. Person

"When I think back to my decade at IU Kokomo what stands out for me are the powerful Enhancing Minority Attainment conferences bringing Nikki Giovanni, Julian Bond, and so many others to our campus. It's the gathering of Tuskegee airmen. It's our mentoring program to encourage gifted students to be the first in their families to go to college. It's the celebration of MLK day on our campus rather than at city hall. It's standing in front of the faculty with Herb Miller explaining that affirmative action is not an alternative to recruiting the very best. It is in fact opening doors to recruiting the very best. I am proud that IU Kokomo celebrated opening doors to be as receptive and inclusive and positive as we could be, and that all of us, campus and community, shared in that pride."

— Chancellor Erita Hill

# IU Kokomo honors alumni with HIGHEST AWARDS

The IUAA Kokomo Region and IU Kokomo recently inducted four new members into its Alumni Hall of Fame. It also honored an IU graduate with the IU Kokomo Chancellor's Medallion and presented the inaugural IU Alumni Partner Award.

**David C. Heilman** was awarded the IU Kokomo Chancellor's Medallion, the highest honor given by the chancellor, for those who have provided distinguished service, given freely of their talents to promote human welfare and community well-being, and served as exemplary role models for students and alumni through their integrity, leadership, and commitment.

**Randall L. Fishman** received the first-ever IU Alumni Partner Award, which is given to an IU alumnus or alumna from any IU campus who has made a difference at IU Kokomo through service to the campus. He was recognized for his contributions to students through athletics, including giving to the

Student Activities and Events Center and establishing a scholarship for the volleyball team.

IU Kokomo Alumni Hall of Fame honorees were:

- **Brianne L. Boles**, president, DSI, Together with Bona Vista
- **Sharmaine L. Ellison**, stroke/chest pain clinical coordinator for Community Howard Regional Health.
- **Amy L. Lucas**, first female full equity partner of Bucheri, McCarty, and Metz, LLC.
- **Israel Nieto Sr.**, primary care nurse practitioner for Northshore Health Center in Crown Point, Indiana.



David C. Heilman



Randall L. Fishman



Brianne L. Boles



Sharmaine L. Ellison



Amy L. Lucas



Israel Nieto Sr.

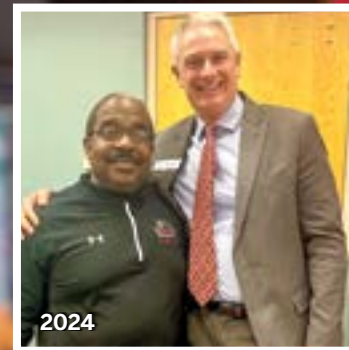


# Legacy of Service

As Indiana University Kokomo prepares to celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2025, some of its longest-serving faculty and staff members share their favorite memories of their time on campus.

We talked to Lucien Madding, who recently retired from physical plant and took on a role as a success coach for students; Sarah Sarber, senior advisor to the chancellor; and Kasem Kasem, professor of chemistry, who each shared their own unique story.

## Physical plant job leads to multiple degrees, success coaching role



When Lucien Madding began his career at IU Kokomo in 1980, he never would have guessed he would eventually serve as a success coach, guiding students to achieve their graduation goals.

At 19, he applied for a job working midnights as a janitor in the Main Building, after an unsuccessful stint in community college. He rose through the ranks in Physical Plant, eventually moving to shipping and receiving, and was happy with the work.

A chance conversation with a student who wasn't sure he wanted to be in college sent him in a new direction.

"I told this young man, 'If you get your degree, you're going to make more money and won't have to work as hard physically,'" Madding said. "I was doing a job I wasn't crazy about at the time, moving furniture for carpet installation. I was having this conversation, and it was an epiphany. I'd been at IU Kokomo 25 years, and if I want to do something else jobwise, I need to have a degree."

He learned more about IU's tuition benefit for employees and enrolled in one class. Each semester afterwards his goal was to take two classes, and one or two in summer school.

"My whole goal was to get a bachelor's degree," he said. Eventually he earned two bachelor's degrees — one in general studies, and another

in labor studies. Later, he completed a master's degree in adult education.

After he retired from his physical plant job he returned to campus part time as a success coach, guiding undergraduate students. Madding sees himself as a life coach for his students.

"You help them with their academics, study skills, and time management, those are the big things," he said. "Also, a lot of times life gets in the way, and you help them navigate a life situation. You're trying to help a student have success and keep moving towards graduation. You get to know these students on a level that an academic advisor may not be able to."

He's learned that success coaching is mostly about listening.

"If you're doing a good job, you're not doing all the talking," he said. "You're doing a lot of listening and asking questions. You can suggest things, but you are trying to empower them to solve their own problems."

Madding feels blessed to have worked more than 40 years at IU Kokomo.

"One of the big blessings for me was being able to go to school and have my employer pay for it," he said. "I earned two bachelor's degrees and a master's and graduated with no debt. If I hadn't been working here, I wouldn't have those things."

"I don't take it for granted."



# Senior advisor recalls role in developing athletics program



When Sarah Sarber came to IU Kokomo as director of student activities, she was younger than most of the students.

It was 1990, and at that time, the student population was mostly returning adult students, who attended part-time.

During her 34 years she's advanced in her career, serving as director of student development and campus life, dean of students and now as senior advisor to the chancellor and equity official for the campus.

She's seen many changes during her time at IU Kokomo, including the transformation to mostly traditional-aged students, and the start of intercollegiate athletics. She and her husband, John Sarber, director of facilities, are super Cougar athletic fans, and can be regularly spotted in the stands at games, matches, and meets.

Both played key roles in the programs' beginnings, with his first-hand knowledge of

athletics as a former D-1 football player, and her organizational skills.

"Athletics has always been important to him," she said. "When we started, I didn't know much about it. I was never an athlete, but I knew I was good at organizing things. I was really good at minimizing risk for participants and the university, and he had the athletic know-how. I don't know that I could have done it without him."

When they started athletics in 2011 with women's volleyball and men's basketball, teams practiced in rented high school gyms around Howard County, and coaches were hired on a part-time basis. Since then, Cougar athletics have grown to include 15 varsity sports, with an athletic department housed in the Student Activities and Events Center, built on campus in 2020.

"One of my favorite things about that time is, I've learned I was not too old to learn," she said. "When we were successful in being admitted to the NAIA, and then the River States Conference, that

was a great accomplishment. But it wasn't just my accomplishment; it was the accomplishment of a lot of people and a lot of hard work."

Sarber also gained a new appreciation and love for sports.

"I developed a true love. I had no idea I loved college volleyball, but I did," she said, recalling the challenging beginning of that program with English professor Kristen Snoddy helping the program, with games in the Northwestern High School gym.

"It was rough at first, because we didn't get a lot of wins. It's pretty amazing to see how far we've come," said Sarber, noting the current volleyball team is ranked 11th in the country and has won the conference tournament the last six years in a row. She likes to claim a role in that success, noting that her last hire in athletics was current volleyball coach and athletic director Heather Hayes.

Growing up in Egypt, Kasem Kasem developed a love for chemistry, with home experiments.

"I've enjoyed chemistry since I was a kid," he said. "My older brother was a chemist, and he used to perform experiments in the house. I used to be his companion and watch what he was doing. I remember when he created a battery to run our radio, because we didn't have public electricity. This inspired me to become an electrochemist.

"Chemistry is a fun subject," he said. "You can't understand real life without chemistry."

Since 1991, he's taught chemistry at IU Kokomo, including undergraduate students in his research so they can contribute and earn publication credit with him.

When he came to IU Kokomo, the Main Building was the only building, and he had a storage room and a small lab available. The opening of Virgil and Elizabeth Hunt Hall as the home of the School of Sciences was transformational,

allowing for the addition of bachelor's degree in chemistry and biochemistry.

"We noticed a big evolution in the teaching mission of IU Kokomo at that time," he said.

Kasem was a pioneer in including undergraduate students in his research, when many believed only graduate students were capable. He's proud to note that of his 70 published papers, students contributed to 35.

"This is one of the highlights of my career," he said. "I believe I can promote the curiosity of the students and develop them into great researchers. I've proved my point that you don't have to be a graduate student to be a researcher."

He believes teaching and research are intertwined, complementing one another.

"I don't separate between teaching and research," Kasem said. "Teaching promotes the curiosity of the student to use what they learn, and then practice how to be open to the surprises that

the research can bring. So many of my students are now Ph.D. candidates or master's degree students or professionals like doctors, dentists, or opticians. I feel I have success in promoting student curiosity and open their horizons to a better future."

He's proud of contributing to a culture of research at IU Kokomo, and of bringing international attention to the campus. He's served as a reviewer for Ph.D. candidates and faculty from universities in the United States and internationally.

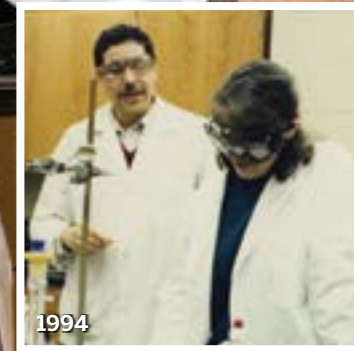
Kasem has also been a pioneer in his academic field, researching in solar energy since 1971, when he completed his undergraduate degree.

While he's had a long career, Kasem is not thinking about retirement.

"My father taught me there isn't anything such as retirement, it's changing the work you do," he said. "The nature of my work is ever changing. I don't feel bored because I always research."



# Professor promotes culture of research





# Cougars

## COUGAR FALL SPORTS WRAP UP SEASONS

- The men's cross country team finished fifth out of 10 teams in the River States Conference (RSC) meet. Bryce Statler, Kyle Thibideau, Luis Saldana, and Caleb Vogl qualified for the NAIA Marathon Classic in Sacramento.
- The women's cross country team finished fifth out of 10 teams in the RSC meet. Junior Leslie Sprankles finished in 12th place and was named to the All-RSC second team. Hannah Wells was 21st and Alysha Crouch was 22nd, both earning All-RSC third team honors. Crouch and Isabella Altic qualified for the NAIA Marathon Classic in Sacramento.
- The women's volleyball team clinched a second-consecutive RSC regular season crown, going undefeated in conference play. The Cougars were runners-up to IU East in the conference tournament. Ranked 11th in the NAIA at the time of publication, the team earned its 10th straight NAIA volleyball championship appearance. They beat Indiana Tech in four sets to advance to the finals site in Sioux City, Iowa, for the second consecutive year, and then won their first pool play game at the championship site over Midway in four sets. The Cougars finished the regular season 26-4, with a 13-0 conference record.
- The men's golf team finished eighth in the RSC fall preview. It finished the fall season with a strong second-place finish at the Holy Cross Invite.
- The women's golf team finished fifth in the RSC fall preview. The Cougars hosted the inaugural Crimson Invitational, finishing third. Junior Hailey Stegemann earned second-place honors and was named RSC Golfer of the Week.
- The women's soccer team finished in the RSC tournament quarterfinals, with an overall record of 6-9-4. Kailie Moore was named NAIA defensive player of the week – the first in program history to receive that honor.
- The co-ed eSports team was 34-22 at magazine deadline, with wins over Anna Maria College, University of Missouri, and Purdue University, among others.
- The women's tennis team faced tough non-conference competition this fall, finishing 0-4. In its spring season, the team will look to make a push heading into the River States Conference Championship.



Luis Saldana



Leslie Sprankles



Hailey Stegemann



Kailie Moore



FOR THE LATEST COUGAR ATHLETICS NEWS, VISIT [IUKCOUGARS.COM](http://IUKCOUGARS.COM)

# ESPORTS UPDATE

## IU KOKOMO'S NEWEST VARSITY SPORT



The IU Kokomo eSports team added Overwatch 2 and Super Smash Brothers Ultimate for its fall season. The Cougars will host a Rocket League team and a brand-new game, Valorant, for the spring season.

The team started its season with some returning starters and a few new faces. The Smash Brothers team has introduced a few freshmen who have won some play time from last year's starters as they have impressed coaches and their peers since joining the team.

Jacson Creau (Warped) and Brayden Karnes (Shiruk), two freshmen from Howard County, have pushed their new teammates to work for their roles, and look to not only command play time, but solidify their own sports on IU Kokomo's Varsity Smash Bros Roster.

The most successful team from the 2023-2024 inaugural season was the Overwatch team. This team went undefeated in its conference during the fall season, winning out to bring home the program's first NECC championship. The team also qualified for a spot in nationals, where it competed with some of the top teams in the division.

This year, the Overwatch team has expanded to two teams: IU Kokomo Overwatch Crimson (varsity), and IU Kokomo Overwatch White (JV). The Crimson team has introduced two new starters into the fray: Zach Gritten (asKa), a transfer from Danville Community College, and Marcus Whitehouse (FarraPvP), a freshman from Carmel. Both have been great additions to the team and have worked hard to deliver what their team needs. Currently,

Crimson is at 1-1 on the season, while its JV counterpart is 2-0.

This spring, eSports will be playing Valorant and another season of Rocket League, with both teams looking to make an impact and bring home their own trophies. The Rocket League team came close last spring, but fell in the conference semifinals match. Valorant has been practicing hard since its creation and is looking for a fast start on the year.

For those who want to learn a bit more about eSports and want to support the team, the team's schedule is posted on the team's Instagram (@iuk\_esports) as well as on the IU Kokomo athletics website. There are multiple ways to support the team – you can watch the games that are broadcast on YouTube and Twitch @iukeSports, or come in person to the new eSports lounge, located on the second floor of Innovation Hall. Currently, the broadcast is streamed live to the eSports lounge and soon will include even more ways for live participants to experience the event, such as a new speaker system that will pump audio from the broadcast to the eSports lounge.



Written by  
— Nick Liegey,  
eSports Coach



# Homecoming

## LINKED BY LEGACY 2024

IU Kokomo celebrated another year of being “Linked by Legacy” during Homecoming 2024.

Honoring the strong relationship between the campus and alumni, events included a swag giveaway and caramel apples for students, faculty, and staff; a Halloween movie night on the Earth Stage; the annual volleyball tailgate on Friday, October 11; and participation in Make a Difference Day, a nationally recognized day of service.

IU Kokomo also marked 20 years of the Angel Walk, a yearly collaboration with the Family Service Association (FSA) of Howard County. This year, 160 community members, students, faculty, and staff walked a path around IU Kokomo and raised more than \$14,000 to support the FSA domestic violence shelter.

IU Kokomo athletics had a strong showing during Homecoming: Volleyball won its two games in shutouts, while women’s golf finished third in the inaugural Crimson Classic, and men’s golf finished sixth in the Egypt Valley Championship.

To read about this year’s IU alumni awards celebration at IU Kokomo, please turn to page 11.



FOR MORE HOMECOMING PHOTOS SEARCH @IUKOKOMO ON FLICKR





“ Ever since I met her (Kaiser), she has been instrumental in my career as a teacher and in theatre.”

# Curtain Call

Joann Kaiser reflects on her time in IU Kokomo’s performing arts

Several IU Kokomo alumni, many who starred in the 2013 production of *Pride and Prejudice* returned to campus for a special reunion to celebrate Kaiser before the November 16 performance in Havens Auditorium. For more photos, search @IUKokomo on Flickr.



Putting on a theatrical performance involves bringing a lot of people together. That’s what makes it special, according to Joann Kaiser.

“What makes it special, is the few people that you have working on the show have the same focus,” Kaiser said. “They come together, there’s a lot of challenges, but those challenges are met.”

A teaching professor in communication arts, Kaiser has helped to guide the performing arts at Indiana University Kokomo since 2008, after serving for several years off and on, beginning in 1989 as an adjunct professor. Now, she’s looking toward retirement at the end of the fall 2024 semester.

“It’s just time,” she said. “I’ll be 67, and it’s time for the students to have fresh ideas, someone fresher... the program is changing, it’s time.”

In her path toward teaching, Kaiser double majored in theatre and speech at Ball State University, later earning her master’s degree in speech and theatre. At IU Kokomo, she started out by teaching the campus’ public speaking courses, but took on acting courses in fall 2010, along with her first show – “Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?”

“It feels like home,” she said of IU Kokomo. “I know that’s almost cliché right now, but I taught part time at Taylor University, at Goshen College, and it didn’t feel right until I came back here.

“It’s just been a really good place to be.”

Now, IU Kokomo has a theatre minor and Kaiser runs the fall plays, while Wendy Grice, director of music, runs the spring musicals.

“What we’ve learned was that acting classes, theatre classes, were a tool for retention,” Kaiser said. “A lot of students who came in found their group, found their community, which always happens with theatre and performing.”

That community, where students found love and married, and found lifelong friends, led to the choice of Kaiser’s final play *Pride and Prejudice*.

Eleven years ago, three young women Kaiser described as “Jane Austen nuts” begged her to put on the show. It’s an easy adaptation, she said, that tells the story of the novel in a fast-paced style with a minimal set that focuses on the characters.

“I wasn’t sure if guys would audition,” Kaiser said, but 50 students showed up to audition.

Kaiser is still in touch with her alumni, and when the choice was made to stage the production again, she reached out and asked, “How would you like to return to Brighton?”

With the help and support of Ben Liechty, director of alumni relations, alumni from IU Kokomo’s past shows – including *Pride and Prejudice* – returned to IU Kokomo to support the newest cast in the fall production, which ran from November 15-17 in Havens Auditorium.

Hannah Jarvis, who graduated in 2017 with a degree in secondary education with a concentration in English and a minor in creative arts, was inspired by Kaiser to take part in the performing arts at IU Kokomo.

“Solely Joann,” she said. “It was solely Joann.”

Portraying Mrs. Bennett in the first production, Jarvis had come to IU Kokomo from another college and was encouraged to take part by a friend who praised Kaiser.

“Ever since I met her (Kaiser), she has been instrumental in my career as a teacher and in theatre,” Jarvis said.

“We created such a family with that cast, and Joann being the head of it. I felt like I grew as a person with Joann; whatever environment she created, there was growth and support, and not

only a push for her ideas, but a push for your ideas.”

Coming back was a no-brainer, Jarvis said.

Returning to Brighton was also an easy yes for Summer Rogers, a member of the class of 2016, who took on the female lead role of Elizabeth Bennett in the original cast.

“I was excited to be in a show of Joann’s,” Rogers said of her experience in her first show under Kaiser.

Describing her experience as, “incredible,” Rogers called her time in the performing arts “one of (my) favorite things I did.”

“It really did feel like a family,” she said. “Just because everyone was so accepting and kind. Joann had a way of making everybody feel important and she always saw everyone’s capabilities, and was all about giving people opportunities to express those.”

As the curtain fell in Havens Auditorium, Kaiser expressed her hopes for the future of the performing arts at IU Kokomo and in the Kokomo area.

“I think people understand that it shouldn’t just be STEM that we’re focusing on, it should be STEAM,” she said.

“My hope is that we don’t see it disappear, that we can be a feeding ground for those people.”

Kaiser hopes that the performing arts program will continue at IU Kokomo.

“It would be really nice for someone to keep the program going for students to find that community and to take it out into this area, where there’s lots of opportunities to be involved in the performing arts.”



# KEY UNLOCKS NEW OPPORTUNITIES



Disney: During a visit in November, students in the School of Business learned what it takes to keep the countless visitors to Walt Disney World happy and safe.

The **Kokomo Experience and You (KEY)** program provides students experiential learning opportunities, developing a valuable background that prepare students for a global market.

This year, Cougar students have presented at conferences, bonded at Bradford Woods FLC, traveled to Poland to tour historic sites and meet

with business leaders, celebrated Dia de los Muertos, and learned what it takes to run Walt Disney World.

IU Kokomo continues to expand the KEY program through the KEY Academy, inviting area residents to participate in lifelong learning opportunities.



Eiteljorg: Students, faculty and staff traveled to the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis to observe traditional celebrations of Dia de los Muertos.



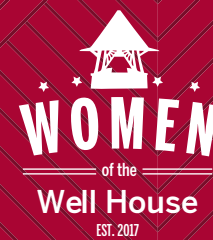
Bradford Woods: Students in the School of Education bonded through team challenges and activities at Bradford Woods.



Cincinnati: Students and faculty in the School of Business visited Cincinnati to learn about business concepts from local institutions.



Poland: Students and faculty in the School of Business traveled to Poland over the summer to tour historical sites and learn about international business concepts from local leaders.



## Empowering Futures: Women of the Well House Transform Lives

The Women of the Well House at Indiana University Kokomo is a dynamic giving society dedicated to making a tangible difference on campus and in the local community. This group of passionate women has been instrumental in funding scholarships, supporting student success initiatives, and enhancing campus facilities. And its commitment to philanthropy has not only enriched the lives of students – it has fostered a spirit of giving within the Kokomo community.

In addition to these impactful efforts, Women of the Well House also provides crucial funding to assist students in traveling abroad. These funds have enabled many students to experience international education opportunities that they might not have been able to afford otherwise. This global exposure is invaluable, broadening students' horizons and enriching their academic and personal growth.

As an IU Kokomo alumna, you have the opportunity to join this inspiring group and contribute to its ongoing success. Together, we can make a lasting difference in our community and support the next generation of leaders!

To learn more about joining the Women of the Well House, contact Tara Scott at [tarscott@iu.edu](mailto:tarscott@iu.edu).

### Here are just a few examples of the impact we made in 2024:

- Provided the Innovation Symposium a \$8,250 grant to fund students' 8-day stay at Harlaxton College at Harlaxton Manor, England.
- Granted \$10,000 to reduce the cost of 19 students taking the Italian Culture and Communication and the Foreign Study in Italian Art History trips by more than \$500.
- Helped the American Heart Association Training Site purchase new adult and infant manikins, AED trainers, pads, batteries, and a new cart to store all new equipment.
- Funded a new student wellness center, providing a much-needed space for mental health support and wellness activities.
- Launched a mentorship program connecting alumni.

## Cougar Pride Shines During Second-Annual Athletics Giving Week

Athletics Giving Week is dedicated to celebrating and supporting student athletes across IU Kokomo's 15 varsity sports. This annual giving event not only highlights the achievements of our Cougar teams, it underscores the vital role that athletics play in delivering a rich college experience, and gives us the chance to give back to the players who make it all possible.

For our Cougar student athletes, the support received during this week is crucial. It not only helps fund essential resources like equipment and travel, but also boosts morale and fosters a sense of community.

If you missed Athletics Giving Week – don't worry! Alumni can make a significant impact by supporting our Cougars all year long, helping to ensure that current and future athletes have the resources they need to succeed both on and off the field.

Whether it's through financial contributions, attending games, or mentoring, let's come together to show our Cougar pride! Visit [iukcougars.com](http://iukcougars.com) to plan a trip to campus for a game, and to stay up to date on news and events. Or, scan the QR code to give a gift to the IU Kokomo Athletic Programs fund.

**THANK YOU!** | This year, you helped us raise more than **\$6,000** during Athletics Giving Week!

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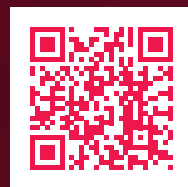


# BUSINESS *After* HOURS

**Wednesday, February 5**  
**4:30 – 7 p.m.**

**IU Kokomo • Alumni Hall**

Join us for an evening of networking in Alumni Hall, and the opportunity to hear from a speaker. Appetizers, beer and wine will be served. The event is free, but RSVPs are required.



**QUESTIONS?** Please contact Benjamin Liechty at (765) 455-9595 or [baliecht@iu.edu](mailto:baliecht@iu.edu).



# IU KOKOMO ALUMNI DAY

*COUGARS host  
Brescia University*

**Saturday, February 15**  
**11:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

**IU Kokomo • Alumni Hall**  
**MBB 1 p.m. • WBB 3 p.m.**

Come back to campus for Alumni Appreciation Day at IU Kokomo! Alumni and their families are invited to lunch and a doubleheader men's and women's basketball game. Lunch will be served in Alumni Hall beginning at 11:30 a.m., followed by the men's and women's basketball games in the Student Activities and Events Center. The event is free, but RSVPs are required. Support Cougar athletics and enjoy some time mingling with your fellow alumni!

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact Benjamin Liechty at (765) 455-9595 or [baliecht@iu.edu](mailto:baliecht@iu.edu).

