Renovated gallery provides first-class home for UWM Art Collection
By Greg Walz-Chojnacki, University Relations

UWM treasure at last has a suitably prominent home, thanks to a gift from a donor and art collector, the late Emile H. Mathis.

The UWM Art Collection and its steward, the Department of Art History, celebrated the opening of a new exhibition space, the Emile H. Mathis Gallery, with a public opening on Dec. 14.

The Emile H. Mathis Gallery is a state-of-the-art 2,400 square feet exhibition space, named in honor of patron Emile H. Mathis, an art connoisseur, collector and gallery owner. The renovated and expanded gallery marks a new chapter for the UWM Art Collection, providing additional exhibition and storage space to display and house the expanding permanent art collection.

“We are immensely proud to showcase the university’s extensive art collection in such a beautiful space,” said Dave Clark, interim dean of the College of Letters & Science. “The Emile H. Mathis Gallery is not only an excellent teaching tool for our students, but also a great community resource for all of Milwaukee. Emile’s gift will enrich the university and the city for years to come.”

Continued on page 16
Peter Janecky earned his PhD in history in 2012 and recently shared his thoughts on his UWM experiences and talked about his work with Ancestry (www.ancestry.com), an online service that helps people track their family tree.

**Tell us about yourself and your background.**

I was born and grew up in Racine, Wisc., and I live there now with my wife, Dawn. I was interested in studying history from my first course as an undergrad at UW-Whitewater. I majored in journalism and minored in history at Whitewater and then earned a Master’s degree in history from UW-Milwaukee in 1992.

After working as a journalist and a mass media professor, I studied for a PhD in history at UWM, and I completed that degree in 2012. My dissertation focused on the relationship between the editors of Milwaukee’s daily newspapers and the city’s two mayors from 1949 to 1988.

**Where are you working now, and what do you do?**

I have worked as a writer for Ancestry for more than two years now, and I write articles for a project called “Historical Insights.” Ancestry members are given hints that their ancestors may have participated in or watched some event. My job is to write brief articles and photo captions about these historic events. For example, lately I’ve been working on a collection of episodes on the history of the World Series. I’ve written about each World Series up through 1949 at this point. Ancestry members who have ancestors who lived in the cities where the series was played will be targeted with hints to attract them to read my articles.

**How does your UWM education help you in your job?**

Studying history at UWM provided me with a broad understanding of United States history, and I could not do this job without that education. I am able to write about topics as varied as the history of transportation infrastructure in the U.S. during the 19th century to the birth of a princess in the Netherlands in 1910. My focus at UWM was on U.S. history, but the research skills I developed have allowed me to also write for the Ancestry.com sites in Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. I have also written articles on the history of Mexico, India, and several European nations.
UWM Geologists uncover Antarctica’s fossil forests

By Matthew Wamser, University Relations

During Antarctica’s summer, from late November 2016 through January 2017, UW-Milwaukee geologists Erik Gulbranson and John Isbell climbed the McIntyre Promontory’s frozen slopes in the Transantarctic Mountains. High above the ice fields, they combed the mountain’s gray rocks for fossils from the continent's green, forested past.

By the trip’s end, the geologists had found fossil fragments of 13 trees. The discovered fossils reveal that the trees are over 260 million years old, meaning that this forest grew at the end of the Permian Period, before the first dinosaurs.

“People have known about the fossils in Antarctica since the 1910-12 Robert Falcon Scott expedition,” said Gulbranson, a paleoecologist and visiting assistant professor in UWM’s Department of Geosciences. “However, most of Antarctica is still unexplored. Sometimes, you might be the first person to ever climb a particular mountain.”

The time frame is exactly what they are looking for. The Permian Period ended 251 million years ago in history’s greatest mass extinction, as the Earth rapidly shifted from icehouse to greenhouse conditions. More than 90 percent of species on Earth disappeared, including the polar forests. Because the Antarctic forests grew at polar latitudes where plants can’t grow today, Gulbranson believes that the trees were an extremely hearty species and is trying to determine why they went extinct.

Many scientists now believe that a massive increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, caused the Permian-Triassic extinction. It’s likely that over the course of 200,000 years – a short time, geologically speaking – volcanic eruptions in Siberia released many tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Isbell, a distinguished professor of geosciences at UWM, has previously studied Antarctica’s Permian glacial deposits to determine how the climate changed. On this expedition, he used the rocks around the fossilized trees to determine how the fossils fit into Antarctica’s geologic history.

“This forest is a glimpse of life before the extinction, which can help us understand what caused the event,” Gulbranson said. It can also give clues to how plants were different than today.

Continued on page 10
Vervet monkeys found in Africa and the Caribbean are the most abundant natural hosts of the simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV), a close relative of HIV/AIDS.

Unlike humans with HIV however, vervets infected with SIV rarely get sick with simian AIDS.

In a new study, a research group that includes UWM anthropologist Trudy Turner found that the animals’ curious tolerance comes from evolution that has favored certain genes in their DNA.

This discovery of a possible defense mechanism against the virus, described in a paper published Oct. 30 in Nature Genetics, could offer clues for developing new treatments for HIV/AIDS and could inform the future evolution of genes involved in HIV.

Vervet monkeys, also called African green monkeys, have long been used as biomedical models for a variety of human diseases.

While it’s a long way from monkeys to humans, Turner said, this work has comparative value. For example, it could help scientists determine whether HIV and SIV share a common ancestry, as some research has suggested.

Among the researchers’ findings is that selection occurred in the animals’ genes that regulate viruses, rather than fight them. And genes that govern progression of immunodeficiency were highly selected.

The team’s sampling strategy was designed to investigate the selection of genes across a diverse group of the monkeys from sub-Saharan Africa to the Caribbean.

“The diversity of the sample was important so that we could determine how widespread the evolutionary selection is from a large geographical area,” said Turner, professor of biological anthropology.

The animals’ tolerance for SIV was the main reason an international consortium of scientists who study the monkeys formed in 2009. The consortium had the whole genome sequenced in 2015, opening up new lines of inquiry.

“We trapped and released 2,000 animals and looked at all sorts of biological questions from that,” said Turner, who directed the African fieldwork operations. “But the hot part of it was the relationship that showed up between some of the genes and SIV.”

The group’s discovery of genomic adaptation to viruses agrees with recent evidence that viruses played a major role in the evolution of proteins, which carry out all the functions of life, in mammals.
Chasing leads led journalism grad to Milwaukee news

By Aaron Gash, College of Letters & Science

If you tune in to channel 12, you might find Tim Elliott taking you through the day’s news.

Elliott, a reporter for channel WISN 12, has always considered Wisconsin home, but his journey since graduating from UWM in 2007 to the evening news today has been a long one.

Ever since his sophomore year of high school, Elliott knew that he wanted to be involved in journalism in some way.

“I just started to think, as a 14 or 15-year-old, this is when I have to start putting myself out there. I joined the newspaper at Janesville Craig [High School], and I knew then,” said Elliott.

He continued to build on his interests as a Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies student at UWM. He cited David Allen, Mark Zoromski, and Maryann Lazarski as the three most influential professors he had in college. Elliott is especially complimentary of the award-winning university television production team, Panthervision, which significantly helped his career in television.

“That was like being in a real newsroom,” Elliot said. “[Zoromski] held us to a very high standard. He was tough with his criticism, but that’s what made us better.”

After graduating, Elliott first worked as a producer at a smaller CBS affiliate, WTVY, in Dothan, Ala., for a few years before becoming a reporter for the same station. After making the switch, he discovered just how valuable his time as a producer was to his new role on the other side of the camera.

“I learned everything there is to know about a newscast, inside and out,” Elliott said. “I think it put me way ahead, because when I switched to reporting, I knew exactly what a producer wanted. I knew how to organize my time better and [how to] have better communication with the producer.”

After his stint in Alabama, he moved to Madison to be a reporter for NBC 15, eventually earning a promotion to co-anchor of the morning news show. Another new opportunity took him to a general assignment reporter job in Louisville, Ky., for a few years. In 2015, he had the opportunity to come back home to Wisconsin as a breaking news anchor for WISN 12 News This Morning and then as the weekend morning news anchor. Recently he moved again, and is now a general assignment reporter for WISN 12. You can usually catch him on the evening news.

Continued on page 7
Misty Voss graduated this past spring with a double major in German and community engagement and education, with an emphasis in child care.

Now she’s taken her interests to Germany, to teach English to German children.

Her trip is being made possible by the prestigious Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals Fellowship, which is funded by the German Bundestag (parliament) and the U.S. Department of State.

The yearlong program begins with a two-month intensive language course in Cologne, followed by a semester at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, studying intercultural communication and education. Voss will spend the remaining balance of her fellowship as an intern working for a German company in either cultural exchange or education.

Voss said the impetus for her involvement in the program stems from her experience attending the Milwaukee German Immersion School and the Milwaukee School of Languages in Milwaukee Public Schools.

“The basis of all this is my passion for immersion education, because it was so great for me,” she says, “To give back that opportunity to learn a second language is something I’m extremely passionate about.”

Voss first attended UW-La Crosse but, being undecided about a major, decided UWM was a better fit.

“I remember looking at the variety of intriguing programs at UWM,” she recalled. “Especially the community engagement and education degree program. When I transferred, I took a couple of courses and it was something that really interested me. Ever since then I’ve been really appreciative of it.”

She also got deeply involved in the German program, and was inducted into the German Honor Society, Delta Phi Alpha, in 2014, her first year at UWM.

“Jonathan Wipplinger, the chair of the German department, started the same year I did,” she says, “I can’t believe three years are already over! I really credit the German department for the awesome opportunities I was given at UWM.”

While working in a kindergarten remains attractive, Voss said, since arriving in Germany she has developed a heightened interest in working for a nonprofit exchange organization.

“I’d like to work at an organization that focuses on the exchange of cultures,” she says. “One that offers opportunities abroad to expand students’ knowledge of a new part of the world through cultural immersion.”

Continued on page 9
Passings

Dr. Alan Corré, Emeritus Professor of Hebrew Studies, passed away in November.

Dr. Corré was hired to head the UWM Department of Hebrew Studies (now a part of the Foreign Languages and Literature Department) in 1963, and he served as a professor of Hebrew Studies for 30 years. His many scholarly articles and reviews on subjects such as Hebrew linguistics, Judeo-Arabic language and culture, canonical Jewish texts, and computational linguistics have been published in notable journals and encyclopedias. Dr. Corré was also a rabbi, and was widely respected in his field. In 2011, a gift from Dr. Corré and his family to the UWM Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies, made in honor of Dr. Corré’s 80th birthday, established a new scholarship fund to support undergraduate students in Jewish Studies.

Funeral services took place in North Miami Beach, Fla.

Former UWM lecturer Gwaub Thao passed away in November. He was 53 years old.

Mr. Thao began his decade-long tenure at UWM in 2005 in Foreign Languages and Linguistics. He later lectured for Hmong Studies/Ethnic Studies, teaching Hmong language, translating dialects, creating materials for literacy courses, and developing Hmong language assessment tools. He was a leader in efforts to preserve Hmong language and culture.

Funeral services took place Dec. 2-3 in Milwaukee. His obituary is online at http://bit.ly/2njfNyP.

Dr. Mary Edge Blewett, former lecturer and English Department alumnus, passed away in November. Dr. Blewett received her PhD in English from UWM and was the first recipient of the Department’s Tinsley Helton Dissertation Fellowship. She was with UWM from 1999 through 2006, ending her career at the university as a Senior Lecturer. Widely regarded for her teaching, Dr. Blewett won the second-ever Educator of the Year Award at Cardinal Stritch University. She was married to Peter Blewett, a senior lecturer in English at UWM. Funeral services took place Dec. 11 and 12 in Milwaukee. Her obituary is online at http://bit.ly/2nJ8wbF.

Milwaukee news anchor

“Breaking news anchor was definitely a change, because I was very serious and matter of fact all the time,” Elliott said. “When I was an anchor on the weekends, that was a little more laid back. We liked to have a little fun in the mornings.”

Regardless of what region of the country he’s reporting from, Elliott has found that each job reflects both the challenges and rewards of journalism. Some of the hardest stories he’s had to report on involved families of victims who have been killed, stating that “you get mixed reactions” in those types of situations. One of his more memorable positive stories involved the use of social media to successfully find a kidney donation for a child – a story that held special meaning for Elliott since he went to high school with the child’s parent.

Now that he’s an established journalist in his field, Elliott has better perspective on the current “fake news” phenomenon.

“Politicians come and go, but journalists are here to stay,” said Elliott. “It’s disheartening to hear how prevalent it’s become, but I think most people know that journalists aren’t out here to deceive people on purpose.”

While he has already experienced many different jobs in a variety of locations on his journey home to Wisconsin, he acknowledged the nomadic nature of the business – journalism could take him any number of places in the future.

“We’ll see what happens,” Elliott said.
Congratulations, graduates!

On Dec. 17, a new cohort of Panthers walked across the stage at the UWM Panther Arena during winter commencement. We especially congratulate all of the Letters & Science graduates who have worked hard to earn their degrees. Although all of our students deserve to be recognized for their efforts, we’re pleased to shine a light on a few students.

Congratulations, graduates! We are so proud of your accomplishments and we wish you the best as you start your journeys beyond UWM.

Brittyn Calyx (BA, Conservation and Environmental Science) had to withdraw from school after a bout of depression. The transgender veteran finished her studies with support from the UWM LGBT Resource Center. 
https://youtu.be/FLpShUHyv1M

Ameena Yusuf (BA, Global Studies) leaned on the support of the Black Cultural Center after her father passed away during her sophomore year. She completed an internship in Nigeria, her father’s home country, working with people displaced by Boko Haram.  
https://youtu.be/gq0tMbBK6zk

Trevor Jung, who graduated with an Urban Studies major, works for Visioning a Greater Racine. The nonprofit strives to align community efforts to make the biggest positive impact on Racine by hosting visioning sessions within the community. Jung is a fourth-generation Racine resident and is dedicated to his hometown’s bright future. 

L&S Salutes

Every so often, Letters & Science likes to recognize a donor who has generously given to the college. This month, we salute Michael Casey.

When he goes up against Chicago’s toughest lawyers, Michael Casey relies on the skills he learned at UWM.

Casey is a 1977 economics alum and a senior counsel at the law firm of Husch Blackwell, where he works as a commercial litigator and governmental counselor. Before reaching his current position, Casey worked in small law firms, put in time at the Illinois Attorney General’s office, and worked for Chicago’s Law Department drafting municipal legislation (a post once held by Clarence Darrow). Casey is a trial lawyer and mediator with a depth of experience in the courtroom and state and federal appellate courts.

“If you take your UWM experience seriously and try to make the most of it, you can excel in any arena,” Casey said. “My major of Economics helped me in my career as a lawyer because it made me focus and understand economic motivations and relationships, which is a key to negotiating, mediating, litigating, and resolving legal disputes.”

Casey is a first-generation college student who attended UWM simply because it was close to where he grew up. His schooling was interrupted when his draft number was called and he was sent to the U.S. Army – quite a change since he had been marching in student protests on campus against the war just months before.

He was drawn to economics because “I was interested in the economic underpinnings of the free enterprise system and alternative methods,” Casey said. But it was his Constitutional Law class with then-Professor Marvin Summers that cemented his desire to be a lawyer. These days, he gives back by donating to the Economics Department.

“I loved my experience at UWM,” Casey said. “To me, UWM represents that diamond in the rough – the opportunity given to persons who did not grow up with silver spoons and turned that to their advantage to work hard and become successful. I’m proud to be a UWM alum. If you believe in the mission of providing opportunities to the future of this city and our country and persons who could use a hand, then I can’t think of a better way to invest your money.”
Urban Studies Spotlight

On Nov. 16, a packed crowd of students, faculty, and community members attended the Urban Studies Programs’ annual Milwaukee Summit in the Alumni Fireside Lounge. This year’s theme was Far from the American Dream: Milwaukee’s Fair and Affordable Housing Crisis, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the March on Milwaukee.

A diverse panel addressed a variety of issues facing the city, including the lack of affordable housing in Milwaukee’s suburbs, efforts to reduce evictions and promote home ownership in Milwaukee, the launching of a ‘housing-first’ policy in Milwaukee County for addressing homelessness, and understanding the history and human toll of neighborhood change from the ground up. Panelists included James Mathy (Milwaukee County Housing Division), Raphael Ramos (Legal Action Eviction Defense Project), Kori Schneider Peragine (Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council), Professor Arijit Sen (UWM Architecture and Urban Studies Programs), and Rebecca Stoner (ACTS Housing).

Webclips of the event can be viewed at http://uwm.edu/urban-studies/henry-w-maier-state-of-milwaukee-summit/.

German fellowship

continued from page 6

It’s very common for German high school students to spend a year abroad, which Voss said is a crucial point in a person’s life.

“The great thing about making this transition is that I am able to use my community engagement and education degree for this type of nonprofit work in the community,” she said. “I am continually learning about the different facets and flexibility of this awesome degree, and at this stage in my life I’m keeping my options open.”

Voss took an enterprising approach to her education: She combined the education and German courses to work in an internship at a kindergarten in Germany, to gain practical hands-on experience. She has kept in contact and continually returned over the past couple of years to see the children and teachers again. She credits Wipplinger’s assistance and flexibility for making it possible.

“He had a contract specially made up,” she said. “I can’t believe I had an awesome opportunity like that.”

Reflecting on her college career, she remembers being disappointed initially that she wasn’t able to attend college outside of Wisconsin, but since her UWM experience has so dramatically broadened her horizons, she is satisfied with her choice.

Her long-term goal is to open her own immersion kindergarten, either in Germany or the U.S. or create an exchange organization similar to that of the one she is taking part in.

“Giving young people the opportunity to learn a second culture and language is a life changing experience and is certainly something I strive to achieve within my lifetime.”

And now she’s settled into her new home overseas, with only one minor regret.

“I left the week before German Fest,” she lamented.

Fortunately, she had a good consolation prize: She was in Germany for Oktoberfest.
At the Permian Period’s end, Antarctica was warmer and more humid than it is today. The world’s continents, as we know them, were packed together in two giant landmasses – one in the north and one in the south. Antarctica was part of Gondwana, the supercontinent spanning the Southern Hemisphere that also included present-day South America, Africa, India, Australia and the Arabian Peninsula.

There would have been a mixture of mosses, ferns and an extinct plant called Glossopteris, and it’s likely that this forest stretched across the entirety of Gondwana.

Gulbranson said that the fossil forests looked different than forests today. During the Permian Period, forests were a potentially low diversity assemblage of different plant types with specific functions that affected how the entire forest responded to environmental change. This is in contrast to modern high-latitude forests that display greater plant diversity.

“This plant group must have been capable of surviving and thriving in a variety of environments,” Gulbranson said. “It’s extremely rare, even today, for a group to appear across nearly an entire hemisphere of the globe.”

But not even these robust forests survived the high carbon dioxide concentrations of the mass extinction.

The resilient plants also must have survived through the polar extremes of perpetual light and total darkness. Even in a warmer past, the polar regions would have experienced months of darkness in winter and would have gone without sunset during the summer months.

By studying the preserved tree rings, Gulbranson and colleagues have found that these trees transitioned from summer activity to winter dormancy rapidly, perhaps within a month. Modern plants make the same transition over the course of several months and also conserve water by making food during the day and resting at night. Scientists don’t yet know how months of perpetual light would have affected the plants’ day-and-night cycles.

“There isn’t anything like that today,” Gulbranson said. “These trees could turn their growing cycles on and off like a light switch. We know the winter shutoff happened right away, but we don’t know how active they were during the summertime and if they could force themselves into dormancy while it was still light out.”

He’ll returned to the site in November and will stay through January 2018. He hopes to learn more about the extinction event.

Gulbranson is going to look for deposits from the mass extinction to see if he can determine exactly how the forests responded as carbon dioxide rose.

“The geologic record shows us the beginning, middle and end of climate change events,” Gulbranson said. “With further study, we can better understand how greenhouse gases and climate change affect life on Earth.”
The Urban Studies program’s annual State of Milwaukee summit was highlighted in Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service. This year’s summit focused on affordable housing.

Empathy is the newest skill you’ll need to be successful as a manager in the business world, said Susan Frost (’01, MA English) in a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article. Frost is the president of Frost Marketing Communications, Inc., in DePere, Wisconsin.

Is time travel possible? HerCampus.com referenced John Friedman’s (Physics) research in an article debating that question.


Democrats have their own troubled history with sexual misconduct in the party ranks, despite being the party many would expect to take the lead on issues of gender equality, Kathy Dolan (Political Science) said in an Associated Press article. The article was repurposed coast-to-coast, including in the Chicago Tribune (http://trib.in/2zxKbGE) and the LA Times (http://lat.ms/2Bj3zb). Dolan also weighed in in a New York Times article on how newscasters like Matt Lauer and Bill O’Reilly, both accused of sexual misconduct, handled interviews with women. http://nyti.ms/2ke8hUN

Margo Anderson (History) has concerns about the Trump administration’s pick to head the U.S. Census Bureau, stating in a CityLab.com article that potential deputy director Thomas Brunell has made distorted arguments against census adjustment.
http://bit.ly/2idBoHo

The surface temperature of the Great Lakes is eight degrees warmer than it was 30 years ago, and that could mean devastating problems for our ecosystem, said Paul Roebber (Atmospheric Sciences) for a blog post for the Union of Concerned Scientists. http://bit.ly/2Bl9ijJ

The bright feathers of male birds that help them attract mates may also show how healthy – and therefore what a good mating prospect – they are, new research by Peter Dunn (Biological Sciences) and Linda Whittingham (emeritus Biological Sciences) suggests, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.
http://bit.ly/2zN2EUD

William Holahan (emeritus Economics) discussed the merits and downsides of raising the federal minimum wage in a piece for the Montgomery Advertiser. http://on.mgmadv.com/2zCwdUx

Learning about other cultures’ holiday traditions helps us become more inclusive as a society, Joseph Walzer (Cultures and Communities) said in a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article exploring different cultural holiday events in the city.

Nan Kim (History) added her name to a long list of academics who penned an open letter to the Stanford English department advocating for a more open conversation about sexual harassment in academia. http://bit.ly/2zSJdWn

Ameena Yusuf (Global Studies) graduated on Dec. 17 and was featured on Fox6 News for her inspiring story about the road to commencement. http://bit.ly/2z5vlXK

Continued on page 12
Marc Levine’s (History) research into Milwaukee’s demographic and employment statistics was cited in a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article examining the historical lessons the slated Foxconn factory can learn from the Great Migration. http://bit.ly/2zVB4R5.

Scientists working on drugs to treat anxiety and panic disorders are building off of James Cook’s (Chemistry and Biochemistry) drug compound that calms anxiety without dangerous side effects, according to Digital Journal. http://bit.ly/2nHHbXA

Things can travel at the speed of light, but you also need to account for the “speed of information,” Jolien Creighton (Physics) said in a Discover article. http://bit.ly/2jwhqIv


Joel Berkowitz (Jewish Studies) added his name to an open letter signed by 124 Jewish Studies scholars condemning President Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. http://bit.ly/2kmlYNP

Murder clearance rates are down in the city of Minneapolis, but it’s not the fault of the police department, Aki Roberts (Sociology) told MinnPost. http://bit.ly/2zfwMpl
Alumni Accomplishments

Thomas Fechter (’93, BA Communication) was promoted to Director of Sales at Werner Electric Supply in Appleton. Fechter has been with Werner Electric for 24 years and is now responsible for planning and implementing sales, marketing, and product development programs. [http://post.cr/2AboOiG]

Alex Henderson (’09, Masters of Public Administration) was named the winner of the 2017 Early Career Leadership Award by the International City/County Management Association. Henderson is the city manager of Kingsbury, California. [http://bit.ly/2AeRyan]

Rudy Kalis (’73, BA Mass Communication) will retire after more than 40 years as a beloved sports anchor and reporter. Kalis announced he will leave television station WSMV in Nashville, Tennessee, after this football season. [http://bit.ly/2ir71xg]

James Theo (’11, BA Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies) joined the law firm of Dinsmore & Shohl LLP in the firm’s Chicago office. He is experienced in trademark management, prosecution and protection, and contract compliance and litigation. [http://bit.ly/2ASx0Fe]

Emily Ballou (’92, BA English and BFA Film/Fine Arts) was nominated alongside her fellow writers for a Writer’s Guild of Great Britain Award for Best Longform TV Drama for her work on the BBC/FX show “Taboo.” The awards ceremony will take place in January at the Royal College of Physicians in London. [http://bit.ly/2jhYRUS]

James Llorens (’77, MS Urban Affairs) will serve as Florida Gulf Coast University’s interim provost beginning in January. Llorens was previously the chancellor of Southern University in Baton Rouge, a historically-black college. [http://newspr.es/2jOHtY4]

Jennifer Considine (’02, MA Communication) presented UW-Oshkosh’s midwinter commencement address during the university’s graduation ceremony on Dec. 16. [http://www.uwosh.edu/today/54410/speakers/]

Carlos Castillo-Chavez (’77, MS Mathematical Sciences) delivered the commencement address at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point winter graduation ceremony on Dec. 16. [http://spjour.nl/2Bq0Gtr]

Rebekah Beaulieu (’05, MA Art History and Museum Studies) was named the new director of the Florence Griswold Museum, an art museum in Old Lyme, Connecticut. She will be leaving her current post as the associate director of Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Brunswick, Maine. [http://cour.at/2Bcu5HW]

Jason Eden (’96, BA History) recently coauthored a book with his wife, Naomi Eden, entitled Age Norms and Intercultural Interaction in Colonial North America. The book addresses how Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans experienced lifetime milestones in colonial North America and explores how cultural underpinnings shape our experience with aging. Eden is a History professor at Saint Cloud State University.

Alum revolutionizes aging communities

A consultant on aging, advocacy and public policy, Stephanie Stein is considered by many to be the leader of Milwaukee’s and Wisconsin’s aging community. Recognized nationally as a leader on aging issues, she built the Milwaukee County Department on Aging into an award-winning organization, and was also the main designer of Family Care, a long-term care program that is now emulated from coast to coast.

Stein was also instrumental in the creation of Senior Care, has mentored aging professionals throughout the country, and has helped to create senior friendly communities. Her accomplishments have become part of our everyday lives.

Stein retired in 2015 after serving for more than a decade as director of the Milwaukee County Department on Aging. She became director of the county department in 1993 after working nearly 20 years for the Social Development Commission.

Stein, who earned a bachelor’s degree in English from UWM in 1968, received the distinguished alumni achievement award at the 2017 UWM Alumni Association Awards.

- Cris Lago, University Relations
Andrew Petto (Biological Sciences) and his collaborators won the “Outstanding Neuroscience Laboratory Article” from the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience during the annual Society for Neuroscience meeting. Their article, “The Use of Modular, Electronic Neuron Simulators for Neural Circuit Construction Produces Learning Gains in an Undergraduate Anatomy and Physiology Course”, analyzed the use of a novel technology-based teaching technology in the beginning anatomy course which allowed students to build their own neural circuits. Pre- and post-testing of students in the experimental group and in a control group revealed greater learning gains in the experimental group. http://bit.ly/2zHT1Xb

George Hanson (College of Engineering and Applied Science), and Michael Weinert (Physics) received a grant from the National Science Foundation in collaboration with the University of West Virginia for their project titled, “EFRI NewLAW: Magnetic Field-free Magneto-optics and Chiral Plasmonic with Dirac Materials.” Funded by the Division of Emerging Frontiers & Multidisciplinary Activities, the UWM portion of this four-year grant is $716,679.

Erin Sahlstein Parcell (Communication) was voted Vice-Chair Elect for the National Communication Association’s (NCA) Interpersonal Communication Division at the convention in Dallas in November. She will serve the division for the next 4 years as she fulfills her duties as Vice Chair Elect, Vice Chair, Chair, and then Immediate Past Chair. The Interpersonal Communication division is the third largest of NCA’s 48 divisions.

Sahlstein Parcell also, with Danielle Sparrow (’17, MA Communication), earned the inaugural “Dawn O. Braithwaite Award for Qualitative Research” from the Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Interest Group of the Central States Communication Association. They will receive the award for their paper, “Microaggressions Toward People with Disabilities: Implications for Inclusive Education” at the 2018 convention in Milwaukee this April.

Dan Agterberg (Physics) has been invited to speak at a memorial symposium honoring 2003 Nobel Prize winner Alexei Abrikosov, who passed away in March. The symposium takes place at the Landau Institute where Abrikosov worked on his early prize-winning research. Agterberg was also invited to speak at the American Physical Society’s March 2018 meeting on “j=3/2 superconductors”, a research area that was born at UWM.

Christopher Quinn (Biological Sciences) was an awarded R03 grant from the National Institutes of Health to investigate the mechanisms that stabilize axons and their branches. Axons are the long, threadlike part of nerve cells that transmit impulses from the cell body to other cells. Precise regulation of axon termination and branch stabilization are required for the development of a functional nervous system and disruptions in this process can underlie neurodevelopmental disorders. Quinn’s proposed research could impact the diagnosis and treatment of neurodevelopmental disorders.

Happy holidays from UWM!

UWM Chancellor Mark Mone wishes you and yours a very happy holiday season as we remember how small acts of kindness create a huge difference in our community! https://youtu.be/bi6onbgVuUA
Alum’s Ancestry work

What do you like best about your job?

Writing episodes on a wide variety of topics has greatly expanded my knowledge of history and the ways that the world has been connected throughout history. I am constantly learning on the job.

I also enjoy searching for the first-person angle that we always want in each episode. I try to find a letter, a diary, or a newspaper article that provides a human perspective from the time of the event that I am writing about. Often, I find these eloquent statements from people involved in dramatic situations in the past, and those quotations become the gemstones of my articles.

Have you researched your own family history, and if so, did you find anything surprising?

My mother was an Ancestry member long before I began writing for the Historical Insights project. She has done such a thorough job of following both our paternal and maternal lines that there is nothing left for me to do except enjoy her work. There haven’t been any major surprises for us. My mom has corresponded with newfound family members in Norway, and our roots go back to Germany, Bohemia, and Norway, as we suspected.

What do you think fascinates people about family history and ancestry?

There is a personal connection that is much stronger when you are learning about your grandparents or great-grandparents. These are people you probably knew as children or even as adults, which makes their lives and the history of their times more real. And then to go back further in time to make connections between the ancestors you never knew and the ones from your lifetime becomes more of a personal mission. These are not just some random people from history. These are the people that made my life possible. So, in many ways, learning about your family history is really learning about the pre-history of your life before you were born.

Thinking back on your time at UWM, was there a particular experience or faculty member who inspired or influenced your career path?

I remember my time at UWM more broadly as two intensive periods of studying history. I worked on my master’s degree from 1990 to 1992, and my course work toward the PhD took place from 2004 to 2012. I was already inspired about studying history by the time I left UW-Whitewater in 1988. The professors I worked with at UWM all contributed to keeping that inspiration burning. During the time I was writing my dissertation, Dr. Genni McBride consistently offered inspirational feedback and direction that I truly appreciated.

What would you say to a high school student about the field of history? Why is it relevant to today’s world?

As I write my articles for Ancestry, I am constantly reminded that the troubles and triumphs of today were also present at many different times and places in the past. History is not just a series of dates and events. In each event there are heroes and champions, victims and villains, and these were real people, not just characters in a movie or a book. We should learn from the examples of the past. We should ask ourselves: How did our ancestors overcome a challenge in the past, or, when tragedy struck, how did our ancestors respond? The answers to those questions can be valuable as we travel through our time in history.
Linda Brazeau, director of the collection, said the renovation more than triples the display space of the gallery.

“The additional space gives us the ability to better showcase the collection,” Brazeau said. “The gallery is also now more accessible, which raises the profile of the collection, something Emile Mathis insisted upon.”

The gallery’s inaugural exhibition, “Legacies: ReVisioning the UWM Art Collection,” showcases artworks of varied media celebrating the collection’s richness and breadth. The exhibition honors the patrons whose gifts of art form the UWM Art Collection.

Prominent works of art from the collection on exhibit include:

- Edgar Degas, “Dancer,” c. 1880
- Rembrandt van Rijn, “Self Portrait in Velvet Cap with Plume,” 1638
- Pablo Picasso, “Still Life with Caged Owl,” 1947
- Joan Miró, “Woman and Bird in the Night,” 1944

Other notable featured artists include Pierre Auguste Renoir, Robert Rauschenberg, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Jim Dine, Christo, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler.

Mathis’ gifts to the university go well beyond the gallery. Upon his death in 2012, he bequeathed more than 600 pieces of African art and more than 1,700 prints to the UWM Art Collection. The collection of prints, which spans 500 years, includes etchings by Rembrandt, Whistler, and others. The collection of African art, which includes 20th century masks and sculptures, represents cultures from western, central and northern Africa.

“When Emile showed me the list of art he intended to donate, I couldn’t believe the artists’ names on the list,” Brazeau recalled.

It was Mathis’ intention that the university would use his prized collection for teaching and display for years. Brazeau, whose brief acquaintance with Mathis developed into a close friendship, said she was gratified to see his vision realized.

“I would like to believe he’d be happy with the way this has turned out,” Brazeau said.

Mathis was born in Superior, Wisconsin, in 1946. He moved to Racine in 1964. He studied fine arts at UW-Superior, and after teaching in Sheboygan, returned to Racine in 1970. He started the Mathis Fine Art Gallery in 1972, and gained a reputation as an art historian, art collector, dealer, curator, community activist and philanthropist.

In addition to his contributions to the UWM Art Collection and the gallery space, Mathis established the Emile H. Mathis Endowment Fund, which will support the UWM Art Collection’s collected prints in perpetuity.