BLUE AND GOLD SOCIETY FOREVER

Old Friends, Meet New Friends:
A Blue and Gold Holiday Update

Blue and Gold Society Alums:

Hello Blue and Gold society alums! We hope this newsletter finds you in good spirits with the upcoming holiday season just around the corner. This is the very first edition of a newsletter that you can expect to be receiving on a bi-annual basis. Each semester, members of our very own External Committee will put together a small update to keep you informed on the happenings of your Blue and Gold Society.

In the very first edition of our newsletter, you will find articles ranging from depictions of our involvement over the first semester, interviews with current alumni staff and a spotlight of a current Blue and Gold Big/Little pairing. Additionally, in order to provide a glimpse into changes in Blue and Gold since its inception, a “Blue and Gold Throughout the Years” commentary featuring interviews with two past and the current president has been included. Finally, the group has also decided to include a feature on a face we are all familiar with, that of Blue and Gold advisor-since-inception, MJ Lovett. As committed members of your Alma Mater, we the members of the 2013-2014 Blue and Gold Society are excited to bring you this newsletter, and we hope that you enjoy the periodic update! Best wishes for a happy holidays, and Hail to Pitt!

Matthew Walsh
Senior Advisor, Blue and Gold Society

UPCOMING EVENTS

BLUE AND GOLD EVENTS
- Traditions Book (Spring 2014)
- Blue and Gold Week (Spring 2014)
- Relay For Life (April 4th-5th)
- Introduction of New Class/Senior Going Away Dinner (Late Spring 2014)

STUDENT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION EVENTS
- Cathedral Ball (December 16th)
- Young Alumni/SAA Ski Trip (February 1st)
- Philanthropy Day (February 27th)
- Dinner With 12 (February 28th and March 1st)
- Pitt Day in Harrisburg (March 18th)

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Introduction...Page 1
Interview with MJ...Page 2
Meet the Staff...Page 4
Big/Little Interview...Page 5
BG’s Through the Years...Page 7
An Interview with MJ Lovett

As I walk toward MJ’s office in Alumni Hall, I am struck again by just how deeply she cherishes the memories that she’s made here at Pitt. Looking through her open door is a lot like falling into a photo-album: pictures stretch from floor to ceiling like old-fashioned wallpaper, coloring her office and life as fittingly as her signature red lipstick colors her mouth, a mouth that smiles when I finally knock to catch her attention. The way she acts the moment before she notices me at her door, however, is most telling of who MJ is to me, to the Blue and Gold Society as a whole—she is furiously typing on her computer and concentrating completely on her work. More than just a smiling picture on a wall, MJ is one of the hardest-working, most dedicated people that I’ve ever met. While she asks me about my fathers’ health, and we move on to talk about her role in the Blue and Gold Society, I can’t help but think that this is one of those lucky accidents that life gives sometimes: the Blue and Gold Society wouldn’t have thrived without optimism, but it also wouldn’t have thrived without an enormous amount of determination. As we sit down for an interview, I feel happy that, in MJ Lovett, the Blue and Gold Society managed to find someone who personified both of these qualities. To begin, I ask her about the beginning...

“When the Charter class began in 1992,” she says, hands folded on the table, “I was asked to be the advisor. We took the program from having 21 students to having 42—such a huge difference. It’s been a great ride.”

She pauses a moment to think and then continues, smiling.

“I’ve seen so many wonderful kids become wonderful adults—I’ve been to so many weddings, and seen them have their own beautiful families. In the end, I help them any way I can. It makes me so happy that I can be some students’ Pitt connection.”

Through the years, MJ guided the Blue and Gold Society as it grew and changed for the better.

“The changes have truly all been positive,” she says, “and I attribute so much of that to Mark Nordenburg, who really took Pitt to another level and made students excited about being members of the Pitt family, a family with a world-class reputation and such a strong tradition of pride.”

MJ is animated and excited to talk about her love for the school, and her love for being a part of the Blue and Gold Society. It is clear that the excitement that she sees in Pitt students is also very much alive in her life.

“While there have been ups and downs, I have never stopped saying that I have the best job in the world. The 20th anniversary of the Blue and Gold Society was a particularly happy moment for me. I was so touched by the number of Blue and Gold Society members who came back and saw me, who were still so connected to the University and to the...continued on next page...
friends and faculty who had made their time at Pitt so special. “

She is quick to mention that Blue and Gold Society doesn’t just value these connections internally—it creates them for the rest of the student body at large.

“My favorite Pitt Tradition has to be Homecoming. Every year more Blue and Gold Society members get involved, every year more Blue and Gold alumni come back for the ceremony. In this way, we don’t just make memories for the Society—our members touch lives across the campus, and give students moments that will stay with them for a lifetime.”

These moments, these connections, are what she hopes will be her legacy.

“If I had to give advice to future generations of Blue and Gold Society members, I would tell them that staying connected is the most important thing—Pitt educates us, nurtures us, and motivates us to reach for our dreams with confidence. Helping students take pride in their alma mater, encouraging them to stay close, has always been a goal for me.”

Every day, the Blue and Gold Society watches MJ achieve her goal—the Blue and Gold Society has spent more than two decades under her guidance, and continues to be a place where Pitt pride is in ample supply, and fellowship amongst student leaders is encouraged. Knowing MJ has made me a better leader, a more informed student, and a more spirited Pitt Panther. To previous generations, I salute you for your contributions—to future generations, I am excited for you to see the opportunities available here at Pitt, as well as available here in the Blue and Gold Society. Although we may never meet in person, I’d like to think that we may end up next to each other in snapshots on the walls of MJ’s office one day—photographic evidence of an extraordinary adventure in education. Pixilated proof of the extraordinary influence of an extraordinary woman: MJ Lovett. Advisor, leader, mother-figure, mentor—a Pitt Panther in the truest sense of the word.

MJ can always be reached at lmj@pitt.edu or (412) 400-8050

Audrey Winn, A&S ‘15 - 1st Year Member of Blue and Gold Society
A Word About Our Alumni Office

The alumni staff works diligently with the Board of Directors and valued volunteers to provide opportunities for alumni to get together through various sponsored events and volunteer opportunities. They invite and encourage Pitt graduates to stay connect to the University and each other through active membership in the Pitt Alumni Association.

For the Blue and Gold Society, the alumni staff is much, much more. When in need of a little encouragement, a piece of parental advice (or two), or even just friendly a hug, we must look no further than our Alumni Association Staff, a group of individuals we are eternally grateful to have the pleasure of knowing. I can honestly say that I have never encountered a group of individuals that greets everyone with more genuine smiles or kind hearts than this bunch. The warm, family environment of theirs is truly invaluable and absolutely unmatched. Nothing exemplifies this more than my conversation with Jeff Gleim, Associate Chancellor of Alumni Relations.

Staff Spotlight: Jeff Gleim

Associate Vice Chancellor for Alumni Relations
Executive Director, Pitt Alumni Association gjeff@pitt.edu

Responsibilities: Strategic planning, overall program management, budget, working with Alumni Association Board of Directors, and various other segments of the University Community.

Education and Work Experience: Jeff earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in his home state, at The Ohio State University. He served in the Office of the Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives for nine years. He then went on to spend 14 years at Ohio State, where he served as the director of The Ohio State University Alumni Association’s Advocates Program.

Coming to Pitt: “A Christmas I’ll Never Forget”
After his name was tossed into the ring for a new position at the University of Pittsburgh, Jeff found himself venturing out of Ohio for his first interview at Pitt. Upon returning for a second interview, Jeff was sold not only the University, but also the people of the University and the city of Pittsburgh as a whole. Seven years ago, two weeks before Christmas, Jeff was notified that he had received the job in the Alumni Office. Not too long after, Jeff would take a chance on this opportunity, moving to Pittsburgh with his wife (his high school sweetheart) and young son. Jeff had nothing but an overwhelming abundance of great things to say about his experiences at Pitt thus far and hopes that there will be many more to come.

Changes in Alumni Relations: In his tenure at Pitt, Jeff has seen much progress in programming through Alumni Relations. His efforts have been focused in attempting to reconnect the alumni with the University, specifically the more recent graduates. In working towards this goal, Jeff has overseen the institution of many new programs including an on-campus homecoming event, Alumni tailgates at every away football game, and the establishment of the Young Alumni Council. Continued on next page...
The Young Alumni Council aims to increase young alumni participation in the Pitt Alumni Association and the University, by developing partnerships with current Pitt Clubs and Affinity Councils, and through the creation of new programming initiatives, for the purpose of further engaging young alumni with the University. For more information on the Young Alumni Council, follow them on Twitter at https://twitter.com/PittYoungAlums or on their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/PittYoungAlums.

Relationship with the Blue and Gold Society: Jeff spoke highly of the students of the Blue and Gold Society and our work on campus as well as his willingness to interact with us.

“My job is to help you grow as students and as people and to help you network; to put you in places with some of the right people that will help you as you graduate and go on.”

Jeff has played a significant role in the mentoring and advising of students in the Blue and Gold Society during their time at Pitt and beyond. He has always held an “open door policy” in order to encourage interaction with our Alumni staff. He strongly encourages students to develop relationships with Pitt’s abundance of extraordinary alumni and to take advantage of the advice and resources that they have to offer. Jeff left me with a piece of advice for current Blue and Gold Society students.

“Soak it up. It is really, really a special time,” he said. “It is not that life becomes worse, or better, it just becomes different once you leave. Take advantage of the opportunities and resources at Pitt. Ask questions, get involved, try new things, find a passion and explore it, and most importantly, learn.”

As Jeff encourages, we are always actively seeking advice in finding our paths in our future careers and lives in general. If you are interested in becoming a mentor to a current Blue and Gold Society member, please send inquiries to bgsexternal@gmail.com.

Giana Lupinetti, A&S ’14
External Vice President, Blue and Gold Society

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**Big/Little Interviews: Kimmy Borza and Amy Check**

**BIG**
Name: Kimmy Borza
Year: Senior
Major: Communication
Hometown: Beaver, PA
Interesting Fact: I’m the third Borza sister to come to Pitt and play on the women’s tennis team.

**LITTLE**
Name: Amy Check
Year: Sophomore
Major: Accounting and Finance
Hometown: Lansdale, PA
Interesting Fact: I attended the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah

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Have you had an internships / research experiences / co-ops / study abroad experiences?

AC: The summer after my freshman year, I was a corporate accounting intern for The Jones Group (owner of Nine West, Jones of New York, and more). Next semester, I will be working for PricewaterhouseCoopers as a wealth management and tax intern.

KB: Yes! The past two years I have been an intern for Pitt Athletics Media Relations. I’ve worked primarily with Pitt tennis and Pitt football - updating the athletics website, writing press releases, interviewing the players, and working directly with outside media. I’ve had an awesome experience!

What other activities are you involved in on campus besides BG?

AC: I am the VP of finance in Phi Beta Lambda, a professional business organization on campus. Last year, I participated in the Resident’s Student Association as the President of my dorm, Holland Hall.

KB: I am on the Varsity tennis team, am a member of SAAC (student athlete advisory committee), and am part of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes leadership team.

What are your plans for after graduation?

AC: After graduation, I would like to become CPA certified and work for a Big 4 public accounting firm.

KB: I graduate in the spring, and hope to work either in Athletics or Sales.

What is your favorite tradition at Pitt?

AC: My favorite tradition at Pitt is singing the Alma Mater. Whether it be at football games or at Blue and Gold morning meetings, I am always proud to sing the words alongside of any fellow panther.

KB: My favorite tradition at Pitt is the University of Pittsburgh Varsity Walk, between the Cathedral and Heinz Chapel. The walk has the names of former outstanding student athletes embedded in stone. Both of my older sisters, Nikki and Kristy (former Pitt tennis players), won the Blue-Gold Award their senior years, so their names were added to the walk. I love walking past and seeing my sisters there, it makes me really proud and motivated!
Blue and Gold’s Throughout the Years

Amanda Johnson was recruited to Blue and Gold by her Big in Pitt Pathfinders. Pitt had always been a big part of her life; she had grown up as a Pitt fan and had come to the university excited to get further involved around campus. This passion for the university helped her to become President of the B&G Society.

During her time as President, Amanda spearheaded the initiative to form different committees in the organization and started an overnight retreat at Alumni Hall. Even MJ and Kara slept upstairs in their offices! Amanda believed this system helped everyone to own part of the organization and get more involved. It also helped her delegate responsibility and set up each VP to succeed in managing his or her own committees.

Because of her time in B&G, Amanda learned about the difference between management and leadership: managers keep the status quo while leaders are dynamic and let the organization involve.

Amanda’s favorite Pitt tradition is the Victory Lights, and her favorite B&G tradition is the ‘Welcome Back’ picnic with SAA. Her most memorable moment in all 4 years at Pitt was throwing a birthday party for Roc when he turned 100; there were cupcakes and music on the Union lawn, Roc came to party, and everyone who devoured blue cupcakes had their teeth stained. Even as Amanda works today as a pharmacy resident at Presby, completing a Masters in Health Administration, she sees the Blue and Gold Society as her family. There were rough points during her tenure as people chose to leave the organization and as tension peaked between the Pathfinders and B&G, but everyone came closer together through it all.

Now a successful business woman with Kellogg’s, Christine Dockey was the first President of the Blue and Gold Society. When I sat down with her, she was able to share with me a little about the founding of this organization and her own unique experiences.

Although Christine cannot remember the exact incident that led to her recruitment, she did recall that the Alumni Office was looking for around 25 junior and senior students, who were well spoken and involved on campus. At the time, the Blue and Gold Society was synonymous with the Student Alumni Association, so the University was looking for students to start the SAA. Christine was interviewed at the end of her sophomore and started her duties the beginning of her junior year. Surprisingly, not a lot has changed with the interview process or the uniforms. The uniforms back then were the same traditional blue and gold rugby with khakis, although they also added a blazer. The first members of the Blue and Gold Society could not even escape the Wednesday 7am meeting! At the time they were held in a 2nd Floor Suite in Craig Hall, for Alumni Hall was not yet acquired by the University.

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As the Society was just getting started, Christine described her duties as primarily being something like an ambassador to Alumnae as they returned to Pitt. She also assisted Chancellor O’Connor, the Chancellor directly before Mark Nordenberg, with any events that needed student presentation. Christine remembers her interactions with the Alumnae mostly because of the advice she collected, the most memorable being “Don’t ever lose your enthusiasm.”

Christine described her peers in the Blue and Gold Society as excited young people, many of whom could have been president of the Blue and Gold Society easily, and all very talented. For Christine, her peers were people she could stay in contact with and although everyone is now at a very busy time of life with their jobs and children, she knows that they are there when she is ready to go back.

We ended the interview by asking her if there were any specific skills that she learned during her time as a member of the Blue and Gold that stayed with her. Christine went on to describe how interacting with so many different people allowed her to distinguish herself from her peers at work functions and interviews. She knew how to act and make herself memorable to potential employers. She had the confidence to approach and eloquence to converse with the CEO of her own company as well as other companies. She gained the experience to stand out from her peers by being a member of the Blue and Gold Society.

**Joseph Kozak** is the current President of the Blue and Gold Society here at Pitt. His organization, motivation, and charisma inspire us and serve as the driving force behind this year’s activities. Starting as just your average “Joe” student (pretty punny, huh?), he quickly became interested in the organization and the prospect of serving as a student ambassador. After serving as a member of the Internal Committee and learning about the inner workings of the Blue and Gold Society, he decided to become even more involved. The following year, he ran and was elected as the Internal Vice President, eventually using the experience to become President. His favorite part of Blue and Gold Society is “the bond you create while you’re here”, and that “no matter where you go in life, you will always share the bonds made in Blue and Gold Society, and at Pitt”. One bond that is special to Joe is when is the tradition of having initiation with Chancellor Nordenberg. During his own initiation, the building had to be evacuated due to a bomb threat and Joe walked out with the pitcher full of the Chancellor’s delicious smoothies. After locking eyes with the leader of the university, Joe feared he would be reprimanded. Instead, the Chancellor simply gave him a high-five. When asked what sorts of changes he has seen over his time in the organization, he responds:

“I have noticed a greater visibility and exposure to the undergraduate student body of who we are. My initiative is not only to reconnect with our alumni, but also to expand our presence on campus and grow our involvement within the University community.”

If any student is interested in getting involved in Blue and Gold Society, Joe advises that he or she should take an active interest in campus organizations.

“Get involved. Blue and Gold Society is all about showing your pride in Pitt, and there are many ways to do that.”

*Arpan Prabhu, Mallory Thomas, Greg Markiw
External Committee Members, Blue and Gold Society*