

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI

MAGAZINE

2022

From Tragedy to Triumph

How Lurri Schoenrock
Landed with
Her Feet Back
on the Ground





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All alumni who earned their bachelor's or master's degrees with CSU are eligible to receive the Knight Tuition Discount. The 10% tuition discount is also available to spouses and dependents of alumni who are seeking to earn their degree with CSU.

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“Tell the story of the mountain you climbed. Your words could become a page in someone else’s survival guide.”

— Morgan Harper Nichols

Dear Readers,

Last fall, I had the extraordinary opportunity to sit down with a handful of our distinguished alumni and hear first-hand a recount of their remarkable journey. Every story told has left me with a feeling of hope and appreciation. This year has been no different. I continue to be amazed at our alumni and the bravery it takes to share their moments of loss, challenges and triumph.

A central theme for this year is perseverance. In such a changing world, it is up to us to stay determined to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. Take this year’s cover story, Lurri Schoenrock, for example. Despite experiencing an overwhelmingly tragic event, she stayed the course. Her story is one that is sure to leave you feeling hopeful. Her journey is proof that we can always land on our feet. Read Lurri’s touching story on Page 12.

Here at CSU, it is a personal joy to learn more about you through your stories. I remember the first time JC Walter shared his college experience with me. His college journey lasted an entire decade and included four deployments. You can check out how our military spotlight studied while he served on Page 16.

How did you persevere while earning your degree? What is the theme of your story? I encourage you to reach out and connect with me by emailing CSU-Alumni@ColumbiaSouthern.edu so we can find the best platform to highlight your story.

As always, thank you for your willingness to encourage others, set an example and persevere forward. Without you, there is no story to tell. With you, I continue to have the greatest privilege of spotlighting your success.

With gratitude,

Haley Whigham
Editor-in-Chief



Ralph J. Blessing

Alumni Association President

M.S. Occupational Safety and Health, Class of 2007

Hello my fellow Knights,

Fall is already here and we are rapidly approaching graduation once again. Congratulations to the class of 2022!

This year has been very special to me. It has now been 15 years since I obtained my master's degree and I have never looked back. The doors that it opened were many, and I still receive comments from peers and employers about how CSU has set new standards in online education and provided the job market with great talent. This is only possible because of the efforts each of us put into our work, and then the continuous efforts of becoming an integral part of society in our own fields of study.

When looking at the CSU Alumni page, I am always very proud to read about the "Notable Alumni" who have gone on to do great things. You are all notable alumni in my eyes. We are a brother and sisterhood, each leaving an indelible mark for family, friends and co-workers and it shows within our communities.

Once again, thank you for what you do for CSU. You represent the virtues of the Knight in many ways, and I am very proud to be your president.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you about whatever you feel is important for our alma mater.

Remember, at times we may find the road difficult, however, we as Knights shall always prevail.

With the most humbled heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph Blessing".

Ralph Blessing

Connect With Your Fellow Knights

Once a Knight, Always a Knight.

As a graduate, you are automatically inducted into the **CSU Alumni Association**. Visit the alumni webpage to grab digital wallpapers and backgrounds, find social media groups and other organizations, update your information, explore career services or find out how to become a CSU ambassador.

ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni



COVER STORY



Lurri Schoenrock 13

From Tragedy to Triumph

How Lurri Schoenrock Landed with Her Feet Back on the Ground

SPOTLIGHTS

Alumni 6

“Todos tenemos una historia que contar.”

We all have a story to tell. Lendel Del Cid shares his education journey.



Military 16

College vs. Career Why Not Both?

Earning your degree during deployment.



International 20

Outstanding Safety Professional

Sarah McCurdy Works to Keep Canadians Safe



CSU NEWS

Columbia Southern University Adds New Fire Master’s Degree with Concentrations..... 22

ALUMNI NEWS

Boast Post.....8
DET Honor Society Welcomes New Inductees.....9

CAREER SERVICES

Career Change Resources 10
Omega Nu Lambda..... 11

EVENTS

Events In Review 18
Upcoming Events 19

**"Todos
tenemos una
historia que
contar."**

We all have a story to tell.

**How Education
Became a Saving Grace
for CSU Graduate**

Lendel Del Cid

Inside a third grade classroom in Los Angeles, California, sat 7-year-old Lendel Del Cid. With no education, and no grasp of the English language, he still found himself grateful for the opportunities his new life had to offer. Even though Lendel was held back in the third grade that year, he didn't let it defy who he was. His success story had to start somewhere, and as far as he was concerned, why couldn't it be here?

Lendel's father, Lino, came to the U.S. in the 1990's. A successful business-owner, Lino began receiving threats from Salvadorian gang members. In an effort to keep his family safe, he sought asylum in the U.S. where he moved his wife and daughter.

"I was born in Guatemala," Lendel said. "I was raised by my grandparents there until my father brought me to the U.S., undocumented, to join the rest of my family and for me to have a better future."



(Left to right) Lendel Del Cid with his sister Herceny, father Lino and mother Elida, at Kenneth Hahn Park in Los Angeles. Lendel and his youngest sister Maylin in Guatemala.

As he settled into his new life, Lendel learned to read and write, sparking a passion for learning. In 2005, he finished high school and began his college journey at a junior college in Orange County, California. While in school, he worked in construction, an environment that reminded him of his father who had worked in the construction field since migrating to the states.

"I found it difficult to work a full-time construction job as a laborer during the day and going to college in the evenings. I decided to drop out of college and joined a labor apprenticeship in 2006 and completed it in 2008," he said. "I enjoyed working in the field, but I wanted to be more than just a craft worker."

While working for a structural concrete company in San Diego, Lendel was offered a safety position for a job at Camp Pendleton, one of the largest Marine Corps bases in America, to remodel a training center. After completing some necessary OSHA trainings and a Quality Control certification through the Army Corps, he accepted the job, launching his safety career.

"Working in Camp Pendleton, and all other military bases that I've worked at, made my journey feel that more special to me," he said. "As a kid, I would see war movies and hear all these great stories of soldiers and service men and women doing amazing things. Although I was born in Guatemala, my heart was in America. My goal growing up was to serve for my adopted country because I figured that is the least I can do for a country that provided so much for me and my family."

Once his first project at Camp Pendleton was complete, Lendel was offered a position to be a full-time safety manager for a company who was building a reverse osmosis water treatment facility inside Camp Pendleton. Now with a steady job, he made the difficult decision to go back and finish what he started all those years ago. In 2018, he decided to finish his bachelor's degree in safety.

"I had just divorced and was relocated three times. I was hesitant to continue my education since I had so many things happening in my life at the time," he said. "Looking back, it was one of the best decisions I have made to help progress my career. I took a higher position offer as a corporate safety director in 2019, and in 2020 I graduated from CSU with a 3.63 GPA."

For Lendel, the decision to take on a college degree and, education in general, was for more than just a job—it was for personal growth. He was finally able to overcome the challenges and reach the success that his third grade self always dreamed of.

"I never thought that I would be here writing about my life story to share with others on how much this degree program has influenced my career," he said. "I hope that my story can motivate others to take those risks because there is something out there for all of us and we should not let anything hold us back from our dreams."

Boast Post

JUNE 2022

Jessica Duron-Martinez

Jessica Duron-Martinez of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, is Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue's first female fire marshal. "It's exciting that this opportunity came and I'm making history in Rio Rancho. I believe knowledge is power and the more we learn the more we are able to teach," she said. "As Maya Angelou would say, 'When you learn, teach, when you get, give.'" She is a 2018 CSU graduate.

MAY 2022

Robert Moore

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has appointed Robert Moore of Bryan, Texas, to the Firefighters' Star of Texas Award Advisory Committee. The committee advises the governor on the issuance, design and presentation of the Firefighters' Star of Texas Award. This award is given to firefighters who are seriously injured in the line of duty and the surviving next of kin of each firefighter who is killed or sustains a fatal injury in the line of duty. Moore is the deputy agency director and chief operating officer of the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service. He received his bachelor's degree in fire administration from CSU.

APRIL 2022

Susan Nelson

Susan Nelson has been promoted to chief operations officer at Carolina Caring, an organization located in Newton, North Carolina, focused on providing care for those facing a serious illness. Nelson has over 30 years of health care experience and has served in many roles including administrator, director of nursing with long term care facilities and RN on intensive care units across the United States and abroad. She earned her master's degree in health care administration from CSU.

AUGUST 2022

Jana Morales

Jana Morales was recognized as the 2022 State of Nevada Employee Veteran of the Month. Morales works as a safety specialist consultant with the division of industrial relations in the state of Nevada. She has served in the Nevada Air National Guard for the past 14 years. She currently holds the rank of Master Sergeant as a C-130 Instructor Loadmaster and additional duty First Sergeant with the 192nd Airlift Squadron, 142nd Operations Group and 152nd Airlift Wing in Reno. She is a 2020 CSU graduate.

JULY 2022

Charles Chandler

Charles Chandler was recently sworn in as the president of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. Chandler is chief of the Westerville Division of Police in Westerville, Ohio. Chandler is a 28-year law enforcement veteran. He holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in criminal justice administration from CSU.



DECEMBER 2021

Astrid Gonzalez Parilla

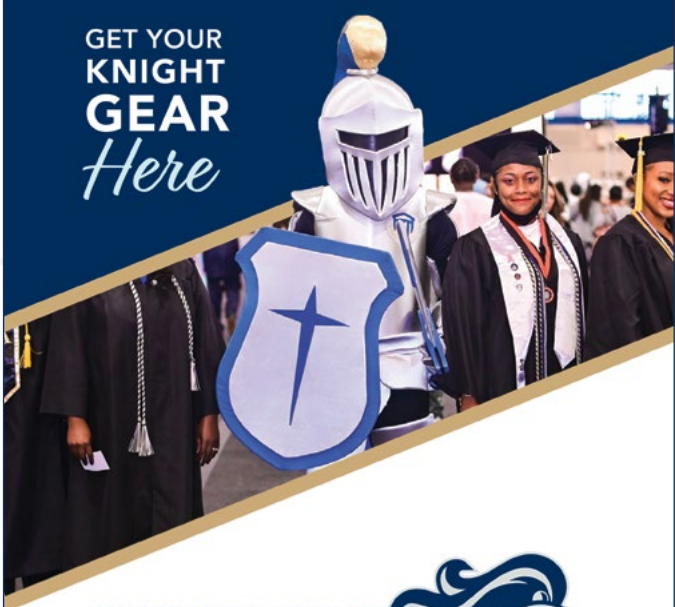
Astrid Gonzalez Parrilla OTD, MBA, FACHE, has joined Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network as senior vice president, clinical operations. Gonzalez Parrilla, a native of Puerto Rico, earned her MBA with CSU in 2011.

OCTOBER 2021

Alexandrae Wint

Alexandrae Wint climbed the career ladder in his job with the New York State Assembly Speakers Office. Starting out as an intern, Wint now holds the title of community relations director for NYSA. He is a 2021 CSU graduate.

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DET Honor Society Welcomes New Inductees



Jared Michael Green • Magda Menner

The Delta Epsilon Tau international honor society was established to recognize the achievements of individuals who work diligently to acquire new knowledge and skills from an accredited distance learning institution. Columbia Southern University extends its congratulations to its latest inductees for their outstanding work and efforts.

CSU alumni who have earned a bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree with a minimum of 3.8 GPA are eligible to be invited to join the DET honor society. CSU administrators submit names of potential inductees routinely to the DET president based on the current criteria for DET recognition.

To learn more, visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni/Organizations/DET

Looking for a Career Change?

Here Are Some Resources for You



Whether you are still in school or have your degree, Career Services has new resources that can be used in your continuing education and career goals!

Parker-Dewey Micro-Internships

Newest to Career Services is our micro-internship program through Parker-Dewey. This program is for alumni and active students who are looking to increase their experience in a desired field, or for those looking to change fields completely. Micro-internships through Parker-Dewey are paid online or in person and can range anywhere from five to 40 hours of work. There are various due dates depending on the internship. These micro-internships can be from Fortune 100 companies to emerging start-ups, and go across departments including sales, marketing, technology, human resources and finance. The internship list is continuously being updated by Parker-Dewey. Micro-internships are facilitated via the Parker Dewey platform, which connects career launchers with companies in need of support. To learn more, visit info.parkerdewey.com/columbiasouthern

Focus2Career

The Focus2Career tool is a platform used for degree and career exploration at no cost to CSU students and alumni. FOCUS 2 is an online, interactive, self-guided career major and education planning system. This platform allows you to search occupations by degrees offered at CSU. Also, there are several assessments that are available to see how interests align with a chosen career path. This tool clarifies questions such as: What type of job can I get with this degree?

Make an Appointment

To learn more about these resources, set up your free Focus2Career account, or to schedule a resume review session, call 877-297-6192 or email CareerServices@ColumbiaSouthern.edu.



Omega Nu Lambda

2022 Scholarship Recipients



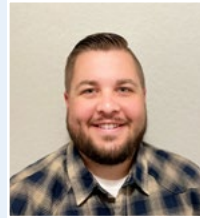
Joseph Dennis



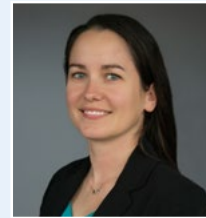
Jacob Grist



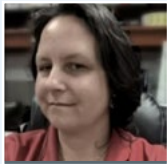
Phillip Kitzko



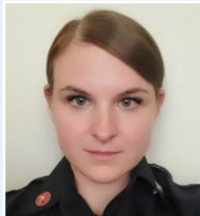
Dexter Mullin



Tiffany Kronebusch



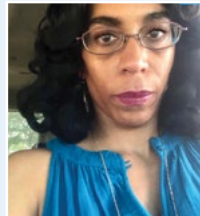
Deborah Maher



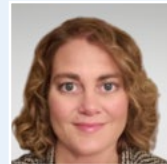
Stephanie Manis



Nichela Pettus



Dionna Thomas



Crystal Warner

Omega Nu Lambda is a national collegiate honor society fostering community, providing encouragement and acknowledging academic success of online students.

Columbia Southern University's Department of Career Services is proud to award the Omega Nu Lambda Scholarship to its latest recipients. Omega Nu Lambda, a national collegiate honor society, was founded to foster community, provide encouragement and acknowledge the academic success of online students.

In order to obtain the scholarship, students must maintain a 3.2 GPA, be in good academic standing and actively participate with CSU Career Services.

The Omega Nu Lambda assists in the cost of one future CSU course and recognizes the accomplishments of Omega Nu Lambda student members.

"The skills of research and presentation that I have developed due to the specific courses I have completed with Columbia Southern University have both highlighted my own and inspired further validity within the ranks of the labor organization of which I am the Vice President," said Manis who is pursuing her degree in fire administration. "Because of this, labor and administrative goals are more closely aligned than ever before; my pursuit of education has not only benefited me, but has even directly impacted the lives of those with whom I am affiliated."

To learn more about the Omega Nu Lambda Scholarship, visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Scholarships.



Lurri Schoenrock

From Tragedy to Triumph

How Lurri Schoenrock

Landed with Her Feet Back on the Ground

On Friday, Aug. 23, 2013, Colton Schoenrock fell asleep driving home. Fatigue from a 15-hour shift caused him to veer off the road where he struck a tree head on after rolling in his SUV. Lurri Schoenrock lost her son that day.

Life as we know it gives no warning before change. It does, however, leave us with a choice. Lurri is on a mission to share her son's story, in hopes that by sharing it, she can shine a light on the importance of workplace safety and maybe save someone else's life. Everything Lurri has accomplished is because she chose to get back up when her world came crashing down.

"Colton worked as a rodbuster in Kansas," she said. "He was used to working day shifts and never worked a night shift on that job; however, he and all the workers had to report to a night shift on a Thursday night, with little to no sleep. The company had all the rodbusters that had worked during the day work from Thursday night until Friday afternoon. This was a straight 15-hour shift."

Colton had a four-hour drive home following his shift. Finding a place to sleep would have been easy, but home was where his 11-day-old son, Kain, was waiting on him.

Lurri herself was no stranger to tragedy. In 2008, she was injured on the job while working for the same company that her son worked for when he was killed.

"I shattered my elbow in my dominant arm, having to have a prosthetic joint for three months," she said. "My system rejected it leading to three years of surgeries followed by three years of rehab. I was told I would never work again due to my injury, and I would only have about 10 percent use of my arm. After defying the odds of my injury, Colton was killed only one year after I completed rehab and it was like another slap in the face. Mentally, I was so broken."



“Through my CSU journey, I have gained courage while being able to help others in the process.”

Lurri likes to use the phrase “I landed with my feet back on the ground”. Because when she got back up, she knew what she wanted to be when she grew up.

“In my 20s I went to college studying at a local community college for a degree in psychology. I was married with three young children, and like many, life just happened, and I needed to work and raise a family,” she said. “After Colton’s passing, I knew I wanted to make a difference and help others return home to their families every day. To do this, I knew a good start was getting my degree.”

In 2017, Lurri started taking classes at CSU and one year later, she earned a scholarship through The National Safety Council, giving her the opportunity to continue keep taking classes after earning her associate degree.

“When I started back to school, I was so scared and beat down from my injury and losing my son. CSU helped me in earning my associate and bachelor’s degree in occupational safety and health and gave me the confidence to go on and achieve more. Going back to school has helped me heal.”

Now working as a safety manager for Smithfield Foods, Lurri devotes her time to fighting for ways safety can play a bigger role in the workplace.



Colton with his siblings, Kruz and Brurria.



Lurri's grandson Kain at his father's gravesite.

"I would like to see change in the hours that an employer can legally make an employee work. I would also like to see the laws changed to allow employees more than eight hours off in-between shifts, and a law that would protect employees from working a different shift than they are used to."

Lurri plans to complete her third CSU degree, a master's in occupational safety and health, in 2023. As she continues her education, she also continues to share her story and make a difference through education.

"I now speak in front of crowds and tell my son's story. I work with the Survivor Advocate Program that the National Safety Council has to offer families of fallen workers, and with the United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities. Through my CSU journey, I have gained courage while being able to help others in the process."

When it comes to having the courage to get back up when life knocks you down, one little guy has the best role model right in front of them, and he happens to call her grandma.

"We talk about Kain's dad all the time," she said. "He knows what I do, and he knows when I get to go talk to a group of people, I get to talk about his dad. I always tell him I know

"After Colton's passing, I knew I wanted to make a difference and help others return home to their families every day."

it's hard not having his dad around, and that's why me and grandpa do what we do; everything we do is for your dad and for you."

Lurri Schoenrock is the definition of perseverance and is a role model to many. When asked if she ever gets tired of sharing her story, a small headshake accompanied by a soft smile slowly appeared on Lurri's face.

"That is the story and that's why I have done what I've done," she said. "All of this won't replace him, and it won't bring him back, but if I can make a change in one person's life, just one person, it's all worth it and I've done what I set out to do."

"Going back to school has helped me heal."

A man with a bald head, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, khaki pants, and brown leather shoes, is sitting on a black metal park bench. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. His hands are clasped in his lap. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage. A bright green diagonal shape is on the left side of the image.

Staff Sergeant

JC Walter

**College
vs. Career**

Why Not Both?

The decision of choosing a career over college always weighed on the mind of JC Walter. While taking a few college courses in 2007, he joined the military, leaving home and the thought of school behind. It wasn't until he was deployed overseas that he realized serving his country and getting a degree were equally his passion—so why not do both?

"My journey isn't like many others," he said. "Joining the military started a snowball effect for me. After returning home from basic training, my unit got activated for deployment and in 2009 I left for Afghanistan."

Still, while he was away, JC couldn't shake the feeling of wanting to get his degree. To his surprise, the battalion executive officer of his unit was taking classes at Columbia Southern University.

"I was deployed four times while trying to achieve a degree and six times overall in my life."

"While deployed I was able to do my job and concentrate on the mission and then give my attention to school when I found the time."

JC says taking online classes became somewhat of a safe place most days from his stressful job.

"When I had the chance to focus on my schoolwork, it was like a mental break from the mission where I could exercise my mind and organize my thoughts. When taking classes, the target is centralized as far as what was needed, whereas on the mission, you can assume something is going to happen, but you can't expect it."

After returning home from his first deployment in 2010, JC transferred to The University of Alabama where he planned to continue his degree and cheer on his favorite team in the process. One thing he didn't plan for, however, was another deployment.

"I was deployed again in 2014 and the degree program was not available online, only residential. I had to decide if I wanted to continue my education or put it on hold. So, I transferred my credits back to CSU, buckled down and did what I needed to do."

JC chose to pursue his bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration, a career that would educate him on continuing to do what he loved—helping others.

"I have a big heart for helping people," he said. "I always thought about a career in law enforcement, but with the stress of knowing I could be deployed again at any given time with my military career, I knew didn't want to add even more stress on my family."

With that in mind, another deployment to Romania rounded out his 3rd placement and the final classes he would need to earn his diploma. In 2016, while mobilized to be deployed a fourth time to Afghanistan, JC finished his degree.

"I wanted to set an example and knew it would be hard being in the National Guard, working a full-time job and going to school. I decided I needed to do this for myself and for my future."

JC now works as an intelligence analyst supporting the FBI where his job is to work with other analysts within the FBI to mitigate risk of insider threats within the organization.

"If I would not have obtained my degree, I would not be in the position I am. Achieving my bachelor's degree through CSU has allowed me reach heights I never thought were possible," he said. "It was a steppingstone to advancing my career, not only in the Alabama Army National Guard, but as well in the civilian life."

JC Walter had every excuse in the book to set his degree aside and focus on his career. Instead, he decided to stick with the long-game, and, after 10 years of pursuing education, he is a proud, first-generation college student.

"I was deployed four times while trying to achieve a degree and six times overall in my life," he said. "Three times to combat zones and one to a non-combat zone all while trying to achieve a degree was challenging among itself. Because of CSU and their understanding, it allowed me to serve and study at the same time. I didn't have to choose one or the other. If anyone is on the fence of deciding between career over degree, why not choose both? I did and it has impacted my life greatly for the good."



Events *In Review*

February 2022

Pasadena, TX | Students and alumni attended the Health and Safety Council Tailgate Extravaganza in February. The CSU Alumni Relations team had 17 CSU students and alumni stop by the booth to help kick off the Safety Excellence Award season.

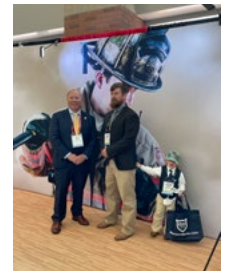


April 2022



Indianapolis, IN | The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) recently recognized CSU graduate Fred Kasper as its Outstanding Graduate during the commission's annual DEAC conference in Indianapolis. Kasper, along with other graduates were honored based on contributions to their career fields, public interests served and how they have used their degrees to advance their personal and professional lives. CSU President Ken Styron presented the award to Kasper at the conference.

Indianapolis, IN | In April, CSU's alumni relations team attended the annual Fire Department Instructors Conference International held in Indianapolis, Indiana. The FDIC conference had a total of 30,000 attendees with many CSU students and alumni in attendance. 128 Alumni and 59 students stopped by the booth to say hello.



June 2022

New Orleans, LA | CSU attended the Society for Human Resource Management annual conference. Several students and alumni stopped by the CSU booth. One alumnus, Antonio Johnson, even had his own booth representing the Army's Partnership for Your Success program.

Chicago, IL | Over 150 CSU students and alumni attended the American Society of Safety Professional conference.

July 2022

Pensacola, FL | The CSU Alumni Association hosted its 2nd annual Family Night at the ballpark cheering on the Pensacola Blue Wahoos. At Family Night, there were 15 alumni, along with their families, who attended to enjoy fireworks, participate in raffles to win CSU swag and celebrate a Blue Wahoo's victory!

August 2022

Pensacola, FL | In August, Back to School Night at the Pensacola Wahoo's game was a success! Columbia Southern University sponsored Friday Night Giveaway where Blue Wahoo's staff gave away CSU/ Blue Wahoo's co-branded backpacks to the first 1,000 children attending the game. CSU also invited local alumni and students by providing complimentary tickets. During the game, CSU had a table set up on the concourse where representatives handed out swag and spoke about our programs.



Upcoming Events



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Cody Hendrix. *Blue Angels Flight Over NAS Pensacola.**

*The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

The annual NAS Pensacola Blue Angels Airshow

November 2022

Pensacola, FL | Columbia Southern University is proud to continue our sponsorship of the annual NAS Pensacola Blue Angels Airshow. We are excited to take part in one of the largest events on the gulf coast and help celebrate 100 years of carrier aviation. CSU will be set up on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 11–12 for opportunities to connect with students, alumni and anyone that is interested in CSU. Come out and enjoy a world class air show!

A portrait of Sarah McCurdy, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black blazer over a white top and a brown skirt with a tie waist. She is standing outdoors against a stone wall with a metal railing in the background. A green diagonal shape is on the left side of the image.

**Outstanding
Safety
Professional**

**Sarah
McCurdy**

**Works to Keep
Canadians Safe**

Canadian Sarah McCurdy is working hard to make a difference in her nation's occupational safety and health industry. And she has the talent to do it.

She has been recognized twice as one of the Top Women in Safety by Canadian Occupational Safety. McCurdy has earned designations as a Registered Occupational Hygiene Technologist, Canadian Registered Safety Professional and Radiation Safety Officer.

Granted, as a senior occupational hygienist at SunCor Energy Inc., McCurdy works to help keep employees safe.

"I enjoy operational based work where I can support them with being able to recognize their occupational hygiene hazards and help them develop sustainable programs so they can live a long, healthy life."

However, she has expanded that helping attitude by serving in various officer positions in the Canadian Registration Board of Occupational Hygienists (CRBOH) from 2018 through 2022. The group strives to promote occupational hygiene and the designations of Registered Occupational Hygienist (ROH®) and Registered Occupational Hygiene Technologist (ROHT®). McCurdy and the board have worked to establish a system to register and certify persons who are competent in connection with occupational hygiene programs. These goals of the group, which has about 319 members, are also meant to enhance recognition of the profession by the public, governments and the working population.

One of the key reasons McCurdy works with the group is to help improve the title and scope protection of occupational hygienists and safety professionals.

"Our government (provincial and federal) does not recognize occupational hygienists or safety professionals as a regulated profession; therefore, anyone can call themselves a hygienist or a safety professional. This leads to public safety being at risk because there are no regulations around where companies are getting their guidance from," she explained.

The issue of title and regulated profession is something she thinks really differentiates Canadian OSH from the U.S.

"From my limited experience working with U.S. assets, there seems to be a lot more liability concerns with the guidance that a professional provides," she said.

McCurdy added that as organizations such as the Alberta Society of Health and Safety Professionals and The Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals move towards title and scope protection, so future qualified professionals will benefit and, in turn, so will workers and companies.

In addition to helping her profession, McCurdy added that "working with the CRBOH has given me the opportunity to expand my network amongst hygienists throughout Canada. I have also learned a lot about non-profit organizations and the value of sitting on a board of directors and what I can bring to the table. It's been an invaluable volunteer opportunity!"

While the group is making progress, "one of our major issues that the CRBOH is currently facing is growing our membership. Like a lot of professions, we are seeing an older population in our membership which are close to retirement. Since occupational hygiene is not a well-known profession, it is hard to promote our designation," she explained.

McCurdy is also hoping more women continue to join the group and the profession.

"There have been some great organizations starting to form such as the Women in Occupational Health and Safety Society (WOHSS) who has a ton of resources available, including a mentoring program. I see a lot of value in organizations like WOHSS, who can provide insight and hope to our upcoming professionals," she said.

McCurdy is not all work and no play. In fact, she loves the outdoors. "I am an outdoorsy, adventure type of person. So, I like spending a lot of my free time enjoying the outdoors, hunting/fishing, camping and hiking. I also like to travel, I just got back from a 10-day trip to Iceland where I got to experience the newest volcano eruption which was an amazing experience!"

In January 2022, Sarah earned a bachelor's degree in occupational safety and health at Columbia Southern University. She was also awarded Outstanding Safety Professional of the Year at CSU for her commitment to safety, professionalism and many accomplishments.



Daniel Jager | B.S. Fire Administration

Columbia Southern University Adds New Fire Master's Degree with Concentrations

The Master of Science in fire executive leadership degree program offers an opportunity for those in the fire service to gain academic training in leadership at the graduate level. The degree was designed to help students acquire a competitive edge in the fire service and related fields while emphasizing the development of an innovative leader. Students in the degree program choose one of four concentrations: emergency services management, human resource management, occupational safety and health or public administration.

"This is an enormous opportunity for leaders to expand and grow to their full potential as trailblazers in the

fire service industry," said Keith Padgett, fire and EMS academic director for CSU. He added that the program is suited for "every progressive fire service member that has the desire to be the very best in order to serve their community."

The 36-hour degree program's emergency services management concentration focuses on addressing and minimizing risks to responders, the public and the environment through ethical, management-level decision making. The human resource management concentration provides students with the knowledge to lead, grow and assess the personnel needs of fire service organizations. The occupational safety and health concentration examines various strategies such as controlling hazards, conducting risk assessments and applying preventative measures to ensure safety within fire service organizations. The concentration in public administration equips students with the knowledge to be an effective leader in areas of planning, budgeting and developing public policies for their community.

To learn more about the degree program and its four concentrations, visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu or call 877-347-6050.



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