

# WESLEYAN PROFILES

## Profile: Assistant Store Manager Jared Johnson, Class of '18

By Dawn Wallace  
& Decree Staff

It was a busy day in the Wesleyan College Store. Several prospective football players and their parents were browsing the blue and gold Wesleyan apparel.

Jared Johnson, the assistant manager, can be seen talking and sharing a few laughs with one family. He's always willing to stop and talk to visitors or students. Six-foot tall with light brown hair, he's dressed in khakis and a navy-blue polo shirt with the NC Wesleyan logo.

Johnson was raised in Rocky Mount off Highway 97 near the Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport. Along with a brother and sister and his parents, he grew up with cousins—the children of his mother's twin sister—who lived nearby. Johnson said he and his siblings often enjoyed spending time with the cousins on the weekends swinging on their swing, or just tossing around a baseball. The two families would often take vacations together, he said.

"Family is important to me," he said. "I'm lucky that growing up almost all of my extended family lived in Rocky Mount. I really liked it."

The Southern Nash High graduate enrolled at Wesleyan the following fall. Attracted by the college's size, location and the offer of a scholarship, Johnson double-majored in business administration and accounting and held a work-study job at the college store. Besides stocking shelves and clerking, Johnson was responsible for mail delivery to different departments. He also dealt with students who came to the store for their packages. "That's one aspect that I really liked about working in the store," he said. "I got to meet everyone on campus."

Johnson finished at Wesleyan in April of 2018 and became assistant manager in the store last October. He said that his experiences as a student-worker led him to seek the full-time position. "It's hard work," he said, "but it's fun and worth it."

Though he's only a year removed from his student-worker days, Johnson said the adjustment to full-time employee and supervisor was pretty smooth. He noted that college Store Manager Marcus Rich is the one responsible for giving students their assignments.

"By the time I graduated," he explained, "I'd accumulated multiple responsibilities in the store and I was confident that I could do a good job in a higher role. I feel like the students view me in a different way, but it felt normal because of how much I was already doing in the store as a student. I may suggest a task for them here or there, but Marcus is the one who assigns their duties."

Johnson added that the biggest change has been in the way he carries himself. "I had to change my mindset



Jared Johnson Decree photo

from that of a student to the mindset of a professional," he said. "Now that I'm on staff, everything I do reflects the college. I'm trying my best to represent Wesleyan in a positive way."

With Johnson managing me and nine other students, I was curious to know his advice for students who may want to take on a work-study position in the future. "My advice is to be attentive and proactive. Be ready to step up and be the one to take responsibility," he said.

Johnson explained that all workers will make mistakes or, at times, do an inadequate job. "The key is to learn from your experiences," he said.

When he was a student, Johnson had

## Jerry Shoemaker Finishes MS in CJ

On May 4, Jerry Shoemaker was among the first group to graduate from Wesleyan's new master's program in criminal justice.

A resident of the Rocky Mount area since 1998, the 50-year-old is employed as a corporal in the Enfield Police Department. Besides his full-time job in law enforcement, Shoemaker is a minister and for the past 16 years, he's been the owner-operator of Deb's Funnel cakes, a mobile "fun food extravaganza." He's taught continuing education courses at Nash Community College for several years. He served as a military police officer in the U.S. Army during Operation Desert Storm, the first gulf war.

The Decree spoke with Shoemaker in the weeks before his graduation.

**Q.** Tell us about your family.

**A.** I have a wonderful wife of 17-plus years, Debbie Shoemaker, aka "Chocolate Bunny"; three wonderful grown children, Holly Marie Shoemaker, 28, Jerry Lee Shoemaker III, 26; and Tyhira Walston, 27, as well as an extraordinary dog named Kali. All of whom have made me the proud man that I am.

**Q.** You're a minister, as well as a businessman and police officer?

**A.** I share the word of God wherever and whenever the need arises. Debbie and I have been spearheading "SHARE Outreach Ministry" through prayer from its inception in July of 2003. Reaching into the lives of others with the love of Christ through a "Fishin' Mission" of family fun, SHARE is a ministry that has touched the lives of thousands.

**Q.** Talk about your start in law enforcement and education in that field.

**A.** I returned to my first love, law enforcement, after obtaining an associate's degree in criminal justice at Nash Community. Fifteen years after Mr. Michael Drew began his relentless recruitment, I enrolled in the ASPIRE program to work on my bachelor's. I completed 62 credit-hours in 11 months, graduating with a 4.0 GPA in May 2017.

By June of that year, I was enrolled in the 4th Basic Law Enforcement Training Academy (BLET) at Edgecombe Community College as a full-time cadet, sponsored by the Northampton County Sheriff's Office. Despite being 48 years young, I graduated at the top of the class earning the highest academic grade of all four academies, according to the Academy Director Burnie Taylor. Upon completion of BLET, I once again became a sworn law enforcement officer, this time in the state of North Carolina.

**Q.** What attracted you to the NCWC master's program?

**A.** I would say it was my love for education and passion for the criminal justice field, coupled with Michael Drew's relentless emphasis on the importance of pursuing my education. Every time I saw Drew in public, he would speak to me about coming to Wesleyan; the short infomercials were persistent. He invited me to come to Wesleyan and motivated and at times calmed me. That helped me excel in my courses.

**Q.** Discuss the specific challenges you faced in balancing school, work, and family life.

**A.** Well, I stopped my life for academic

a strong working relationship with Rich. Asked if their relationship had changed now that he's Rich's assistant, he said, "I don't so. If anything, it may have gotten better."

Johnson sees Rich as a role model. "Marcus is one of the hardest working people that I've been around," he said. "In the past I've worked in places where employees try to get by doing the minimum. I feel like Marcus is the complete opposite. He often takes work home with him, and most of the time, he eats lunch in 10 minutes to continue working rather than taking a full hour to himself."

Johnson added that Rich has created a positive atmosphere for his workers. "I've enjoyed working for Marcus because he's able to make work fun," he said. "He's always even keel. In the nearly six years I've worked for him, I don't think I've ever seen him angry or upset."

While working an 8-to-5 job, Johnson is enrolled at East Carolina University in an online master's degree program. He's studying business administration and intends to graduate in two years. "I'm hoping to use my degree to teach lower-level business classes at the undergraduate level," he said.

In his free time, Johnson likes to

play and watch sports. A talented disc golfer, he can often be seen with friends, tossing a disc on Wesleyan's on-campus course. His best overall round is six under-par. His best overall round is eight under at the Sunset Park course.

"I think that the course here is easier to play in the winter because the grass is low and the trees are leafless, so there aren't as many obstacles on your way to the hole," he said.

Basketball is another favorite activity. Once while playing a pickup game with friends, he scored 30 points. "That doesn't happen very often and it was a proud moment in his life," he said.

Dwayne Wade, a player for the Miami Heat, is Johnson's favorite basketball player. He is a fan of football and often plays fantasy football. He follows the Carolina Panthers, but considers Tom Brady the closest he has to a favorite NFL player. "It's impressive what he's done over his career and it's insane that he's still playing at a high level in his forties," Johnson said, noting that the New England quarterback looks a little like his boss. "Both are tall and they have the same hair style," he quipped.

Johnson uses sports to strike up conversations with his student employees as well as Rich. "I've often heard him say things like, 'Did you see the game last night?'" and "How are you doing on your fantasy team?"

Last month Johnson wed Kelsey Whitley, a fellow Wesleyan grad. The two married one week before she received her diploma May 4 at the Rocky Mount Event Center. An education major, Whitley hopes to become an elementary school teacher.

Like Johnson, Whitley was a student worker in the college store, but their families have known each other since their childhood. Johnson noted that Whitley's mother taught his younger sister in elementary school. Johnson and Whitley have a sweet relationship. They attend Christ Covenant church and spend time worshipping the Lord together.

"It really wasn't until she came to Wesleyan that we started to hang out together," Johnson related. "Other than a physical attraction, she had many traits that I was seeking in a wife. She loves Jesus, she's kind, she's funny, and she's very easy going."

Right after graduation, the couple took a weeklong honeymoon cruise in the Caribbean, traveling to St. Maarten, San Juan, and Haiti.

Johnson said his wife will teach summer school during June and July in the Nash-Rocky Mount district. He said she is interviewing for full-time positions in the area. Her preference is to teach second grade.

Johnson spoke of his wife with evident pride.

"I'm sure she'll be an awesome teacher because she's great with kids and possesses the heart to see them succeed," he said.

my career I hope to do infectious disease research full-time, perhaps going into pharmaceutical development.

## HONORS from pg 1

Ivan Cockman

**Q.** Describe your project.

**A.** I focused on modelling Markov chains in an open-source programming language called Python. Markov chains are used to model time-dependent random phenomena. This type of model is useful in sciences, finance, and other fields. My goal was to understand Markov chains and create a generic program that shows how they work and perform some analysis.

**Q.** What was most challenging about the project?

**A.** I would say it was working with Python, as I had no experience with any programming languages.

**Q.** What did you learn about yourself?

**A.** I learned that I have the capability to work on a large project if I put the time and effort into it.

**Q.** What role did your director play?

**A.** Dr. (Brent) Dozier was a great director. He was a source of ideas for the coding aspect of the project and he helped me understand the mathematical concepts behind Markov chains.

**Q.** What are your plans for next year and the future?

**A.** I plan on attending the North Carolina State's chemistry graduate program in the fall. I hope to get my Ph.D. and either work in the chemical industry or education.

Hannah Ivester

**Q.** Describe your project.

**A.** It was a combination of a creative narrative and scientific analysis of the novel "The Strain" by Guillermo del Toro. The narrative is used to help teach the reader about viruses and viral infection, while the scientific analysis attempts to give validity to the science used in the novel. The discussion also critiques the differences between the science in the book and the science in real life.

**Q.** What was most challenging about the project?

**A.** The most difficult part of my thesis was trying to marry the real and the fictional. Trying to see the scientific truth in a fictional novel about vampires is no easy task.

**Q.** What did you learn about yourself?

**A.** I learned that I get some of my best work done in the early hours of the morning. This project was difficult in that it was interdisciplinary, so I had a committee made up of two scientists and an English professor. Trying to merge science and literature is something I hope I never have to do again.

**Q.** What role did your director play?

**A.** Dr. (Heather) Louch mainly helped me find topics to discuss for the scientific analysis. She kept me on track and helped develop the thesis into the two separate sections that it became.

**Q.** What are your plans for next year and your future career?

**A.** Next year I'll be at Virginia Tech working towards a Ph.D. in Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health, likely with a focus in infectious diseases. In

Joseph Lloyd

**Q.** Describe your project.

**A.** I focused on social media and memory deception topics. Though memory research had been conducted on older forms of media, there has been little research done on social media. My goal was to see how much influence social media had on the autobiographical memories of its users. To do this, I tested participants' memories by giving them a fabricated social media news feed, paired with a questionnaire. The results indicated that exposure to social media information that contradicted autobiographical memory of news events led to changes in the memories.

**Q.** What was most challenging about the project?

**A.** I would say it was conducting the surveys. Operating statistical software was also challenging at times.

**Q.** What did you learn about yourself?

**A.** I learned that I can easily adapt to the challenges that confront me.

**Q.** What role did your director play?

**A.** My director (Dr. Sanborn) was very helpful throughout the course of my study. He was able to give me proper guidance and confidence at times I needed it most. I'm very grateful for the assistance he provided.

**Q.** What are your plans for next year and your future career?

**A.** I plan to attend a mathematics master's program at East Carolina University in the fall. I'm not sure about my future career, yet but I'll probably go on to get a Ph.D.

Justin Tankelewicz

**Q.** Describe your project.

**A.** I decided to write and execute a business plan. My business is called REACHur. It pays local social-media users to post on their personal social media accounts about local businesses. REACHur helps local businesses improve their social media marketing and helps social media users make an easy dollar.

**Q.** What was most challenging about the project?

**A.** It was getting businesses to buy in to REACHur. So far, I've pitched to about 20 different businesses with 5 buying into it.

**Q.** What did you learn about yourself?

**A.** I learned that I really have a passion for entrepreneurship and building my own product. Building REACHur has become my main passion and helped me to realize that my path after graduation is to continue with my business.

**Q.** What role did your director play?

**A.** Dr. (Bennie) Felts was very helpful with my project. He guided my project in the right direction by giving me guidelines for formats and letting me know what needs to be in a business plan.

**Q.** What are your plans for next year and your career?

**A.** My plan is to continue to develop REACHur, by building out the app, acquiring more users and getting more businesses to buy into it.

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