

30 YEARS AND COUNTING

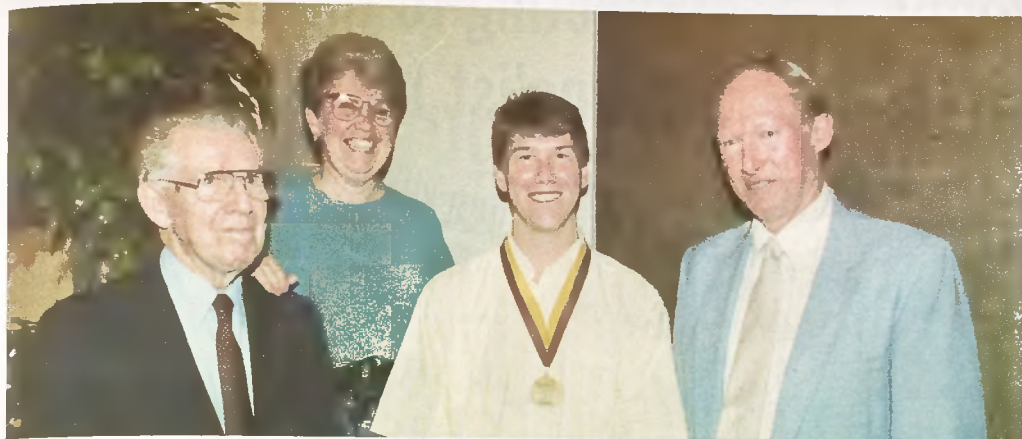


PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE MARS
Top: John Barnhill '92 receives the Iris Holt McEwen Award during the 1990-1991 school year alongside his parents and grandfather.

Left: A group of Elon students take a break from a Habitat for Humanity build in 1997.

EV! | from cover

Not only did Barnhill get involved, but he served as the president for the organization that would lead to what is now the Kernodle Center and Elon Volunteers.

"I got kind of thrust into the limelight with starting service at Elon," Barnhill said. "That was the kickoff of it all, and then from there, Habitat grew, and the chaplain said again, 'What if we did more than just help people build housing -- working with people in need?' So we started Elon Volunteers, and I served as the first student coordinator of that."

The program that started with Barnhill now facilitates dozens of programs and has more than 100 student leaders that organize programming for undergraduates to participate in. Their initiatives range from youth development to environmental issues, including eight community partners that consistently welcome Elon Volunteers.

After the establishment of Elon Volunteers, the programming continued to expand. In 1997, the Center for Service Learning received an endowment from the Kernodle family in honor of their late son, John R. Kernodle, who was an active member in the Burlington community. His mother, who is now widowed and nearing 100 years old, serves on the advisory committee for the Kernodle Center and is still supportive of the center.

Mary Morrison, assistant dean of campus life and director of the Kernodle Center, has been at Elon for 13 years. Since her arrival, she has had a hand in expanding and deepening the center's efforts.

"We have this really interesting leadership structure," Mor-

ison says of the organization, which only has six professional staff members. "They always had a leadership structure—student leadership structure—but we kind of broadened that and formalized that. Now we have anywhere from 120 to 140 student leaders who are planning, implementing and evaluating our programs. We've grown tremendously—from a smaller group of students when I came—and the kind of things we have been doing have expanded."

Looking forward, Morrison says her focus is on deepening the work that students are doing and making sure their efforts are worthwhile and meaningful.

Barnhill sees great potential in the effect Elon Volunteers can have on the community. During the 2015-2016 school year, Elon's chapter of Habitat for Humanity celebrated its 25th house in Alamance County—an achievement Barnhill does not take lightly.

"I think picking a few areas of concern that are deep in the community and focusing on those with all the resources, efforts, knowledge, skills and talents of Elon—we could actually solve problems. Not just address the problem, but solve it," Barnhill said. "Imagine if Elon said we are going to eradicate poverty housing in Alamance County, and we are going to do that by partnering with all of these different organizations and all

these different donors, imagine that. Alamance County—the first county in America that eliminates inadequate housing."

Morrison says interest in long-standing organizations such as Habitat has not waned, but they are always thinking of ways to engage more students. One of the biggest areas of interest for Elon students, Morrison says, are those involved with the youth population in Burlington. Through the Boys and Girls Club and programming through the Burlington Housing Authority, each week many students flock to these opportunities. During the 2013-2014 school year, the number of service hours completed by students increased by 23 percent to reach 127,000 hours.

The Kernodle Center facilitates both curricular and co-curricular programs. Co-curricular programs include the opportunities students take advantage of outside of the classroom, whereas curricular programming would fall under what is considered an Academic Service Learning Course.

Morrison says they've done studies to figure out how their work is impacting the community and how the volunteers are received. Morrison says through the various work, whether it's students who complete a public relations assignment for a community partner or a student who tutors a child every week, the impact is felt and overwhelm-

“
I'M REALLY PROUD OF WHAT THE STUDENTS OF EACH YEAR, EACH DAY HAVE PUT FORWARD TO MAKE IT BETTER AND STRONGER EVERY YEAR.

JOHN BARNHILL
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

ingly appreciated.

As part of Homecoming this year, the Kernodle Center is celebrating its alumni who have gone on to pursue service-based work as a career.

"We want to celebrate those alums who took it to the next level and made it their profession or career," Morrison said.

Not only are students pursuing careers in government or non-profit work, Morrison says she still finds many alums who have pursued careers in unrelated fields but still give back to their communities in other ways.

"It's interesting to me the number of students who may have gone into accounting, or they may have gone into public relations, or they may have chosen a completely different career, but have maintained their community-engaged work because that is so deeply ingrained into their values," Morrison said. "We love to see that too."

In addition to the Kernodle Center in upstairs Moseley, during the 2012-2013 school year, the Downtown Center for Community Engagement opened in downtown Burlington. It serves as a meeting place for students, faculty and staff but also for the community to have "important and crucial conversations."

While Barnhill now has less of a hands-on role in the Kernodle Center, his long-standing history with the organization gives him perspective that few people have and leaves him with great admiration for its progress and success.

"I'm really proud of what the students of each year, each day have put forward to make it better and stronger every year," Barnhill said. "There is nothing more fun for me than to walk up into a Habitat meeting, meet some students doing Habitat or Elon Volunteers or anyone, and they have no idea who I am, and they talk about it with the passion that I had when I was doing it—that's the best thing. That it's sustained. It continues on."

Recovering from tragedy

SYNAGOGUE | from cover

in Numen Lumen at that evening. But before that, Tommer and several other students organized a gathering in the Moseley Center Sunday afternoon. Tommer helped to publicize the event by word of mouth and social media posts.

"To make this happen was just really powerful to me and just shows the resiliency and power of the Jewish community around the world," Tommer said.

Despite the university's late response, the group wanted to act fast. But there was a one challenge for Rabbi Mendy Minkowitz.

"Because this tragedy happened on a Sabbath, which has traditionally the day when we don't use any electronic devices, including of course television, internet and anything like that, I was completely in the dark about this event until fairly late in the day," Minkowitz said.

That's exactly what Lakind feared as he made the trip to Minkowitz's house Saturday afternoon.

"So the first thing I did, I drove over there and he was already informed by other people about the situation," Lakind said.

"We need to do something. Like we can't just sit down. Something needs to happen right away. ... We started planning and thinking of something that we could possibly do to help anyone affected, the whole Jewish community," Lakind said.

When word started to spread, Tommer also joined in the planning.

"The fact that this many people showed up was really great because there really wasn't that much notice," Tommer said.

With just a few posts, texts and calls, the group of students created a space for themselves and others to reflect on the tragedy impacting their community.

Minkowitz works with Chabad of Elon and Burlington. He said this violence was a threat to all Jews.

"I think it's also trying to send a message that we shouldn't even feel safe in our own domain, in our own houses of worship," Minkowitz said. "And we shouldn't even feel like we're free of anti-Semitism and of bias."

Minkowitz said the connection between dark and light in the Jewish faith is a constant reminder of hope.

"Most people are afraid to grab darkness and you know, get hurt in the process of that have that struggle," he said. "But you don't need to grab darkness, you just need to make light. And when you make light, darkness automatically fades."

Kay said hope is not enough.

"I think that the silence right now is deafening, and I think that it's really upsetting to see that the people who have so much to say about so many gun reform issues are saying nothing about this."

For Lakind and Kay there's a gap in support from the Elon community.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEX FARBER
Alex Farber, pictured at age 13, reads from the Torah during his bar mitzvah at the Tree of Life Synagogue in 2013.

"It's kind of ironic because 'Elon' means oak in Hebrew, and so I feel that a lot of people don't really recognize that there is a Jewish presence on campus," Lakind said.

Kay said she wished more people would come and support her community.

"I think that that's really hard and you need to show that you're in solidarity with

all groups and the Jews are a group that were persecuted and have been persecuted and time after time after time," Kay said. "I think that many times people don't consider [Jewish people] a marginalized group and we are."

Minkowitz agreed and drew from the history of his community.

"The Jewish people are no stranger to persecution and to hurt and to violence. We've almost done this our entire history. It's terrible every time it happens, but we've built a resilience to be able to overcome and continue," Minkowitz said.