

Summer 2021



# Beyond

Alumni/ae of Touro University Nevada



## KEEPING THE TOURO NEVADA FAMILY CONNECTED

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# Congratulations Class of 2021!

We are thrilled to welcome you as Touro University Nevada's newest alumni/ae. Your strength and resilience on your journey to becoming the next generation of physicians, healthcare providers, and educators has led you to this exciting moment.

Remember that your journey does not end here at Touro. In fact, it is only just beginning.

Congratulations!

# WELCOME

Since Touro University Nevada opened its doors with 78 medical students in 2004, we have grown to become one of the finest healthcare and educational institutions in the United States. Along the way, we have seen our alumni/ae make an impact across the country. For the last 17 years, we have prided ourselves on educating the future generations of healthcare professionals and teachers, and we could not be prouder of each and every one of you.

As we adjust to our (hopefully) soon-to-be post-COVID-19 world, remember how your Touro experience helped bring you to this point in your career as a healthcare provider or teacher.

As you read through our first Touro Alumni/ae Magazine, I want you to take a moment to reflect on your time as a student. I am sure you recall those late nights and early mornings preparing for your exams; the first time you put on a white coat; the friends you made who have since become life-long colleagues; or how it felt when you put on your cap and gown as you prepared yourself for commencement. Whether you graduated in 2008 or in 2021, you are forever a part of a very special family here at Touro.

I hope you enjoy reading this first issue of the Touro Alumni/ae Magazine and it brings back fond memories of your time on campus.

As an institution, we are better because you were here.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shelley Berkley'.

**Shelley Berkley**  
CEO and Senior Provost  
Touro University Western Division

# WELCOME

While this past year has been a challenging and emotional time for everyone, it's given us the opportunity to connect with all of you in ways we never have before. I've spoken with so many of our amazing Alumni/ae, heard their

stories, and know how important it is that we all have the opportunity to engage with one another both now, and in the future.

I am so excited to be launching this new Alumni/ae Magazine, with its focus on YOU! Your accomplishments, your triumphs, your stories. I hope as you glance through and read this magazine, you are reminded of fond memories of your time at TUN and excited to see what your colleagues are doing in their communities.

We want to make this magazine a celebration of all of our TUN Alumni/ae and welcome you to reach out with your experiences so we can highlight as many of our fantastic Alumni/ae as possible.

And because of that, you may have noticed something different. In line with our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the Touro University Nevada Office of Alumni/ae Relations is shifting our language to represent our entire alumni/ae base. Moving forward, we will use the term "alumni/ae" when addressing our alumni/ae as a whole. We understand that as we learn and grow, some of our language must grow with that. We recognize this omission in our past use of the term and are excited to begin using language that is more welcoming and inclusive for all.

Remember to stay in touch and share all of your updates and accomplishments.



**Veronica R. Fischer**  
Director of Donor Engagement and Alumni/ae Relations

## ALUMNA PROFILE HEATHER WELLS



Educational experiences from across the country help shape her medical career.

By the time Dr. Heather Wells (**College of Osteopathic Medicine, Class of 2014**) finished her family medicine residency in Mankato, Minn., just 80 miles south of Minneapolis-Saint Paul, she had garnered medical education in the Southeast, Southwest, and Northern part of the United States.

Wells came to Southern Nevada from Destin, Fla., a small town in the Florida Panhandle where she was raised. After graduating from Florida State University (FSU), Wells decided to come out West for medical school at Touro. Her faculty at FSU encouraged her to study medicine outside of the region because it would allow her the opportunity to learn medicine differently in an unfamiliar part of the country. That experience, they told her, would benefit her after she graduated from medical school.

"I didn't want to go to a big medical school because I'm not from a big area," she said. "At the same time, I wanted to go to a DO school. I wanted to learn about why pain happened and how we can use the body to fix the pain, instead of just handing someone a pill."

At Touro, she felt right at home with her smaller cohort.

"I can honestly say that I knew everyone in my class," she recalled. "We all knew medical school would be hard work,



but we shared the same struggles and had the same goals in mind, which made it easier for us. I still keep in touch with some of my medical school classmates."

Wells also loved that she could finish her clinical rotations without leaving the state of Nevada. That's when she truly discovered her love for family medicine.

"I quickly came to realize that each day was different, and I could tailor my practice to each patient I saw," she said. "It was reassuring to know that I wasn't going to have the same routine every day. I love the connections that I built with my patients. That's why I wanted to pursue family medicine after I graduated."

That's when Wells got into her family medicine residency in Minnesota as part of the Mayo Clinic. Her husband was from Minnesota, and the opportunity to learn medicine in another new region of the country excited her.

With her residency completed, Wells returned to her native Florida to practice medicine, in the Panhandle city of Port St. Joe, population 3,500.

"Learning medicine in Nevada, Minnesota, and Florida has given me the opportunity to learn from physicians all across the country," she said. "Based on the landscape of their respective regions, I learned that physicians might do things a little differently. I worked in bigger cities and rural areas, and it's helped me immensely."

Although she graduated from Touro University Nevada seven years ago, Wells still finds ways to stay involved with her alma mater.

"My time at Touro prepared me for my career today," she said. "Even though I live in Florida, I still have patients ask me about my time in medical school. That's when I can share my Touro experiences with them."



VOLUNTEER

STAY CONNECTED

BECOME A PRECEPTOR

MENTOR STUDENTS

TUN

CONNECT

TUNALUMNI.ORG

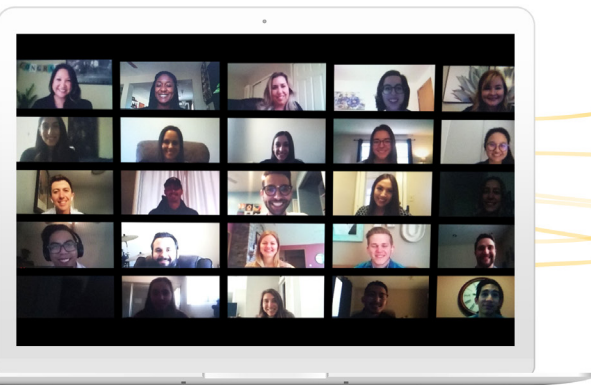
# ALUMNI/AE REUNION

## Virtual Mixer and Speaker Series Helps Touro Graduates Reconnect with Their Alma Mater

Despite living in a mostly virtual world during the COVID-19 pandemic, Touro Nevada Alumni/ae have still been able to connect with one another through the computer.

As part of the 2021 Alumni/ae Reunion, the university hosted a week-long speaker series and awards ceremony as alumni/ae from across the country tuned in for the virtual programming.

“It was a real joy to be included in the Alumni/ae speaker series,” said Alexandria Crossley, a 2018 graduate from the School of Nursing. “I feel Touro has made a significant name for itself here in Nevada, and I want to be a part of that growth and strong reputation in the community.”



Alumni/ae can facilitate the academic journey for students who may be having difficulty seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

As we grow and expand as professionals, we bring back to Touro an ever-expanding pool of resources and connections, for the University, the students, and the Alumni/ae. It represents a tremendous potential for a strong diverse network.”

Alumni/ae from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the College of Health and Human Services spoke on a myriad of topics during the speaker series, including eating disorders, personal and career growth, osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) in the primary care setting, enhanced recovery after surgery, and many more.

# AWARD WINNERS

## Generosity Award



**Dr. Ori DeVera**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2015

Dr. Ori DeVera was presented with the Generosity Award for going above and beyond in his professional career to give back to Touro University Nevada. He works as an urgent care doctor at Southwest Medical Associates in Las Vegas.

## Community Impact Award



**Dr. Evan Bishop**  
School of Physical Therapy  
Class of 2013

Dr. Evan Bishop was presented with the Community Impact Award for making significant contributions to his community. Dr. Bishop is the CEO and owner of LVL Up Physical Therapy in Las Vegas.

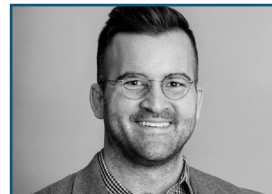
# ALUMNI/AE SPEAKERS



**Dr. Evan Bishop**  
School of Physical Therapy  
Class of 2013



**Marissa Parsons, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant  
Studies, Class of 2011



**Alan O'Donnell, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant  
Studies, Class of 2016



**Dani Kinsley, OTR/L**  
School of Occupational Therapy  
Class of 2015



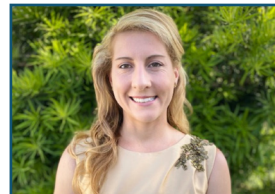
**Dr. Stephanie Persondek**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2010



**Dr. Barbara Kiersz-Mueller**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2014



**Alexandria Crossley, FNP**  
School of Nursing  
Class of 2018



**Dr. Elizabeth Hausmann**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2016



**Mousumi Dey, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2013

## Blue and Gold Award



**Dzuy Luu, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2011

Dzuy Luu was presented with the Blue and Gold Award to recognize the accomplishments of an alumnus from the 10-year Class and seeks to highlight that with just 10 years of professional experience beyond graduation, remarkable things can be accomplished. He works at Professional Wound Specialists in the Las Vegas Valley.

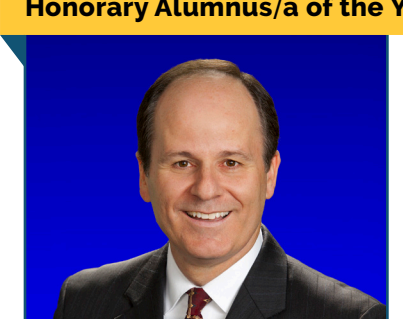
## Alumnus/a of the Year



**Dr. William Wrightsman**  
School of Occupational Therapy  
Class of 2008

Dr. William Wrightsman was awarded with the Alumnus/a of the Year Award in recognition to an alumnus who embodies the spirit of Touro's vision – “Educating caring professionals to serve, to lead, to teach.” He works as the founding program director at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Penn.

## Honorary Alumnus/a of the Year



**Paul Stowell**  
Advisory Board Member  
Touro University Nevada

Paul Stowell was presented with the Honorary Alumnus of the Year Award, which recognizes the efforts of an individual who has made significant contributions and has formed invaluable partnerships with the university. He is the Nevada Regional Executive for City National Bank in Las Vegas.



# ALUMNA PROFILE BRYNN BUTZMAN

Occupational Therapy alumna combines swimming and education to open aquatic-based therapy practice in Southern Nevada.

As a lifelong swimmer who spent more than a decade performing on the Las Vegas Strip, Dr. Brynn Butzman (School of Occupational Therapy, Class of 2019) never could have fathomed that she would eventually enjoy a career as an occupational therapist in Southern Nevada.

Shortly after graduating with her Biology degree from Santa Clara University, Butzman moved to Southern Nevada where she spent 13 years as a synchronized swimmer in 'O,' one of Cirque Du Soleil's most popular shows. She fell in love with her work, but the time commitment was grueling and with two young children at home, Butzman decided to change careers.

"I wanted to make sure I had a career that would still allow me to spend enough time with my kids, which is why I decided to revisit the OT profession," she said. "That's when I found out about Touro. Because I had been out of school for so long, I took my pre-requisites and put all of my eggs in the Touro basket."

Butzman was accepted into the School of Occupational Therapy and after careful consideration, decided to pursue her Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD). As part of Touro's second class of OTD graduates, Butzman took some time to develop the concept that would be the basis for her capstone project.

"I could not find a single article about aquatic therapy from an OT," she recalled. "That got my wheels turning and wondering why there wasn't anything OT-based. I knew I wanted to do an aquatic program and a research project to complement it since there wasn't much literature out there."

For nearly two years, Butzman, along with Drs. Robyn Otty and Cynthia Lau from the School of Occupational Therapy, conducted research that would serve as the cornerstone of her capstone project.

The research was eventually published in OT Practice, the official magazine of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

At the end of 2019, Butzman expanded upon her research and opened her own business, called "Ocean of Change Therapy Services," which specializes in aquatic-based occupational therapy for young children and their parents.

It is one of the few of its kind in Southern Nevada.

"Doing aquatic therapy allows me to work closely with the parents and the children. It's such a pleasure to watch the parents really lead the way," she said. "I want to help them learn the treatment so they can work with their children when they go back home. I have so much fun doing this and I love watching these kids make progress."

It's been difficult to get her business started, she admitted, but she's hopeful that more families will discover the benefits of aquatic-based occupational therapy once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

"There are countless areas where aquatic therapy can help," she said. "I'd love to see a place where occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, and others devote an entire center to aquatic therapy. I knew that I would eventually turn this into my own business and completing the OTD program at Touro really cemented my passion for wanting to make this my career."



# TOURO NEVADA STANDS FOR JUSTICE

## Campus Initiative Amplifies Voices to Help Address Inequalities and Racism in Healthcare and Society

After the entire world witnessed the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, Touro's students decided that enough was enough. During the subsequent weeks that followed as millions of Americans took to the streets to protest police brutality and the racial and social injustices plaguing the nation, several members of the Touro Nevada community brought forward the idea of hosting a discussion about the nation's inequities, and how they affect the healthcare industry.

Student leaders from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the College of Health and Human Services spoke about the importance of having more minority representation in medical school and other healthcare programs.

The discussion was called "Touro Nevada Stands Against Injustice," and it would eventually lead to the creation of the "Touro Nevada Stands for Justice" series, a campus-wide initiative calling for more educational discussions about the importance of inclusion, diversity, and the problems our society still faces on the path to equality.

Leaders from the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), including students Paulina Awuah, Luis Sanchez, and Chloe Nieves helped organize the event. Several additional members of the Touro community, including Rolando Flores, Registrar and Associate Dean of Students; Tava McGinty-Jimenez, Director of Admissions and Associate Dean of Students; Cathy Godfrey, Director of

*"It's been inspirational to see how much the 'Touro Nevada Stands for Justice' Series has grown in such a short amount of time. It brings hope to the entire student body knowing how receptive the university has been to our concerns and using its platforms to influence change around the nation."*

*-Paulina Awuah*



Student Involvement; Schyler Richards, former Vice President for Advancement; and Dr. Philip Tompkins, Dean of Students, organized the program.

The initiative's launch coincided with the university's first "Walk for Justice" on June 19, otherwise known as Juneteenth, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

More than 100 members of the Touro Nevada community peacefully marched the streets of Downtown Henderson, some holding signs that said "Black Lives Matter," and "Med Students for Black Lives" among others.

Since then, "Touro Nevada Stands for Justice" has expanded its programming to discuss the marginalization of countless populations in the U.S., including Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, the LGBTQIA community, and more. Discussions have also included societal and cultural oppression that millions of people are facing around the world.



Members of the Touro University Nevada community before the beginning of the "Walk for Justice" in Downtown Henderson on June 19, 2020.

# PSA NORTH LAS VEGAS

## Touro University Nevada and North Las Vegas Collaborate on COVID-19 Vaccination PSAs

Although Touro University Nevada is located in a quiet pocket of Henderson, the City of North Las Vegas knows how much of an impact the institution makes across the entire Las Vegas Valley. After the COVID-19 vaccine rollout began, city officials in North Las Vegas noticed that a handful of zip codes in their city were among the lowest COVID-19 vaccinated zip codes in Southern Nevada. This prompted the city to find a way to encourage their constituents to get vaccinated, and Touro University Nevada was more than willing to lend a helping hand.

Students and faculty across Touro's programs worked with North Las Vegas to create several public service announcements (PSAs) to encourage residents to get their COVID-19 vaccines.

Students from the university's Latino Medical Students Association (LMSA) chapter delivered their messages in

Spanish to alleviate the doubts that those in North Las Vegas' Spanish-speaking community might have about the vaccine's effectiveness.

"COVID-19 has affected everyone I know. It took loved ones from my family, from my friends' families, and from members of my community in Las Vegas and my hometown in Los Angeles," said Luis Sanchez, a second-year student in the College of Osteopathic Medicine. "Getting the COVID-19 vaccine brought me a great relief, because I knew that I was protecting myself and those close to me. As a native Spanish speaker, I immediately knew that I had to lend my voice and help spread the message for the COVID-19 vaccine distribution PSA in Spanish because I wanted the right message to reach members of the Hispanic and Latinx communities in Las Vegas."



*"As a native Spanish speaker, I immediately knew that I had to lend my voice and help spread the message for the COVID-19 vaccine distribution PSA in Spanish because I wanted the right message to reach members of the Hispanic and Latinx communities in Las Vegas."*

**- Luis Sanchez**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine, Class of 2023

*"I thought if I could participate in a PSA where those in the community saw an African-American medical professional encouraging them to get vaccinated, it could possibly alleviate some of their fears and doubts."*

**- Dr. Tracey Johnson-Glover**  
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing



The PSAs were disseminated throughout North Las Vegas' communication channels and were posted to both the city's and Touro's social media accounts.

"Although COVID vaccines have been available for some time, there has still been some hesitancy to getting vaccinated, particularly among African-Americans," said Dr. Tracey Johnson-Glover, Assistant Professor in the School of Nursing. "I thought if I could participate in a PSA where those in the community saw an African-American medical professional encouraging them to get vaccinated, it could possibly alleviate some of their fears and doubts."

North Las Vegas City Councilwoman Pamela Goynes-Brown, a life-long resident of North Las Vegas, thanked Touro for participating in the COVID-19 PSA campaign.

During the PSA, Goynes-Brown tells the viewers that she got her shot and now doesn't have to worry about seeing her family. She had reservations about the vaccine at first but feels much better after having been vaccinated.

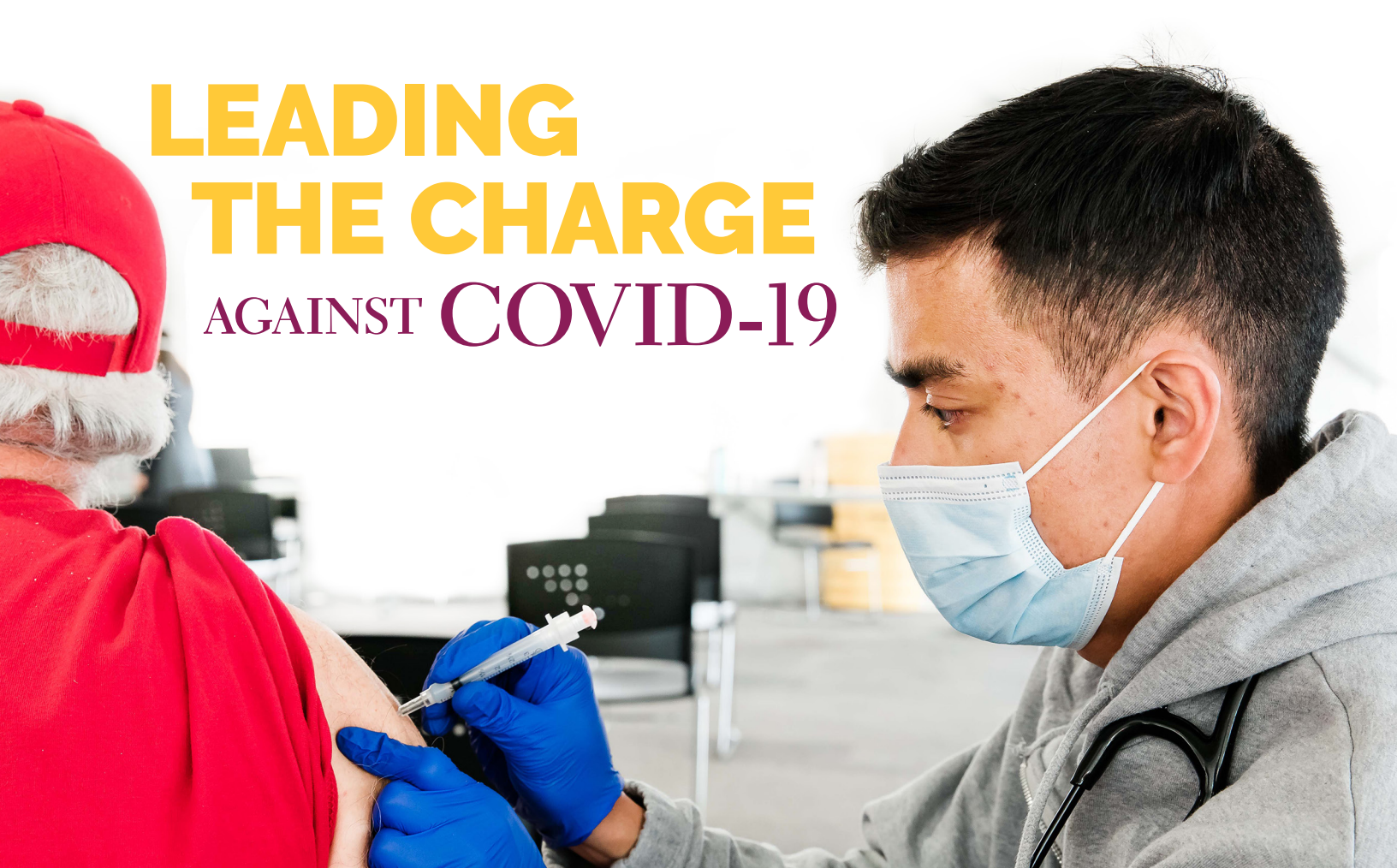
"I appreciate the opportunity to work with Touro University Nevada to get the word out and urge others to get vaccinated," she said.

*"It's important to get vaccinated so that we help stop the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, there is still a lot of vaccine hesitancy. By participating in this PSA, I hope to encourage more people to get vaccinated so that we can continue to keep our friends and families safe."*

**- Valerie Mendez**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine, Class of 2022



# LEADING THE CHARGE AGAINST COVID-19



## Touro Nevada Students Administering Thousands of COVID-19 Vaccines Across the Las Vegas Valley

**Above:** PA Student Matthew Mebida administers a COVID-19 vaccine to a man at Catholic Charities.



When the country received the long-awaited news that a COVID-19 vaccine would soon be available, Touro University Nevada's students and faculty jumped at the chance to be an integral part of the process.

Since January, the students and faculty have played a critical role in vaccinating Southern Nevada residents as quickly as possible.

In addition to the campus's five major vaccination events, students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and College of Health and Human Services

are delivering vaccines to an array of Southern Nevada residents, including to those at Catholic Charities, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Sun City Anthem, the Nevada Homeless Alliance event at Lutheran Services of Nevada, and more.

Aaron Storey, a student in the School of Physician Assistant Studies who has spent months giving COVID-19 vaccines, including to those at Catholic Charities and Lutheran Services of Nevada, said he has been inspired by the university's efforts in directly working to make life easier for so many people during the pandemic.

"All of the collective hours that Touro Nevada's staff, faculty, and student body have put into vaccinating for this pandemic has been completely voluntary," he said. "This is extra time on top of full work weeks, full time studying, children at home, and many other obligations people have. It has been remarkable to see the selfless service and love that people are going out and putting forth to the community."

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Touro community has been instrumental in delivering as much relief as possible to the Southern Nevada community.

When the pandemic forced everyone to work remotely and there was still much to learn about COVID-19, Touro's students and faculty were providing free tests to the Valley's most vulnerable populations.

As the months progressed, the Touro community made mask deliveries to local hospitals and medical groups during the Valley's personal protective equipment (PPE) shortage, thanks to an incredibly generous donation from Touro advisory board member, Michael Tang.

When news broke that a vaccine would be available, students and faculty stayed the course, longing to be a part of the historic moment.



**"Volunteering to help vaccinate the senior populations of Sun City reminded me why I chose this field."**

**- Ellie Ok**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2023

Samantha Yin, another second-year student in the College of Osteopathic Medicine, helped administer vaccines at the Tzu Chi Foundation in Las Vegas. At Tzu Chi, students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the School of Physician Assistant Studies worked together to translate information and comfort the elderly Asian populations who were receiving their vaccine.

"Without our help translating the forms and explaining more about the vaccine, they wouldn't feel as comfortable getting the vaccine," Yin said. "This was such a great reminder that it is so important, as future healthcare providers, to use our own skills where we can to help support our community members."



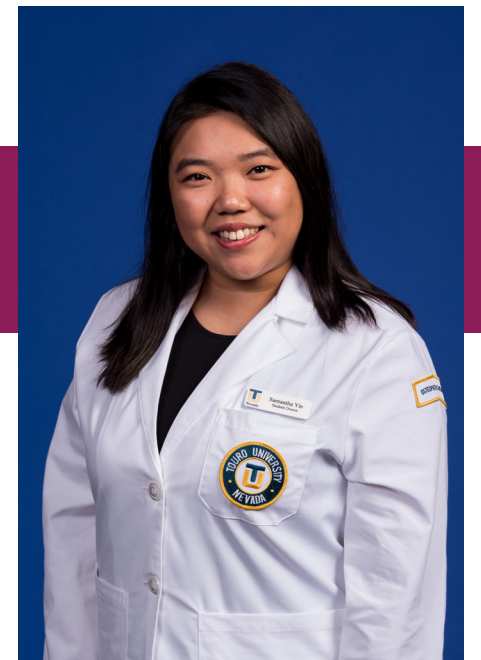
**"It has been remarkable to see the selfless service and love people are going out and putting forth to the community."**

**- Aaron Storey**  
School of Physician  
Assistant Studies  
Class of 2021

Since then, hundreds of students have volunteered to assist in the vaccination efforts, which has led to more than 10,000 Southern Nevadans receiving their COVID-19 vaccine.

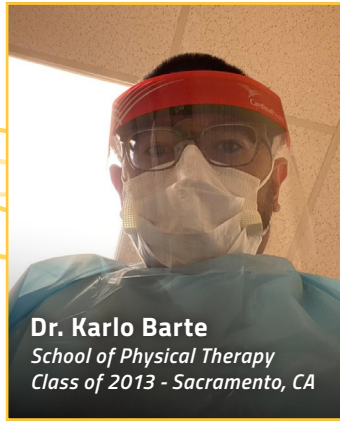
From the older populations to the homeless populations, students have been working on the frontlines to vaccinate as many people as possible against COVID-19.

"Volunteering to help vaccinate the senior populations of Sun City reminded me why I chose this field," said Ellie Ok, a second-year student in the College of Osteopathic Medicine. "I felt honored and grateful to deliver vaccines and to help move us another step forward in the fight against COVID-19."



**"This is such a great reminder that it is so important, as future healthcare providers, to use our own skills where we can to help support our community members."**

**- Samantha Yin**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2023



**Dr. Karlo Barte**  
School of Physical Therapy  
Class of 2013 - Sacramento, CA



**Dr. Nicole Khaldy**  
School of Physical Therapy  
Class of 2012 - Las Vegas, NV



**Dr. Stephanie Be**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2016 - Boston, MA



**Dr. Dan Uelk**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2009 - Chesterfield, MO



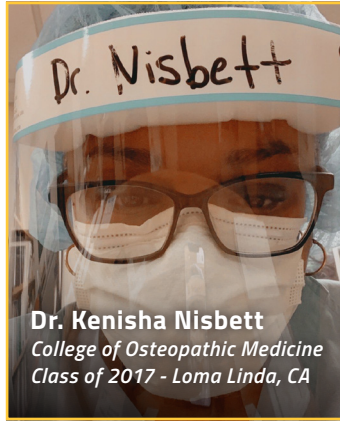
**Tameem Sabry, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2015 - Upland, CA



**Julian Rios, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2008 - Las Vegas, NV



**Dr. Molly Biehl**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2008 - Sheridan, MT



**Dr. Kenisha Nisbett**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2017 - Loma Linda, CA

# ALUMNI/AE ON THE COVID-19 FRONTLINES

Thank you for the critical work you are doing to keep us safe,  
and thank you for representing Touro with such grace and dignity.

We are honored to call you Alumni/ae.



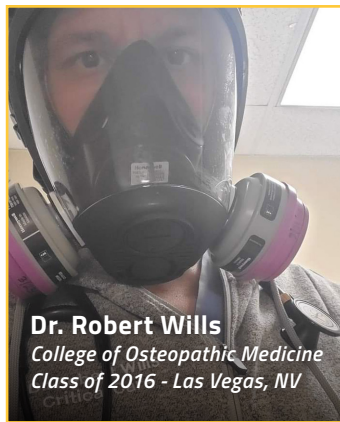
**Dr. Ashley Morgenstein**  
School of Physical Therapy  
Class of 2019 - Coral Springs, FL



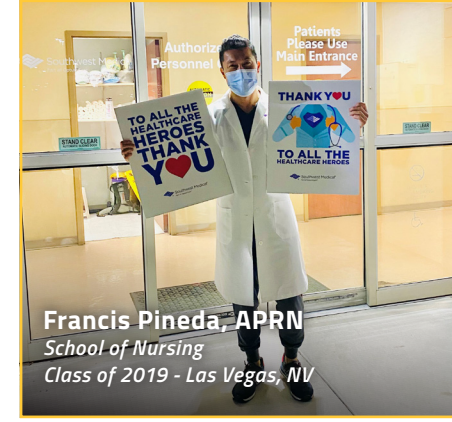
**Dr. Brooke Balchan**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2008 - New Rochelle, NY



**Andrea Eghterafi, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2018 - Las Vegas, NV



**Dr. Robert Wills**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2016 - Las Vegas, NV



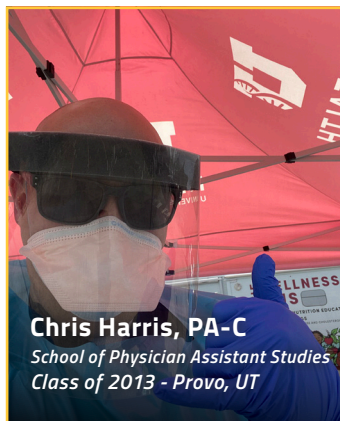
**Francis Pineda, APRN**  
School of Nursing  
Class of 2019 - Las Vegas, NV



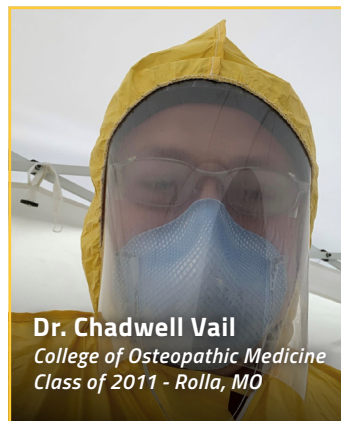
**Kimberly Rowe, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2017 - Phoenix, AZ



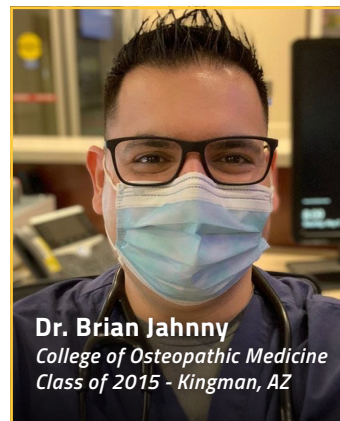
**Dr. Jen Hwang**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2017 - Philadelphia, PA



**Chris Harris, PA-C**  
School of Physician Assistant Studies  
Class of 2013 - Provo, UT



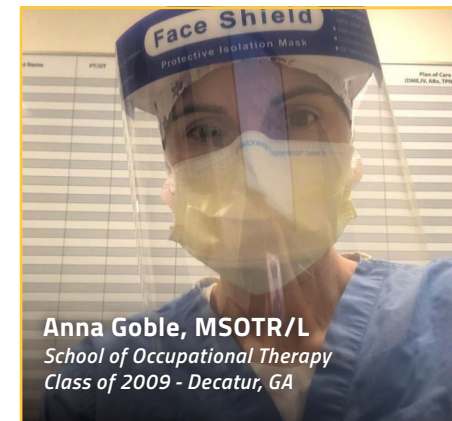
**Dr. Chadwell Vail**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2011 - Rolla, MO



**Dr. Brian Jahnnny**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2015 - Kingman, AZ



**Dr. Jennifer Harrison**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2014 - Las Vegas, NV



**Anna Goble, MSOTR/L**  
School of Occupational Therapy  
Class of 2009 - Decatur, GA



**Dr. Matthew Maynard**  
College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Class of 2017 - Sacramento, CA



**Dr. Matthew McClain**  
School of Physical Therapy  
Class of 2015 - Sarasota, FL



# TOURO Alumni/ae

Stories by Steven Slivka

Photos by Mona Shield-Payne

\*ALUMNI/AE FACES ON THE FRONTLINE photos were voluntarily submitted

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