

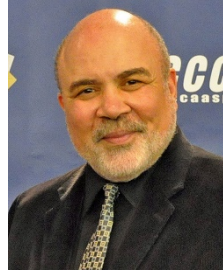


PittGreensburg

Alumni Spotlight — The 1960's and 1970's



Fred Charles '72



Carlyle Carter



Bernie Cobetto '73



Tom Jollie '72

Alumni Spotlight: Men's Basketball Alumni Club

What started as a four-game exploratory schedule in 1968 met with such great response that the fourth game had to be moved to a bigger gym to accommodate the number of fans who wanted to get in. The next academic year—fall of 1969—marked the official start of the Pitt-Greensburg men's basketball program.

These beginnings are one of the reasons that Bernard “Bernie” Cobetto '73, Carlyle Carter, Thomas “Tom” M. Jollie '72, and Fredrick “Fred” E. Charles, Esq., '72 formed the Pitt-Greensburg Men's Basketball Alumni Club (MBAC), in coordination with Harry Bowser '72, also a member of that first team as well as a past assistant coach and now a volunteer character coach for the team, and the Pitt-Greensburg Alumni Association.

Bernie Cobetto, a new grandfather, feels that being a part of that first team is part of his legacy. “I am a Pitt man in a Pitt family,” Bernie said. His brother, son, daughter, and father—Bernard H. Cobetto, MD, '47 who established the annual Cobetto Lecture on Contemporary Ethics here—all went to Pitt. Bernie completed a bachelor's degree in political science at the Oakland campus, followed by a master's degree in health administration. He also met his wife of 40-plus years while a student at Pitt-Greensburg. “I got a solid education and played basketball for a great coach,” Bernie said of his time at Pitt-Greensburg.

Carlyle Carter came to campus after Bernie and the team's first coach, John Hunter, attended the Fayette-Westmoreland County All-Star Game. “Son of a single-parent family, no one in our family had completed college,” Carlyle said. “I loved the idea of continuing to play basketball, and Pitt-Greensburg gave me that opportunity.”

Currently the CEO/president of the California Community College Athletic Association, Carlyle acknowledged, “While I ultimately didn't complete my education at Pitt, I don't believe I would have gotten to where I am without the foundation laid at Pitt-Greensburg.” One of his career distinctions was being hired as the first commissioner of the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. “According to the NCAA, it was the first hiring of a minority commissioner of an

athletic conference comprising non-historically black colleges and universities of any NCAA athletic conference,” Carlyle said.

Tom Jollie felt drawn to the Greensburg campus by the opportunity to continue working while pursuing a Pitt degree. He reflected on Dr. Norman McWhinney and how the English instructor mixed learning and laughter. Tom said one of his fondest memories at Pitt-Greensburg was that “there was always someone willing to engage in a philosophical discussion about anything.”

Tom, who has two sisters and a brother with Pitt degrees, served in the United States Army before returning to Pitt, this time the Oakland campus, to finish his degree. He went on to a long career in the insurance business.

Fred Charles attended law school after completing his bachelor’s degree in Oakland. After opening his own law practice, he was named chief public defender of Lehigh County, followed by serving as director of the Pennsylvania State Defenders Association. He was then named solicitor for Lehigh County and is the only attorney in the history of Lehigh County to have held both positions. Fred has also served as special counsel to the National Football League, legal counsel to professional athletes/broadcasters, and legal counsel to a national professional wrestling corporation. He has been married for over 35 years to his college sweetheart, Denise Albert Charles, who was also a student at Pitt-Greensburg.

When asked about their spare time these days, Fred responded, “What spare time?” He further shared, though, that he is devoted to his church, family, and friends. Tom golfs, and Carlyle said “barbecue, barbecue, barbecue” in addition to enjoying his grandsons, working on his vinyl record collection, participating in drum circles, and bicycling. Bernie keeps busy with babysitting his grandson, maintaining rental properties, word-working, restoring furniture, and painting—“I love recycling and re-purposing junk to a treasure.”

Fred, Bernie, and Carlyle all named Dr. Carl F. Poke, professor of political science and director of academic affairs, as a faculty member who had a great influence on them. Carlyle said, “His lectures and later his personal attention with me, not as a basketball player but as a student, made a real impression on me.”

Now, these many years later, bringing the past, the present, and the future together is what MBAC strives to do. “Fellowship and camaraderie among the past and current players, and support of Pitt-Greensburg by the basketball alumni family are the ultimate goals,” said Fred, who serves as the MBAC president. “The club is the nexus between now and then,” and Fred believes the alumni will “be proud of what Pitt-Greensburg is now, and Pitt-Greensburg can be proud of who came through its program.”

Desiring to develop MBAC as a social and fellowship club, the officers are collecting contact information as they prepare to send out their first newsletter. Bernie, MBAC secretary, said that he is surprised by the response for the club, with former players responding from as far away as Alaska, Rhode Island, Florida, and California.

“Some of my fondest memories are my times with my teammates at Pitt-Greensburg,” said Carlyle, MBAC vice president. “Even though we have not communicated much over the years, I know our bonds are still strong as teammates.”

Tom, treasurer of MBAC, agreed, saying that he’s involved to get reacquainted with friends and teammates—and to remember those times.

Reflecting on his fondest memory as a student, Fred recalls participating in the first basketball game, a win at Pitt-Titusville, and their first home game, an overtime win against Penn State-New Kensington. “We didn’t think at the time that this was something historic,” Fred said. “We were thinking about winning.”

For more information on the Pitt-Greensburg Men’s Basketball Alumni Club, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at pgaa@pitt.edu or 724-836-7496.



Alumni Spotlight: Harry P. Bowser '72

Harry P. Bowser graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1972 after majoring in secondary education and history. He studied at the Greensburg campus from January 1968 through April 1970. Read more about his life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... the name and that I could commute.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg was ... that it was really small. My high school was bigger.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memories were ... the friendships developed and the closeness of the people on campus.

The faculty members who had the greatest influence on me were ... Mrs. Karen Scanlon—always encouraging and helpful; Dr. Norman McWhinney—funny, brilliant, approachable; Dr. Guy Rossetti—young, mature, trustworthy; and John Hunter—a coach that gave me a chance. I can’t remember one faculty member from the Oakland campus.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... finish my degree at the Oakland campus. I was in the Pennsylvania National Guard and had to delay my student teaching. When I returned, I was hired at Southmoreland, where I spent my entire 35-year teaching career.

My reason for becoming active with the alumni association is ... that I am grateful for the opportunities given to me in life by my education at Pitt, and I wanted to give something back. Coaching brought me back on campus. I'm working through the PGAA to set up a men's basketball alumni club to tie alumni back to the basketball program.

In my spare time, I like to ... work around my house and yard and travel when possible. And, I enjoy spending time with my granddaughters Alexis and Mikayla.

My family/friends are ... the most important part of my life, along with my faith in God. My son, Adam, played basketball for and graduated from Pitt-Greensburg and is currently the director of the Somerset Education Center at Pennsylvania Highlands Community College. My wife Karon and I have another son, Ryan, who is a manager at MAX Environmental.

Tell us something we didn't ask ... I've been in-and-out of the Pitt-Greensburg basketball program since I played on its first basketball team. I was an assistant coach under John Hunter for two years before leaving to coach at Southmoreland High School. I started as an assistant basketball coach for a number of years before becoming head coach for seven years. I then returned to Pitt-Greensburg as assistant coach under Matt Furjanic and was part of the championship team. I continued as an assistant for coaches Karl Radday and Marcus Kahn. I returned once again to Southmoreland as the head coach for another six years before retiring. After overcoming some health problems, I helped start up an elementary basketball program. Then in 2014 after being approached by Coach Sean Strickland, I was able to return to Pitt-Greensburg to serve as a character coach. And, I'll continue to do what I can to help the basketball players and Pitt-Greensburg.



Alumni Spotlight: Roberta Gebrosky Chunko '78

Roberta Gebrosky Chunko studied for two years at Pitt-Greensburg before relocating to the Pittsburgh campus. She holds three degrees from the University of Pittsburgh: B.A., Education-Comprehensive Social Studies (1978); M.Ed., Social Studies Education (1983); and Ed.D.,

Social Studies Education and Teacher Development (2000). Read more about her life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... a recommendation from my high school counselor. During my junior year meeting with my counselor, I was asked what I would like to do when I graduate from Franklin Regional High School. I said I wanted to become a teacher but had no idea where to go to college. Also, I would need to work my way through school and should live at home to save money. After noting that my grades and test scores were very good, she suggested Pitt-Greensburg. The rest is history! I could not be more pleased with this choice. I became the first in my family to graduate from college.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg ... was the location. Greensburg was “the big city” to me. My first classes were downtown. I learned to maneuver through city streets and parallel park. I was so impressed with the country setting of the Greensburg campus and the beauty of Lynch Hall.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was ... the sunny days “studying” on the grounds near the stream that runs through campus.

The faculty member who had the greatest influence on me was ... Dr. Nancy Washington. She opened my eyes to the world of psychology. Her enthusiasm and teaching techniques were impressive. I minored in psychology and continue studying psychology today. Currently, I teach high school psychology.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... finish my degree at the Pittsburgh campus. When I graduated in 1978, teaching jobs were difficult to acquire. Fortunately, my first year after graduating I was hired to teach social studies in the Wilkinsburg School District. The next year I taught at Churchill Area High School which then merged with four other districts to become the Woodland Hills School District. After a time as a stay-at-home mom, I was employed by the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Education. I have been employed by the Franklin Regional School District since 1996.

My reason for staying connected to the University is ... that I am very thankful for the opportunities Pitt-Greensburg provided. In particular, I am especially thankful for the scholarship provided by Pitt-Greensburg my freshman and sophomore years. My husband and I support various aspects the Greensburg and Pittsburgh campuses, especially those dealing with education.

In my spare time, I ... go on “adventures” and experience new things. I view every experience as an opportunity to learn how to live a better life and serve others. Adventures large and small occur at unexpected moments and are most often with my family and friends.

My family members are ... Pitt alumni. My husband, sister, brother, both daughters and their husbands, and three cousins are Pitt grads. And, three of my family members work for Pitt or UPMC.

Tell us something we didn't ask ... I believe very strongly in the importance of education and believe that education can make “dreams come true.” I share with my students that “I am living the dream” because of my education. Thanks, Pitt, for enabling dreams to come true!



Alumni Spotlight: Vincent Ferrari '78

Vincent Ferrari graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in 1978. Read more about his life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... the proximity to home, familiarity with Greensburg, and that it was a nice, small campus.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg ... came during freshman orientation day in the summer of 1973. I was able to see Lynch Hall and the beautiful campus grounds for the first time. My impression was that it was a very pleasant and friendly place. My impressions on my first day of class that September were a little different! My first college class was to be a required physical education course. The location was the old armory in downtown Greensburg, as there were no other facilities yet on the Greensburg campus. I also had classes in the old Vogle Building on Maple Street in downtown Greensburg. I soon learned that despite the outward appearance and location of this building, inside were excellent instructors, great classmates, and a wonderful learning environment.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was ... Lynch Hall and the surrounding grounds.

The faculty member who had the greatest influence on me was ... Dr. Kenneth Bell, my biology professor. He was a wonderful teacher as well as a great role model. Sadly, he passed away not long after I left Pitt-Greensburg, but his memory lives on in the nature trail that he sometimes took his class out on, and which today bears his name.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... the School of Pharmacy at the Oakland campus. After graduating in 1978, I moved to Maryland in the suburban Washington, DC, area where I got my first job. In November of that year, I got married and have lived in Bowie, Maryland, for over 30 years. For the past 12 years, I have worked as supervisor of the Employee Pharmacy at Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis, Maryland.

My reason for staying connected to the University is ... to give back in a small way for all that Pitt-Greensburg did for me in my short academic time on campus.

In my spare time, I ... am an enthusiastic photographer, and, in recent years, I have become somewhat accomplished at my art. My work has been entered in several shows, including some solo exhibits. And, I am the editor of the newsletter for the Bowie-Crofton Camera Club. In addition to photography, I also enjoy hiking and traveling with my wife.

My family is ... my wife Leslie (NUR '78), who I met at the University of Pittsburgh and have been married to for more than 36 years, and our daughter Christina.

Tell us something we didn't ask ... I wish more students from the time I went to Pitt-Greensburg were active as alumni. It would be great to get in touch with some of them again.



Alumni Spotlight: Larry Helkowski '74

A nontraditional student—married and just out of the military—Lawrence J. (Larry) Helkowski '74 returned to western Pennsylvania to go to Pitt. “I was down in Georgia and just couldn't wait to get here.” He had grown up in Scottdale, PA, and always wanted to go to Pitt. “Just always been a fan—a believer in the Pitt system.” Helkowski returned to Westmoreland County in November 1969 and began classes at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg two months later.

Pitt-Greensburg was not yet granting four-year degrees, so after three years of study, Helkowski relocated to the Oakland campus to complete his education, earning a bachelor's of science degree in Management.

To this day, though, Helkowski remembers the beautiful setting of Lynch Hall and fondly recalls his professors at Pitt-Greensburg. Norman McWhinney, PhD, was one of the instructors who stands out to him. “He was one of the best teachers I ever had,” Helkowski said. “He made you

so relaxed. We were night students, and he realized that. . . He understood that we worked. He made it a pleasure to come to class.”

Another member of the campus community who made a lasting impression on Helkowski was Guy Rossetti, PhD, saying, “Dr. Rossetti and I were good friends. It was an honor to know him. His passion, enthusiasm, devotion, and vision for Pitt-Greensburg, the students, the faculty, staff, and the community was a great source of inspiration for me. I learned a lot about leadership and life just from being around him.”

While pursuing his degree, Helkowski worked for People’s Gas. He started as a clerk, then moved into credit collection. After graduation, Helkowski worked in sales and marketing, in addition to running the credit union, and ultimately worked with builders and developers to deliver gas economically on residential lot plans. He won salesman of the year for three consecutive years because of the Seven Springs expansion.

Additionally, during his time at People’s, Helkowski served as account executive for the United Way. Getting connected with nonprofit organizations through United Way led him to serve as chairman of the board at Westmoreland County Community College and, after 33 years with the gas company, to a new career path. Due to his experience with contracts, he was approached about applying for the president/CEO position at the Westmoreland County Blind Association (WCBA). “It is an amazing business. It is a complicated business,” Helkowski said in reference to the manufacturing process he had to learn with the new position.

When he started with WCBA, Helkowski signed a one-year contract to see if he could turn things around at the nearly bankrupt organization. Twelve years later, WCBA is not only providing meaningful job opportunities for those who may otherwise not be employed, but is also serving the community.

Seventy-five percent of the WCBA workforce is visually impaired or multiply challenged. WCBA contracts with the federal government to sew essential items for the men and women of the United States Armed Services. WCBA also provides 150 to 200 customers a month with shredding service. In 2013, 77 workers shredded over one million pounds of paper. “We are probably going to do 1.2 or 1.3 million this year,” Helkowski said enthusiastically. “And that is stuff that is not going into the landfills. It is being recycled to make toilet paper, paper napkins, tissues. . . . It is a win-win-win-win.”

Additionally, WCBA employs a case worker and low-vision doctor, and supports a blindness prevention program. “When I leave work, I [know] did something. I helped somebody today,” Helkowski said of his second career. “It’s an altogether different feeling.”

A second generation of the family also graduated from Pitt. His son, Lawrence S. Helkowski, earned a degree from the University of Pittsburgh’s School of General Studies (now the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences) in 1992 and went on to earn a juris doctorate from Ohio Northern University and an MBA from Ohio State University. He works as an assistant attorney general in the Columbus, OH, office of the Attorney General. His specialty is environmental law.

“We’ve been probably 40 years a part of Pitt,” said Helkowski, who resides in Irwin with his wife Jacqueline. They have one grandson.

Helkowski, whose cellphone ringtone is the Pitt Fight Song, has been a Pitt season ticket holder in football and basketball since the 1970s. When he was a clerk in the gas company, he couldn’t afford seats, and he met some Pitt alumni who helped him get tickets. When talking about Pitt alumni, he said, “It is meeting people who care.” He encourages young alumni to get involved in the programs: “If you don’t get involved, you’re never going to have that allegiance. You gotta have spirit.”

Reflecting on the care of the faculty and the value of the small classroom experience at Pitt-Greensburg, plus his “love affair” with Pitt athletics, Helkowski said, “It has been a wonderful part of my life.”



Alumni Spotlight: David M. Kitch '66

David M. Kitch studied engineering at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg from 1964-1966 before relocating to the University of Pittsburgh. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering in 1968 and a master’s degree in industrial engineering in 1981. Read more about his life during and after Pitt-Greensburg.

The thing that drew me to Pitt-Greensburg was ... the close proximity to my home (12 miles) and lower tuition cost for Westmoreland County residents.

My first impression of Pitt-Greensburg was ... that it was a small campus. I was the second class to enroll at Pitt-Greensburg, and the campus was one building located in downtown Greensburg.

My favorite thing as a student/fondest memory was ... that the classes were very small, some consisting of only five students. I developed friendships with other students from all parts of Pennsylvania. Fond memories were of eating lunch together and occasionally visiting each other’s homes.

The faculty member who had the greatest influence on me was ... Ted Zaleskiewicz who taught me four classes of physics. I wanted to be a mechanical engineer, and physics is the framework of mechanical engineering.

After Pitt-Greensburg, I went on to ... attend the Oakland campus. I carpooled with fellow engineering students from the area. I graduated with a BS in mechanical engineering (BSME) in 1968. I found course work at the main campus to be easier and less competitive since class sizes were much bigger. As a student, I joined the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). I remained active in ASME and served as a local chapter chairman, served on several ASME Design Committees, and was awarded a lifetime membership after my retirement.

My first job was at Elliott Co., located in Jeannette, and was as a compressor aerodynamic development engineer. Elliott provided me a good first step for my remaining career. I left Elliott in 1973 for a senior engineer position at Westinghouse Electric Nuclear Energy Systems (NES). During my 25 years at Westinghouse, I worked for NES in Monroeville and for the Electromechanical Div. (EMD) in Cheswick. I worked as a principal design engineer, fluid systems engineer, and marketing and project engineer. I served as a Westinghouse representative to ASME, Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO), and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). I traveled extensively (both domestic and international) to equipment supplier factories, nuclear power plants, and numerous conferences. I published many technical papers and have a patent. I attended graduate school at night and earned a MS in industrial engineering (MSIE) in 1981 from Pitt. Steve Tritch, the present Pitt Chairman of the Board, became the Westinghouse Nuclear VP while I worked at Westinghouse.

I retired from Westinghouse in 1998 but almost immediately went back to work for Westinghouse as a consulting engineer for EMD. I worked there until 2007 after which I returned to Westinghouse Nuclear and continued to work as a design consultant on the new model nuclear plant, AP-1000, for almost five years. During this time I had the opportunity to mentor and train several new engineering hires. I developed a close working relationship with one who happened to be a Pitt graduate. We remain close friends.

My reason for becoming staying connected to the University is ... that the campus is local and it gave me a start in my engineering career. I am interested in helping Westmoreland County get properly recognized, and I think the Pitt-Greensburg campus boosts the image of the county. I am a member of the Pitt Alumni Association and Golden Panthers, and I regularly attend homecoming celebrations and other events.

In my spare time, I like to ... serve on the Pitt Mechanical Engineering and Material Science (MEMS) Board of Visitors. I've served in this capacity for almost 20 years. This gives me the opportunity to see and help improve the quality of our department, students, and the Swanson School of Engineering.

My wife Bridget and I like to spend time with our four grandchildren who range in age from 12-15 years old. We take them to dinner, on interesting field trips, and on a one- to two-day vacation every summer and during Christmas vacation.

I am a serious Chevrolet Corvette enthusiast. Coming from an auto repair family, I do almost all my own auto repair work. I own three Corvettes and restored a 1966 Convertible from basically a rough-looking driver to national award prominence. I belong to several local Corvette clubs and judge Corvettes on a national level. I also like to golf, attend my grandson's ice hockey games, watch Pitt sports and Penguin hockey, and travel.

My family/friends are ... My wife Bridget: "Dave is my best friend. We've enjoyed each other's company for over 50 years, traveling, sharing time with our grandchildren, attending work related, Pitt related, car related and even gardening related activities. He continues to endorse his university and encourages alumni to come back home to see its growth and change".

Bernie Fedak, retired USS VP Engineering: "I've known Dave Kitch since 1967 first as a fellow student at Pitt and then as a colleague in the Pittsburgh professional community. Dave worked as an engineer at Westinghouse and I worked in the steel industry. Dave and I also have participated on the Pitt main campus school of engineering - mechanical engineering visiting committee for many years. Dave is a die-hard Pitt grad. He promotes the school of engineering whenever he can and wherever he goes. He is obviously very proud of his alma mater. His participation on the visiting committee has been enthusiastic and his input has been valuable. Dave values his Pitt education and considers it to be a vital part of his successful career. He constantly gives back to Pitt as he has made promotion of the university a way of life."

Dr. Mingking Chyu, Chairman, MEMS Dept. Swanson School of Engineering: "Dave Kitch is a renowned engineer and a great mentor to many young engineers. As a long-term employee at Westinghouse Electric Company, he has made enormous contributions in various aspects of nuclear power. While the nuclear industry in the US has been short of workforce, Dave has helped to recruit and train numerous engineers of nonnuclear background to become viable contributors in today's nuclear engineering industry. Dave's passion towards engineering goes beyond nuclear power. He is an avid automobile engineer and an accomplished expert in restoration of Corvettes. On this front, Dave has been volunteering his time and energy to promote broad based participation, particularly the younger generation. In summary, Dave is an extremely deserving individual to receive the notoriety that Pitt-Greensburg has bestowed upon him."

Kyle Noel, Sr. Engineer, Westinghouse Electric Co.: "Dave has been an incredible mentor in my early professional career. His willingness to pass along knowledge and experiences gained throughout his career has played an important role to my development as a young engineer. In addition to being a valuable mentor, Dave has also been a great friend and our personal relationship has grown alongside our professional relationship. Overall, Dave is a caring, honest, trustworthy, and respectable person who loves to stay busy and spend time with his family and friends, and is extremely passionate with his interests such as music, Corvettes, and the University of Pittsburgh. Hail to Pitt!

Tell us something we didn't ask ... My wife and I just celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. My wife is very involved in volunteer work. I wear my Pitt engineering cap that gets attention in all parts of the US and Europe. I worked on two professional sports car race teams and helped one win a national championship in 1997. I attended the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving in Phoenix, where I drove a new Corvette Z06 on the Firebird Raceway. I love to drive all three of my Corvettes. My two sons both are entrepreneurs.