

Stephen Geyer ('96)

Distinguished Alumni, College of Education

Stephen Geyer has worked with Goochland County (Virginia) Public Schools since 2011, and is now the assistant superintendent of instruction. He earned a bachelor's degree in English from JMU and went on to earn a Master of Education and Doctor of Education in administration and supervision from the University of Virginia. Geyer's responsibilities center around pre-K-12 instructional programming for the division. He also serves as an adjunct instructor for the Curry School of Education in U.Va.'s education leadership program.

Prior to joining the team in Goochland, he was an elementary-school principal in Northern Virginia for more than a decade. There he established an instructional literacy framework recognized by the McGuffey Reading Center as "one of the most comprehensive and effectively designed approaches in the state." In 2013, the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development recognized Geyer as Virginia's Curriculum Leader of the Year. He began his career as a secondary-school English teacher.



Stephen Geyer ('96) celebrates with his wife and children at the 2016 alumni awards banquet.

Geyer is a brother of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity and served as a resident adviser and student ambassador while at JMU. He and his wife, Emily ('98M), and their children, Alexandra and William, live in Goochland, Virginia.

'The ultimate connector'

A scholarship built by friends BY MARTHA GRAHAM ('03P, '08P, '12P)

never saw it coming," says Steve Smith, a man rarely at a loss for words, when he learned that a lifetime's worth of friends banded together to fund a scholarship to celebrate the impact of his career on JMU.

By the time friends gathered to celebrate Smith's retirement, they were halfway to their goal of endowing the Charles Steven Smith ('71, '75M) Legacy Scholarship, which will fund an annual award for a deserving student with a direct alumni legacy. "When they announced how much they had already received, I was speechless," he says.

The convivial Smith began accumulating friends when he enrolled at then-Madison College in 1967 and joined Sigma Phi Epsilon. "When I started at Madison, I would have been the last person to be in a fraternity, but I got into one. I made a lot of wonderful friendships with my fraternity brothers, many of whom I keep up with."

Smith earned a bachelor's degree in history and later a master's in counselor education. After graduating, he worked in Madison's admissions office. "I was a road runner," he says. "I went out and talked to high-school kids about coming to JMU. I had hair down to my shoulders and could relate to the kids. We got a lot of good prospective students."

In 1985, Smith became director of the JMU Alumni Association, a position that suited his bent for connecting people. In 1990, he took a hiatus from the university to work at another college and then in industry, but he returned in 2001, joining the development office. "I missed it," he says. "I felt like I always belonged at JMU."

In 2004, Smith became associate vice president for constituent relations.



"Steve Smith is the ultimate connector—he knows everyone!" says Ashley Privott ('15M), current alumni director. "This scholarship is a testament to all those friendships. The fact that it will be awarded to legacy students is fitting because one of Steve's great joys is seeing generations of JMU families attending Madison. It has been so wonderful to see so many JMU friends honor Steve and his dedication to his alma mater."

One of those friends is Larry Caudle ('82), a fraternity brother, partner in the law firm Kraftson Caudle and lead donor for the Smith scholarship initiative. "Steve is responsible for reconnecting more alumni to JMU than anyone I know," Caudle says. "He cherishes his own Madison Experience and understands that is the driving force behind any alum's decision to invest their time, treasures and talents in the university. More importantly, Steve believes that our collective Madison Experiences do not have to end at graduation, and he is a master at reuniting alumni with long-lost friends, roommates and teammates. My wife, Barbara ('81), and I are extremely proud to be part of this effort to recognize Steve's legacy because we believe nobody has opened more doors at Madison."

Smith's Madison career has come full circle. Reprising his first recruiting role, he's now working part time in Admissions. "I work with alumni families who have kids interested in coming to JMU." The scholarship, which reached \$40,560 at press time, ensures Smith's legacy will reach far into the future. He looks forward to meeting the student recipients. "I'll probably know some of their families." You can help push this scholarship to the \$50,000 endowment mark at bit.ly/AlumSmithLegacy.