

ALUMNI NEWS

Distinguished contributors

The Alumni Association honors the achievements of notable alumni at the Alumni Awards Banquet. Take a closer look at these 2017 Distinguished Award winners.

Joseph Damico ('76, '77M)

INEZ GRAYBEAL ROOP ('35) ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD

Joseph Damico has served his alma mater in numerous capacities, including as a member of the



JMU Board of Visitors and chair of the presidential search committee that brought Jonathan Alger to JMU.

Damico and his wife, Pamela ('77), are philanthropic leaders of the university. Their \$1 million gift for the Jackson E. Ramsey Eminent Scholars Centennial Chair was a lead gift for the Centennial Campaign. Damico also led the board of visitors in making a \$100,000 gift to erect the Centennial Fountain in front of Burruss Hall. With more than 35 years of health care experience, Damico is a founding member and serves as an operating principal of RoundTable Healthcare Partners.

Carrie Owen Plietz ('97)

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI College of Health and Behavioral Studies

Carrie Owen Plietz is the executive vice president and chief operating officer of WellStar Health System's hospital division. She



oversees the operation of WellStar's 11 hospital locations, as well as real estate, construction and facilities

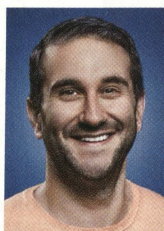
development, and security and emergency preparedness. Prior to joining WellStar in 2016, she

was the CEO of Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento, California. Plietz serves on the American College of Healthcare Executives Board of Governors. She has been honored as one of *Modern Healthcare's* 2011 Up and Comers, *Becker's Hospital Review's* Top 25 executives under 40 for five consecutive years and the 2010 Robert S. Hudgens Young Health Care Executive of the Year by the American College of Healthcare Executives. Plietz lives in Marietta, Georgia, with her husband, Jasen ('97), and two children.

Avrum Elmakis ('01)

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI College of Integrated Science and Engineering

Avrum Elmakis describes himself as a "serial entrepreneur and investor" who has built multiple successful businesses in



various markets. Elmakis and his wife, Lauren McKay ('01), started TDBBS, a natural dog treat com-

pany, in their kitchen soon after graduating from JMU. The company now employs around 125 people in Richmond, Virginia, and has numerous facilities around the world. In 2013, Elmakis was named an Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year. The company has been named to *Inc.* magazine's list of the 500/5,000 fastest-growing businesses in America every year since 2012. In 2016, TDBBS earned a spot on the lauded *Inc.* 500/5,000 Honor Roll for making the list for five consecutive years. The company has also won numerous awards for being one of the fastest-growing businesses in the greater Richmond, Virginia, area. Elmakis is active in his community and serves on numerous boards, primarily for nonprofit organizations.

Activate your Madison Network

BY HEATHER HEDRICK ('00), Alumni Association president

As a JMU alumna, I have a deep appreciation for the Madison Experience and all that JMU does to inspire our continued dreams of living productive and meaningful lives. I have been blessed over the years that my network members—my husband, some of my best friends, my mentors and many of my colleagues—are also alumni who share this Madison Experience. My experience is not unique, and this "Madison Network" is the common bond that connects each of us to the university and our own personal Madison Experiences. The Madison Network is not something you have to join. As a student, alumni, faculty, staff, parent, family or friend of JMU, you are already a part of it!

The benefits of the Madison Network come alive through connection, conversation and engagement with one another. Connection is created by accessing interactive resources like the *Dukes Take Five* blog. Conversation can occur naturally by attending functions such as your local alumni chapter networking events. You can stay engaged with JMU through opportunities like mentoring current students or young alumni. These are just a few ways you can activate your Madison Network and enjoy the benefits of personal and professional growth.

The Madison Network, when kept in motion, serves as a catalyst to help you continually build upon your Madison Experience for years to come. So what are you waiting for? Engage in the ways that are most meaningful to you and activate your Madison Network today!

(Right): Hedrick networks with Stephanie Bowlin ('01) during the Women for Madison Network Breakfast in Richmond, Virginia. (Below): Alumnae activated their Madison Network at the breakfast, which featured guest speaker Donna Harper's ('77, '81M, '86Ed.S.) talk on creating harmony between work and home life.

