

# Personal Planning

Fall/Winter



## BEREA COLLEGE



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNED PHILANTHROPY



As campus kicked off a hopeful fall semester, we were reminded that meaningful moments like those shared in this issue are made possible by the faithful commitment of donors who provide steadfast support to Berea College and its students.

In this issue we are pleased to give you a glimpse into another meaningful moment, the summer internship experience of West Virginia native Randie '26, the first-ever Ray Ramseyer Endowed Intern in Alumni, Communication and Philanthropy. This endowment was recently funded by Ray's loving son Craig Ramseyer in dedication to his father.

As part of Randie's internship experience, she traveled with Berea representatives to visit donors in West Virginia, Virginia, and California. As one of Randie's supervisors throughout the nine-week experience, it was a joy for me to see her flourish during our time together as well as witness the bright smiles on donors' faces, many of whom had never met a current Berea student.

One donor couple Randie met was Jeff Kunkel and Mary Elyn Bahlert, residents of Oakland, California, who are featured in this issue. I was fortunate to be present for this meaningful interaction. As we sat in their peaceful living room drinking hot licorice tea together, we shared stories about Berea, our lives, and hopes and dreams for the future, including Randie's aspiration to travel to Ireland, one of Jeff and Mary Elyn's favorite destinations. This special visit was impactful for all of us. In addition to creating a special connection between a current student and wonderful

friends of the College, the experience helped Randie grow and explore as she navigates her educational experience and prepares for the many possibilities within her reach.

On another note, I am happy to share with you that we have learned that charitable gift annuity rates are increasing in January 2024. These rates are the highest we have offered within the past decade. I encourage you to please contact me or any member of our Planned Philanthropy team to learn more or to request a personal charitable gift annuity exhibit for your review. We will be happy to help you achieve your philanthropic goals in a way that benefits you and the College.

We in Planned Philanthropy and throughout the College remain thankful for your thoughtful support of Berea College and its students.

As we celebrate the start of the new year, we wish you many bright days ahead filled with abundant peace, love, and joy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Harmon, '99".

Amy Harmon '99, CFRE, CSPG  
Executive Director of Planned Philanthropy  
800-457-9846 ext. 3868  
harmona@berea.edu

P.S. Please consider supporting Berea's students and our greatest need by contributing to the Berea Fund today at [give.berea.edu/give](https://give.berea.edu/give)

CONTACT THE OFFICE OF PLANNED PHILANTHROPY  
Call [800-457-9846](tel:800-457-9846) Email [plannedgiving@berea.edu](mailto:plannedgiving@berea.edu) Visit [berea.giftlegacy.com](https://berea.giftlegacy.com)

“Beyond funding the no-tuition promise, it is the other programs such as endowed internships, extra-curricular activities, the arts, study abroad, guest speakers, and more that makes Berea so special.”

RANDIE '26  
MAJOR: ENGLISH

Photo credit Nay Kaw '23

## FIRST-EVER RAY RAMSEYER ENDOWED INTERNSHIP STUDENT ENGAGES WITH DONORS DURING UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Randie '26 made her way to Berea College from her hometown of Beckley, West Virginia, looking for an education and an opportunity to secure a strong future. What she found was a new world of opportunities, possibilities and valuable life lessons, which are changing the trajectory of her life.


A family friend encouraged her to learn about Berea College and its offerings. At first, Randie explains, “I was resistant to the prospect of coming here, because I had my heart set on going to West Virginia University with my friends from high school.” Randie said that during the application process, “I found myself feeling more invested in Berea College. I started researching the different programs after an interview with my admissions counselor. The process felt very personal, as I felt she was invested in showing me aspects about the school I would love. Applying to Berea made me feel like I was pushing myself.” A College tour was “the icing on cake,” said Randie. “I fell in love with the old architecture, the affordability, the very real prospect of studying abroad, **and I saw who I wanted to be mirrored in the students here.** Above all, I knew Berea would challenge me in a way I did not think I would find elsewhere.”

Focusing on academics is a priority for Randie, along with taking time for herself. She hopes to become a Teaching Assistant/Resident Assistant for the Bridge program because, “I found it valuable as a freshman. It showed me the expectations Berea has for students.” Learn more about the Bridge program at [berea.edu/office-of-student-success-and-transition/berea-bridge](http://berea.edu/office-of-student-success-and-transition/berea-bridge).

Randie's opportunities so far include a summer internship with the College's Office of Planned Philanthropy. She is the first Ray Ramseyer Endowed Intern. This summer internship in the division of Alumni, Communication, and Philanthropy is designed for a student who is considering a career in the non-profit field and is a participant in the Berea Patrons program, a gift club for current students who are also donors. She said, “**My favorite part was meeting donors, as I was able to see in person the investment they put in us students as the future.**” During this summer internship, Randie traveled with Executive Director of Planned Philanthropy Amy Harmon to visit with longtime Berea friends Jeff Kunkel and Mary Elyn Bahlert. “I was able to experience the care and feelings behind donations,” said Randie. “I had not known how important

*Continued on back page* **RANDIE**



A close-up portrait of Jeff Kunkel, a middle-aged man with grey hair and a goatee, wearing a blue suit jacket over a green shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

“Berea’s unique model of education remains attractive and relevant. Mary Elyn and I want to be part of that unique model of education and growth.”

**JEFF KUNKEL**  
CALIFORNIA

GREAT COMMITMENTS SOCIETY MEMBER

Photo credit [jeffkunkel.org](http://jeffkunkel.org)

## YEARS-LONG FRIENDS OF BEREA COLLEGE FIND JOY IN SUPPORTING STUDENT OFFERINGS AND BEREA’S UNIQUE FUNDING MODEL

A growing relationship between a small liberal arts college in Kentucky and steadfast friend began 44 years ago with a simple lunch and a road trip.

Jeff Kunkel, a student at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, was traveling via I-75 in his 1963 Chevy Nova on his way to a work assignment in Eastern Kentucky. Along the way he saw a sign indicating the Historic Boone Tavern Inn and Restaurant at the next exit. Jeff thought he would take a break from his travels and have a nice lunch, and it turned out to be so much more.

Jeff notes that the young waiter who assisted him at Boone Tavern was a “Berea student who was working and training in the restaurant as part of her tuition-free education. This made me want to learn more about Berea College, so after lunch, I wandered around town, talked to more students, visited Hutchins Library, the Sunshine Ballard Weaving Studio, and the Log House Craft Store.” He also collected materials from the Office of Admissions and learned about Berea’s unique model of education.

While Jeff was impressed with so many aspects of Berea College during his encounter, he later learned that the grandmother of one of his friends attended Berea College when women were un-welcome in many other college classrooms. “I began to make small annual gifts to Berea College, which helped me feel connected to the students,” said Jeff.

Years later, Jeff and his wife, Mary Elyn Bahlert, scheduled a campus visit, stayed in the Historic Boone Tavern Inn, and toured the campus farm, gardens, library, studios, and music center. “We saw and met students who were studying, working, and making things,” said Jeff. “The students were engaged – body, mind, and spirit.”

Last summer, Jeff and Mary Elyn met with Randie, a second-year Berea student, during a visit to their home in California. Randie joined Amy Harmon of the College’s Planned Philanthropy team during this visit and, according to Jeff, Randie “shared about growing up in West Virginia and her studies and work in the Berea College Writing Center, which, she hoped, might offer her some direction

*Continued on next page* **JEFF**

Cont. **JEFF**

about her future path.” This meeting also opened Randie to the experience and perspectives of two of Berea College’s steadfast friends. “My favorite part (of the Ray Ramseyer Endowed Internship) was meeting donors, as I got to see in person the investment they put in us students as the future,” said Randie. “I got to experience the feeling behind the support and the care.”

As a writer and artist, Jeff said he knows the value of making useful, beautiful, and interesting things by hand, and he is glad that making such things can be a necessary part of student education at Berea College. Mary Elyn most values the integrated, co-educational history of Berea College, and as a first-generation college student herself, Mary Elyn knows the value of a college that deliberately serves first-generation students.

“Mary Elyn and I have discovered that one of the great joys is the ability to offer financial support to the people and organizations we value,” said Jeff. “We both value liberal arts education, and Berea’s unique model of education remains attractive and relevant. Mary Elyn and I want to be part of that unique model of education and growth.”

**“Not long ago, we made Berea College a beneficiary of our living trust and became members of Berea’s Great Commitments Society during the 100 in 100 Initiative. Just recently, we began to set up a charitable gift annuity with Berea College,”** said Jeff. They hope that one day Jeff can offer a workshop on writing or painting to Berea students, and Mary Elyn, as a retired pastor and current spiritual leader, can lead a retreat or preach a sermon at Berea. **“All of this has arisen from a lunch at Boone Tavern more than forty years ago,”** said Jeff.

Cont. **RANDIE**

donor support is, nor how donors donate to certain programs based on their interest and our needs,” said Randie.

In addition to her internship, Randie identifies life lessons she has learned through her labor positions at the College. During the fall semester, Randie worked with Dr. Amrita Mishra as her Teaching Assistant/Peer Leader. “I spent most of my time reading for the class, attending class, grading, and holding student hours where I was available for students to come see me for help,” said Randie. “In this role, and my previous position as a Facilities Assistant, I have learned the importance of looking at perspectives outside of my own. As a Facilities Assistant, I learned how valuable physical labor jobs are to keeping the school running. As a Teaching Assistant/Peer Leader, I have learned it is important to meet people where they are and to help them get where they want to be.”

Randie’s Berea journey has included meeting high academic standards, participating in a summer internship, thriving in her labor positions, and immersing herself in campus activities and organizations including Book Club. She demonstrates that learning goes well beyond the classroom and shares, **“When an opportunity pops up, seize it. Berea has many opportunities available, if one puts in the effort to look and work for it.”**

When thinking of the tremendous impact alumni and friends have had on her, Randie shares directly with donors, **“You are more essential than you may realize. Beyond funding the no-tuition promise, it is the other programs such as endowed internships, extracurricular activities, the arts, study abroad, guest speakers, and more that makes Berea so special. It is where we see the aspects of life valued by you and feel the gift of generational hope. Thank you!”**

## Charitable Gift Annuity rates have **INCREASED!**

Now is a great time to contact our Planned Philanthropy team to learn more or request a personalized exhibit.

800-457-9846 • [plannedgiving@berea.edu](mailto:plannedgiving@berea.edu) • [berea.giftlegacy.com](http://berea.giftlegacy.com)



# — ENDOWING OUR FUTURE —

At Berea College, we offer a number of charitable gift and estate-planning strategies that can benefit you and the next generation of students.

Contact us to learn how you can make a gift to endow our future.

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