

AURORA



Class notes and in memoriam

Submissions received June-October 2021

Above: **Cindy Wright '88**, left, UAF Alumni Association president, and Theresa Bakker, UAFAA executive director, show their UAF pride with Nook at the Golden Days parade in July 2021 during the Nanook Rendezvous reunion (read more about reunion near the bottom of this article). UAF photo by JR Ancheta. Photos below were provided by alumni unless otherwise noted.



Eric Miller

Eric E. Miller '77 retired on May 29, 2021. Miller served as an audit and logistics services manager for NTA Inc. He later received his master's certificate from Villanova University in church administration. He continued as parish administrator and accountant for 12 years at St. Stephen the Martyr in Renton, Washington, until his

retirement. He remains active as Finance Council chairman, and serves as board member for St. Stephen Housing (transitional housing for homeless families) and its preschool. He is also a member of the Rotary Club International.



Sean Mesloh. Photo courtesy of the Alaska Railroad Corp.

Sean Mesloh '93 was promoted to chief mechanical officer at the Alaska Railroad, effective March 1, 2021.

Ryan Anderson '97 was named commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities by Gov. Mike Dunleavy in September. Ryan earned a bachelor's degree in geological engineering from UAF. He

has worked for DOTPF for two decades, most recently as Northern Region director.



Laura Wallace Burleson '97 — “After graduating from UAF, I took a job in a genetics lab at Yale University while working on a genetic epidemiology project that I found fascinating. I discovered that I was far too clumsy for lab work. I then pursued further education, first with a master’s in public health and then further training in epidemiology. I started working in drug safety for a pharmaceutical company during graduate school and have worked in the field ever since. Last year, I was promoted to be the head of the Global Epidemiology and Real World Evidence Department at Boehringer Ingelheim, a mid-sized European pharmaceutical company, and moved from the U.S. to sunny German wine country. I live in the area and enjoy hiking through the hills covered in grapevines on evenings and weekends.”



UAF photo by JR Ancheta.

Forrest Kuiper '99, '00, '12 is acting fire chief of the University Fire Department. He also currently holds Seat 3 on the UAF Alumni Association board, representing the Fairbanks area. He previously held the position of board treasurer. His spouse, **Buffy Kuiper '03, '11**, works for UA Scholars and Alaska 529.



Forrest and Buffy Kuiper

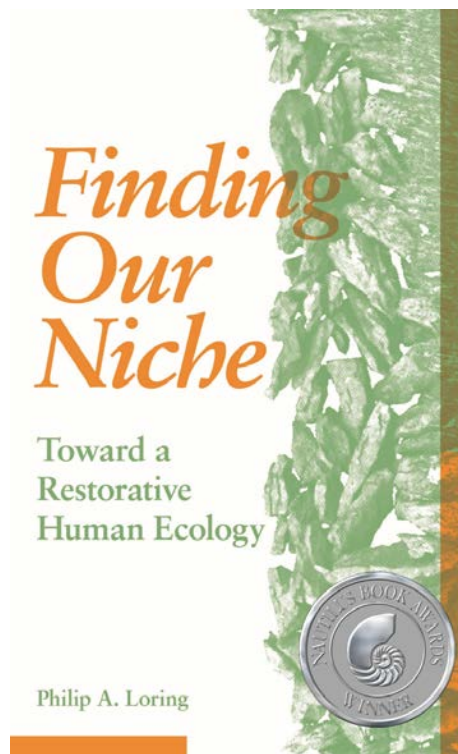


Philip A. Loring '07, '10 — “I currently hold the Arrell Chair in Food, Policy and Society at the University of Guelph, and am an associate professor in the Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics. My research on food and sustainability has taken me to a wide range of locales, from the coastal clam gardens of British Columbia to the rocky landscape of western Ireland. In addition to my book, I have emphasized science communication and outreach in a variety of media, including short films and a TEDx talk that has been viewed over 100,000 times. My short documentary film, ‘Wetland/Waste Land,’ won an honourable mention in the Let’s Talk About Water Film Festival.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ut3x-wGyuQ>

I received two advanced degrees from UAF, an M.A. in anthropology in 2007 and Ph.D. in Indigenous studies in 2010. I have a new book, 'Finding Our Niche.' The book tells many stories of my time in rural Alaska for my research and won two awards — a Nautilus Book Awards silver medal (in ecology and environment) and an Independent Publisher Book Awards 'Ippy' gold medal (in regional non-fiction)."



Clockwise from left: The cover of Philip's book bears a winner's seal from the Nautilus Book Awards; Philip, right, prepares for an interview about the impacts of climate change on food for TV Ontario's news magazine, "The Agenda"; Philip visits County Claire, Ireland, in 2019.



Ray Zhenhua Rui '09, '11, '12 has received the 2021 International Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Petroleum Engineers. The award recognizes Ray's exceptional engineering accomplishments and his contributions to more than 20 SPE and United Nations committees.

Ray holds the Distinguished Chair Professor position at China University of Petroleum-Beijing. At UAF, he first earned master's degrees in petroleum engineering and business administration and then a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary studies.



Charu Uppal '10, '14 passed the CFRE International examination to become a certified fundraising executive. Uppal, who holds master's degrees in professional communication and in business administration from UAF, serves as the associate director of individual giving at the Portland Art Museum.

Before the museum, she managed the annual giving program at the Oregon Zoo Foundation for over four years. At the onset of COVID-19, in March 2022, she led the Emergency Recovery Fund campaign to mitigate revenue loss caused by closures. The campaign exceeded the \$1 million goal in 21 days.

In 2020, Charu was selected for a prestigious mentorship program offered by the Association of Fundraising Professionals. As a part of the program, she designed and conducted a nationwide research study to explore how bias, prejudice and inequity manifest in the lives of racialized and marginalized fundraisers. The findings of the study were published as the cover story of Advancing Philanthropy, AFP's flagship magazine, in July 2021. By amplifying diverse voices, she said, she seeks to increase awareness of the issues faced by diverse individuals and to create greater accountability in the fundraising profession.

Charu, who grew up in New Delhi, India, said her first fundraising project was selling World Wildlife Fund buttons to preserve and protect wildlife when she was 8 years old, and she continues to support environmental nonprofit organizations.

Every free minute she gets, Charu explores the wilderness with her husband, **Ross Imbler '08, '10**, her kids Sitara, 9, and Adler, 5, and her rescue dog Apples, 10.



Clockwise from top: Charu and her family paddle at Cascade Lakes near Mount Bachelor in central Oregon; Charu celebrates at Commencement 2014. UAF photo by JR Ancheta; Charu takes a photo of herself with her husband, Ross Imbler, and kids Sitara, left, and Adler.

Nathan Johnson '17 — “I graduated in 2017 with a Bachelor of Emergency Management. During my time at UAF, I also worked at the University Fire Department. Since graduating, I have moved back to Washington and currently reside in Yakima, where I am the local emergency response coordinator for the Yakima Health District. This

position has allowed me to put my education into practice and build public health emergency preparedness systems within Yakima County.

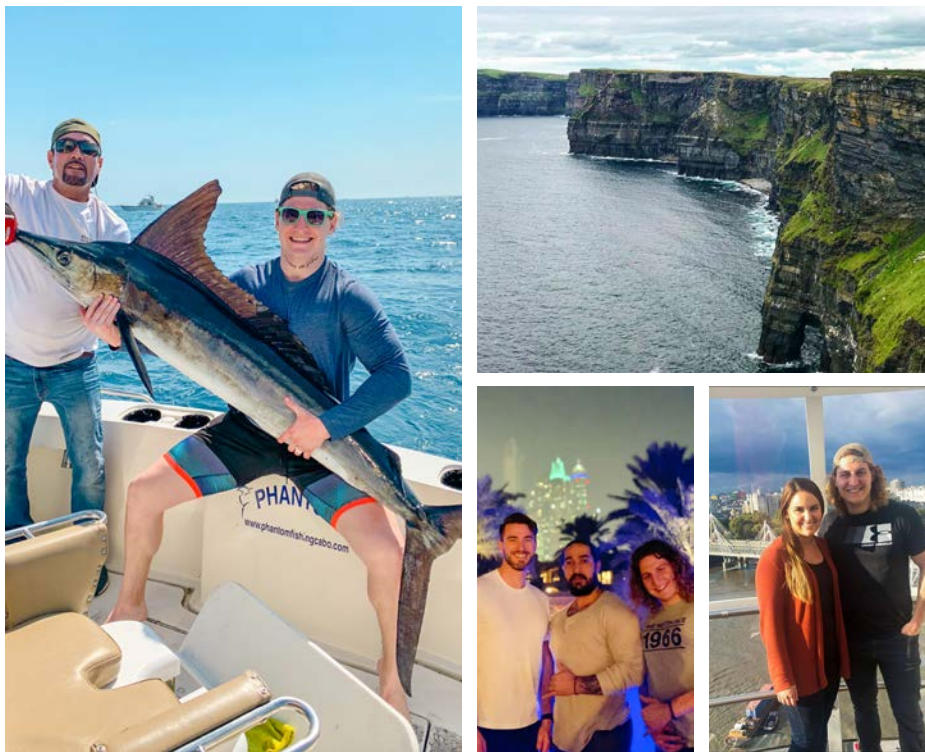
Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I served as the incident commander for the county's response to the pandemic. This provided me with opportunities to coordinate between local, state and federal partners closely as we navigated the response. My education from UAF gave me the tools necessary as I worked with colleagues to build low-barrier, accessible and equitable systems to provide resources to a historically underserved and vulnerable community. This included personal protective equipment distribution, community-based testing and community-based vaccine distribution.

I thank UAF for having such a robust emergency management program to provide students with the foundation to excel within the field.”

Kyle Evans '18, '19, '20 — “I completed three degrees at UAF — an associate in general studies, a bachelor's in homeland security and emergency management, and a master's in security and disaster management.

Upon graduating, I found myself with a plethora of free time. It was confusing at first. How do people spend their time after work? I had prioritized homework over hobbies

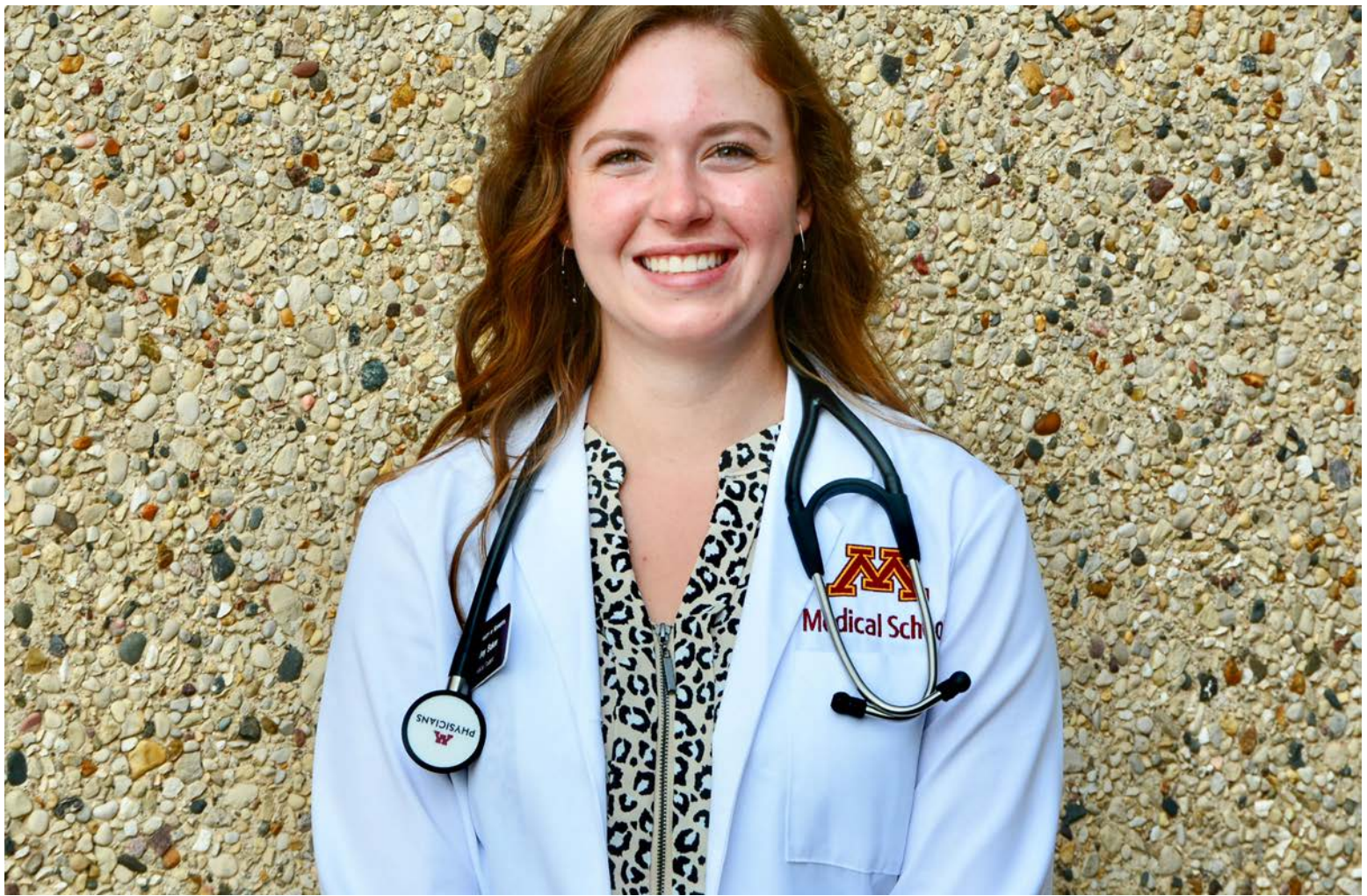
for years. After some thought, it was decided: time to reconnect with the outdoors. Fortunately, I work in a career field that allows me to travel the world. Some of the neater experiences over the past couple years have been swimming with sharks in Belize, catching blue marlin in Mexico, dining at a restaurant near the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, demolishing baguettes and wine with my wife at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, walking along the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, and gazing out over downtown from the London Eye Ferris wheel.



*Clockwise from left: Kyle holds a marlin he caught while deep-sea fishing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; The Cliffs of Moher form part of Ireland's west coast, where Kyle visited after graduating; Kyle and his wife, **Samantha '15**, ride the London Eye Ferris wheel; Kyle, right, visits with friends Joe and Travis in downtown Dubai.*

Gaining a deeper understanding of the world and immersing yourself in other cultures is also intriguing to me. I was able to observe Black Lives Matter protests in Washington, D.C., see the drawdown in Afghanistan firsthand and learn passable French that I will hopefully be able to use with locals next time I am in France.

Adventures aside, I look forward to returning to Alaska permanently. In the meantime, I have been contracted to work for two Fortune 500 companies, utilizing skills learned from my time at UAF and in the U.S. Air Force. At the first company, I served as a site lead, instructor and member of a test and evaluation team for a research project. I am now filling the role of a senior design engineer.”



Hailey Baker '21 — “I graduated from UAF with my B.S. in biology with the class of 2021. I recently started my medical degree at the University of Minnesota on the Duluth campus, which specializes in rural and American Indian/Alaska Native health care (a perfect fit for my future patient population!). I was raised in Fairbanks and am so happy and thankful to have attended UAF for my undergraduate degree.

If there are any pre-med students who would like to reach out with questions about the process or my journey here, I encourage them to email me at bake1547@d.umn.edu. I always like to help others however I can.”





Nanook Rendezvous reunion hosted virtual and in-person alumni

Thank you to all who joined us for this year's Nanook Rendezvous alumni reunion, July 22-24. The UAF Alumni Association kicked off the

celebration with a virtual tour of recent additions to campus, including the new bowhead whale exhibit at the UA Museum of the North and the Alaska Esports Center. More than 600 viewers joined us on Facebook and YouTube to learn about these innovations.

After the tour, alumni joined an online game hosted by the Alaska Esports Center crew. Teams of players shared their punniest answers, while the rest of us voted for our favorites. Later, the alumni association hosted an Outdoor Open House in front of Constitution Hall. Guests picked up new UAF alumni T-shirts and other blue and gold goodies while catching up with fellow alums and posing for pictures with Nook.

Photo caption: Cindy and Bill Wright join Nook at the Alaska Goldpanners' Nanook Night during the 2021 Nanook Rendezvous. UAF photo by JR Ancheta.

Fairbanks Friday continued our tradition of bringing the celebration to local alumni-owned and UAF-supporting businesses. HooDoo Brewing Co., Ursa Major Distilling, The Roaming Root Cellar and Cafe de Stir It Up each offered special Nanook-themed menu items and goodies. That evening, we were excited to be back in the ballpark for the traditional Nanook Night with the Alaska Goldpanners. Even though we got rained out, alumni were invited to attend any other game during the remainder of the season.

We hope you were able to connect with your fellow alumni and make some new memories. Campus photographer **JR Ancheta '15** took a great selection of photos at our reunion events, which you can explore in our [online photo gallery](#).

**Save the date for next year's
reunion in July 2022 during Golden
Days.**



Chancellor Dan White, center left, visits with UAF alumni and Nook during the 2021 Nanook Rendezvous. UAF photo by JR Ancheta.





In memoriam

[View a list of alumni and friends whose passage has been shared with us since the previous issue of Aurora.](#)



