

# ARCS

## ARCS PITTSBURGH NEWSLETTER WINTER 2023

### Message from the Co-Presidents

If you are like me, winters in Pittsburgh seem like they are getting longer. Dinners looking out to a night sky and always feeling chilled even in my own home has me longing for Spring already. Escapes to warmer climates has become key to enjoying the season.

Luckily, ARCS National has scheduled this month's meeting in Arizona. One of the meeting's focal points is the kickoff of a strategic planning process to address some of the challenges we face as an organization. If we want to remain relevant and impactful as an organization, we need to be alert to our changing environment and adjust our course accordingly. I'm confident that all of the time and effort that will be put into this planning process at the National level will be beneficial to all the chapters as well.

Anne and I are looking forward to participating in this meeting and purchased our airfare back in November!

If you were unable to attend the Donor Appreciation event on October 18, you missed an enjoyable evening at the University of Pittsburgh. We had a great turnout of members and scholars. We have shared photos from the event in this newsletter. We hope to connect with you at future events. Watch your email for dates and registration information.

We will be featuring scholars in our "spotlight" section to share not only highlights of their research but also something that interests them outside of the lab. Anne and I thought we would also share.

One of my winter distractions is playing paddle tennis. If you are not familiar with this sport it is a hybrid of tennis and racquet ball, played outside in the winter. I find it a great way to get some fresh air and exercise during a season when my first instinct is to hibernate.

Anne just completed a 5-week, 4,800 mile sightseeing trip to Winnipeg, Canada with her husband to celebrate their 49th wedding anniversary. The first trip back in 1973 included wonderful dinners, a visit to the zoo and a chance to see the Winnipeg Jets play hockey. The Canadian border guard was amused when she explained the reason for their revisit. Also, a family wedding in Redstone, Colorado provided an opportunity to connect with distant cousins while enjoying a spectacular view of the Rocky Mountains. This round-trip journey allowed us to see the vast amount of farmlands and ranches on both sides of the border. Great memories were relived at the end of our trip.

Read on to learn about Anne Gormaley, our featured scholar.

**Anne Crawford  
& Linda Thier**  
Co-Presidents

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## Donor Appreciation Event

The University of Pittsburgh hosted our Donor Appreciation Event on October 18 at the University Club. It was great to see so many members, scholars and ARCS supporters in person. Our featured speaker was Yvette Conley, Professor of Nursing and Human Genetics, Vice Chair for Research, PhD Program Director, Health Promotion & Development for the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing. We also got to hear from our scholars who are doing some amazing research!



JoAnn Patross, Nicole Auvil (their scholar), Fred Peters



Kellie Spahr (their scholar) Viju and Anoo Verghis

### Spotlight on a Scholar

**Anne Gormaley**, a Pittsburgh Chapter Award scholar, attends the University of Pittsburgh, Swanson School of Engineering's Department of Bioengineering. While her research interest focuses on the development of neural interfaces that allow us to send and receive signals to and from the brain through novel tools, Anne's approach to



managing stress and making new friends around Pittsburgh is skateboarding and has even participated in nearby competitions.



Linda Thier, Bev Elliott, Annie Rivers – 2020, 2021 and 2022 ARCS Light Awardees



Anne Crawford, Yvette Conley (featured speaker), Linda Thier



## When I Grow Up...

I have a clear memory from many years ago of an incredibly long list of what I was going to do “when I grew up.” I have a second equally distinct memory from my 10th wedding anniversary. I was 31 years old, married, with two going on three kids, and living in a red brick colonial house in Point Breeze in the city of Pittsburgh. I was and still am extremely happy with that circumstance, but I did have a sudden realization that the incredibly long list of possibilities of my childhood had somehow been severely curtailed – seemingly almost without my knowledge. I was most likely NOT going to be a neurosurgeon or an astronaut or President of the USA or a championship skier or swimmer, etc., etc. Every time we make a choice in our lives, we are declining or at least postponing other choices. We take a road, less traveled or not, and, according to Robert Frost, that makes all the difference.

I’m sharing this personal realization with you because it is fundamental to my commitment to the ARCS Foundation Endowment. I chose to be an English Major. I don’t regret that, but as a liberal arts student, I would have little to no impact on the world of scientific innovation and discovery. And that IS a regret because

advances in medicine, engineering, technology and information science are extremely important to the strength and well-being of our country and of mankind as a whole.

So how does a Jane Austen groupie get in on that action? Supporting an ARCS Foundation Endowed Award, of course!!! ARCS Pittsburgh now has 10 endowments, 6 at CMU and 4 at Pitt, totaling \$1,150,000 and involving more than two dozen ARCS Pittsburgh members as donors. The generosity of these donors will stretch far into the future and impact countless lives through discoveries to be made by scientists not yet born.

I invite all ARCS Pittsburgh members not currently participating in an endowed award to consider the possibility of this kind of legacy. Endowed awards may be created via a single donor or in partnership with others, allowing for the broadest possible participation at a minimum donation of \$2,000 per year for 5 years. I hope you will think about it and contact me if you are interested in knowing more. Jane Austen would be proud!

### **Jeanne B. Berdik**

Endowment Committee Chair  
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## ARCS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Journey

In 2020-21, we faced a lot of challenges aside from funding Scholar Awards. We had to deal with the virus lockdown, adjusting to virtual meetings and programs (when they could be scheduled at all), resulting in lack of engagement and potential membership losses. As Chapter President, I was also on ARCS National's Council of Presidents (COP). The COP is a collaborative body of all the Chapter Presidents. We commiserated and shared coping strategies. Raised for our consideration after the George Floyd murder was whether ARCS should be taking a position on the Black Lives Matter/Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) movement. The COP's initial discussion was inconclusive, largely driven by questions about what we could add in terms of action. We referred the issue back to ARCS National President, Sherry Lundeen, who determined that the COP should continue to work on the matter.

I had personally come to the conclusion that pursuing the issue DID matter to ARCS, and I brought the issue to the Pittsburgh Chapter Board, who were unanimously in favor of pursuing the issue for lots of reasons, including reinforcing the ARCS Mission, expanding our reach, increasing membership and interest, partnering with our universities in their existing programs, and because we felt it was "the right thing to do." We proceeded to discuss and create a Pittsburgh Chapter Statement as follows:

*ARCS Foundation Pittsburgh Chapter, an organization of women committed to advancing science in the US through awards to PhD students, supports the universities we serve in their efforts to integrate inclusion, diversity and equity as a priority, and we are committed to reflect those principles in our own organization.*



We submitted this statement for ARCS National approval, but, in the meantime, a Task Force had been established to develop a DEI statement for ARCS National. It was headed by Beth Wainwright of our Chapter. That group developed a statement as follows, which the Pittsburgh Chapter unanimously adopted, in lieu of its own statement, at our Annual Meeting in May 2022:

### Opening Doors to Scientific Achievement

- ARCS Foundation embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values critical to scientific excellence and innovation.
- We believe these core values are crucial to creating a welcoming environment within our organization.
- We open doors to talented individuals who bring different perspectives to scientific research.
- ARCS Foundation celebrates and supports the efforts of our partner institutions as they eliminate barriers to academic achievement.

ARCS National then appointed a Task Force to develop action recommendations. The

Task Force, led by our own Beth Wainwright and Barb Goergen, of the Minnesota Chapter, began a year's work to develop those recommendations. Fifty-five members, scholars and scholar alums participated in the five working groups, including Pittsburgh Chapter members Beth, Pam Meadowcroft, Brigitte Bouchat, Inez Miles, and me (I chaired the Values working group.) The Task Force produced a multitude of recommendations, including the formation of a National Standing Committee to undertake realizing the recommendations.



I am the chair of that Committee, which has 23 volunteer members, with five from the Pittsburgh Chapter: Beth Wainwright, Pam Meadowcroft, Jodi Forlizzi, Jennifer Martin and I. The Committee also includes 18 women who served on the year-long Task Force.

The DEI Standing Committee has it work cut out. Our five groups (Chapter/Members; Universities; Scholars; Funding; and Resources) will undertake projects, which for 22-23 will emphasize:

- Understanding and addressing the barriers to ARCS Chapter membership
- Supporting the National priority of investigating whether to include US Permanent Residents as Scholars
- Investigating adding MSIs (Minority Servicing Institutions, formerly HBCUs) to our list of approved universities
- Addressing funding Scholars at the undergraduate level
- Establishing a Scholar Alum network
- Developing a program and funding for Scholars to mentor K-12 students
- Reviewing and revising Governance, marketing, and other documents and materials to reflect our commitment to DEI
- Undertake changing some forms to obtain more demographic information
- And more!!

As an organization we are stretching to encompass the “unknown best.” I’m plagiarizing a statement made by one of my Task Force colleagues, Jo Whitehead, a physician from the Northern California Chapter:

“Mendel taught us that the hybrid is stronger than the pure-bred, so doesn’t that also apply to the wider universe of strengths and ideas from diverse human beings?”

We hope to strengthen ARCS Foundation with diversity that encompasses all human differences.

**Linda Burke**

## Welcome New ARCS- Pittsburgh Chapter Membership

This has been a banner year for recruiting new members. We’d like to not only meet this number in 2023, but to exceed it. Please consider bringing a friend to one of our programs so that they can see ARCS in action.

**Betsy Cwenar**  
**Aviva Diamond, PhD**  
**Jillian Flatley, Esq**  
**Lynda Flom, MD**  
**Gail Harger**  
**Laura Heberton-Schomchik**

**Stephanie Helman, PhD**  
**Michelle Heusser, PhD**  
**Elizabeth Hobbs**  
**Debbi Linhart**  
**Ellen Pishko**  
**Andrea Sajewski, PhD**

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## Upcoming Events

2023 looks to be a very promising year for program opportunities. Listed below are the upcoming programs so be sure to watch your email for registration and additional information. We’re looking forward to seeing you there.

- January 10th 6-9 PM: 6115 Gates Hillman Center, CMU Campus “*Understanding Stereotype Threat and Unconscious Bias: Mitigating Their Effect on Inclusion and Belonging*.” Talk led by Judy Forlizzi, FDRS, Associate Dean, DEI. Light refreshments will be available.
- January 25th 7 PM via Zoom: New member orientation
- February TBD. Tour of Magee hospital
- March 22nd: Fireside chat and PPG tour with Dr. Sharon Feng
- Date TBD. Tour of new Immunology Labs on Morewood Avenue

If by chance, you haven’t received the invitation for the January 10th event, please contact our administrative assistant, Sarah Stallings at [spswork94@gmail.com](mailto:spswork94@gmail.com) so that she can send it to you.