



the Collage

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Kutztown University

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McKenna Wychunas, Kutztown University Social Work alumna, chose social work after hoping to help others as she had been helped before. "I feel like in my life I've had a lot of experiences where I needed someone to be there for me," she says. "I wanted to be that for someone else." She believes social work was the perfect path to help other people and that the social work program at KU got her where she is today.

McKenna finds herself drawing on her time at KU throughout her career as a case manager for homeless adults at the shelter Servants to All in Schuylkill County. "Without all of the education that I received from my professors and all of my wonderful courses, I wouldn't have

the knowledge and education that I need to work in my job today," she explains. Throughout her day-to-day life, she finds herself using her experiences from her time in the Social Work program. "I feel like in my everyday life I have a person or situation come up that reminds me of something I learned in class, or a skill that I utilize that I learned in one of my courses or from a PowerPoint," she notes. "It's so nice that I can apply those things to my profession."

Working with the homeless population was not always what she wanted to do, but she realized her path when doing an

internship with homeless youth. "My internship turned out to be one of the greatest experiences of my life," she explains. "Now I have a job that I love very much, and I've learned about a population that previously I could never see myself working with." McKenna works with a varying amount of clients, providing case management for homeless adults. She meets with them to put together a 30-day plan, providing long term goals and treatment for her clients to help them get on their feet.

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McKenna has experienced unsuccessful cases, with clients falling back into old habits and ending up in the shelter again. Because of this, she finds the small successes to be that much more rewarding. "Even if it's not something big, any little success is a good thing," she says. "When a client comes in and tells me they got a job, it may not be the best job ever but they got a job—things like that are definitely the most rewarding."

While at KU, McKenna also found her outlet with ACT, or Actors Creating Theater, a student run theater group on campus. She still finds theater to be a way to create time

McKenna Wychunas | Social Work Alumni Highlight

for herself throughout her professional career. "You have to do something for yourself when you're constantly helping out other people," she says. "You have to think of yourself too and have that outlet and safe space for yourself."

McKenna is currently planning on coming back to KU to get her master's degree in social work. "I just look up to everyone in

the field who has their master's degree," she notes. "I think it's a huge accomplishment and I would love to be a part of that." She is also a part of a local theater group where she is currently residing and is performing in two shows this year.

As for what she hopes to impart to current KU students: "It's okay to be confused at first," she says. "You don't have to have all the answers. We have the chance to do something different, and if you don't end up liking something, you can always change it—it might not be easy, but it's definitely worth it if you find something you love."

Congratulations May Graduates

The Dean's office in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences would like to congratulate and celebrate the spring 2024 graduates. We hope you are proud of your accomplishments here at KU as you have made it to the end with success. We cannot wait to see what the future holds for you.

Congratulations class of 2024!



Dr. Wendy Ryan | Marine Science Emeritus Highlight

A path in marine science was non-negotiable for Dr. Wendy Ryan, professor emeritus from Kutztown University. "Even when I was little, all I ever wanted to be was a marine biologist," she says. "I think it's because I grew up by the ocean... it was just a really strong connection." After teaching at KU for 31 years, Dr. Ryan now lives in Coastal Washington, enjoying life as an artist while still teaching those in her community about marine science.

Dr. Ryan found working with students to be the most valuable part of her time at KU. "The ability to help a lot of students get on the path to the career that they were passionate about, that's the part that made it worth it," notes Dr. Ryan. Even now in retirement, Dr. Ryan hears

from past students, ones who graduated as far back as 1996.

Dr. Ryan was recognized in her last semester at KU with the Outstanding Faculty award for 2024, given by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's office in recognition of faculty who show a consistent and conscientious commitment to student success, whether that be in or out of the classroom. "To be recognized at a level beyond the students was really nice," she says. "It was like the capstone for me, like what I did had value."

In her retirement, Dr. Ryan has been teaching marine science concepts at a local coastal interpretive center and at groups within her local community and schools. "It's the fun stuff without the stress of grading and graduation and helping students find jobs," she says. She hopes to also connect with local high schools to be a resource for students making college decisions.

Getting back in touch with her artistic side has been a big part of her retirement. She has been spending her time participating in the local art community and exploring life as an artist. Dr. Ryan finds rocks on local beaches, cleans and polishes them, and wraps them in wire to be used as jewelry. She also recently

created an Earth Day project, collaborating with a local glass artist and using his leftover glass scraps to make jewelry. She sells her art at festivals and craft shows and participates in educational presentations at some of the festivals. "I'm really, really busy, but it's definitely things that I'm choosing that's keeping me busy," she notes.



Dr. Ryan hopes students will follow their passions. "I think what's been happening is students for somewhat obvious reasons have sort of a focus on 'how much money can I make?'" she says. "That needs to be part of the equation, but I think in order to be successful and to be happy, I think those things are the same. I don't think 'successful' is money. To be successful you have to do something that you like. Preferably something that you love."



Dr. Ryan's "Beach Bits" (pictured left and above). She finds rocks like agate, jasper, and even petrified wood on local beaches, then polishes them and wire wraps them for jewelry.