

CLAU^{CL}UPDATE

Spring/Summer 2025 – vol. 4, no. 1

College of Liberal Arts

EXPLORE/ENGAGE/ENRICH/EARN

UNEARTHING BASS STREET

Archaeology students document and
reclaim community at Nashville site

CLA UPDATE

College of Liberal Arts

EXPLORE/ENGAGE/ENRICH/EARN

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Spring/Summer 2025 ■ vol. 4, no. 1

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Victoria Grigsby, who is studying Political Science and German, has been accepted into the highly competitive Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute at Princeton University. Grigsby's background in Taft, her small hometown with a population of about 250 people, has given her a unique perspective on policy and leadership.

mtsunews.com/grigsby-fellowship-princeton-summer-institute

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TRUE BLUE NEWS ANY TIME MTSUNEWS.COM



FOCUS ON THE HOLOCAUST

MTSU's 15th biennial Holocaust Studies Conference welcomed scholars, students, and community members to examine the focal shift in Holocaust studies from past to present.


mtsunews.com/holocaust-studies-conference-recap-2025



SHARING CELLO EXPERTISE

School of Music faculty member Bryan Hayslett, Music major Annalisa Thomas, and master's student Jayna Powell led a three-day cello workshop in the Cayman Islands through the Volta Music Foundation.

mtsunews.com/mtsu-school-of-music-cello-professor-students-lead-workshop-in-cayman-islands

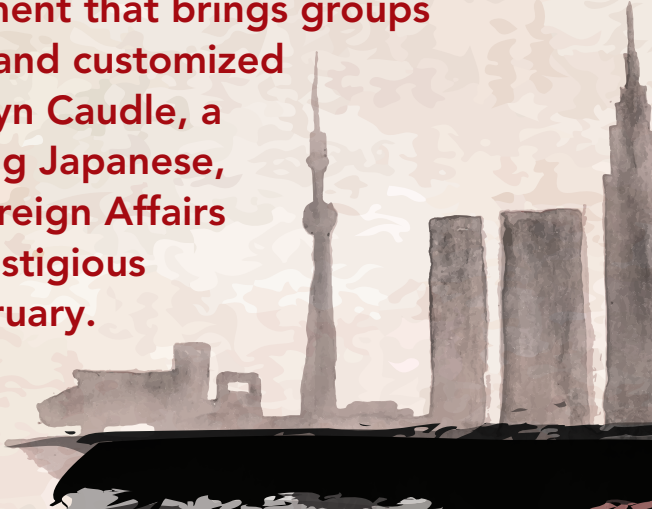


by Nancy DeGennaro and Matthew Hibdon

KAKEHASHI Project

Foreign Language major Jordyn Caudle
participates in prestigious program
after selection by the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs of Japan

In Japanese, the word "kakehashi" translates as "bridge." The KAKEHASHI Project is a grassroots exchange program funded by the Japanese government that brings groups to Japan for engaging, focused, and customized experiences. MTSU student Jordyn Caudle, a Foreign Languages major studying Japanese, was chosen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to participate in the prestigious 2025 KAKEHASHI Project in February.



For eight days, Caudle and his cohort toured Japanese gardens, museums, universities, and historical sites and even attended a traditional tea ceremony.

“They wanted to expose us to as much Japanese culture as possible,” said the 29-year-old Nashville resident. “The trip was a wonderful, life-changing experience.”

The day after arriving in Japan, the group visited the home of Japan’s prime minister, where Caudle delivered a speech, in nearly flawless Japanese, to high-level dignitaries and numerous media outlets from across the country.

“This was a great honor, but the introvert in me was scared,” Caudle admitted. “But I came at them with some heat—I’d practiced my speech—and their eyes got really wide. I was able to impress them.”

The Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville nominated Caudle for the exchange based on MTSU’s “enthusiastic response” and his strong performance in the 2024 Tennessee Video Skit and Poster Presentation Contest, according to Tye Ebel, Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program coordinator at the Japanese Consulate.

“We are thrilled that Jordyn was able to represent Tennessee in the recent KAKEHASHI exchange,” Ebel said. “We hope that his success encourages more students at MTSU to consider studying the Japanese language.”

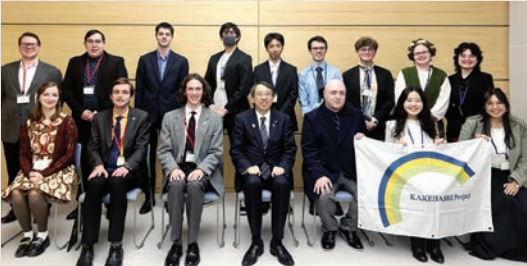
Caudle competed with an elite group of applicants from across the United States and Canada to be named as one of 15 students to participate in the exchange program.

“I am very proud of Jordyn’s accomplishment as the first MTSU student selected for the prestigious program,” said Priya Ananth, professor and

Continued on 6



Japanese major Jordyn Caudle with his certificate after being chosen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to participate in the prestigious 2025 KAKEHASHI Project exchange program



Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Keiichiro Tachibana (front row, center, next to Caudle) received the winners of Japanese language speech contests from the U.S. and Japanese language learners from Canada, who were invited to Japan under the KAKEHASHI Project.



Japanese major Jordyn Caudle (r) with his cohort at a restaurant in Japan



Japanese program coordinator in the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. “I cannot think of a more deserving student from our Japanese program to experience this once-in-a-lifetime kind of opportunity.”

Although the program participants were given personalized tours and exclusive experiences, they were also encouraged to “go, explore, take pictures, do whatever you want,” Caudle said, flipping through photos on his phone.

Students lived with host families, who provided them with an even deeper understanding of Japanese culture.

“It was great to be able to be in that environment. They were very welcoming and very warm,” said Caudle, showing off photos of him with his Japanese host “mother” and “brothers.”

“They said basically anything you want to eat, anything you want to do, anywhere you want to go, we’ll go. So, make a list of what you want.”

For Caudle, staying with a host family was the flip side of his own childhood. His introduction to Japanese culture came when his family began serving as a host home for a rotating cast of visitors from Japan, including students as well as employees working with the Gibson guitar company in Nashville. His father also trained in martial arts.

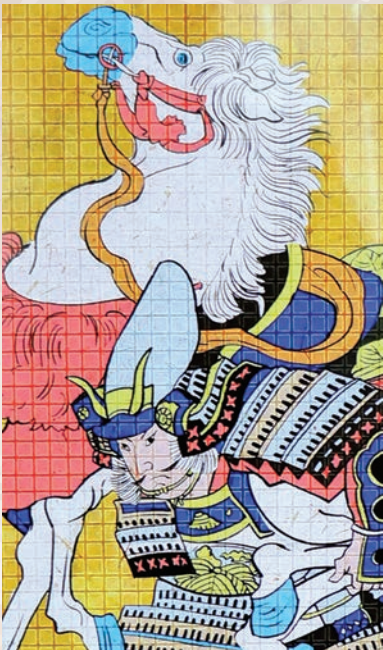
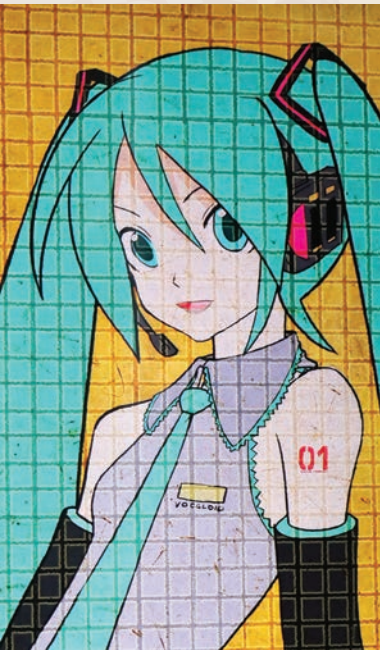
When Caudle was a teenager, his family “fell on hard times,” he explained.

“I had lots of negative thoughts at the time,” Caudle recalled. “My escape from all that was putting everything I had into learning Japanese. I found a reason to keep going. I’m very lucky to have found that passion.”

In his early 20s, Caudle began working as an interpreter for various Japanese companies. Eventually, he found his way to MTSU.



Japanese major Jordyn Caudle (center) with the family who hosted him during his trip to Japan sponsored by the KAKEHASHI Project exchange program



Artwork in the permanent exhibition “Digitally Natural - Naturally Digital” at Tokyo’s Miraikan, The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation

"One of the main reasons I chose MTSU is for the Japanese program. Since I already had a background in Japanese, I just wanted to immerse myself in a Japanese program as well," Caudle said. "The professors have helped me perfect my Japanese."

Caudle is also appreciative of the personalized instruction he's received in the Japanese program. "Dr. Ananth is always encouraging, and she always keeps the classroom very fun and light," he said.

During his trip, Caudle also reunited with one of the visitors who had stayed at his family's home. He was only 4 when he first met the exchange student. Caudle's connection with Japan came full circle when he was able to meet the 4-year-old daughter of his longtime family friend.

After graduation, Caudle plans to pursue a career in disaster prevention and relief in Japan, which contends with a variety of natural geological events such as tsunamis and earthquakes. He also hopes to film and produce documentaries about Japan to share the beauty of this beloved country.

"I get the most joy when I'm helping people," Caudle said. "And I want to give back to the country because I feel like it gave me a path in life to continue to do so."

For eight days, Caudle and his cohort toured Japanese gardens, museums, universities, and historical sites and even attended a traditional tea ceremony.



UNEARTHING BASS STREET

by Nancy DeGennaro

MTSU Archaeology students are getting hands-on with history through ongoing research at the site of one of Nashville's first post-Civil War Black neighborhoods.

Led by Professor Andrew Wyatt, the Bass Street Community Archaeology Project provides experiential learning in the basics of fieldwork for students while preserving an important part of Black history.

"What we are doing here is very unique in archaeology," said Wyatt, who has been taking students in his Introduction to Archaeology course to work with upper-level students and MTSU alumni at the site over the past seven years.

"Many projects focusing on Black history concentrate on the period of enslavement, but we are looking at the history of Black Nashville from the period of Reconstruction through to the Civil Rights era."





Above: Students (l-r) Jackson Edwards and Michael Sutherland



At left: Digging together at the site are: front, Rhiannon Nourse (l) and Lexi Guza, and back (l-r), community volunteers Katharine Bogen and Madeline Laderoute and students Edwards and Sutherland.

Opposite page: MTSU students (l-r) Taylor Tims, Alanah Shadowens, and Elauna Hicks get hands-on with history at Fort Negley Park's Bass Street Community Archaeology Project.



Bass Street is at the foot of Fort Negley, a Union Army stronghold built by hundreds of enslaved and freed Black people during the Civil War. Once the war ended, the area developed into a thriving Black community that was later demolished and residents forced to relocate to make way for Interstates 65 and 40.

In 2017, Vanderbilt University professor and digital archivist Angela Sutton began the Fort Negley Descendants Project to trace family histories of those who built the Civil War fortress. Around the same time, Wyatt was searching for a project for his students. At the suggestion of MTSU Department of Geosciences faculty member Zada Law, Wyatt connected with Sutton, and the Bass Street Community Archaeology Project was born.

Taylor Tims, an Anthropology major and College of Liberal Arts student emissary, said the project has been beneficial on multiple levels—from a preservation standpoint as well as an experience for her career pathway.

"It isn't often that hands-on experience like that can be implemented in a class, but having even one day of fieldwork helps prepare students for future opportunities should they choose to go into archaeology as a career," said Tims, who has been working with Wyatt and the students for several semesters as a teaching assistant.

"It also provides opportunities to examine the artifacts found with practices taught during lectures, which is very helpful for the learning process."

Over the years, students have unearthed a variety of items, from dinnerware and household items to construction supplies such as bricks, window glass, and nails, Wyatt said. The foundations of some of the most important structures also are visible.



During the fall 2024 excavation, “there was also a great deal of melted-down metal pieces, and perhaps one of the most interesting discoveries, at least according to the students, was a single flip-flop,” said Tims, explaining that it was likely left from one of the homeless encampments that frequented the area in recent years.

Opposite page:

Middle: Group photo of Wyatt with his fall 2024 Introduction to Anthropology students during their October dig

Bottom: 1937 aerial photo of Fort Negley



**To learn more about the
Bass Street Community
Archaeology Project at
Fort Negley, email
andrew.wyatt@mtsu.edu.**

MTSU *Arts* HALL OF FAME

by Matthew Hibdon

This year's MTSU Arts Hall of Fame inductees—alumnus and Broadway music director/conductor Steven Malone; MTSU Theatre's "founding mother," Dorethe "Dot" Tucker; and long-standing media partner WGNS Radio—exemplify a deep and lasting impact on the University's creative community.

Their achievements in performance, education, and media have not only enriched MTSU but also left a lasting legacy in their respective fields. These 2025 inductees were recognized during the MTSU Arts Celebration Concert on April 5 in Tucker Theatre.

The MTSU Arts Hall of Fame honors individuals and organizations whose contributions have significantly shaped and supported the arts on campus.

Established in the 2022–23 academic year, the Hall of Fame recognizes artistic excellence, educational leadership, and steadfast advocacy for the performing and fine arts at MTSU.



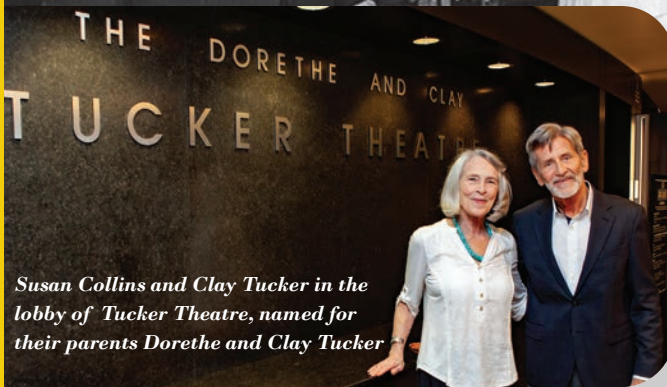


CLASS OF 2025

Steven Malone

Steven Malone ('03) was active in both the School of Music and the Theatre program as an MTSU student. Since graduating, his impressive career has included conducting and playing for a variety of Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regional productions. His accomplishments include being the associate music director/conductor for the original Broadway productions of *Newsies*, *Anastasia*, *Flying Over Sunset*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, and *Sunset Boulevard* (currently on Broadway). He also was assistant music supervisor for NBC's live telecast of *Peter Pan Live!*, starring Allison Williams and Christopher Walken, and children's vocal conductor for *The Sound of Music Live!*, starring Carrie Underwood. Additional film credits include associate music producer on Disney's live action *Beauty and the Beast* and vocal coach on Disney's *Disenchanted*.

Malone also recently worked as associate music and vocal performance supervisor on the set of both seasons of the Apple TV+ original series *Schmigadoon!* He additionally served as music director and conductor for a musical stage adaptation of *Schmigadoon!* that had its world premiere at the Kennedy Center earlier this year. The stage adaptation of the Emmy Award-winning television show's first season received critical acclaim, and fans are eager to see the production transfer to Broadway.



Susan Collins and Clay Tucker in the lobby of Tucker Theatre, named for their parents Dorethe and Clay Tucker

Professor Emerita Dorethe "Dot" Tucker and her husband, Clay Tucker, former English professor and CLA dean, pose on the steps of the MTSU theater named for them during a special 1987 ceremony at the Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building auditorium.

Dorethe Tucker

Dorethe "Dot" Tucker, who graduated from then-named Middle Tennessee State College, joined the faculty of the MTSU Language Arts Department in 1957 and became a member of the Department of Speech and Theatre when it was formed in 1965. She worked as a theatrical director and sponsored the Buchanan Players until her retirement in 1981. During her tenure at MTSU, she taught acting and directing, served as a sponsor for the Alpha Psi Omega honorary dramatic fraternity, and directed close to 100 plays, which provided training and experience for her students and entertainment and enlightenment for the school and community.

Tucker also was a founding member of the Tennessee Theatre Association and a member of the Tennessee Arts Commission and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She is sometimes referred to as the "founding mother" of today's Department of Theatre and Dance, and the University honored Tucker and her husband, H. Clayton "Clay" Tucker, former dean of CLA, in 1987 by renaming the auditorium inside Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building as Tucker Theatre. She died in 2017, but her memory lives on through the department's annual awards ceremony, "The Dorethes."



WGNS Radio represented by longtime leaders, the Walker family (l-r): Bart, Lee Ann, Josephine, and Scott



WGNS Radio

WGNS has served as the official media sponsor of MTSU Arts since the unified brand was created in 2011. The radio station has been a cornerstone of the Rutherford County community since its founding almost 80 years ago. The “GNS” in its call sign stands for “Good Neighbor Station,” and everything the radio station does on the air or in public is created to give the aura of being a “good neighbor,” especially since Bart Walker purchased WGNS in 1984.

Walker’s dedication to local broadcasting and community service was honored by his induction into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame in 2016. He and his wife, Lee Ann Walker—both proud MTSU graduates—married in 1967 and have been partners at the station and in the community. Their family has continued this legacy, with son Scott Walker learning all facets of broadcasting and now serving as WGNS president and general manager. Scott Walker also brings to the table a strong background in graphic arts including audio-video and photographic skills. His series about the homeless population continues to have a strong following (view at smalltownbigworld.com). The Walkers’ commitment to community engagement and local journalism has solidified WGNS Radio’s role as a trusted news source in middle Tennessee and as a proud media partner of MTSU Arts for 13 seasons.

CLASS OF 2025

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