



Celebrating Jonathan G. Powers
October 22, 2022



Jonathan G. Powers Scholarship Fund

The Jonathan G. Powers Scholarship Fund is intended to provide scholarship support to deserving Knox student(s) who have demonstrated significant financial need to meet the expenses of a Knox education. Preference will be given to scholars/athletes maintaining strong academic standing and satisfactory progress toward their degrees.



knox.edu/powers-memorial

309-341-7233



Jonathan G. Powers

May 10, 1965 - June 15, 2022

RIPPLE *by Grateful Dead*

If my words did glow with the gold of sunshine
And my tunes were played on the harp unstrung
Would you hear my voice come through the music?
Would you hold it near as it were your own?
It's a hand-me-down, the thoughts are broken
Perhaps they're better left unsung
I don't know, don't really care
Let there be songs to fill the air
Ripple in still water
When there is no pebble tossed
Nor wind to blow
Reach out your hand if your cup be empty
If your cup is full, may it be again
Let it be known there is a fountain
That was not made by the hands of men
There is a road, no simple highway
Between the dawn and the dark of night
And if you go, no one may follow
That path is for your steps alone
Ripple in still water
When there is no pebble tossed
Nor wind to blow
You who choose to lead must follow
But if you fall, you fall alone
If you should stand, then who's to guide you?
If I knew the way I would take you home
La da da da...

WELCOME

C. Andrew McGadney, President

REFLECTIONS

Richard Stout, Chair and Professor of Economics
Michael A. Schneider, Provost and Dean of the College
Todd Heidt, Professor of Modern Languages-German
Student/Athlete/Alumni Teams

CLOSING

Carol R. Scotton, Associate Professor Emerita of Economics
and Business and Management

Please stop by Jonathan's Tree—his continuing
presence on campus—outside GDH.

J-Pow

Jonathan G. Powers
Extraordinary teacher, mentor, coach, colleague, friend
Knox College September 2000 – June 2022
He lives on through his kindness and generosity.



C. Andrew McGadney President

Good afternoon. My name is Andy McGadney and I remain honored and humbled to serve as the 20th President of Knox College

Today we gather to celebrate the life of Jonathan Powers.

During my short tenure as president, Jonathan had an incredible impact on me—as a great colleague, friend and a trusted advisor. Jonathan had a unique way of saving me from myself, by providing a kind word, a well-timed and thoughtful question and ultimately to provide protective and necessary guardrails during my initial days as president. His love of THIS place enabled him to be a trusted steward and protector of the College.



C. Andrew McGadney President

My wife, Camille, and I had the pleasure of recently visiting with Jonathan's parents, Ginny & John in Pound Ridge, New York a few weeks ago. (I believe that the Powers' are joining us via livestream today.) Camille and I enjoyed learning more about Jonathan and his brothers as well as the ability to share with Ginny and John the incredible impact that Jonathan has and continues to have on this community.

Jonathan had a gift.....to make people feel special, needed and appreciated. We can all take a page from his book in the way that he supported and loved others.

Given Jonathan's impact on this community, it is fitting that you hear today from various constituents from the Knox community—faculty, alumni and students.

At this time, I would like bring to the podium our next speaker – Richard Stout, Chair and Professor of Economics



Richard Stout

Chair and Professor of Economics

I'll start with a brief biography. Jonathan was born on May 10, 1965 in Pound Ridge, NY, where Jon and Ginny Powers raised three sons, all excellent students and athletes. We are so pleased brothers Andrew and David are here with us today. (Please stand, pause....) I'll bet that David has not forgotten this: Jonathan and David competed against each other in the Ironman competition in 2009 in Madison, WI.

Jonathan went to high school in nearby New Bedford, NY. History and social studies were his favorite subjects. He was on the ski team, and he was a summertime lifeguard at the town pool. After high school he went to Amherst College in 1983 where he joined the swim team. His senior year he captained the Amherst swim team and water polo team. Jonathan majored in economics and political science, graduating *magna cum laude* in 1987. In graduate school Jonathan focused on industrial organization at Northwestern University and earned his PhD in 2002.



Richard Stout

Chair and Professor of Economics

Jonathan arrived at Knox College in 2000. I was chair of the Economics Department then. Jonathan taught many courses including: principles of microeconomics, intermediate micro economics, principles of macroeconomics, statistical methods, introduction to econometrics, industrial organization, senior seminar, game theory, and behavioral economics. Jonathan also taught first year preceptorial classes on sustainability. More importantly for his students he modeled for them a life built around kindness, patience, generosity, intellectual curiosity, and rigorous thinking. He went out of his way for students who were struggling. He engaged with his colleagues to devise ways to help students needing extra care and attention.

Jonathan not only taught and coached, he was an active campus citizen. Jonathan chaired the Economics Department from 2011 until June 2022. He also served Knox well on a number of committees including the Budget and Planning Committee, an *ad hoc* version of the Financial Development and Budget Committee. His colleagues regarded him so highly that in 2017 we elected him again to a three-year term on the Executive Committee of the faculty. Others will tell us more about getting to know Jonathan through shared committee service. But, in short, Jonathan through his teaching, coaching and service was married to Knox.



Richard Stout Chair and Professor of Economics

Grieving is exhausting. That is why we need each other. That's why we are here now. We give emotional support to others and receive their support. Sharing stories to celebrate Jonathan helps. Sharing reflections helps. Sharing brings us together this afternoon.

We are together in Memorial Gym today to honor and celebrate the impact of Prof. Jonathan Powers, Jr, a beloved teacher, a beloved coach, a beloved colleague, a beloved son and brother and friend. This arena is especially fitting because in March 2009 Knox celebrated the impact of Tim Heimann, venerated Prairie Fire head basketball coach, in this gymnasium. Jonathan, the captain of the swim team at Amherst College, knew the impact that his Amherst coach had on him. Aspiring to impact Knox students the way his Amherst coach had and the way Coach Heimann had, spurred Jonathan to try his hand at coaching the water polo team. He quickly became the head coach of the swim team and a few years later was named conference coach of the year. The rest, as it is said, is history.



Richard Stout
Chair and Professor of Economics

Kathleen Ridlon, Carol Scotton, Barbara Schulze, Scott Sunderland, Kim Schrader, Sylvie Bowen-Bailey, Liz Metz and Robert Barker individually and collectively spent many hours organizing Jonathan's memorial service. Please thank them with a round of applause.

Now ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our Provost and Dean, Mike Schneider.



Michael A. Schneider Provost and Dean of the College

I am honored to have the opportunity to share a few brief words of recognition to my longtime friend and colleague Jonathan Powers. The loss of any member of the community, current or retired, is a source of intolerable grief. At the same time, we all feel a distinct sense of regret in this moment. The loss of an active member of our community can only be endured by sharing the many stories of Jonathan that we will hear today.



Michael A. Schneider

Provost and Dean of the College

Faculty life is steeped in ancient customs, arcane traditions, and symbolic milestones that mark and shape the life and career arch of a faculty member. From the outside, these customary practices may be opaque, if not precisely mysterious. Nonetheless, they shape our view of ourselves. Faculty work is marked by stages and signature events, from the formal welcome into the community as a “junior” faculty member, passing through ranks, before culminating in a formal retirement as a “senior colleague.” As is painfully evident in moments like this, these customs and traditions organize simplify and explain our world, offer meaning, and mark the passing of time. When someone is torn from this framework, we acknowledge the loss in our order. Tearing someone as embedded in the life of the College as Jonathan makes us all the more acutely aware of this disruption in our time, in our process. There are the celebrations we will not have. There are the retirement speeches, both eloquent and roasting, that won’t be said. There are the recognitions of the fullness of a contribution to the College -- professor, teacher, advisor, confidante, inspiration, and in the case of Jonathan, caring coach in Athletics -- for which we will not have the chance to thank him. At his retirement, there will be no presentation of an embossed retirement chair or rocker (our version of the golden watch). We will yearn for those chances to record, and to honor these legacies and to laugh, and to burnish those customs and traditions again. These are all denied to Jonathan but, in our sorrowful, self-pitying, and honest moments, we understand how they are denied to us, too.



Michael A. Schneider Provost and Dean of the College

The stories we hear from those who knew him well will no doubt resonate. Jonathan was embedded in so much of the College's work that we cannot help but still find him among us. We still publish reports influenced by the work he did, find an email from him to answer a question, advise students who worked with Jonathan, coach student-athletes who were coached by him. And, in times of great need, we still cite his words of wisdom and quote his words of comfort. I extend my sincerest condolences to his family members here and on the livestream, to those who knew him well, and those who knew him enough to know his legacy and his profound impact on Knox College.

I now invite my colleague Todd Heidt, Professor of Modern Languages, to the podium to share his personal reflections.



Todd Heidt

Professor of German

Hello, my name is Todd Heidt. I had the great fortune to work closely alongside Jonathan in recent years on the Executive Committee and the Faculty Affairs Subcommittee. Since 2018, we were a team helping plan faculty participation in convocation and commencement. But, as everyone here knows, you didn't have to know Jonathan to know about him on this campus.

He was kind. He was an extraordinary professor and coach. He cared deeply about his students, his colleagues and the College. It's no wonder his influence seemed to touch all corners of campus.



Todd Heidt

Professor of Modern Languages-German

Very soon after I arrived at Knox in 2009, I learned that a certain economics professor, “JPow,” had a cult-like following among students. They loved him. Students talked about their classes with him in the hallways. I saw t-shirts proclaiming “JPow is my homeboy” worn by his swimmers. One day I discovered a quote from Jonathan’s class written in the stalls of the men’s restroom, “The rational agent doesn’t consume the fourth beer.” (This is 100% true! Ok, this is a strange form of flattery. But you have to admit: his students were paying close attention!) Jonathan’s reputation preceded him.

This all piqued my interest. Who was this guy? What was he doing in class and at swim practices to inspire this kind of following? Before I got to know him, I had a suspicion. I’ve seen the type. This must be some professor desperately trying to be cool to win over students.



Todd Heidt

Professor of Modern Languages-German

I was wrong. Jonathan was many things, but definitely not the “cool professor” type I was expecting. He was a bit shy, but gregarious once you got him chatting. He was understanding. He had a great sense of humor. He loved teaching and coaching. Very quickly I figured out what was really going on. This wasn’t a professor desperately trying to be anything. The students loved Jonathan for who he was, not who he was trying to be. Frankly, I was a bit jealous. How is it that this guy is so beloved? How do I teach well enough to connect with students like Jonathan can? These thoughts have crossed my mind many times over the years.



Todd Heidt

Professor of Modern Languages-German

In spring 2020, I was elected to the Executive Committee, where I served alongside Jonathan. This committee is busy in normal times, and became even busier in the pandemic. We considered the manifold ways in which the pandemic disrupted the normal teaching and learning on campus and frayed the social fabric in this tightly knit community. We discussed the thorniest issues of the pandemic and how to keep our campus safe with ever-evolving information and guidelines. It was often exhausting. Through these discussions, I got to see yet another facet of Jonathan. Inevitably, during a difficult discussion, late in the afternoon, when my energy and focus were waning, Jonathan would speak up and demonstrate both his deep humility and his great humanity. In his soft voice, in his gentle way, he'd drive right to the heart of the issue at hand. He remained focused, carefully considering the wellbeing of everyone on our campus, while also remaining deeply concerned about the quality of the education that our students deserved to get from Knox. This committee includes students, who can be shy in situations like this, speaking with faculty and high ranking administrators about complicated matters affecting the entire campus. But Jonathan consistently asked students what was on their minds, asked them for their perspective on this or that matter, when they had gone silent for a while. He remembered them when others (including me) sometimes forgot them. Jonathan Powers didn't forget people - that just wasn't in his nature.



Todd Heidt

Professor of Modern Languages-German

Jonathan's passing has left a hole in the Knox community which we can never fill. I suggest that we continue to learn from Professor Powers. Jonathan may be gone, but his lessons and legacy remain in each of us. We will not forget Jonathan. We remember his goodness. We remain inspired by his connection with students and colleagues. We honor his memory. But this community won't forget, couldn't possibly forget, what Jonathan Powers gave us.

As a community, we are immeasurably better thanks to Jonathan Powers.
Thank you, Jonathan.



Sylvie Bowen-Bailey '20

Hi! My name is Sylvie Bowen-Bailey and I'm a swimmer from the class of 2020. I've been on the committee planning this event, and through that I've had the opportunity be in contact with many swimmers and alumni. and have heard many great stories about JPow.

I've noticed that a lot of these stories were already familiar to me because I'd heard JPow tell them multiple times – always with the same punchline. It's been a reminder to me of how mutual our care was – JPow meant so much to us, and we also meant so much to him.

Many names of older alumni were already familiar to me because of the stories he regularly shared.

Next up we have some students from JPow's tenure at Knox. First up is Mary O'Malley and Julie Larsen from the class of 2004, then Nicolette Laird from the class of 2016, and finally Kaitlyn Cashdollar from the Class of 2023.



Mary Catherine O'Malley '04 Julie Larsen '04

As legend goes, in the fall of 2000, the year Jonathan started at Knox, he stood next to Larry Brady, the longtime Knox swim coach, who struck up a conversation at Pumphandle. When it came up that Larry was the swim coach and Jonathan swam at Amherst, Larry (most likely) volunteered Jonathan to “help” with the water polo team who was looking for a faculty sponsor or coach, whatever they could find first. Students weren’t yet putting his face on t-shirts in the early 2000’s; instead our top way to engage Jonathan was seeing how fast we could make him blush by creating awkward moments during water polo trips. We were exceptional.



Mary Catherine O'Malley '04 Julie Larsen '04

There was a moment when writing this when we said “this is our version of JPow, I wonder what others would say?” So we did some outreach to our Knox Community. This is what we heard: When a fellow student excused himself to blow his nose, “JPow was very professional and continued to talk the class through the complexities surrounding Marginal Revenue Product. In the background we could all hear a full grown man’s nose blowing incredibly loudly from the hallway. JPow never broke character.” “His style of teaching, seemingly effortless immersion of his students in the links between economic theory and everyday life, and his dedication and accessibility to his students were unparalleled” ... or as someone else so eloquently said “every supply and demand graph was about beer and pizza. That made sense to me.”



Mary Catherine O'Malley '04 Julie Larsen '04

He preached that our time was as important as his and that we needed to figure out how to optimally use our time to get what we wanted out of it. If we made dumb choices, he wouldn't tell us we were wrong, he would just say "that's your choice" but results would be according to the choice. As another alum said, he was the first professor I wanted a picture with after graduation. I never even took one of his classes. That may not sound like much but he helped teach me how to be a good human being and I could never repay him for that. And of course there were several folks who said I remember Questions? Comments? I use that daily in my own work with students.



Mary Catherine O'Malley '04 Julie Larsen '04

JPow wasn't a legend when we met him, in fact he was still known as Jonathan. We shared a "freshman year", and we were lucky to be able to find our footing in the community as he found his. Because he was so authentic, and so uniquely himself, he cultivated a space where so many people knew they didn't need to show up as nothing else than who they were. We sat next to a Knox alum at dinner last night who, though didn't know JPow, said this about his own Knox experience: it was "all about the questions, not always about the answers." JPow, thank you for being a man who helped so many of us ask questions and find answers.



Carol Scotton

Associate Professor Emerita of Economics and Business and Management

Good afternoon. I'm Carol Scotton. A colleague and Friend of Jonathan's.

Rich reminded us the other day that planning this celebration/memorial for Jonathan helps in the grieving process. And I am so grateful to everyone who made this possible. This celebration of Jonathan's life. Here at Knox. Jonathan "was and is Knox" as his Mother said. Jonathan exemplified the idea of liberal arts college. He was all about the values we espouse ... and everyday he'd live to make those a reality – for himself, for you, for anyone he could.



Carol Scotton Associate Professor Emerita of Economics and Business and Management

To that end, we invite you to convene in the lobby and share with each other how Jonathan impacted your life. Celebrate in this time and place we have together with some of his favorite – or least, well-known - snacks – he was always sure to be sure there were snacks, something fun to eat together.

There's a memory table.

And a poster of Jonathan you can sign and leave a comment. And, of course some **baked pizza**. I'm sure that doesn't surprise you. Kevin - and all the people and places he frequented on Seminary Street saw Jonathan as a 'regular'... They could count on his good nature and kindness. He is missed.



Carol Scotton
Associate Professor Emerita of Economics and Business and
Management

Afterwards, stop by the **maple tree** his family had planted on campus. This is a way for Jonathan to live on “in his kindness and generosity”

Finally, if you'd like a remembrance of Jonathan ... Come to the Economics Suite in GDH and pick out a book from Jonathan's library. His library tells another side of our friend Jonathan.

And, when you can, listen to Ripple, by the Grateful Dead. You'll see why Jonathan impacted so many.

Thank you – let's celebrate.



Nicolette Laird '16

There are many incredible things that could describe Jpow, but the quality I wanted to highlight was the dad-like love and support he showed every one of his students/swimmers. Jpow was our dad away from home. I wanted to share one of my favorite stories that I think demonstrates the awkward, but loving dad energy that we have come to associate with Jpow.

My freshman year I got put in Jpow's car during the first water polo game of the season. As we all know, Jpow is a very considerate person and tries to make everyone feel welcomed and like they belong. But, as we also know, the most awkward way a dad can connect with their children is through current pop culture and pop music. In true Jpow fashion, to make his car full of freshmen players feel welcomed he put on a mix tape of pop music that an upperclassman had given him. What he didn't realize was that the first song on the CD was "Birthday sex" by Jeremih. It was a very awkward car ride, but the best way to start a supportive and non-judgmental relationship with who would become my favorite coach.

I know now that JPow was not a connoisseur of 2010's pop music and had he played his favorite songs instead of trying to play something a bunch of freshmen would enjoy, the playlist would have been very different and potentially a little less awkward. He loved us very much and we loved him right back. He was an incredible coach and professor. He is very missed.

"Questions? Comments? Concerns?"



Kaitlyn Cashdollar '23

When I showed up for school the fall of my sophomore year to move in, I had gotten a cold and had to do a mini quarantine in my apartment. Somewhere in the move in, I had lost all of my medicine. It was JPow who went to the store for me to get me advil, DayQuil, nyquil, cough drops, and snacks. After that, I knew that if I ever needed help or support, JPow was there for me.

My mom recently told me that it was this moment of JPow's kindness that made her feel comfortable about me being several states away from home. She knew someone was taking care of me when she could not. JPow was more than a coach and a professor, he was family.





Jonathan presenting a lecture on duopoly.



In Memoriam: Jonathan G. Powers

- “Jonathan personified the best of Knox in so many ways. His constant devotion to students, his joy in teaching, his unstinting service, and his utter love of the community have been constant themes in his life at Knox. Jonathan was devoted to the people of this community, and his love motivated all of his work toward the betterment of us all. And we are, indeed, better for his love.”
– Elizabeth Carlin Metz, *Smith V. Brand Distinguished Professor of Theatre at Knox.*
- “As he did for so many, Jonathan listened with kindness and patience and great generosity,” said Carol Scotton, associate professor of economics and business and management.
- “We were all blessed to be in the presence of grace when we worked with Jonathan,” said Daniella Irle, director of Prairie Fire athletics.



Excerpts from individual tributes to Jonathan Powers from the June 16, 2022 Gathering of Friends to honor him

- “I don’t think I have ever met a man who has done so much and taken credit for so little.”
- “The single most heartwarming, generous person I have ever known. He has changed all of our lives.”
- “He genuinely cared about students, and was a model of kindness, calmness, perseverance, and generosity of spirit.”
- “A great friend, coworker, and teacher. I will miss him.”
- “A good, kind, and decent human being in all regards. A generous man.”
- “He put together a rigorous course, and students loved him for it.”
- “If you think of students as bees, he had honey in his office.”
- “He would wait for consensus, wait for you to come around.”
- “Every message he got from alumni he would really care about.”



Excerpts from individual tributes to Jonathan Powers from the June 16, 2022 Gathering of Friends to honor him

- “I knew how much he cared for me, and cared for all of us.”
- “Probably in my four years at Knox, he was the single most person I could rely on.”
- “A person in my corner who genuinely cares and was always eager to listen. One of the kindest people I have ever met.”
- “He cared deeply about Knox but even more about the students.”
- “Knox was Jonathan’s ‘place.’”
- “He gave me hope for the quirky, smart people who want to help other people.”
- “Jonathan always pushed me to be the person I wanted to be.”
- “He had a heart that was very expressive of his care. Always genuine.”
- “He was always so kind and forgiving.”
- “He was the best coach ever.”

