



CONNECTION...IS THERE EVER TOO MUCH?

If so, how much is too much? After months of waving to grandparents through windows and depending on spotty internet for work and family get togethers, some feel that more connection is not only necessary to thrive but to survive. Others may find themselves looking back upon time spent this past year in gardens, books, and computer screens, and feel more complete with less connection.

Connection often hinges on “what ifs?” If we connect with *this*, then we do not connect with *that*. If *that* connects us, then *this* may pull us apart. In the 1990s writer-director Peter Howitt dedicated an entire movie to the idea of connections—how losing them or making them changes not only one person’s life—but the lives of all those around them. In an interview with *The Ringer* in 2018, Howitt talked about his movie “Sliding Doors” and the moments that make us by saying, “It’s a happy beginning rather than a happy ending.”

We celebrate the joys of making strong ties and finding happy beginnings in this issue of *Haslam Magazine*. For our cover subject, Shelly Sun (HCB, ’92), a struggle with her grandmother’s illness inspired a business that meets a need felt nationwide—

dependable, experienced care. BrightStar, Sun’s entrepreneurial brainchild, connects local caregivers and medical personnel with those in need of services in their area. Its national support network keeps overhead and anxiety low for franchisees.

Diane Walker Markarian (HCB, ’83), and her husband, Raffi, have leveraged their success to remove worries of entrepreneurial-minded current students. Their connection with the Anderson Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation allows more students to attend pitch competitions by alleviating some of the financial burden involved with travel. The competitions open doors for students in their careers and give them the confidence to move forward with their dreams.

In yet another example, a large group of connected alumni have come together to honor the professor who encouraged them on their paths to success. In acknowledging the impact and expertise of Dick Townsend’s 42-year career teaching accounting, Marty Brown (HCB, ’85) and other beneficiaries of Professor Townsend’s expertise and devotion have memorialized his impact through a “happy beginning.” Their fundraising efforts have created the Department of Accounting and Information Management’s first endowed chaired professorship, the Richard L. Townsend Chair of Accounting.

As summer comes into full swing, may you find ways to connect with those around you and encourage fresh outlooks and new beginnings.

With gratitude,

Stephen L. Mangum
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