FROM OUR CLASS PRESIDENTS

Dear highly competent classmates,

We trust this spring edition of the Class of 1977 Newsletter finds you well. New in this issue is an expanded Spotlight feature that allows us to better showcase what some of our classmates have been doing over the past 46 years!

This spring marks a number of exciting happenings at Smith. First, the members of the Class of 2027—the class that will be graduating 50 years after we did—are receiving their acceptance letters! Second, Commencement is taking place on Sunday May 21. Third, we will be hosting another round of Virtual Living Rooms in honor of our 46th reunion on May 18 (watch your emails and our class FB page for more information). And fourth, our honorary classmate, Kathleen “KMac” McCartney is completing her tenure as Smith’s 11th President. We honor her many achievements, perhaps most especially her work to “ensure access to Smith for every ambitious prospective student from every walk of life.” Please consider making a gift to The Smith Fund in her honor by visiting smith.edu/give.

And a gentle reminder to keep in touch by joining our class Facebook page: facebook.com/groups/smith77, updating your email and contact information by emailing smithierecords@smith.edu, and submitting your news for the SAQ Class Notes to one or the other of our highly competent class secretaries.

REUNION UPDATE

Our four intrepid Reunion Co-Chairs (see side bar) have already started to meet and are committed to planning an amazing 50th reunion in May of 2027. Anyone interested in helping out is welcome to join the team; please email us about your interest at Competent1977@gmail.com.
CLASS SPOTLIGHT: BONITA GRUBBS

One of Bonita Grubbs’ favorite Smith memories is walking the path beside Paradise Pond on her way from center campus to Martha Wilson. It is a fitting memory for our classmate who has spent the last four-plus decades working to create pathways to housing for families that are unhoused or housing insecure in New Haven, Connecticut.

Bonita lived in Martha Wilson for her first two years; then spent her Junior year at Trinity College in Hartford, and then her Senior year in Eleanor Duckett. She majored in Sociology and African American Studies, where she worked with Maceo Duley, Johnella Butler and Peter Rose, faculty who inspired her and exposed her to areas of study she never would have explored if she hadn’t gone to Smith.

Bonita’s path after graduation led her to the American Heart Association where she worked on a statewide initiative within an antihypertension outreach, treatment and engagement campaign. This sparked her interest in public health and led her to Yale, to study for a Master’s Degree in Public Health with a concentration in Health Services Administration. Simultaneously, involvement in her church caused her to reflect on her purpose and calling, and she decided to also study for a Masters of Arts in Religion at the Yale Divinity School. In 1984 she was awarded both of these degrees.

Fresh out of graduate school, Bonita became an Assistant Regional Administrator with the State of Connecticut’s Department of Mental Health offering support and services to people experiencing chronic mental illness who were moving out of institutions. She was instrumental in building the community and professional relationships needed to support the transition of individuals out of long-term hospitalization and into homes and services in the community.

Bonita became ordained as an American Baptist Minister in 1987. And then, in 1988 she was appointed the Executive Director of Christian Community Action (CCA) in New Haven; she has run CCA for the past 35 years.

CCA’s mission is to respond to the needs of people in crisis, provide immediate basic needs, and then help them build pathways to stability and independence. During her tenure at CCA, Bonita has overseen and managed the creation of apartment style residences for families who find themselves unhoused; developed community networks to help families return to independence; and established wrap around services such as emergency food access, child care, job training, and diaper banks. In addition, she has developed programs that inspire and help those who have experienced crises in housing to engage in grassroots advocacy.

Bonita has combined this direct care work with her public health knowledge and skills to achieve policy changes that improve the health and wellbeing of the New Haven community. The New Haven Register, in naming Bonita New Haven’s 2012 Person of the Year, described her as a “graceful guide …working hard to transform peoples’ lives by giving them the tools to push back against homelessness, hunger, poverty and social injustice.”

Bonita says that “you honor and value people by the services you offer them.” She consistently delivers on this belief in her work with CCA: providing for basic needs in times of crisis, providing supports for families to build their own pathways out of crisis and return to independence, and then working to stop the drivers of housing insecurity by taking action to reform public policy.

Bonita views her work and accomplishments as a calling. She is clear that what she does at CCA has never felt like work: “You never work a day in your life when you do something you love.” Bonita, your Smith classmates recognize the extraordinary effort, energy, hard work, time, talent, and smarts it has taken to achieve what you have for the New Haven community, and we salute you.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Our very competent class has two fundraising targets for fiscal year 2022 - 2023. One is a goal of raising $150,000 for The Smith Fund. The other is a class participation rate of 35%—a goal of 235 classmates making a donation of any amount to The Smith Fund. As of the beginning of March we are halfway to both of these goals: 113 of us have given $62,000 to The Smith Fund since July 1 of last year. We still need 122 classmates to go to smith.edu/give and make a donation before June 30! Since this is Kathleen McCartney’s final year at Smith, and she enthusiastically accepted our 40th Reunion invitation to be an honorary member of The Last Competent Class, please consider making a gift to Smith in her honor. The Class of 1977, Smith, and future Smith students thank you for your past, present and future generosity in support of Smith and excellence in higher education for women.

It’s the Big One! Join our 50th Reunion Fund Team, reconnect with your classmates, and help us change lives. If you would like to volunteer, please email Competent1977@gmail.com.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMORIAL CHAIRS

Thank you to classmates who wrote thoughtful SAQ obituaries for three recently deceased classmates: Lisa Gilson Clancy who wrote about Sally Klassing Schroer, Tot Kunda who wrote about Patty Klimczak Anderson, and Kathryn Hood Earle who wrote about Melanie Foster Roberts. In addition, we are grateful so many classmates have honored deceased classmates with donations to The Smith Fund in their memory.

The Class of ’77 Officers are seeking recommendations of classmates to Spotlight in upcoming issues of the bi-annual newsletter. Please send recommendations to Competent1977@gmail.com.