

One Family, Four Generations of Vandals

The McKenzies have spread across the U.S., but they have a shared pride in their college experiences — steeped in the traditions of silver and gold.

Sophia Bush, the McKenzies' fourth-generation Vandal, sees reminders of her family every day on campus. She walks along the paths her great-grandmother took to class in the 1960s and '70s. She lives near her mother's sorority house, Gamma Phi Beta. When the family comes together, they often find themselves sharing and comparing memories of their time in Moscow. Meet the McKenzie family and read about their Vandal experiences.

Sophia Bush



Sophia Bush

Daughter of Amanda / DEGREE: University of Idaho — sophomore seeking a bachelor's in education, health and human sciences / PROFESSION: Wants to teach high school social studies in Washington state

Sophia never before had a teacher like Cameron McGill, the instructor for her English 102 class. His engaging teaching techniques inspired Sophia to become a teacher herself. She plans to teach social studies so she can help her students understand the government and show them how they can shape the country's future.

“A lot of the women in my family worked hard to come here,” she said. “It is a family tradition I have no problem following.”

Amanda McKenzie Bush '98



Amanda McKenzie Bush

**Daughter of Ellen / DEGREE: University of Idaho — bachelor's in special education and elementary education /
PROFESSION: Teaches fifth grade at Grangeville Elementary School**

While attending U of I, Amanda worked with two local groups that assisted people with disabilities, Opportunities Unlimited and Stepping Stones Inc. The respect her colleagues gave to the people they cared for inspired her to add a special education degree to her schooling.

“At its heart, Moscow never seems to change. The town is familiar to me. It is the other place I call home,” she said.

Amanda’s son, Booker Bush, will attend U of I alongside his sister, Sophia, starting in 2019. He has signed as a walk-on to the Vandal football team.

Carolyn (Morris) Frei '69, '76



Carolyn (Morris) Frei

DEGREES: University of Idaho — bachelor's in education, master's in education / PROFESSION: Retired in Lewiston; taught English for 18 years at Grangeville High School

Carolyn first came to U of I as a chaperone on a 4-H field trip. While on campus, she met with what was then known as the College of Education to see about finishing her undergraduate degree, which she started at two other institutions. Her love of learning — a trait she is proud to pass to her family — drove her to earn her master's a few years later.

"I just liked to go to school. I was a college junkie," she said. "I wanted to learn more about teaching Shakespeare at the high school level, something I had never experienced."

Ellen Morris McKenzie '74



Ellen Morris McKenzie

Daughter of Carolyn / DEGREES: University of Idaho — bachelor's in home economics-business / PROFESSION: Retired in Moscow; worked as assistant to the dean in the U of I College of Art and Architecture

On graduation day, Ellen remembers looking across the sea of black hats and realizing the knowledge she gained during her time on campus was a small piece of the larger puzzle.

“It was a humbling moment, but it inspired me to become a lifelong learner,” she said. “And then, when I worked on campus, I saw how much the faculty and staff care, and what it takes to run a university. I’ve come away with immense pride in being a Vandal.”

Mary McKenzie Patel '01



Mary McKenzie Patel

Daughter of Ellen / DEGREES: University of Idaho — bachelor's in microbiology; University of Reading (England) — master's in sociology; Oregon Health and Science University — doctorate in medicine; University of Pennsylvania — master's in health policy research / PROFESSION: Practices pulmonary and critical care medicine in Portland, Oregon

Mary's schooling and career have led her around the world. She's produced a thesis on “Bereavement, Loss and Grief in Harry Potter” in the United Kingdom and become the director of her team at Legacy Health in Portland. But everything started at U of I, where Mary helped found the U of I chapter of the Kappa Delta sorority.

“I’ve worked in the Ivy League, and honestly, I don’t feel like there is that big of a difference between there and U of I,” she said. “At U of I, there are just so many great classes and people to interact with.”

Andrew McKenzie '03



Andrew McKenzie

Son of Ellen / DEGREE: University of Idaho — bachelor's in molecular biology and biochemistry; University of Colorado Boulder — master's in chemistry / PROFESSION: Works as a medicinal chemist with Moderna, a pharmaceutical company in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Andrew started his career in U of I's chemistry labs. Now, he studies the chemistry of mRNA — the genetic instruction manuals cells use to make proteins. U of I labs also offered a different kind of chemistry; Andrew and his future wife, Jennifer, were paired as lab partners.

"I always loved the Palouse. It is such a striking place," he said. "Our kids openly talk about moving back to Moscow and living with grandma while going to college."

Article by [Leigh Cooper](#), University Communications and Marketing.

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