



With the Batmobile from *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*.



With members of the cast from the Harry Potter films at "A Celebration of Harry Potter" at Universal Orlando Resort.



With Dale Earnhardt Jr. in association with a partnership with Hendrick Motorsports.



With daughter, Kirra, and wife, Jacqueline, on the occasion of the grand opening event for The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios Hollywood.

# From Postage Stamps to Harry Potter

By Jason E. Curtin '98



From Looney Tunes and *The Big Bang Theory*, to Batman and The Lord of the Rings, Warner Bros. Entertainment is one of the most successful motion picture and television studios in the world. In 2016, SU alumnus Barry Ziehl '91 was named its senior vice president of public affairs and strategic initiatives. He oversees the public affairs team, including corporate responsibility, philanthropy and sustainability initiatives, and heads government and community relations, ultimately helping to enhance Warner Bros.' brand reputation worldwide.

Ziehl began his career with Warner Brothers Consumer Products in 1999, moving up in successive roles. He led global marketing campaigns supporting DC Entertainment and drove public relations efforts for licensing, retail and promotional programs, including the launch of *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*. The following is a Q&A with Ziehl.

## How did you end up choosing Salisbury?

I applied to a few schools and then-SSU, now-SU, felt right to me. The campus, the location and the vibe felt far enough away from home ... but just close enough.

## What was your experience at then-SSU like?

Great all-around. As with anything in life, an opportunity is what you make of it and take from it. Going in, I didn't know what direction I might be heading. I knew I was a strong writer, so I went down the communications path. Those four years created life-long connections and a foundation that, ultimately, allowed me to launch into the next stage of my life.

## What has your career path been like after SU?

After leaving SU, I took an internship in the communications department at the headquarters of the U.S. Postal Service in Washington, D.C. I was making all of \$8 an hour, but that's where I really began to magnify my learning experience. I was getting exposure to everything from running a small television studio to running communication campaigns for America's stamp program. It was in this role that I crossed paths with the executive from

Warner Bros. who would, ultimately, recruit me. In 1999, my family and I moved to Los Angeles to begin a professional and personal adventure that has lasted 17 years to this point.

## What advice would you give students or younger alumni?

Work hard, really hard. It's the time in your life when most of us have maximum capacity to learn, grow and gain experience. In school, I learned how to be open to learning, how to be independent and how to be responsible for my actions. The key to success is creating opportunities for yourself and taking full advantage of every one you get. Right now, companies are looking for the fresh ideas that only the next generation of learners can bring to the table. Be courageous.

## You support SU as part of your personal philanthropy. Why?

I'm proud to be an alumnus and I think it's important to support the institution for generations to come. As the reputation of SU grows stronger and stronger, [it] reflects well on all graduates – whether you graduated in 1991 or 2016.

## What else keeps you busy aside from Warner Brothers?

My family ... with a senior in high school and a sophomore in college, we are appreciating every opportunity we have to be together. I also serve on the board of Operation Amped, a non-profit I helped start 10 years ago, whose mission is to share the "stoke" of the surfing community and the healing potential of surfing with seriously ill, injured or disabled U.S. military veterans and their families.

## What's next for you?

When my wife and I made the decision to move to LA, I never dreamed we would still be here and that the WB experience would be so diverse and enriching. I'm enjoying every moment [of the new role]. It's been great to revisit the foundation of learning that began in 1987 when I walked onto the SU campus for the first time.