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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



## Dear Rhodes Community,

I appreciate your patience and flexibility yesterday during the Memphis Light Gas & Water (MLGW) power outage that impacted our campus and much of Midtown. It was a frustrating afternoon for all of us, and I am so pleased that MLGW was able to restore power more quickly than anticipated so we could resume normal operations. I want to extend my deepest thanks to our Facilities, Campus Safety, and Bon Appétit teams, who worked tirelessly to take care of our campus.

Last weekend was fabulous! Thank you to all the parents and families who came to Family Weekend. It was wonderful to see all of you on campus in community with one another. The atmosphere on campus was so warm, fun, and festive, and the weekend was a beautiful reflection of what makes Rhodes so very special.

One big highlight of our weekend was the college's first-ever space launch. The four-inch, cube-shaped satellite named **RHOK-SAT was launched into space Sunday** from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. RHOK-SAT, a collaboration between Rhodes and the University of Oklahoma, launched aboard **NASA's Northrop Grumman CRS-23**, a cargo spacecraft that was on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. RHOK-SAT was delivered to the International Space Station and will orbit the Earth for approximately one year, transmitting data to the satellite ground station installed in Rhodes Tower. Congratulations to all the students, faculty, and alumni who have been part of this project since its inception in 2019. A very special thanks goes to Dr. Charles W. Robertson, Jr. '65, who encouraged Rhodes to submit a proposal to NASA and who so generously provided funding for the project. The Rhodes team is led by physics professors Bentley Burnham (program director), Brent Hoffmeister, and Ann Viano, and computer science professor Phil Kirlin. This is a very proud moment for all of us in the Rhodes community!

I am absolutely delighted to share that we have received a **\$2 million endowment** from The Rhodes Family Foundation, an important step in helping us realize our dream of providing our students with the finest career and professional development programming of any liberal arts college in the country. Bill Rhodes is the former president and CEO of AutoZone, where he continues to serve as executive chairman of the board. He and his wife, Amy, are the parents of a 2018 Rhodes College graduate, Madison Rhodes. Bill is a former Rhodes trustee and the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Rhodes in 2024. This extraordinary gift will be used to fund the director's position for our new Center for Career and Professional Development, our first-ever named staff position, and to support the center's vision for ensuring all Rhodes graduates are prepared, engaged, self-aware, and confident in their abilities to lead and to fulfill their professional, academic, and

personal goals. Rhodes aims to raise at least \$10 million to expand the Center's staffing and programming. If you would like more information on how you can help us, please email Jenna Goodloe Wade at [goodloe@rhodes.edu](mailto:goodloe@rhodes.edu). A national search is currently underway for the director's position.

The Spence Wilson Center for Interdisciplinary Humanities is presenting a [free public lecture on "250 Years of Our Declaration of Independence"](#) by Dr. Danielle Allen, the James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University and director of the Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation. The event is tomorrow at 6 p.m. in McNeill Concert Hall. All of you are invited to attend.

It is important to note that Wednesday, September 24 marks the anniversary of our first day of classes in Memphis, in a city we have proudly called home for the last 100 years. We will continue to celebrate this milestone throughout the semester. I hope you will take a few minutes to view our [100th anniversary website](#) that chronicles our history and celebrates a few of our alumni who are making a difference in Memphis. Our commitment to Memphis runs deep, and we are grateful for the many friendships, partnerships, and collaborators that have enriched our lives and those of our students.

As part of the celebration of our 100th anniversary in Memphis, I'm proud to announce that our students, faculty, and staff have already committed more than 20,000 hours of community service to our beloved city in honor of this milestone. Our ultimate goal is at least 50,000 hours of service this academic year, so I hope you will [sign up](#) for "Rhodes Into Memphis" so we can exceed our goal. Alumni and parents are also invited to participate.

In addition, we are pleased to welcome Andy Silvernail, CEO of International Paper, to campus on Friday, September 26. He will participate in a conversation with me at 10:00 a.m. in Blount Auditorium. Students, faculty, and staff are invited to attend. Questions may be submitted in advance to Anne Beard at [bearda@rhodes.edu](mailto:bearda@rhodes.edu). International Paper is one of only three publicly traded companies headquartered in Memphis, playing a vital role in the city's economy. Mr. Silvernail, who took on the CEO role recently, brings a compelling personal and professional story. You can learn more about him through International Paper's leadership page and a [profile by The Daily Memphian](#) published last year.

Rhodes has once again made the Forbes list of [America's Top Colleges for 2026](#) and is also on Southern Living's list of ["The 45 Most Beautiful College Campuses in the South."](#) U.S. News & World Report rankings will be announced next week.

I appreciate you and all you do every day to make Rhodes such a wonderful and welcoming community.

**Jennifer M. Collins**  
President  
Rhodes College



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