

## Lee Pitts

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# Lee Pitts

## INSTRUCTOR OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Lee Pitts' first real job out of college was teaching middle school language arts and social studies. He left that career path to pursue journalism. He even worked as an embedded reporter in Iraq covering a 4,000-member Regimental Combat team. But he never forgot his love of teaching.

As a Washington, D.C.-based reporter for WORLD Magazine Pitts signed up to participate in the WORLD Journalism Institute (WJI), a training intensive that provides would-be Christian journalists with a chance to learn the art of backpack journalism from practicing professional journalists.

"Interacting with college students and teaching them skills like interviewing reignited my teaching heart," he says.

Fast-forward 15 years, and now Pitts serves as director of WJI, which offers five different program options including WJI Collegiate, WJI Europe, and WJI High School. Several courses take place on Dordt's campus in Sioux Center, Iowa, but others—such as WJI Mid-Career, a weeklong experience that Pitts just wrapped up in Asheville, North Carolina—happen elsewhere.

"It's a great blessing to be WJI director because it combines my two professional passions: teaching and journalism," says Pitts. "I came to Dordt in part because I was having so much fun teaching journalism at WJI for two weeks a year, that I wanted to find somewhere where I could teach journalism all the time. Dordt provided that for me."

As director of WJI, Pitts plans programs that will reach the needs of Christian journalists or those who are interested in becoming Christian journalists. He helps to recruit "practicing professional journalists who are people of faith that are in the frontline reporting trenches" to

help students learn practical information about how to survive and thrive as journalists as well as how their faith and vocation intersect.

"Most importantly, we want to make sure the programs are educational and fun—that there is a good mix of learning, bonding, growing, pushing, and challenging," he says.

Pitts enjoys meeting and getting to know people from around the world who share a passion for storytelling and for the Lord.

"Being a person of faith working in the media is a challenge. But it's not so much of a challenge that we as Christians should shun the media. Rather, we should be in the public square as storytellers who chronicle communities and through stories taht reflect God's world and his work in it," he says. "And it's important to have peer connections with other Christians, where we can lift each other up in prayer and stay connected."

WJI is having a real-world impact in that it's helping to shape future Christian journalists. Since WJI launched about 25 years ago, there have been more than 800 participants—many of whom have gone on to work for places like the Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, CBS News, WORLD Magazine, Christianity Today, and the Des Moines Register.

Pitts says his work with WJI helps him to be a better Dordt professor, too. "Journalism is one of those professions where you learn by doing," he says. "Journalism is a dynamic profession that's always changing, so I think it's important to stay on top of the latest by interacting with veteran reporters. By serving as WJI director and a Dordt professor, I get the chance to engage in my own style of research and scholarship, even if it looks a little different from what other faculty might be doing. I love it."



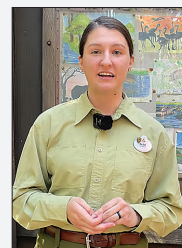
## ALUMNI NOTES

### Kathleen

(Tazelaar, '16)

### Van Singel

works as an Ituri Forest Animal Keeper at Disney's Animal Kingdom. She was featured on Disney's Animals, Science, and Environment page on World Hippo Day: <https://fb.watch/jsuA1IVAwC/>



**Herman Hofman** ('13) is one of six new partners to join Varnum, a law firm in Grand Rapids. He is a litigation attorney with extensive courtroom experience who advises companies in a variety of industries on legal matters in individual and class-action contexts. He is a graduate of Michigan State University College of Law.

**Brett Heidema** ('10) received first place in the Montana State Irrigated Winter Wheat Category for the National Wheat Foundation's 2022 Yield Contest. Heidema lives in Manhattan, Montana.

### Libby Dykstra

('09)'s design of *The Hiding Place: An Engaging Visual Journey*



(Tyndale House Publishers) won a Top Shelf Book Cover Award. "The cover's fit and finish are so cool," writes a Top Shelf judge. "Much care has gone into understanding the story and context, and all of that is clearly seen executed in this cover."

**James Brinks** ('06) recently wrote a book called *What Do Grownups Do All Day?* This book looks at vocation and calling. **Ron Van Der Pol** ('06) illustrated the book.

### Sheila (Otness, '06)

**Smude** was elected to the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Public School Board in November 2022.

She, her husband, and their six children live in Buffalo, Minnesota.

