

Wesleyan Wednesday

Chris Duke '82

To round out a day full of #PantherPositivity, we bring you this week's #WesleyanWednesday feature! Chris Duke '82 is a Louisville native who made the choice to attend Wesleyan after researching the top small, private colleges in Kentucky. "After a visit to KWC, it felt like a good fit and the financial aid package I was offered was outstanding," he recalled.

Chris majored in accounting and management, but attributes much of the career preparedness Wesleyan provided him with to the fact that the College is a liberal arts college. "I took classes in music, art, film and more," he remembered. "I believe that ultimately, we add value to our life and business career by defining and solving problems. Having knowledge and experiences in a variety of areas and subjects has been helpful in so many ways.

Solving complex problems requires developing the ability to think and look at things from many perspectives that may seem unrelated at first glance."

We asked Chris who mentored him while he was a student at Wesleyan and, when he answered "several," we weren't surprised! "I loved sitting and listening to Bill Crago and Bob Darrell from the English department and Hugo Zimmerman '76 was influential in his business classes," he shared. "I still laugh at some of what Gus Paris said in his political science classes, much of which is still true today. Ray Purdom was a tennis coach and had a gift for explaining science in a way that still impacts my thinking and reading today, and Arthur Chesler was always there to challenge my thinking. Even years after graduation, I'd stop by his office or give him a call. He was never shy about sharing his opinion."

After graduating, Chris worked in pharmaceutical sales for three years before going to obtain his MBA from Duke University. According to his bio, after graduating from Duke, "Chris founded two companies and worked in a variety of roles in the IT sector.



At his last venture in Corporate America, SciQuest (SQI), he held a record seven titles in four years, by always saying 'yes, I can do that.' He left in 2003 to build Anna's Gourmet Goodies, which he, his wife, Debbie, and his daughter, Anna, continue to operate today."

If you haven't had the chance to check out Anna's Gourmet Goodies yet, you're certainly missing out! While we don't want to spill all the beans, we'll tell you that it's a bakery that's totally online and uses chocolate chip cookie and brownie recipes that have been passed down through generations. Oh, and we found an added bonus when exploring the site ourselves: They are selling what they've named "Confinement Relief Kits" that you can order and send to those who are confined to their homes during this time. "We can't fix everything, but we can provide some comfort by delivering a box of our incredible gourmet cookies that feed the soul," the site reads. Although that's already a sweet enough (pun intended) reason to order, it gets better.

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Although we could talk about desserts all day, we wanted to make sure you knew a few other things about Chris, too. First, he's a published author! Chris wrote his first book, *Outside The Oven: Observations on Life and Business from an Entrepreneur and Philosophical Baker*, in 2017. Next, he's a blogger. Make sure to check that out at OutsideTheOven.com. Lastly, he's a big reader who tries to keep up with Bill Gates' reading list and also enjoys biographies.

When finishing up the interview, we asked Chris if there was anything he'd like to share with our incoming freshmen and it was advice that we certainly wanted to share. "One of my favorite quotes is from Bill Nye, the Science Guy: 'Everyone you meet knows something you don't.' Whether it is other students, faculty or alumni, seek out people who know something you don't and are doing things you are interested in learning more about," he advised. "You might fill up the storage on your phone or your computer, but you can never exhaust the capacity of the human brain. Spend your time filling it with things of value."

Thanks, Chris, for continuing to share your experiences, knowledge and baked goods with those around you and living your life #TheWesleyanWay! We are so proud to call you and alum.

P.S. Don't forget to check out AnnasGourmetGoodies.com, just like we did. It's okay to send yourself a Confinement Relief Kit, too... Right, Chris?