



# Meet The **TEACHER**



Dear families of Unless U,

As we settle into a new school year, we wanted to take the chance to introduce (or in many cases, reintroduce) our staff to you.

Here at Unless U we are truly blessed with some of the most selfless, creative, thoughtful, loving, and fun teachers and staff in the world. We would not be able to do what we do if it were not for each one of the lives contained in these pages. It is an honor to serve our families and students alongside these people.

We also receive as much as we give (which is a lot)! We often compare coming to work each day to 1) going to Disney World, 2) walking down a red carpet, 3) arriving at a surprise party, or 4) some combination of the above. Each one of us is filled with joy to get to do what we do, on the good days and the hard days.

We are truly a family here at Unless U, and we are so glad you are a part of it!

Ethan Smith, Unless U Program Director

*"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, and it's not."*

*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



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## **April Jung**

Assistant Director of Programs



Hi! I'm April Jung and I've been blessed to be part of the Unless U family for almost 5 years! I began my journey as a volunteer and then taught Science part-time before transitioning into my current role. These days, I am privileged to support the Program Directors at each campus as we work to create a vibrant and loving community for all of our students. I also work with Jennifer Greer to host the monthly Sisterhood Socials for our moms. Getting to serve all of the students, families and staff members on both campuses gives me a unique peek into the mighty work that God is doing here.

I received my Bachelor's degree from Auburn University and my Master's from Appalachian State University. Before a long season as a stay-at-home mom, my prior professional roles were in Higher Education.

When I am not working, I am enjoying life with my family. My husband, Alan, and I have been married for 26 years and we have four kids. Camden, 22, is a senior at Samford. Owen, 20, is a sophomore at Samford. Langley, 17, is a senior at Hoover High where Harper, 14, is a freshman. We also have two dogs named Barnabas and London. We've lived in Bluff Park since moving to Birmingham 18 years ago and we couldn't imagine calling any other place home. We attend church at Shades Crest Baptist Church.

In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with friends, baking, reading and listening to podcasts. We also love to travel...especially when it affords us the chance to get out and enjoy God's creation in nature.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



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## **Cathy Bearden**

Unless U Educator



Hi! I'm Cathy Bearden and this year I am teaching about the US presidents and helping to coach the cheer squad. Through the years I've taught reading, science, math, music, fitness, history, a little bit of everything! I teach Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays and do early care on Thursdays.

I joined Unless U in 2015 when we turned a year old. I have seen so much growth and change and I've been a witness to the Lord's provision through it all. I am blessed beyond measure seeing the Lord work in and through our students and organization daily. I tell people all the time that I work at the happiest place on the planet!

I graduated from Samford University 30 years ago. I taught third grade for 7 years and was a stay at home mom for 14 years before I began at Unless U.

My husband, Matt, and I have been married for 30 years. Our son, Joey, is 23 and works for the University of Alabama at Huntsville and our

daughter, Maggie, is almost 21 and is a junior at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. We are active at Shades Crest Baptist Church in Bluff Park where I teach Sunday School and handchimes, serve as a deacon, sing in the choir, and play handbells. Matt and I have lived in Bluff Park most of our lives. In my free time, I enjoy running, reading, baking, playing trivia, and sitting on my front porch with Matt and our 11 year old dog AJ.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



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## **Dillon Heatherly**

After Care Coordinator



My name is Dillon Heatherly and I help with aftercare! I have been working with Unless U part-time and full-time doing anything from teaching to helping fix various things around our building since January of 2022.

Before working at Unless U I graduated from Spain Park High School in 2021. I then worked as an assistant superintendent for a construction company that built churches around the southeast. After finding that was not my passion, I left and started volunteering at Unless U in November of 2021!

Now I am a junior at UAB studying to be a counselor for people with disabilities and their families. Outside of school and working with Unless U, I love going to UAB soccer games and spending time with friends and family. I have work experience with Unless U, United Ability, and Shades Mountain Baptist Church. I have been working with this community since I was in the 7th grade and hope to continue my journey moving forward!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*





# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Deanna Barnette**

Unless U Educator



Hi there! My name is Deanna Barnette, and I am honored to serve as a Math and Science Educator at Unless U. My heart's desire has been to teach at Unless U ever since I first heard about it from my daughter who is one of Lindy's college friends. After more than 25 years of teaching in both public and private schools, I feel like I am the luckiest teacher in the world to have made this transition!!

When I'm not teaching, I enjoy spending time with my family, reading good books, and traveling. My favorite hobby, however, is playing with my adorable granddaughter, Evie. In addition to Evie, my long list of blessings include: my daughter and

son-in-law (who live in Bluff Park,) my son, Nick, who recently relocated to NYC, and all of the Unless Unicorns who share their joy with me on a daily basis!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Ellen Anson**

Unless U Educator



I'm Ellen Anson and I have worked with students with special needs most of my life, beginning my teaching career in 1975. I retired from teaching special education for Hoover City Schools in 2018 and after a short time volunteering at UnlessU, I jumped on board as a teacher in January, 2019. I am so blessed to be able to continue to share my love of teaching and work with these amazing students, their wonderful families, and this fabulous staff.

I teach a little bit of everything under the heading of "social studies" which includes our News2You reading comprehension program, Core Essentials and Values, and culture around the globe. Through these subjects our students learn about the world around and beyond them. I also coach bocce on Wednesdays and Thursdays with the students who participate in the afternoon Elective Wheel. I have been a unified partner and bocce official for Alabama Special Olympics at the local and state

level so I have been thrilled to introduce bocce into our afternoon activities.

My husband, John, and I have been married 47 years and have 3 adult children - twins Patrick and Tim, and our daughter, Lauren. Lauren has followed in my footsteps and is an autism specialist at Crestline Elementary. In my spare time I love to quilt, read, and play with my cat, Gigi. My husband and I love to travel in both the US and overseas, and the students always look forward to the virtual field trips I take them on when we return home.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## Ethan Smith

Unless U Program Director



I'm Ethan Smith, and I am thrilled to serve as Unless U Program Director! I joined the team as an educator in January of 2022, and have loved every minute so far. I moved from Minnesota to Birmingham in 2015 to pursue my M.Div. at Beeson Divinity School (Samford University). After that, I worked as an editor and trained as a chaplain at UAB. Through these things and more, I can't help but see God's faithfulness in providing every skill I might need to love our students, staff, and families well. I've found my home with y'all. My favorite part of my job is spending time with students and getting to know them as the wonderful people that God made each one of them to be and supporting families as they care for each student.

Outside of school, I spend most of my time with my wife, Kadie, and our beautiful daughters, Adelaide and Bea. We also have a crazy and incredibly loving Goldendoodle named Hamilton. We belong to Grace Fellowship church, where I am an ordained elder and Kadie serves as Minister of Congregational Care and Women's Discipleship. I look forward to as many years as the Lord would have me here at Unless U. Thank you all for believing in this dream and trusting us with your children and family members!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Kalie Williamson**

Unless U Educator



Hi my name is Kalie Williamson and I teach Math Life Skills and Bible here at Unless U on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays! I also teach at Post Place Tuesday and Thursdays! I graduated in 2023 from Samford University where I got my degree in Elementary Education and Christian Missions. I actually interned at Post Place during my time at Samford and that is how I got connected to Unless U! I instantly knew that is where the Lord was calling me and I wanted to work here full time. After I graduated college, I took a general education job in an elementary school where the Lord continued to tug on my heart to get my masters in Special Education and move into a different role of teaching. I followed the Lord's lead and began working on my masters degree from the University of West Alabama and got the opportunity to work at Unless U. I have seen the Lord's faithfulness in every aspect of my journey and I am excited to continue teaching here!

I attend CrossPoint Church where I teach Bible Study and I also have the opportunity to work and plan retreats that provide respite care for families who have children with disabilities. I am passionate about missions and I love to go on missions trips and share the Gospel! In my free time, I like to bake, hang out with my cat, travel and hike!

I am so excited to embark on this journey and have the opportunity to teach these students everyday and share the love of Jesus! Unless U is truly such a special place and I am so thankful that I have the opportunity to be back here teaching full time!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*





# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Kathleen Millsap**

Unless U Educator



Hi! I am Kathleen Millsap and this semester I am serving as an Educational Support Specialist alongside our fabulous teachers at Unless U! I graduated from Auburn University in 2015 with a Bachelor's degree in Collaborative Special Education and Minor in Human Development and Family Studies. I began my teaching career at Auburn High School and completed my Master's Degree in Special Education in 2016. When I moved to Birmingham I continued teaching Special Education at the secondary level.

The Lord led me to Unless U in 2021 as they were in the midst of opening the new campus, and I was ready for a shift in my career. I started with Unless U working in Scoops and then started teaching in the classrooms. I have taught a little bit of everything during my time here from Math, History, Reading, and Bible. I absolutely love every day I spend here and the way the Lord meets me through these students. The students and staff at Unless U continue to help me grow as a person and challenge me to grow in my faith..

I have been blessed with a wonderful husband Carlton, a 2.5 year old girl (Anna James), a 17 month old boy (Hamp), and our dog Willie who keep me very busy! We attend St. Luke's Church and spend our free time finding fun things to do as a family!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**



## Katie Batson

Administrative Assistant



Hello! My name is Katie Batson, and I am thrilled to be the Administrative Assistant at Unless U as well as one of the basketball coaches! I joined the Unless U family a little over a year ago and have loved every moment since my first day!

I grew up in Hoover and graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in August 2023. My passion for working with individuals with disabilities led me to Unless U, where I started as an intern in May 2023 before officially joining the team after graduation.

In my free time, I enjoy spending time with family and friends and traveling to the beach.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



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## **Keeling Kennedy**

Activities and Recreation Coordinator



Hi, my name is Keeling Kennedy. I am excited to be serving the Unless U community as the Activities and Recreation Coordinator. I recently joined the Unless U universe after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in sports administration from Samford university this past spring!

While my path might be unusual, I am so excited to be in a position that gives me an opportunity to impact the life of our students. And I am forever thankful that I made the decision to get involved with Unless U as a volunteer during my last semester of school.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Libby Faucett**

Unless U Scoops Job Training Specialist



Hi! My name is Libby Faucett, and I am so excited to be taking on the role of Job Training Specialist at Unless U! I've been at Unless U since September 2023 as an intern, but I'm thrilled to be starting this full time role.

I graduated from Samford University in April 2023 with a bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Science. I recently finished a 9 month Christian leadership program called The Fellows Initiative, which is what brought me to Unless U.

I have had a passion for working with people with intellectual/developmental disabilities since 5th grade, and it has been amazing to see how the Lord has guided my steps and brought me to Unless U to love and serve our students. Taking on this role has truly been an answered prayer!

In my free time, I enjoy baking, reading, and hanging out with my friends and family!

I am currently a member at Briarwood Presbyterian Church.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*





# Meet The **TEACHER**

## Lindy Cleveland

Founder and Executive Director



Hi, I'm Lindy Cleveland, and I'm deeply passionate about creating meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities through Unless U, which I founded in 2014 after graduating from Samford University with a degree in Human Development and Family Life Education. My heart has always been drawn to supporting and empowering our students, and it's this passion that drives everything I do. Each day, I'm inspired by the incredible resilience, joy, and unique gifts that our students bring to the table. Seeing them grow, thrive, and find their place in the world is the most rewarding part of my work.

Over the years, I've been honored to receive various recognitions, from being featured in publications like Woman's World Magazine to receiving awards such as the Samford University's Humanitarian Alumni of the Year and the national Young Alumni award from The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities in 2023. But these accomplishments pale in comparison

to the pride I feel when I see our students achieve their own milestones. What truly fills my heart are the everyday moments I get to spend with your students and the families at Unless U. My team and I are committed to walking alongside you, celebrating your victories, and supporting you through any challenges that come your way. My husband, Mitch, who shares my passion as a special education teacher, and our two sons, Grady (age 6) and Jordan "Brooks" (2.5), are my constant support and inspiration.

Every day at Unless U is a gift, and I'm grateful to be part of this incredible community. My commitment remains strong to ensure that our students and families always feel supported, valued, and loved. When I'm not at Unless U, I love dancing with the amazing ladies at Dance Trance, catching up with friends, and pouring into our young married Sunday school class at Hope Community Church, where Mitch and I serve as teachers.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Lisa Ferguson**

Facilities Manager



My name is Lisa Ferguson, and I have the privilege of serving as the Facilities Manager at Unless U. For the past 3 years, this incredible school and the friendships I've formed here have become an irreplaceable part of my life.

I've been happily married to my husband, Barry, for nearly 34 years, and together we have two wonderful children, Wyndham and Morgan. Before joining Unless U, I dedicated 28 years to teaching preschool in Jefferson County. I truly love being a part of the Unless U family!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## Marti Carter

Unless U Educator



Hi! I am Marti Carter. This is my fourth year teaching Bible at Unless U two days a week and I can absolutely say it is the most rewarding job I have ever had! Every day at Unless U is a good day! Our friends are the most joyful, fun people to be with and my life is better for the time I get to spend with them!

I went to Samford a much longer time ago than I care to admit and have lived in Hoover all of my adult life. I have been married to my husband Paul for 34 years. We have a son (Caleb), a daughter (Katie), and son-in-law (Jonathan), and a precious and feisty granddaughter named Eden. We spend any time we can with our family because they are pretty generally just a really fun crew! For fun I enjoy going to the Y, walking, reading, being

with friends, painting, and eating good food!

I am looking forward to a great year studying the Gospels with our students and getting to be Mrs. Ellen's sidekick in Bocce ball during elective time!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**



## Marye Grace Sauermann

Marketing and Development Director



Hello! My name is Marye Grace Sauermann, and I'm the Marketing and Development Director for Unless U. I've been a part of the UU family for six years, and I cannot imagine my life without this place and the incredible people that fill it. My journey with Unless U began during my junior year at Samford when I started as an intern—and I never left!

I married my best friend, Brandon, and we have a precious dog and cat, Stella and Cici. We're members of Redeemer Community

Church and love spending time outdoors. In my free time, I enjoy riding horses and playing tennis!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*





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## **Meredith Binkley**

Director of Content and Human Resources



Hey Unless U families - My name is Meredith Binkley and I am the Director of Content and Human Resources at Unless U. I have been a part of the Unless U family since May 2021 and your students have brought an indescribable joy to my life.

I am originally from Birmingham and grew up in the Oak Mountain area. I graduated from Auburn University in 2009 and since then my work background has involved a lot of camp ministry and time in the non-profit world. I am passionate about serving others and seeing them come to know the Lord in a deeper and more personal way.

The most important thing you should know about me is that I am married to my husband, Ryan, and mom to two amazing boys: Conner and Carter. Most of my free time involves chasing the boys around and doing whatever they are interested in - usually throwing or kicking a ball, playing outside, or building whatever their creative minds come up with. However, in the rare moment of quiet, you can always find me cheering on my Auburn Tigers, reading a good book, or spending time with friends.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



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## **Olivia Burgess**

Unless U Teaching Assistant and Scoops Shift Supervisor



Hi! My name is Olivia Burgess and I have the opportunity to work as a teacher assistant and a shift supervisor at scoops! I started at Unless U this fall and have absolutely loved every minute of it! I also work part time at my church in the Haven and Friendship ministry!

I graduated in 2021 from Corner High School and attended a community college for 2 years! I'm looking to go back to UAB next fall to get my bachelor's degree!

I enjoy doing anything outdoors, playing pickleball, hanging out with family and friends, and serving in the student ministry at my church!

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Paula Heath**

Director of Community Engagement



My name is Paula Heath and I am thrilled to have the privilege of connecting Unless U to the community and our community to Unless U. I love advocating and educating people on what we do here. I have been a fan of Unless U since the very beginning as Lindy and I were leading a college Bible study when it all began. I officially came on staff three years ago as the new building and Scoops were opening. My background and experience has been working in a variety of ministry positions from preschool to college students. I truly feel like it is a privilege to work here and our students give more to me than I could ever give them. They make my life and those around them better.

When I am not at work, I am a full fledged boy mom. I have 2 sons at the University of Alabama (Elijah and Gabe) and one at Hoover High School (Ben). Plus, a wonderful husband, Scott, who is one of our basketball coaches at UU. Everyone's favorite family member has four legs, weighs 10 pounds, acts more like a human than a dog and is named Daisy.

We love all things related to sports and the Crimson Tide. I love music, flowers, being active, traveling and adventuring outside.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



# Meet The **TEACHER**



## Savannah Scott

Unless U Educator



Hi! I am Savannah Scott and I have had the privilege to work as an educator and cheer coach at Unless U for the last year. Before becoming a member of the Unless U family I practiced as a Speech Language Pathologist for 5 years.

I received my Bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama and my Master's from Harding University.

When I'm not working I am busy spending time with my family. My husband, Drew, and I have been married for 5 years and have 2 beautiful girls. Monroe (2) and Mary Blake (1). Our sweet Monroe has Down Syndrome and we CAN'T WAIT for her to be a UNICORN one day.

We live in Liberty Park and are members of Mountain Brook Community Church.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*





# Meet The **TEACHER**

## **Susan Sturdivant**

Unless U Educator



Hello! I am Susan Sturdivant and I have been with Unless U as a Speech-language pathologist since 2016. Prior to this time I practiced for over 30 years in school, hospital, and clinical settings with individuals of various ages and needs. Currently, I lead the Tuesday Communication class where we focus on social and pragmatic language centered around each semester's theme. I also enjoy being in other UU classes as well as Post Place when a substitute educator is needed.

I have the unique perspective of being a staffer as well as Mom of an Unless U "Founding Father" named Daniel! Speaking of family, my husband Jim and I have four incredible sons, a beautiful daughter in law, and a precious granddaughter. Robert is Pastor of students at

Trinity United Methodist Church, Brittany is a talented photographer, Addie is an engaging, curious preschooler, Adam is in medical school at UAB, Daniel is an enthusiastic UU student and Scoops employee, and Thomas is a sports information director at Keiser University in West Palm Beach, Florida. With this bustling family, my spare time revolves around family, spending time at Lake Martin, and enjoying sporting events on the Plains at Auburn. We all feel blessed to be participants in what God is doing with Unless U in so many lives.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*



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## Treva Graham

Unless U Educator



I am Treva Graham and I have been blessed to be with the Unless U family since 2016. I retired from Homewood City Schools in 2015 and after volunteering at Unless U, I was so happy to join the family. I teach Bible classes and I love singing worship songs with the students and hearing them pray sweet prayers. I help lead Cooking and Service electives. All of the students bring me such joy.

I am originally from Atlanta and am a proud graduate of the University of Georgia. I love the Georgia Bulldogs!

My husband, Pete, and I live in Bluff Park and we have one son, Charlie, who is a teacher in Jefferson County.

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*Dr. Seuss - The Lorax*