

# Short visit turns Bertha Thomas into full career

All eyes on

“It makes me feel great to have a little part in so many lives.”

BY EMMA MUELLER  
Staff Reporter

Bertha Thomas thought she would only be at Truman for three to four years.

Sixteen years later, Thomas is a staple on Truman's campus. As assistant dean of multicultural affairs, Thomas focuses on ensuring student success in academics, organizations and programs, as well as helping them plan for the future.

Thomas said she originally thought history would dictate her life, but her stay here at Truman was unexpected.

“My husband, Dr. Patrick Lobert [professor of French], and I began our married life after he received his Ph.D. and after I finished my education at Wayne State University, and we had moved every four years,” Thomas said. “I just expected that would be the pattern. We'll go to Kirksville and it'll be an interesting three- or four-year experience, and then we'll find our way probably back either out east or the northern Midwest.”

Thomas and her husband moved throughout the upper Midwest and even found themselves across the Atlantic, she said.

“We moved from Detroit to Ann Arbor, Michigan,” Thomas said. “Then from Ann Arbor to Pittsburgh. Then from Pittsburgh to Minnesota. And we spent the better part of two years in the south of France. Then we moved back to Minnesota and that had taken up 12 to 13 years of our lives.”

Although Thomas moved to France as a result of her husband's position with Carrollton College, the move still allowed her the opportunity to interact with students.

“His job at Carrollton College was to take students to the south of France for seven months,” Thomas said. “It was a pretty extended study abroad experience. They hired me at Carrollton College to help students get acclimated to living in France, and that was just a great deal of fun. I spent the better part of two years making great fine dinners for students and taking them on wonderful excursions and making sure all their bills were paid.”

After leaving France, Thomas returned

with her family to Minnesota. Then her husband received a call offering him an opportunity to teach at Truman, she said.

“We came, and he had that position of teaching French, and lucky for me there was a position open as a program coordinator for the McNair Program,” Thomas said. “The McNair Program is a program that assists and encourages underrepresented students to go on to graduate school, hopefully to a Ph.D. I was hired, and I got to spend six years doing that particular job, which is where I learned a lot of the skills that has helped me very much in this particular position.”

Throughout her time at Truman and in her current position, Thomas has instituted and worked on a number of programs and organizations designed to foster student achievement.

“Every time a new class of students come in, I'm still as enthusiastic about getting to know the students and trying to figure out, in big ways and small, how to help students realize what their goals are for their college education.”

**Bertha Thomas**  
Assistant Dean of Multicultural Affairs

“I really do believe that the academic support systems that I've helped to develop here are well designed and utilized, and the evaluations from students are really good,” Thomas said. “I really do believe that our organizations are really important to the campus. Not only the historically black sororities and fraternities, but also the cultural organizations are very important connectors to students who want to have opportunities to explore their cultural background or interest. So I'm really proud of being a part of those groups, and I do think they've gotten stronger during my time here.”

Thomas said her greatest accomplishment is still being excited to help students after 16 years on the job.

“Every time a new class of students come in, I'm still as enthusiastic about getting to know the students and trying to figure out, in big ways and small, how to help students realize what their goals are for their college education [and] also what their goals are post-Truman,” she said. “I'm actually in contact with more than 100 alums. When I talk to them, particularly years after they've left Truman, they really see the benefits they gained from the really fine education that they got here and the relationships they had. So it makes me feel great to have a little part



Amy Gleaves/Index

Bertha Thomas, assistant dean of multicultural affairs, has traveled all over the U.S. and France with her husband, ending up at Truman.

in so many lives.” Even with all the time and effort Thomas puts into helping students, she said she finds time to relax.

“I'm on campus a lot, and I do enjoy it,

but when I have some down time, it's just so much fun to hang out with my husband,” she said. “We go to Columbia. We walk the Katy Trail. We eat really fabulous Thai food, which is something I miss being in Kirksville.”

## Pieces of artifacts discovered in Kirksville



Mayank Dhungana/Index

Local Resident Charles Tharp discovered artifacts such as arrowheads and pottery in his backyard.

BY STEPHANIE HALL  
Features Editor

Charles Tharp made a unique discovery while tending his garden.

In October, the city dug up the ground in front of the museum, formerly the Washington grade school, to replace an existing waterline. Four months later, Tharp, director of the Museum of Natural History, Arts, Science and Literature, discovered pieces of arrowheads, tools, flint chips and pottery on his property.

Tharp said the winter rain and snow washed away dirt to reveal the artifacts. The pieces are from the woodland period, which was about 1,500 years ago, but it is hard to tell just by looking at them, Tharp said.

He said pieces of artifacts are actually quite common, but usually he just keeps complete artifacts.

“For every nice complete artifact you find, you find bitsy pieces of broken chunks,” Tharp said. “You don't find a whole lot of really nice ones. After a while it comes to the point where you pick something up, look at it, and throw it back down because it's not a nice, complete piece.”

Tharp said a true artifact must have significant notches at the end to signify it being broken by hand.

“Usually you can tell by how they are broken off,” Tharp said. “[If they are]

symmetrical, and that doesn't occur in nature normally.”

Tharp is no stranger to artifact hunting. He said he has been looking for artifacts near the Chariton River since he was young with his dad.

“My mom owns 800 acres of timber right out by the Chariton,” Tharp said. “Most of what I've found has been by the Chariton River area.”

Pat Ellebracht, president of the Adair County Historical Society, said the first settlement of whites in Adair county was in 1878.

“Supposedly the Indians had given up their rights to the land,” Ellebracht said. “I think that was in the Louisiana Purchase ... which was in 1803.”

He said the main tribes that would have lived in the area were the Sac, Fox and Iowa tribes.

“I don't know how many [artifacts] they are finding now,” Tharp said. “Around on the Chariton River, it's good to go after a rain.”

The Adair County Historical Society

has a display of arrowheads found near the Chariton River. They also have a peace pipe and an arrow on display.

John Buckwalter, director of public works, said this is a rarity during construction, and they haven't found any other Native American artifacts in Kirksville.

“We've found modern stuff ... nothing that we would have normally consider[ed] as Native American artifacts, clay pots and anything like that,” Buckwalter said.

He said the particular location in which the artifacts were found had been disturbed many times in past years. At the time, they were working on replacing a waterline that already was in place.

He said that if they do work on a new plot of land that is undisturbed, they have to request a permit and a survey by the state of Missouri. He said that when working in previously disturbed areas, it is normally not an issue.

“Basically if we find anything — like if, heaven forbid, we find bones — we would stop and have them identified before we continue,” Buckwalter said.

“For every nice complete artifact you find, you find bitsy pieces of broken chunks. You don't find a whole lot of really nice ones.”

**Charles Tharp**  
Director of the Museum of Natural History, Arts, Science and Literature

## King's Buffet & Restaurant

Grand Reopening: Newly Remodelled!



**College Student Discount**  
Sunday to Thursday  
Evening Buffet  
\$6.73 (plus tax)

**Buffet includes:**  
Grand salad bar, variety of appetizers, shrimp, beef, chicken, pork and more, ice cream and desserts.

**665-6622**  
**1707 S. Baltimore**

rant  
rant  
rant  
rant

## Something to say?



Say it with  
**Tru Rants**

Sound off about what's on your mind. E-mail your rants to [trurants@gmail.com](mailto:trurants@gmail.com)

See page 5 for this week's rants!

The only rules are:  
• Keep it under 40 words  
• No personal attacks or profanity allowed