



Michael Goldberg plays guitar while spending time with son Asher de Forest during one of Goldberg's at-home dialysis sessions in 2014. Goldberg, an associate professor at the University of Washington Bothell, passed away Dec. 26. (Photo by Quinn Russell Brown)

## UW Bothell's Michael Goldberg remembered as cherishing life

By Kari Bray

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**BOTHELL** — Michael Goldberg was a lively teacher, a devoted family man and a voice of humor and gentle dissent.

He loved music and film, and was an expert on how cinema mingles with history. He appreciated good food and the way it brought people together. He balanced grading with playing music alongside his sons.

Goldberg started at UW Bothell in 1993, when the fledgling branch campus was leasing space and looking to grow. He helped shape it as an associate professor in the [School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#).

He refused to let illness interfere with the people and activities he cherished. Though he spent five hours a day, five days a week hooked up to a dialysis machine, he finished teaching a class in the fall and prepared for another course this quarter. He never got to teach it.

Goldberg died Dec. 26. He was 57.

Goldberg was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when he was 15. Years later, as a graduate student at Yale University, he learned he had kidney disease. He received a kidney and pancreas transplant in 1995. By 2011, the kidney was failing. In 2013, he [shared his story with The Herald](#).

He underwent years of at-home dialysis. His wife, Elizabeth de Forest, learned to insert the needle and care for him during the process that cleaned his blood, doing the job his kidneys no longer could. Goldberg and de Forest became a team in his care just as they were in raising their sons, Asher, 18, and Jonah, 15.

“There’s no one I would rather be a parent with,” de Forest said.

Goldberg walked their boys to school every day from kindergarten through fifth grade and volunteered in their classes and camps. He was a talented cook and recently learned to make pho stock for delicious batches of Vietnamese noodle soup.

He never complained about his illness or lost his energy, even when he showed up to meetings with an oxygen tank, said [David Goldstein](#), a senior lecturer at UW Bothell who worked with Goldberg for 19 years. Both had lived in California, were Jews and had children around the same age. They brought their kids to the park together and helped each other with classes.

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Goldstein once invited Goldberg to help him teach a lesson on 1960s rock music. They decided to dress the part, though he suspects they looked more '90s grunge than '60s rock. Goldberg peppered his friend with questions, straying from the 1960s toward punk rock. He asked Goldstein's thoughts on the best album, and he responded "London Calling" by the Clash. Goldberg disagreed with Goldstein in front of his students "in a very kind and funny way," Goldstein said.

Goldberg was wicked smart and had strong opinions but used kindness and humor to make his points.

"He was entertaining in faculty and committee meetings because he had no patience for bureaucracy but a lot of patience with humans and their frailties," Goldstein said.

[Bryant Simon](#), a history professor at Temple University in Philadelphia, attended Yale with Goldberg. They lived together during Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA" tour and camped out for tickets. When Goldberg was doing research for his dissertation on the [role of gender in Gilded Age Kansas](#), Simon flew out to meet him and they re-created a food tour from one of their favorite books.

Aside from his family, Goldberg only was an avid fan of the Red Sox, Simon said. Though he appreciated many things, Goldberg believed everything was open to critique. He and Simon were trying to find a time to talk about Springsteen's new book.

"If we had talked, it would have been, 'I liked this, I didn't like this, this worked, this didn't,'" Simon said. "That was every conversation with Michael. That's what made it fun."

Simon admired his friend's work. Simon can entertain students, he said, but Goldberg could teach.

Kristin Lewis took four classes from Goldberg between 1999 and 2001. He turned film classes on their head to reveal fascinating ties to history.

When Lewis was a student, UW Bothell rented space in an office park. Goldberg made sure they had a first-class education. His energy was infectious, and he was unabashed about his love for his family. He once came to class wearing a baby carrier with his son strapped inside. He insisted the students pay no attention to the adorable child and delivered his lecture while carrying Asher.

Lewis was 28 and thought she was too old for school. She rarely spoke in class.

"After I'd been in two of his classes, he came up to me during a break and just quietly leaned down and said, 'You are so damn good at this. Please speak up more,'" she said. "He just cut through my shyness and anxiety about my age."

Goldberg was one of four influential faculty at UW Bothell younger than 60 who died in 2016.

Philip Palm lectured in the School of Business after years working in business and finance. He [died Jan. 12](#) after a heart attack. He was 59.

Leslie Ashbaugh, an assistant vice chancellor and senior lecturer, died March 29 after battling cancer at 52. She'd worked at UW Bothell since 1998 and is [remembered as an inspiration](#).

Constantin Behler, one of UW Bothell's founding faculty, died June 22 at 57. He started at UW Bothell in 1990 and retired in February. He [was known as a brilliant, humorous teacher and mentor](#).

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Ashbaugh, Behler and Goldberg were part of the team that guided UW Bothell in its first decade, shaping the culture of the campus before it moved to a permanent home in 2000, said Bruce Burgett, dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. One of Goldberg's greatest contributions was his belief that instructors should meet students where they're at and genuinely care about their success.

"It's such a powerful legacy that he's left," Burgett said. "It's rare that you get to really shape an institution. He and the others had that opportunity, and they really did it well."

*Kari Bray: 425-339-3439; kbray@heraldnet.com.*



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