

# THE TARTAN

THE MAGAZINE OF ALMA COLLEGE  
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After more than 40 years of dedicated service to Alma College, Choirs Director **Will Nichols** waves goodbye.

# The Tartan

## EDITOR

Tim Rath

## DESIGNER

Cody Marecek

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Ellie Anderson '21  
Dan Gaken  
Lynzee Harrison '13  
Steve Jessmore  
Tylere Presley

## CONTRIBUTOR

Jeff Abernathy

## PRINTER

McKay Press

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**Alma College**  
Communication and  
Marketing Office  
317 Grant Ave.,  
Alma, Mich. 48801-1599  
alma.edu  
plaid@alma.edu

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## OUR MISSION

Alma College's mission is to prepare graduates who think critically, serve generously, lead purposefully and live responsibly as stewards of the world they bequeath to future generations.

## ON THE COVER

Secret Professor of Music  
Will Nichols is pictured in his  
office in the Eddy Music Center.



*The first annual Native American Heritage Month Drum and Dance Presentation took place in November at the Oscar E. Remick Heritage Center for the Performing Arts. The event was a partnership between the Alma College Diversity and Inclusion Office and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, based in Isabella County.*





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A formerly drab alleyway located just north of the Wright Leppien Opera House Block in downtown Alma is now aglow with color and life, thanks to a new mural that commemorates Alma College.

## 26 In Tribute to a 'Very Fine Person'

The Thomas Andison Chapel was dedicated at Homecoming in September, in recognition of the philanthropic legacy of a person who supported Alma College in innumerable ways over many years.



## Cherishing our past while celebrating our future

This past fall marked a truly memorable time to be at Alma College.

As is tradition, in December, we welcomed students, staff, faculty and the local community in the Oscar E. Remick Heritage Center for the Performing Arts, along with many more watching the livestream, for our annual celebration of the holiday season, Festival of Carols. This year's event was particularly notable as it was the last concert led by Secret Professor of Music Will Nichols.

It's difficult to capture what Dr. Nichols has meant to the Alma College Choirs, Music Department and the college as a whole during his 40-plus years on our campus. Dr. Nichols has provided leadership, mentorship and friendship to countless students – before, during and well after they leave Alma. He has served Alma College as a bridge to a broader world, where students perform and learn in fascinating spaces both at home and abroad. He has also kept us connected with our traditions and values in so many ways. Because of Will, the singing of "Loch Lomond" has become a signature part of our special events on campus. We will truly miss him on campus and wish he and his wife Pam all the best in their next steps.

It was a privilege to welcome so many friends and alumni back to campus in September for our annual Homecoming event. This year we honored someone who quietly did incredible work on behalf of the college: Thomas Andison, a longtime member of the college's Board of Trustees.

Tom was a great friend to Alma College and we are profoundly grateful for his passion for Alma and commitment to its future. Alma College's longstanding affiliation with the Presbyterian Church and Tom's strong core of faith were one of the biggest commonalities of our relationship, and as such, I can think of no more fitting honor than to name our chapel for him.

We will continue to honor the work of John Wirt Dunning, a 1904 graduate who is the only Alma College alumnus to serve as president of the institution, through the naming of Dunning Hall, a residence hall in the area known as South Campus.



Finally, the success of the Alma College football team, which ascended to heights that no other team in Scots history had seen before, energized our campus community and alumni, family and friends across the world.

Led by head coach Jason Couch '97, the Scots once again won the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA) championship, en route to the NCAA Division III playoffs. In the second round of the playoffs, they shocked the football world with a thrilling, come-from-behind victory against perennial powerhouse Mount Union University (Ohio).



As a result of that win, Bahlke Field was the site of football in December for the first time in its history – a quarterfinal matchup that brought thousands of friends and alumni back to campus, as well as media from all over the state. While the Scots fell in that game to a talented SUNY Cortland squad, it is clear that Coach Couch has built something incredible with our football team – something we can all be proud of.

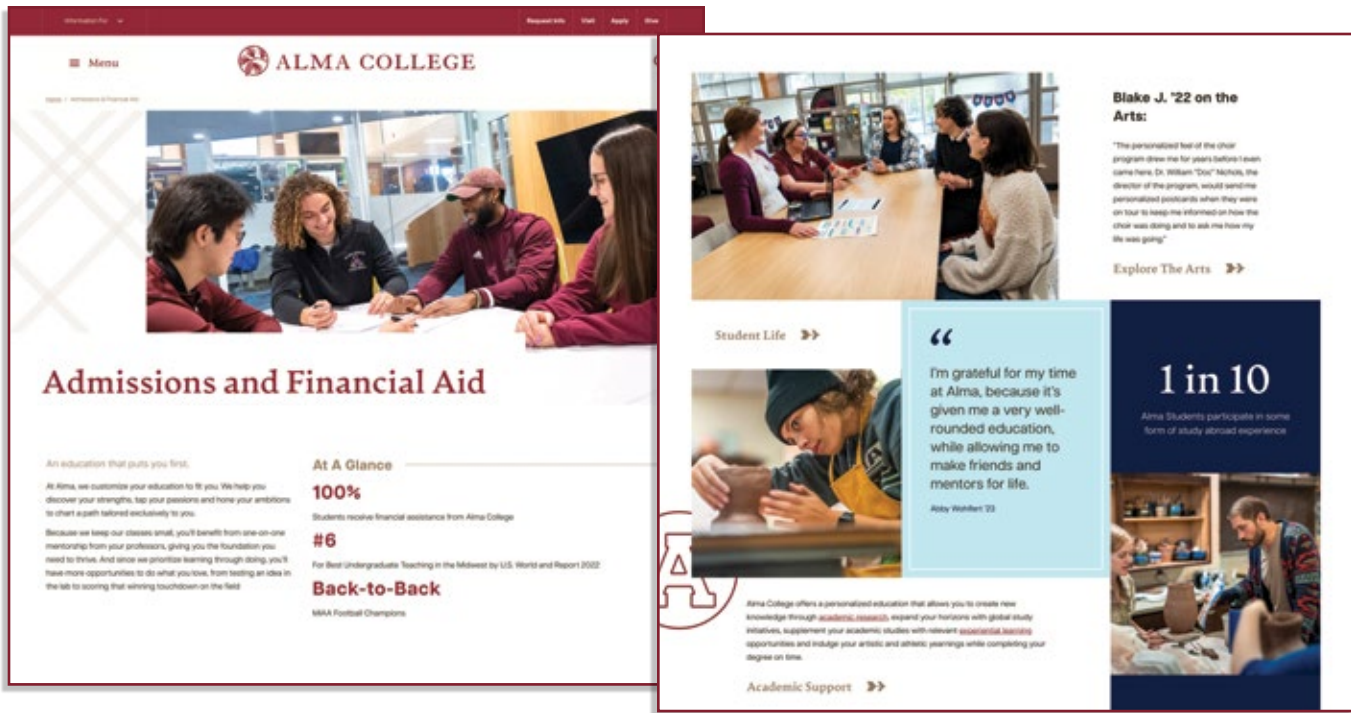
Finally, I want to pay a brief tribute to Kevork "George" Gazmararian, a longtime and beloved professor at Alma College, as well as a friend and mentor of mine, who passed away shortly before this edition of *The Tartan* went to press.

There will be more to come on the professor lovingly referred to as "Gaz," but for now, I will say that he is remembered as an esteemed leader, a cherished colleague and an outstanding mentor for 30 years. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends.

GO SCOTS!  
– JEFF ABERNATHY  
PRESIDENT

abernathyj@alma.edu  
alma.edu/offices/president  
(989) 463-7146

 almapresident  
 @jeffabernathy



# Alma College's new website and branding wins prestigious awards

Alma College's new website and brand platform, refreshed earlier this year by a collaborative team of marketing and web design experts, college students, staff and faculty, has secured two prestigious industry awards.

Alma received a Gold Award at the HMR Publications Group's 11th Annual Educational Digital Marketing Awards. The event recognizes excellence in educational websites, digital content, electronic communications, mobile media and social media.

Alma has also been honored with a Gold Award at the 19th annual Davey Awards, sanctioned and judged by the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts, an invitation-only body consisting of professionals from media, advertising and marketing firms.

"We are honored and privileged to see Alma College's new website and brand platform honored by these prestigious organizations," said President Jeff Abernathy. "We believe these awards speak to the quality of the many improvements that have been made over the course of the year in our marketing and communications, which will help broadcast the good news of Alma College to more people than ever before. There is so much to be proud of here."

Alma's new branding includes a refreshed color palette, typography, patterns, graphics and more. It is being deployed across all of the college's many platforms, including on-campus signage, merchandise, print publications, social media and the website.

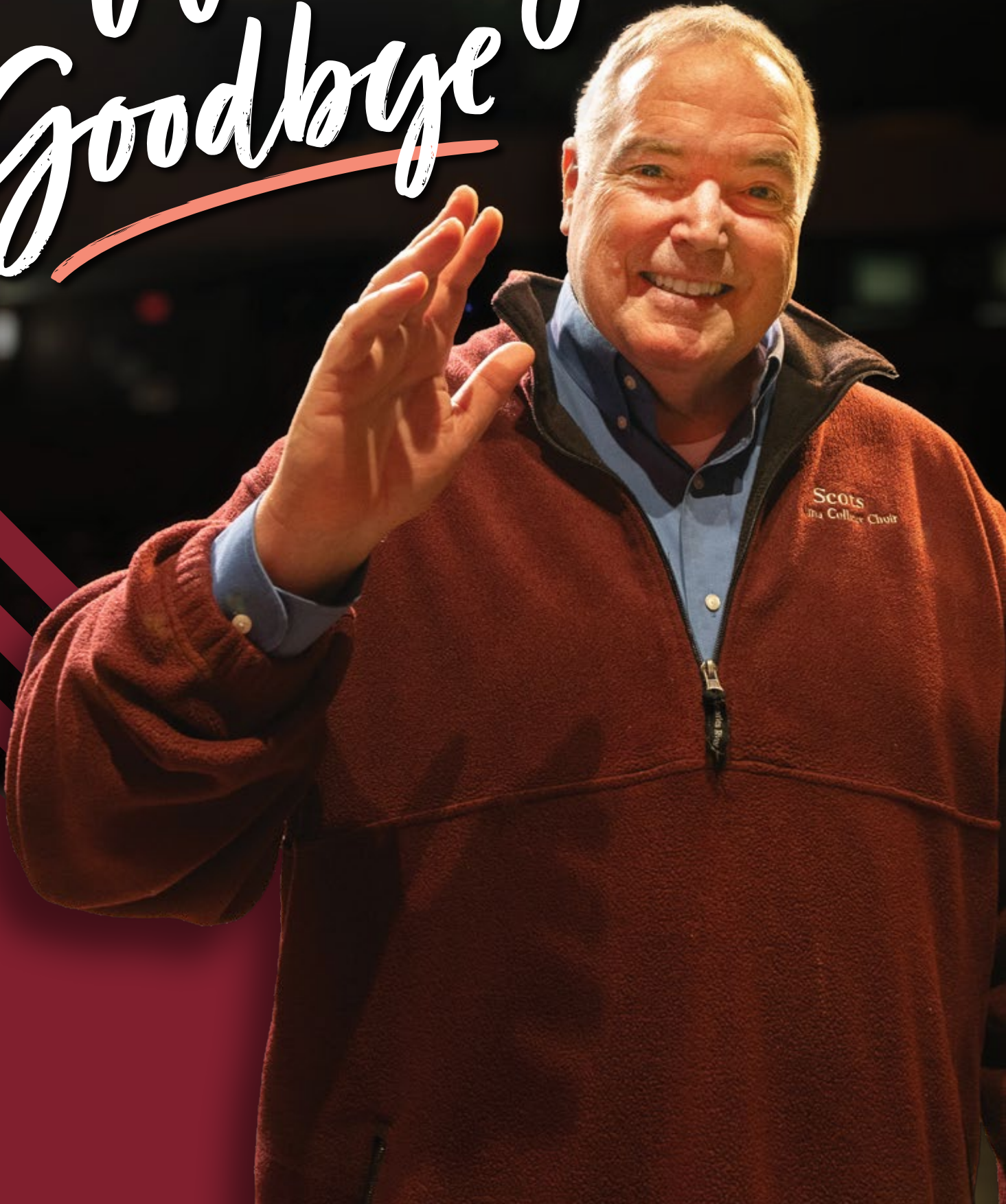
The website includes a multitude of new features, including capacity for high-resolution images and video, a mobile-friendly display for seamless viewing on different media devices and a "Program Finder" quiz that allows prospective students to be matched with their ideal academic programs. Accessibility has been improved by creating a high contrast between text and background colors and color combinations that are easy to distinguish for users with various types of color vision impairments.

The college partnered with Ologie, an Ohio-based advertising agency, to help coordinate the refresh effort, and used extensive market research with all of Alma's audiences to inform its efforts. A team of staff, students and faculty from across multiple disciplines served on an advisory committee to oversee the project, which took roughly 18 months from start to finish.

"I'm so proud of the collaborative team that joined the Scots community to produce this outstanding new website and brand platform," said Melinda Booth '02, vice president for communication and marketing. "Our goal throughout this process has always been to draw people in and show them how Alma prepares graduates who think critically, serve generously, lead purposefully and live responsibly. We are pleased to share the stories that make us Alma College in new and effective ways."



# Waving Goodbye



*After more than 40 years of dedicated service to Alma College, Will Nichols shares stories of leadership and friendship.*

From opening convocation to commencement, Secret Professor of Music Will Nichols has been front and center, leading the campus community and the Alma College Choirs through some of our favorite musical traditions for 41 years.

Nichols, 67, will retire this year after a long and distinguished career that saw incredible growth of the choir program, outreach to faraway nations, and untold numbers of happy alumni who say they are grateful to have been taught by a professor they affectionately call "Doc."

"Anything great that has ever been done, it starts with one person and an idea. If that person has the tenacity and desire that is necessary, they find the people who have those same feelings and make it happen," said Dave Zerbe, the Paul Cameron Russell Associate Professor of Music.

"That's Will and the Alma College Choirs. You cannot overstate what he has meant to this institution for four decades. He has worked incredibly hard to build something that is truly both distinct and well-loved by so many people."

## FAMILY REUNIONS

Nichols, originally from East Lansing, Mich., came to Alma to lead the choir in 1983, at age 27. Among his predecessors in the role were Ernie Sullivan, who conducted the choir for 28 years and was called "Uncle Ernie" by his students. Those same students made a habit of returning to campus for Homecoming to perform with the incumbent choir.

The connection choir alumni had with Sullivan and the deep love they had for Alma College and the choir made a big impression on Nichols as he started out. It helped him appreciate how the choir could play an important part in the life of the Alma campus.

In keeping with tradition, the Homecoming concert still serves as a well-attended reunion every year. This past fall, 150 choir alumni returned to sing at Homecoming, and a performance of Handel's masterpiece "Messiah" at the Heritage Center brought 25 choir alumni back to campus to spend the weekend singing with the Alma Choir and orchestra.

"It was never only about the music," said Sheri Tulloch '95, a choir alumni who has since gone onto lead the choir at Grand Ledge (Mich.) High School. "Most of us were not even music majors – we just loved to be together and perform. There was a lot of laughter and sharing and so much of that has to do with Doc. He did not want to change us. He wanted us to be a family."

A great joy of Nichols' career, he says, has been how Alma College – and the rhythms of the yearly choir calendar – became central to the life of his own family. All four of his children (Jennifer, Christian, Wilson and Elizabeth) attended Alma College and Wilson and Elizabeth sang in many choir concerts. Nichols' wife, Pam, has traveled on tour with the choir for many years and is often the person with whom students share joys and worries. Pam Nichols is also the steady hand behind the Alma Choir Facebook page that shares choir news, schedules and birthday wishes with hundreds of choir alumni.



## PROVIDING A SAFE SPACE

Nichols said he tries to run the choir in a way that creates a space for students to be themselves. When students have that freedom of expression, he believes, they are able to build relationships that have the potential to last a lifetime.

Brendan Lodge '14 is one such student. In his time with the choir, Nichols recognized Lodge's talent for singing, as well as his interest in arranging music. At one point, Nichols asked Lodge to arrange a popular song for the choir to sing together at Homecoming. A video of the performance ended up going viral on YouTube and gave Lodge the confidence he needed to continue arranging music.

"Doc was really instrumental for me in realizing this skill within myself and allowing me the opportunity to enhance it," said Lodge, who now works as a high school choir instructor in Livermore, Calif. "It's something I try to pass along to my own students today. I will be forever grateful for that."

Nichols treats colleagues with a similar sense of dignity. Tony Patterson served as artist-in-residence at Alma College and the accompanist for the Alma College Choirs for 25 years. Patterson said that throughout his career, Nichols gave him the grace and power to do what was needed in certain situations, which is a rare quality for a choir director at any institution.

"When you're in charge of a group, the buck stops with you. But he had a lot of trust in me, and in the students, and I really appreciate that," Patterson said. "I think that shows up in our morale, which then shows up on the stage. The students and I were able to be ourselves, and we had a lot of fun doing so."



## TOURING THE WORLD

In the early 1990s, at the request of then-President Alan Stone, touring domestically and internationally became one of the signature elements of the Alma College Choir experience. According to Nichols, choir tours offer two great benefits: the choir always improves through performing tour songs multiple times; and choir friendships become stronger from the experience of traveling together.

Touring also has an impact on student recruitment, showing high school students the exciting places they could go as members of the Alma Choir. Nichols, who used time on the tour bus to write to high school singers, believes he sent postcards from across the U.S. and Europe to thousands of prospective students.

The amount of road miles the choir has logged during Nichols' tenure is almost impossible to count. It has toured the United States every year since 1991, going all over the Lower 48 states. It has visited Scotland on six separate occasions, essentially, every four years, since 1998. It has gone to Ireland, Italy, France and other European nations.

For many students, these trips are their first time leaving the United States and represent memories that last a lifetime.

"I was in the choir during the pandemic, so when we toured, we really spent a lot of time together. These memories have been some of the best I've had at Alma College," said MiShaye Hearn, a senior student from Matteson, Ill. "I was able to see places in Scotland where my family came from, which I might not have been able to do otherwise. On a personal level, it's meant the world to me."

Nichols' most memorable performances on the road include several at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. and a show at Stillman College, in Tuscaloosa, Ala., with Nichols' friend and fellow choir director James Arthur Williams.





## MEMORIES TO LAST A LIFETIME

As he prepares to depart Alma College, Nichols says he still feels the same sense of enthusiasm as he did when he first started. Although he is ready to hand his conductor's baton to whomever comes next in his position, he continues to be amazed by the Alma Choir.

Nichols is grateful to a number of Alma College administrators, including Ron Kapp, Oscar Remick, Alan Stone and Jeff Abernathy, who have let him lead the choir "his way" through the years and supported it through periods of tumult, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

He is also grateful for the countless number of alumni and friends, as well as current and former colleagues, who have sent him messages or visited in-person to wish him a happy retirement.

"I am so appreciative of my opportunity to lead these choirs, and meet so many wonderful people," he said. "I wish everybody the very, very best."



### "LOCH LOMOND"

The singing of "Loch Lomond," a traditional Scottish ballad, has become a fixture at Alma College Choir concerts and other events. The song is so well-known on campus that the new cafe located in the Greg Hatcher Learning Commons bears its name.

Did you know that it was Will Nichols who brought the singing of "Loch Lomond" to Alma College in the first place?



Some years ago, Alma Choir supporters Thomas '76 and Christine (Washburn) Kohn '75 endowed a fund to support the choir program. The Kohns have asked that this endowment now be named in honor of Will Nichols so that his impact can continue to be recognized in the years to come.

You have the opportunity to join others in supporting the Alma Choir program to honor Will Nichols. **Scan this QR code for more information.**

*Below, clockwise: Will Nichols, at right, is pictured with Wei Tsun Chang and Anthony Patterson, promoting the concert "Basically Bach," in 1996. Nichols is pictured at his final performance leading the Alma College Choirs, the 2023 Festival of Carols. Nichols is pictured with Brendan Lodge following commencement in 2014.*

*Opposite page: Nichols is pictured leading the Alma College Choir in 1997. The Alma College Choir is known for its vast travel itineraries. In this photo from 2000, the choir is pictured in Washington D.C.*



Nichols says that he chose the song for the choir to perform because its lyrics seemed to fit with the theme of graduating from Alma College: "O, you take the high road, and I'll take the low road, and I'll be in Scotland afore ye ... On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond."

The choir has performed a couple of different arrangements of "Loch Lomond" in its history; one by Ralph Vaughan Williams and another by Jonathan Quick. Since "Loch Lomond" became a part of its repertoire, the choir has made many trips to the actual loch, located between the lowlands of central Scotland and the Highlands.

## FEATURES

Carla Jensen, the co-director of the Center for College and Community Engagement (3CE), is pictured with a student this past fall.



"The Venture program is about providing every student with the opportunity to get out of the classroom while you're still a student at Alma College — **to seize the moment, explore new opportunities and have an impact in your world as you prepare for life after Alma.**" — Carla Jensen

## A decade of dreams fulfilled

*The Alma Venture program* has been a hallmark of the Alma College experience for 10 years.

Venture grants help students to advance and clarify their personal, professional and academic goals through applied experiences such as internships, study abroad, clinical, research and service projects.

A program of distinction for Alma College and a cornerstone of the Alma Commitment, the Alma Venture program was born of the 2012-17 Alma College Strategic Plan. The Venture program fully began in 2013.

The most recent strategic plan, "Evergreen: A Dynamic Plan for Alma College," continues to build on the connection between experiential learning, vocational exploration and career development.

MORE THAN  
**1,500 students**  
PARTICIPATED

OVER  
**\$3.5 million**  
AWARDED

IN SURVEYS  
OF VENTURE  
RECIPIENTS:

**20 percent** say the Venture program drove their decision to attend Alma College

**65 percent** say they would not have had their experience without Venture funding

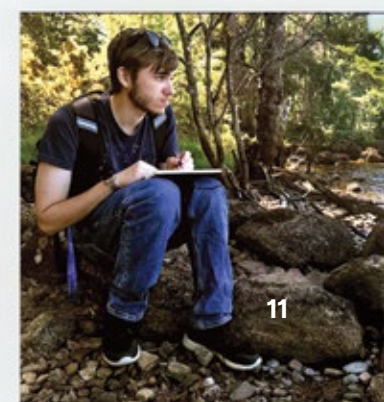
**89 percent** of sophomores say Venture changed the experiences they chose to pursue in college





"There are plenty of places to see, people to meet, and things to do but none of this will ever happen if a person doesn't recognize the amount of money and support waiting for them to utilize."

– Madison Anzarut '23





# How the Scots made history

**Alma College football sees the best results in school history** with appearance in NCAA Division III quarterfinal round game.

In 2023, the Alma College football team once again set a new standard of excellence for the program.

For the second consecutive year, the Scots finished the regular season undefeated, going 10-0 and winning the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA) championship. But unlike in the 2022 season, when Alma was knocked out of the NCAA Division III playoffs in the second round, the Scots kept playing.

Thanks to an incredible, come-from-behind victory on the road against highly favored Mount Union University (Ohio), Alma reached the quarterfinal round of the playoffs for the first time in program history. It was the first time football had been played in December in the history of Alma's Bahlke Field.

Although the Scots ultimately fell to a talented SUNY Cortland squad in that game, the impact of this past season will not soon be forgotten. The team was covered by every major media outlet in the state – including the Detroit Free Press, Detroit News and MLive. Bahlke Field was packed with screaming students and alumni who braved the cold to cheer on their team. A livestream of the game, broadcast on the Alma College Athletics YouTube page, set records for most people watching.

"I had an alumni message me from Kansas City (Mo.), who planned to come to the game with three teammates from his 1972 team," head coach Jason Couch said prior to the matchup against SUNY Cortland. "To see that kind of love the football team can inspire with its alumni base – that's special."

*The Scots are pictured celebrating their MIAA championship-clinching victory, a 50-14 victory on the road against rival Albion College, on Nov. 11.*





Below: Alma College head coach Jason Couch, center, is pictured leading the team during the Scots' Homecoming game against Trine University (Ind.) on Sept. 30. Bahlke Field was packed throughout the year with loyal fans.



“ This team is incredibly special. It’s an honor to coach them. ”

In 2023, the Scots simply excelled in all facets of the game. During the regular season, Alma averaged more than 50 points per game. Quarterback Carter St. John was named the MIAA Offensive Most Valuable Player. The defense was incredible, too, leading all of Division III in forced turnovers.

In total, 11 players were named to the All-MIAA First Team: St. John, Devon Frenchko, Nate Webb, Reese Townsend, Jerome Roberson, Hunter Sanderson, Eli Jackson, Odin Soffredine, Drew Humm, Bryce Fredenburg and Zach Poff. Five more were named to the Second Team: Eddie Williams, J.B. Couch, Maddox Mozal, Gage Nelson and Josh Hernandez.

Jason Couch picked up accolades, too. The 1997 Alma College graduate and three-year starting center won the MIAA 2023 Football Coach of the Year award.

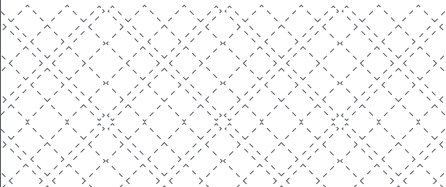






**Murray named Vice President for Advancement**

Robert W. Murray '88, an Alma College graduate and longtime fundraising professional, has been named vice president for advancement at Alma College. The appointment marks a homecoming for Murray, who previously served Alma's Advancement Office for more than 22 years, first as director of planned giving and later as senior director of planned giving.



**Buchanan wins fellowship**

Shonda Buchanan, a member of the MFA in Creative Writing program faculty, was awarded a 2023 Individual Artists Fellowship from the California Arts Council. The fellowship will be used to support two writing projects.

**Loch Lomond Cafe opens in Learning Commons**

The campus community of Alma College, as well as the local communities of Alma and Gratiot County, are celebrating the new Loch Lomond Cafe, which opened inside the new Greg Hatcher Learning Commons on Aug. 28. Loch Lomond Cafe features a Qdoba Mexican Eats restaurant, as well as Mac's Grill and a convenience store designed for college students.



**Alma College partners with Synod of the Covenant**

Beginning in summer 2024, Alma College will host a series of conferences designed to identify, train and support emergent preachers, in partnership with the Synod of the Covenant Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and two other organizations. A grant of \$1.25 million from the Lilly Endowment Inc. is helping to establish the initiative, titled "Cultivating the Gift of Preaching."

**Master of Arts in Special Education program launches**

Students will learn the skills needed to become special education teachers in Alma College's new Master of Arts in Special Education with Learning Disabilities Endorsement program, which began in August. The fully-online, grant-funded program will help fill an important need for Michigan by helping train teachers in needed roles.

**Peterson and Jensen to co-lead 3CE**

Carla Jensen, director of experiential learning, and Benjamin Peterson, lecturer of political science and history, are now co-directors of the college's Center for College and Community Engagement (3CE). Launched in 2021, the 3CE creates collaborative opportunities between the college and greater Alma area.



## Alma College reaches pact with Montcalm Community College

Officials from Alma College and Montcalm Community College (MCC) in November signed an agreement that will make it easier for students to work toward their goal of receiving a bachelor's degree. As part of this agreement, students earning an associate's degree from MCC will follow a collaborative Transfer Guide, allowing them to transfer all credits toward a bachelor's degree at Alma College without duplicative study.

## iGEM team wins gold in France

The Alma College International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) team competed at the 2023 iGEM Grand Jamboree in Paris, France in November and won a gold medal for their efforts. iGEM is a student organization that uses the field of synthetic biology to solve local problems. The Alma iGEM team's project focused on environmental issues within the Pine River.



## Contreras Schwartz publishes memoir

Leslie Contreras Schwartz, a member of the MFA in Creative Writing program faculty, released a memoir, "From the Womb of Sky and Earth," on Sept. 15. The book previously received a 2022 C&R Press Award for nonfiction.



## Alma partners with Ferris State on new initiative

Officials from Alma College and Ferris State University met in October to formally sign an agreement that will benefit students in the pre-pharmacy program. Under the terms of the deal, Ferris will reserve five seats for Alma students in each annual cohort of students entering its Doctor of Pharmacy program.

## Alma to take part in inaugural program

Alma College is one of only 25 colleges and universities from around the country that have been selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Work-Based Learning (WBL) Consortium, through the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). The WBL Consortium provides a national community of practice to support institutions in easing student barriers to internship access and job market preparation.



## Traditions Tree Project earns CASE award

Alma College's Traditions Tree project has received an international Circle of Excellence Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). The project received a Silver Award in the Targeted Campaigns and Appeals category, marking Alma College's third Circle of Excellence Award from CASE.







*A scene of Alma College's campus,  
facing west, in October.*





# Building relationships on campus

**Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Sean Burke** leads the faculty of Alma College to live our mission.

The new provost and vice president of academic affairs at Alma College says he has found one common element among every Scot he has met: the ability – and the desire – to be greater than the sum of our parts.

Sean Burke started at Alma this past summer, following 15 years of service at Luther College, in Decorah, Iowa, most recently as associate provost. In his new role, Burke serves as the senior academic administrator, with oversight of more than 50 undergraduate and three graduate programs of study.

Given Burke's extensive track record in higher education, he is well-familiar with the news headlines that tell of its challenges. One of the reasons he came to Alma, he says, is the spirit of the campus community to work through those challenges.

"Alma has long held a commitment to producing students who are critical thinkers, good communicators, career-ready and engaged with their communities," Burke said. "What I've seen since I came on board is how deep that commitment runs – from faculty, staff, students and alumni. That is not the case at every institution, and it's going to help guide us as the world continues to change quickly."

"To me, the Alma College spirit is much more palpable than at any other institution I've seen. You feel it not only through **the love that our campus community shows this place**, but also through how much everyone wants to become engaged with it."

Among the changes coming to Alma College that Burke is working to implement are more graduate degree programs. A Master of Arts in Special Education with Learning Disabilities Endorsement degree program launched this past summer. Burke says more like it are on the way, in order to respond to marketplace demand.

Another change is a program that connects alumni with faculty in the pre-law and business programs, to give students studying those fields opportunities to get real-world experience before they graduate from college.

"The alumni mentor program is a perfect example of something that shows the mentality of this community, to my mind," Burke said. "Alumni love this place, like every one of us do, and they want to continue to be engaged. We're going to tap into that, and say, 'This is the best way for you to help our students.' It's such a natural fit for Alma College."





## Faculty news and publications



**Liping Bu**, Reid-Knox Professor of American History, compares and contrasts public health systems of six nations in "Public Health and Cold War Politics in Asia," published in September through Routledge.

Together with a team of contributors, Bu examines China, North Korea, Japan, South Korea, India and Indonesia during the early years of the Cold War, as they jockey for strength and influence with different political ideologies and economic enterprises. In the book, Bu and her team posit that public health and welfare of the people became a critical lens to look through to understand how one society differed from another.



**Victor Argueta-Diaz**, associate professor and engineering program coordinator, in August published "Optical Sensors: An Introduction with Lab Demonstrations," through the Institute of Physics. Argueta-Diaz aimed for "Optical Sensors" to serve as an introductory guide to the study for both students and professionals.

Optical sensors, which tell users information about objects by converting light into electronic signals, are a growing study in the field of electrical engineering. The book includes illustrations of various items and concepts by Argueta-Diaz's son, Leonardo Argueta-Slaughter, a high school sophomore and budding artist.



**Peggy Yates**, associate professor and director of the Master of Arts in Special Education program, served as part of a team of researchers that in October published the "Special Education Paraeducator Assessment and Evaluation Toolkit," for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), a leading authority on special education worldwide.

The toolkit is designed to be a resource for school personnel, including administrators and teachers, as well as professional development providers and paraeducators, in working with K-12 students who have disabilities. It also provides a framework for effectively supervising, coaching, training, and evaluating paraeducators to ensure they meet the expectations of their role.

A new laboratory in the Dow Science Center allows nursing students to hone their skills without having to travel off campus.

The lab, which opened this past September, features two "mid-fidelity," Gaumard-brand manikins and arms for practicing IV infusion. It's set up with real hospital beds, curtains and equipment to mimic what students would experience in the hospital.

With the new lab, students are able to practice head-to-toe assessments as well as practice almost any skill they would need as new nurses. In addition to being able to practice their skills, students can complete clinical judgment assignments in the lab as part of their nursing courses.

The college still maintains a relationship with MyMichigan Medical Center Gratiot, where nursing students ordinarily practice their skills. However, students say, having an on-campus option makes practice much more convenient for them.

"I'm a very hands-on learner and I like to go to the hospital to practice skills. But it takes a lot of coordination to get that done," said Claire Williams, a senior nursing major. "I'm really grateful for the work that has gone in to getting this prepared for us."



Students in electrical engineering, computer engineering and physics classes have a place to work on their required projects, thanks to a new laboratory that has been installed at the Dow Science Center.

The lab features seven different stations; each containing a multimeter power source, function generator and oscilloscope. According to Associate Professor and Engineering Program Coordinator Victor Argueta-Diaz, these are the basic tools that professionals use to test and evaluate circuits – allowing students to hone their skills before entering graduate school or the workforce.

Two students can work at the seven stations simultaneously, Argueta-Diaz said, allowing for continued growth of the science and engineering majors. In addition to the electronics, the lab features several round tables and a large screen that help students collaborate on projects.

"We needed something like this," Argueta-Diaz said. "Students no longer have to carry their equipment around – they can keep it here whenever they need it. It's open for them to use at any time."

## On-campus labs give students new learning opportunities





# Celebrating our alumni

**2023 Alumni Award winners**  
span multiple generations of Scots

Roderic Mast '79, Carolyn Schultz '84, Krista Ried '94, Kasey Zehner '13 and Karen Klumpp '87 were honored as 2023 Alumni Award winners at Homecoming in September.

Mast was the winner of the **Distinguished Alumni Award**, the highest honor presented to alumni. This award recognizes those who have brought distinction to the college through their professions, set strong examples for others, and served their communities through personal accomplishments that enhance the prestige of the college.

Mast is president of the Oceanic Society, America's first ocean conservation nonprofit. He also spent more than two decades as vice president of Conservation International. An international biodiversity conservationist and sea turtle expert, Mast got his start as a field researcher in Mexico, and a ship-board naturalist in the Galapagos Islands.

Schultz was given the **Hebert Award**, presented to alumni for their loyalty and service to Alma College and the college's Alumni Association. Schultz served for a decade on the Board of Trustees, was president of the Alumni Board, assisted in a number of admissions and athletics events, and helped establish the Schultz Family Scholarship, which benefits students of color.

Ried was the winner of the **Smith Distinguished Service Award**, presented to a graduate who believes in Alma College and has assisted with student recruitment, provided career steps to students or served on a college council or board. Ried was honored in large part for her service to the college's Alumni Board, where she was vice president and president.

Zehner was given the **Young Alumni Award**, which recognizes alumni of the past five to 15 years who are following through on the values of Alma College while attaining a high level of professional accomplishment and volunteer service. Zehner is the vice president of Greater Gratiot Development, Inc., where she provides business consulting, community planning and marketing services, among others.



Roderic Mast



Carolyn Schultz



Krista Ried



Kasey Zehner



Karen Klumpp

Klumpp was named **Grand Marshal** of the Homecoming parade, as someone who represents the essence of Alma College.

Klumpp started at Alma College as a faculty secretary and after two years, began to pursue an undergraduate degree. In 1987, she graduated cum laude, with a major in computer information systems. While pursuing a graduate degree, she continued to work at Alma College, and eventually completed a Ph.D. at Michigan State University, all the while remaining a loyal Scot.

She later served in a variety of administrative roles, including registrar, vice president for enrollment, associate provost, and the inaugural director of the Center for Student Opportunity.







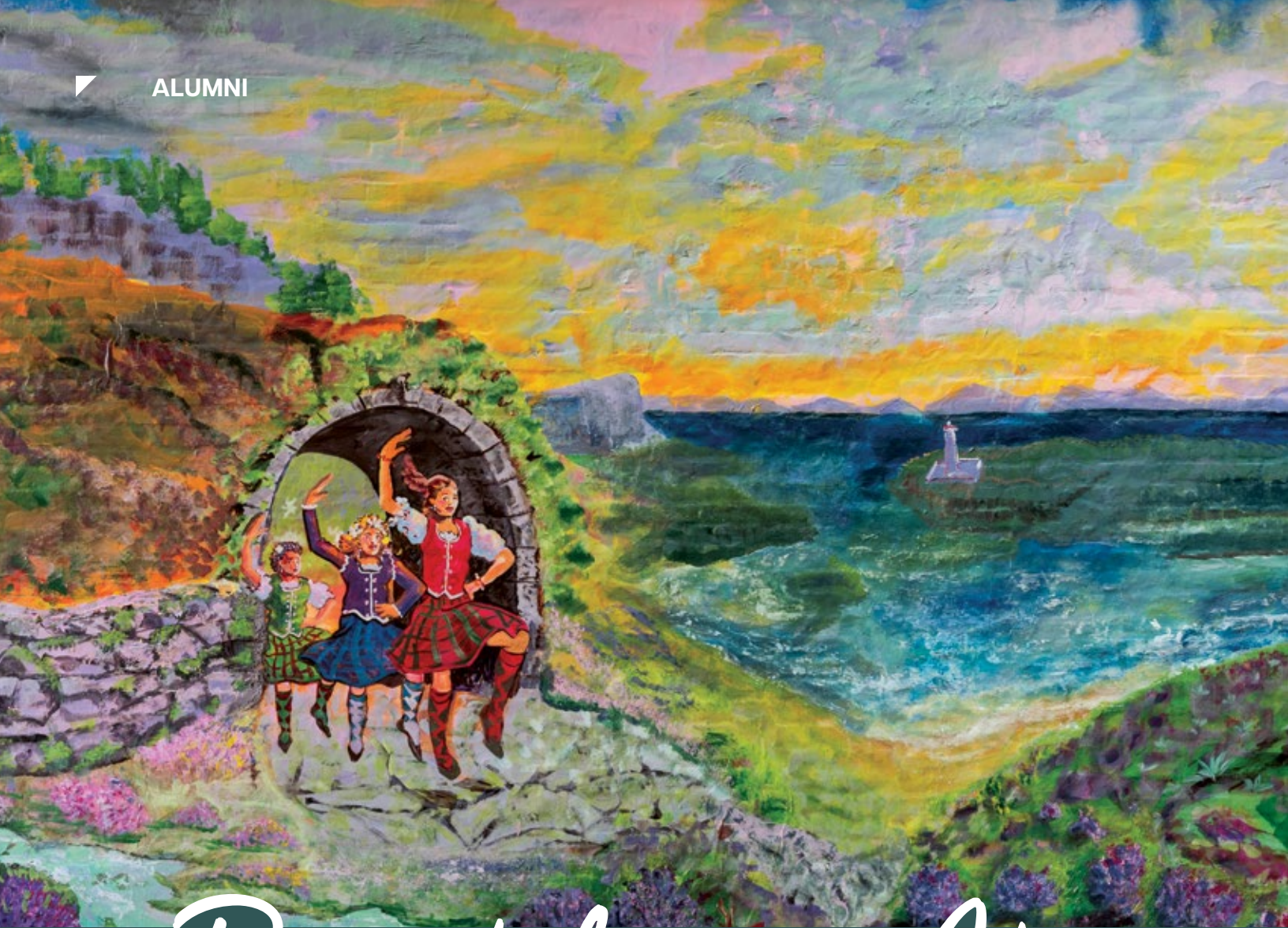
# HOMECOMING 2023











# Beautifying Alma

*Town and gown come together in creation of **new mural in Opera House Block.***

A formerly drab alleyway located just north of the Wright Leppien Opera House Block in downtown Alma is now aglow with color and life, thanks to new mural that is in large part a tribute to Alma College.

Stephen '80 and Susan (Humphreys) Meyer '83 commissioned the new piece, titled "The Yaldi Mural," painted over the summer by Detroit-based multimedia artist Charles "Chazz" Miller. The 55-by-15-foot mural depicts a number of "bonny" scenes from Scotland, including the sun rising over a glistening loch, purple heathers, fairy pools and the Old Man of Storr.

A closer look reveals even more figures that are sure to be appreciated by Alma College Scots, including the Highland Dancers and a bagpiper in full regalia. Stephen Meyer said the idea for the mural goes back to 2019, when the Opera House was dedicated following a \$6.5-million restoration effort.

"When the Opera House opened, I thought there needed to be some finishing touches," said Meyer, a trustee emeritus of the Board of Trustees. "It's a beautiful facility that has already done so much for Alma College and its students, and I couldn't help but think that it could be even more."





"We see time and time again that art brings people together. So, Susan and I thought, what better way to continue strengthening the relationship between the college and the city of Alma than to create art in this integral space?"

An Alma native, Stephen Meyer was originally put in contact with Miller by Amy (Edgar) Wellington '87, a friend who also grew up in Alma and has worked in the art scenes of Lansing and Detroit for many years. The initial sketch from which the mural evolved was drafted by Meyer's sister, Doris Balgoyen '72. Ultimately worked into the design are a few images that are an homage to Meyer's parents – the late Stephen and Helen Meyer, both of whom are integral parts of the history of Alma College and the city of Alma – and reflect the family's interests and relationship to the city.

"I am not sure that myself, nor my sister or parents, could have imagined, during our time at Alma College, the level to which the city would be intertwined with the college," Meyer said. "Students are living downtown, eating at restaurants and taking part in the community. Murals like these are the backdrop for all of this activity."

Miller has created murals all over Michigan – including one, in 2021, in downtown Alma. It's a flowery scene of butterflies, located just east of the Opera House mural and next to the Strand Theatre, which was supported by a grant from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council.

The Opera House mural took Miller, who paints his murals by hand, about 10 days to complete. He described it as a "fun" project, one that offered a lot of room for creativity while still focused on a distinct, positive message.

"The Meyer family gave me that theme and told me they wanted it bright and cheerful. That was enough for me to get started, and we just worked from there," Miller said. "This is symbolic for Alma as it is going through an awakening. There's a sunrise in this piece because this is a new day for the city and the college."



Scan the QR code to explore the many symbols, or "Easter eggs" hidden within the Yaldi Mural. Alternately, you may visit [alma.edu/yaldi](https://alma.edu/yaldi).







# In tribute to a ‘very fine person’

## *Thomas Andison Chapel dedicated at Homecoming ceremony*

In September, following the traditional Homecoming worship and memorial service, the Thomas Andison Chapel was dedicated, in recognition of the philanthropic legacy of a person who supported Alma College in innumerable ways through many years.

John Wirt Dunning, a 1904 graduate who is the only Alma College alumnus to serve as president of the institution, will be honored through the naming of Dunning Hall, a residence hall for upperclass students in the area known as South Campus.

Andison served on the Alma College Board of Trustees from 2013-22. He was chair of the Investment Committee and granted emeritus status in fall 2022. In addition to his service on the Board, Andison supported Alma generously; as a former college professor, he was especially passionate about supporting teaching and learning.

“I had the good fortune to be seated next to Tom at my first meeting as a trustee in 2014. I quickly came to appreciate his intelligence, kindness and humility. As (current) chairman of the Board of Trustees, I relied heavily on his wise counsel and friendship,”

said Darryl G. Schimeck '82. “I can think of no more fitting tribute to his memory than to name the chapel in his honor. He was indeed a true Scot.”

In 2002, Andison provided funding to create the Andison Center for Teaching Excellence, in order to ensure support for the work of Alma faculty. Since then, it has helped a wide variety of professional development activities, including mentoring new and early-career faculty members, faculty participation in on- and off-campus workshops to explore new pedagogical approaches and collaborative efforts to create supportive learning environments. Each spring, outstanding faculty work is recognized and honored with the presentation of the Andison Awards for Teaching Excellence.

“In my interactions with Tom, what stuck out to me was his genuine concern for faculty – to make sure we had the support and resources to do what we do best, both in terms of our ability to guide students and to pursue our scholarly agendas,” said Deborah Dougherty, the Gunda S. Kaiser Professor of Spanish and director of the Andison Center for Teaching Excellence. “He recognized, even without having been an alumni, that one of the core tenets of Alma is the relationships that are fostered here, and I think that’s remarkable.”

Andison’s leadership made possible the establishment of the new Greg Hatcher Learning Commons, which serves as the heart of Alma College’s campus and the physical home of the Andison Center. Andison also helped lead the 2021 chapel renovation project and established two endowed scholarships – one in honor of his parents, and one in his name – to provide perpetual support to students.

“Tom led with wisdom and experience,” said David Chapoton '57, who served with Andison as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1998 to 2019. “I was assigned to help mentor Tom on the Board, but I think I learned as much from him as he did from me. He was a good friend who did more good work behind-the-scenes than we know about. This is a fitting tribute for a very fine person.”



## Honoring our departed Scots

Alma College mourns the loss of alumni, friends, faculty, staff and students who have passed away. This page specifically honors the lives of the college community members whose passing we have become aware of since the last issue of *The Tartan*. To continue paying meaningful tribute to those we have lost, we have created a webpage where you can view full obituaries for each person. Visit [alma.edu/in-memoriam](http://alma.edu/in-memoriam) to learn more.

### 1940s

Elizabeth Cleland Horne '42  
Maryanne Bowen Markwick '44  
Florence "Betty" Ellis Burr '48  
Marian Mattson Leber '48

### 1950s

Glenn N. Rogers '50  
Hugh L. Harsha '51  
Phyllis Hayward Livingston '51  
William D. Simpson '51  
Elizabeth A. Williams '51  
Ernestene Hebert Crawford '53  
Stuart E. Friesema '53  
Carol Cummings Kutzner '55  
George W. Fox '56  
George B. Huysken '57  
Robert J. Watterworth '57  
Kathleen Botimer Blossom '59  
Thomas E. Bluck '59

### 1960s

Elizabeth Aubertin Bauer '60  
William R. Bowen '60  
David C. Bryant '60  
James F. Plutschuck '60  
Russell Brandt '61  
Robert D. Tarte '61  
Donn Charles Neal '62  
Susan Little Hodgson '63  
James "Bud" Darnell '64  
Michael L. Reed '65  
James D. Shuster '65  
Thomas L. Olson '69

### 1970s

Marilyn Stetz Nagy '70  
Donald D. Myers '72  
Linda Hodge LaLonde '77  
Philip D. Ropp '77

### 1980s

Kim Kinsel Leavenworth '81  
Michael C. Evangelides '84

### 2010s

Leslie Rose Van Hamme '16

### Former Faculty and Staff

Michael D. Doran  
Lynn Rather  
Charlene L. Vogan

### Friends of the College

Alex James Bedenis  
Ruth Ann Roberts Hamilton  
Richard M. Hubbard  
B. J. Humphreys  
Alice Craig McCloskey  
Dorothy Molesky  
Mary Jane Nugent  
Warren Nugent  
Calvin P. Owen  
Barbara Skowronski  
Dorothy Smith  
Robert W. Taylor

### Melvin A. Nyman passed away on Sept. 22, 2023.

Nyman taught at Alma College for more than 33 years before retiring in 2014. He was chair of the mathematics department for several years and served on various committees. Several Alma College student trips to the Soviet Union, Russia, England and New Zealand, among other locations, were led by Nyman.

In addition to his service to the college, Nyman gave considerable efforts to his local community, serving on the Alma City Commission and as mayor of the city of Alma. During Nyman's tenure with the city, he helped oversee several efforts to improve its relationship with Alma College, including the Wright Leppien Opera House project.



### The Rev. Jesse Perry passed away on June 27, 2023.

Perry, of Jacksonville, Fla., was chaplain at Alma College from 1990 to 2001. He is remembered as accessible and caring — the quintessential college chaplain, who met students where they were at and helped them get where they were going. His small-group Bible studies were cherished for their lively atmosphere.

Perry concurrently served as pastor at Emerson Presbyterian Church in Breckenridge, where it was humorously noted that he was the longest-serving "temporary" pastor in that church's history, at some 15 years. He retired and moved to Florida in 2009.







"We feel it's important to do our part to ensure that students have the same opportunities for life-changing experiences that we had during our time at Alma College. **That's why we donate.**"

- Matthew (Yettaw) '15 and Ashley Yuill '13

### SUPPORT OUR SCOTS //////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////

Your annual gift provides essential support to Alma College and its students. **Join fellow alumni, supporters and friends with a gift today.**

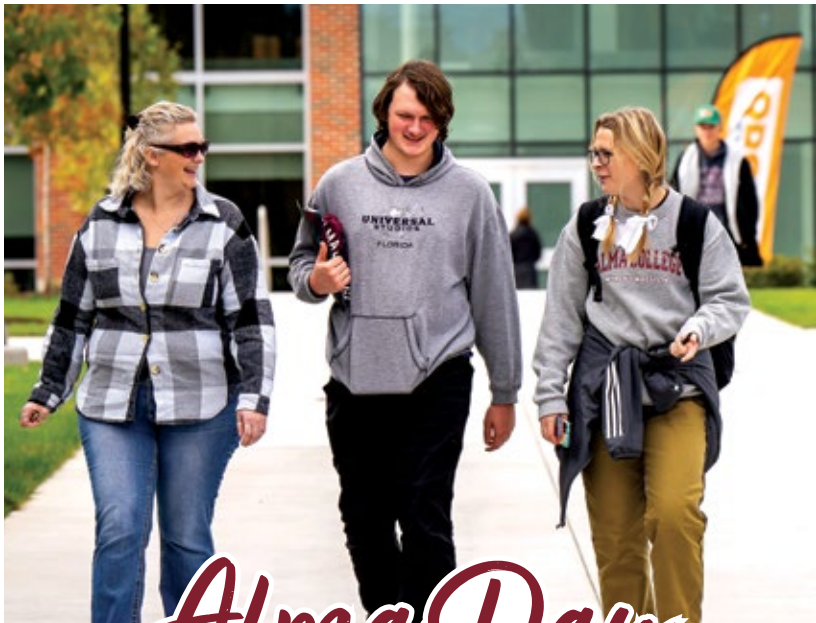
[alma.edu/donate](http://alma.edu/donate)

## — Plan your Alma getaway! —

- Stay on campus
- Check out the new Greg Hatcher Learning Commons
- Take in our local scenic areas
- Enjoy a day pass at Stone Recreation Center
- Watch a performance or attend an athletic event
- Explore downtown restaurants

It's your home away from home.

Reserve a space today: [alma.edu/hospitality](http://alma.edu/hospitality)



# Alma Day

**SAVE THE DATE**

Tuesday, March 12, 2024  
[alma.edu/giving](http://alma.edu/giving)

# ALUMNI *notes*

**Tell us what's new!**

*The Tartan* and your friends want to know what you are doing these days. Submit your news online at [alma.edu/alumni-notes](https://alma.edu/alumni-notes).

**Thomas Clippert '66** and wife, Susan, have relocated to Hudsonville, Mich. They live on the first hole of the Gleneagle Golf Club. Thomas completed more than 30 years as a principal in the Troy (Mich.) School District and is now enjoying retirement with family and friends.

Over the last two years, **Richard Douglass '68** formed the Rural Health Group in Iosco County, Mich., to investigate the deficiencies that affect the region. The group landed a large grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to study non-emergency medical transportation in vulnerable populations and determine the loss of medical services and health status consequences on the rural population. The technical report will be published in July 2024.

**Gary Dorrien '74** published two major books this past fall; "A Darkly Radiant Vision: The Black Social Gospel in the Shadow of MLK" (Yale University Press) and "The Spirit of American Liberal Theology" (Westminster John Knox Press). Dorrien is the Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics and professor of religion at Columbia University, both in New York City. He is currently writing a memoir that contains a chapter on his experience at Alma College.

The latest book of fiction by **Jim Daniels '78**, "The Luck of the Fall," was published by Michigan State University Press in July. Daniels enjoys his visits back to Alma as part of the college's MFA in Creative Writing program faculty.

After 30 busy years doing eye surgery at rural hospitals, **Jeffrey Robinson '84** is retired and enjoying his freedom.

**Jamie Blow '84** finished her new house and moved to Jackson Springs, N.C., in August. She plans to work on her golf game as she works remotely for another year, then retires for the second – and hopefully final – time in 2024.

**Julie Pingston '89** has been named the recipient of the 2023 ATHENA Leadership Award by the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC). Pingston is president and CEO of Choose Lansing, formerly known as the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau. She is also president of the Potter Park Zoological Society, board member of the Arts Council of Greater Lansing, member of Potter Park Zoo Board, treasurer of the Michigan Association of CVBs and board member of the Holt Education Foundation.

**Heather Laird-Fick '93** has accepted the position of assistant dean for accreditation and program evaluation at the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. In this role, Laird-Fick is focused on leading program evaluation for the M.D. degree program with a special emphasis on the college's Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) accreditation continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts to conform with the required standards.

**Daniel Tisch '96** was promoted to full professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine (Ohio). He and Anne (Tobian) Tisch '96 are happy to visit with alumni and friends visiting northeast Ohio.

**Marc H. Kaeckmeister '97** has joined the Great Lakes Bay region practice of the State Wealth Advisors at the State Bank, a financial wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC, as a financial advisor and sales manager.

Trine University (Ind.) has hired **Tonya Bussema '97** as student affairs coordinator. In her role, Bussema will coordinate day-to-day operations and provide administrative support to the functions within the Office of Student Affairs.



**Jason Paetz '99**, who is a Spanish teacher at Frankenmuth (Mich.) High School, received the Michigan World Language Association (MIWLA) High School Teacher of the Year Award Oct. 19 at MIWLA's annual conference. Paetz was also honored with the MIWLA Distinguished Service Award. The MIWLA Teacher of the Year Awards honor the accomplishments of exemplary K-12 world language teachers.

**Emalee (Sutherland) Rose '04** has accepted the position of vice president for the Office of Philanthropy and Stewardship at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Ky.). In this key leadership role, Rose oversees and provides strategic direction to the seminary's fundraising efforts, donor relations and stewardship initiatives.

**Jessica (Karbowski) Weare '04** was selected by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to be the acting commissioner of the Michigan Lottery. Weare was previously deputy legal counsel for Whitmer's executive office, advising on a range of legal issues confronting the State of Michigan including lottery, gaming and tribal affairs.

**The Rev. Christina Jensen '07** married Nicholas Asperger on Oct. 28 in Fairgrove, Mich. **Anna (Brostrom) Gilbert '05** was matron of honor. Jensen continues as pastor of Chandler, Fraser and Kinde Presbyterian churches in Huron County, Mich.

**Hillary Bard '08** and their spouse, Chris, are homeowners in Moreno Valley, Calif., where they both work remotely and are aided by two office-assistant cats, Mr. Bowie Big Paws and Imogen Ruth. Hillary Bard teaches middle school students.

**Liana (Easterby) Kenney '08**, together with husband Chris and daughter Hannah, 3, welcomed Collins Gladys Kenney on June 5.

**Antuan Featherstone '09** was named a member of the 44th class for Leadership Detroit, a program of the Detroit Regional Chamber. The program is designed to challenge emerging and existing leaders from southeast Michigan to bring about positive change in their communities.

**Josh Pugh '11** was announced as the new director of external affairs at the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. In this role, Pugh leads housing policy development, legislative relations, market research and communications strategy.

**Kyle Aho '14** was named to the board of trustees at the Community Foundation of Marquette (Mich.) County.

**Connor Hart '21** graduated Dec. 15 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) with a master's degree in natural resource science, including a specialization in applied ecology. While attending UNL, Hart's grant-funded research was completed through both the UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. Hart received the Nebraska Natural Resources Legacy Project Award in 2022.





*The Tartan* is published for alumni, students, parents, families and friends of Alma College. Please recycle this magazine and pass it on to a prospective student.



*Assistant Professor of Art and Design, Jillian Dickson, center, is pictured in class.*