



## THE CENTER FOR COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

For a second year, Tina Rolling's BUS380 Individual Income Tax Prep course is working with the United Way's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to provide free tax preparation assistance to members of our community. The 12 students in the class, with training and oversight through the VITA program, assist community members with their individual tax returns and applying for tax credits. This community-engaged course is an example of a partnership that benefits both students and the community. Students get real-world tax preparation experience and learn a valuable life skill, while serving members of the community and helping to bring resources back to the community. Other VITA tax preparation sites in Gratiot County include the St. Louis Public Library and the Alma Public Library. Qualifying households earning \$64,000 or less may schedule an appointment by calling 211.



### Upcoming Events

#### Arts United

Thursday, March 7

**For general admission, doors open at 7:00pm and the show starts at 7:30pm in the Oscar E. Remick Heritage Center**

Arts United is an annual event to raise money for United Way of Gratiot & Isabella Counties. During the show, you will be able to bid on a variety of artwork in the silent auction, as well as enjoy an array of music, song, dance and theatrical performances from both the local and Alma College communities. **The VIP reception will take place in the Hogan Center from 5:30-7:00pm. VIP access includes complimentary drinks, hors d'oeuvres and live entertainment.**

#### Hope House Dinners

February, March, April 5:00pm-7:00pm (Every day, Except TH)

Make a meal at the shelter and eat with the residents. Ingredients provided and cooking instructions if need be.

#### Spring Dance Concert

March 15, 16, 17 at 7:30pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

Alma College dance faculty present new, original dance works alongside student dances. Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

#### Percussion Ensemble Spring Concert

Friday, March 22 at 8:00pm-10:00pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

Join the percussion ensemble as they present their annual spring concert, featuring the percussion chamber ensemble, and the jazz percussion and steel drum band! Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

#### Spring Career Fair

Friday, March 22 at 2:00-4:00pm in the Stone Rec Center

Last day to register is Monday, March 18.

#### Alma College Highland Arts

Saturday, March 23 at 8:00pm-10:00pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

Join us for an entertaining presentation of Highland dance by the Kiltie Dancers and bagpipes by the Alma College Pipe Band! Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

#### Art Prom

Sunday, March 24 at 6:00pm in Clack Art Gallery

Food will be provided. Also see the gallery opening ceremony in Clack gallery at 4 pm with snacks and refreshments! The Theme is Dadaism!

#### Alma College Jazz Ensemble

Wednesday, March 27 at 8:00pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

The jazz concert features a number of soloists who demonstrate their ability to spontaneously improvise melody. Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

#### Women and Gender Studies (WGS) Symposium

Thursday, March 28 11:20-12:50 in the Greg Hatcher Learning Commons (lower level CCCE)

WGS students bring attention to gender-related issues. Engage in interactive presentations with takeaway stickers/informational sheets/candy etc.

#### Myth & Music

Friday, April 5 at 7:00 Location TBD

The Alma College Flute Studio proudly presents music inspired by Greek Mythology. The ethos and archetypes of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece will come to life through music from different eras and genres.

**Gratiot County Hope House**

Zoe Palmer

The Hope House homeless shelter provides temporary housing to individuals experiencing homelessness in Gratiot County. Located in St. Louis, it holds 20 beds and is nearly always at full capacity, especially this time of year when the weather becomes unbearable. Hope House is such a pivotal nonprofit to the community and gives people a second chance at life. Not only do they assist in the housing process, they also set goals with every person who walks through their door on day one to ensure they get their GED, have the right attire for job interviews, and can attend meetings for drug/alcohol abuse or mental health.

Homeless shelters receive stigma from a society who has never had to walk in their shoes or doesn't take the time to understand what they're going through. Of course, nonprofits can always use donations in the form of money or tangible items. For Hope House, however, one of the biggest ways to show community support is through the donation of time. You can sit and socialize with guests as most of them just want somebody to talk to or listen to what they're going through.



The college has partnered with Hope House to promote a dinner program where students or staff can cook a meal for the guests of the shelter and eat with them. All ingredients are provided by the shelter, all you need to do is show up with a good attitude and an appetite. Included are photos of the Alma College 3CE staff volunteering their time to cook a meal for the guests. Volunteers are welcome to cook any day of the week. Thursdays are reserved for Community Cafe meal donation each week. Show up around 4pm to start cooking, dinner is served between 5-6pm, aiming for dinner to be served around 5:30pm. Reach out to the AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer Coordinators at [vista@alma.edu](mailto:vista@alma.edu) to sign up for a shift or ask any questions. Be that change in your community by humanizing individuals experiencing homelessness. Open your mind and your ears to empathize with human beings who are no different than yourself.

**Braver Angels**

Ben Peterson



As national political debates grow increasingly rancorous, it falls upon us to maintain a healthy public sphere where disagreement coexists with a commitment to the common good. Recognizing this, several movements and organizations are working to rebuild our capacity for productive political discourse. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Alma College had the privilege of partnering with one such organization, Braver Angels. They provided our students and staff with a 'De-Polarizing the Mind Training,' which focused not on ignoring the very real differences that exist in our republic, but rather on finding more constructive ways for people to communicate across ideological divides.



The impact of these trainings on our students was tremendous. Participants shared that they learned to 'judge the policy, not the person' and to 'acknowledge the other side of an issue.' Developing these skills is critical for our community. Supporting this work aligns with Alma College's mission, and we plan to extend similar trainings to the larger community in the months ahead.

**MLK Day Read United**

Carla Jensen

As part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Program at Alma College on January 15, members of the college community were recorded reading children's stories about Dr. King or the civil rights movement. The collection of recorded stories was shared with the United Way of Gratiot and Isabella Counties (UWGIC) as a contribution to their Read United program. During National Reading Month in March, Read United shares links to videos of community members reading stories with local schools and the public, promoting literacy and highlighting community role models from a variety of backgrounds and industries, sharing their love of reading. Alma College is proud to support the Read United campaign.



Elizabeth Mukurazita reads while Jacob O'Brien provides technical support

**The VISTA Experience**

Sara Warren &amp; Grace Prom

AmeriCorps VISTA is a federal program that connects non-profit organizations with volunteers who work to complete their goals within their communities. These volunteers can take on a variety of topics and tasks depending on the non-profit they work with. The AmeriCorps VISTA program's goal is poverty elimination through community aid and support.

At Alma College there are several AmeriCorps VISTAs who work with a collective eight different community partners. Zoe Palmer works with adults with disabilities and houseless people with Dream Works and Hope House. Grace Prom works with food security and environmental awareness and stewardship with the Gratiot County Community Garden, the Hunger Network, and Forest Hill Nature Area. Sara Warren works with environmental awareness and stewardship, and food security with Healthy Pine River, St. Louis Superfund Citizen Action group, and First Presbyterian Community Cafe.