



THE CENTER FOR COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bringing Arab American Food and Culture to Alma, MI

Ben Peterson



Sometimes the best programs begin with a cup of coffee. Three years ago, Dr. Khanssaa Canning chatted at a local coffee shop about ways to connect Alma, MI and diverse communities across the state. Shortly thereafter we received a planning grant from the Michigan College Alliance to develop connections between Alma College and the Arab communities of Michigan. The grant supported the two of us and several students in an extended design and brainstorming process during which we laid out a strategy for building a respectful, reciprocal, and meaningful relationship. From that point, Dr. Canning took the lead and independently sought out funding which ultimately resulted in a grant from the Commission on Middle Eastern Affairs. Their generous support allowed her to develop an increasingly robust Arabic language and cultural program at Alma College. Along with money from the Center for College and Community Engagement, that grant has also funded events in our community featuring food, dance, crafts, and a speech by the renowned community organizer and businesswoman Juman Judeh.

On March 27th at 5 PM at the Wright-Leppien Opera House, we will continue this tradition by welcoming the Arab-American National Museum to Alma who will teach us about traditional calligraphy and its cultural context. It will then be our honor to hear from Nabeleh Ghareeb who serves on the Michigan Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs and has been a president of the Arab American Women Business Council. The event is open to the public and everyone is invited. Dr. Canning and I hope that this will become something that is a part of our community for many years to come.

It's amazing what a chat over a cup of coffee can begin!

Upcoming Events

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.

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.

Arab-American National Museum Comes to Alma

Wednesday, March 27 at 5:00pm in Wright-Leppien Opera House
Welcome the Arab-American National Museum to Alma who will teach us about the traditional calligraphy and its cultural context while hearing from Nabeleh Ghareeb, serving on the Michigan Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs and President of the Arab American Women Business Council.

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.

Masterworks Concert

Sunday, April 7 at 3:00-5:00pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

The Alma College Choirs and Chamber Orchestra join forces to perform one of the world's great musical masterpieces. Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall. Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

Alma Choir Spring Concert

Wednesday, April 10 at 7:00pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

Relax and enjoy an evening of songs before final exams! Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall. Tickets: Free, no ticket required.

Alma College Theatre presents Exit, Pursued by a Bear

April 11, 12, 13, 14 at 7:30pm in Remick Heritage Center, Strosacker Theatre

Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

Alma College High School Jazz Festival

Friday, April 12 at 8:00am-5:00pm at Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

Come tap your toes at the 26th annual Alma College High School Jazz Festival.

Alma Spring Band Spring Concert

April 14 at 3:00 pm-5:00pm in Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall

The Kiltie Wind Ensemble presents its annual spring concert. Featuring contemporary and traditional wind band literature, this entertaining concert has something for everyone! Remick Heritage Center, Presbyterian Hall. Tickets: \$15 adults; \$7 seniors 62+; Alma College staff, students and youth 18 and under are free; seating is reserved.

Commencement 2024

April 20 at 2:00pm-4:00pm in the Hogan Center, Art Smith Arena.
For more information: <https://www.alma.edu/commencement/>

Alternative Break

Mammoth Caves National Park – by Cara Hofstra

Volunteering at Mammoth Caves National was an unforgettable experience! From maintaining trails to counting bat populations and cleaning walkways, our volunteer trip was filled with purpose. Meeting passionate park rangers added depth to our journey, reminding us of the importance of conservation. Amidst the cave formations, we found beauty and inspiration. Grateful for the opportunity to protect and preserve this natural wonder.

United Cerebral Palsy of Tennessee – by Christina Harbin and Elizabeth Card

Throughout the week, we built four wheelchair ramps for houses in need. We also spent time organizing and cleaning a warehouse that stores medical equipment. Participant Elizabeth Card said, "I will build on this experience in the future by volunteering at the United Cerebral Palsy here in Michigan since I saw how much of an amazing impact they make on people."

April Breaks -- Carla Jensen

During the week between winter and spring terms, April Alternative Breaks will return to Kentucky to assist Presbyterian Disaster Assistance with a tornado cleanup project. Locally, students, faculty, and staff can volunteer with the Gratiot Community Garden (April 20&21) and Forest Hill Nature Area (April 22-24). For more information, contact Carla Jensen at jensencr@alma.edu.

Chamber of Commerce Moving Day

Sara Bonacci

After over 30 years in a historical building in downtown Alma, the Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce decided it was time to downsize and move to a smaller and more suitable space.

With the help of the Alma Center for College and Community Engagement, the Chamber was able to accomplish this move on Monday, March 4. The new space, located at 127 East Superior Street, is bright and welcoming. Executive Director, Sara Bonacci, was beyond thankful for the C3E's help during this move, and is excited to continue their partnership in the future.



AmeriCorps VISTA Breakfast

Katy Arnold

On Friday, March 1st the Center for College and Community Engagement gathered with the AmeriCorps VISTAs and their community partners to celebrate the accomplishments of our VISTAs and the benefits they have provided these organizations. Community partners included Chuck Sandro (Healthy Pine River), Cindy Taylor (Dream Works Inc), Erika Kemler (Forest Hill Nature Area), Nancy Thall & Lily Boutwell (Gratiot Community Garden), Mary Anne Justins (Gratiot Hunger Network) working alongside their appointed VISTAS Grace Prom, Sara Warren, and Zoe Palmer.



Alternative Breaks traveled to Kentucky and Tennessee to volunteer during Alma College's spring break. Check out these student reflections and upcoming Alternative Breaks.



Gratiot County Community Garden

Grace Prom



Summer is quickly approaching, and the Gratiot County Community Garden is looking forward to its 5th gardening season. The mission of the garden is to provide free produce to the community and help others learn about sustainable healthy lifestyle choices. The garden is managed by a small team of community members and is cared for by volunteers. Whether you're an experienced gardener or want to learn how to grow your first tomato there's a place for you here. If you are interested in volunteering in the garden this summer, please email gratiotcountycommunitygarden@gmail.com.