

ACC News You Should Know



Marwede ('16) Glides Up the World Rankings



Scholarship Spotlight: Ahead of Her Time



ACC Alumni Basketball Game in December



The Future is Now at Van Lare Hall

Elite Pro Disc Golfer is ACC Alum



Andrew Marwede in a DGA

Andrew Marwede ('16) is a disc-slinger with a taste for cookies.

The former assistant men's basketball coach, who also played hoops for the Lumberjacks in the mid-teens, is making a name for himself as a professional athlete. No, not in basketball, but in the growing sport of disc golf, where he is known as the Cookie Monster. (More on the nickname later.)

Now ranked as the eleventh-best disc golf player in the world, Andrew discovered the sport in 2014 as a 17-year-old freshman at Alpena Community College. While it's not widely known, ACC has a disc golf course—Lumberjack Meadows--on Woodward Avenue. That's where Andrew played his first match and discovered that he was naturally gifted at the sport, which has players throwing discs at targets along a course similar to that of golf. With discs ranging in cost from about \$10 to \$20 each, it is an affordable sport to play, even for college students like Andrew was at the time he discovered the sport.

Andrew joined the small disc league Alpena has and started honing his game. He says he knew immediately that he was pretty good at the sport and, within a year, began traveling throughout the state to compete in tournaments on the weekends. Especially excelling at throwing tricky forehand shots, Andrew quickly improved his game and, by the time he graduated from ACC in 2016 with an associate degree in business administration, he was ready to go pro.

Andrew moved to Kalamazoo and continued his education at Western Michigan University while playing disc golf professionally when his schedule allowed. When he graduated from Western with a bachelor's degree in sports management in 2018, Andrew devoted himself to being a full-time disc golf pro, traveling the country to compete in tournaments.

When asked if he was scared to go pro full-time, relying solely on disc golf winnings and endorsements to pay his bills, Andrew admitted to at least a little trepidation.

"I was definitely nervous, but I knew that's what I wanted to do the minute I graduated--and I have been doing it full-time ever since."

In 2019, Andrew sweetened up the disc golf world by using a chocolate chip cookie as his mini marker, which are small disc-shaped objects used to mark where a player's disc lands and where they must take their next shot. In a viral disc golf video, Andrew is seen making a tricky shot before picking up his mini marker—a cookie—and taking a bite. It was then that the Cookie Monster of disc golf was born. Cookies are now Andrew's signature mini marker and something fun that sets him apart from other players.

A full-time pro, Andrew has been steadily climbing the world rankings of the sport. When the COVID pandemic hit, however, the disc golf tour came to a halt and Andrew headed home to Alpena. Not being able to compete in disc golf meant that he could devote himself to his other great sports passion: basketball. For two seasons, Andrew was the assistant men's basketball coach under Mark Jacobs, who stepped down in April after four years on the job. Andrew, who was coached in middle school by Jacobs, said he'd love to consider a job coaching basketball someday when he retires from his

disc golf career.

“But only at ACC,” Andrew says, showing his deep love for the Lumberjacks.

With the disc golf season back in full-glide, Andrew says he’s visited all contiguous U.S. states except South Dakota and Maine, playing disc golf in about 30 tournaments a year. Each event usually runs between a Friday and Sunday, so Andrew uses the weekdays in between to commute in a tricked-out cargo van to the next tournament. His van also serves as his home away from home when he’s on tour.



Andy Marwede at work.

Andrew plans to play disc golf professionally as long as his skills and body hold up. Most elite players are in their twenties and thirties, so life after his professional disc golf career is something about which Andrew has given some thought. With a business and sports management educational background, Andrew is interested in perhaps transitioning someday to management or sales for a disc golf company.

Speaking of disc golf companies, Andrew just signed an endorsement deal with DGA Disc Golf and has a limited edition run of Andrew Marwede discs available for purchase.

“I’m extremely grateful for this opportunity with DGA and everyone’s support throughout the process,” Andrew said.

Those inspired by Andrew’s success and interested in learning more about disc golf are invited to [contact Travis Barker](#), who heads the Alpena Disc Golf League, which has [a group page on Facebook](#) and an [Instagram page](#) as well.

“The Facebook group is full of generous, kind people all willing to meet any at the course who asks. We are all more than happy to give pointers to beginners,” Travis said.

Scholarship Spotlight: A Woman Ahead of Her Time



Elaine Thompson Donald ('64)

What impact can education have on a life?

For Elaine Thompson Donald ('64), someone born just eight years after American women got the right to vote, education propelled her into a life she likely only could've imagined as a child. And it all started by taking a chance and enrolling at Alpena Community College.

“ACC opened a little door for my mom,” daughter Rebecca Donald said, “and the whole world was there behind it.”

We will never know what compelled Elaine, who died last year, to enroll at ACC in 1962. She had graduated high school in 1945 and gotten married soon after at the tender age of 19. Through the years, five children were born to Elaine and her husband Robert—sons A.D. and Jac and daughters Rebecca, Esther, and Judith. Elaine stayed home with her children and was, as Rebecca and Esther describe her, “a 1950’s housewife.” The sisters remember their mother as always reading, even when nursing her children. When her oldest child was 14 and the youngest was 6, Elaine enrolled at ACC, the first in her family to seek higher education. She was 34 years old.

“I try to picture how she even knew how to go get a degree when there was nobody before her,” Rebecca said.

“She just had this passion to learn,” Esther added.

While her husband was at work, Elaine went to class at ACC. Kids came home from school at lunch in those days, so Elaine’s mom would go to her daughter’s home each weekday to prepare lunch for the children and get them back to school. Rebecca and Esther credit their grandma with making it possible for their mother to go to college.

Elaine just loved learning and her classes at ACC, frequently quoting things to her

children she'd read in her textbooks in preparation for class.

"I know she went home to laundry and cooking and children," Rebecca said, "but when she was there (at ACC), she would just light up."

The courage to go back to school sparked a lifelong love of education for Elaine. After graduating from ACC in 1964, Elaine pursued her goal to become a teacher by enrolling in a summer program held over two years at Michigan State University to earn a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1966. In 1977, earned a master's degree in education from Central Michigan University.



Elaine Thompson Donald ('64) graduating from ACC.

Elaine made education her life's work, not only by teaching elementary school students at Sunset Elementary School in Alpena for decades, beginning her teaching career in but by teaching and traveling abroad, too. During summers, Elaine grabbed her passport and joined groups of other educators traveling the globe. Over the years she visited Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Japan, and South America. She explored the Galapagos Islands and took a leave of absence in autumn of 1982 to live and teach in Japan for a year. Just before the fall of communism across Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, Elaine retired from Alpena Public Schools and accepted a job teaching fifth grade on a Russian Island. As the Soviet Union crumbled around her, Elaine had to figure out how to get off the island and back to America.

Later, in her 70s, Elaine got yet another bachelor's degree in family life education from Spring Arbor University.

To honor her mother's memory, Esther Donald-Briggs and her husband John have established an endowed scholarship in Elaine's name. The scholarship will provide funding to students who are pursuing a degree or certificate in any field of study at ACC, the institution that was so instrumental in launching Elaine's second act in life.

"Education was so important to her...and she would want that for other people," Esther explained.

Rebecca added that their mom was attuned to economic inequality and believed education could give a boost to those falling behind.

"I think she knew that that one class...I think she knew that sometimes that's all it takes to get that foothold," Rebecca said.



Elaine Thompson Donald in Japan in 1983.

When asked what they wanted scholarship recipients to know about their mom, Rebecca expanded on the importance of being courageous enough to take a chance, just like their mom did back in 1962.

"Accomplishing everything she did was incremental. ACC was that first step. You don't have to be able to think past that," Rebecca said. "I know there's a lot of talk about goal setting and all that, but I don't know that mother did that. She just got up, she went there (ACC), and then one door opened after another."

Esther added that her husband, who joined her in establishing a scholarship in Elaine's memory, made the point recently that ACC gets people started so they can use that education to do so much more.

"That's what ACC did for her," Esther added, speaking of her mother.

For more information about the Elaine Ellen Thompson (Elaine Donald) Memorial Scholarship, [contact Alpena Community College Foundation Executive Director Brenda Herman.](#)

All in for ALL: The Association for Lifelong Learners



Drs. Don MacMaster and Tina Rossi

Have you ever wished you'd taken a certain class in school that seemed boring when you were a kid but sounds fascinating now? Have you ever innocently Googled something and, 45 minutes and many clicked links later, found yourself researching how far a sloth can swim? If so, you're the perfect person to check out what the Association of Lifelong Learners has to offer.

Housed at Alpena Community College, the Association of Lifelong Learners (ALL) is a vibrant, engaging resource in Northeast Michigan promoting learning about a wide variety of subjects. ALL is comprised of active learners, most of which are

of retirement age, though anyone of any age or education level can join the group. ALL president Judy Nichols, says the association offers valuable opportunities for everyone.

"ALL is for anyone seeking to expand their knowledge, experience, and friendship. Our programs offer the opportunity to do all of this and more," she enthused.

Each week, ALL offers a fresh set of educational programs, both at ALL headquarters at the Madeline Briggs Center at the west end of ACC's Van Lare Hall and virtually via Zoom. As a bonus, most of these programs are recorded and available at future dates on [YouTube](#). There are programs in a wide variety of subjects, from history, health, and current events to art and book reviews. ALL offers a stable of regular activities as well, including contract bridge, pinochle, Mexican train dominoes, pickleball, square dancing, and camera club, all of which happen weekly.

Choosing classes and activities is a group effort. ALL has a program committee that meets monthly to discuss what subjects to explore and ideas for presentations.

"This committee, in particular, is the group I call CSI Alpena – Creative Sleuths Investigating Alpena," Judy says. "(They're) always looking for a new business or site, an interesting perspective on an old--or new--idea, an unsung hero doing something really good in our own neighborhood, a crafty soul willing to share his or her talent. This group contacts potential presenters, coordinates their program with our calendar and technology, and hopefully, the program is on!"

Far from the mundane topics you might expect a community education program to cover, ALL has offered some truly special opportunities for participants to learn from gifted presenters with creative programs of interest. An official photographer for the Michigan State University Marching Band led a photographic walk around Alpena. A retired high school and college educator presented a program on movie appreciation, complete with an eclectic range of films evoking powerful responses from students. ALL has had programs exploring the marine life and lore that surrounds our area.

"...Birding, kayaking, hiking, biking, and even stories of the night sky--just some of our presentations," Judy recounted. "If you're willing to share, ALL is eager to learn!"

Classes and programs aren't all that ALL offers, though.

"A moveable feast is scheduled monthly at area restaurants where ALL members and guests enjoy great food and conversation," Judy shares.

In addition, get-togethers deemed "The Happening" are held quarterly in different locations and feature a shared meal, during which members can connect and get to know each other. Sometimes Happenings also include a fun event like a wagon ride through a local apple orchard.



ALL program presented by the Experimental Aircraft

ALL is financed by dues and donations. Annual membership is \$50 per person or \$90 per couple, with the fiscal year running July 1 through June 30. Programs are free for members, though some programs or activities may have additional fees that are collected quarterly,

For more information on the Association of Lifelong Learners, [visit their website](#).

Golden Goose Feathers Nest at ACC Foundation



CFNEM presents check to ACC Foundation.

Things in the Alpena Community College Foundation office just got quite fowl.

The ACC Foundation decided to take part for the first time in the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan's Giving Tuesday event on November 30 to use the platform to spread the word about the great things donors to the foundation accomplished together for ACC and its students this past year.

Thoughts that the foundation could take home Grant the Golden Goose, awarded to the charity that raised the most funds on Giving Tuesday, wasn't a consideration. But now the foundation is feathering its nest to make room for Grant!

With 60 charities competing in a good-natured competition to raise the most funds that day, the ACC Foundation was just honored to be included in such esteemed company. To celebrate the season of giving, the foundation decided to shine a spotlight for Giving Tuesday on the needs of ACC students and how supporters of the college have worked together to help those students achieve their dreams. To say that friends of the college came out in force on Giving Tuesday to support the work of the foundation is an understatement. When the dust settled on the day, donors to the ACC Foundation gave \$39,105 in gifts to support ACC and the students it serves. That garnered the golden goose and gave the ACC Foundation an opportunity to honor the people who have made it possible for generations of Northern Michiganders the opportunity for higher education.

"The generosity of the supporters of the college never ceases to amaze me," said ACC Foundation Executive Director Brenda Herman. "Their donations mean so much to the students who ultimately benefit from the support ACC receives from alumni and friends of the college all over the world. It's not just what the funding makes possible—it's the message behind the gift that tells a student that someone believes in them and thinks they're worth investing in."



Grant the Golden Goose

Grant the Golden Goose is settling in nicely at the foundation offices inside Besser Technical Center at Alpena Community College. He will be appearing at a plethora of college events throughout the year to spread the word about the ACC Foundation and the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan's Giving Tuesday initiative, which benefited so many worthy charitable organizations in northeast lower Michigan.