

ACC News You Should Know



ACC Alumna Preserves History



Calling All Alumni Athletes



ACC Gets Creative for Pinning Ceremony



Harvesting Hunger

ACC Alumna Brings Past to Light



Jenni Ritzler Johns ('83)

If we don't know where we've been, how do we know where we still need to go?

From military conflicts to economic trends, historians provide the information about the past that help give context to the present. Bookstores and e-readers are filled with the work of today's historians telling the stories of past political leaders and national heroes. But what about the stories of our hometowns?

Who are the historians who preserve the present and tell the stories of the past on a local level?

For many Facebook users with local ties, Jenni Ritzler Johns' ('83) posts to online community forums have brought Alpena's history alive, sparking memories of childhood and the way things used to be on the Sunrise Side.

Perhaps because of her rich family history—her father's side of the family has been a staple of the Alpena area for generations while her mother was an immigrant—Jenni is more interested than most by the stories that lead us to the present. Jenni's great-grandfather, Charles Ritzler, came to Alpena from Germany in 1890 and was a merchant tailor before becoming the owner and operator of Ritzler Dry Cleaners, which generations of Ritzlers subsequently ran until the business was tragically destroyed by fire in 1993 when Jenni's father, Richard, and her uncle, James, were the owners.

Jenni's mother, Shirley, was English and raised on the Isle of Sheppey in the English Channel, where she survived World War II with her family. Jenni says her mom's personal stories of the war and Jenni's grandfather's service in the Royal Navy always intrigued her. After coming to America with her husband in 1954 at the age of 20, Shirley became a gifted artist. Though she died in 2003, Shirley recently had an exhibit at the Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan of her intricate paper cutouts.

It was her mother who nurtured Jenni's devotion to preserving evidence of the past, starting in childhood.

"At a very young age, my mom encouraged me to scrapbook my accomplishments and memories. Yes, I still have copies of all my school report cards," Jenni shares. "I've always enjoyed studying history, and was inspired by two local teachers in particular, i.e., Ann Taber, who taught Alpena history while I attended Thunder Bay Junior High, and William Romstadt, who taught a military battles history class while I was a student at Alpena Senior High."

Following graduation from AHS, Jenni joined the Army and spent the next three years working in West Germany as a military journalist. She traveled throughout Europe while serving her country during the Cold War before leaving active duty to return home to Alpena in 1981.

Back in Northeast Michigan, Jenni considered what direction she should go in life and weighed the options. ACC was right in her hometown, but Jenni wasn't sure she was college material—and being older than many of the other first-year students gave her pause. Willing to take a chance, however, Jenni decided to try one class—Richard Clute's sociology course—in the autumn of 1981 and the rest is, well, history.

“All my ACC instructors were absolutely wonderful,” Jenni said, citing Mr. Clute as someone who made a positive impact on her education at the college. “Three other ACC instructors also were a great influence: Sonya Titus, who was my teacher for English/American Literature and also the ACC Players theatre director; Mr. Law for my Political Science class; and Dr. L. Aufderheide, who was my Humanities class instructor and the ACC Campus Update (school newspaper) advisor.”



Jenni, circled, and the cast of Godspell.

Jenni thrived at ACC and graduated with honors in late 1983 before transferring to Central Michigan University and earning a bachelor’s degree in journalism in 1985. During her time in Mt. Pleasant, Jenni noticed her elective courses were filled with history classes. Before she knew it, she ended up with two minors to go with her journalism major: history and broadcasting. Her education would end up serving Jenni well in both her professional work in public relations and marketing communications and in her hobby as a genealogist and historian.

Continuing to research her family roots throughout her life, Jenni says her genealogy hobby rubbed off on both of her parents, with her father even becoming a member of the Northeast Michigan Genealogy Society and serving two years as its treasurer. When her dad died in January 2019, Jenni inherited binders and boxes full of family treasures, plus years of her parents’ research from a variety of sources, including the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library’s collection of microfiche and documents.

Happy to share the pictures and informational snippets she and her family have collected over the years, Jenni is a frequent contributor to several historical Facebook groups. When asked what her advice would be for other amateur historians interested in documenting the present and preserving the past, Jenni said, “Don’t wait and have regrets! Interview, interview, interview! Take notes, record, photograph or video tape, if possible.

“Ask your grandmother what kind of mischief she got into as a teenager and write it down. My late grandmother said she used to run through the neighborhood with her friends and knock over outhouses for fun. Ask your dad why he chose to join the Air Force instead of the Army and write it down. Ask where that old grandfather clock came from and put a tag on the back, indicating so. Have your parents, grandparents, etc., complete a ‘life’ resume, with dates and descriptions of significant events. Even draft a simple outline for them to follow and basically fill-in-the-blanks. You’ll soon have collected accurate memories that can be passed along for generations to come.”

Jenni has generously shared pictures and clippings of ACC history with the ACC Office of Alumni Relations, which will be published periodically on the ACC Alumni Facebook page.

Let’s Get the Team Back Together!



ACC Cross Country

ACC Athletics and the Office of Alumni Relations need your help! The team at ACC is searching for contact information for past ACC athletes to encourage them to get involved again in the college and ACC sports. Goals for getting reacquainted include:

- Creating an ACC Lumberjacks Hall of Fame.
- Recognizing athletics volunteers and boosters with the Lumberjack Legions program.
- Capturing the athletics history at ACC to preserve memories and inspire current student-athletes.
- Presenting opportunities for alumni athletes to give back to the college and the students ACC serves.

Are you or someone you know an alumni of ACC athletics? [Please click here to fill out the survey](#) and encourage others on your team while at ACC to do the same. It’s time the rich athletic history of the college be recognized and celebrated!

ACC Gets Creative for Pinning Ceremony for Nurses



ACC Nursing Grads

If there's one thing nurses do well, it's getting their job done amid a crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has created quite a crisis, but the ACC Student Nurses Association rose to the challenge of not only completing their education, but also marking the occasion in the traditional way unique to their chosen profession.

New nurses, such as the 34 students who recently graduated from ACC's storied nursing program December 16, traditionally mark their induction into the profession with a pinning ceremony. Dating back to the Crusades in the 12th century, pinning ceremonies are steeped in symbolism and often incorporate a cap, lamp, pledge, and—of course—a pin. ACC holds pinning ceremonies for each graduating class, where each newly-minted nurse has either an LPN or RN pin affixed to their uniform by a nurse of their choice—typically a family member or friend in the profession or an ACC faculty member.

Student Nurses Association Pinning Co-Chairs Alexandria David, Natalie Woolman, Lauren Romel, and Lyndsey Romel got creative when it became apparent that they could not hold the pinning ceremony in-person and decided to take the event online. Nursing students gathered the email addresses of the guests they wanted to invite to the ceremony and invitations were sent virtually.

Ultimately, 122 people logged in on Webex to attend the ceremony, with most guests joined with other people in their household to watch from as far away as Canada and Florida. Awards and scholarships were presented, student speakers represented their classmates, and ACC President Dr. Don MacMaster addressed the graduates. The Student Nurses Association had ordered pins for graduates and distributed them prior to the ceremony, but the names of the graduates were recited at the virtual pinning ceremony so each new nurse could be recognized. ACC Director of Nursing Melissa Fournier led the students in the recitation of the Florence Nightingale pledge, with viewers at home also taking part in this hallowed tradition for new nurses.

While the virtual pinning ceremony was still special, nursing department secretary Lisa Brege said it lacked some of the personal touches only an in-person event can offer.

"What was missing was the photography -- the capturing of the smiles, joy, and emotions of the graduates being pinned," Brege said, before adding that ACC Communications Technician Jess Haselhuhn photographed the graduating nurses on campus prior to the virtual pinning ceremony so each would have a special keepsake.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced change on most of us, but it hasn't changed how ACC nursing faculty and staff feel about their newest graduates, nurses who will be heading out to the frontlines of the fight against the pandemic.

"This ceremony is always the proudest moment for nursing faculty and staff to see the students' success and reach their goals," Brege said.

Harvesting Hunger



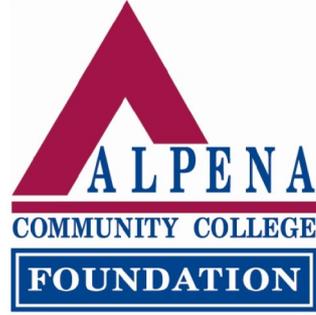
ACC Food Pantry

What began in 2017 as a small enterprise to try to help struggling students get enough to eat has rapidly grown into a bustling student food pantry, thanks to generous donors who know students can't fill their minds with knowledge on an empty stomach.

The ACC Student Food Pantry inside Besser Technical Center has grown to meet the demands of ACC students experiencing food insecurity amidst the pandemic. Monetary gifts made by generous donors allowed for the pantry to help students at the ACC Oscoda campus. ACC staff forged a relationship with Neiman's Family Market in Tawas to place food orders for in-need students to pick up during the most recent mandated campus closure. A survey was sent to students to gauge food insecurity and allowed those who needed food to choose between three pre-packed food packages to pick up by appointment.

Caring donors who answered the call of the foundation for help feeding ACC students in danger of not getting enough to eat are responsible for the growth and

evolution of the ACC Student Food Pantry. In 2020, a total of \$12,083.10 was donated to the foundation and earmarked for the pantry, with \$4000 of that sum being raised on Giving Tuesday 2020, which foundation staff dubbed "Giving Foodsdays". In addition, several local organizations did food-drives for the pantry, which greatly helped keep this vital resource for students stocked.



FOODS
~~#GIVING TUESDAY~~

What improvements are being made to the pantry in 2021? A full-sized refrigerator was repurposed from another department at the college, greatly expanding the available space for perishable food and beverages for pantry consumers. Lisa Blumenthal, ACC Student Food Pantry coordinator, has tried to improve outreach and education, letting students know when food distributions of other organizations are happening and where students in Alpena and surrounding counties can go for a free hot meal each day. She has also posted simple recipes for students to follow in order to prepare meals using pantry staples.

The ACC Student Food Pantry is next to Room 120 in Besser Technical Center and is open to all students needing help getting enough to eat. There are no rules or limitations for the pantry, where students are invited to take what they need.

If you know of an ACC student in need of food, have them call ACC Student Food Pantry coordinator Lisa Blumenthal at 989-358-7296 or email blumentl@alpenacc.edu.

If you'd like more information about supporting the ACC Student Food Pantry, call ACC Foundation Executive Director Brenda Herman at 989-358-7297 or email hermanb@alpenacc.edu.

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