

ACC News You Should Know



What's Hatching at ACC This Summer



Overcoming Obstacles: Christy Heimke ('21)



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Scramble for Your Spot!

Baby Boom: What's Hatching at ACC?



Mother Duckling with Babies

Considerable effort has been made the past few years to make the courtyard in the middle of Besser Technical Center attractive and inviting for students, staff, and visitors alike. Volunteers and staff have spent hours landscaping and cleaning, refurbishing sculpture, and attracting attention through artful indoor décor that invites visitors to step outside into what has become a natural extension of usable space at Besser Tech.

If the recent baby boom in the area is any indication, however, ACC may have succeeded a little *too* much in making the courtyard an enticing place to recreate.

This spring, staff began to notice a pair of mallard ducks leisurely strolling around the courtyard. For several weeks, the pair was spotted waddling amongst the budding flowers and soggy mulch unearthed from months of snow-cover. Some staff became suspicious that perhaps the ducks had nested in the courtyard and ducklings might be born. Director of Facilities Nicholas Brege walked through the courtyard on April 20 on a duck-finding expedition, but didn't spot any nests. It appeared staff's suspicions were not confirmed.

ACC's spring commencement day dawned bright and early to the gentle sound of paddled feet. Eleven ducklings circled the Besser Tech courtyard with their mother! It's as if the ducks knew it was time to graduate and see what their time at ACC had prepared them to do. Because ACC's graduation ceremonies were a drive-through-style affair, the ducks had to stay in the courtyard that day for their own safety.

The next day, however, May seventh, the door to the courtyard was opened, a ramp was placed over the concrete steps leading up to Besser Atrium, and the door to Johnson Street was propped open. The wait was on. All morning, staff in the president's office, adjacent to the atrium, peeked out their window to see if there were ducklings emerging from the courtyard. Finally, during an ambient art presentation by ACC instructor Timothy Kuehnlein to the Association of Lifelong Learners late in the morning, the mama duck proudly led her ducklings out of the courtyard, into the atrium, across the ACC seal on the floor, and out the door to Johnson Street.

ACC staff followed the quacking parade and stopped traffic on Johnson Street so the feathered family could safely cross. The ducklings and their mother made their way to the Thunder Bay River behind Van Lare Hall and safely waded in to begin their lives in the wild.

Back in Besser Tech's atrium, ACC staff noticed a nest filled with eggs and assumed it was the remnants of the recently vacated duck mother's prenatal apartment...until later in the day when they found yet another mama duck sitting on the nest. Staff in the ACC Bookstore had a particularly good view of the second duck mother's nest and kept watch for the appearance of ducklings.

Monday, June 14, ACC Bookstore Secretary and Buyer Denise Tobias sent out an email alerting staff that five ducklings had hatched over the weekend! With doors open and staff alert, the ducklings and their mother ultimately decided they wanted to stay another night at the Besser Tech Avian Bed & Breakfast.

Early Tuesday morning, the ducklings and their mother emerged from the courtyard,

but they determined that they'd like to take a tour of the building before vacating the premises! ACC custodial staff gently herded the roaming ducklings from waddling the hallways and guided them to a door outside before escorting them to the river across the street.



The odds of having back-to-back duckling broods born in the little courtyard in Besser Tech seem high, but not as high as having three! Soon after the second brood vacated, staff noticed yet another nest in a different section of the courtyard. A dutiful mother duck incubated eleven eggs, with all but one hatching June 30. With the help of the staff in the president's office and maintenance personnel, the last brood (for now) was guided out of Besser Technical Center and across the river.

A total of 26 ducklings graduated from the very unofficial Besser Technical Center courtyard birthing program this year, which is quite a feather in ACC's cap. The program came with very small bills and fowl play was kept to respectable levels.

Overcoming Obstacles: Christy Heimke



Christy Heimke

Like so many community college students, Christy Heimke ('21) is a study in perseverance and second chances. The story of how Christy took advantage of those second chances and refused to give up until she reached her goal has earned her a 2021 John M. Grant Front Runner Award, which ACC presents each year to a graduating male and a graduating female student who have demonstrated unusual dedication in the pursuit of higher education.

After her graduation from high school in her native Georgia, Christy's life was going as planned. She enrolled at Gordon State College and completed her freshman year. Then, life intervened. Christy became a teen mom and dropped out of school to care for her child.

She always wanted to return to school and get a degree, but there was always a reason why "now" wasn't the right time to pursue her dreams. The years went by and Christy raised her children. She met her husband and they moved to Alpena.

When two of her daughters were old enough to consider attending college, Christy decided she should lead by example.

"I finally decided to get out of my own way and just go for it. I'm one of four children, and the only to attend college and I knew how much it meant to my mom that I go," Christy said.

And go she did. Because her husband is a retired, disabled Army veteran, Christy was able to attend college through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program, otherwise known as Chapter 35 benefits. Knowing the hardships veterans like her husband suffered for their country, Christy felt a strong responsibility to make the most of the assistance as a way to honor the people who have sacrificed so much.

It turns out Christy would need to lean on that sense of responsibility a lot in the months to come, because even though Christy felt ready to finally start pursuing her education again, life never stopped throwing obstacles in her way. Just prior to starting classes at ACC, Christy learned that her mother had fallen ill and would need an organ transplant. Christy quit her job in Alpena and traveled to Georgia to be with her mom during the surgery and recuperation period. Not wanting to miss out on school, though, she returned to Alpena just two weeks after her mother was released from the intensive care unit so that Christy could start her first semester of classes at ACC.

"I ended up taking classes with one of my girls, and that was fun," Christy shared.

During the early months of 2020, Christy dug into her schoolwork at the college and was doing well. Then, COVID arrived in Michigan and suddenly everything changed. All of Christy's courses were converted to remote delivery, which was a challenge to adjust to. Despite feeling lost at first, Christy acclimated to online learning and finished her first semester at ACC with a 3.9 grade point average.

Encouraged by her success, Christy enrolled in online and remote summer classes at ACC, determined to keep pushing toward her degree. Once again, however, her mother's health declined and Christy traveled back to Georgia to be with her. Her mom fought hard, but ultimately passed away a few weeks later. Despite her grief, Christy returned home to Alpena and finished summer semester with a 4.0 grade point average.

After completing the fall semester with a 4.0 GPA, Christy was hired at a local coffee shop and quickly rose to a salaried position working 40 hours a week as a manager overseeing 25 employees at two store locations. Her new work responsibilities, coupled with her family responsibilities and a full load of class work, became exhausting and Christy struggled to keep her grades up. She credits being nominated for the Front Runner Award as the motivation she needed to finish the semester strong and honor the opportunity to go to school via the Chapter 35 benefits program.

In addition to winning the John M. Grant Front Runner Award, Christy graduated summa cum laude this spring with an Associate in Arts degree in business administration from ACC. She will continue her education through the cooperative bachelor's degree program ACC has with Northwood University.

"I plan to enter into the field of human resources upon completing my bachelor's degree in Business Administration. I do still have a dream to one day own my own business, but we'll see about that," Christy said. "One step at a time!"

Overachieving on His Own Pace: Peter Huizinga



Pete Huizinga

Are Some students graduate from high school and know exactly what next step to take in order to proceed along life's timeline. Others, however, are like Peter Huizinga, who wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life after graduating in 2009 from Troy Athens High School downstate. He ended up taking a few general classes at Oakland Community College (OCC) and getting a job that didn't have any room for advancement.

Before Pete knew it, almost a decade had gone by. He knew he needed to make some changes if he wanted a career—not just a job—so Pete followed his parents when they moved up to Hubbard Lake after he realized he had hit the ceiling on what he could earn where he was working. Remembering that he had enjoyed a welding class at OCC, Pete enrolled at Alpena Community College and thought maybe he'd major in welding and get a one-year certificate.

Little did Pete know what was in store for him! Once he started classes he quickly discovered he had a thriving interest and aptitude in a variety of technical areas. This interest blossomed into Pete taking a plethora of additional courses, sometimes 20-plus credits a semester.

Pete's academic journey at ACC is a wonderful example of how non-traditional students can achieve great things and transform their lives when they are ready and motivated to go back to school.

At ACC, Pete became involved in a variety of activities related to his coursework. For example, he served as president and sergeant-at-arms of the Manufacturing Technology Group, ACC's professional manufacturing student group. Another way he amplified his classroom learning was through extra-curricular projects, including leading the plastic recycling machine project and the aluminum smelting and casting project. Both of these activities helped him put his classroom learning into action and provided real-world experience.

Pete honed his hands-on skills through a variety of volunteer activities, including working with the ACC facilities department to fabricate various items, retrofitting old kennels at the Huron Humane Society, and assisting in the development of two patented items for the Caregiver Incentive Program. Pete also was a tutor for other students in the machine tool and CAD programs.

"I have been involved with so many projects and activities at ACC that I am known by a wide range of instructors and administrators," Pete said, understating just how active he was on campus during his three years at ACC.

Pete became a fixture in Besser Technical Center as he satisfied his voracious appetite for learning and exceeded his academic goals in the process. Pete graduated with three different associate degrees, two certificates, and nearly a dozen nationally-recognized industry credentials. He was also awarded a John M. Grant Front Runner award, which ACC presents each year to a graduating male and a graduating female student who have demonstrated unusual dedication in the pursuit of higher education.

"I'd have to say the quality of education I received during my time at ACC was top notch. Every single teacher I had was an expert in their field and was passionate

about teaching and helping their students learn and understand,” Pete said, adding, “I’m going to miss the friendly atmosphere of ACC.”

Scramble for a Spot!



The 2020 Scramble Champions

Beautiful River’s Edge Golf Club in Alpena will once again be the setting for the ACC Foundation’s annual Robert M. Granum Scramble for Scholarships golf outing, which has raised over \$420,000 to assist students with tuition over the past twenty-five years.

The 26th edition of the scramble, slated to take place Saturday, August 21, promises to be a lot of fun. Teams of four will play in a best-ball scramble format, where golfers of all skill levels can enjoy themselves and compete for fabulous place prizes that include rounds of golf at some of Northern Michigan’s best courses.

The cost to participate as a golfer is \$90 each, with four golfers on a team. If you’d like to support scholarships for ACC students, but don’t golf, there are a variety of opportunities, with cart sponsorships available at \$50, shared-hole sponsorship for \$125, or hole sponsorships for \$250. In addition, a donation in any amount to the scramble for scholarships fund at ACC by August 1, 2021 means your name will be included on a banner displayed at the event.

Registration forms are available now at River’s Edge Golf Club or the ACC Foundation offices inside the Besser Technical Center atrium. Limited golfing spots are available, so please register as soon as possible to ensure your team can participate.

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