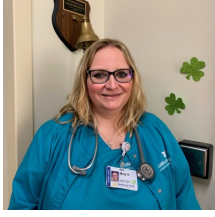


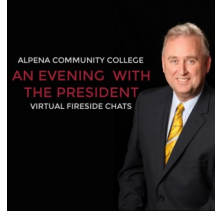
## ACC News You Should Know



The Gift of Education:  
Who was Marie  
Sexsmith Griffin?



Second Act Success  
Stories: Mary Delling



ACC Fireside Chats:  
Dr. Don MacMaster



LUMBERJACK OUTDOORS CLUB

New Club on Campus

## The Gift of Education: Who was Marie Sexsmith Griffin?



Marie Sexsmith Griffin

*The Alpena Community College Foundation awarded \$260,455 in scholarships to students of the college in 2020, made possible by generous donors who believe in the value of an ACC education. The Gift of Education is a series looking at the people behind the scholarships to discover what motivates them to invest in the students of ACC. To kick off the series, Patricia Griffin tells us about her mother, Marie Sexsmith Griffin, a woman ahead of her time.*

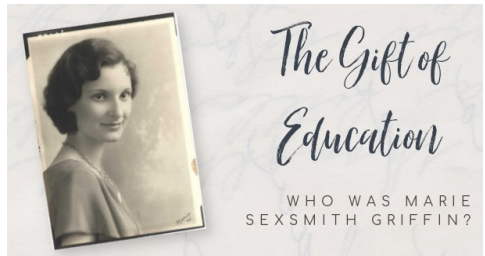
My mother, Marie Sexsmith Griffin, graduated from Northern High School in Flint, Michigan in 1932 at the height of the Great Depression. Determined to continue her education, she enrolled in what was then Flint Junior College (now Mott Community College) and upon graduation in 1934, was undecided about either teaching or nursing as a career. As it was the less expensive course of study, Mom chose nursing, and subsequently enrolled in the nursing program at the University of Michigan. While in school, helped financially by her parents, she graduated from Michigan's University Hospital School of Nursing with a diploma in nursing in 1938. Mom then moved back home with her parents and found a position as a registered nurse in a local hospital. Still interested in teaching, she continued her education, alternating working in the hospital in Flint with taking classes at Michigan, and earned a certificate in public health nursing from Michigan's School of Education's public health division in 1939.

After her marriage to my father in 1940, she secured a position as a public health nurse in New Orleans, Louisiana, where my dad, a radiologist, was stationed with the Army throughout World War II. Mom loved working with new mothers, teaching them how to care for their newborn babies. Her work took her all over the city-parish of New Orleans. She found especially rewarding her time spent in helping mothers who had no other means of accessing routine health care for themselves or their children, thus combining her earlier interest in both teaching and nursing. She reluctantly left her position several years later when her first child was born.

After the war, my parents settled in Flint, and while Mom did not return to nursing full-time, she kept her license current, volunteering in the community when nurses were needed; for example, during the polio epidemic to vaccinate school-age children. Mom's earlier pursuit of an education subsequently developed an interesting twist more than three decades later. After good-humoredly voicing her dismay that she was the only member of the family, besides the dog, to not have a college degree, she asked me, her daughter, to look into what she would need to do to graduate with a bachelor's degree from Michigan. To her surprise, the registrar in the School of Education, examining all her old transcripts, discovered that unbeknownst to my mother at the time, Mom had previously met all the graduation requirements for a Bachelor of Science in Education. Dad, my two brothers and I proudly attended her graduation ceremony in 1975.

Education was a driving force in my family, and my parents instilled in my brothers and me the value of an education; all three of us have advanced degrees. Acting on this belief, Mom, in her 80's, decided to establish an endowed scholarship to enable students to begin their educational journey, as she did, at a community college. Ultimately, she decided on Alpena Community College. Her dad had grown up in Alpena, moving as a young man to Flint in the early 1900's to work as a test car driver at the then Buick Motor Car Company. Much of her dad's family had remained in

Alpena, though. Mom, as a young girl, recalled day-long car trips during the summers from Flint, in a Buick, of course, to visit with relatives in Alpena. Once she was old enough, her dad taught her to drive by letting her take the wheel on these trips. There were, obviously, no expressways back then, so her mother would pack a lunch to eat along the way. Spring and fall trips to Alpena were made more comfortable by hot bricks wrapped in blankets to keep everyone's feet warm, given the absence of heat in early autos.

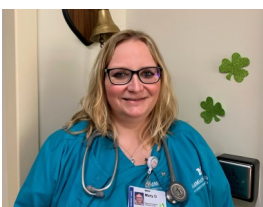


Over the years since Mom's passing in 1999, contributions to the scholarship in her name have grown, and thanks to the careful investment policy of the ACC Foundation, the number and amount of the scholarships awarded each year have increased. Recipients have regularly expressed their gratitude in notes to me, as the scholarship's contact, and it has been heart-warming to learn about their excellent experiences at ACC and their plans for transfer. Mom would have been pleased. And she would have been especially happy that occasionally a young woman who has received her scholarship has chosen to pursue a bachelor's degree in a formerly non-traditional field for women, like engineering.

Mom believed, as do I, that education is still the main key to opportunity in America. Moreover, as was true for Mom, public education is the specific key that provides the most opportunities for the most people. But the cost of a college education is increasingly financially out of reach for so many. Community colleges, where I spent 30 of my 40 years in education in various academic, student support and administrative roles, do an especially superb job of welcoming, financially supporting, and educating all comers. Community colleges today give students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to improve their lives, fulfill their dreams and ultimately make a contribution to society, just as they did for my Mom back in 1932.

*--Patricia Griffin, daughter of the late Marie Sexsmith Griffin*

## Second Act Success Stories: Mary Delling



**Mary Delling**

They say life is what happens to us while we're busy making other plans. When life changes, our plans change, something ACC alumna Mary Delling ('20) personifies.

When she was a kid, Mary had planned to be a nurse, but as she grew up, choices she made and the circumstances of her life resulted in her not pursuing a nursing education after she graduated from high school. Instead, she went to work and ended up in service industry jobs without much security.

A few years ago, when the place where Mary was employed was making cuts, she realized she was likely going to end up on the chopping block before long. With children to support and on her own to do so, Mary made the decision to go back to school and pursue the education she knew she'd need to have a career—not just a job. So it was that in 2017, Mary enrolled at ACC.

What would she study? Life had changed since Mary was a girl dreaming of being a nurse. She did some research, talked to ACC faculty and staff, and made a decision.

"Being a single mom, I wasn't all about doing the nursing clinicals and leaving my kids home with family that much and working such long hours. I looked into the medical assistant program and it fit everything I was looking for," Mary explained.

School was not easy. Mary describes it as "challenging", but put her head down and applied herself, asking for help when she needed it. People stepped forward to provide that help, and that made all the difference.

"...the people that made the biggest impact on me were Mr. Kuehnlein, who never gave up on me even though I had to take his class twice; Todd Graham, who was the best math tutor ever; and my family, who were my biggest cheerleaders."

Despite the help ACC provided and the support of her family, getting an education was difficult for Mary and not without roadblocks. Losing her father before the beginning of her final year hit Mary hard and she thought about delaying the second year of her program.

"I wanted to take a break before my last year, but my oldest son looked at me and said 'Mom, you know Grandpa wouldn't want you to quit after you came this far. Just keep going. Do it for him.' That last year was super hard, but I am so glad that I did it."

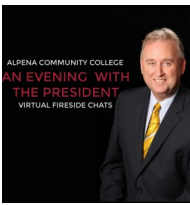
The COVID-19 pandemic presented a major change to how most classes were delivered in Mary's final semester of school, but it ultimately taught her resilience and gave her confidence in herself.

"My education at ACC has impacted my life by making me realize that when I set my mind on a goal, I really can achieve it. My goal at ACC was to graduate with honors, and I did. My last semester of school I kept saying I wanted to work at the cancer center...that was my goal," Mary said.

She reached her goals. Mary graduated cum laude and was even elected the secretary of the Nu Omicron chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at ACC. After graduation, Mary landed her dream job as a medical assistant at MidMichigan Medical Center—Alpena's cancer center.

"I tell my kids all the time that when you put your mind to something and set a goal--no matter how big that goal may be--as long as you work hard and never give up, you will be able to reach that goal. I know that they can look up to me and see that that is really true."

## ACC Fireside Chats: An Evening with the President



Dr. Don MacMaster

Are you interested in all the new projects happening at ACC? Would you like to know more about how ACC is leading the nation in a key area? How would you like the inside scoop on how the multimillion-dollar renovation of Van Lare Hall is going?

The Office of Alumni Relations, together with the ACC Foundation, is pleased to present a new interactive, informational outreach series: ACC Fireside Chats. Join us

**Wednesday, April 7 at 7:00 p.m.** for an exclusive evening chatting with Dr. Don MacMaster as he gives an overview of what's happening at ACC. This WebEx-based video event is accessed by invitation only, so please email Director of Alumni Relations Mary Eagan at [eaganm@alpenacc.edu](mailto:eaganm@alpenacc.edu) if you're interested in attending. All those who attend will be entered into a drawing to win an ACC Lumberjacks gift basket.

Relax at home as you watch Dr. MacMaster show off the newly-renovated Besser Atrium, which includes a beautiful fireplace, and talk about a wide range of issues. Questions will be entertained and much will be learned.

See you Wednesday, April 7 at 7:00 p.m.!

## New Club on Campus



Riley Smith (L) and Sean Petz (R)

When ACC nursing student Riley Smith arrived in Alpena from his hometown in Midland, he was excited about more than the education he would receive at ACC. An avid outdoorsman, Riley was looking forward to free time spent fishing and hunting and exploring the great outdoors of Northeast Lower Michigan. A social guy by nature, Riley also anticipated finding other students who share his passion for being outdoors and having some hunting and fishing buddies.

When he moved into the dorms at ACC, Riley was surprised more students weren't heading to the woods, lakes, and rivers in the area like he was when the weekend rolled around. Undeterred by not having a buddy with whom to go hunting, Riley spent his free time during bow season in the woods and, when he bagged his first deer, looked for a place to hang the carcass.

After some negotiating with Director of Student Housing Cindy DeRocher, Riley was given permission to hang his deer from a tree behind student housing and it ended up being the calling card he needed to get interested students to contact him about outdoor activities. Soon after, the Lumberjack Outdoors Club was born. Cindy DeRocher stepped forward to be the club's advisor and some structure to the organization started to emerge.

Spending time outside bonding with other students while learning about the wilderness of Northern Michigan was new to many residents of ACC's student housing complex, many of whom come from outside the area—and outside the country—and were curious about the club.

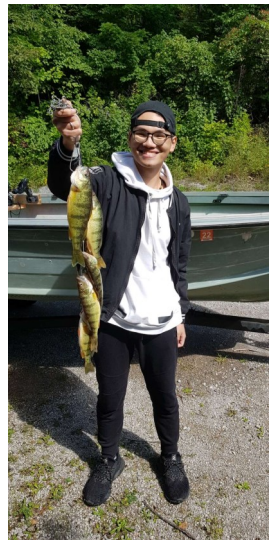
ACC business administration student and club member Dat Nguyen, one of several international students at ACC who have taken part in club activities, came to Alpena as an exchange student from Vietnam. He has received quite an education outside

the classroom this schoolyear courtesy of Riley and the club.

“I was not into outdoor activities until I met my roommate Riley. He got me into fishing and hunting. I enjoy fishing very much--it’s just fun to land a trophy fish after a fight.”

Dat enjoys the club and intends to continue fishing after he leaves Alpena, though he’ll have a longer commute to his favorite fishing hole once he transfers to Walsh College in Troy this fall.

Instilling a long-lasting love for the outdoors is something Riley stressed as a club goal. Beyond just having fun in the woods and on the waterways of Northern Michigan, the Lumberjack Outdoors Club focuses on three key areas of interest: recreation, education, and conservation. In addition to tapping maple trees for syrup, going fishing, and having cookouts featuring game that club members have harvested, the ACC Outdoors Club has cleaned up the disc golf course on campus, established policies and procedures for using forgotten canoes the college owns, and constructed wood duck boxes so hens can nest safely and be relatively protected from predators. Future plans include building bird houses, planting trees, and clearing and making brush piles. There’s even talk of forming a competitive skeet shooting team.



Lumberjack Outdoors  
Member Dat Nguyen

For now, though, Riley and the club are focused on taking advantage of the increasingly warmer weather and the opportunities that spring in Northeast Michigan provides.

“Sucker spearing is coming up. Currently I have my boat up here and we will be trolling the river and Lake Huron for salmon and walleye. We plan on doing an overnight canoe trip late April. Turkey season starts April 22nd...and maple syrup making is going strong,” Riley shared.

If you’re interested in the ACC Outdoors Club, contact club advisor Cynthia DeRocher at [derocherc@alpenacc.edu](mailto:derocherc@alpenacc.edu) or call her at 989-358-7394.

**Alpena Community College Office of Alumni Relations**  
665 Johnson Street, Alpena, MI 49707  
[alumni@alpenacc.edu](mailto:alumni@alpenacc.edu)  
(989) 358-7344



[Subscribe](#)