

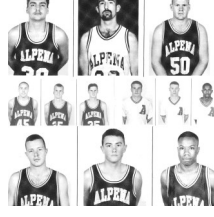
ACC News You Should Know



Thomsons Retire from Service at ACC



Birthday Ironman: Roy Smith Climbs 60



ACC Alumni Basketball Game in December



The Future is Now at Van Lare Hall

ACC Says Farewell to Thomsons



Mary Jane and Larry Thomson

Normally, it would be a bit of a scandal if two instructors at ACC fraternized and quit their jobs to spend more time together. But since Larry and Mary Jane Thomson have been married for decades and have chosen to retire after many years of service to ACC and their community, we'll look the other way.

Having spent the better part of three decades in service educating students in business and computer information systems at ACC, instructor Mary Jane Thomson retired from teaching at the end of the spring 2021 semester at the college.

An inspiration to her students, Mary Jane proved that you don't have to take the traditional educational path to be successful in life. In 1976, she earned her first associate degree, with highest distinction, from Lake Superior State University and worked as a computer programmer/analyst and manager of information systems director in insurance, banking, and health care. After nearly twenty years, Mary Jane decided she wanted to take her career in a different direction and enter the teaching field, but in order to do that, she knew she'd need to further her education. In 1994, Mary Jane graduated with highest honors with a Master's of Business Administration degree from LSSU. Never one to stand on convention, Mary Jane then earned an associate degree in business from ACC and a bachelor's degree in business administration from LSSU, both with highest honors, in 1995. Yes, you read that correctly. Mary Jane got a master's degree before she earned a bachelor's degree and then went on to earn another associate degree. Earning her degrees in an unconventional order as a nontraditional student was an asset to Mary Jane in her teaching career.

"Completing my bachelor's, master's, and 45 graduate hours post-master's 20 years after earning my associate degree gave me an ability to really work with non-traditional students who attended ACC later in life, all while working full-time and raising children," Mary Jane said. "Knowing that I had done it gave students a lot of encouragement toward them being able to do it too."

An instructor with a passion for teaching, Mary Jane says her satisfaction with her job came from empowering her students with practical knowledge they could use to make their lives a little easier.

"The desktop computing skills that students learned in my classes could be immediately applied in their personal or professional lives to automate tasks. Hearing students share how they were using the skills they learned were better than a paycheck for me."

Mary Jane retired with her husband Larry, who graduated from ACC in 1974 with an associate degree in criminal justice. Larry transferred to Ferris State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice. He briefly worked as a patrolman in DeWitt before moving home with Mary Jane to Alpena. Larry spent nearly 33 years with the Alpena Police Department, reaching the rank of detective/lieutenant with the APD, during which he frequently mentored ACC students in APD's ride-along program, allowing criminal justice students to develop hands-on experience as they accompanied police officers on patrol.

During his career in public safety, Larry eventually had the opportunity to teach some classes at ACC as an adjunct instructor.

“It was like a dream come true to have that daily contact with a classroom full of future criminal justice professionals. I continued in this capacity until my responsibilities as a detective became too demanding and I had to step away from teaching.”



The Thomsons cheer on graduates.

After Larry retired from the APD following 33 years of service, an incredible opportunity emerged: ACC was searching for someone to lead their criminal justice education program.

“Of course, I applied for the position, and was excited to be selected,” Larry enthused. “My decision to join Mary Jane as a full-time instructor at ACC was made very quickly. Seeing this as an opportunity to share my training and experience with the next generation of criminal justice professionals just made sense. I modeled my behavior after Benjamin Franklin’s philosophy, ‘Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.’”

During the five years Larry led the criminal justice program at ACC, Larry placed an emphasis on hand-on learning and instilling in his students the philosophy that law enforcement should be building bridges in the community with the community. Students volunteered in area programs like trunk-or-treat and the Polar Plunge to benefit Special Olympics. But it wasn’t all fun and games.

“I developed an annual, real-life, mock crime scene assignment which challenged students to work together using skills they had learned in the classroom to properly investigate a crime scene,” Larry shared. These mock crime scenes could be very realistic and drove home the point that real-life police work is very different from the detached descriptions in textbooks.

As much as Larry enjoyed his time leading the criminal justice program at ACC, retirement beckoned. In reflecting on his time at ACC, Larry became nostalgic.

“As I enter retirement it is notable that my professional career started with an ACC education and ended with educating future law enforcement professionals at ACC. Nothing is better than that!”

The entire ACC family wishes Larry and Mary Jane a long, happy, and healthy life in retirement and thanks them for their years of service to the students of ACC.

Birthday Ironman: Roy Smith Celebrates 60 by Climbing



Roy Smith gets some practice in.

Forget being over the hill! While many of us struggle to climb out of bed in the morning, longtime ACC utility technology instructor Roy Smith is planning to spend his birthday doing something people half his age would have trouble accomplishing.

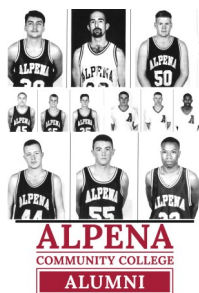
Not content to just celebrate with cake and ice cream, Roy decided to mark this milestone birthday doing what he loves most to help out the students he’s dedicated his life to educating. **Roy is not only challenging himself to spend his 60th birthday October 26th climbing 60 utility poles, but he’s also challenging you to donate \$60 in his honor to benefit the ACC Utility Technology Program Support Fund**, which is held at the ACC Foundation and helps UTT students travel and compete in the annual lineman rodeo. When ACC’s lineman team last competed—which was in 2019, before the pandemic—it took first place in the national competition. All funds raised in honor of Roy’s 60th birthday climb will go directly to help ACC UTT students prove they’re still among the best in the country by competing in the 2022 lineman rodeo.

It’s easy to give! [Donate online](#), or mail your payment to:

UTT Program Support Fund
ACC Foundation
665 Johnson Street
Alpena, MI 49707

We need your help to make sure Roy’s pole-climbing marathon is worth more than bragging rights, so whether you donate \$60, \$600, or \$16, every gift motivates Roy to climb closer to his target and our students closer to the 2022 Linemen Rodeo!

Alumni Returns to Campus for Basketball Showdown



Calling all ACC basketball alumni! If you were a cager for the Lumberjacks at any time in the past, you’re invited back to campus to dribble your way to glory!

Spectators and athletes alike should plan to pack Park Arena on Saturday, December 4, for back-to-back basketball games, with the Lady Lumberjacks of the past taking on today’s ACC women’s squad at 2:00 p.m., and the Gentleman Jacks of yesteryear squaring up against this year’s ACC men’s squad. This is your opportunity to reconnect with classmates and friends from the past and raise money for the ACC Athletics Assistance Fund at the ACC Foundation.

ACC Basketball Alumni

Tickets for the event will be on sale soon. If you’re interested in playing in the game—or even just sitting on the bench—contact ACC Athletic Director Cynthia DeRocher.

The Future is Now: The New & Improved Van Lare Hall



The new entrance to Van Lare Hall

“If you blindfolded me and dropped me off in this building, told me to take my blindfold off, and guess where I was, I would have never said this was Van Lare Hall.”

That was the reaction of an ACC retiree who toured the newly-renovated Van Lare Hall during an open house held October 9 for donors and the general public. And if the dramatic transformation of Van Lare Hall weren’t surprise enough, visitors were greeted with a large video screen on their tour of the building that announced an exciting addition to the building in the coming year.

For generations of students, Van Lare Hall, Alpena Community College’s original campus building, has housed the hopes, dreams, questions, and prayers for the answers to innumerable calculus problems over the years. While the building continued to serve the educational needs of its students for nearly 70 years, what was once an impressively modern structure aged into antiquated and inefficient space. Meanwhile, ACC’s nursing program was outgrowing its home in the Charles R. Donnelly Natural Resources Center, where the kind of technology needed to educate today’s nurses was not feasible to install. The answer to both problems seemed to lie in a major renovation to Van Lare Hall, where the nursing program would move.

After the State of Michigan awarded ACC \$3.35 million in matching funds towards the renovation of Van Lare Hall, the Alpena Community College Foundation kicked off their *Healthy Futures Start Here* capital campaign, led by chairwoman Georgene Hildebrand, and ultimately raised \$3,155,080 towards funding for the project.

Construction crews took over Van Lare Hall starting in October of 2019 and worked diligently to transform the building into a state-of-the-art nursing education center. While the pandemic slowed down progress, Van Lare Hall, housing the new Ruth C. Julian Hall of Health Sciences, opened its doors to students in late August of this year.

The culmination of the project was the weekend of October 8, when donors to the campaign were welcomed into Van Lare Hall to tour the finished product. Patrons were able to see firsthand what their support means to the students at ACC. From the simulated patient manikins, life-sized anatomical human models used to train nursing students in the new high-tech nursing labs, to the expansive views of the Thunder Bay River from the soaring new student center, donors got to see the tangible benefits of their contributions to ACC and the students who will benefit from that support in the years to come.

Announced at the ribbon-cutting event and showcased on a large video screen throughout the weekend, the Fitzpatrick Lecture Hall will be built in a notch in the building on the Johnson Street side of Van Lare Hall. Named after benefactors Tim

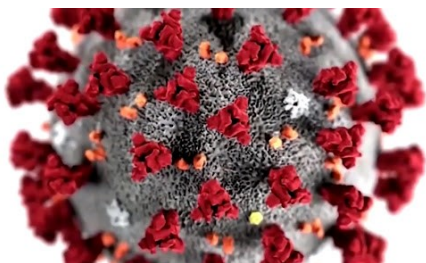
and Sue Fitzpatrick, the lecture hall will seat about 50 people, providing large-scale instruction space in a building that currently cannot accommodate large classes. The lecture hall makes the Ruth C. Julian Hall of Health Sciences wing honoring Mrs. Fitzpatrick's mother, who was a nurse, a fully-functional educational hub for students and community members alike. Director of Facilities Dr. Nicholas Brege hopes the lecture hall will be completed in time for fall semester in 2022.

*If you're interested in touring the newly renovated Van Lare Hall and learning more about the Ruth C. Julian Hall of Health Sciences, **please email ACC Director of Alumni Relations Mary Eagan.***

An architectural rendering of what the new proposed Fitzpatrick Lecture Hall will look like when it's built onto the Ruth C. Julian Hall of Health Sciences.



Free COVID Testing & Vaccinations



Throughout Wednesdays in September and October, Alpena Community College has partnered with District Health Department #4 to offer free drive-up testing and vaccinations for COVID-19. The service has been available from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. and will continue on Wednesdays throughout November.

Those interested in being tested for COVID-19 or vaccinated against the virus should arrive at Besser Technical Center on Johnson Street in Alpena and follow the signs directing traffic. Testing and vaccination is done while you are seated in your vehicle. All ages are welcome to attend and there is no cost for either testing or vaccination. Tests show quick results. The events are open to the public.

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