



ALPENA COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION NAMES 2021 DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES: CHRISTIN KAUFFMAN BENNETT & KEITH S. TITUS

The Alpena Community College Foundation is proud to present both Christin Kauffman Bennett and Keith S. Titus with the 2021 Distinguished Graduate Award for their remarkable achievements and outstanding accomplishments since their early days at ACC.

Established in 1998 by the ACC Foundation, the ACC Distinguished Graduates program honors ACC graduates who have contributed to society through building successful careers. The productive, meaningful lives honorees have led demonstrate how an ACC education provides the foundation for a lifetime of achievement.

Christin Kauffman Bennett is an Alpena native and graduate of Alpena High School who earned an Associate in Science degree from Alpena Community College in 1986. She then transferred to Ferris State University (FSU), where she earned both an Associate in Applied Science in plastics technology and a Bachelor of Science degree in business in 1989.

Upon graduation from FSU, Christin began a long career at the Amway Corporation, starting as a quality engineer in 1990. Thirty years later, she is now the principal research scientist for compliance for multiple Amway manufacturing facilities, a job that has taken her all around the United States, as well as India and Europe.

Outside of work, Christin remains busy donating her time and talents to her community. A volunteer for the United Way Day of Caring, Bethany Christian Services, the Children's Museum of Grand Rapids, River Bank Run, and Special Olympics, Christin has also helped out at her children's elementary school and been a board member of the American Youth Soccer Organization.

Christin and her husband Dan, who is also an Alpena native she started dating at ACC, live in Jenison and have three grown children: Sydney, a pediatric occupational therapist; Kelsey, a tax and billing specialist; and Ryan, a controls engineer.

In reflecting on her time at the college, Christin said, "Starting out at ACC was a perfect fit for me and played a huge role in my success."

The second Distinguished Graduate for 2021 is no less impressive and brings a long history of service to ACC, as well as to the surrounding community.

Born in Cheboygan, Keith Titus' family soon moved to Alpena, where he spent the majority of his life. In 1959, Keith graduated from Alpena Community College with an Associate in Arts degree before moving on to Central Michigan University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in speech arts in 1962 and a Master of Arts in communications arts in 1963.

Keith returned to Alpena in 1966 and spent the next 30 years as an instructor of both theater and communication at Alpena Community College, where he served as the department head of fine arts and foreign languages for four years. Keith was elected ACC faculty council president in the 1960s, sat on the curriculum committee at ACC in the 1970s, and served on the regional council for the Michigan Education Association in the 1990s.

Saying that Keith was active in the community during his years teaching at ACC is an understatement. He was one of the founders of Thunder Bay Theatre, serving in both creative and leadership roles there for over 20 years. Keith was also a three-term Alpena County Commissioner from 1974 through 1980, chairman of the Alpena County Democratic Party, and active in both Trinity Episcopal Church and First Congregational Church. He is the author of 12 theatrical productions, three books, and several short stories.

Upon retirement at ACC, Keith earned a Master's of Divinity degree at Western Theological Seminary in 1997 and, along with his wife Virginia, became an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. The Reverends Titus shepherded numerous churches in Michigan over more than twenty years while also serving as the "clergy couple" of the Northeast Michigan Marriage Encounter program. In 1998, Keith founded the nonprofit organization Re-Member, which works to improve the quality of life for the Lakota people living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota through building and maintaining relationships, utilizing shared resources, and recruiting and deploying volunteers. Re-Member welcomes people from all over the country to Pine Ridge to immerse themselves in Lakota culture by taking week-long "working vacations" on the reservation, where they learn about the Lakota and labor alongside them doing such things as building bunkbeds for children, repairing homes, securing and delivering firewood, and building outhouses. Keith served as the executive director of Re-Member for eight years and is still its ambassador-at-large. Keith and Virginia, who was also a graduate of Alpena Community College, parented eight children together and retired to Alpena several years ago. Sadly, Virginia recently passed away after a courageous battle with cancer.

One of the early students of ACC in its infancy, Keith remembers well the advances ACC made in those early years.

"In the fall of 1957 I entered A.C.C., where classes were still being held at the Alpena High School. This did not seem to be a big leap forward. Some of the instructors taught at both institutions and the halls were still filled with 12 and 13-year-olds. But in the fall of '58 Van Lare Hall opened its doors to me and I felt a larger sense of joining higher academia," Keith reminisced.

"The classes were taught by teachers who referred to themselves as professors; which they did; professing that the accumulation of facts, of truths, of the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom was our sacred duty. I've carried that with me since, through three vocations which continued to fill both head and heart."

In being named the 2020 Alpena Community College Distinguished Graduate, Christin and Keith join a prestigious fraternity of 27 other alumni upon whom the college has bestowed its highest honor.

"Both Christin and Keith personify how an ACC education acts as a springboard to success," noted ACC Director of Alumni Relations Mary Eagan. "But success isn't just defined by career achievement. I think the family atmosphere of ACC, where students receive such a personalized, intimate education, promotes caring about the people around them. Both Christin and Keith have demonstrated that climbing the career ladder isn't enough for them; they both sought out ways to make a real difference in people's lives by volunteering and working hard to contribute something tangibly good to the world. I am so proud to call them both ACC Distinguished Graduates."