Who’s next?

Dr. Tim Blessing’s groundbreaking research provides new insights.
The first conference of The John Updike Society brought international attention to Alvernia in October with a series of fascinating sessions that explored the life and work of the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Learn more about Updike the Everyman, Shillington, Pa., resident and legendary novelist on page 28.
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On The Cover: Who will be America’s next president? Research fielded by Tim Blessing and Takele Mojire provide fascinating insights.

Cover design: Steve Thomas, Ryan Emsley. Photo credit: This page: Magnum Photos. Alvernia Magazine is a publication of Alvernia University. Copyright 2010. All rights reserved. For more information contact Carey.Manzolillo@alvernia.edu.
Our growth is further testimony to the enduring appeal of Alvernia’s Franciscan heritage…”

As the year draws to a close and we make plans to gather with family and friends during the holidays, it is a fitting occasion to reflect gratefully on the extraordinary times we are experiencing at Alvernia. The university is realizing progress that will endure for generations, much of it the result of the on-going success of our Values and Vision Campaign.

There is no better example than the newest addition to our campus, Cedar Hill Farm. This historic 15-acre property, a gift to the university by Jerry and Carolyn Holleran, now serves as the President’s home as well as a university conference center and resource for Berks County. It is a stunning property and a remarkable gift — a visionary gift — that is a legacy of the Hollerans’ generosity and reflects their confidence in Alvernia’s future.

This spirit of generosity and visionary philanthropy has inspired two other notable commitments. Next fall, we will admit our first cohort of the Shirley and Joseph Boscov Scholars thanks to a most generous contribution by Shirley Boscov, her son Jim, and his wife Cindy. The Boscov Scholars program expands on the Boscov Scholarship Fund established in 1996 by Shirley and her late husband, Joe, and will support Berks County students majoring in the Arts, Education, Business, the Sciences or Health Care. It is the most prestigious of Alvernia’s scholarship awards and a key investment in making an Alvernia education affordable for the best local students.

Top students deserve the best faculty, and first-rate faculty need strong support for their important work. Earlier this semester, the first Neag Professorship was announced. Named for Ray and Carole Neag, this endowed faculty position was awarded to Dr. Donna Yarri, Associate Professor of Theology, recognizing her fine teaching and impressive record of scholarship. The Professorships are the latest investment from a couple that has a long history of giving to Alvernia and a special passion for supporting faculty excellence.

It is rewarding to see that investments in Alvernia, like those made by the Boscovs, Neags, and many other generous supporters, are yielding significant dividends. In August, we welcomed our largest-ever first-year class, part of a record enrollment. The Class of 2014 is also the most geographically diverse in Alvernia’s history, with 30 percent coming from outside Pennsylvania. In addition, for the first time, we have over 1,500 full-time undergraduates, with more than 800 in university residences. Our total enrollment now exceeds 3,000 students (not including those in the Seniors College or the Montessori School.)

Our progress is further testimony to the enduring appeal of Alvernia’s Franciscan heritage and our renewed commitment to develop “ethical leaders with moral courage” as well as accomplished professionals. Alvernia is becoming far better known, regionally and even nationally, through events like the First International John Updike conference. Yet we continue to be a place of opportunity for deserving local students of all ages and backgrounds, a point brought to life in our recently announced dual admissions and scholarship program with Reading Area Community College.

Perhaps especially during such exciting times, it is good to give thanks. Today’s progress is made possible by the commitment and selfless attitude of those pioneering and, yes, visionary Sisters who founded Alvernia more than 50 years ago. As we continue our celebration this year of the contributions of American Catholic Religious Women to church and society, we are mindful of all that the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters have done for Alvernia. So it is fitting we will recognize one of our own teacher-scholars and an emerita faculty member, Sr. Jacinta Respondowska, OSF, with an honorary degree in December. You can read Sister Jacinta’s compelling story on p. 14.

On behalf of everyone at Alvernia, here’s wishing you all the blessings of Christmas, a fun-filled holiday season, and a joyous New Year!

Thomas F. Flynn
President
Updike event draws global attention

Hundreds of fans, family members and scholars from around the world gathered on Alvernia’s campus in October to celebrate the late John Updike during the inaugural conference of The John Updike Society. The event featured a series of fascinating sessions that explored the life and work of the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

With the conference came exciting news that Alvernia, thanks to archives provided by The John Updike Society, will house one of the largest and most important scholarly collections of Updike materials. The other is located at Harvard University. During the conference, Alvernia also named its first visiting Updike Scholar in Residence, Dr. Jack DeBellis.

“‘Updike in Pennsylvania’ — was both a neat declaration of his eternal resting place and abundant fodder for three days’ scholarly inquiry,” said journalist Anthony Paletta in his Wall Street Journal article highlighting the conference. More than 400 media outlets covered the event including The Associated Press, Boston Globe, Philadelphia Inquirer, Huffington Post, and USA Today, to name a few, providing outstanding exposure for Alvernia as the conference host. During opening ceremonies, Alvernia President Dr. Thomas F. Flynn announced that a collection of Updike’s correspondence, reviews, papers and other materials, courtesy of The John Updike Society, will be housed in the university’s Frank A. Franco Library and Learning Center. The first three collections in the archive: the Rachael C. Burchard Papers, the Larry C. Randen Collection, and the David Silcox/Thelma Lewis Collection, will be bolstered by several other works that have been donated since the initial announcement. Although the collection has not yet been cataloged, it will include a wide range of materials related to Updike’s work and life and will serve as a significant resource for both scholars and students. “It’s perfect to have it here, and I think he [Updike] would be extremely flattered and touched,” said Updike’s daughter, Miranda.

To further expand and deepen Alvernia’s commitment to the study of Updike’s work, Dr. Flynn also announced the appointment of Alvernia’s first Updike Scholar in Residence, Dr. Jack DeBellis. DeBellis, a member of The John Updike Society board who is best known for two invaluable resources — The John Updike Encyclopedia and John Updike: A Bibliography of Primary & Secondary Materials, 1948-2007, will foster critical study of Updike’s work on Alvernia’s campus through lectures, interactions with faculty and students and published articles. He will also provide advice and counsel related to the creation and development of the university’s Updike archive and collection.

“You could not ask for a more qualified and well-respected academic to serve as our John Updike Scholar in Residence,” said Shirley Williams, Alvernia’s provost. “Jack will add so much depth to the study of John Updike on and outside our campus. Our students will gain unparalleled insight and perspective from his years of work, research and interactions with the Pulitzer Prize-winning author.”

The three-day celebration of John Updike’s life and works marked the 50th anniversary of Updike’s renowned classic, Rabbit, Run.

“I think he [Updike] would be extremely flattered and touched.”

Miranda Updike

Signs of the times

A dramatic new campus entranceway, above, was recently completed through Angelica Park off Route 10, welcoming visitors to campus in grand fashion. Other new campus signage was also added at Greenway Terrace and in front of Bernardine Hall (complete with a 50-inch flat-screen monitor).
**Boscov Scholars program debuts**

A major new scholarship initiative to benefit Berks County high school students was announced recently made possible by the generous support of Shirley Boscov, her son Jim and his wife Cindy.

Students from Berks County high schools interested in attending Alvernia and majoring in the Arts, Education, Business, the Sciences or Health Care can apply for Shirley and Joseph Boscov Scholars program awards, which blend merit and need based aid. The amount of each annual award given will be $15,000 making them the highest merit awards provided by the university.

The Boscov Scholars program is a dramatic extension of the Joseph L. and Shirley K. Boscov Scholarship Fund, created in 1996 to benefit graduates of Berks County high schools. It has helped many Alvernia students realize their dream of a quality, private, higher education in Berks County. The Boscov Scholars program will build on that tradition and provide further support for deserving students.

"The Boscov Scholars Program will be one of the major sources of scholarship funding available to Alvernia students," said J. Michael Pressimone, vice president of Institutional Advancement at Alvernia. "It is the premier scholarship for local students attending the university who thrive in the classroom as well as in the region and beyond through volunteer and community involvement."

**Dual admission program launched**

RACC partnership also offers scholarships

Presidents from Alvernia University and Reading Area Community College (RACC) announced a new comprehensive dual admission agreement between the two institutions during a ceremony at Alvernia’s Franco Library in the fall.

The establishment of a special scholarship program to help RACC dual admission students finance their education at Alvernia was also announced.

Alvernia President Dr. Thomas F. Flynn and RACC President Dr. Anna Weitz added their signatures to the new dual admission agreement that will provide access and opportunity for students from Berks and the surrounding counties.

Through the dual admission program, students will simultaneously apply and be admitted to both institutions. Alvernia will waive the application fee for students who successfully complete the requirements of the dual admission program.

Under the program, students will complete their Associate of Arts or Associate of Science Degree at RACC and then enroll at Alvernia for the completion of their Baccalaureate Degree in a wide variety of degree-granting programs.

"Unlike many such agreements," said Alvernia Provost Shirley Williams, "this program is open to all students whether they seek admission to Alvernia as traditional daytime students or as students in the evening program."

Alvernia and RACC have been working together for many years to provide a vital source of education and professional development for members of the Berks County community. For more than 50 years, Alvernia has offered skilled employees trained in areas like manufacturing technology, information technology, health care, public service, and public safety. And through its Business, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science and Math Divisions, it prepares students with associate degrees to transfer to a four-year institution to earn bachelor’s degrees in many fields.

"Since their inception, Alvernia University and Reading Area Community College have been places of transformational opportunity for people from all backgrounds and means," said Alvernia’s Stacey Adams Perry, dean of admissions & student financial planning.

"This important announcement continues that tradition and enhances the relationship between our two institutions." "From Accounting to Psychology we are pleased to include over 18 different academic options as a part of this agreement," said Perry. "We hope to expand educational opportunity to many students."

**Tom Flynn**

"Alvernia aims to expand educational access and opportunity for local students."

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New board members named

Four new members have been added to Alvernia’s board of trustees. Comprised of alumni and leaders from the regional community, higher education and representatives from the Bernardine Franciscan sisters, Alvernia’s board provides oversight for university planning and fiscal operations and offers counsel on a range of institutional management issues. New members include Charles Barbera M’01, Cindy Boscov, George Rice ’85, and Ben Zintak.

Dr. Charles Barbera M’01 is the Chair of the Emergency Medicine Department at Reading Hospital and Medical Center. He holds a Doctor of Medicine degree from Temple University and a Master’s in Business Administration from Alvernia. He serves as a board member for the Children’s Home of Reading and the Wyomissing Recreation Board and serves as Treasurer for the Pennsylvania College of Emergency Physicians. He was President of the Berks County Medical Society (2005) and has served as Editor of the group’s Medical Record since 2004.

Cindy Boscov has more than 30 years’ experience working in various educational and learning environments, including 10 years in the Berks County Intermediate Unit Early Childhood program. She is a dedicated community volunteer, taking an active role in parents’ groups, special event committees and fundraising events. She is a member of the Berks Women in Crisis Capital Campaign Committee and is currently coordinating volunteers for the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts while co-chairing for the GoggleWorks Fifth Anniversary Special Events Committee.

George S. Rice Jr. ’85 has served in a number of professional roles related to the criminal justice field including the FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration, where he conducted investigations of major drug trafficking organizations. For the last four years, Rice has served as the Executive Director of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International (APCO), the world’s oldest and largest nonprofit professional organization dedicated to the enhancement of public safety communications.

Ben Zintak is a retired business owner who worked for Caron International for seven years before co-founding the Dimensions Company, a global designer, manufacturer, and wholesaler of art craft products. Zintak served as President at Dimensions and at Zeeco Inc., a personal private investment company. He has also served for many years on several nonprofit boards, including Threshold Rehabilitation Services, Montessori Country Day School, and the United Way of Berks County, among several others.

Yarri named first Neag Professor

Dr. Donna Yarri, associate professor of theology, was awarded the university’s first Neag Professorship, an endowed faculty position named for Ray and Carole Neag.

“I truly feel honored to have the distinction of being the first faculty recipient of this award,” said Yarri. Most recently, Yarri co-edited a book on Kafka’s animals and co-authored a provocative book...
Campus News

Community awards presented
Mary Pendleton, Richard Tschiderer and RACC honored at event

Alvernia recognized individuals and a regional organization that have made a significant impact on the university and its surrounding community during the annual President's Dinner in October.

Presented to Mary Pendleton, the Franciscan Award recognizes individuals who selflessly give their time, talents, and resources to serve Alvernia, the community, and their profession. A long-time volunteer for Alvernia and in the community, Pendleton has been a great supporter of the Bernardine Sisters. She was a founding member of the Alvernia Arts Council in the early 1980s and saw the importance of making Alvernia better known in the community and bringing the area community to the campus.

The Pro Urbe Award (which translates to "for the city") was given to Reading Area Community College recognizing its commitment to the community.

"There are few organizations that have done more for this community than our partners at RACC," said President Thomas F. Flynn, Ph.D. "Like Alvernia, RACC is a place of opportunity for first-generation students and working adults. It is a vital source of workforce development for the community. Alvernia has enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with RACC, and transfers from RACC have done very well at Alvernia."

During the event, Alvernia also bestowed Trustee Emeritus status to the late Richard A. Tschiderer for his distinguished leadership and service as a board officer and trustee at large. Tschiderer retired as a partner from Ernst & Young LLP in 1990, after 36 years with the company. Prior to his career at Ernst & Young, he served in the United States Army during the Korean conflict. He was active in the Berks County community, serving two terms on the Alvernia University Board of Trustees, retiring from the board in 2009.

Flynn named to lead HECBC
Alvernia’s President Thomas F. Flynn, left, has been named to serve as chair of the Higher Education Council for Berks County (HECBC) during the 2010-2011 academic year. The council is comprised of five institutions: Alvernia, Albright College, Penn State Berks, Kutztown University, and Reading Area Community College. Alvernia will host HECBC’s annual Undergraduate Research and Creativity Conference on its Reading campus next April. The event showcases top student research projects from the five institutions and highlights the scholarly work underway at each campus.

Founders Day Lecture celebrates Women Religious
Sister Pacelli remembered
Sister Patricia Byrne, CSJ delivered the 2010 Founders Day Lecture in the newly renovated Francis Hall Theater and Recital Hall in September. The event was dedicated to Sister Pacelli, a founding faculty member who selflessly serve Alvernia, the community, and its surrounding area. A long-time volunteer for Alvernia and in the community, Pendleton has been a great supporter of the Bernardine Sisters. She was a founding member of the Alvernia Arts Council in the early 1980s and saw the importance of making Alvernia better known in the community and bringing the area community to the campus.

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Record numbers arrive at Alvernia

The Class of 2014 that arrived on Alvernia’s campus this fall is remarkable in more ways than one. Besides being the most geographically diverse, with 30 percent coming from outside the state of Pennsylvania, the class is the largest incoming group of first-year students ever — 391.

Alvernia also broke records for total number of new students (first-year students plus transfer students), total undergraduate enrollment (more than 1,500 students), and students living on campus (more than 800).

“Word about Alvernia is spreading throughout the wider region,” said Alvernia President Thomas F. Flynn, “even as we draw increased numbers from the city and county and other Pennsylvania communities. It is exciting and gratifying that more and more students are attracted to our campus by the range of our academic programs and talented faculty and by our success at integrating our distinctive Franciscan approach that emphasizes ethics, values and service.”

Alvernia’s undergraduate enrollment has grown more than 53 percent in the last decade, with an approximately 80 percent increase in the number of full-time faculty.

Foster tapped as Interim Dean

James C. Foster, Ph.D., has been named Alvernia’s new Interim Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences. Foster, who received his doctorate from Cornell University (1972), was vice president and dean of academic affairs at Mount Marty College.

Member at Alvernia and administrator for almost five decades, who passed away in February. The lecture kicked off Alvernia’s year-long celebration of the extraordinary works and support of Women Religious in the ministry of Catholic higher education. Throughout the academic year, the university is recognizing the accomplishments, vision, and courage of Woman Religious, joining with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in extending grateful support for their contributions. In particular, the university is celebrating the work of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, whose distinguished legacy is so fundamental to Alvernia’s formation and development. Sister Byrne’s lecture was dedicated to Sister Pacelli, and her topic could not have been more appropriate: Catholic Sisters and Higher Education in America. It focused on the involvement of the Catholic sisters in American post-secondary institutions. Her remarks explored the roots of some of America’s Catholic colleges and universities, including Alvernia, and their struggle to survive amongst a myriad of non-sectarian schools.

“Being relatively new, Alvernia still bears traces of its founding years like the long presence, and now the dear memory, of Sister Pacelli not only in the religious community but in the school as well,” Byrne said. According to President Thomas F. Flynn, Sister Pacelli was a university treasure. “She represented the best in ourselves and our highest aspirations as an academic community,” he said. “Above all, Pacelli was a Bernardine Franciscan Sister, inspired as a young woman in her vocation and then for the rest of her life by the example of St. Francis.”

Byrne, a Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, Pa., is a respected instructor, theologian, and academic. She has earned degrees from St. Louis University, Boston College, and the Gregorian University of Rome, and has been named a doctoral fellow at Notre Dame University. She has also taught for 20 years in the Department of Religion at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., and the Abbey of Regina Laudis.

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College, Yankton, S.D., from 2001-2009, where he also served as a professor of history. Foster started his teaching career (in 1971) as an assistant professor of history at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and has continued teaching for the last 28 years at institutions that have included Arizona State, Penn State, and the University of Michigan.

“Jim is such a great asset to have on our campus,” said Shirley Williams, Alvernia’s provost. “His background and depth of experience are invaluable as we continue to chart the future for the College of Arts and Sciences. We are very pleased that he is here.”

Though he has published several books and written numerous articles, Foster has developed expertise in grant procurement, successfully finding programs to help fund several academic initiatives during his career.

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Four faculty members have been awarded Alvernia Faculty Excellence Grants for the spring 2011 semester to further their scholarly work:

Richard Stichler (humanities) will participate in collaborative research with professors at Peking University and the China University of Politics on “Western Interpretations of Chinese Philosophy.”

Takele Mojire (humanities) is developing an article on “The Impact of Foreign Aid on Quality of Life” in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Ana Ruiz (psychology) is writing a paper to be presented at the Oxford Round Table on “Social Justice for Women by Women.”

Judy Warchal (psychology) is developing an article and presentation at the Fourth International Symposium on Service Learning on “The Long-Term Impact Of Multiple Undergraduate Service Options On Alumni.”

40-year public service veteran is a pioneer

As new Alvernia graduates joined together for the commencement ceremony in the Sovereign Center last May, the Chief Operating Officer of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Estelle B. Richman sat on the stage, waiting her turn at the podium as an honorary degree recipient. As she sat, the proud mother of two and grandmother to four looked confident and ready to offer sound advice to graduates — advice that propelled her career from an early age.

Richman’s commitment to public service did not begin with HUD. In fact, she is a 30-year veteran of the field. Her dedication to a career in government and her skills as a talented executive have been directed toward her passion to help those most in need for social services.

Richman grew up in racially segregated Virginia during a socially turbulent time. Her father was a medical doctor and her mother was a college-level educator. Exposure to the segregation and racial discrimination of the time had a lasting impact on her and led her to embrace the notion that she had an obligation to give back to others. During her speech, she recalled a lesson that her wise grandmother taught her: “You owe it to help someone else out of poverty when you get out yourself. And when you’ve never been in, then your obligation is double.”

Richman is a nationally recognized expert on issues concerning behavioral health and children’s services and has been honored for advocacy efforts by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association, among others. A year after receiving the 1998 Ford Foundation/Good Housekeeping Award for Women in Government, the Behavioral Health System named her the winner of the 1999 Innovations in American Government Award from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

“Her life and career stand as public testimony of how Alvernia’s long-standing commitment to underserved populations can be lived out in government service,” said Alvernia President, Thomas F. Flynn of Richman. “She has been a champion for those in need and a shining example of someone who has made it her life’s work to help transform communities and individual lives. We are proud to count her as an honorary member of the Alvernia University Class of 2010.”
Faculty News

Alvernia professors are accomplished scholars, experts in their fields, and supportive mentors who are committed foremost to their students’ success. More than two-thirds of them hold the highest degree available in their field. Outside of the classroom many regularly publish books and articles, present scholarly works at national and international conferences, and serve as field experts to the media — through newspaper, broadcast, and online outlets. Small wonder that Alvernia students highly value the small class sizes, personal attention, and breadth of academic programs offered by the university. Following are select highlights of recent faculty achievements, awards, honors and scholarly work completed in their various disciplines.

Frances M. Ross
Assistant Professor of Art
Alvernia honored longtime Assistant Professor of Art Fran Ross in October during an exhibit and private show of her works at the Cedar Hill Farm Studio and Conference Center (the first event held in the space since being donated to Alvernia). Fran signed artwork for others and enjoyed an evening with many friends. A well attended two-day public exhibit followed in the Student Center on the main campus.

Roxana Delbene,
Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Languages
Roxana Delbene’s paper, “Discourse practices of de-humanization in the representation of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. press” will be published in Readings in Language Studies Volume 2, edited by John Watzke, in December. In addition, Delbene’s presentation “From interaction to meaningful interaction in medical communication: a study of presence in the screen play Wiz” was accepted as oral presentation at the Eighth International Conference on Communication, Medicine & Ethics. Held at the School of Public Health in Boston University in June, the presentation was part of the Colloquium “Presence in Health Care Communication: Discursive and Ethical Dimensions.”

Karen Cameron,
Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy
John Luvisi
director of Grants and Prospect research
Karen Cameron and John Luvisi will present “Grants: fulfilling needs and dreams for occupational therapy” at the American Occupational Therapy Association’s 91st Annual Conference and Expo in Philadelphia, April 2011.

Bryan Dreibelbis,
CMA, CFM
Associate Professor of Business

Neil H. Penny,
OTR/L, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy
Neil Penny has recently accepted the responsibility of Occupational Therapy Program Director. Karen Cameron will continue to serve in the role as Occupational Therapy Graduate Coordinator.

James Siburt
Adjunct — Communication
James Siburt presented a paper at the Semiotic Society of America’s annual conference last October in Louisville, Ky., titled “The Zombie as Sign and Symbol.” He also led a round table discussion about online and distance learning at the Annual American Academy of Religion conference in Atlanta, Ga. The discussion was titled “Distant and Communal: Exploring New Forms of Online Pedagogy.”

Theresa Adams, RN,
MSN
Assistant Professor of Nursing
Theresa Adams was recognized during “Author Night” by the New York Institute of Medicine in September for her work with Marianne Jeffreys on Teaching Cultural Competence in Nursing and Health Care. The event, attended by multidisciplinary professionals (physicians, social workers, nurses, nurse educators, and graduate students from many professional schools) was the first time that a nurse was invited to speak to this group. In addition, Adams and Kathleen Nevel (Alvernia Ph.D. candidate) were book contributors for Teaching Cultural Competence in Nursing and Health Care, authored by Marianne R. Jeffreys.

New faculty welcomed
Alvernia welcomed 11 new faculty members this fall. They include: Back row, from left to right: Dr. Liang Ding (Business), Dr. Michele Garrett (Nursing), Dr. William Renninger (Theology), Dr. Kathleen McCord (Education), Dr. Andrea Sholtz (Philosophy), Professor Holly Smith (Education), Professor Mary Seamon-Zellers (Occupational Therapy), Professor Rosemary McFee (Criminal Justice). Front row kneeling: Dr. Hans Schmidt (Communication), Professor John Barone (Occupational Therapy). Not pictured: Sr. John Ann Proach, OSF (Education).

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EdD, RN. Adams was also recently appointed to the Steering Committee for “A Chronic Disease Self-Management Program,” an evidence-based peer-to-peer program, researched and studied by the Stanford Education Patient Research Center.

Tim Blessing, Ph.D.
Professor of history
Tim Blessing has examined the impact of partisan and ideological attitudes on historians’ evaluations of five recent presidents and presented his findings at the American Political Science Association Convention last September, in Washington, D.C. Along with Dr. Di You (Assistant Professor of Psychology) and Dr. Anne Skleder (Cabrini College), Blessing created a survey to measure 256 historians’ rankings of these American presidents, as well as historians’ ratings of their actions, policies, and personal characteristics.

In addition, Blessing has been elected Vice President (2010-2012) and President-Elect (2012-2014) of the Pennsylvania Division of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

Edgar J. Hartung, J.D.
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
Edgar Hartung served as moderator for the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials – International (APCO) Leadership Symposium in Houston last August. Participants of the symposium included Dr. Deborah Gonzales, Officer in Charge of the Los Angeles Police Department’s Protected Activity Evaluation Unit (Risk Management Division); Chris Moore, J.D., Assistant Chief of Police, San Jose, Calif.; and David Williams, M.Ed., Inspector with Victoria Police Australia. Hartung also participated in the 76th Annual Conference and Exposition of APCO.

Peggy Bowen-Hartung, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
Edgar J. Hartung, J.D.
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice

Peggy Bowen-Hartung and Edgar J. Hartung participated in the Aspen Wye Faculty Conference in Queenstown, Md. in July.

Tracy Scheirer
Adjunct—Nursing
Tracy Scheirer received the Pennsylvania 2010 Outstanding Advocate for Immunization award at the Annual Pennsylvania Immunization Coalition conference in Lancaster in June.

Donna Yarri, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology
Spencer S. Stober, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biology

Dr. Donna Yarri and Spencer Stober had an essay, “What Makes Us So Doggone Special? Darwin’s Challenge to Human Superiority,” accepted for publication in an edited volume titled, 150 Years of Evolution: Darwin’s Impact on the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The book will be published in 2011. They were also given a contract for a co-authored book to be titled, God, Darwin, and the Origins of Life, expected to be published in 2013.

Kathy Wisser, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Nursing
Dr. Kathy Wisser successfully defended her dissertation to earn her doctorate degree this summer.

Deborah Greenawald, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Nursing
Dr. Deborah Greenawald successfully defended her dissertation to earn her doctorate degree this summer.

Travis Berger, M.Ed
Instructor of Business

Travis Berger signed a contract with Exide Technologies to create and deliver a leadership development program. The pilot for the overall training program is being conducted at the smelter plant in Reading. For the 2010 season, Berger served as interim CEO for Reading United A.C., the minor league soccer franchise affiliated with the Philadelphia Union of the MLS. He is currently serving as a Leadership and Organizational Development consultant, facilitating the formulation of their strategic plan.

Faculty News

Litereary Festival draws eyes and ears to campus

Alvernia’s annual Literary Festival kicked off a monthlong slate of 16 events in October with Slam Poet IN-Q. IN-Q performed his own unique brand of hip-hop/spoken word, paired with a retro-funky sampling much to the pleasure of the campus and community audience. According to critics, his new album puts true mastery of rhythmic-artist-poetry on exhibit.

The events were part of The Greater Reading Reads Literary Festival, which is a monthlong celebration of literature, complete with author lectures, book signings, workshops, and many other events. It took place in venues across Berks County, including Alvernia.

Highlights of other festival events on campus included:

Larry Alexander, journalist and author of Biggest Brother: the Life of Major Dick Winters, spoke about leadership through the eyes of Dick Winters, who grew up in Lancaster, Pa., during the Depression. Winters is credited as the man who led the famous Band of Brothers from D-Day until the end of World War II.

A student panel called “Sucked In: Hot Confessions of Not-So-Cold-Blooded Vampire Addicts,” discussed novels including Twilight, Dracula, and Interview with a Vampire.

Assistant Professor of English, Tom Bierowski, Ph.D., presented “Jack, Safe in Heaven Dead — Kerouac as Modern Shaman,” and Associate Professor of Theology, Dr. Donna Yarri, presented “Kafka’s Creatures, Animals, Hybrids, and Other Fantastic Beings.”

In addition, Dr. Laurence Mazzeno, author and past president of Alvernia, presented “Updike and the Essay as an Art Form,” to a large crowd in the newly renovated Bernardine Lecture Hall.
For more than 50 years, Alvernia has been providing a dynamic environment for students and community members to experience arts and cultural events. Whether through student performances, visiting lecturers, featured faculty presentations or guest artists, the arts have been alive on campus.

That tradition has expanded this fall through the creation of the Arts at Alvernia series that is bringing a broad array of performances to campus. The newly renovated Francis Hall Theater and Recital Hall is providing a first-class setting for many of the events and now features improved seating, elevator access and is fully air-conditioned.

A performance by Alvernia board member and singer Deanna Rubin, that featured an array of selections from her most recent CD, christened the new facility in September and served as a prelude to the season. Other fall events included singer Janice Chandler Eteme who performed a range of selections with pianist Bonnie Wagner.

“This is a vibrant time for artistic programming at Alvernia,” said Alvernia President Thomas F. Flynn. “For many members of our community, the arts are providing an important venue for expression and exposure to cultural programming that enriches the learning environment on our campus.”

The Arts at Alvernia series bolsters the already thriving student theater program. November’s production featured The Shadow, an adult fairytale comedy that looked satirically at leaders, followers and ethics.

Alvernian Alum Bill Bleistine ’86, and his band Ceili Rain will perform in March.

### Arts thriving at the ‘Vern

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Where others gave in, Sister Jacinta never did. And now, she has much to show for it...
THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

By placing her life in the divine Providence of her Maker, sister Jacinta endured untold hardships to realize her dreams.

This December, Sister M. Jacinta Respondowska, O.S.F, Professor Emerita of Philosophy, is receiving an honorary Doctor of Human Letters degree from Alvernia, recognizing her years of dedication and service and in honor of all Bernardine Franciscan Sisters whose distinguished legacy is fundamental to the university’s formation and development. This recognition is part of Alvernia’s year-long celebration of the vision, courage and extraordinary works of Women Religious in the ministry of Catholic higher education.

Sister M. Jacinta Respondowska, known simply as Sister Jacinta at Alvernia, has crisscrossed the globe throughout her lifetime. In the process she has touched the lives of many with her wit, wisdom and inspirational faith, including countless numbers who have passed through Alvernia’s campus.

Her journey has not been easy. As a child, she persevered through severe hardships including hunger, homelessness, illness and separation from her family. Yet today, Sister Jacinta considers herself “the happiest person you’ll ever meet in this world.” That’s what she tells students in her Philosophy of Human Existence course as she helps them navigate the metaphysical and ontological realms to discover a deeper knowledge of God, where she hopes they too can find the secret of happiness.

Born Eulalia Respondowska, Sister Jacinta lived happily in Poland with her parents, older brother Waldemar, and younger sister Otystia until World War II encroached on their lives in September of 1939. Within weeks, everything eight-year-old Eulalia knew turned upside-down.

Her school closed to house Russian soldiers. Her father, a highly-decorated World War I veteran, left suddenly to join the Polish army in Warsaw minutes before being pursued by the KGB. Had he been home, he would have joined the estimated 15,000 military officials, diplomats, professors, and Polish intelligentsia who were executed by the Russians and whose family members would later be sent into exile.

Soldiers returned to her home on a frigid February morning in 1940 to deport the family to Siberia. Although they were told to pack only essentials, a kindly soldier advised the family to bring as much as possible. Had he not, the trio might not have survived the -60 C weather during the next two years.

Eulalia’s 10-year-old brother, Waldemar, visiting relatives when the soldiers arrived, would remain separated from the family for years. Her paternal grandparents and an aunt were simultaneously routed from their home and joined the Respondowska family in Siberia.

By 1941 a glimmer of hope emerged. Joseph Stalin had granted amnesty to those in exile in the Soviet Union and the Respondowskas boarded a train bound for Poland. Jacinta explained, “Without our

... it was when I lost everything — everything but faith and prayer — that I found my life’s greatest treasure, God. This relationship would alter my life forever.”

Sister Jacinta

Continued on page 47

By Carey Manzolillo
Who’s Next?
Unseating President Obama in 2012 may be a tall order

The 2012 presidential election is still two years away, but with an ailing economy, high unemployment and Barack Obama’s popularity on a perilous slide, the Democrats have good reason to feel glum. Resurgent Republicans, and their quasi-allies in the right-wing Tea Party, are already counting the votes that they believe will topple the Obama administration and usher in a new conservative era. Judging by media buzz and the shouting voices of the blogosphere and punditocracy, it’s a widely held notion that Obama’s historic presidency will end at one term and that his opponents will “take back America,” as their current rallying cry proclaims.
Yet Dr. Tim Blessing, professor of history and political science at Alvernia, has some encouraging words for the beleaguered Democratic Party: cheer up. In fact, he thinks that Obama might be able to hold on even in the face of what appears to be a populist uprising not only against the administration and its progressive policies but also against all incumbents. Projecting a re-election failure for Obama, and a Democratic demise in 2012 might indeed be premature.

And as Blessing suggests, it won’t be so easy for the opposition party to reoccupy the White House. “Republicans have a high hill to climb,” he predicts. “Many things will have to go the Republican way for them to win, and it’s hard for me to see exactly where they will find the votes.” The GOP will, therefore, be even more dependent on turning out its base in 2012 than it has been in the past.

This flies in the face of recent polling and the November election results, of course, which suggest that the Democrats have fallen out of favor with their own legions as well as with the general population. But Blessing’s prediction does come with some important caveats. One is that it’s possible the Democratic brand could be so tarnished by the election that everybody — even diehard Democrats — might move so far to the right that a Republican would win. Another involves the idea that a significant number of people who went to the polls in 2008 and voted for Obama will be so discouraged by his administration, and so disenchanted with his performance, that they abstain in 2012.

Still, Blessing’s view is that it will be a stretch for a Republican to regain the White House in the next election. That’s because he looks at presidential voting in a different way than most pollsters, by analyzing very long-term statistical data to reach broad conclusions about whether voters will swing one way or another or stick to their traditional voting patterns.

Blessing and Takele Mojire, assistant professor of economics, have developed a comprehensive statistical database of county-by-county United States election results that dates back to 1892 to help them analyze and interpret voting patterns and how they may impact election results.

Says Blessing, while the Democrats might suffer in mid-term elections and are fighting to maintain popular appeal as they push through strategic legislation, his conclusion is that voters will, at the end
of the day, most likely side with tradition in terms of selecting a president. Based on his research with Mojire, he concludes that as a rule, voting patterns tend to be — except for occasional blips — relatively stable. Of course voters are influenced by any number of factors — such as a candidate’s style, perhaps, or demeanor or appearance — but in general they’re based more on habit than on what the voter might think about individual issues or policy questions.

“Most people vote like their parents,” Mojire asserts, offering the following imagined scenario to illustrate how that tradition is passed down. “If you’re brought up in a Democratic household, then the Republicans are dumb, deluded, and not quite honest,” he explains. “And if you’re brought up in a Republican household, Democrats are dumb, deluded, and not quite honest. You do, most of the time, what you are trained to do. It is almost preordained.”

Blessing adds that research he and Di You, assistant professor of psychology at Alvernia, have conducted, confirms Mojire’s remarks. He says that if nothing really unusual occurs in an election year, “you can see how high a hill the out of power party has to climb.” He also notes that the best predictor of how a person votes is how they voted last time. Since the Democrats won the popular vote in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2008, the GOP’s greatest hope is that enough Democratic voters will so lack motivation that they will not turn out.

Of course, voters don’t always move in lockstep with the past, and there have been major shifts in some elections. Take Lyndon Johnson’s landslide victory over Goldwater in the 1964 election. Blessing says this outcome was due in part to the fact that the electorate was traumatized in the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination and was looking for comfort in uncertain times, which is why they turned to the known and seemingly steady Johnson in such large numbers over the unknown and seemingly edgy Goldwater. This can be considered a massive but temporary shift, Blessing explains, that doesn’t neatly fit longer-term electoral patterns.

In the 2008 election, the Blessing-Mojire results show that Obama’s win came about through subtle shifts and small swings in county votes, or as Blessing puts it, “an accumulation of small swings,” rather than a large-scale movement. (In his view, the Blessing-
Mojire database indicates that there are only about 400,000 so-called “swing” voters in the entire country.) According to this analysis, traditional Democratic counties performed just about as expected with a little tilt more Democratic; the centrist counties stayed in the center but with a slight tilt to Democratic; and Republican counties were less Republican, but only slightly less Republican, than usual.

In other words, small shifts on a regional level had a big impact on the national stage: those 3 percent to 4 percent shifts everywhere were enough to assure Obama of a sound Electoral College victory. Blessing says the shifts occurred in part because McCain was not the pick of the majority of Republicans and therefore lost core voters who didn’t turn out. And it didn’t help that McCain, Blessing adds, seemed “old and stiff and uncomfortable in front of the camera.”

Counts are, in fact, the key to voting trends rather than states, Mojire figures. That’s because states are part of larger geographic areas with divergent populations in cities, suburbs and rural areas that cross state lines. So, for example, Appalachian regions of Georgia don’t vote like the Atlanta region but more like southern Tennessee. “States don’t vote like states,” Morire says. “If I drew a map of voting in counties it would look nothing like the states. The areas with similar voting patterns overlap without regard to state boundaries,” he adds. While most cities tend to vote relentlessly Democratic (issues being much less important for urban voters than parties), Mojire says — there are, on the other hand, about 800 mostly rural counties that have voted Republican for the last 50 or 60 years and “will continue to do so no matter who is on the ticket.”

If you want to forecast which party might win an election, look for clues in the suburbs, which have become the true battleground in electoral contests, he says. Why? Suburbanites straddle both city and country. They commute between the two and have access to the urban media, but often they identify with the rural lifestyle. “If you can win enough of the suburban blocs you can win the suburbs and carry a state,” Blessing advises, noting that the suburbs have been trending Democratic since the late ’80s, helping to turn some Red states Purple and some Purple states Blue.

An article in the New York Times titled “Orange County is No Longer Nixon Country” about demographic changes in that traditionally Republican and conservative enclave supports that observation. The story noted that a milestone was reached as the percentage of registered Republicans dropped to 43 percent, the lowest level in 70 years. That coincides with an influx of ethnic groups including Hispanics, Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese who are changing the demographics of the once solidly white population, along with voting trends. While Orange remains a Republican county for now, “many officials say it is only a matter of time before many Republican officeholders get swept out with the tide,” the story concludes.

Blessing began studying voting trends in 1979, as a way of measuring presidential performance and how voters measure that performance when they decide for whom to vote. That led him to consider how voters actually make that decision and then to his study of county election results and the creation of the voting pattern database the two are using.

One question, though, is whether the intense focus on traditional voting patterns, rather than more specifically on issues and policies, ignores critical motivations that influence a voter. At a time when far-reaching changes are being implemented or proposed that will transform how major institutions in the country function — from health care reform to Wall Street regulation — leaving this element out of the equation might appear simplistic. After all, “it’s the economy, stupid!” as the now famous saying goes. Or is it?

With the nation still mired in an economic...
slump marked by job losses and home foreclosures and long-term unemployment, you would imagine that the economy — with a big “E” rather than the finer details of policy, such as the impact of cap-and-trade or tax cuts for the wealthy — would be foremost in the minds of voters. “Economic issues are large,” notes James Pfiffner, a professor of public policy at George Mason University. While he agrees with Blessing that most voters have their minds made up before they head to the polls, he notes that “the state of the economy weighs heavily on voters in elections, and the President often gets more credit and more blame than he is responsible for.”

Blessing contends however that, with few exceptions, there are only occasional detours in the pattern of relatively stable voting in relation to the economy. One was the Great Depression, which broke the Republican pattern for four or five elections; the other was the Reagan Revolution. Yet today, as the country is engaged in an often boisterous debate about who was to blame for the downturn and how to get out of it — with each party pointing fingers at the other — Blessing suggests that Obama “still has the edge.” He hypothesizes that, given the stability of party voting, if George W. Bush had been able to run again, the 2008 election would have been closer — despite his low poll numbers and the crashing economy — and that Bush would have polled better than McCain because Bush was much more strongly identified with his party than McCain.

Political scientists concur that individuals mostly view themselves through a partisan lens, and that this self-identity is the best predictor that exists of how they will vote. If you say you are a Republican or a Democrat, you’re likely to vote that way about 80 percent of the time, a notion backed up by Blessing’s findings. Yet there is another key question to be answered: how to predict whether someone will be motivated to go to the polls at all?

Lara Brown, an assistant professor of political science at Villanova University, says it is at this stage that issues such as war, the economy or taxes — or a general disgust with corrupt politicians — are crucial in the voters’ decision to get involved or to stay home. “All of these temporal, event-based things determine your motivation to participate,” she explains. “Once motivated, you are likely to go into a sort of habitual mode.”

Voting might be a habit, something we do only once every four years, but it’s still difficult to get inside the head of your average American voter, to know who that voter is and where his or vote might be headed. That’s especially true in an age of instant communications and social media, where we are bombarded with an overload of information and voices trying to sway us to buy something or endorse an idea, a person or a cause.

Continued on page 50
A historic stone estate becomes Alvernia’s newest jewel and a legacy to the philanthropy of Jerry and Carolyn Holleran.

Cedar Hill Farm
A historic stone estate becomes Alvernia’s newest jewel and a legacy to the philanthropy of Jerry and Carolyn Holleran.

Hill Farm
By Mary Ellen Alu

Just above the bustle of Route 222, beyond a thicket of trees and the Schuylkill River, a Georgian-style stone estate links past and future with Alvernia University.

Rising 3 ½ stories at its center, the nineteenth-century structure was once home to a local quarry master. Now, it is the President’s House — the first for the university — providing both private living quarters for Alvernia President Thomas F. Flynn and his wife Helen, and public meeting space for community groups and university faculty, staff, and students.

Cedar Hill Farm in Bern Township — with its vibrant floral gardens — was a gift to Alvernia from emeritus trustees Jerry and Carolyn Holleran, who had painstakingly restored the property from the floors up. They resided there 24 years.

“You lived in the history, and I loved that,” said Carolyn Holleran, who would often think of the people who had preceded her — in the house, and down by the river.

A clue to the home’s historic past can be found on its exterior, in a brick-framed slab near a chimney, which reads: “1840 W. & M. Silvis.” “W” is William Silvis, a quarry master who, along with his wife Margaret (“M”), had the original portion of the stone house built 170 years ago.

Inside, there have been modifications, but much is the same: a center hall; rooms with fireplaces, floors of American chestnut, and windows with nine panes over six. The stone walls are 22 inches thick and curve at the windows, allowing for light to stream into the rooms.

Silvis, who had significant land holdings in Berks County as well as other parts of Pennsylvania, built the house near the limestone quarries he developed in the bluffs by the river. “Limestone was used by farmers to amend their soil,” said Carolyn, “and the Schuylkill River would have provided a means of transport.”

While the house itself is steeped in history, the story of the land ownership begins a century earlier — with a farmer named John Epler. (An arm of his family had emigrated from Germany as early as the 1730s, according to research conducted for the Hollerans.)

Epler was issued a warrant for the land in 1750, which authorized the State Surveyor General to lay out boundaries. Five years later, the research showed, Epler received a patent — an official sanction by Richard Penn — his representative for the Province of Pennsylvania — for the transfer of 300 acres to Epler from “the highest office.”

Eventually, the land passed to Epler’s son, then to his grandson, then to others. By 1837, and perhaps earlier, William Silvis owned a portion of it, later building the house that has endured through eras of progress and societal change.

After Silvis’ death in the late 1840s, the house and surrounding lands changed hands several times. Perhaps the most significant turn came in 1911, when Reading hardware distributor Stanley Bright and his wife, Sarah Hood Gilpin Bright of Philadelphia, took up residence with their five children, transforming the hillside farmhouse into a country manor.

Sarah Bright hired noted Philadelphia architect R. Brognard Okie to remodel and expand the house. Okie, who became known for “manorizing” farmhouses in...
Pennsylvania, added the two, 2½-story wings that flank the original structure. A kitchen wing with maid quarters was added in 1915; a library wing with two small bedrooms and a master suite, in 1919. Okie also “cropped” the fireplaces in the original section, adding cupboards and cubby-holes that Sarah Bright prized.

“It was when we began to do over this farmhouse that I lifted up my voice for closets,” wrote Sarah Bright at the time, “and particularly for cubbyholes to keep things in, ‘things’ being a feminine term for what you know to be useful but do not believe to be beautiful; or if you do, whose beauty, if left at large, is outweighed by the necessity for endless dusting.”

Children’s books, farm bulletins, records, tea-party dishes, firewood — “everything from matches to motor coats,” wrote Sarah Bright — were stored there.

Another innovation was the location of a playroom, on the ground floor instead of the attic, then conventional. Sarah Bright, in writing about the “experiment,” said the space had previously been divided into two kitchens for former tenants, but that the kitchens no longer worked for modern cooking.

Flooring had been removed in the renovation, exposing original cedar logs used for support. Liking the look, the Brights kept the logs exposed, using flagstones to fill in. When their children opted to sit on the cold floor instead of cushions, they put down rag rugs. Stairs led to an upstairs drawing room, Sarah Bright wrote, making it “easy for grown-ups to descend when necessary to quell riots.”

But the Bright children — daughters —...
Sarah and Louisa and sons Stanley Jr., Joseph, and John Gilpin (later an aviator who served with the famed “Flying Tigers” in China during World War II) — spent a good deal of time outdoors as well, in both summer and winter. Sarah Bright noted a sandbox and bicycles were part of play.

At the bottom of the hill lived Mary Reeser (now Deitrich), whose parents worked for the Brights. Her father George Reeser was a caretaker, cutting wood and tending to the asparagus the Brights grew. Her mother cleaned “the big house.” On weekends, the Brights would entertain.

“The house was lovely,” Deitrich said.

Outdoors, the Brights took down a barn, the foundation of which forms a walled garden. Deitrich, who was years younger than the Bright children, said she and her mother witnessed a daughter marry there. They also were present when another daughter was wed inside the home, by a fireplace.

And when the Brights traveled around the world, they brought Deitrich gifts, such as Chinese and Russian dolls. On one birthday, she was given a linen handkerchief on which her name had been embroidered.

“The Brights were very good people,” Deitrich said.

A granddaughter, Leila Bright, of Maine, has fond memories of the weekends she spent at Cedar Hill as a child. She’d take a steam train to Reading from her home in Rosemont, and her grandfather would meet her. When she headed back home, he’d give her $1 — “a visitor’s tax” he called it.

Every weekend, the Brights hosted one or two grandchildren.

“They wanted us to enjoy them and the house,” Leila Bright said.

And the grandchildren did — they sang “Coming ’Round the Mountain” at the piano, played “Hide the Thimble,” and rode bicycles. They found arrowheads as they walked old Indian paths to the river, where they swam and had campfires.

Leila Bright said her grandmother was innovative, hands-on, a professional at running a house. She taught her grandchildren to sew and needlepoint and knit — “all of which she did all the time,” Leila Bright said. “Her hands were always busy.”

Her grandfather had a good sense of humor, she said. He loved to play backgammon with friends. An early riser, he listened to orchestral music from Europe over a shortwave radio; visiting grandchildren woke to the paired sounds of music and their grandfather slurping coffee.

Stanley Bright was involved in the day-to-day operation of the farmland he owned, and he’d take along his grandchildren to visit those tending the land.
In 1959, following his death, Sarah Bright transferred the property to new owners. Some 45 years later, in January 2005, Leila Bright — the eldest child of the Brights’ eldest son Stanley — found her way back. En route to New York from North Carolina, and realizing she was near Reading, Leila Bright navigated new roads, located the house, and knocked on the door.

By then, Jerry and Carolyn Holleran owned the home. They had bought it in 1985, in disrepair, attracted by the challenge of restoring it.

“They turned it back into what it was for us — a wonderful family home,” said Leila Bright, who was given a warm welcome and a tour.

When the Hollerans bought it, only a toilet, sink, and shower had been working — and none were in the same bathroom. The Hollerans updated the plumbing and electricity, added insulation, scrubbed soap scum from Mercer tile with a toothbrush, rebuilt the foundation, and re-laid the stone floor. They built an artist’s studio, added a pool and decking, and removed trees and weeds that had grown through the smoke house. They planted gardens and laid paths to the river, where they would swim and boat with their children and grandchildren.

“You can’t live like 1840,” Carolyn Holleran said, but in restoring the house, she and her husband tried to maintain its historical integrity.

The couple opened their home not only to family but also to friends and the community, entertaining frequently. “We had such wonderful times here,” Carolyn Holleran said.

In 2009, with their family grown, the Hollerans gave the house, and an endowment to maintain it, to Alvernia — “a concrete and stone example of generosity that will endure through the ages,” said Board Chair Kathleen D. Herbein ’95 at the formal dedication of the home in October. The house will also give the university a competitive advantage in attracting future presidents, said Herbein.

Given that the estate would also be used for university conferences and retreats, some renovations were necessary. Ramps were added and doorways and stairways widened so that areas could be accessed by those with disabilities. Changes were also necessary for health, safety, and building code requirements related to how the university intends to use the property.

Alvernia took ownership of Cedar Hill in January and after some thorough planning, work began last spring to convert the residential estate into a property well-suited for institutional use. Throughout the
Who was John Updike?

Ask his Driver
David Silcox is a born collector. The Shillington resident enjoys the hunt as much as the acquisition, especially when it involves books or memorabilia from the youth of famed author John H. Updike. For a stretch in the late ’80s, Silcox made a 12-mile drive on a regular basis between the Reading Airport and the Updike family farm in Plowville, Pa. His trips, however, didn’t focus on building his broad collection, which he has begun to donate to the university archive, to be housed in Frank A. Franco Library. Instead, he was intent on building a relationship and store of unforgettable memories with Berks County’s favorite son.

Then in his 40s and an industrial engineer, Silcox jumped at the chance to “chauffeur” Updike during visits to his mother. Every couple of months between 1988 and 1989, he shared the front seat, and casual conversation, with one of the greatest American fiction writers of his generation. As they traveled through the rolling hills that dot the highways and byways of Greater Reading, the two chatted in the sprawling ‘84 Crown Victoria Silcox inherited from his uncle. Sometimes, Bradley, Silcox’s then 8-year-old son, would tag along in the backseat and shoot the breeze with the distinguished writer. Talk amongst the trio was often of the mundane; Updike’s travels, Silcox’s job, town news, property taxes, Bradley’s autograph collection. But now and then the Updike fan, who often planned potential topics ahead, turned the conversation to the writer’s childhood or literature.

“I was never his buddy,” says Silcox, 63, an affable man, sturdy with white, wavy hair and wire-rimmed glasses. The retired Carpenter Technology executive speaks with a gravelly voice as he drives us around in his red Honda CRV (the Crown Victoria long since traded in) and points out the old locations of Stevens’ Luncheonette, Beckers Garage, and other favorite Updike haunts in the Shillington of old. “My wife used to say, ‘You’re his grunt.’ But I enjoyed being his grunt.”

Scholars may dissect Updike’s works to analyze the author, as they did at October’s John Updike Society Conference; Silcox, though, came to his conclusions from his regular rounds of small talk and a gradual conversation that unfolded over 20 years, first as a driver, then as a “contact” in town until the writer’s death in 2009.

Who was John Updike? Celebrity? Celebrity? 

As the first conference of The John Updike Society began last October on Alvernia’s campus, an unassuming man of 60-something, dressed neatly in coat and tie, fidgeted in the rear of a filled lecture hall. Unbeknownst to most who had gathered, David Silcox, Updike conference organizer, good friend of the university, and retired engineer, was far more than a casual observer. Depending on one’s point of view, he was a confidant, handler, helper, heckler, friend, or just plain driver for the revered writer. Maybe he was all these, or perhaps none. To Silcox he was just Updike’s gofer or grunt. But across two decades, Updike the man unfolded before him – vulnerable and quirky, thrifty and testy, sometimes funny, occasionally witty, but always a gentleman, and always brilliant.
Cultural icon? Demure recluse? According to this accidental chauffeur, the guy was amiable, modest, always frugal. In fact, the multimillionaire who pulled in about $30,000 per speaking appearance sought rides to and fro in large part because he fretted over what it was costing him to travel to visit his mother, even after his tax advisor told him that he could deduct those expenses as research. After all, he would be incorporating memories from those trips into his future writings.

Updike also refused to subscribe to the Reading Eagle (the very same newspaper he worked for in his younger years) when he moved away, prevailing on locals to send clippings. And he was known to prefer postcards over letters to save postage, even to reuse a stamp on occasion. “That was John Updike,” Silcox says as he shares the details. “He had a Depression-era mindset.”

Silcox delights in talking Updike. He has not yet, however, read all his masterworks. “He’s a hard read,” he says, adding his favorite is The Centaur. And it should come as no surprise that he was at the meeting — it was held in his dining room, no less — when the notion to establish The John Updike Society was kindled, an organization that the author wouldn’t allow while he was alive. Silcox also helped organize the inaugural Updike conference at Alvernia, where he had a ready audience for his tales. He served as a tour guide for participants and retraced part of the route taken with Updike those many years ago. True to form, the detail man that inspired the meticulous author’s trust was charged with conference site particulars, handling goodie bags, organizing itineraries, and ensuring buses ran on time. (They did, naturally.)

In October 1989, the Silcox shuttle service screeched to a stop when John’s mother Linda Hoyer Updike died, but by then a comfortable bond connected the two men. Soon Silcox was called upon to handle various affairs. He would suggest a lawyer, pass on information about former classmates, attend his lectures and readings in the region, or keep tabs on local politics, he says. “I was Updike’s go-to man,” he adds with obvious pride. For a decade starting in 1999, he clipped articles on local news and gossip from the Reading Eagle and mailed the thick packets to New England, where the writer had settled. Updike used details from the articles to inform his rich portraits of middle America.

Silcox came by his “in” with Updike through neighbor Thelma Lewis, who taught with Updike’s father Wesley, at the local high school and was a friend of Linda, who Silcox also got to know. Lewis also served as an adviser for the Chatterbox, Updike’s high school newspaper to which he contributed editorials and cartoons as a teen. She recommended Silcox for the chauffeur role, and as her health deteriorated, she passed on the clipping job. Before Lewis died in 2006, Silcox, who helped with her affairs, was given many of her prized Updike items, including yearbooks, correspondence, and a few first-edition books, several of which were inscribed “to my earliest and best editor.”

Silcox was a natural for the job. “He seems to know everybody,” says Alvernia’s sitting Updike Scholar in Residence Jack De Bellis, professor emeritus of English at Lehigh University and author of The John Updike Encyclopedia. “He’s a man in motion. He’s constantly involved in multiple projects.” One of his latest is a book he is co-authoring with De Bellis called A Class Act: Updike’s Classmates Speak; Silcox tracked down teachers and classmates. “He’s the kind of person who gets things done. He’s really a dynamo.”

Silcox, though, doesn’t care for the attention, perhaps a quality of Updike’s that rubbed off on him. On a drive around town, he prefers not to focus conversation solely on him but include Updike’s former classmates, particularly Barry R. Nelson, laid up from a series of strokes. Nelson, 78, met Updike in ninth grade and became his closest friend. The two worked together on the Chatterbox, where Nelson, a basketball player, contributed sports stories. “I taught him how to shoot over his back, without looking at the hoop,” he says from his recliner. Once, he also researched Updike’s questions about sandstone quarries, information used for the short story “A Sandstone Farmhouse.”

As we take our leave, we drive past Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, where Updike was baptized, and Silcox recounts the time 9-year-old John was walking to Sunday school, a nickel clasped in his hand. As he crossed the street, a car hit him. “Fortunately, in those days, the cars didn’t move very fast.” Even as the boy
was sprawled in the street stunned, he kept a tight grasp on his nickel. “Who, but John Updike, would still be clutching their nickel after they got hit by a car?” he wondered.

We pass the local library, and Silcox remembers his efforts to get Updike to make a large donation to the renovation project. In return, a room would be named in honor of his parents. Updike declined; instead, he purchased a brass nameplate for $500.

His tight purse strings left some Shillingtonians to gripe that the two-time Pulitzer Prize winner never did much for the communities that inspired his oeuvre. Silcox bristles at the suggestion. “Shillington is internationally known but for whom? John Updike,” he says.

Updike was a stickler for accuracy. For the 100th anniversary of Shillington, Silcox wrote a biography of Updike, with his permission, to be included in a town history book. “I told him, ‘I’ll work something up, and you can rip it apart.’ I have the rough draft,” which Silcox says had a few extra errors “for John to find. ... He did his editing in red. He said, ‘Good job. Here are some ideas. Let’s do a second run of it.’”

The book also reprinted a well-known Updike poem, “In the Cemetery High Above Shillington.” He instructed Silcox to ensure that the verse was typeset accurately. “You can’t trust printers,” he told Silcox. When the book came out, he offered compliments. “When someone like John Updike says, ‘Good job,’ that means a lot.”

Those who knew the writer always describe him as friendly but seldom called him friend. “John’s relationship with most people was a professional relationship,” says De Bellis, who knew the author for three decades but never became close to him. “John was an extremely private person. He was always cordial, honest, and delighted that people took an interest in his work.”

As Silcox says with no hint of malice: “I was on the periphery. I consider myself very fortunate.” The two would never discuss Updike’s many health problems, including a stutter (which made a reappearance whenever he spoke to the locals), psoriasis, and asthma. Or the woes of his first marriage. Or anything else truly intimate.

Yet, the two Pennsylvanians shared common ground that could have led to a deeper relationship. Silcox, like Updike, is an only child. He grew up in Pottsville, in coal country. “I grew up a poor boy,” he says. “My mom worked in a factory.” Silcox also suffered a speech impediment not unlike Updike’s stutter. “I would always withdraw. He was more of an
Impulse. Impulse buying. Impulse eating. Impulse love-at-first-sight. But spontaneously dragging trash from a New York dumpster to a fourth-story Brooklyn brownstone because of career despair? That’s borderline nuts. Tim Stark will be the first one to tell you so, too.
seeds of sustainability

After years of unhappily working in an air-conditioned office as a government city worker, then a consultant while also attempting a writing career, Stark threw his hands up in the air and tried something different: farming. The water pipes, furring strips, and two-by-fours studded with nails that he salvaged in the dark turned into his first seed germination rack. This abrupt construction began his lifelong determination to grow things purely by honest sweat and low-tech farming — especially his much-coveted Heirloom tomatoes.

Stark’s green-striped, yellow, purple, orange, and red beauties are sought after by chefs in top New York City eateries such as the Four Seasons, Union Square Café, and all of Iron Chef Mario Batali’s restaurants. He has traveled a long road, literally, since he planted his first 3,000 tomato seeds in that brownstone walk-up, now distributing tomatoes from over 30,000 plants in the height of the season.

Stark chronicled his continuing venture in his memoir Heirloom, Notes from an Accidental Tomato Farmer, published in 2008. At Alvernia he shared his many convictions on life, farming and people during the 2010 Literary Festival. Heirloom is the perfect example of the “Think Globally, Act Locally” mindset,” said Alvernia librarian and Literary Festival committee member John Nelka. “After reading the book, I was struck by the similarities between Tim’s story and the Alvernia ‘story.’ Both have strong roots in the local community along with an awareness of ‘the big picture.’ Both show a fierce dedication to craft, and a steady and rigorous work ethic tempered with compassion, warmth, and humor. Above all, the nurturing and careful planning that produces Tim’s prized tomatoes is not unlike the educational process. We share a common mission, to foster and promote growth; to nourish mind, body, and spirit. It is a true labor of love.”

Birth of a farmer

“There is now a growing interest in artisanally produced foods,” said Stark. “You can’t just come up with a mold, press a button, and make 20,000 of them like that.” The inner farmer that nurtured his agricultural career change stemmed from being 6-years-old and moving to Eckerton Hill Farm in Berks County. His father, a trial attorney in Allentown, and his mother, a published writer, had the acreage worked by neighboring landowner Milt Miller, a Pennsylvania Dutchman.

“That guy was a force. I was a little screwball to him. I thought he was a weird old ‘Dutchie’ guy when I was a kid,” reflected Stark. “This guy was taking care of the whole property all by himself single-handedly. I would like to think of myself as a Milt Miller, but I’ll never be. I think that kind of person is a titan. They don’t exist anymore.”

When his Brooklyn landlord denied him access to the rooftop to transplant his seedlings into the sunlight, Stark knew he had to return home to Eckerton Hill where his mom still resided. Beginner’s luck gave him rain every week, and a bumper crop of sun-ripened tomatoes that dripped with the perfect combinations of acidity and sweetness ensued.

“The way we farm is incredibly sustainable. I mulch with straw and hay — no plastic mulch because it is an oil product,” said Stark. “We are using ideas that have been around for a long time. I plant hay, clover, and rye in between to improve the quality of the soil.”

Stark rotates his crops and plants tomatoes in the same location every third season. He never uses pesticides and only uses a low-toxicity fungicide for tomato blight when it is very close to threatening his fields. “It is not a skull-and-crossbones chemical and I’ve only sprayed it

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once in 15 years. I sprayed so
little that it didn’t even leave a
residue,” said Stark. “Hail and
early blight can wipe me out.”

Fertilization is done with
natural chicken and horse
manure and also his own home-
grown compost pile made up (of
all things) — split tomatoes. “I
have the most beautiful compost
in Berks County,” he said with
amusement.

Fifteen years have passed since
driving his beat-up Toyota truck
back and forth from Brooklyn
to the farm every weekend;
enticing his NYC doctor and
lawyer friends to “enjoy a
weekend in the country,” so he
could get free weeding. He now
has 16 employees during harvest
time. He is a firm believer of
personal responsibility, treating
his employees with respect and
compensating them well. Three
are paid interns who live rent-
free in a late 1700s stone house
on the 58-acre Eckerton Hill
Farm II that Stark purchased in
2008.

Intern Annie Myers, a 2009
New York University graduate
in Agricultural and Regional
Food Systems, was working as
a food forager at the Spotted
Pig restaurant in Manhattan
when she met Stark. She left
her position to learn the other
end of the business — where
and how the food is grown and
distributed.

“The details are what’s
important,” she said. “This farm
does that really well. Everything
is done in a professional way.”

“Tim’s method is an excellent
example of how it is possible to
develop a system of agriculture
that will sustain our communities
for generations to come,” said
Dr. Spencer Stober, professor
of biology and director of the
Center for Ethics and Leadership
at Alvernia. “His farming
practices are much more than a
model for sustainable agriculture.
He works to foster community
relationships by bringing people
closer to each other, and to the
earth that nurtures them.”

Eckerton Hill Farms produces
unconventional tomatoes such as
the Cherokee Purple, the Green
Zebra, the Orange Banana, and
Radiator Charlie’s Mortgage
Lifter. During the growing
season, Stark and Wayne Miller
(Stark’s farm manager for 12
years) leave Berks County at
3:30 a.m. three days a week,
with two overstuffed trucks
bound for the Union Square
Green Market in Manhattan.
Restaurant buyers, who phoned
in their orders the day before,
are already waiting for them at
6 a.m.

His unique packages of 20
different varieties of Heirloom
tomatoes are sold in two sizes,
either a 12-pound or two-pound
box. He also sells a cherry tomato
variety by the pint. During peak
harvest, Stark will sell more than
4,000 boxes of tomatoes a day.
A typical restaurant order would
be two large, two medium,
and three cherry tomato boxes.
Mesclun Green, Greek Basil,
and Rainbow Swiss Chard are a
few of the many Heirloom items
that he brings to market. His
large variety of hot chili peppers
is almost as famous as his
tomatoes, especially the Flaming
Chocolate Scotch Bonnet.

“Heirloom plants are grown
from non-hybridized seeds. I
save seeds each year for next
year’s planting,” he explained.

Stark’s dedication to farming
in the way his Mennonite and
Amish neighbors do is not the
only reason for his success. He
devotes 100-hour workweeks as
farmer, middleman, salesman,
truck driver, and delivery person
to his business. As busy as he
is, he still finds time for his two
daughters: Gwendolyn, 12, and
Charlotte, 10, and his wife Jill,
a former lawyer who helps with
the business.

His belief of offering the best
possible product created in the
most environmentally conscious
environment mirrors a key
Franciscan values — stewardship
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Values & Vision: The Alvernia 50th Anniversary Campaign is the largest fundraising initiative in our history. In just three years, the campaign has generated $23.5 million to support transformational changes to the university. A current focus of the Campaign is the renovation of historic Francis Hall, the iconic face of Alvernia. During the next three years, the building will be renovated to make it a contemporary learning environment for generations to come.

Most importantly, support for Values & Vision is providing the fuel needed to realize our vision: “to be a distinctive Franciscan university, committed to personal and social transformation.” It will take the generosity of many philanthropic individuals, companies, and organizations to achieve this vision. To learn more about Values & Vision and the renovation of Francis Hall, including naming opportunities, contact the Office of Advancement at 610-796-8259.
Teaching by the numbers

Associate Professor Bryan Dreibelbis draws on his accounting expertise to help students excel in class…and the real world.

Bryan Dreibelbis uses Groucho Marx jokes and German colloquialisms to bring his lessons to life.
Times are tough, and tomorrow’s business leaders need to be ready; ready to react to current issues and recognize new ones coming down the pike; ready to use technical knowledge in a professional way; ready to develop solutions to business challenges that are emerging in the ever-changing marketplace. So to succeed in such a regulation-governed field, Alvernia’s business students require training in current trade developments from both practical and ethical standpoints…and maybe a little humor to keep it interesting.

Veteran business professor Bryan Dreibelbis punctuates lessons with colorful German colloquialisms and Groucho Marx jokes in class to make points. He never stops working to prepare students for life after graduation, drilling them with adamant advice.

“Network, network, network!” crows Dreibelbis. “Get an internship, join professional organizations, get good grades — employers do look at transcripts. Develop professionally and eventually earn certification. In the accounting world, those credentials are extremely important and valuable.”

And then he backs that up with opportunities, like internships with dynamic companies, and involvement in Alvernia’s Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) and prestigious Phi Beta Lambda (Future Business Leaders) Chapter, which Dreibelbis founded and has advised since 1988. His dedication has brought awards and prestige to a long line of grateful business students.

“Being a member of the campus chapter of Phi Beta Lambda and IMA my entire college career, I had many opportunities to interact with other business professionals and fellow students,” said Justine Fromheiser ’10, staff accountant at Herbein & Company, Inc. “My role as president of PBL during my junior and senior years helped my leadership abilities grow. Each spring we attended a professional conference where we learned about business topics, participated in competitive events, and networked.”

Dreibelbis has been teaching at Alvernia for 24 years, specializing in accounting. His technique of maintaining cutting-edge instruction focuses on keeping abreast of the latest industry advancements and interfusing his students within the business world. “Technical knowledge coupled with professionalism — or more specifically: analytical skills, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making skills are required more than ever,” he explains.

“And it’s working,” says Andrew Smolarski, a junior with a dual major in accounting and management. “He makes sure to keep us up-to-date. Currently, he has been spending a lot of time talking about the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) converting to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS),” he said. “It would have a great impact on the way we would handle accounting if and when FASB converts to IFRS.” Smolarski is concentrating on fraud and is minoring in mathematics at Alvernia.

But it’s not all about regulations. Just because doing the right thing is sometimes difficult to do in a business setting, that’s no reason to ignore ethics. “In my Accounting Information Systems class we emphasize internal control and that automatically leads to discussions of ethical issues — for example, fraud prevention and transparency of financial statements,” Dreibelbis said.

“And, in my auditing class, we spend a good deal of time covering ethics, internal control, and recent accounting scandals.”

And Dreibelbis hopes that staying up-to-date with new techniques and technology will help students stand out after graduation. Senior accounting major Trevor Ashley’s excitement over learning real-world applications in Dreibelbis’ classes is apparent. “We had to use an accounting program called Klooster to enter financial data, make statements, and be able to interpret what the information means,” he said. “This was my first real opportunity to take all of the knowledge taught in his classes and use it to make a true professional-looking financial statement. Being able to accomplish this was proof that what Mr. Dreibelbis was doing was really working.”

Like Smolarski and Ashley, many of Dreibelbis’ students realize how much they’re gaining from the talented professor. Last year, during the depths of the economic downturn, he was asked by former student Rob Ganter ’10 to travel to a television studio in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., to attend the taping of a town-hall meeting show “Who’s Protecting Our Money?”

“Rob was able to get a ticket to the taping and was allowed to bring a professor with him; he invited me,” recalled Dreibelbis. “The show was hosted by CNBC’s Jim Cramer and Erin Burnett with special guest Sheila Bair, chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). It was an interesting show because of the fragile state of the economy at that time.”

Alvernia accounting majors use opportunities that Dreibelbis provides to prepare for careers in the industry and/or public accounting. They are encouraged to consider obtaining a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) or Certified Public Accountant (CPA) certification after

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A Passion for Nursing

Kindred spirits fuel Russian brother & sister

By Dawn Thren

Knowing where you came from can inspire you to get where you plan to go. So say Russian-born nursing students Catherine “Katya” and her brother Boris Golub who moved to America at an early age but have been driven by the work ethic of their parents and grandparents.

“It is my parents’ goal to give their children opportunities and options that they did not have access to when they were growing up,” said Boris.

Their parents Vera and Leon moved with their six children from Magadan, Russia (close to Siberia) when Katya and Boris were 9- and 6-year-olds. They relocated their family to Lancaster County in 1997 where they already had family and acquaintances.

Katya is the first person in her family to attend college and knew she wanted to select a profession in the health care field early on.

“As a senior in high school, my father started having some health issues. I made a lot of trips with him to various hospitals and treatment centers,” said Katya. “That gave me the opportunity to see different medical personnel perform their roles…and I realized that I liked the role of the nurse the most.”

But money was tight, and finding a program that would help her succeed was important. Katya found that program at Alvernia, where she is currently a senior, on the brink of graduation.

Alvernia offers more than 20 endowed scholarships for students. With help from the Financial Aid Office, Katya was able to secure the Dr. Edna B. McKenzie Scholarship and the Helen Makiewick Kubucki Scholarship, both offered exclusively for nursing students.

“Alvernia also receives annual support from other individuals and organizations like the Diocese of Allentown, the Bernardine Sisters and the Summer Thomas Memorial Scholarship Fund,” said John Luvisi, director of grants and prospect research. Luvisi works to secure grants, endowed scholarships, and other opportunities that help students focus on their education, instead of how to pay for it, (including Boris’ PA Higher Education Scholarship).

And focusing on education is important in difficult nursing classes. “I've really enjoyed my nursing classes, especially Nursing and Human Responses I,” Katya said.

The upper-level course focuses on the changing needs of women and the developing child during the reproductive life cycle. As a class requirement, students receive 84 hours of supervised clinical practice experience in a medical setting.

Boris is glad that Katya introduced him to the program at Alvernia. “Alvernia’s nursing program is outstanding. It is very challenging, and they really make sure that the students are prepared to enter the medical field before they graduate,” he said.

According to the 2008 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, Boris is part of a growing trend — the percentage of men graduating with nursing degrees has more than doubled since 1990. As a sophomore, he is not concerned about working in a female-dominated profession. After earning his RN license and gaining experience in the field, he plans to continue his education in a specialty area.

“Overall the classes associated with nursing are very difficult,” he said. “I really do enjoy Foundations of Professional Nursing with Professor (Anne) Fink. She has a great way of presenting the material in a way that is understandable and also enjoyable to the students.”

Assistant Professor Fink has had both Golub students in class. “They have been very focused, attending all classes and paying close attention,” said Professor Fink.

“Boris and Katya join a number of students from diverse backgrounds within the Alvernia nursing program. I find it very exciting to see students with differing backgrounds and perspectives become successful in nursing.”

Alvernia’s Franciscan values translate well in the field of nursing, where having true respect for human dignity and serving people of all backgrounds is part of everyday life.

So it’s only natural that the values should be visible in the university’s academic programs. “The Transcultural Nursing course teaches us that we may all come from different cultures and backgrounds, but we are still people in need of someone to truly care for us and go the extra mile to accommodate our special beliefs and practices without being judged,” said Katya.

Very dedicated in reaching her goals, Katya would like to work in the Ephrata, Pa., area where her bilingual abilities can help the large Russian population of that region.

Nursing students Katya and Boris Golub are well on their way to a rewarding future in the medical community.
“Last semester, I had clinical at the Ephrata Hospital for our pediatric rotation and my 6-year-old patient serendipitously turned out to be Russian. His mother spoke very little English, and it was a great relief to her to have a nursing student who could properly communicate her needs to the nursing staff,” said Katya. “It also put her at ease to have the comfort of speaking a familiar language in that stressful situation.”

Katya and Boris are on their way to becoming excellent contributors in the medical community and attribute much of their quality education to their professors.

“The entire nursing faculty has helped me through this journey of nursing school in their own way. I would like to thank them for their support and teaching,” said Katya.

Boris agrees. “From all of the professors that I’ve seen, they do it because it seems like they love their job. That’s why I chose Alvernia. They have great nursing professors who really care about the success of their students.

“But to me personally, my lab professor Dr. (Deborah) Greenawald stands out. She really cares about the students. It seems like she puts everything she has into her job, and that is commendable.”

There are now eight children in the close-knit Golub family with everyone still living at home. Boris credits his mom for making college not a choice, but something that he had to do. “There were times that I felt like quitting, but she wouldn’t let me.”

“If not for their encouragement,” said Katya, “I don’t think I would have made it to this point.”
Alvernia’s newest varsity sport, women’s golf, began its first season this fall with six team members. Freshman Paige Brach (from Montgomery High School in Belle Mead, N.J.) was confirmed as the team’s first recruit in early January 2010. Brach was the captain of her high school team as a junior and was named All-Area and team MVP after leading Montgomery to third place in the state tournament. She was also named team MVP as a sophomore when she qualified for the state tournament as an individual.

Men’s Golf Assistant Coach Tom O’Connell ’95 is leading the Crusaders as head coach of the first-year women’s program.

O’Connell was named MVP of the Alvernia golf team in 1995, and later returned to his alma mater to quickly build a new ice hockey program from a student-run club to an impressive two-time finalist in the Mason-Dixon College Hockey Association. O’Connell served as Caddie Master at Pablo Creek Golf Course in Jacksonville Beach, Fla., and at Stonewall Golf Course in Bulltown, Pa.

Leading the team as a player is senior captain Caitlin Renshaw from Brandywine Heights in Topton, Pa. Other founding team members include sophomore Ashley Drake of Nazareth Academy in Philadelphia, freshman Christine Heppel, East Brunswick, N.J., freshman Emily Kennedy, Marian Catholic, Summit Hill, Pa., and freshman Chelsea Prosser from the Institute of Notre Dame in White Marsh, M.D.

Designated as the 20th varsity sport at Alvernia, the team practices at Flying Hills Golf Course and the Reading Country Club and participates in events in both the fall and spring semesters.

Early in the season, the new team finished second at the Alvernia Fall Invitational at the Reading Country Club and first at the Albright Invitational at the Berkshire Country Club. The Crusaders wrapped up the fall 2010 season with a fourth-place, second-place, and first-place standing in three matches. The Crusaders will return for the spring season and expect to participate in the first-ever Middle Atlantic States Collegiate Athletic Conference (MAC) conference championship in May.
Alvernia honored former student athletes at the annual Athletics Hall of Fame ceremony in October. This year’s individual Athletics Hall of Fame inductees include:

**Shannon Brandt ’94** (women’s basketball) was a four-year starter who scored 859 points and also played on Alvernia’s first championship team, the Keystone Athletic Conference champs of 1992. She played on three NAIA-qualifying teams and was named Team MVP for her freshman and senior years.

**Jeffrey Merlet ’94** (baseball) played professionally in Europe. He was named to the NAIA BB District 19 First Team (1993), the All-PAC BB First Team (1993), and as Player of the Year for NAIA District 19 (1992).

**Lonnie Walker** (men’s basketball) is the only 1,000-point, 1,000-rebound men’s player in Alvernia’s history. He scored 1,312 career points, had 1,002 career rebounds, and recorded the team’s only triple-double in 1997. That year he was named to the 1st Team All-PAC, 2nd Team Mid-Atlantic, and ECAC 1st Team Mid-Atlantic Team. He was the 1998 PAC Player of the Year and a Second Team All-American in 1998.

**P.J. Yoder** (baseball) had an impressive .422 batting average at Alvernia and was a 26th-round draft pick of the New York Mets (1995). He was named to the NAIA District 19 First Team (1993), the All-PAC First Team (1993), and the All-PAC First Team (1994). Before being drafted in 1995, Yoder was also named All-PAC First Team (1995), ECAC South First Team (1995), ECAC South Player of the Year (1995), and Team MVP (1995).

**1987 men’s cross-country team** was the first team to represent Alvernia in a national competition when it won the NAIA District 19 race hosted by Alvernia and qualified for the NAIA National Championship in Kenosha, Wis. The individual level of athletic achievement on this team was unprecedented at Alvernia in the mid-80s. The top three runners routinely broke 26 minutes for a 5-mile race — a pace of just over a 5-minute mile.

Members include:
- Dwight Armistead ’91
- Timothy Bender
- Lee Bennett ’92, M’04
- Thomas Dourte ’90
- Christopher Giallo
- Dr. Michael Gentile ’88
- Brian Patton ’90
- Charles Scott ’88
- Isaac ‘Butch’ Ulrich ’88
- Larry Zerbe, Head Coach ’88
- Stephanie Butcher, Assistant Coach

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**Athletes inducted into Hall of Fame**

The Alvernia University men’s basketball team is primed for a season of success and is picked to finish fourth in the Commonwealth Conference by conference coaches.

The Crusaders, who finished last season with a 17-11 overall record and 6-8 in league play, return four starters from a team that advanced to the Eastern College Athletic Conference South Region final last year after narrowly missing out on the Commonwealth play-offs.

Junior guard Tad Gillis, a first team All-Conference player last year, is returning to run the point for the Crusaders as is his backcourt mate Seth Cornell. Brian Nerney, Stefan Thompson, and Ryan Ludwig who combined for 42 starts last year also return. The Crusaders will need to fill the gap left by Nick Rivera, the team’s leading rebounder and second-leading scorer, who graduated last spring.

Highlighting the team’s non-conference schedule is a trip to Phoenix on December 29-30 for the Grand Canyon Classic where Alvernia will face Husson College (Maine) and Centenary College (N.J.).
Channeling his inner assets to meet the day’s challenges makes Michael Jupina extremely successful at what he does. In his line of work, he has to be fast, accurate, and practically see through walls to anticipate what is coming next. No, Jupina is not a superhero, but the 2007 Alvernia MBA graduate leaps small bounds each day as the vice president of marketing and communications at St. Joseph Medical Center in Reading, Pa.

Working in the medical industry brings on the added undertaking of understanding federal and state regulations inside and out. “There are daily challenges in health care, but one of the biggest right now is attempting to anticipate how regulations will impact us and to remain nimble and responsive to the changes they may bring,” said Jupina.

Health care reform has been a hot topic for the last decade and is on the cusp of major change. Jupina not only has to relay new policy in an informative language that the public will understand, but also has to compassionately serve people with many different backgrounds. Supporting St. Joseph’s mission of emphasizing human dignity and social justice to create healthier communities means that no patient is left behind.

His career is something Jupina has been training for his whole life. He began learning about the medical industry at an early age, growing up in a small coal town in Carbon County, Pa., where the largest employer was a hospital. His parents met in nursing school, and although his father worked primarily as a Philadelphia police officer, he also later served as a nurse in Center City and would take his son to the hospital where he worked. Not long after, the family moved to Lansford where both his parents worked at Gnaden Huetten Hospital and where Jupina worked as an orderly during high school and college.

While working and serving as captain of the football team, Jupina earned his Bachelor of Arts in communications studies/journalism at Bloomsburg University. On the fast track to an impressive career, he became director of communications at the former Lehigh Valley Bank, where he worked for seven years. He then joined the public relations/advertising firm Tierney & Partners in Philadelphia as director of new business development.

Jupina came to St. Joe’s in 1999, at a time when the hospital was beginning the largest transformation in its history. In 2006, the hospital moved its primary location from inner-city Reading to a new facility in rural Bern Township, while still providing primary care at its Sixth and Walnut Street campus.

“The move took seven years from planning to opening,” said Jupina. “It was the right thing to do, and today Berks County has one of the newest, highly rated hospitals in the country.”

During that busy time in his life, which included having a son and daughter with wife Danielle, Jupina decided pursue a Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA) at Alvernia University.

“My interest was in learning, in gaining insight, in being pressed by the professors and learning from other students, given their diversity of backgrounds and their wide range of personal and professional experiences,” reflected Jupina on why he selected Alvernia. “Dr. Ballantyne (associate professor of business) set that tone and the other professors carried that through.

“The real benefit of the MBA was the academic experience…where the goal is to expand your ability to think and analyze through discussion and debate led by thought-provoking professors. I was impressed that the professors could respect who we were and what we did professionally, but they didn’t give us a pass because of that.”

Jupina’s MBA concentration in marketing and communications not only broadened his existing professional scope, but introduced him to new avenues as well.

“I went into my classes realizing full well that technology had greatly changed the way people and businesses communicate,” he said. “The classes on statistics, market research, and accounting were very helpful. As part of the hospital’s senior management team, having knowledge outside of my area of expertise is vital to being a valuable contributor.”
Alumni class Notes

1970s
The honorable Linda (Mowson) Ludgate '77 received the Anne X. Alpern Award from the Pennsylvania Bar Association commission on Women in the Profession for a woman who has made an outstanding impact on women in law. She has initiated programs for battered women, fought for the rights of low-income defendants, and won a seat as a Berks judge. She has also set up numerous programs in Berks and traveled across the nation and world, speaking to groups and educating herself about the law.

Charles R. Broad '78, M'06 received the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America in recognition of exceptional service to youth.

1980s
David C. Quinter '80 was featured in the Reading Eagle discussing how software developers are one of the hottest jobs because today's world relies on software for just about everything. David is director of information technology at SSM Group in Wyomissing.

Rev. Megan A. (Reichelderfer) Fiti '80 served as an Operations Research Analyst at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland from 1983-1987 and 1990-1999. She began serving as an Assemblies of God Missionary in 1999 and served a four-year term in Kiribati and a four-year term in Samoa. While in Samoa, Megan married Tatupu Fiti, and they are preparing to serve their next term in Tuvalu.

Mildred Paisley-Emes '81 has been granted a Private Detective license by the court of common pleas in August 2009. Mildred and her husband Kim Emes '79 are the owners of Kr E Security/Investigations, Inc. in Hamburg. Mildred continues to teach for the BCI head Start Program, where she has taught for the past 30 years.

Mark Levandowski '82 was named chief financial officer at Shinn Spring Water Co. in Cumru Township.

Linda L. Seidel '85 was featured as a "Person of the Week" by the Reading Eagle for her involvement with the red cross. Linda has been involved with the red cross since 1983. She began volunteering as a nurse, and over the years she has also taught classes and helped with various health screenings in the community. Linda joined the Youth Advisory Board of the red cross in the mid-1990s and continues to serve on the board.

Rochelle Grey '86 was named wealth adviser at M&T Investment Group's Reading office. She is responsible for working with business owners in Berks and Lehigh counties to coordinate and deliver investment solutions and services, and to offer brokerage services, investment products and insurance.

Larry Zerbe '88 was featured in the Reading Eagle under the Fitness profile. I am the director of the Reading Tennis program, which introduces youngsters to the game of tennis. I am said his biggest

Alumni honored at homecoming

The Alvernia University Alumni Association honored two alumni during a special homecoming event this fall, in the newly renovated Francis Hall Theater and Recital Hall.

Dominic M. Murgido, criminal justice, Class of 1979, received the Ellen Frei Gruber Award for outstanding service to Alvernia. Murgido was the Vice President and Director of Loss Prevention at Boscov's, and an adjunct faculty member at Alvernia for 24 years before opening It's All About the Bean coffee shop in Bennington, Vt.

Dr. Josephine Elia, biology, Class of 1975, was the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award, given for professional achievement. Elia is an

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exercise achievement is using athletics to see people’s lives change and to see the game of tennis be taken to the people who would otherwise not have an opportunity to play.

1990s

Lori (McIntosh) DiGuardi ‘90 attended the grand opening of the culture center at Brain Tree Primary School, Kyanja, Uganda with the Queen of Buganda, Nnabagereka Sylvia Nnaginda. Read more about her story at www.braintreeprimaryschool.blogspot.com.

Dr. Melissa Marcario ‘93 is a psychologist at the VA hospital in Pittsburgh. She specializes in post traumatic stress disorder.

David M. Bentz ‘94 was featured in the Reading Eagle for being selected by the Pottsville-based North Central Pennsylvania highway Safety Network as the presenter for the latest version of the traffic safety training DVD, “Survival 101: A Student’s Guide to Staying Alive.”

Joyce E. Garee ‘94 was the administrator for the crime Victims Assistance Program in Dutchess County, N.Y., in 2001. Joyce began working with those who were incarcerated and was recruited to head the Ryan White HIV Substance Abuse corrections program through New York State. This led her to be in contact with those working with brain-injured people. She was trained as a psychologist at a brain injury rehabilitation center where she learned how to do psychological testing and assessment. Currently, Joyce is in private practice and does consulting work with non-profit organizations. Joyce is also working on her Ph.D. in clinical psychology.

David J. Ferguson ’95 is the Executive Vice President for Trans Logistics Inc., in Royersford.

Mary C. (Shemonski) Haines ’97 is engaged to marry Toby Seip.

2000s

Joshua A. Smith ’00 is the president of Genesis Insurance Advisors, LLC and Genesis Wealth Advisors. Genesis is a family operated insurance and financial services agency that offers products through Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company and Nationwide Securities, LLC. Josh is the primary associate agent for the business. He is also a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard and is currently training to be a commissioned officer.

Wayne W. Holben ’00, a West Reading police officer, was featured in the Reading Eagle after losing his partner Dolfo, a German shepherd police dog to terminal cancer. Officers Holben and Dolfo had been working together since October 2003, when the hungarian-bred shepherd came out of training. Dolfo lived with the policeman and his wife and their 2-year-old daughter. Dolfo was trained for patrol and narcotics detection.

Angelica (Cotto) Arroyo ’02 has gotten married and was blessed with a child. She has supported her husband’s military career and has lived...
in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania and is now residing in Kentucky.

**John Scolastico ’02** received a promotion to Assistant Chief of Probation and Parole.

**Carrie L. Kemp ’03** and Mark D. Mountz were married May 23, 2009, in St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Birdsboro, during a double-ring ceremony officiated by the Rev. Kenneth Gould. The couple will reside in a log home, in Robeson Township.

**Lynda Marie Hoffman ’03** and Todd Justin Coyle welcomed their second child Todd Justin Coyle Jr. to their family on June 19, 2010, weighing in at 7 pounds, 9 ounces. Todd joins his 1-year-old sister Braelyn Marie.

**David F. Brennan ’03, M’05** married Melissa M. Cress on June 5, 2010, at the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Church, Elysburg. The couple resides in Elysburg.

**Joshua Martin ’03** works at the military base in New Cumberland.

**Lauren B. Phillips ’03** and Christopher Korejwo were married on June 19, 2010, in Newton Presbyterian Church during a double-ring ceremony officiated by the Rev. Kenneth Gould. The couple will reside in a log home, in Robeson Township.

**Nathan Reich ’03** was appointed Assistant Principal of Barcroft Elementary School in Arlington, Va., on September 9, 2010.

**Jeffrey Rauserch ’04** graduated from Bloomsburg University with her Master’s in Education for deaf/hard of hearing degree in June 2010.

**Jon King ’04** and his wife Megan M’06 enjoy some time with their two children during the fall.

**Heather R. (Shuman) Baum ’04, M’09** and her husband David had a baby girl named Cecelia in January of 2010.

**Tara (Walulek) Sirgey ’04** and Ronald Kozak are engaged to be married.

**Jennifer Rauscher ’04** is engaged to Scott E. Aukamp.

**Lindsay M. Seyfer ’03** is engaged to Scott E. Aukamp.

**Nicole (Savastana) Varady ’03** and her husband Joshua have a 7-year-old son Nicholas and are expecting a daughter in September, 2010.

**Brian Eckroade ’05** got engaged on February 17, 2010.

**Michael and Karen (Burns) Hinkle ’04** announced the arrival of their daughter Shannen Contessa Hinkle, born on May 12, 2010. Shannen weighed in at 7 pounds, 6 ounces, and was 19 inches long.

**Mark Your Calendar!**

March 18, 2011
Alvernia Career and Internship Fair

April, 2011
Spring Fling

June 23, 2011
Newport, RI and Boston, MA Trip

September 16, 2011
Hawaiian Cruise

Visit Alvernia’s online calendar for more information: www.alvernia.edu

Join our Alvernia alumni group on facebook Just another way to stay connected
from Wyoming Optometric center became the first optometrists in Berks county to be granted hospital privileges. They currently have privileges at St. Joseph Medical center where they provide education to the family practice residents, as well as provide emergency eye services and in-house eye consultations.

Isabel C. (Ospina) Kampe ’05 and her husband David have a healthy 2-year-old boy and 7-month old identical twins.

Joseph Kmetz ’05 and Kerry Higgs ’07 are engaged and plan to marry on March 12, 2011.

Katie-Marie Bottner ’05 recently moved back to the United States after spending time in Prague, Czech republic, teaching English. Katie currently resides in St. Louis, Mo., where she is the Marketing Director for Graphic connections Group.

Megan E. Bischof ’05 and Matthew Gore were married on June 12, 2010, at the Allentown rose Garden. They currently reside in Washington, D.C.

Shana (Gabler) Blayney ’05 and her husband Warren, had a son on June 27, 2009.

Trish O’Gurek ’05 was recently hired by the reading School District as a school counselor for ninth and tenth grade students.

Jennifer Kissinger ’06 and Kenneth Starkey were married August 29, 2009, in Bellman’s church, centre Township.

Keith Rose ’06 and Tiffany Schitller ’08 were married February 27, 2010, in Myerstown, Lebanon county.

Lori A. Wunderler ’06 married Matthew Eppihimer in August 2010.

Jamie Hamilton ’07 and Chad Evans are engaged to be married.

Shelley E. Moore ’07 is engaged to Ryan C. Eppihimer.

Tammy (Rex) Beideman ’07 is the Business Services Accountant for H&R Block in Tamaqua. Tammy works on bookkeeping, payroll, payroll filing requirements, and sales tax filing requirements, 1099 filing, and she prepares both business and personal tax returns. She was married on October 3, 2009, to her best friend and childhood sweetheart.

Laura Bliger ’08 and Phil Stack had a baby girl, Lilly, on August 17, 2010, at 1:21 a.m. Lilly was 7 pounds, 13 ounces, and 22 inches long. Bonnie (Souders) Gruber ’08 graduated from the 2010 leadership Berks Program.

Kathryn Martin ’08 recently completed Villanova University’s Paralegal Education Program and is now employed by the law firm Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin.

Laura Early ‘08 is working on her Doctor of Pharmacy degree at Northeastern Ohio University’s College of Medicine and Pharmacy.

Lauren Smuck ’08 and Albert Dillon Jr. ’09 were married on September 19, 2010, and reside in Lancaster. Lauren is a registered nurse at Lancaster General health where she works in the Women and Babies hospital as a nursery/postpartum nurse.

Lisa (Ross) Domalski ’08 was featured in the Reading Eagle for her new hobby of canning. Lisa enjoys canning jams for strawberries, blueberries, black raspberries, and grape jelly using grape juice. Her plans also include canning peaches and corn and whatever else may come into season at Weaver’s Orchard where she works.

Lisa is also planning to continue canning into the fall, when she will be working extra hours for apple season and also serving as an assistant soccer coach at Alvernia.

Shannon Higgins ’08 is a kindergarten teacher at Chesterbrook Academy in Collegeville. She recently received the school’s “Educator of the Year” award.

Bryan Otruba ’08 and Camille Cloutier ’09 were married on July 17, 2010. Bryan and Camille are married and live in Philadelphia. Bryan is employed by the Morton Salt Company and Camille is a nurse.

Lisa Anderson ’09 is one of the two directors of social service at Manor care health Services in Huntingdon Valley.

Meaghan Harris ’09 is engaged to marry Jason Schlott.

Krista Blocher ’10 landed a part-time job at rock hits Y102 as an on-the-air personality.

Sylvia Brown ’10 was recently hired as an associate scientist at PPD in Richmond, Va.

DECEASED

Anne T. (Dougherty) Koschuta ’69 passed away on May 8, 2010, in the Lehigh Valley hospital. She is survived by her husband Nicholas W. Koschuta and her children, Nicholas, Anne, and Molly. She is also survived by four grandchildren.

Robert V. Kopson ’78 passed away on March 23, 2008.

The Rev. Dr. Christopher Jones ’83, 55, reading, passed away Sunday, September 19, 2010, peacefully at his residence.

Jeffrey R. Beck ’84 passed away on March 31, 2010, he is survived by his wife and two children.

Juliette A. Dusko ’90 passed away on April 1, 2010, in her West Lawn residence.

Restain V. (Jarvis) Miller ’98 passed away on March 14, 2010, at the age of 63.

Save the Date

Margaritaville — Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Don’t miss this event that brings together alumni and May 2011 graduates for a highlight of the spring semester. Visit www.alumni.alvernia.edu for the latest news and event offerings.
awareness, as the train stopped periodically, cars were being detached leaving people behind. Tragically, we became separated from our grandparents and aunt because we were traveling in different cars. My mother and sister did not reunite with them until seven years later in Uganda.

Unable to return to now Communist-controlled Poland because of the Hitler-led genocide taking place there, the family traveled by barge, train, horse-drawn sleigh, and eventually on foot to flee from the tyranny and the gas chambers. “At this point we became refugees—homeless, helpless, and on the brink of death from starvation,” says Jacinta.

Fortunately, the Polish Government, acting from London, gathered orphaned and sick children for transport to temporary shelters in various British colonies to be cared for until Poland was able to bring them safely home. Eulalia and her sister, both ill with typhoid, were prime candidates for the trip; however Otylia was too sick to travel.

“Mom was at a loss for what to do,” says Sister Jacinta. “She starved for days at a time to keep us alive. She knew that if we stayed in that hopeless condition, we would all perish. However, if we separated and survived, there would be hope of being reunited someday.”

So separate they did. In 1942 Eulalia boarded a train leaving her mother and sister behind. She prayed daily to be reunited with them. “As we were transported from place to place, I felt like a speck of dust tossed about by the winds of the war-convulsed world — lost and, although with other children, feeling very much forlorn. I turned to prayer as my mother taught me.”

With the help of a family friend, Eulalia’s mother and sister found passage to a Polish Army base and were transported to safety along with military families. Soon, Mrs. Respondowska began the search for her older daughter. Then on December 8, 1942, after what seemed like a lifetime to Eulalia, the three family members were reunited at a Polish settlement in India. “As I reflect on my past now, I note that it was when I lost everything—everything but faith and prayer—that I found my life’s greatest Treasure, God. This relationship would alter my life forever,” she says.

The family became separated again in 1943 for more than two years, but this time, mother and daughters were able to correspond with each other. A reunion two years later was short-lived. India, worried that foreigners would be in danger as it attempted to free itself from England, asked the Polish government to relocate its citizens, an act that scattered them throughout the world.

“Rev. Franciszek Pluta, a director of the Jamnagar settlement in India, while visiting in Ohio, met with Sister Zygmunta to appeal to the Bernardine Sisters to sponsor a group of girls. “The fifty girls—and I was one of them—set sail from Bombay for America on January 27, 1947. Docking at Singapore, Hong Kong, and Hawaii, we arrived at San Francisco and traveled cross country arriving at our final destination in Reading in March 1947,” says Jacinta.

Once in the U.S., a teen-aged Eulalia continued her education in earnest in what is now Alvernia’s Francis Hall. “Deprived of education in the early days of imprisonment, there was much catching up to do. Survival itself had been the challenge of each day. Now a new barrier, the English language, was my challenge,” said Jacinta.

Eulalia graduated from Alvernia High School in June 1949 and entered the congregation of the Bernardine Sisters that August. She received the name Sister Mary Jacinta at her Investiture one year later and professed final vows in August 1956.

In November 1954, Jacinta’s photo was published in the local newspaper upon completion of her naturalization ceremony. A mother of one of her students seeing the picture asked when she had last seen her mother and sister, and when she hoped to see them again. “It’s been seven years, but perhaps never again as I don’t have the means to sponsor them,” says Jacinta. Without hesitation, the mother offered sponsorship and on December 8, 1955 they arrived from Australia where they had lived for five years.

On August 15, 1958 her brother, then 30, joined the family in the United States. In 1987 during a trip to Poland, Jacinta visited the grave of her father who died in 1973.

Jacinta received a Bachelor’s Degree in Russian and Education from Emmanuel College, Boston and both a Master’s degree and a Doctorate in Philosophy from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Today she is fluent in Polish, English, and Russian and has done translation work in all three languages.

“Sister Zygmunta, Alvernia’s first President, asked me to pursue a degree in Philosophy,” says Jacinta. “The idea initially daunting, rewarding in retrospect, served to crystallize my own ideas, values, and beliefs. It also prepared me to respond to the challenge given to the academic community by Pope John Paul II who in his Ex Corde Ecclesiae asked them to develop a new system of thought that would do justice to God, the universe, and human nature.”

In 2001 Jacinta responded by planning a series of books. The first book Come Along: We are Truth-Bound is written in three volumes, with volumes one and two already in print and volume three in writing. Book two, We are Mystery-Bound, and book three, We are Glory-Bound, will follow.

Her relationship with God, forged by a life of many hardships and fueled by dogged determination, has produced much fruit: a deep appreciation for God and family, a compassion for the world, and a multifaceted education. These allow others to profit inestimably. Perhaps this is why she is one of the “happiest persons in the world.”

Carey Manzolillo ’06, M’07, is contributing editor of Alvernia Magazine.
extrovert. He would make fun of himself."

Updike, of course, left the area for Harvard University and his career. Silcox graduated from Penn State University in 1967 with his engineer's degree and married a Shillington woman, Mary, in 1977. The next year, the couple moved to town. Unlike the Harry Angstrom character in Rabbit, Run, however, Silcox has always remained content with his small-town life, satisfying any wanderlust with vacations to China, Russia and other exotic locales. "I love Shillington," he says simply, echoing Updike.

By now, we're near the Ploverville farm, where Emerson and Marlene Gundy live. (Emerson is a second cousin to Updike and bought the place 20 years ago.) The red sandstone farmhouse was built in 1812 — and Marlene allows a peek inside. "This was where he sat and read," she says, showing the living room with its broad plank floor and built-in book cases full of Updike. The room is cozy with knickknacks and country charm, but when Silcox used to visit Linda Updike, he says the room was bare and sparsely furnished.

One of the Gundys’ favorite memories was the time Updike, who hated the farm as a child but grew fonder as an adult, visited them on a wet day. His shoes were muddy, and he took them off to pad around barefoot, settling in the enclosed sun room. As he shared tea with the Gundys, he remarked, "Isn't this blissful — sitting here listening to the rain on a tin roof?"

"We always liked the tin roof, but I never used that adjective," Marlene says, laughing. "Anyone else would have said, 'Isn't that a neat sound.'" It was one more tale for Silcox to collect.

The collector in him has amassed books by local authors John O'Hara and Conrad Richter, autographs of baseball greats, presidents, Medal of Honor winners and cosmonauts and astronauts. But his true passion is Updike. In Shillington, some might argue that's a rampant condition. Silcox, though, has more determination than most. He is proud of the breadth of items that showcase Updike's early days.

"I was always planning ahead," says Silcox, who realized the value of keeping certain mementos. To that end, he has begun an inventory, after which he plans to turn his collection over to Alvernia where it will be housed in the Updike archive room with the other remnants of the John Updike Society Archive. "The rest of it can be sold off, split up," he says of his other collectibles, "if I pass away and my son doesn't want it. But the Updike pieces are near and dear to my heart, where they came from and how I collected them, and the personal association. I want it to stay together."

Besides the first editions, all autographed, Silcox has personal correspondence dating to the 1950s as well as his own written exchanges with the author. He rattles off his finds: honorary awards, Updike's high school yearbook, Wesley's and Linda's college yearbook, Chatterbox issues thought lost, sermons given at his parents' funerals. "A lot of little stuff like that," he says, Silcox always kept a stash of items handy for Updike to sign — adding value to them. The busy writer always obliged. Silcox is still on the hunt for Updike's .22 caliber rifle used to shoot pigeons in the barn as described in the short story "Pigeon Feathers."

"His collection is really very impressive," said Alvernia archivist Gene Mitchell of Silcox's Updike collection. "From a scholarly perspective, the pieces add to what we know already exists and shed further light on Updike the author and Updike the man. We are grateful to Dave for his donation and thankful for the foresight he had to collect items that have such significance."

In fact, Updike, himself, was apparently impressed with Silcox's tenacity when it came to the collection. One time, the go-to-guy got his hands on the last football program that Updike wrote in high school. Even he didn't have a copy in his personal files he told Silcox.

"He said, 'Dave, you're always finding things.'" In the process, Silcox discovered far more than a prize-winning author and a trove of valued memorabilia. His experiences revealed Updike the Everyman, and for his trouble, he was rewarded with a collection of memories that will endure for a lifetime.

Yes, that's David Silcox. Always a collector.

Lini S. Kadaba is a journalist who lives in Newtown Square, Pa. Her stories have appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Boston Magazine and Women's World.

SUSTAINABILITY | continued from page 34

and the “care for creation.” In fact, his ethical tactics have earned the reverence of many professionals in the business.

"Tim is a hard worker, said Katie O'Donnell, Chef de Cuisine at Esca, an upscale Italian restaurant on W. 43rd Street in Manhattan. "He is very passionate about his plants and his land and is obsessive about the quality of his produce and taking care of his customers. He goes out of his way to develop relationships with chefs. Plus, his tomatoes speak for themselves. I do not buy my tomatoes from any other growers and they know it."

Stark saw first-hand what the aftermath of 9/11 did to New York City. "That was a really emotional time. People were just freaking out. The city was attacked and the world was upside down," he said.

"We were part of their world. We were part of the day-to-day. So many people thanked us for coming back to market."

During the immediate days after the attack, Stark donated truckloads of tomatoes to an emergency kitchen that fed fireman, policeman, and volunteers at Ground Zero. "We had police escorts down to the restaurant. It was really moving."

"Stark's approach to business provides an inspiring story that we can use in our business classes," said Dr. Jonathan Silver, assistant professor of marketing at Alvernia. "His focus on operational excellence; building strong relationships with his customers and employees; and demonstration of social responsibility provides a great model for business success."

"The demand for what I am doing has not dwindled. I have had a lot of people in the finance industry who come up to me and say 'Oh man, we are not making nearly what we made. We are thinking of buying a farm and doing what you do,'" said Stark. "It is hands on. I am proud of what I do. We are making something that is not on a computer. It makes a lot of people happy to eat these tomatoes."

Dawn Thren is a freelance writer living in Berks County. Her work has appeared in newspapers, educational tabloids including About Families, and higher-education publications in the region.
Give to Alvernia, and we’ll give you crispy green thank you notes in return.

In today’s financial environment, you’re probably looking to make every dollar go a bit further. If you’re considering a gift to Alvernia, why not make one that pays you income — for life. Consider a Charitable Gift Annuity.*

**Single-Life Charitable Gift Annuity** Rates

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*charitable Gift Annuities provide an initial tax deduction and guaranteed income for life, a portion of which is tax-deductible. For more information, contact zane Gizzi at 610-796-8430 or zane.gizzi@alvernia.edu.
planning and construction process, the building’s historical importance was constantly revisited, in order to maintain its former charm.

Artist Marcia Graff, of Mohrsville, created a new mural in the dining room of the original section. Wanting to evoke the period when the house was built, Graff chose to follow the primitive style of 19th century itinerant artist Rufus Porter.

“It felt like an appropriate style,” said Graff, who viewed old photos of the house (sans wings) before creating her art. The mural features the original house and river, and Graff filled in the story, adding neighbors’ homes.

Interior designer Angela Ehst, of Elements of Design in Reading, said the challenges were many including keeping the home’s historical integrity while accommodating the public and making the space still feel like a home. Ehst said she played on the cheerfulness of the house.

“It’s amazing how one setting has all these different personalities, all these different uses,” said Ehst, reflecting on the home’s history.

“The Hollerans are wonderful people who continue to make an impact on Alvernia and the Berks County community,” said Alvernia President Thomas F. Flynn. “Their generosity continues to inspire many and we remain so very grateful for their support.”

In late summer, even before President Flynn had moved in, the house was host to Alvernia faculty, who walked the grounds and passed through the house, just like Silvis and his wife, the Brights, Hollerans, and other families who had been there before them.

A new era had indeed begun.

Alvernia gratefully acknowledges the following individuals, companies and corporations for their generous contributions of time, talent, services and equipment in preparing Cedar Hill Farm for service to the Alvernia community: Angela Ehst, Sue Jenkees, Susan Kunkel of Elements of Design; Associated Construction; Celli, Flynn, Brennan Architects; Derck and Edson; Fromm Electric; Marcia Graff; Pagoda Electric.

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graduation, and some have also obtained designation as Certified Fraud Examiners (CFE).

Graduates of the accounting program often call Dreibelbis “the most influential professor they had at Alvernia.” His students leave campus with the technical knowledge they must have, and an introduction to the professional world to start successful careers. His dedication embodies the mission of Alvernia — to graduate students who are reflective professionals, engaged citizens, and ethical leaders.

“Every person that ever attended college remembers a professor that had the most positive impact on their educational experience. Bryan is that type of professor. He prepares his students for life after college and vigorously promotes the accounting profession not only through his teachings but also through involvement in IMA and other professional organizations,” said Greg Portner, CMA, vice president business operations/CFO, Threshold Rehabilitation Services, Inc., and Reading IMA member.

“Bryan is a true financial educator and professional.”

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At the same time, the “news” is skewed to partisan interests and delivered to partisan audiences that are not interested in opposing views, which makes it easy to falsely convince people that, say, Obama is secretly a Muslim. Pollsters try to discern the public mood by asking about the President’s performance, whether the country is on the “right track,” and if the voter is confident about the future. Recall how Ronald Reagan’s simple question in the campaign against Jimmy Carter, when asked “are you better off today than you were four years ago,” was a winning line.

For Blessing, the answers might be interesting but he considers them not as important as a voter’s deeply ingrained allegiance to a party. Consider Obama’s healthcare reform bill, which stirred bitter emotions across the country. Even if you are a Democrat who was opposed to the overhaul, Blessing reckons, you will go the polls in 2012 and, most likely, dutifully vote for your party. A significant number of Democrats who don’t agree with Obama on healthcare reform or other issues, or just simply with his leadership, says Blessing, adapting a comment first made in the nineteenth century, “...will grit their teeth, pull the level for the Democratic candidate, and then shrug their shoulders and say they voted for the lesser of the two evils.”

Ernest Beck is a freelance journalist and former veteran Wall Street Journal reporter. He writes on a range of subjects for publications including The New York Times and SmallBiz.
Senior Emily Berret always had a bit of a passion for politics growing up, which is why she decided to major in political science at Alvernia. The honor student served as president of the Student Government Association and spent time working on a congressional campaign in the 6th Congressional District this past election. She also took a vested interest in the 2008 presidential election, doing her best to get out the vote on campus and even attended President Obama’s inauguration.

So she has felt right at home these past few months, roaming the halls of the fabled West Wing as part of a group of college students invited to serve an internship at the White House. There she has joined students from schools like Harvard, Stanford, Notre Dame, and Northwestern who are part of the elite program that hopes to cultivate and prepare those devoted to public service for future leadership opportunities.

Emily’s experience has been a dream come true, thanks in part to her involvement in the Washington Center offered through Alvernia. The center is a national internship program for gaining practical experience by working in congressional offices, government agencies, news networks, or agencies devoted to legal affairs, international relations, or business and economic issues.

“Emily investigated the Washington Center early in her college experience. Her focus was on the White House placement from the beginning of the interviewing process,” said her mother Beth Berret who happens to be an associate professor of business at Alvernia. “I suppose over the years I spoke highly of the educational experience at Alvernia, especially our affiliation with the Washington Center.”

According to the White House, Emily’s internship provides a unique opportunity to gain valuable professional experience and build leadership skills. Interns work in one of several White House departments, including the Office of the Chief of Staff, the National Economic Council, the Office of Presidential Correspondence, the Communications Department, the Office of the First Lady, and even the Office of the Vice President.

West Wing Wonder
Student Emily Berret feels right at home in White House internship

By Audrey hoffman
Historic Cedar Hill Farm is the newest addition to Alvernia’s campus. It is a stunning property that is a legacy of Jerry and Carolyn Holleran’s generosity.

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