

SUMMER/FALL 2024

# BRYN ATHYN

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



**WE'RE ALL DIAMONDS:**  
HOW FRANCINES GOMEZ INSPIRES AS  
A BILINGUAL STUDENT COUNSELOR



# Dear Friends,



Dear Friends,

There is so much about the 2023-2024 academic year at Bryn Athyn College for which I have been grateful. I'm aware of faculty working hard to teach and students doing their part to learn. I view activities such as our athletic teams competing. I see conversations going on over lunch in the Brickman Dining Hall. I watch as students gather for chapel services to turn our hearts and minds to the Lord and the life He wants for us. All these things come together to make the life of Bryn Athyn College.

A major challenge starting in May of 2023 has been concerted efforts to reduce the unsustainable deficits the College has been running. With cooperation of many, we succeeded in reducing \$2.4 million from the 2023-2024 budget and this was accomplished without significantly curtailing our academic offerings or our athletic programs. We have more to cut this year, but it is a far smaller sum than what we needed to achieve for the 2024-2025 budget.

This issue of the *Alumni Magazine* is coming to you as an online offering. We hope this serves you as well as our print editions have in the past. This issue features the history of athletics, brought to you by biology professor Figge Bryntesson (AA '93, BA '94), an alumna Francines Gomez (BA '20), who is making waves as a school counselor, a collection of throwback photos to the good old days, and the celebration of the internships we hold so important at Bryn Athyn College.

Bryn Athyn College has started its 148th year with many courses for the students to experience, athletic events for student-athletes to compete in and all the other activities that make the life of this college. I am grateful to be part of what makes Bryn Athyn College such a great place.

I hope this issue reminds you of some of your own experiences at Bryn Athyn College. We value our connection to each of you and would gratefully welcome your financial contributions to support our continued work.

Best wishes,

Rev. Eric H. Carswell (AA '73, MDiv '79)  
President

## BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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# Faculty Highlights

By Monica Rose (BA '23)



**Sofia Castro**  
Psychology Department Chair

*“I think it is a privilege to educate the next generation of psychologists.”*

Dr. Sofia Castro was inspired to teach by her grandmother, who was one of the first teachers in her small town in Costa Rica. When she got a teaching assistant position as a doctoral student and taught her first class (Sensation and Perception) she fell in love with it!

Dr. Castro got her Ph.D in experimental psychology from Catholic University, and her masters from University of Maryland Baltimore County. Her favorite part of teaching is the interaction with students; getting to hear about their life experiences, watching them grow professionally, and getting to see them apply their knowledge to make an impact.

Dr. Castro mainly teaches applied psychology classes. Applied classes include: introduction to psychology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, cultural psychology etc. Her favorite class to teach is memory and the brain and cognitive psychology.

“I love the small community [of BAC] and how everyone is always so helpful and caring. It is a great place to grow professionally and spiritually.”

After teaching, Dr. Castro is looking forward to spending time with her husband and their two cats. A self-proclaimed “foodie,” she also loves going to restaurants and trying different cuisines.



**Edward Higgins**  
Asst Prof. of Biology and Chemistry

*“I have always felt a draw toward teaching.”*

Dr. Higgins teaches chemistry and biology at Bryn Athyn College. He values the opportunity to work closely with students, enjoying the depth of understanding that comes from one-on-one and small group interactions.

With a background as a pediatrician, Dr. Higgins transitioned to teaching after realizing his passion for education. He appreciates BAC’s small size, which allows him to form meaningful relationships with students over time. His educational background includes a BS in chemistry from St. Louis University, a masters in chemistry from St. Joseph’s University, an MD from St. Louis University, and a pediatrics residency at Penn State University Children’s Hospital.

Looking to the future, Dr. Higgins is excited to continue engaging with education, even in retirement, possibly as an adjunct instructor. He also looks forward to dedicating more time to his hobbies, including gardening, cooking, landscape photography, and furniture making. Alongside his wife, he enjoys hiking and biking, particularly in new locations across the U.S.

A defining moment in his career was the profound sense of fulfillment he experienced at his first commencement: “I vividly remember the feeling that I had sitting at commencement for the first time and watching that year’s biology majors receive their diplomas. Knowing how hard they had worked and feeling grateful to have been a part of their journey was an almost indescribable sensation. That same feeling still comes over me each May.”



**Sarah Wong**  
Head of Education Program

*“We have a really special, supportive community here at Bryn Athyn.”*

Dr. Sarah Wong is a dedicated educator. She teaches a range of special education courses, serves as the Director of Field Placement, and acts as Certification & Compliance Officer.

Her passion for teaching is fueled by witnessing her students develop into compassionate educators: “Every day, I get to interact with students and colleagues who bring unique gifts, talents and experiences to our college community. Whether through teaching and learning with my students in the classroom, or collaborating with colleagues on a project, I learn so much from their rich perspectives!”

At BAC, Dr. Wong cherishes the opportunity to forge meaningful relationships with both students and colleagues. She values the diverse talents and perspectives that each individual brings to the college community and believes in the importance of growing and thriving together in a supportive atmosphere.

Dr. Wong’s academic journey includes a bachelor’s degree in education & child study and psychology from Smith College, a masters degree in Early Childhood Special Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a doctoral degree in special education from the University of Pittsburgh.

“My prayer is for us to continue to grow and thrive as a community where each person is valued, inspired, and can see the fruits of their labor.”



**Ryan Pine**  
Language & Lit. Department Chair

*“My favorite part of teaching is the journey I go on with my students.”*

Dr. Ryan Pine is an english, writing, and communications instructor at Bryn Athyn College, where he enjoys exploring a variety of subjects beyond his primary research focus in victorian literature and public relations.

A Philadelphia native, Dr. Pine earned his degrees and certificates from local institutions such as St. Joe’s, La Salle, Villanova, and Temple, and completed his Ph.D in Literary Studies at Georgia State University.

“A call led me to teaching, a literal call—the president of the high school I attended called me out of the blue one day and told me I’d make a great English teacher. I was skeptical, but he was adamant, so I gave it a shot. That was over seventeen years ago; I haven’t once looked back.”

Dr. Pine values the close-knit community at BAC, where the college’s size allows him to engage in diverse teaching experiences. “My favorite part of teaching is the journey I go on with my students. I still get that buzz when we make a shared discovery in our discussion of a novel.”

Dr. Pine is dedicated to teaching and envisions it as his lifelong vocation, expressing a deep commitment to his role as an educator.





# MAKING A DIFFERENCE: ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

By Michelle Chapin (BA '10) and Monica Rose (BA '23)

*“We’re all diamonds . . . Depending on where you’re facing it, the light shines on it differently. So depending on where the light is coming, that’s the way you act... But your core stays the same. Your personality stays the same. You just show it at a different angle.”*

Who was that teacher or mentor for you? You know, the one who made you believe that you could do anything, who helped you through the dark turbulence of youth, who shared invaluable lessons that helped shape who you are today? For many students in Allentown, PA, that person is Francines Gomez (BA '20), who currently serves as a bilingual high school counselor and a licensed mental health counselor, working with many individuals as they find their own paths in this world.

That’s what it’s all about for Francines: forging those meaningful connections. “My time at Bryn Athyn: the relationships are what got me through,” she reflects. In her professional role now, “It’s the relationship with my kiddos that’s the most rewarding part of my job.” Her career has been dedicated to supporting young people. She works to dispel any preconceived notions that might be working against the best interests of her students. “I feel like every human is a nice and good human to begin with,” she smiles as she posits. “It’s just the circumstances that might be what’s hard for them right now. So if a student goes off on me, my first thought is ‘What is possibly going on in this in this student’s mind or household, or whatever they’re going through, that is causing this?’ instead of ‘They’re just a bad kid.’” Firmly, she adds, “No kid is a bad kid.” She often uses the analogy of a diamond to break down this complicated idea of identity to her students, “I always say and even tell my kiddos now: we’re all diamonds. A diamond is a little rock and it’s beautiful and

shiny and it has a lot of facets. Depending on where you’re facing it, the light shines on it differently. So depending on where the light is coming, that’s the way you act... But your core stays the same. Your personality stays the same. You just show it at a different angle.”

Already in her time as a school counselor, she has risen to head counselor, providing guidance and a safe space for children and young adults during their academic day. Amid her own busy schedule of administrative meetings overseeing the Student Assistance Program, college career services, and graduation planning, she makes sure to prioritize the needs of her students. She notes, “One thing that kids always know is: if my door is open, I’m available. It’s open for kids to come in and be who they are and have the safe space to act a little crazy, or cry, or laugh... They know that I’m always here for them.” Whether to chat or just grab a treat from the ever-flowing candy jar, she’s sure to greet each student who enters her office by name, which she’s made a point to learn, so each and every student feels safe and important. Which has worked; many former students have come back to visit her to fill her in on their successes or grab coffee and ask her advice on a particular issue.

Originally, Francines thought her pursuit of helping people lay in the medical field. She enrolled in Bryn Athyn College eyeing the biology and pre-med programs with OB/GYN or midwifery as her career goal. As often happens in college, after a couple years of inspiring classes, new experiences, and self-reflection, it became clear that field wasn’t the right fit for her. But then, what was? Her drive to help others paired with the endless possibilities seemed a lot for one person to wrestle with alone. She sought the guidance of one of the campus counselors, who helped her identify psychology as better aligned with her interests. In high school, she had volunteered as mentor for youth initiatives including the Big Brother Big Sister Foundation and the Soldados de Christo (Soldiers of Christ) Ministry. Plus, she was supporting her peers as a resident assistant at Bryn Athyn. So in many ways, choosing psychology as a major was just affirming skills she had been building all along.

Anyone who was at Bryn Athyn when she was a student can attest to the simple fact that Francines was an absolutely rockstar on campus. Her strong work ethic thrived with

support of her professors and mentors. Dr. Higgins especially stands out to her, “He always would tell me: ‘The only person that stands in the way of you is you. You’re your biggest critic. And once you get past that, I feel like you will go so far.’” She successfully juggled part-time work, making Dean’s List multiple times, volunteering with the FeelGood campus charity club, completing numerous campus internships, serving as Student Government President, and her role as an RA. By the time she was a senior, her career path had taken shape. She remembers a moment of certainty, “I realized, ‘I think I want to do school counseling.’ I want to work with young adults and help them prepare for college or career [opportunities] I didn’t really have in high school.”

Like many of Bryn Athyn psychology graduates, Francines wanted to pursue a graduate degree in the field. “I ended up talking to a few of my professors and figuring out what exactly I wanted to do in a school,” she says. “I knew I wanted to work with young adults, but I didn’t know exactly where. I definitely had guidance from Professor Cavallo, because he was a school psychologist. He gave me a little bit of insight on what it’s like.” She landed on NYU for her graduate studies, both for its prestige and the program’s simultaneous advanced certificate in LGBTQ health, educational and social services. There, she earned her master’s degree in counselor education, school counseling, and guidance services in spring of 2022, and a few months later began her work with students in Allentown. Recently she also obtained an advanced certificate, mental health counseling/counselor from Alfred University. This has enabled her to gain experience as part-time as private therapist. “After reflecting on all of the opportunities that I was afforded, I realized that BAC definitely had a part in discovering my passions. Being an RA and a student ambassador, working with my peers, giving tours to high schoolers and being a mentor to underclassmen as an upperclassmen, just added that spark to my passion.”

Even more inspiring, she doesn’t feel she’s quite done it yet. She says, “I do want go back to school to get a masters in educational leadership or maybe even a doctorate to hopefully get my principal licensure. Maybe in the future I look to be a superintendent in a school district. But I also I have dreams of having my own practice and being able to have different specialties and different affirming practices. And trying to incorporate the need that is needed at this point—not just for students, but for adults as well—normalizing the fact that counseling is OK. Because it’s still such a stigmatized term.”

“I feel like my future is endless. I have all these plans and all these hopes and aspirations and dreams that did start at Bryn Athyn. One thing that I definitely took from Bryn Athyn was [the former tagline] ‘Become a better you.’ I ran with that.”

You certainly have, Francines.





# ATHLETICS HIGHLIGHTS

## COACH OF THE YEAR

Bill O'Neill (Men's and women's soccer)  
Sean Westerlund (Men's basketball)  
Ramona Walters (Women's lacrosse)

## PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Kira Bradley (Women's soccer)  
Shea Gormley (Women's lacrosse)  
Kira Bradley (Defensive Player of the Year, women's lacrosse)

The Elite20 Recipient is awarded to the student-athlete who has the highest cumulative GPA for the two teams competing in their respective sports championship.

## ELITE20 RECIPIENT

Kaylee Smith

9 of our 11 NCAA teams made playoffs. The **women's soccer team** won the Skye Division Championship and were runners-up for the United East Conference.

**Men's soccer** hosted their first home playoff game in program history.

**Men's basketball** had their best season in program history, setting a wins record and hosted their first home playoff game.

**Women's basketball** won their first playoff game in program history and had the second best season in program history.

The athletic program had 15 1st Team, 11 2nd Team, and six 3rd Team All-Conference Selections.

In three terms, there were a total of 109 All-Academic Selections.



The Bryn Athyn College Alumni Association (BACAA) has been dormant since 2020 due to COVID, and the turnover of staff in the Alumni Office. Since stepping into this role as Alumni Affairs Coordinator in September 2022, I have worked hard to recruit a slate of candidates to revive this important function. It began with a committee of enthusiastic alumni, and I am so grateful for their support. A ballot was sent to alumni in spring of 2024 and on June 30, the following candidates were officially affirmed:

Dan Allen (AA '78), President  
Elizabeth "Libby" Allen (BA '22)  
Melissa Bowyer (AA '09, BA '11)  
Amanda Calamito (BA '17), Secretary  
Jonathan Carr (BA '18), Treasurer  
Nikita Klinisovs (BA '19), Vice President  
Kaye Lermite (AA '76)  
Cullen McNally (BA '19)  
Lance Pendleton (attended 1995/1996)  
David Smith (attended 1964/1965)

I am confident that with their presence we will see a stronger connection between the alumni network and the College. I look forward to working with them.

Dan Allen, now the President of the Alumni Association shared his vision for the upcoming year:

"On June 30, 2024, the Bryn Athyn College Alumni Association (BACAA) held its first annual meeting since the pandemic. BACAA approved the slate of candidates for the Board: Dan Allen (president), Elizabeth Allen, Melissa Bowyer, Amanda Calamito, Jonathan Carr, Nikita Klinisov, Kaye Lermite, Cullen McNally, Lance Pendleton and David Smith. Tara Fehon serves as BACAA's Alumni Liaison.

"Dave Cooper (AA '79) (outgoing president) and I spoke about the conditions that created the long hiatus for BACAA— particularly COVID restrictions and turnover in Liaison staff forcing the College administration to focus on other pressing priorities instead of its support for BACAA's continuity. We spoke about the importance of the BACAA Board's purpose of building community among the alumni and representing the alumni voice to the College's administration and Board of Directors.

We dedicated some time during the meeting for feedback from members who attended in person and online. We intend to distribute a survey to members to obtain further feedback about ways for BACAA to better serve the College and its alumni.

"Immediately following the alumni meeting, BACAA's Board met. We elected Nikita Klinisov as Vice President, Amanda Calamito as secretary, and Jonathan Carr as treasurer. We intend to dedicate our meetings over the next several months to restart many of BACAA's key initiatives, such as its annual scholarship, career support for students and alumni, Charter Day event planning, various communication channels to alumni, and the aforementioned survey."



One way to support the BACAA is to renew your annual member dues of \$25: [secure.qgiv.com/for/bacaa](https://secure.qgiv.com/for/bacaa)

Stay in touch [alumni@brynathyn.edu](mailto:alumni@brynathyn.edu)







2006



2005



2002



1990s



2009

# Through the Years



2000



2006



1990s



1985



1990s





Men's ice hockey championship 2013

# BAC Athletics History (Part 1)

By Fredrik Bryntesson (BA '94)

April 19, 1968 marked a vital milestone in the history of Bryn Athyn College. In his annual report for 1967-68, College Dean E. Bruce Glenn remarked, “The biggest step toward an independent College environment – the biggest perhaps in its history – was taken on April 19, when students and core faculty moved from Benade Hall, across Papermill Road [nowadays called Tomlinson Rd], and up the slope to Pendleton Hall, the new home of the College and Theological School... students comment in the weeks since all academic classes have been held there, as well as the relaxing moments in the handsome lounge and central commons, indicate a new sense of awareness that this is a college in its own right.”

The college had previously shared the same buildings as the ANC Secondary Schools. Now it had its own campus. Since 1968, Bryn Athyn College has evolved from an institution where most students only attended for a year or two for a two-year degree to an institution where students study in the light of our mission for four years and graduate with a Baccalaureate degree from one of our excellent four-year majors. In a similar fashion, athletics has developed at the College, where each successive step has paved way for the current athletics program. We appreciate the efforts of our forebears who contributed to the successful program we all enjoy in the present day. It has been a long process which has always been committed to living our faith as we practice, compete and contribute to our community. We stand on the shoulders of giants!

Bryn Athyn College did not have its own athletics program until the late 1960s. College student athletes had participated on Academy teams that competed against other high schools and academies. For example, the 1920 Bryn Athyn Academy football team comprised students from the (now ANCSS) Boys’ School, College, and Theological School. The successful ice hockey team of 1921 had a roster that included 10 Boys’ School and two College students.

Over time, it became clear that older College students competing on ANC Boys’ School teams was not fair to schools that were fielding high school only teams. In 1959-60, Academy athletic director, Stanley Ebert included in his annual report that College men would likely be excluded from the Academy teams in the near future, something he called “the end of an athletic era for the Academy.” Wrestling success in the early 1960s and the Academy’s basketball championship in 1965, with a roster that included at least five college players, led other institutions to complain. The 1966-67 year was the last for Bryn Athyn College men to participate on Academy sports teams.



Bob Eidse on men's ice hockey, 1971

Stanley Ebert noted in his 1959-60 report the necessity of developing athletic offerings for the College. It did not take long. Ronald Nelson (attended 1950-51), Ebert’s successor as the Academy athletic director, “in 1966 ... planned the beginnings of a separate athletic program for the College...” Although the athletic program at Bryn Athyn College wasn’t fully established until the late 1970s, Nelson’s work in the 1960s was an essential steppingstone for this important development.

Bryn Athyn College’s first purely college student athletic program was the 1966-67 men’s lacrosse team. The College Dean wrote in his annual report, “One of the most memorable accomplishments of the year was the fielding of a lacrosse team drawn exclusively from the College. Mr. Nelson gave this undertaking the most thoughtful care throughout the spring season and the members of the College Faculty, who have for several years urged and advocated a distinctly college athletic program, are especially gratified by the result”. The first game was played on April 20, 1967. The team won four games and lost two during the inaugural season. The following year, faculty member Brian Schnarr (AA ‘63), encouraged by Nelson, founded the current ice hockey program. Dean of the College, E. Bruce Glenn, pointed out the importance of the addition of these sports offerings in his annual report:

“Varsity sports in the College, inaugurated with last spring’s lacrosse team, became more strongly ingrained in our life with full and successful seasons in ice hockey and lacrosse this year... Development of a varsity sports program brings inevitable problems of roster conflict; but its presence is important to the esprit of the College, so many years tagged to the sports activities of the secondary schools, and teachers have shown a willing understanding to make some allowances.”



Ray Silverman, 1967



Shane McCurdy, 2019



Men's hockey national championship 2015

The first championship for an athletics team in Bryn Athyn College history was won by the men’s hockey team in 1972. Thereafter, the hockey team regularly made the playoffs and finished first in the conference’s regular season standings in 1976-77. But sports offerings at the College were limited; true, there was a rugby team in the early 1970s, but for almost 10 years, participation in intercollegiate athletics was only possible for college men and the two major sports they could choose from were lacrosse and hockey.

The 1977-78 academic year was an important milestone for Bryn Athyn College athletics. Robert ‘Bob’ Heinrichs (AA ‘59) was named the first ever Bryn Athyn College athletic director. This led to the development of other sports offerings, including men’s soccer whose first game was a 2-0 win against Valley Forge University on October 8, 1977. The first Bryn Athyn College end of year sports awards event was held that same year. Athletics proved to be an important component of the overall Bryn Athyn College experience. College Dean Robert W. Gladish (AA ‘50) pointed out in his annual report, “these activities fill a very definite need in the life of many of the College students.”

In 1977-78, the addition of informal women’s volleyball and lacrosse teams to the sports offerings was a key development. For the first time, Bryn Athyn College women could play intercollegiate sports (the ANC Girls’ School introduced interscholastic sports a few years later). This important step forward owed much to the work of Bob Heinrichs and Mrs. Judith ‘Jid’ Smith (attended 1952-53).

Developments in athletics in 1977-78 set the tone for the future. This arguably represents the beginning of the modern Bryn Athyn College athletics program.

[Click here to read more...](#)



WLAX championship celebration 2022



Women's soccer championship 2022



# FOUNDERS' GIVING SOCIETY

By Tara Fehon

January 14, 2024, marked 150 years since John Pitcairn wrote a check demonstrating his confidence in the Academy of the New Church and its mission. Bryn Athyn College upholds its mission (and that of the Academy) by providing a rigorous academic experience grounded in the teachings of the New Church.



To honor John Pitcairn's legacy, Bryn Athyn College created the Founders' Giving Society in recognition of all donors who make a gift to Bryn Athyn College of \$500 or more.

Bryn Athyn College's parent organization, the Academy of the New Church, began its formal existence on the 19th of June, 1876. Yet January 14th, 1874, has been regarded as the unofficial beginning of the organization and celebrated as Founders' Day for many years. On that early January day, John Pitcairn wrote a check for five hundred dollars in order to defray the costs of a proposed publication to begin "a reformatory movement in the New Church" (New Church Life 1911, 189). In today's economy, that check would be worth closer to over \$13,000. Two days earlier, a group of men had met at the Atlantic Garden restaurant on Diamond Street in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and formulated the idea for this movement. Those present were Frank Ballou, Walter C. Childs, William Henry Benade, and John Pitcairn (as noted on newchurchhistory.org).

You are invited to join this initiative and become a Founder yourself, helping champion high-quality education and spiritual learning for future generations.

We'd like to thank the following Founders' Giving Society members. Donors listed are for fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

|                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
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| Dan & Ruth Goodenough           | Phil & Janna Zuber            |
| Richard & Melodie Greer         | Anonymous (50)                |

## Charter Day 2023 Recap

By Monica Rose

### Charter Day Procession and Service

Students and alumni braved the rain and welcomed the sun for games, awards, and special events. As always, the weekend began with the BAC and ANC students and faculty, and the Board of Trustees walking the traditional procession to the cathedral for a special Charter Day church service. This year's service was delivered by BAC Alumnus Rev. Christopher Barber (AA '08, BA '10, MDiv '13). Watch the service recording.

### Community Field Day

The procession was followed by a sunny Community Field Day, organized by BAC Student Life. Families and students gathered outside the College Center and enjoyed carnival games, cornhole, paper crafts, and more.

### BAC Alumni Awards and Reception

"[The Distinguished Alumni Award] recognizes alumni of the College who have given back to their communities, alma mater, or church, especially by applying the values and perspectives garnered from a New Church liberal arts education." Distinguished Alumni Awards were given to Stephen David (attended '79-81), Jay Volcy (BA '17), Louise Barry Rose (AA '51, BS '53), and posthumously Rev. Frank Rose (AA '48, BA '50, MDiv '52). Awards were followed by an alumni reception with entertainment by alumna Freya (Simons) Williams' (attended 2014/2016) musical group, Freya and the Daydreams.

### Women's Soccer Game and Tailgate

The Lions had a big win against Clarks Summit, with a final score of 10-0. Spectators huddled under umbrellas, tents, and raincoats to cheer on the women's soccer team, who

celebrated Senior Day for their senior players. At halftime, current senior Ashley Rivera was presented the 2022-23 CSAC Scholar-Athlete of the Year award.

### Women's Volleyball and Alumni Games

Women's volleyball won their game 3-1 against Saint Elizabeth University. Immediately following this exciting win, students and alumni had a blast playing in an alumni game, organized by Amber Wood (BA '19).

### Open Mic Night

David Steen (BA '14) hosted an open mic night for students and alumni to perform. The College Center was transformed into a neatly lit stage for brave participants and a supportive audience.

### Brunch with Leo the Lion

The weekend drew to a close with a new event, Brunch with Leo the Lion. Alumni, family, and friends reflected on the fun-filled weekend, while children swarmed the newly redesigned Leo the Lion. Allison Warren (BS '20) attended with her family and said, "I have two little kiddos who love mascots, and it was so nice to be able to come back to visit BAC with my kids for an activity aimed towards them. It was nice being able to relive my college breakfasts with the waffle bar, and to share that with my kids means a lot!"

### Monday Golf Outing

Monday October 23rd held the 29th annual Charter Day Golf Outing, which has raised over \$690,000 over the years for the ANC and BAC Student Scholarship Fund. Rob Kees (attended 1984) made a hole-in-one!

**Celebrate Charter Day with us  
October 10-13, 2024  
Click here to learn more!**



**Click here to Become a Founder**



# Distinguished Alumni Awards

The Distinguished Alumni Award are given in recognition of Bryn Athyn College alumni who have given back to their communities, alma mater, or church, especially by applying the values and perspectives garnered from a New Church liberal arts education. On October 13th, 2023, four Distinguished Alumni Awards were given to Stephen David (attended '79-81), Jay Volcy (BA '17), Louise Barry Rose (AA '51, BS '53), and posthumously Rev. Frank Rose (AA '48, BA '50, MDiv '52).

## Rev. Frank and Louise Rose

Louise attended Bryn Athyn College, earning a degree in education. While in college she exhausted the undergraduate language offerings and, seeking further study in Greek and Hebrew, found herself across the table from theolog Frank Rose. After graduation, she returned to Glenview to teach, all the while corresponding with Frank, their letters sprinkled with Hebrew.

Frank attended the church schools and graduated from theological school in 1952, taking up the pastorate in Colchester, England. Three years later, Frank returned to the states long enough to marry Louise, and then they returned together to Colchester where they raised five children and served not only the Colchester congregation but New Church groups in Scotland, Wales, France, Holland, Germany, and Austria. In 1968 the family relocated to the Caryndale society in Canada,

then Bryn Athyn for five years, and ultimately Tucson, Arizona, where Frank and Louise served Sunrise Chapel and nurtured its outreach to surrounding communities.

In addition to her great love of mothering, Louise has devoted her long life to supporting worship services, women's retreats, marriage enrichment groups, and Frank's pastorates. She played organ and arranged flowers for worship services in three countries, ran women's groups for over 30 years, and served as wedding coordinator for Sunrise Chapel. Now in her 90s, Louise continues to carry on aspects of the work that she and Frank fostered together through a lifetime, especially the commitment to support people in connecting with others and growing spiritually.

Their legacy can perhaps be captured by Louise's favorite phrase: "Let everything you do be done with love" (I Corinthians 16:14).



## Stephen David

After attending Bryn Athyn College (then it was called the Academy of the New Church College), Stephen went on to pursue a BA in Economics and Political Science from Yale University, graduating magna cum laude. This was followed by a MBA from the University of Pittsburgh.

Today, Stephen is the CEO of SkyMark, leading the development of software systems that support teamwork, data analysis, and decision-making. He also serves as a Board member for the Institute for Swedenborg Studies and is an Academy Corporation member.

When submitting this nomination, faculty said: "Stephen David has lived the spiritual mission of Bryn Athyn College" as Co-Founder of New Christian Bible Study Project, now the leading website for the New Church worldwide. It emphasizes the interconnections between the Old and New Testaments and the Writings, showing the internal sense to Bible readers from all over. It's deeply multi-lingual, with more than 80 translations of the Word in over 40 languages, and 52 of Swedenborg's Latin texts, plus 480 translations of them in 22 languages, all cross-linked across the website.

[Register for the 2024 Alumni Reception](#)



## Jay Volcy

Since graduating from Bryn Athyn College, in 2017, Jay has worked as a dedicated public servant. Starting as a humble intern in the office of State Senator Shirley Kitchen. He was later hired as a staffer for State Senator Sharif Street. After only one-year with Senator Street, he became a Deputy Scheduler and Assistant to the then Executive Director, Jim Harrity.

Jay has had the pleasure of serving people in North Philadelphia through constituent services and community events. Jay has worked closely with now Councilmember at-Large, Jim Harrity, where he is currently the youngest Chief of Staff in Philadelphia City Council history. Jay is thrilled to work with the Councilmember, who he considers one of his mentors. In his capacity as Chief of Staff, Jay serves all Philadelphians through writing legislation, negotiating with the other city departments, and facilitating community events. Jay hopes to use his degree from Bryn Athyn College to serve his community and continue his career in public service.







# Congratulations Class of 2024!

**BIOLOGY**

- Amber C. Dawes**  
minors in History and Law and Society  
Philadelphia, PA
- Kaylia Shontea-Ajia Duncan**  
Reading, PA
- Ava Rose Fino**  
Harding, PA
- Trenton Garner Hiatt**  
minor in Physical Science  
Adrian, OR
- Kiyann Marcha Peterson**  
Ewing, NJ

**BUILDING ARTS**

- James Edward Allen**  
minor in History  
Bryn Athyn, PA
- Teagan Niles Dewees**  
minor in Business  
Huntingdon Valley, PA  
*Valedictorian*

**BUSINESS**

- Anais Hunter Connelly**  
minor in Psychology  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Karl Edward Cranch**  
minor in Data Science  
Bryn Athyn, PA

**Kearah B. M. Henry**  
Philadelphia, PA

**Clara M. Kiely**  
minor in Data Science  
Philadelphia, PA

**David-John T. May**  
minor in Data Science  
Edgewater Park, NJ

**Mia Micciche**  
minor in Communications  
Philadelphia, PA

**Joseph M. Nugent**  
Philadelphia, PA

**Joseph Thomas O'Neill**  
Bensalem, PA

**Michael G. Perkett**  
Pittsfield, MA

**Timothy K. Ragan**  
Philadelphia, PA

**Jeremy Michael Yoak**  
Philadelphia, PA

**EARLY CHILDHOOD & SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Danielle Eileen Andreini**  
Levittown, PA

**Emily Alexandra Bell**  
Willow Grove, PA

**Jade Deibert**  
minor in Religion  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Alexander R. Hancin**  
Langhorne, PA

**Emily Elizabeth Hoff**  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Kaitlyn Houck**  
Bensalem, PA

**Gianna M. Juiliano**  
Philadelphia, PA

**Katelyn E. Osterhoudt**  
Langhorne, PA  
*Valedictorian*

**Allyson C. Paul**  
Jenkintown, PA

**Kayla Michelle Poll**  
Bensalem, PA

**Jenna R. Sasso**  
minor in Psychology  
Erie, PA

**HUMAN SOCIETY**

**Ivy Clark**  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Anthony P. Falgiatore, Jr.**  
minor in Law and Society  
Atglen, PA

**Faye Moretti**  
Jenkintown, PA

**Sabrina Quinn**  
minor in English  
Philadelphia, PA

**INTERDISCIPLINARY**

**Evelyn Beth de Chazal**  
Biology/ Religion  
minors in Art History and Dance  
Rochester, MI

**Blake Justin Halterman**  
Mathematics/Computer Science  
minor in Data Science  
Bryn Athyn, PA

**Joram Bradley Heinrichs**  
Religion/Education  
Kitchener, ON

**Alana Rose Zhen O'Grady**  
Dance/Education  
Glenside, PA

**Willow A. Orthwein**  
Performing Arts/Education  
Bryn Athyn, PA

**Privish Sadaqat**  
Religion/Biology  
Philadelphia, PA

**MATHEMATICS**

**Matthew Contreras**  
minors in Business, Finance, and Computer Science  
Poolesville, MD

**Reid Thomas Schroeder**  
minors in Computer Science and Religion  
Urbandale, IA

**PSYCHOLOGY**

**Alyssa McKenzie Asplundh**  
Bryn Athyn, PA

**Michael S. Carmody**  
Voorhees, NJ

**Marco F. J. Cruz**  
Holland, PA

**James Brandon Dyson**  
minor in Business  
Frederick, MD

**Adrian J. Norris**  
Hagerstown, MD

**MASTERS: RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**Edward Kent Rogers**  
Willow Grove, PA



**ASSOCIATE IN ARTS DEGREES**

**Kyle Stephen Bovitt**  
Business  
Philadelphia, PA

**Adam Hamlers**  
Business  
Philadelphia, PA

**Nicol Kaczorek**  
Pre-Nursing  
Philadelphia, PA

**Ryan J. Kirwan**  
Art  
Hewitt, NJ

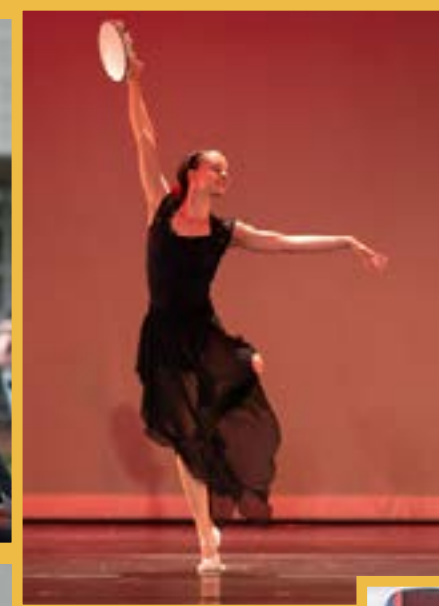
**Emma Maria Stine**  
Pre-Nursing  
Bryn Athyn, PA



Commencement speaker Curtis Childs (above) provided the graduates a series of "how-to's" on leading a fulfilling life. Valedictorians Katelyn Osterhoudt and Teagan Dewees commented on the College's remarkable ability to bring people from all walks of life, together.







# A Year in Pictures





# Internship Spotlights

By Michelle Chapin

Since every Bryn Athyn graduate is required to complete an internship as part of their degree, students have served a wide variety of uses and had quite a smattering of unique hands-on experiences. From government officials’ offices to charter schools, students have been able to learn as much about themselves as their chosen field. Some discover what sort of professional setting they do (or don’t) want in their career. Others see their major come to life in tangible ways, preparing them for their lives after graduation. Experiential learning is just as important as lessons in the classroom, and BAC offers both. Here are a couple project snapshots from this past academic year.

## Maria Storck Insurance Underwriting

Maria Storck (class of 2024) delved into the world of insurance with Starr Insurance. For two summers, she served as an underwriter intern. Mentored by head underwriters, she worked with real claims in evaluating submissions for their risks, rating workers’ compensation policies, and gaining an understanding of a complicated and ever-evolving industry.

She also learned crucial soft-skills to successfully work collaboratively in a professional environment. “I gained a different perspective of what ‘networking’ entailed,” Maria says. “Last summer, I made over 200 connections on LinkedIn solely because of the networking aspect of the job. This tested my communication skills to the max but taught me not to be afraid of talking to new people.” This building confidence helped make the corporate world feel less intimidating. Her coworkers were kind in taking her under their wing, invested in her success, “The company even set up a day-to-day schedule, including presentations on how to be a business professional and thrive in a corporate environment.”

Though her internship may be over, her working relationship with Starr has only just begun. She has accepted a full-time position with the Starr Insurance Associates Program, beginning in January 2025. Her budding career is already off to an incredible start, we look forward to learning all about her many future successes.



## Evelyn de Chazal Building Bluebird Nestboxes

Evelyn de Chazal (BA '24) worked with mentor and professor Eugene Potapov, Ph.D. creating and installing over 20 nestboxes across Bryn Athyn’s campus, aimed at offsetting the declining eastern bluebird population. “Bluebirds are picky nesters,” Evelyn explains. “And their boxes are often overtaken by sparrows or other critters. Providing them more spaces to nest should encourage them to settle in the area and ensure a steady population for future generations. The benefits they provide the surrounding ecosystems include more than just their pretty color and songs: they eat many of the insects we consider pests.”

The project was a unique blend of ornithology and carpentry. Her father Aaron de Chazal (attended 1991/93) helped her navigate the world of table saw, joiners, and drill presses as she constructed each wooden nestbox. While Potapov offered insight into the needs of the birds and the best placement of the boxes on campus. If you can find these boxes if you look hard enough the next time you’re at Bryn Athyn. Some are seamlessly hidden within the foliage of a tree, while others offer respite in the middle of one of the many spacious fields. Evelyn was excited to leave a tangible legacy on campus while also satisfying her love of birds.



# News from the Biology Major

By Monica Rose



Brock, Anwyn (BS '21) - MS in Physician Assistant Studies (PCOM 2024)



Walsh, Ashley (BS '19) - MS in Physician Assistant Studies (Slippery Rock University 2024)



Brock, Allaina (BS '21) - MS in Genetic Counseling (University of Pennsylvania 2024)

We’re thrilled to highlight the remarkable achievements of our Biology and pre-nursing alumni.

**Coleton Graham (BS '18)** has capped off his journey with a master’s degree in biomedical sciences from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Cole was honored with Provost’s Award for Academic Excellence, Forensic Biology Concentration, a testament to his dedication and hard work. Known for his musical talents as the lead guitar player with BAC Rocks, Cole is now gearing up for medical school in the coming months.

**Allaina Brock (BS '21)** and **Anwyn Brock (BS '21)** both celebrated significant milestones. Allaina earned a master’s degree in genetic counseling from the prestigious Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, Anwyn received a master’s degree in physician assistant studies from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

**Ashley Walsh (BS '19)** is also marking an important achievement, having graduated with a master’s degree in physician assistant studies from Slippery Rock University.

**Kiley Clay (BS '20)** has completed her master’s degree in occupational therapy from the Jefferson College of Rehabilitation Sciences at Thomas Jefferson University.

**Zachary Brock (BS '20)** has completed his master’s degree from Arcadia University and proudly holds his MMS in physician assistant studies.

In total, we proudly acknowledge that 41 of our biology major alumni have now completed graduate or nursing school. Additionally, 11 of our pre-nursing alumni, who were not biology majors, have also graduated from nursing school.

Congratulations to all our graduates for their dedication and success! Your achievements are a testament to the rigorous education and commitment that our programs foster. We look forward to seeing the impact you will make in your respective fields.





# A Legacy of Service

## Restoring a dormant club in a changing world.

By Michelle Chapin (BA '10) and Monica Rose (BA '23)

Service, helping the neighbor, and community engagement have long been a tradition at Bryn Athyn College. Through the decades, students have actively participated in a variety of volunteer projects and service trips. These efforts embody a key principle of a Bryn Athyn education, the New Church idea of charity, which is described as “is an inward affection, consisting in a desire which springs from a person’s heart to do good to the neighbor, which is the delight of his life. And that desire involves no thought of reward” (*Secrets of Heaven* 8033).

We wanted to share the inspiration the campus draws from this collective commitment to making a positive impact, both locally and globally. Here are a couple projects that took place on campus that exemplify Bryn Athyn’s enduring legacy of altruism and community service.

### Trick-or-Charity

To say Keren Abraham (class of 2025) loves to help her neighbor is understatement. In high school, she volunteered at many initiatives, including a local vaccine clinic. She feels called to help those around her, however she can. “Volunteering and service is huge to me,” she says. “It is such a big part of my life.” So when she came to Bryn Athyn, she wanted to help revive C.A.R.E., Bryn Athyn’s community service club which suffered logistical challenges during the pandemic. Many students through the decades have served under C.A.R.E., so it was important to Keren to honor the club’s legacy while bringing in new ideas of her generation. “We want to keep the integrity of what C.A.R.E. had been,” she explains. “So it’s trying to figure out that balance between the new and the old. Creating this beautiful little in between, where we still remember the past of the things that we used to do, and still grow upon that.”

The annual autumnal event Trick-or-Charity seemed like a great place to start: it was an event that carried great nostalgia, while ushering in a new era of C.A.R.E.. Student dress in Halloween costumes and go door to door in the local community, asking for items to donate to a local shelter. This year, St. Francis Inn was the beneficiary. Keren wasn’t quite sure how the event would go, but it exceeded every one of her expectations. She describes, “It was so much fun, everyone had such a blast because it’s like it’s not your typical volunteer event.” Students dressed as witches, angels, and hockey players toured the neighborhoods of Bryn Athyn, collecting donations in shopping carts. Gathering breakfast items, canned goods, clothes, paper goods, and much more, Keren was called multiple times during the evening that

her fellow students’ carts were too full to continue! The generosity was overwhelming in the best way. “Honestly,” Keren reflects, “without the community, I don’t think it would have been this successful. I was expecting everything to maybe like fit in the back of my trunk—that would have enough donations. But it surpassed my trunk; it was overfilling my car!”

It’s not going to stop there; Keren has big plans for C.A.R.E. because she sees incredible potential within her generation. “The youth of today are literally our future leaders. So being able to support them early on is what really matters. And being able to have organizations like C.A.R.E. step forward—it gives opportunity to students to become problem solvers. It also builds leadership and character.” She continues, “Something C.A.R.E. is trying to do: we want people to be able to not just experience that ‘Oh, wow’ moment, but also experience the part of it being able to recognize, identify and then being able to figure out a solution or some way we can help. We want our students to be problem solvers.”

*“Even though the event seemed small, at the end of the day it went toward something bigger, and that is the overall goal for C.A.R.E.”*



### The Pad Project

Katherine “Kat” Halle (BS ’23) is no stranger to volunteering and leadership. She participated in the Athletes Helping Athletes project and served in Student Government Association when she was a student at Bryn Athyn College. After graduating with her degree in biology, she started volunteering with The Pad Project, a nonprofit organization focused on eliminating the stigma surrounding menstruation. “As someone with a premenstrual disorder, I am passionate about being an advocate for all menstruators,” she explains. “I found The Pad Project Ambassador program through their Instagram, which is a wonderful resource to learn about some of the barriers people with periods face.”

Knowing the generosity of her alma mater, she coordinated a project at Bryn Athyn College that consisted of two parts: bringing awareness to this issue and taking action to help those affected. In March, Kat hosted a showing of *Period. End of Sentence.* in the College Center, a documentary bringing awareness to menstrual inequality, especially in lower-income regions. She also asked the College and the surrounding community for donations of menstrual products to donate to those in need. This initiative collected over 500 products that she was able to donate to Flow Forward NJ, a nonprofit dedicated to ending period poverty in New Jersey.

When asked what you can do, Kat has a lot of ideas: “Period poverty affects people from all walks of life. Consider asking your local women’s shelter or food bank if they are in need of donations. If you are a Pennsylvania resident, Governor Shapiro’s new budget proposal includes \$3 million to increase access to menstrual products in public schools. This is a step in the right direction, yet it is estimated that 1 in 3 teens and 1 in 4 adults struggle to afford period products in the United States. If you are unsure of how you can make a difference, The Pad Project has several fundraising initiatives. Visit [thepadproject.org/donate/](https://thepadproject.org/donate/) to learn more.”





# Ray Silverman selected as Endowed Chair

By Tara Fehon

In 2017, alumnus Dr. Forrest and Peggy Dristy started a fund to support the religion department with the idea that it could also support scholarships. The fund was named the Dristy-Farrell fund in memory of their daughter, Janet Farrell who passed in 2018. Along with the Dristy's incredible generosity, many donors have made contributions to this fund over the years.

This generosity afforded us an opportunity. Why not create an endowed chair for the religion department? An endowed chair is a faculty position supported by an endowment in perpetuity.

With the array of course offerings and a mission to educate each and every Bryn Athyn College student, a gift of endowed support for a faculty chair ensures the institution's outstanding curriculum and rigorous requirements are funded for future generations of students. Endowed faculty chairs create an enduring legacy, enabling the College to hire and retain the most qualified faculty and to continue to ardently pursue our mission.

The Dristy-Farrell fund provides partial funding for an endowed chair and based on recent input from Dr. Dristy, scholarships for students new to the New Church. A student may be considered for the scholarship if they excelled in Religion 101, were recommended by the professor, and submit an essay.

Rev. Ray Silverman (MDiv '84) has been selected as the first Dristy-Farrell Endowed Chair for the Religion Department. President Carswell is pleased to bestow this honor on a faculty member who is held in high esteem.



Ray was also nominated and awarded the Mission-Focus Service Award for the following traits:

- Contributions directly support the mission of the college
- Adheres to organization values and ethical standards
- Efforts positively impact organization's mission
- Positive influence on organizational culture

His colleagues describe him as:

"A shining example of New Church higher education in action. He brings a joy to his work that lifts the spirit of everyone he encounters."

"Ray Silverman somehow manages to remain one of the most popular people on campus by telling teenagers and young adults to obey the Ten Commandments."

"[He] has been a steady, positive influence on all members of the college community for many years. He is able to connect with students who are new to the teachings as well as those who have been born and raised in the New Church. I believe he has also been a strong mentor to our student athletes."

My personal favorite is how the Registrar, Colleen Willenbring observes, "Ray's (religion) courses have the longest waitlists of any faculty member!"

This beautifully illustrates why he is an excellent choice for the Religion Department, Dristy-Farrell Endowed Chair.

We are grateful to the Dristy-Farrell family and all other donors who have made this opportunity possible. Thank you for supporting Bryn Athyn College and its mission to provide an academic experience grounded in the teachings of the New Church.

Peggy Dristy passed away in the spring of 2024. Alumni are welcome to honor her memory and this use by making a gift to the Dristy-Farrell Fund--contact Tara Fehon to learn how to support this fund: tara.fehon@brynathyn.edu

## ALUMNI MILESTONES

### 1970s



**Sylvia Montgomery Shaw** (AA '70) published second novel, **Flight of the Trogon**, inspired by Divine Providence. Set in Mexico during the revolution of 1910 and the coup of 1913, the novel explores the problem of evil from a New Church perspective and the power of prayer.

### 1980s



**Susan Asplundh** (attended 1986/1987) and **Rev. Chuck Blair** (AA '85, MDiv '06) married.

### 2010s

**Hannah (Reynolds) Olan** (BA '11) accepted the position of Director of Operations at the Georgia Justice Project.

**Annalisa Gatti** (BA '15) Completed a master's degree in information and library science at the University of Western Ontario in August 2023.



**Lauren O'Connor** (BA '17) got married to Johnathan Meyers in October 2023.



**Zach Franzen** (BA '17) and **Annalisa (Synnestvedt) Franzen** (AA '10, BA '11) welcomed baby Katherine in May 2024.



**Amanda Calamito** (BA '17) got married in December 2023 with other BAC alumni present!

**Greg** (BA '15) & **Ivy (Daum) Synnestvedt** (AA '13, BA '15) welcomed baby Noah in June 2024.



**Alair Brock** (BS '19) and Seth Wyncoll got married in April 2024.



**Nikita Klinisovs** (BA '19) and Ashley Smith tied the knot in June 2024.



**Brennen** (BA '19) and **Sierra (Phillipi) McCurdy** (BS '19) welcomed baby boy, Rowan. In addition, Brennen graduated from Rutgers Law School (JD '23) and is currently an Associate Attorney at Fitzpatrick, Lentz & Bubba.



**Rachel Elphick** (BS '19) and **Shane McCurdy** (BS '19) tied the knot September 2023.

### 2020s

**Katherine Halle** (BA '23) is pursuing her Masters of Science in Psychoactive Pharmaceutical Investigation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Pharmacy this fall.



**Karl Cranch** (BA '24) & **Jade Diebert** (BS '24) married June 2024.

### Staff & Faculty

**Sofia Castro-Hernandez** (professor of psychology) got married in May 2024.

### In Memoriam

**Sylvia Parker** alumna, soup genius, and former faculty (AA '55, BS '57) passed into the spiritual world December 2, 2023.

**Greta E. Bochniak** (BA '87) passed into the spiritual world May 20, 2024.

**Cade Gurney** (AA '17) passed into the spiritual world November 26, 2024. #48







# Charter Day 2024

## Oct. 10-13

October 11

- Processional
- Church Service
- Sunset Sips & Bites

October 12

- Alumni Soccer Game: BAC vs ANCSS
- Brunch with Leo the Lion
- Women's Soccer
- Women's Volleyball
- Women's Volleyball Alumni Game
- Men's Soccer
- Alumni Reception
- Charter Day 5K Run/Walk

October 21

- Student Scholarship Golf Outing

[Click here for a full list of events](#)

[Click here for more information about the weekend](#)



Click events below to  
register now!



**Charter Day 5K Run/Walk**

**Sunset Sips & Bites**

**Alumni Reception**

**Golf Outing**