

ALUMNI CONNECTIONS



July, 2026



Upgrading Technology to Improve the Student and Community Experience

Bay College is investing in major technology upgrades to enhance the student experience. The College will transition to Ellucian Colleague, a modern student information system that streamlines everything from applying and advising to registration and billing. Students can expect smoother services and more accurate, consistent advising, thanks to improved data access across campus.

Bay is also launching Element 451, a new communication platform that delivers personalized reminders, updates, and guidance to help students stay on track. These tools will support stronger connections not only with current students, but also with alumni, families, community members, and future learners.

Together, these upgrades will make it easier to navigate enrollment, stay informed, and move confidently from first contact to graduation. We look forward to a more connected and user-friendly Bay College experience!

Welcome to Bay Alumni Connections

Welcome to the first edition of the Bay College Alumni Newsletter! As a Bay graduate, you're part of our community for life, and that connection truly matters. This newsletter is all about keeping in touch, sharing what's new and exciting at the college, and highlighting the amazing ways our alumni continue to make an impact.

We hope it keeps you informed, inspired, and feeling connected to Bay. No matter where life takes you, you'll always be part of our story—and we're proud to be part of yours.

Follow us on social media, and please, take a moment to update your contact information & communication preferences. Let us know how you'd like to stay involved. Whether you want more targeted information, you're interested in sharing your story, volunteering, mentoring, or showcasing your skills and talents, we'd love to connect you with opportunities that make an impact.

Stay Connected UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION



baycollege.edu/alumni

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Bay is pleased to announce Dr. Thad Strom, a Gladstone native and Associate Director of the Oscar G. Johnson VA Healthcare System, as Bay College's 2026 Distinguished Alumni of the Year. Selected earlier this year from a pool of outstanding nominees, he was formally recognized at the College's Awards Celebration in April.

Strom began his academic journey at Bay College, earning an Associate in Arts in 1997. He went on to earn a doctorate in Counseling Psychology and built a nationally respected career in veterans' mental healthcare. Over nearly 20 years with the VA Healthcare System, he has advanced PTSD

treatment, trained clinicians nationwide, and contributed to research that has improved care for thousands of veterans. Since returning to Upper Michigan in 2018, he has provided innovative leadership at the Oscar G. Johnson VA Healthcare System, helping earn national recognition for its mental health program and strengthening rural behavioral healthcare. Dr. Strom remains deeply connected to Bay College and credits Bay with helping shape his success. Beyond his professional work, Dr. Strom is an active volunteer, supporting local schools, his faith community, and his family's nonprofit, Senior Crafting Connections.

As part of this honor, recipients are invited to speak at commencement. Our 2025 Distinguished Alumni, Dr. Julie (Schmidt) Berkhof (1996 graduate), Director of Nursing at the University of Rochester Medical Center's Wilmot Cancer Institute, addressed Bay College's 2026 graduates. Dr. Strom will serve as the 2027 commencement speaker.

The Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes graduates for professional achievement, community service, and their connection to Bay College. Nominations are accepted year round, with the recipient selected each February. To submit a nomination, visit www.baycollege.edu/alumni



Every alum has a story! We're looking for alumni to feature and celebrate. If you're willing to share your journey, we'd love to hear from you!

Contact us at alumni@baycollege.edu or call (906) 217-4042.

Alumni Committee

Vicki DeGrand
Tina Jensen
Kathy Ryno

Kathy Flagstadt
Laurie Mold
Larry Sundling

Kaylee Hubert
Nancy Przewrocki

Alumni Engagement & Conference Services Coordinator

Laurie Mold
laurie.mold@baycollege.edu
Phone: (906) 217-4042

A Message From The President

Dear Bay College Alumni,

I hope this message finds you well and thriving in your personal and professional journeys. As I reflect on the strength and impact of our Bay College community, I am continually reminded that our alumni are among our greatest ambassadors.

You represent the spirit of Bay College in communities across the Upper Peninsula and beyond—leading in your professions, supporting your families, and making meaningful contributions wherever life has taken you. Your success is a reflection of your hard work, determination, and the strong foundation built during your time here.

At Bay College, we continue to build on that foundation with a clear focus on Student Success, Community Success, and a Culture of Success. We are also embracing this year's theme of Transformation — leaning into innovation, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that we remain responsive to the needs of our students and our region.

As alumni, you are an essential part of this journey.

There are many ways to stay connected and engaged – by mentoring current students, sharing your professional experiences, participating in alumni events, or supporting the College through advocacy and philanthropy. Your involvement not only strengthens Bay College, but also creates new opportunities for the next generation of students.

We are proud of all that you have accomplished, and we remain committed to fostering a lifelong connection with you. Bay College will always be your home, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

Thank you for representing Bay College with pride and purpose.

With appreciation,



Dr. Nerita Hughes, President



17,011 credit hours completed
across 2 campuses.

51.6% students enrolled
exclusively in online courses

\$2 million saved by students
since introducing online
Open Educational
Resources(OER)

14,150+ Alumni



Bay Snapshot

Top Programs

Liberal Arts
Nursing/Pre
Early Childhood Education
Business/Admin
Social Work
Radiography

18,179 + Associates and
Certificates Awarded

Bay College Foundation

The Bay College Foundation plays a vital role in supporting student success and strengthening our community. As the philanthropic arm of Bay College, the Foundation works to remove financial barriers through scholarships, while also investing in programs, facilities, and initiatives that enhance the student experience. This past year, the Foundation awarded more than \$650,000 in scholarships to over 300 students, helping make higher education accessible and achievable.

In addition to providing critical financial support, the Foundation fosters meaningful connections between the College and the communities it serves. By partnering with generous donors, alumni, and local businesses, the Foundation supports

workforce development, academic programming, and campus improvements. It also brings people together through events and engagement opportunities that celebrate giving and highlight the impact of student success.

Through continued generosity and collaboration, the Bay College Foundation remains committed to creating opportunities, empowering students, and building a stronger future for our region.

[Learn more at baycollege.edu/foundation](https://baycollege.edu/foundation)



foundation@baycollege.edu



(906) 217-1700



**Give
Today!**

2026 Degrees Conferred

Bay awarded 199 degrees this semester, which is the most awarded in a Winter term in over five years! Here's the breakdown by program:

Accounting – 5
Art and Design – 3
Automotive Maintenance Technician – 3
Automotive Master Technician – 4
Automotive Technology – 3
Business – 7
Business Administration – 10
Computer Info Sys: Programming and User – 1
Computer Info Sys: Software/Network Support – 1
Computer Network Systems & Security – 5
Corrections Officer – 3
Criminal Justice – 8
Early Childhood Care & Education – 2
Early Childhood Education – 6
EMT-Basic – 8
Entrepreneurial Small Business – 3
General Science – 5
Geographic Information Systems – 1

Health Careers – 4
Liberal Arts – 36
Marketing – 3
Mechatronics – 2
Mechatronics and Robotics Systems – 8
Nursing – 13
Occupational Studies – 2
Office Assistant – 2
Office Systems/Admin Assistant – 1
Pre-Engineering – 8
Pre-Natural Resources – 1
Pre-Professional Health – 4
Radiography – 10
Social Work – 8
Water Resource Management – 4
Water Technology – 1
Welding – 14

Arts & CULTURE ON CAMPUS

Summer is in full swing at Bay College, and the season comes alive with the return of Lunchtime Live!, our free outdoor concert series featuring talented local musicians, paired with delicious food for purchase from the Taco Kitchen and a rotating lineup of area food trucks.

Adding to the excitement, the beloved Strings on the Bay concert series brings classical performances to the Besse Center Theater, continuing its tradition of enriching the community with exceptional chamber music experiences throughout the summer.

JULY

- 14** **Lunchtime Live!: Reflections**
11:30 am - 1:00 pm ET - Escanaba Campus
- 14** **Strings on the Bay: "Once Upon a Piano, There Were Four Hands"**
7:00 pm ET - Besse Theater (students free)
- 28** **Lunchtime Live!: Wingin' It**
11:30 am - 1:00 pm CT - Iron Mountain Campus

AUGUST

- 11** **Strings on the Bay: "American Echoes"**
7:00 pm ET - Besse Theater
- 25** **Lunchtime Live!: Socially Chemical**
11:30 am - 1:00 pm ET - Escanaba Campus

SEPTEMBER

- 1** **Lunchtime Live!: George Sailor**
11:30 am - 1:00 pm CT - Iron Mountain Campus



Partners in the Arts

Following last year's tragic fire at the Bonifas Theater, Bay College was honored to provide space for Players de Noc and Missoula Children's Theater to continue performing, ensuring that live theater remained accessible to the community.

Players wrapped up a successful season this spring with sold-out performances of the Mel Brooks musical comedy *The Producers*. This June, Missoula returned to campus with a cast of more than 60 local students for a performance of *Rapunzel*. Providing opportunities for young performers to learn and grow is an important part of Bay's mission, and this collaboration highlights the College's role in fostering arts education and community engagement.

As renovations at the Bonifas Theater continue and Players de Noc prepares to return home, Bay looks forward to maintaining strong partnerships and creating new opportunities to bring performances, speakers, and cultural events to campus.

This summer also marks an exciting new chapter for Strings on the Bay. This long-running chamber music series, founded by Bay College, is now under the leadership of Emily Olson, a longtime series flutist and Artistic Director of Beacon Arts Michigan. The program is entering a new era focused on collaboration and artistic excellence. Free admission for students will be available in July, and local vocalists are warmly invited to join the ensemble as a choir for a special finale performance in August. To learn more or sign up contact Emily Olson at: emily@beaconartsmichigan.org

These partnerships reflect Bay College's ongoing commitment to strengthening the arts and enriching the cultural landscape of our community.



Visit baycollege.edu/events to find additional information and tickets for upcoming events



Bay College Athletics: A Brief History

Bay College athletics dates back to 1968, when the original "Norsemen" teams competed in sports like basketball, tennis, and golf. By the early 1970s, men's basketball became the primary, and eventually only intercollegiate sport, continuing until the program was discontinued in 1977.

Bay College's Alumni Norsemen laid the foundation for today's Norse Athletics. They helped establish a lasting tradition of teamwork, school spirit, and community pride that continues to this day.

The program was revived in 2017 with the launch of men's and women's basketball and cross country under the modern "Norse" name.

Since reinstatement, Norse athletics have expanded to include baseball, softball, and volleyball, competing in the MCCA and NJCAA. The program quickly found success, highlighted by conference championships, regional title runs, and strong overall records, including a dominant stretch in men's basketball under Coach Matt Johnson who also serves as Athletic Director.

Matt Johnson recently stepped down in June as Bay College's head men's basketball coach after nine successful seasons to focus on his role as Athletic Director, allowing him to dedicate his full energy to growing Norse Athletics and creating new opportunities for student-athletes across all programs.

Assistant coach Mike Cretens was named the new head men's basketball coach after helping lead the Norse to a 100 – 24 record over the past four years, including two conference championships!

Johnson leaves behind a highly successful program, highlighted by a 186 – 78 overall record and consistent conference and postseason success, setting a strong foundation for the next chapter of Norse Athletics. With strong new leadership and growing momentum, the Norse enter their 10th season with a bright future ahead. Go Norse!

Visit baynorse.com for complete schedules and ticketing information!

Norse Alumni

Were you part of Norsemen athletics in the 1960s or 70s? We'd love to hear your stories and celebrate your legacy!

baycollege.edu/alumni

Norse Athletics Schedule

Fall (August – November)
Volleyball

Winter (October – March)
Men's & Women's Basketball

Spring (March – May)
Baseball
Softball
Men's & Women's Cross Country



Spring Recognition & Events

Bay College hosted the **40th Annual U.P. Sports Hall of Fame All-Star Basketball Classic** on June 24, showcasing top Upper Peninsula talent for the second straight year.

Baseball Honors: Avery Wilson and Harrison Haigh earned All-Conference Second Team honors, while Bon LaChance and Jake Rolfe received Honorable Mention, highlighting a strong offensive season.

Softball Recognition: Joelle Jordan was named All-Conference Second Team, with Arianna Hernandez, Nina Bower, and Rylee Gerow earning Honorable Mention; Head Coach Tim McIntyre was named Northern Conference Coach of the Year!