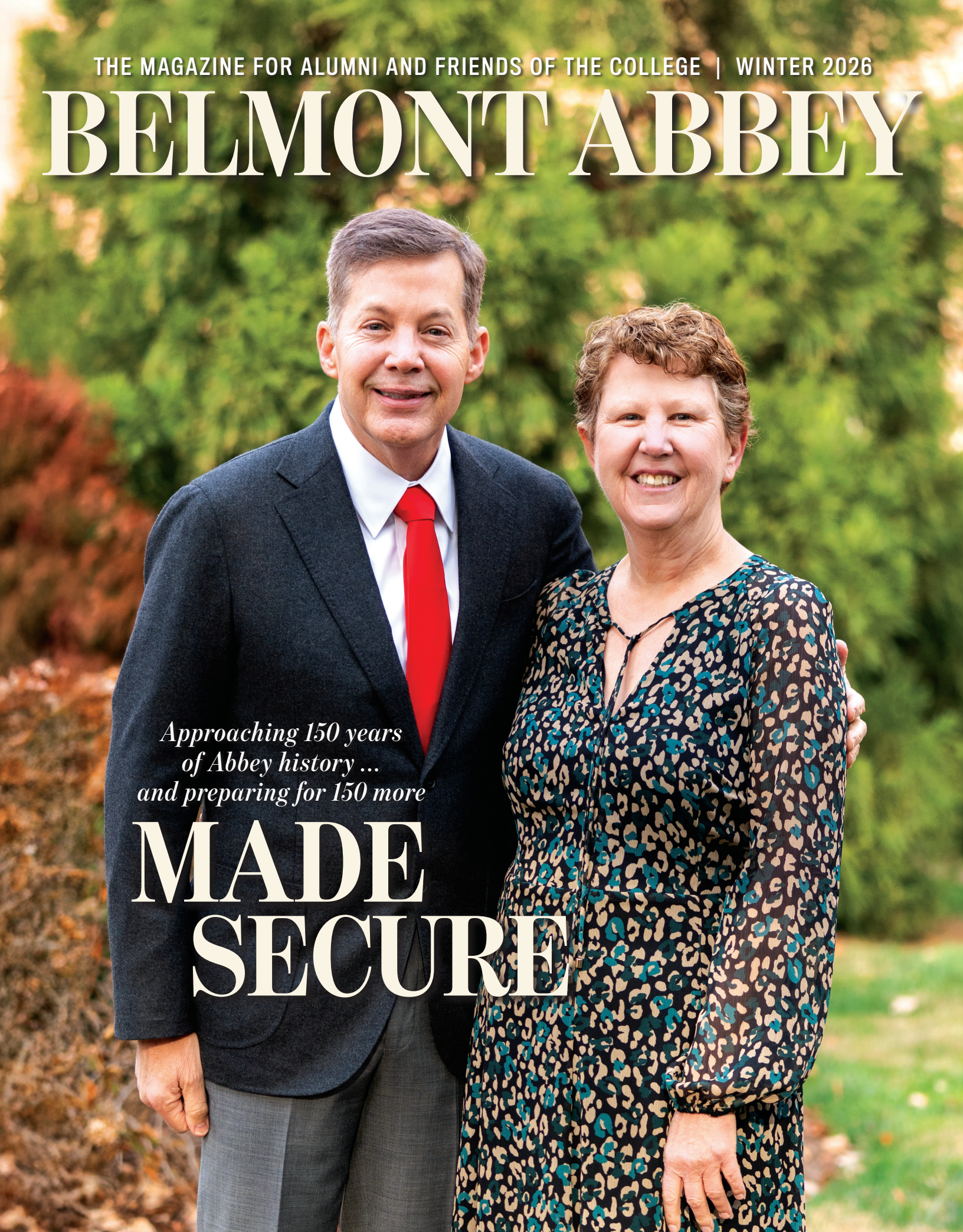
THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE | WINTER 2026

BELMONT ABBEY



Approaching 150 years of Abbey history ... and preparing for 150 more

MADE SECURE



CELEBRATING 1876~2026 150 YEARS

For more information about our year of celebration visit: www.bac.edu/150

150 Years of Work and Prayer

This good work began in 1876. One hundred fifty years later, we remain grateful for these generous souls who dedicated themselves to spreading the Gospel and bringing the Catholic liberal arts tradition to the South.

Join us in celebrating every monk, every faculty and staff member, every alum, and every student, who made the Abbey a home and a foundation for a joyful life. Thank you to our benefactors. Thank you to our founders. Thank you to every man, every woman, and every family who gave willingly to support this mission.

Here's to the next 150 years.

"The work and prayers here shall spread God's blessing over this beautiful country in the years to come when perhaps few of you who are listenting will be among the living."
-- Abbot Leo Haid, O.S.B.

1876-2026

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE®
150th ANNIVERSARY

FROM THE PRESIDENT
DR. JEFFREY W. TALLEY



BELMONT ABBEY MAGAZINE

Belmont Abbey Magazine is the official publication of Belmont Abbey College

SUPERVISING EDITOR
LAURA SCHAFFER

GRAPHIC DESIGN
ROXANNE RICKER
Creative Circle Media Solutions

CONTRIBUTORS
Sarah Bolton, Charles Cornelio, Mike Ellis, Br. Gabriel Hamilton, SueAnn Howell, Dr. Catherine Nolan, Rolando Rivas, Laura Schaffer, Abbot Placid Solari, Dr. Clark Summers, Dr. Jeff Talley

PHOTOGRAPHY
Belmont Abbey College: Rolando Rivas, Evan Shoup

COVER PHOTO
Rolando Rivas

SUPPLEMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHS
Nicholas Willey, MiraVia, Dr. Clark Summers, Talley family, Col. Michael O'Fallon

PRINTING
Lake Printing
Charlotte, N.C.

For more information about *Belmont Abbey Magazine*, email lauraschaffer@bac.edu or send letters to:

BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE MAGAZINE
Attention: Laura Schaffer
100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road,
Belmont, NC 28012

COPYRIGHT © 2026 BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE

MISSION STATEMENT *of* BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE:

Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. In this endeavor, we are guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning. Exemplifying Benedictine hospitality, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others.



WINTER 2026 ISSUE

COLUMNS

CHARLES CORNELIO
Introducing Dr. Jeffrey W. Talley
PAGE 4

ABBOT PLACID SOLARI, OSB
Gratitude for 150 Years
PAGE 5

DR. CATHERINE NOLAN
Catholic Bioethics
PAGE 6

BELMONT ABBEY NEWS

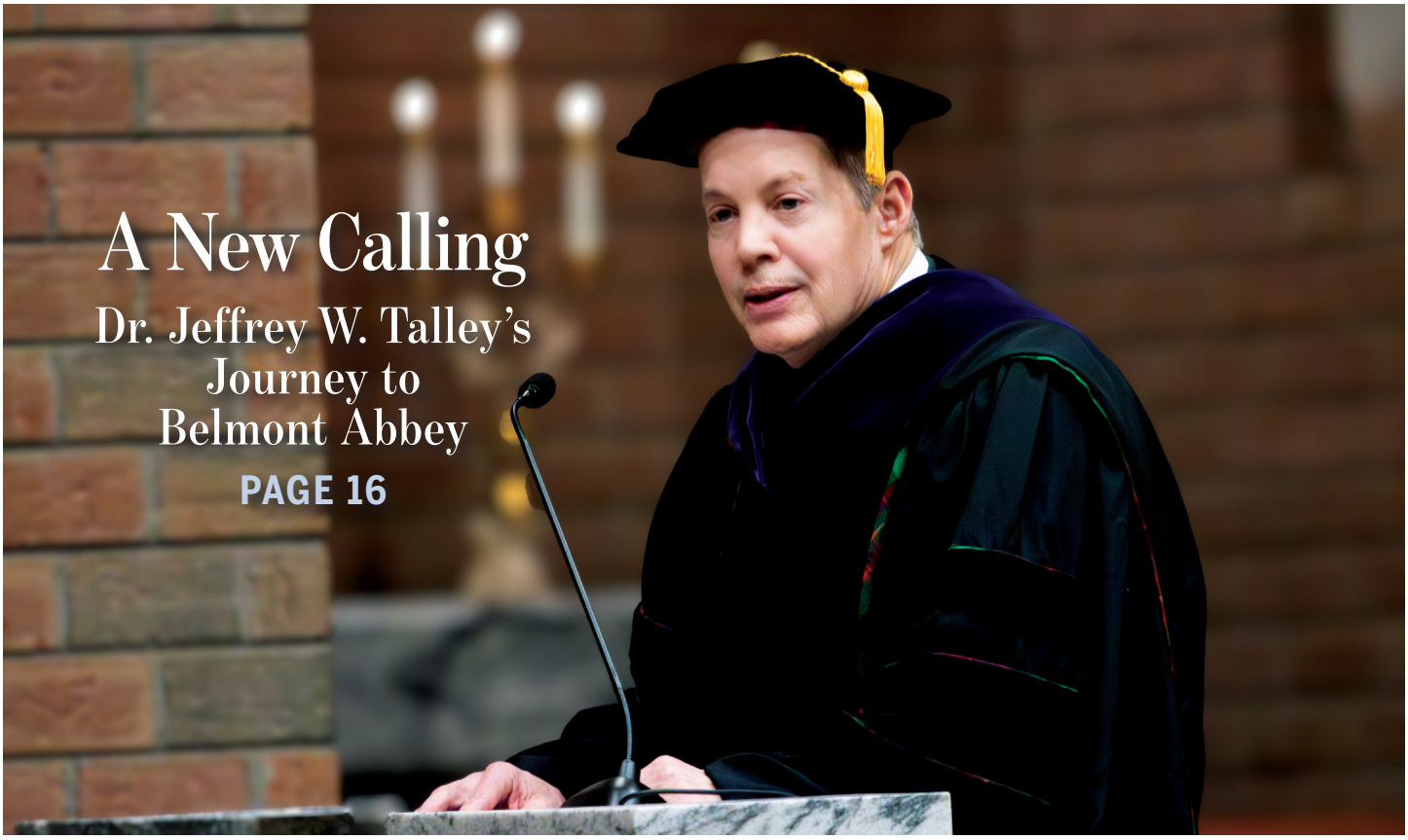
Raising Funds for Athletics
Beloved men's soccer coach takes on new role PAGE 8

Upcoming Tennis Center Honors Mike Reidy
Progress toward a 2026 groundbreaking PAGE 10

Monastic Milestones
Abbot Placid and Fr. David Golden Jubilees PAGE 12

Charlie Martin
The Abbey Remembers a Local Legend PAGE 14

MEET THE NEW PRESIDENT



A New Calling

Dr. Jeffrey W. Talley's Journey to Belmont Abbey

PAGE 16

FEATURES

HONORS UNDERGRAD TO ABBEY LEADERSHIP

A Conversation with Dr. Joe Wysocki

PAGE 20





MONKS, MARINES, AND CRUSADERS

A Homecoming 2025 Reflection

PAGE 28

WE ARE FAMILY

MiraVia welcomes Abbey couple with open arms

PAGE 24



ABBEY LANE UPDATE

Class Notes & In Memoriam PAGE 32

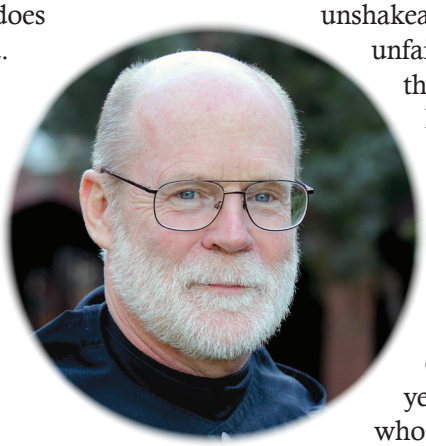
FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Gratitude for 150 Years

ABBOT PLACID SOLARI, OSB
Chancellor

IN THIS ANNIVERSARY YEAR, we look back to humble beginnings: to April 21, 1876, when one monk and two students arrived in a mule-drawn wagon at their "new" monastery and school - a log cabin. We can wonder, too, at what Leo Haid's thoughts might have been upon his arrival as newly-elected abbot in early 1885, laying eyes for the first time on his "abbey," not much improved since 1876.

When I was elected abbot, I went to Bishop Haid's grave to ask his prayers, as I was anxious about facing the challenges confronting our abbey and college. I quickly realized that one does not whine to Bishop Haid. He had virtually no resources at his disposal, was responsible for the Benedictine missions in Virginia, Georgia and Florida, and shortly after his arrival was appointed Vicar Apostolic, taking on responsibility for the minuscule Catholic flock in the entire State of North Carolina. In spite of this, Leo Haid and the first monks of Belmont Abbey built the impressive buildings which still form the heart of our campus; they turned the missions in Virginia, Georgia and Florida into monasteries and schools; and they laid a firm foundation for the development of the Catholic Church in North Carolina. If they did so much with so little, let us move into this anniversary year with the confidence that we, too, can do amazing things.



Above all, let us move forward with unshakeable confidence in God's unfailing Providence and the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. That provident care and intercession have never failed us. They have been most evident in all the members of the Abbey and College communities over the years and into the present, whose generous service and selfless dedication have brought Belmont Abbey through to this day. As we welcome President Talley and his wife, Linda, to our community, I ask that you consider a special gift to the College in this anniversary year so that you, too, may have the blessing of ensuring that Belmont Abbey College will be here to form new generations of students for the next century and a half. Happy Anniversary!

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Introducing Dr. Jeffrey W. Talley

CHARLES CORNELIO

Chair of the Belmont Abbey College Board of Trustees

BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE thrived under the leadership of President Bill Thierfelder for 21 years, and last spring's retirement announcement led the Board of Trustees to engage in a search for his successor. We employed one of the top Catholic recruiters in the country, formed a Search Committee, and worked for over 7 months to carefully select the new President of Belmont Abbey College from a pool of exemplary candidates.

I am very pleased that Dr. Jeffrey W. Talley, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (Retired) has joined the College as our 21st president, as of January 2, 2026. A Three Star General who commanded the US Army Reserve, Jeff holds a PhD, several master's degrees, and a number of patents. He has also served on the faculty of several prestigious universities.



In making this decision, the Board sought several essential characteristics. The first was leadership: the ability to provide vision; set clear, measurable goals and attain them; and identify, motivate, and work with excellent people. Jeff has led men in combat and has been highly praised for his collaborative success, including in the academic setting.

Second, Jeff is a man of deep Catholic faith who understands the College mission and will live it. He has been an active Benedictine Oblate for decades. He understands and expresses the importance of the College's Benedictine and Catholic tradition and the apostolate that our monastery formed nearly 150 years ago.

Third, Jeff will lead the College in continuing and improving its academic work. He believes that a strong Catholic liberal arts college, with its other important offerings, can thrive in this competitive environment. His many years as a faculty member provide the background to value and support our Abbey faculty.

Fourth, Jeff advocates forming the whole person: mind, body, and soul. He wants all the areas of the College to thrive in accordance with its mission and vision, from its students to academics, sports, and administration.

Fifth, like all colleges, we are constantly under strain from the financial environment. Jeff has a track record of running successful organizations. He is a proven fundraiser. Given his military and academic background and his experience building and running his own thriving business, Jeff is "well connected," which will greatly benefit the College.

Though not a comprehensive list, these strengths identify Jeff Talley as the person to lead Belmont Abbey College forward, now and into the future. Through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, we believe and trust that the Holy Spirit led the Board, the monastic community, and Jeff to this exciting new beginning.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

At the Forefront of Catholic Bioethics

DR. CATHERINE NOLAN

Assistant Professor and Chair, Philosophy

A CRITICAL AREA OF CATHOLIC THOUGHT today is bioethics, which examines the morality of actions affecting peoples' health, life, or death. Belmont Abbey College made a name for itself in 2007 when it took an ethical stance against funding abortion and contraception through its employee health insurance. But what has happened since then?

The most obvious change is that the monastery leased property to a new hospital, with conditions that the care provided should accord with Catholic teaching. Alongside the hospital, which opened last January, the Abbey developed a nursing program, including an MSN and RN-BSN. BAC has also helped to sponsor Charlotte's Converging Roads conferences with the John Paul II Institute. These conferences keep Catholic medical professionals up to date in understanding ethical challenges today.



Beyond formal programs, an interdisciplinary bioethics reading group also brings interested students together with faculty from the Philosophy, Theology, Biology, and Nursing departments to discuss topics like organ donation, genome editing, and cognitive disabilities. My own interest in bioethics has led me to publish papers on the topics of a Catholic understanding of death, brain death, and life-threatening pregnancies.

Theology department bioethicist Catherine Yanko points out that BAC's Catholic Bioethics course, which is required for many majors, offers students "the opportunity to consider the ethics of various choices they will face as medical providers, healthcare administrators, biomedical researchers as well as a patient, proxy decision maker, friend or family member themselves. Providing students with the environment and resources to analyze such vulnerable and important topics is an indispensable part of Belmont Abbey College's commitment to the Catholic vision of education."

Already we see alumni carrying this commitment forward. Clay Zimmerman, 2024 BAC Valedictorian and bioethics grad student at Duke University, hopes to go on to a PhD in this field. "The Abbey's commitment to a liberal arts education undoubtedly provided me with the tools necessary to enter a field as niche and dynamic as bioethics," Clay explains. "I learned to love the process of learning which has enhanced my more specialized graduate education. The novel ethical dilemmas posed by advances in medicine, science, and technology require bioethicists to maintain a high level of interdisciplinary knowledge, and I can confidently say my time at Belmont Abbey primed me to make the transition to this field."

Through community engagement, conferences, reading groups, publishing, and teaching, Belmont Abbey College continues to blaze a trail in the developing field of Catholic bioethics!



HELP ENSURE THE ABBEY LEGACY

and honor the vision of our founders. Help us reach **$150 million by the end of our 150th anniversary year** in 2027.

Join us in the mission to see our country, our future, and our next generation Made True in the light of God's grace.

With your help we are forever Made True.

learn more at: madetrue.bac.edu

150 FOR 150

MADE TRUE

The Campaign for Belmont Abbey College

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE

BELMONT ABBEY
NEWS

Seeking Greater Heights *for* Abbey Athletics

A new role for beloved Men's Soccer coach, John Keating



BELMONT ABBEY HAS A HISTORY of athletic growth and achievement, from Conference Championships and Conference Sportsmanship Awards to new programs like Field Hockey, Wrestling, and Lacrosse. Since Dr. Bill Thierfelder began his presidency, our program has become the 7th largest in the NCAA.

BY ROLANDO RIVAS
AVP of Marketing and Communications

John Keating also has a history of athletic achievement, with a stellar, 15-year career coaching Men's Soccer culminating in a 2021 Conference Championship. Nevertheless, Keating reflects that, "Within our program, perhaps my biggest delight has been seeing young men come to faith from backgrounds that dismissed Christ and his Church. My work here has never been about an 'occupation' but a vocation, and I have been blessed to have seen the fruits of the labor in my own lifetime. That's a wonderful consolation."

Keating and his fellow coaches have created a robust culture of sport and virtue at the Abbey, forming young men and women in body, mind, and spirit. Through coaching, Keating has gained a firsthand view of all that his fellow coaches can accomplish. He's seen them getting tremendous results on and off the field, working with modest resources, and he firmly believes they might be the best coaching staff in America.

Limited scholarshipping and aging facilities, however, inhibit the success of their programs, so Keating has decided to step in and try to help his fellow coaches achieve their dreams. From coaching young men, he has now moved into College Relations to become a servant leader to his colleagues, assuming a new fundraising role created specifically to support athletics.

The needs are great.

In line with many Division II programs, Belmont Abbey welcomes large rosters, accepting 60 students over two soccer teams. While this supports enrollment, the model fails when playing time or facilities don't meet expectations … and we have a sizable facilities gap.

The Abbey urgently needs a Track & Field complex and turf field, which would impact 2/3 of our student athletes' experience. Field Hockey alone lost recruits this cycle due to the fact that they train and play on grass; we remain one of only three programs in the country that don't play on turf. Accreditation might eventually require a turf field for competition.

But these are not the only needs. The Wheeler Center, too, requires essential air conditioning and bleacher improvements, while the pronounced hotel, food, and transportation cost of attending tournaments mean limited resources hinder our teams' ability to compete. Since many high school students include athletics as a component in their choice of college, enhancing scholarships, budgets and facilities will help our programs attract the best student-athletes, be competitive in the age of the NCAA transfer portal, and



John Keating is the all-time winningest Men's Soccer Coach in Abbey history.

SCAN THE QR CODE to find out how to support student-athletes on their formative journey and make a gift to Abbey Athletics.

boost retention.

Meeting these needs, moreover, would fuel transformation far beyond athletics. Athletics may be the door by which students enter, but they leave here transformed by wisdom and fed with faith. Attracting a student through athletics means inviting them into a four-year, life-changing experience, and scholarships and facilities allow us time to influence a young man or woman as they encounter all that the Abbey has to offer.

Keating recalls countless examples. "The process does work," he says, "I get emails and texts all the time that say, 'Coach I didn't realize it at the time, but I realize all the things you preached, all the core values; it just dawned on me. If I wasn't grateful then, I'm thanking you now.'" Investment in athletics could be one of the best ways to find the student that needs the Abbey the most.

Keating certainly agrees with the old adage: that you see the



Keating, twice named Conference Carolinas Coach of the Year, led Men's Soccer to a 2021 Conference

hand of God in the rear view mirror. But now he's focused on the road ahead, trusting in Divine Providence and hoping for great things in the Abbey's future. "If you trust in His ways," as Keating says, "the dots connect, and very often in plain view."

"I think we have some of the best fundraisers on the planet, here at the Abbey," he adds, "We are called to work for the kingdom of God, to work for the souls of young men and women. As a fundraiser I now provide, for those with means, a deeply satisfying outlet for their wealth. It's truly a spiritual work of mercy. Giving, in this sense, provides spiritual fulfillment. It's the best job in the world." BAC

To find out more about athletic needs, please contact John Keating at johnkeating@bac.edu or 704-747-6461.



Thanks to Doug Ehmann '85, the Reidy Tennis Center will carry Coach Reidy's legacy forward for generations.

Upcoming Tennis Center Honors Mike Reidy

Reidy Tennis Center Finalized with Alumni Gift

BY SARAH BOLTON '19
Marketing Project Manager

BELMONT ABBEY HAS RECEIVED a significant donation from alumnus Doug Ehmann, class of 1985, enabling the completion of the Reidy Tennis Center and Pavilion, a facility honoring the late Coach Michael "Mike" Reidy.

Doug Ehmann, a longtime supporter of the College, has contributed significantly to campus life over the years. A former member of the Board of Trustees, Ehmann helped build the Abbey's golf team and served as its coach, supported improvements to the Wheeler Center, and played a pivotal role in the development of the tennis facilities. In 2008, he was honored with the Br. Gregory Corcoran Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award—recognition that not only highlights his personal accomplishments but also exemplifies the meaningful ways Belmont Abbey alumni continue to give back. Personally acquainted with Coach Reidy and inspired by his legacy, Ehmann's recent $1.4 million donation provides the final funding needed to complete the Reidy Tennis Center and Pavilion.



Coach Mike Reidy is a legend, not just of Abbey Tennis, but of Abbey athletic culture as a whole.

"Doug's impact on our community has been instrumental to the Abbey's progress and success. We are deeply grateful for his continued support of Belmont Abbey College," said Dr. Joseph Wysocki, then Interim President of Belmont Abbey College.

Coach Reidy, who joined Belmont Abbey College in 1969, led the men's tennis team for 31 years. Under his guidance, the team secured six conference titles and made seven national tournament appearances, including reaching the NCAA Division II Sweet 16 in 2001. Reidy was named conference Coach of the Year four times and also led the women's tennis program to a conference championship in 1999. His contributions established Belmont Abbey's holistic approach, which serves as a life-changing foundation for student-athletes that yields success on and off the court. Bonnie Reidy, Mike's wife of more than fifty years, served as a second mom to many of the tennis players—offering encouragement, support, and a welcoming presence that made the Abbey feel like home. She continues to be a beloved friend of the Abbey and a cherished part of its extended community.

Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B., reflected on Coach Reidy's legacy, "Coach Reidy's most enduring legacy comes from his role as a mentor and teacher for innumerable players, students, and friends. He taught his players that academics were first and that if you did not learn sportsmanship, you were not on his team. Countless alumni refer to him as a second father and acknowledge that they owe much of their success, personally and professionally, to Coach."

The Reidy Tennis Center and Pavilion will include locker and shower rooms, restrooms, coaches' offices, team meeting rooms, gathering spaces, and outdoor fan seating. Construction is set to begin this year. BAC

Dear alumni...

For our 150th, we want to hear from you!

CELEBRATING 1876~2026 150 YEARS

We want to hear all you've accomplished!

Tell us your story, share how the Abbey touched your life, or shout out a favorite monk or professor.

Share your testimonial today!



Scan the QR code or visit bac.edu/alumnistories to share your testimonial.

1876-2026

Belmont Abbey® COLLEGE 150th ANNIVERSARY



In prayer and work, ora et labora, the monks of Belmont Abbey live out their monastic vocations at the heart of campus.

Monastic Milestones

Have you ever wondered what's going on at the monastery?

BY BR. GABRIEL HAMILTON '20 *OSB*



PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS INTERESTED to know what the monks are up to. It fascinated me when I was a student at BAC. It confused me during my vocation visits. It mystified me in my first few months living at the monastery. And two-plus years in, I'm still investigating. What is going on at the monastery?

Day to day, we're still kicking around in the old hallways and doing our usual things. Our life is on a never-ending four-week cycle of psalms and prayers. We try to help and be present in the College. Saturday Night Movies continue.

Still, important events punctuated our monastic routine last year:

(i) At the start of the year—January 15th, the feast day of the Benedictine Saints Maur and Placid—Br. Chrysostom Sica professed solemn vows.

(ii) Last spring, on the feast of our patroness, Mary, Help of Christians, Abbot Placid Solari and Fr. David Brown celebrated fifty years of monastic profession and priestly ordination, respectively.

(iii) In a simple ceremony last October, Abbot Placid led five men to their choir stalls in the Basilica, marking the start of their postulancy, the first official step in joining a religious order. During this trial-period of a few months, the postulants would live the monastic life with our community and discern whether to pursue it.

For a smaller monastery like ours, having these three major landmarks in a monk's life in a single year is significant. And what connects these three is that together they form a kind of full circle of monastic life.

Br. Chrysostom's final vows are his public commitment to seek God as a monk at Belmont Abbey for the rest of his life. He has definitively set off on the journey. From this point on, he is a full-fledged monk, ready to live and work in our community without the structures and support of the initial monastic formation. It's a real beginning of a new life built on the mature adherence to St. Benedict's interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Br. Chrysostom must become the stable, obedient monk who can faithfully respond to Christ each day and become a sign of his Kingdom.

This firm "setting off" is the same path taken fifty years ago by Fr. David and Abbot Placid. Their jubilees of priestly ordination and monastic profession are public signs of faithfulness to their initial vows and consecrations to God. The powerful witness these two monks have given in stability and in ministry is rightly celebrated and honored at this time. But, even more, their golden jubilees help us to see and reflect on the often-unnoticed foundation that they have laid and are laying for the monastery year by year.

The faithful journey

That foundation is the one that our five postulants inherited to build on. This is the path they have followed.Others have taken this road before them, and those monks of old have been transformed and gladdened by it. By taking a seat in their choir stall, the postulants were really renewing an old journey. A monk's place in choir, which is based on one's order of entry into the monastery, is his place for the rest of his life, should he choose to stay. Day after day, four-weeks by four-weeks, we can choose to take our seat, to accept our journey, and to be faithful.

It's beautiful to see these out-of-the-ordinary events come together as a full circle. They give us a more complete image of monastic life and are signposts of the monastic journey. Things that may seem like an ending—jubilees of fifty years—are really beginnings and are actually generative. At the same time, these extraordinary events point us toward the ordinary events of day-to-day life. A key part of monastic life is to be faithful in the ordinary and to see that it has a purpose and destination.

But, more than anything, these important celebrations of faithfulness past, present, and future remind us of how faithful Jesus has been to our Abbey, and how he has been the glue, the foundation, the worker, and the giver of every good gift to us. How blessed we are to live this beautiful life. BAC



Abbot Placid (left) and Br. Chrysostom (right) joyfully celebrate their commitment to the Benedictine life, by which they carry on a 1500 year tradition.



Abbot Placid Solari and Fr. David Brown have served the Belmont Abbey community for more than 50 years.



Honoring Charlie Martin ’70

Dot Martin shares memories of beloved local legend

BY MIKE ELLIS '90
Director of Alumni Relations

ON JULY 1, 2025, Belmont Abbey lost a local legend: not just an alumni legend but also a longstanding pillar of Belmont and the Gaston County community. Charles “Charlie” Martin ’70 led an extraordinary life centered on family and built on dedicated service. Many of us remember him as an active Abbey alum and the former Mayor of Belmont. However, his life and legacy go even deeper. I had the pleasure of sitting down with Charlie’s widow Dorothy “Dot” Martin to learn more about this remarkable man.

Charlie - or as Dot lovingly calls him, "Kit" - was born in New York, where he and his siblings Carolyn, Bruce, and Napoleon lived with their parents in a Manhattan apartment. Charlie's mother, a Catholic of Cuban descent, and his father, a Greensboro, NC native, had met in Miami Beach. Family was always a priority in the Martin household, and Charlie's parents instilled both respect and discipline in their children.

At 12, Charlie moved with his family to New Milford, NJ, where he finished high school and entered the Navy. Charlie's four years of service (1961-65) spanned the Bay of Pigs Invasion and Cuban Missile Crisis, and as Dorothy recalled Kit's love for the Navy and his expertise in crypto coding, she expressed surprise that he hadn't pursued a naval career. In 1965, however, Charlie received an honorable discharge and enrolled at Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU), at which time his brother Bruce was studying at Belmont Abbey College.

A New Home

At FDU, Charlie attended classes by day and drove a NY City taxi at night. When he confessed to Bruce, however, that he wasn't enjoying his undergraduate experience, his brother suggested he sell his car and transfer to Belmont Abbey, and that is exactly what he did. Once at the Abbey, a chance meeting with a pretty, local girl would convince Charlie to put down permanent roots.

This meeting, which occurred at a local bar, was actually highly improbable, given that Dot doesn't drink alcohol. When her friend, who worked at the bar, asked Dot to keep her company that night, however, she'd agreed to join her for the evening. And when a handsome young man from the Abbey arrived with his friends… it was love at first sight. "Charlie needed a ride back to the Abbey," Dot remembers, "and I was hesitant, but he was a perfect gentleman. I dropped him off at the cemetery on campus." This was the beginning of their romance, a romance which would last the rest of their lives.

Kit and Dot were married in 1970 at the local Methodist church, and she jokingly calls this their "first marriage" since, after Dot converted to Catholicism, they "re-married" at the Basilica, with Father Cuthbert presiding. Today Charlie is buried in the Abbey cemetery, directly across from where Dot dropped him off on that first date.

Serving the Community

During the 1970s, Dot recounts how different Belmont was and how Abbey students and outsiders, especially northeasterners, weren't always welcome in town. Charlie, however, would not be deterred: "He was always a doer." Whether coaching Belmont youth teams, serving on town committees, getting involved in the Red Cross, or becoming a member (and eventually President) of the Alumni Association, Charlie was a man of action.

Although he entered into politics at the promptings of a local resident, Dot recalls this encouragement was less than genuine. As soon as Charlie submitted his city council candidate paperwork, in fact, his "friend" promptly campaigned against him on the platform that Belmont shouldn't elect an outsider. Charlie lost that election but learned a valuable lesson, and he would spend the coming years immersing himself in the Belmont community. Becoming an insurance agent, he built relationships, made connections, and demonstrated his affection and concern for Belmont and its residents, gaining a loyal following. The second time he ran for city council, Kit Martin would not be denied.

As Charlie gained local popularity and support, the former Mayor of Belmont, Richard Boyce, suggested that he run. Charlie would serve as mayor for 10 years, doing everything he could to improve Belmont's stature and visibility. The improved relationship between the Abbey and the town was one of his proudest accomplishments.



Charlie Martin was inducted into the Alumni Wall of Fame in 2016.

Even with his substantial successes, however, when I asked Dot what she remembers most fondly about Kit, she immediately said, "his humility." Charlie always prioritized others, especially kids. He prayed the rosary daily and never allowed ego to influence his decisions. As Mrs. Martin reflects, "It was the way he loved me and the way he loved people" that she will continue to cherish most.

Belmont and the Belmont Abbey community join her in remembering this beloved local legend, who lived out the Benedictine hallmarks of love, humility, and stability, both in service of his alma mater and of the town he made his home. We will always be grateful for the magnanimous and humble Charlie Martin. BAC



Charlie and Dot with Dr. Bill Thierfelder (left) at Homecoming 2007, where Charlie received Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.



Jeff and Linda Talley join the Abbey family as the 21st President and First Lady of Belmont Abbey College.

Dr. Jeffrey W. Talley's Journey to Belmont Abbey

A NEW CALLING



The Talley family celebrates Christmas while stationed at Fort Myer in Arlington, VA. Pictured L to R: (back) Matthew, Josh, Christopher, and Jeff; (front) Ashley and Linda.

BY LAURA SCHAFFER | *Editor*

IF YOU HAVE THE PLEASURE OF MEETING DR. JEFFREY W. TALLEY, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (Retired), it won't take you long to realize that he's a man who gets things done. I learned this for myself when I interviewed Dr. Talley, soon after his selection as Belmont Abbey College's 21st President. Although I certainly enjoyed our conversation, and he answered my questions thoroughly and good-naturedly, the fact is that Dr. Jeff Talley is much less interested in talking about himself than in rolling up his sleeves and getting to work …

Working his way

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Jeff moved to Arlington, Virginia as a child when his father took a Department of Defense job at the Pentagon.

In a house full of brothers, the resourcefulness and tenacity that would later give Jeff such galvanizing impetus could also land him in hot water, as when he broke into his father's closet and picked the lock on his classified Pentagon briefcase… This same dogged and creative energy, however, spurred Jeff to start multiple lawn service businesses in high school. "I was quite the entrepreneur," he said, working what amounted to a full-time job on top of his classes. Focused more on working than on studying, Jeff "didn't take high school very seriously," but he graduated in 1977 with a college acceptance and a 1969 Mach I Mustang.

Although his in-state college experience wasn't a good fit, Jeff kept on with characteristic determination, working long hours to pay his way while continuing as a full-time student. "I did every job you could think of," he remembers, including buffing floors and cleaning pews at the local Episcopal Cathedral.

Even working full-time, however, the college meal plan was outside his budget, so Jeff ate macaroni and cheese every night - with a little tuna mixed in on Fridays. "That's all I could afford… And all of a sudden I get this letter from the Army… offering an Army ROTC scholarship." At first, he threw it away and "kept eating mac and cheese," but the next week, Jeff pulled it back out of the trash, thinking, "What the heck? I'm patriotic. I love the United States, and the Army would be good for me. It'd give me some discipline."

So, Jeff transferred to Louisiana State University and accepted an ROTC scholarship. LSU's exceptional forestry and natural resource management program appealed to his interest in the outdoors; moreover, "to a boy from Northern Virginia who's 17 years old," he smiled, "Louisiana is a far, exotic country." It was also where Jeff met his wife, Linda.

Working on calculus in the library one night, sitting by the front window, Jeff noticed a young woman who kept looking up from her English paper. "I thought, 'this beautiful young woman's looking at me. I'm going to go say hi." Jeff and Linda dated through college and were married after graduation. Only years after their wedding did he discover she'd been looking past him that night, waiting for her girlfriends to walk her back to the dorm. They have been married for over 40 years.

Journey of faith

At this time in his life, Jeff started "digging into [his] faith." He had been raised Methodist but had never given much thought to what he believed. So, Jeff brought his questions to the Methodist minister and chewed over the answers.

The "problem was," he said, "I had a certain belief about Holy Communion… I basically believed in real presence…. I believed Holy Communion wasn't symbolic… so when I discussed that with the Methodist minister, he goes, 'you can't be Methodist …we don't believe that.'"

So, Jeff started meeting with Episcopal and Lutheran ministers, as well as Orthodox and Catholic priests. He attended retreats and immersed himself in reading, studying, and prayer. "And meanwhile," he recalled, "I got commissioned."

"I graduated at 11:00 a.m. from LSU, commissioned at 1:00 p.m. as

CONTINUES ON PAGE 18

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers… and then at 3:00 p.m. I was ordered to leave and report to my first assignment in the Army," at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, where he continued his journey of conversion at St. Paul's K Street in Washington DC, an "Anglo-Catholic" Parish. Jeff was confirmed in the Episcopal Church, and Linda followed soon thereafter when they relocated to St. Louis.

Meanwhile, during his ten years in the Regular Army, he began, with characteristic tenacity, to accumulate degrees, including a master's in religious studies from Assumption College and another in liberal arts from Washington University in St. Louis. He also began a Ph.D. in Historical Theology (Patristics) at St. Louis University.

But his journey didn't end here. At first, Jeff's ongoing discernment seemed to be leading him to Anglican orders, where he would attend St. Stephen's House at Oxford, followed by seminary at Nashotah House in Wisconsin, and then finish the Ph.D. he had started in historical theology. However, it was at this time that he felt God calling him to convert to the Catholic Faith. "What converted me was St. John Henry Newman," Jeff notes, and the Oxford Movement. When he did eventually go to Oxford years later to study business, Jeff chose Keble College in honor of Newman's colleague, John Keble, who together with Edward Pusey, were the main three Anglican clergymen who led the Oxford movement.

Jeff received spiritual direction and "rigorous examination" from Abbot Thomas Frerking, O.S.B (St. Louis Abbey – English Benedictines) and Fr. Brian Van Hove, S.J., and then in a private ceremony at a chapel at St. Louis University, he was given his first Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Following their life in St. Louis, Jeff and Linda were transferred in the Army to Washington, D.C. It was here that Linda would join him in conversion at the hands of the Archbishop of Military Service in the Crypt Church of the Basilica of Immaculate Conception. Jeff also continued his spiritual direction with the English Benedictines of St. Anselm's Abbey in Washington, D.C., where he would develop a deep and lasting friendship with his spiritual director and father confessor, Abbot Aidan Shae, O.S.B.

Thanks to Abbot Aidian's guidance and friendship, Jeff ultimately discerned that "God was calling me to a more structured life than just a normal layman." While serving as a lieutenant back at Fort Belvoir, he also became a third-order Benedictine, or Oblate, of St. Anselm's Abbey, vowing obedience, stability, and chastity within his state in life, vows which have governed Talley's vocation as a Christian for almost 40 years. Adding to his confirmation name of Joseph, Benedict was Jeff's selected oblation name; thus Jeffrey Joseph Benedict was born.

Service at Home and Overseas

After serving two years in Korea, Jeff was assigned to Baltimore, where he would complete his company command, join the Army Reserve, and earn his graduate degree in Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. He then completed his PhD in Engineering at Carnegie Mellon in three years, taking a job as a research engineer at a Corps of Engineers research lab in Vicksburg, Mississippi, before joining the faculty at the University of Notre Dame. In his nine years at ND, where he received early tenure and a Teacher of the Year award, Jeff was twice deployed as a reservist to fight in Iraq.

During one of these deployments, in 2008, his exemplary leadership as Commander of the 926th Engineer Brigade under General Dave Petraeus earned two (of three career) Bronze Stars. By developing and implementing a policy called "Engineering the Peace," Jeff led an essential effort to rebuild Baghdad swiftly and efficiently, restoring the city's infrastructure and leaving an incalculable impact on the region's stability.

Back home, Jeff continued teaching at Notre Dame until an enticing offer from Southern Methodist University, backed by calls from the governor of Texas, the bishop of Dallas, and legendary quarterback Roger Staubach, convinced him to move South.



Students welcomed President Talley at a special Meet & Greet outside Stowe on Inauguration morning.

After teaching for two years at Southern Methodist and earning a business degree at Oxford, Jeff and Linda moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, where Jeff, along with a classmate from Oxford, began several startup tech companies. Meanwhile, missing academia, Jeff also accepted a faculty position at Johns Hopkins.

Though he had continued to serve as a reservist during this time, at this point in his career, Jeff received a call from the Secretary of the Army, asking if he would return to active duty as the 32nd Chief of the Army Reserve and assume command of all the reserve forces.

At first, Jeff declined. Taking on such a role would mean resigning from his companies and quitting his professorship. But when he relayed the offer to Linda, she told him bluntly, "Your country's asking you to serve one more time. The answer must be 'yes.' You and I must serve if the country asks us to serve."

So, Dr. Jeff Talley became the Chief and Commanding General of Army Reserve Forces and was appointed to the three-star rank. For four years, he dedicated himself to this demanding role, which included extensive congressional and media responsibilities, as well as leading one of the largest commands in the Defense Department. "You're exhausted when it's done," Jeff said, and when he and Linda heard rumblings of an extended appointment, Linda spoke up again, asking the Secretary directly: "Please let us retire." And he agreed.

Taking Care of Business

Jeff retired, taking an appointment as the Cabot House Scholar in Residence, an Advanced Leadership Fellowship at Harvard University. For the next year, he and Linda lived in the dormitory with their dog, Baxter, "the first and last official mascot at Cabot House," before moving back to Arizona. Jeff then spent four years as a senior executive at IBM, overseeing the corporation's global public sector interests and dealing directly with heads of state and heads of government worldwide.

While at IBM, Jeff held a faculty position at the University of Southern California in Public Policy, Engineering, and Business. In 2020, he realized he was burning out, so he "took a knee" and formed his own advisory firm around public-private partnerships, or P3s. Since then, the P3 Initiatives Group has assisted DOD-referred and B2B clients in developing strategies and pursuing contracts.

Now, although he will remain Chairman of the Board of the P3I Group, Jeff is handing the reins to his vice president, who will assume the managing partnership role, allowing Talley to take on his new role as President of Belmont Abbey College.

A New Calling

His civilian and military careers, accomplishments, and accolades have continually proven Dr. Jeff Talley not only a man of unparalleled determination and energy but also someone who takes personal discernment seriously, who holds himself accountable, and who never rests on his (considerable) laurels.

As President of Belmont Abbey College, Dr. Talley's vision for this nearly 150-year-old institution reflects the same clear and decisive vision and the same energetic commitment to excellence by which he has lived his own life. His priorities will center on strengthening our rigorous academics, rooted in faith and dedicated to growth in leadership.

"We have a unique opportunity," he urges the Belmont Abbey College community, "to help young men and women get a rigorous academic experience in a faith-filled environment that's strong in its Catholic identity so they can go forth in a world that's become so challenging, so complex, so difficult. Leaders who are balanced both morally and professionally are in greater need than ever before. For this purpose, Belmont Abbey College exists. I thank God for the opportunity to become part of the Belmont Abbey College family, where together we can bear the light of Christ in the world today."



President Talley stands ready to lead the Abbey to new levels of excellence, in faithfulness to our calling as a Benedictine liberal arts institution.

A convicting sense of vocation undergirds everything Dr. Talley has achieved over the course of his personal and professional life, and today it powerfully informs his vision for the future of Belmont Abbey. His own progress through a "challenging, complex, difficult" world has seen the benefit of rootedness in faith. And now, by the grace of God, his scholarly dedication, commitment to service, and faithful leadership will bring to this new era of Abbey history a vision that both cherishes our rich institutional past and aspires to an even brighter future.

As the Abbey prepares with gratitude to celebrate its 150th anniversary, the BAC community welcomes Dr. Jeff Talley as the 21st President of Belmont Abbey College, ready to build toward new levels of faith, scholarship, and leadership together, that in all things God may be glorified. BAC



Dr. Wysocki continues to share the same joyful pursuit of Truth that he inherited from his professors.

Honors Undergrad *to* Abbey Leadership

A Conversation with Dr. Joe Wysocki '04, Provost

DR. JOE WYSOCKI has been a member of the Belmont Abbey College community for more than twenty years, first as a student and alumnus and later as a beloved professor, Dean of the Honors College, and Provost. Having served as Interim President from last August until the end of the year, Joe now returns to his role as Provost, eager to provide faculty leadership and continue the Abbey's good work. Last fall, we sat down with Dr. Wysocki to ask him about his undergraduate experience, his career, and his approach to leadership. Here are a few things he shared with us:

BY LAURA SCHAFFER
Editor



Dr. Wysocki fell in love with campus from his first visit to Belmont Abbey. The impact of his Abbey experience, however, went far beyond his expectations, thanks to lifelong mentors like Dr. Gene Thuot (below) and Abbot Placid.

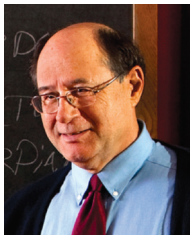
How did you first come to Belmont Abbey?

I grew up on Long Island in New York and lived there until I was about 15, when my family moved to High Point, NC. During my junior year of high school, my mother woke me up one Saturday and said, "We're going to a fire rally at Belmont Abbey College."

I did not know anything about Belmont Abbey College, nor did I know what a fire rally was. As it turned out, it was actually a charismatic revival with Franciscans from the Franciscan University of Steubenville. My mother thought it was a good Catholic event we ought to attend, so we drove down early that morning. And I fell in love with the campus.

A year later, I applied to Belmont Abbey College and came to a Hintemeyer weekend. I wound up not getting the Hintemeyer scholarship but fell more and more in love with the place, the faculty, and the students. That was the beginning of my journey.

How did your Honors experience and Abbey mentors impact your personal and professional journey?



Dr. Gene Thuot , Professor Emeritus

I entered freshman year as a young man who was very drawn to the active life. I wanted to study political science, go on to law school, and run for political office. I never could have expected what I received from the Abbey, the way it changed me.

Having enrolled in the (then) Honors Program, I took a course on Plato's Republic with Dr. Gene Thuot during my sophomore or junior year. I had a deep desire to go out and do justice, but after reading Plato's Republic, I was

CONTINUES ON PAGE 22



unsure whether I really knew what justice was. It was the first moment I felt confronted with my own lack of knowledge. And it was discomfiting, but it also called me into a deeper desire to seek the truth. That was the beginning of my interest in becoming a teacher.

I had many other formative encounters at the Abbey, and Abbot Placid in particular became a friend and mentor beginning in my sophomore year, when I had the chance to serve regularly at Sunday Vespers and have dinner with the monks afterwards. The relationship that I came to have with Abbot Placid was one that kept me engaged with my Catholic faith even after I left the Abbey. We stayed in communication while I studied political philosophy at Baylor University, and he welcomed me back in 2010 when I returned as a professor. He travelled to Washington, D.C. to marry me and my wife. He even baptized six out of our eight children. It has been a lasting friendship.

Faculty and monastic mentors at the Abbey profoundly impacted my intellectual and moral formation, but these mentorships were never legalistic. They were always about virtue, which is ultimately about happiness. As I would think about moving forward, going on to graduate school, they would ask: How do you envision your future happiness? Do you want to have a family? What do you think you'll need to support that family? How are you going to balance that with the love of study and the love of books? They were asking questions about how I thought I should order my life, which is always a difficult thing because we tend to want all goods at all times. But as finite beings, we live in time. These mentors asked questions that guided and ordered my life as I was discerning what was important, what was essential.

What is something you've learned from your education and career here at Belmont Abbey?

The Rule of Saint Benedict is an amazing blend of the lofty and the very practical. The early chapters, those on the virtues and the tools for good works, are infused with Scripture. They aim directly at the loftiest possible goal of seeking God. In other parts of the Rule, however, you find odd things like how much wine monks should get every day or what their meal schedule should look like. St. Benedict advises on humility and silence, but he also instructs his brothers not to sleep with their knives on their belts. All these little things sound strange, but I think the point is that Catholicism is a sacramental faith. The Church believes that our small, lived practices, the ways we treat our bodies every day, are tied to the lofty. We can examine every element of life and see how that



Dr. Wysocki welcomes a new class of freshmen to the Abbey at matriculation, addressing them as an alumnus as well as a member of college leadership.

orders us toward the virtues and God.

I've always thought that Belmont Abbey offers a true blend of the active and the contemplative life. Possibly the greatest gift the Abbey has given me, through all of the faculty and the monks I've encountered here, is recognizing the vital tension between those two things.

What has it been like to transition from Dean of the Honors College to Provost and even Interim President?

As Dean of the Honors College, I had my hands in the dirt more, in the daily details and the work of promoting one particular program. As provost, my job is to enable others to do that sort of work, whether by removing obstacles or collaboratively thinking through possibilities. There's something sad about moving away from Honors, but at the same time it's exciting because I love the institution so much as a whole.

As Interim President I simply wanted to carry on the good work that Dr. Thierfelder had begun here at Belmont Abbey College. He did an amazing job in terms of hiring the right people here over his tenure, and I have the utmost confidence that his good work will continue.

The Provost Council, trying to get to the heart of the continued good work and improvement of Belmont Abbey College, started off the year with a number of questions, one of which is: what are the ways in which every student encounters the mission of Belmont Abbey College in academics, in student life, in athletics, in the enrollment process? We've done so well here in terms of hiring the right faculty and staff that students are definitely encountering our mission. But there are certain ways in which we want to regularize and ensure this. What can we guarantee that every Belmont Abbey College student



Western monasticism owes its 1500 year tradition to St. Benedict of Nursia and the Rule by which he guided his community.

"As Interim President I simply wanted to carry on the good work that Dr. Thierfelder had begun here at Belmont Abbey College. He did an amazing job in terms of hiring the right people here over his tenure, and I have the utmost confidence that his good work will continue."

experiences, whether they're a graduate student, a transfer, or online? How do they encounter the mission? We're constantly thinking about those things.

How would you characterize your approach to leadership?

One of my favorite things about the Great Books is that they are both good for their own sake and eminently useful. You find amazing passages that are worth reciting just because they're beautiful, but I'm convinced you can also get as much from those texts as you could in the best leadership textbook. So I'm not joking when I say that these texts have helped me to be a better leader.

There's one line from Shakespeare that I always keep in the back of my head. It comes from Henry V, the night before the battle of Agincourt. King Henry's men are fearful, some of them close to despair, and he goes out to encourage them, knowing that many of them blame him for their situation. In the prologue to that act, there's a line describing this as "a little touch of Harry in the night." I love this line because it uses Harry, the informal name, and because, as their leader, he has to go out among them even when they're unhappy with him. It's something that's stuck in my head for years. I even put that on my schedule sometimes: "a little touch of Harry in the night." As a leader, you can't simply say, "my door is always open" because people won't come and see you, even if you hold open office hours. You have to walk around sometimes, even if it doesn't seem like you're getting anything done. BAC



The Fleeman family continues to grow and thrive. Here, Kathleen, Caleb, and little Oliver return to campus, taking a moment outside the Abbey Basilica.



The Fleemans remain always a beloved part of the MiraVia family.

We are Family

MiraVia welcomes Abbey couple experiencing unplanned pregnancy with open arms

BY SUEANN HOWELL | *Communications Director of MiraVia*

TUCKED AWAY IN THE BACK OF Belmont Abbey's campus, nestled at the end of a winding lane through the pine trees, is MiraVia – a welcoming residence for college student moms experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.

Opened in summer 2013 on land donated to MiraVia by the Benedictine monks of Belmont Abbey, the College Residence accepted its first pregnant college student that fall. The privately funded residence for women pursuing higher education can accommodate up to 15 mothers and their children – free of charge – offering childcare, meals, life skills classes, and mentoring so they can focus on being a mom and achieving their educational goals.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 26



Caleb reads to Oliver during one of his frequent visits to MiraVia.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

Divine Providence In Action

Kathleen Reitemeyer Fleeman and her husband, Caleb Fleeman, were freshmen at Belmont Abbey College in the fall of 2019 when they met and fell in love. Kathleen didn't know what MiraVia did, but when given the opportunity to volunteer at the banquet that October, she thought it sounded like fun, so she signed up.

"While volunteering at the banquet, I learned so much about the program and the great things MiraVia did for women in need," Kathleen said. "Little did I know that I would be contacting Tina Darling (Residential Program Manager) at the College Residence just a few months later."

Kathleen and Caleb found out in February 2020 that they were expecting a baby.

"Finding out I was pregnant was the scariest time in my life," she recalled. "I was going through so many emotions and didn't know what to do. But I am a 'figure it out and cry later' type of girl, so the afternoon I found out I was pregnant, I reached out to MiraVia to see if they could help."

Kathleen met Darling at the College Residence the next week. "And that is when I finally let myself cry. I spent more time crying than talking, but Tina helped comfort me and told me all the options I had," Kathleen said. "Leaving her office made me feel like something was going to go right and I was going to be able to continue going to school."

Unfortunately, just weeks after their meeting, the COVID-19 pandemic forced colleges and universities all around the world to close campuses and send students home for a time.

"Once again, I felt lost and like I didn't know where to go or what to do," Kathleen said. "I was not in a good place mentally. But by the time the summer was over, I was able to move into the residence and start making it my new home."

Kathleen recalls that as she settled in and got to know the other moms, they all became her closest friends. "I made lifelong friendships and was able to become the mom I am today," she said.

The Fleemans welcomed a healthy baby, named Oliver, in November 2020, who is the delight of all of his extended family.

A Miraculous Way For Students

MiraVia, which in Latin means "miraculous way," provided a life-affirming home for the Fleemans.

"MiraVia provided me with the closest feeling to a lighthouse in a stormy sea that I could have ever imagined," Caleb said. "In a new, and most terrifying, situation, MiraVia granted me a sense of serenity and security. They welcomed me with open arms, and it was like I had known them my whole life."

Caleb lived just up the winding road from MiraVia on campus, so he was able to spend time with Kathleen and Oliver during the day and be an active part of his son's life during their time at the residence. He says that each and every member of the staff taught and guided him through the journey of being a parent.

"I went from being terrified and not knowing what to do, to being one of the favorite dads around

that all the kids (at the residence) would come talk to and want to play with," Caleb said.

Darling remembers the Fleemans fondly, and how Oliver and the other babies would get excited and run to the door when Caleb came to visit. "Kathleen and Caleb treated all residents and staff like family and were such a joy to be around," she said. "I can recall their love for each other, their son, and the MiraVia community, that has really left a lasting impression."

Grateful And Blessed

The Fleemans appreciate the support they received from MiraVia which gave them a stable environment in Oliver's early years. Kathleen graduated on time with a degree in accounting from Belmont Abbey College in May 2023, and Caleb graduated from Pfeiffer University with a degree in English. Kathleen is now employed at the accounting firm where she interned during college, and Caleb is a teacher.

The couple married in October 2023 — on the same weekend as the MiraVia banquet. They recently purchased their first home and welcomed their second child in November.

"We know firsthand that MiraVia does not just support families, it is a family," Caleb said.

"MiraVia will always be an important part of our lives that made me into a mom, who graduated college, got a job, and was able to give her son the life he and I deserved," Kathleen added. "Oliver and I will forever know MiraVia as our first home, and we are eternally grateful for the love and community we received." BAC

SueAnn Howell is the Communications Director of MiraVia, a Catholic non-profit serving women and their families in the greater Charlotte, North Carolina area since 1994. For more information on MiraVia's College Residence and Outreach Center Programs, go to ***www.miravia.org****.*



At the heart of MiraVia's mission is the gift of life, so beautifully expressed in family love.

SCAN THE QR CODE
To find out how you can support Belmont Abbey's MiraVia Scholarship.

Donor-Centric Philanthropy

Have you considered your family and philanthropic goals? Now is the time to create or update your will or estate plan in order to:

- Provide for your family and cherished causes.
- Increase your income through philanthropic planning.
- Ensure your legacy and impact.

Learn about the most tax efficient way to give now and through your estate plan, and discover how donors like you benefit from thoughtful planning.

1876 Heritage Society

Belmont Abbey College
Office of Planned Giving
100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road
Belmont, NC 28012

704-461-6674
plannedgiving@bac.edu

Belmont Abbey College
EIN# 56-0547498

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE

This information is not intended as tax, legal or financial advice. Gift results may vary. Consult your personal financial advisor for information specific to your situation 19AB60. The names and images shown here are representative of typical donors and may or may not be actual donors to the organization. Under federal rules your benefits may be different from this example. Please contact us for your specific benefits. Copyright 2023 Crescendo Interactive, Inc. Used by permission.

A Homecoming 2025 Reflection

Monks, Marines and Crusaders



Col. Mike Fallon (far right) with Reconnaissance Team "Dublin City" in 1970

BY CLARK H. SUMMERS
Assistant Professor of Politics

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS of Belmont Abbey's 2025 Homecoming celebration was the return of Abbey alumnus Colonel Michael O. Fallon '68, United States Marine Corps, Retired. Colonel Fallon's visit afforded an opportunity to explore the decades-long connections between the Abbey and the US Marine Corps.



Mike Fallon (center) with the 1967 Abbey Soccer Team

Colonel Fallon was on campus for several reasons. First, as a special guest of the Crusader Men's Soccer team, he was on-hand to celebrate the anniversary of the Crusaders' competing for the 1966 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NAIA) Men's Soccer Championship. Second, Colonel Fallon also took the opportunity to offer a book-talk on his recently-published book, Hill 119: Defending a Reconnaissance Marine's OP, Vietnam, 1969-70, hosting a discussion open to both the Abbey community and the general public. Not surprisingly, the intersection between these two purposes – sports and military service - brought Michael and a group of other Abbey alumni together after the event for an informal lunchtime discussion about their common experiences and the shared connections between the Abbey, its distinctive campus life, and their service as Marines.

The book talk on Saturday,

CONTINUES ON PAGE 30



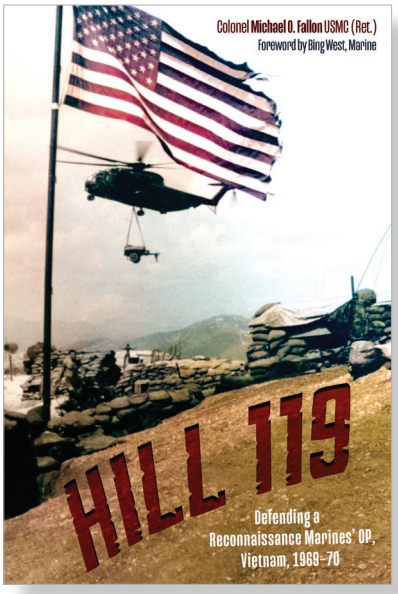
Scott Whitehead, Monte Monteleone, and Tony Dittmeier receive their Marine commissions in May 1971.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

October 4th took place in Holy Grounds coffee shop, and was very well attended. The entire Crusader Soccer team was present, alongside numerous military veterans of all services, making for an engaged and enthusiastic audience. Colonel Fallon took the opportunity to open his talk first with a shout-out to his fellow veterans and then another, enthusiastic "shout-out" to the athletes who would be taking the pitch later that afternoon.

A Military Tradition

Michael O. Fallon comes from a family with a long tradition of military service, particularly in the Marine Corps. During his time at Belmont Abbey College, prior to graduation in December of 1968, he also participated in the USMC Platoon Leaders Course (PLC), an officers commissioning program akin to the Reserve Officers Training Programs (ROTC) used by the other services. Additionally, Michael Fallon was a Varsity Soccer player and a starting member of the squad that competed for the NAIA National Championship in 1966. After completing his bachelor's degree coursework and his USMC training, Second Lieutenant (2LT) Fallon served as an Infantry and Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, seeing combat in Vietnam from 1969 through 1970. These experiences serve as the framework for his exhaustively researched and detailed account of Marine Corps combat operations in Hill 119. Colonel Fallon spoke for over ninety minutes and was still fielding questions from the audience as the talk came to a close.



Following the conclusion of the book-talk, Colonel Fallon invited any Abbey alumni present who had also served in the Marine Corps to join him at the Abbey dining hall for lunch. This led to the round-table discussion with Belmont Abbey graduates Monte Monteleone, Chris McDonald, and Bob Delaney. As with Michael O. Fallon, these three men had graduated from Belmont Abbey and subsequently served in the US Marine Corps across a decade-long period from the mid 1960's to the mid-70's.

Not surprisingly, the conversation turned into remembrances of common experiences and shared friends. Like Mike Fallon, Monte was raised in a Marine family; in fact, he is a self-described "Marine brat," having graduated from Camp Lejeune High School before coming to Belmont Abbey. Bob Delaney shared that his attraction to the Marines started as "hero worship," "Because of John Wayne!" Like Chris McDonald and Colonel Fallon, Monte would also participate in the USMC Platoon Leaders Course (PLC) and serve as a Marine Corps officer during the 1970's before leaving active duty to pursue a civilian career.



Monte Monteleone, Col. Fallon, Chris McDonald, and Bob Delaney (left to right) share their experiences as US Marines and as Abbey Crusaders.

Campus Brotherhood

But aside from the influence of family prior to college, all three veterans affirmed that there were other motivators that led to their service in the Marine Corps. One of the most significant of these was their joining the Phi Kappa Theta fraternity then active on the Belmont Abbey campus. Other fraternity brothers they remembered fondly in their discussion included: Scott Whitehead, John

…being a Crusader afforded its students the opportunity not just to receive an education, but also to become a part of legacies both ancient and modern: from the great Liberal Arts traditions of Christendom to offering service in one's community.

Hickey, Brian Murphy, and Tony Dittemeier. Mike, Monte, Chris, and Bob all attested to the close connection between the "Phi Kap" fraternity brothers and the active PLC program on campus, referring to it as "the ΦΚΘ-PLC pipeline."

The Crusader Identity

Although now inactive, Phi Kappa Theta ("Phi Kap") (ΦΚΘ) was a significant part of Abbey student life during this era. With roots dating back to 1889 and 1919, Phi Kappa Theta was founded as an expressly Catholic fraternity in 1959. As such, it was a natural fit within the Belmont Abbey College community from 1959 until 2012. According to the Phi Kappa Theta website, the mission of the fraternity is, "To actively develop men to be effective servant leaders who passionately serve society, Fraternity, and God." The fraternity motto, "Give, Expecting Nothing Thereof," was "a way brothers convey[ed] each day the responsibility… to be contributing members of our organizations and communities." It becomes immediately clear that the mission of a fraternity such as Phi Kappa Theta would dovetail well with the Benedictine hallmarks of Belmont Abbey College.

It is worth keeping in mind that the Abbey was a men's-only college until 1972.* This is relevant with regard to the shared identity across the multiple levels of the Abbey. The monastic community has always been dedicated to prayer and service, and it functions as the beating heart of the college. Participation in varsity sports was then an integral part of the Crusader identity (as it continues to be to the present day) by promoting self-discipline, sacrifice, and commitment to accomplishing team goals. Campus organizations such as the Phi Kappa Theta fraternity then reinforced this, meaning that the whole Abbey experience was dedicated to preparing young men to be husbands, fathers, and community leaders with an expressly Roman Catholic character.

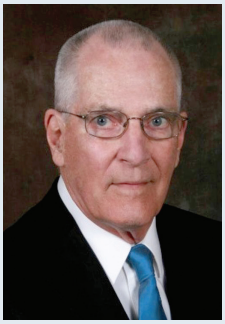
Perhaps this is the underlying and enduring legacy of Belmont Abbey's "ΦΚΘ-PLC pipeline"? Certainly, during the era of the 1960s and 70s, being a Crusader afforded its students the opportunity not just to receive an education, but also to become a part of legacies both ancient and modern: from the great Liberal Arts traditions of Christendom to offering service in one's community. Perhaps the most fortunate were those who are counted among "the few and the proud"? BAC

Dr. Clark H. Summers is an Assistant Professor of Politics at Belmont Abbey College and retired US Army officer.

** Women attended the Abbey prior to 1972 as day students. 1973 was the first year women began living on campus.*

In Heroic Service

Belmont Abbey College honors our many alumni veterans, especially those who have given their lives to defend our cherished freedoms.



Michael Snyder



Chuck Muller

In celebrating our veteran alumni, the Abbey wishes to mark the recent passing of two beloved Crusaders and United States Marines: Michael Snyder '62 and Anthony "Chuck" Muller '56, each of whom we remember with fondness and gratitude.

An Alumni Wall of Fame inductee and Board of Trustees member, Mike Snyder was one of the most exceptional benefactors and faithful supporters in Belmont Abbey's history. He received his honorable discharge from the US Marine Corps Reserves in 1967 and continued to serve his family, community, and alma mater with the same dedication and generosity until his death in January of 2024.

Chuck Muller enlisted in the Marine Corps at 17. A Korean War veteran and Gunnery Sergeant, Chuck always credited his discipline and attention to detail to his military training and experience. He was a faithful Abbey benefactor and an 1876 Heritage Society member, and he returned home to the Abbey at every opportunity. He passed away in March of 2025.

May God bless all of our alumni veterans.

Abbey Lane Update

CLASS NOTES

1960s

» **BOB KLINGENSMITH '64**
Bob is joining the Belmont Abbey Athletics Department Board.

» **JOSEPH OWEN RIDDER '66**
Joseph recently retired.

1970s

» **BOB SCHELLENBERG '73**
Congratulations to Bob on his three most recent grand-nephews and -nieces!

1980s

» **DONALD DORSEY JACK, JR. '84**
Donald has been working for The Duffie Company for the last 15 years as a Senior Property Accountant.

1990s

» **DEIDREA (GIBSON) GRAND '99**
Deidrea was inducted into the Lincoln County Sports Hall of Fame on February 21, 2026.

2000s

» **MELISSA MASCARI '05**
Melissa is a school psychologist who recently became a licensed psychological associate by the NC Psychology Board and started her own private practice, Grindstone Path Psychological Services, PLLC. She wishes to express thanks to Dr. Cote and Dr. Calhoun-Sauls, who helped foster her love of psychology and supported her in applying to graduate school. Her website is www.grindstonepsych.com



DAVID HELMLY '85 WINS AN EMMY® AWARD

DAVE RECEIVED A 2024 EMMY® AWARD this fall as Adobe's Director of Professional Video North America & Australia. He and Adobe were recognized for Technology and Engineering, in particular for Dave's work on "360-degree consumer and professional camera technology with Panoramic Image Stitching Algorithms and Software for immersive video production and seamless live streaming." Hearty congratulations to Dave and his team for this exceptional honor!

» **MARIA (TORRES) AND BOBBY PALSA '07**
Maria and Bobby just welcomed their second child, Maya Cecilia Palsa-Torres in September. She joins their son Leo (11 years old).

» **EMMA CAMP '09**
Emma has received international recognition for her groundbreaking work with coral reefs. The Explorer's Club recently named her one of "fifty people changing the world," and her story has appeared in Harpers Bazaar Australia.

2010s

» **ROSE (WAGNER) HOLGUIN '11**
Rose and Evan Holguin welcomed Juniper Clare on October 26! Juniper joined big sister Emilia and big brother James.

» **KAY (SCHELLENBERG) GARI '13**
Kay and Gabriel recently had a baby!

» **PARKER HOLLAND '13**
Parker was recently promoted to Deputy Director of Elections Administration at the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

» **LYDIA (SCHELLENBERG) STANLEY '14**
Lydia and Michael recently had a baby!

» **HANNAH (SCHELLENBERG) HELOW '15**
Hannah and Peter recently welcomed their fourth child, Blaise George Helow.

2020s

» **BRYANNA FARMER '20**
Bryanna was named National Jurist Law Student of the Year last spring "in recognition of her outstanding service to Campbell University Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law." Congratulations, Bryanna!

» **OLIVIA LYNN LICCIARDI '20**
Olivia moved back to NC this past year! She's now working towards a medical coding certification.

» **JASON & CLAUDIA MERLI '20**
Jason is currently attending the Kenan-Flagler business school at The University of North Carolina. Jason and Claudia were married in 2021, and have since welcomed two sons, Jack (2) and Dean (6 months).

» **ANNA DAVIS '23**
Anna recently took a promotion and company transfer to work for Deloitte as a consultant in the Office of the Deputy Assistant of War for Logistics.

» **BENJAMIN PATRICK FIELDING '23**
Benjamin is pursuing and completing his PhD in Kinesiology.

» **LINDSEY ELIZABETH SOMMERS '23**
Lindsey recently got engaged!

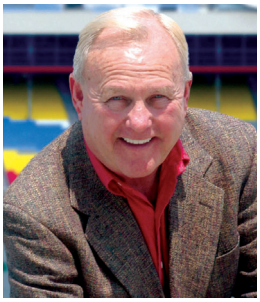
» **DANIEL EDWARD KORYCKI '24**
Daniel just welcomed a new baby

IN MEMORIAM JUNE 15 - DECEMBER 31, 2025

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

» HOWARD "HUMPY" WHEELER

Belmont, NC
August 20, 2025



A Belmont native and a 1956 Abbey Preparatory School graduate, Howard (Humpy) Wheeler, Jr. played a pivotal role in founding the college's renowned Motorsport Management program in 2007, placing his own, legendary contributions to the field of motorsport in the service of young people eager to make their mark on the industry. Wheeler's legacy will continue to bear fruit in the lives and careers of future motorsport stars.

Visit bac.edu/futurestars/ to see more about Humpy's legacy and impact.

» PATRICK BRADY '06

Queens, NY
November 8, 2025



Patrick Brady '06, died in the line of duty with the Fire Department of New York while responding to a five-alarm fire in Brooklyn, NY in November. We honor his service and pray for his wife, Kara, and the entire Brady family.



HAVE YOU RETIRED? MARRIED? Traveled somewhere exciting? Taken on a new job or welcomed a new baby? We'd love to hear from you! To be featured in the next issue of Belmont Abbey College Magazine, please email your life updates to **collegerelations@ bac.edu**

» **GERALD BAKER**
Plano, TX
July 25, 2025

» **BENJAMIN BANACH**
Tampa, FL
July 23, 2025

» **FREDERICK BEHRENDS**
Chapel Hill, NC
October 29, 2025

» **RITA (MANCINI) BENNETT**
Long Branch, NJ
July 21, 2025

» **JAMES "MARVIN" BROWN '63**
Charlotte, NC
December 28, 2025

» **BARBARA (MONTEATH) BUCHANAN**
Asheville, NC
August 25, 2025

» **DR. DONALD CRESSWELL '65**
Chestnut Hill, PA
June 19, 2025

» **SR. MAUREEN DEES**
Belmont, NC
December 2025

» **EDUARDO DE TORRES '73**
Newton, NC
October 23, 2025

» **HELMUT DEUSSEN**
Charlotte, NC
October 4, 2025

» **JACKSON DUNN, JR.**
Charlotte, NC
November 22, 2025

» **CHRISTOPHER DUX '77**
Paris, TX
October 21, 2025

» **RICHARD EASTON '72**
Palm Beach, FL
August 21, 2025

» **DONALD FREDELL '59**
Houston, TX
November 16, 2025

» **WILLIAM HALLMARK, JR.**
Hockley, TX
October 9, 2025

» **CLARA "BECKY" INGLE**
Greensboro, NC
December 25, 2025

» **DONALD KANIPE**
Gainesville, FL
December 28, 2025

» **JANE (HARRILL) KEEVER**
Murrels Inlet, SC
June 18, 2025

» **DANIEL MARKOWSKI '70**
Newtown, PA
November 26, 2025

» **ROBERT "BOB" MUELLER**
Wausaukee, WI
September 15, 2025

» **JOHN NAGEL**
Winston-Salem, NC
September 11, 2025

» **JAMES O'CONNELL**
Onancock, VA
December 20, 2025

» **BLAISE PLAGEMAN '63**
Collinsville, VA
September 1, 2025

» **THOMAS STEVENS**
Raleigh, NC
July 17, 2025

» **EDWARD TOBIASSON '69**
Red Bank, NJ
September 24, 2025

» **HEATHER WALLACE**
Huntersville, NC
June 29, 2025

» **FLYNN WARREN, JR.**
Decatur, GA
August 1, 2025

» **GARY VARNADORE**
Lancaster, SC
June 27, 2025

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE

100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Rd.
Belmont, NC 28012
bac.edu

Consider giving to
the Abbey today.



SAVE THE DATE!

CELEBRATING 1876~2026 150 YEARS

WE LOOK FORWARD TO CELEBRATING OUR 150th ANNIVERSARY TOGETHER!

HOMECOMING

Oct. 3-5, 2026

1876-2026

Belmont Abbey COLLEGE
150th ANNIVERSARY