

# THE ALMANIAN

Summer 2008 Edition

Serving Alma College since 1907

## HOPE FOR ECUADOR



Photo Courtesy of Emily Neil

A country path outside of Quito, Ecuador. Without intervention, Ecuador will be unable to protect its natural environment.

### *Chevron urges lobbyists to displace blame*

BY AARON POOLEY  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The election of Barack Obama could bring an end to a five year dispute between oil giant Chevron and the government of Ecuador.

The Ecuadoran government seeks compensation for the toxic waste dumped into its Amazon rainforests by the Texaco Corporation, bought out by Chevron in 2001, the year that the legal battle began.

This could cost Chevron up to \$16 billion dollars if U.S. trial lawyers are successful, and Chevron, through the aid of U.S. government lobbyists, hopes to continue to lock Ecuador into a legal stalemate.

*Please see Chevron, Page 2*

### *The Almanian website to launch soon*

BY JONATHAN MORLEY  
WEBMASTER

Soon, *the Almanian* will have a new website and a new look. Students will be able to read, print, and archive articles on-line. Scheduled for deployment shortly after the start of the fall term, the new website will provide Alma students, staff, and faculty—along with other interested readers—with online access to news, feature, opinion, and sports.

Keep your eyes open—the new website will be unveiled shortly.

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## Gasoline prices rising?

BY SIMONE MISHLER  
NEWS EDITOR

“I might as well be bleeding into my gas tank!” was the first thing I heard stepping out of my car at the local Sunoco station.

Looking to the pump next to me, I saw the disgruntled voice came from the owner of a yellow H2 Hummer. The price of gasoline had reached a low for the summer at \$3.56 per gallon, which meant that everyone in the county was filling up.

Although, after a 20-minute wait, most consumers were still dissatisfied with the summer’s lowest fuel price.

There is no doubt that Americans are concerned about fuel prices. The rise in cost for gasoline is reflected in the rising price of consumer goods. Grain prices reached an all-time high this June, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with the prices of livestock and other crops not far behind.

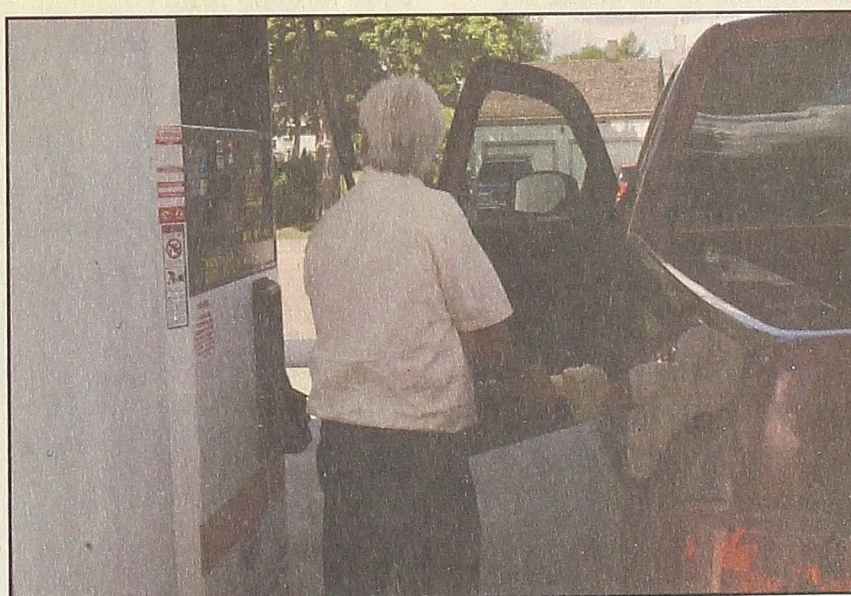


Photo Courtesy of Skip Traynor

Just the thought of traveling to the gas station can be as painful as paying up at the register.

But even with the rise in gasoline prices affecting the rest of the consumer market, it is still relatively inexpensive.

Today, a gallon of gas costs a fluctuating average of \$3.77, according to the Energy Information Administration.

When adjusted for inflation the price of a gallon of gasoline in 1922 was \$3.11. The 66-cent increase, over 86 years, does

not seem to reflect the “skyrocketing” prices that most Americans seem to be talking about.

From a global perspective, Americans are getting a great deal on fuel.

The United States ranked the 45th cheapest nation out of 155 countries surveyed to buy gas in a study done by AIRINC.

While gas lingers between

\$3 to \$4 per gallon in the U.S. most European countries pay more than \$8 per gallon.

Gas prices are not soaring in every part of the world. In many oil-producing nations gasoline prices are incredibly low. In Venezuela gas is sold for 12 cents per gallon. These low prices drive the demand for oil upward inflating the price of oil worldwide.

The rising price of oil is felt in every part of the world, Americans are just paying more in relative terms.

In Europe the taxes paid on gasoline average around \$4 per gallon, so an extra \$2 paid at the pump does not reflect a major change. The tax on gasoline in the United States in comparison is around 18 cents per gallon, making the rise in price more noticeable to the American consumer.

The noticeable increase in gasoline prices is changing the way that Americans spend

*Please see Gasoline, Page 2*

**AP**  
ASSOCIATED  
COLLEGIATE  
PRESS

### CAMPUS UPDATES

The Princeton Review  
names Alma College one  
of the  
“Best in the Midwest.”

A campus emergency notification system is underway to notify students and faculty as soon as an emergency occurs.

New washing machines purchased for residence halls conserving gallons of water per load.



## Chevron...from page 1

But Attorney Steven Donziger, with the help of his former classmate Barack Obama, could deliver Chevron's lobbyists a knockout punch.

"The two were basketball buddies at Harvard Law School. In several meetings in Obama's office, Donziger showed his old friend graphic photos of toxic oil pits and runoffs. He also argued strongly that Chevron was trying to subvert the "rule of law" by doing an end run on an Ecuadoran legal case," said Newsweek reporter Michael Isikoff.

Over a period of 20 years, ending in 1992, Texaco dumped

more than 19 billion gallons of toxic oil waste on Ecuadoran soil.

Cancer rates have skyrocketed in the areas closest to the dumping sites, as well as "spontaneous abortion rates," according to one Amnesty International report.

Since Chevron bought out Texaco, and therefore claims they are not directly responsible for the toxic waste, Chevron wishes to substitute financial compensation for a "clean up plan" designed by the corporation itself.

Chevron claims that Ecuador is abusing the corporation to

advance the country's wealth.

"We can't let little countries screw around with big companies like this—companies that have made big investments around the world," said a Chevron lobbyist.

"An Obama spokesman last week said the senator "stands by his position" that the case is a "matter for the Ecuadoran judicial system," said Isikoff.

Barack Obama's stance could be enough to stall Chevron for the moment, but as to how the Obama camp will slow Chevron's lobbying groups is yet to be seen.

## Campus and community connect

*Service Week  
to offer new  
perspectives on  
community volunteer opportunities*

BY AARON POOLEY  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Many of us on this campus at some time may have experienced the feeling of being somewhat tucked away from major projects and events that are an assumed part of larger colleges and universities.

It may even be felt at times that because our campus is smaller than most, that any outside work that we do would equally have a small impact on the world around us.

Throughout the years, however, Alma College has time and time again shown that this is simply not the case.

Service Week, beginning September 8, opens with a community and organizational fair offering the opportunity to meet active participants in not-for-profit organizations and local



Photo Courtesy of Alisa Dean

Taking a few, free hours of the afternoon to help clean up the grounds of Masonic Pathways is one of many ways to volunteer one's time in the Alma community.

businesses involved in service life.

The community and organizational fair will take place from 4:30 to 6:30 P.M.

At 5 P.M. a student picnic will be offered on the Chapel lawn.

Also on Monday, Mentor PLUS and Big Brothers Big Sisters will hold a back-to-school Mentor Kickoff with Service Learning and the Kiltie Korner Bookstore sponsoring a scavenger hunt and other games during the student picnic.

Following the picnic, an Alternative Break meeting will

allow students and community members to hear about student's travel experiences during Winter Break.

On Wednesday of Service Week the Center for Responsible Leadership will host Woodrow Wilson Fellow, Barbara Gottschalk.

Gottschalk is the founder of Seeds for Peace. She will speak at 7:30 P.M. at the Heritage Center.

For more information on these events, contact Alisa Dean at dean@alma.edu.



Photo Courtesy of Alisa Dean

AmeriCorp VISTA, Alisa Dean, works on a painting project at the senior center. After completion this sign would serve as an announcement board.

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### For More Info, Contact:

09salaza@alma.edu

## AD SALES MANAGED BY SIFE.

## Gasoline...from page 1

their summers.

The typical family vacation has become what has been coined the "stay-cation." Instead of driving, families are now looking for locations close to home where they can bond.

In the month of July, gasoline consumption fell 3.6 percent according to the Energy Department. Following the decline in consumption, crude oil prices fell more than \$2 per barrel—the greatest decline in crude oil prices since December 2004.

The increase in fuel prices is also changing the type of car the American market is now demanding. Having taken advantage of low fuel prices over past decades most motor companies have focused on designing trucks and sport utility vehicles for the American market.

Now smaller and hybrid vehicles are the development focus of major automotive manufacturers. Nissan Motor Company announced that it expects to sell an electric car in the United States and Japan by the year 2010.

It does not look like the price of gas will be falling anytime soon. Americans may denounce the rise in cost, may drive less, and may even change the type of cars they drive; but there is little hope for lower prices at the pump.

Next time you are filling up it may help to put a new perspective on how much you are spending in gas as compared to other fuels. Is Starbucks your fuel of choice?

Starbucks' lattes cost the equivalent of \$23 per gallon. And beer? Budweiser beer costs about \$11 per gallon.

----August 28----

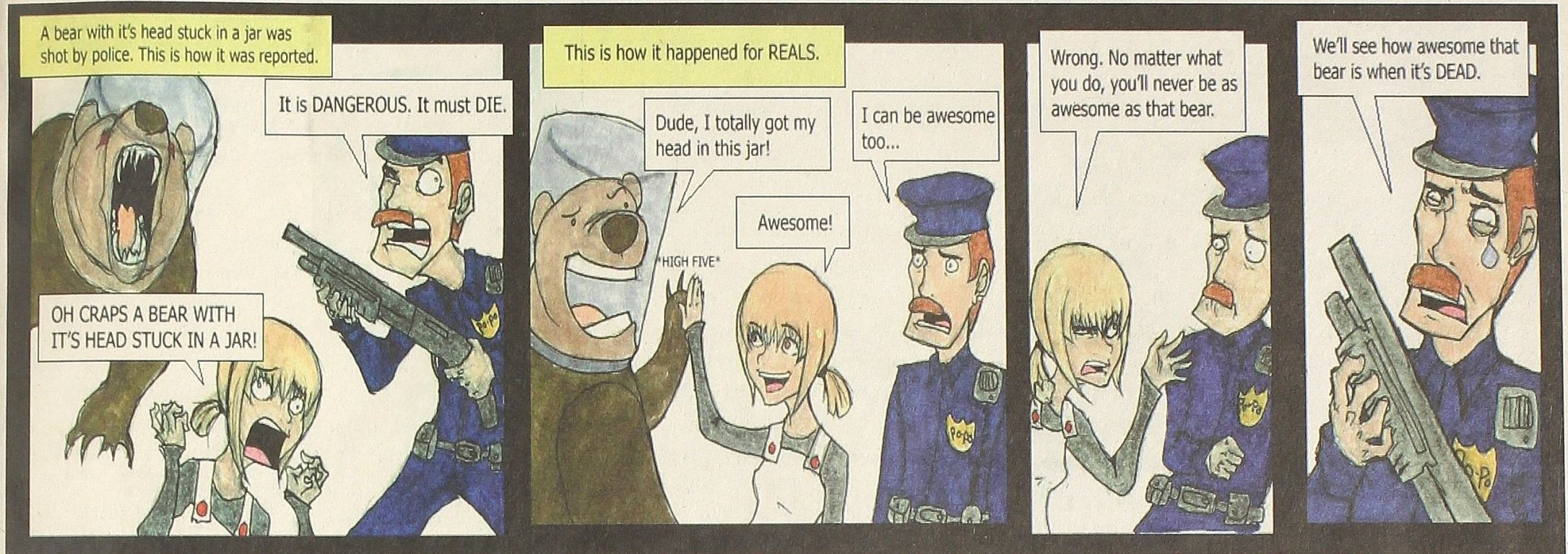
## Community Cafe

5-7 P.M.

MEET AT CHAPEL STEPS AT 4:45 P.M.



## AWKWARD MISCONCEPTIONS BY CHRIS SCHNEIDER



## Can Batman sink the Titanic?

BY LAUREN SYPNIEWSKI  
FEATURE EDITOR

"You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain," said Harvey "Two-Face" Dent in this sequel to the 2005 "Batman Begins."

The film commences with the introduction of the Joker and his minions, whom the Joker promptly kills after their service is no longer needed.

Contrary to "Batman Begins," the sequel focuses less on the Gotham city mobsters; however, they do pay off the Joker to kill Batman, and here is what drives the action for most of the film.

**Criticism revolving around Ledger and his role is perhaps enhanced by the actor's premature and unexpected death shortly after completing the filming for "The Dark Knight."**

"The Dark Knight" shocked fans and critics alike with its skyrocketing sales.

As of July 29 the film had grossed a total worldwide amount of \$462.2 million. The 3,040 American and Canadian theaters that showed midnight premieres of the film alone raked in \$18.5 million and many theaters added 3 and 6 AM show times in addition to the

midnight showing.

Opening day was July 18 for the United States, and the film broke the single-day box office record with \$67.85 million, surpassing the previous title-wearer "Spiderman 3," which brought in \$59.8 million.

"The Dark Knight" also broke the record for opening weekend with \$158.4 million, again beating "Spiderman 3."

Many wonder whether or not "The Dark Knight" can "sink 'Titanic'" as it were, and take the title of the top-grossing film of all time. However, the two films have already very opposing histories. Not only are they from completely different genres, but also "Titanic" only grossed \$28.6 million in its opening weekend.

Furthermore, "Titanic" remained in theaters for nine months after its opening on December 19, 1997, and holds name of top-grossing film with an astounding \$600.8 in total ticket sales.

Dan Fellman, president of distribution for Warner Brothers remarks on the matter that: "You can't compare this movie to 'Titanic.'" There's never been another movie like this [Titanic]. We are honored to be considered in that company. But I think "Titanic" will hold that record for eternity."

Besides the talk of money that the film is reeling in, much conversation is directed towards Ledger's interpretation of the Joker.

Criticism revolving around Ledger and his role is perhaps enhanced by the actor's premature and unexpected death shortly after complet-

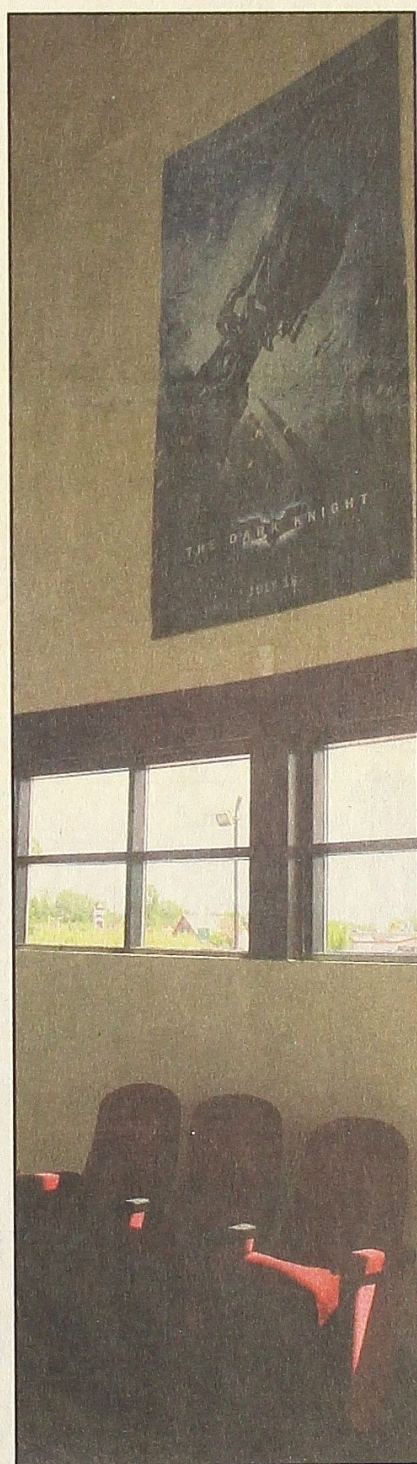


Photo Courtesy of Skip Traynor

**"The Dark Knight" continues to top box office charts.**

ing the filming for "The Dark Knight."

Nevertheless, his dark and riveting performance thrilled audiences and fans, as Ledger brought a different perspective to the Joker and his psyche.

Critics everywhere seem to

reserve most of their positive opinions to Ledger's performance.

Peter Travers of "Rolling Stone" states that Ledger's darker interpretation brings the Joker away from Jack Nicholson's more comic performance of the same role.

David Denby of "The New Yorker" saves perhaps his only compliment for Ledger, saying that his "sinister and frightening" performance is the film's only achievement.

A month previous to shooting, Ledger lived alone in a hotel room sorting out his interpretation of the role: the voice, walk, psyche, thoughts, and feelings. He recorded all of this in a journal.

Christopher Nolan directs the film for his seventh Batman movie. The film is the first non-animated Batman movie not to use the word "Batman" in the title. Although scenes of London and Hong Kong can be found throughout the film, the sequel was filmed primarily in Chicago where it was given the pseudonym "Rory's First Kiss" to avoid publicity.

Contrary to most superhero movies, this film seems to focus not on what makes a hero, but what does not.

Batman actor Christian Bale echoes this theme along with the words of Harvey "Two Face" Dent: "Now you have not just a young man in pain attempting to find some kind of an answer, you have somebody who actually has power, who is burdened by that power, and is having to recognize the difference between attaining that power and holding on to it."

## New year, new look

BY AARON POOLEY  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

There is much more in store for the *Almanian* than simply an aesthetic adjustment.

As we all transition into a new year of course loads, extra-curricular activities, service opportunities, and social adventures, our staff feels that the printed media that represents the diverse needs of Alma's students should transition too.

For those familiar with this newspaper in the past, the move from a tabloid-size newspaper to broadsheet stirs the need for more coverage of campus, community, regional and national events.

It is our responsibility as the press to deliver news that is not only appropriate to its respective audience, but also to encourage a broader standpoint on how our readers view the world around them.

Each issue will include dates and times for upcoming service events to better communicate the importance of volunteer participation by this campus.

Letters to the Editor are strongly encouraged. This is your opportunity to share with our staff and campus readership your stance on the issues concerning Alma College.

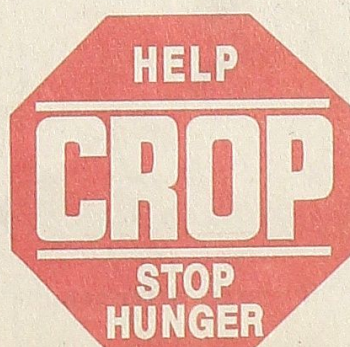
And do not hesitate to contact our news desk for potential leads. Your input as the reader is vital to maintain accurate and applicable news media.

Our staff have many people to thank for their help in preparing this year's *Almanian*.

This year the *Almanian* and SIFE have teamed up to better serve the businesses that support this publication.

And many thanks go to Skip Traynor and Ken Tabacsko, our advisors, and to Beth Pellerito for her guidance in preparing this edition.

Look for more information in the next edition on how to participate in the Gratiot County CROP Walk



# End Hunger.



## The United States VS. China

By **CHELSEA CLARK**  
SPORTS EDITOR

In order for the average Alma student to attend the Beijing Olympics, which start August 8, they would need \$8,505 just for a round trip ticket, a hotel room, and a couple of tickets to the actual events.

No one, however, needs to shell out that kind of money to watch the games as NBC plans on airing full coverage of the 122 events that will take place this August.

Ever since it was announced in 2001 that China would hold the 2008 Summer Olympics, China has spent billions in preparation while the global community has discussed their human rights violations.

The possibility of a boycott was thrown around frequently, and the Chinese government has set up three separate demonstration sites around the city in an effort to control the protesting.

The Chinese see these Olympics as their chance to win big on a global stage.

In 2004, at the conclusion of the Athens Olympics, China came in second in the gold medal tally, beating out Russia and falling short of the United States by only four medals.

***Women's softball will be fighting for their fourth and final gold medal.***

Since then, China has made strategic efforts to ensure they come in first in 2008.

In most cases, the strengths of the United States and China are not in the same events.

One event in which that is not the case is women's gymnastics. In the past two years, China and the United States have flip flopped world team titles each by less than a point.

The United States roster boasts 25 individual world med-

als and holds the current world title, but on August 13 they will be competing against the Chinese in their home gymnasium.

Otherwise the race for the most golds will come down to who can make the most of each of their strengths.

China will put its faith in Wang Liqin and Guo Yue, the leaders of their table tennis teams. They are also thought to take gold in judo, weightlifting, and badminton.

The United States delegation is putting its hopes in some familiar faces. Men's basketball is working on putting together a dream team that will actually have a dream performance. Its leaders are set to be Kobe Bryant, LeBron James and Dwyane Wade.

The faces of swimming will be Michael Phelps for the men and Dara Torres for the women. Phelps won six gold medals in Athens and will be trying to enter the record books

with a record breaking eight gold medals in a single Olympics this time around. Torres will be competing in her fifth Olympics.

The 41 year old mother will be swimming in three races while fighting off the suspicions of reporters.

Women's softball will be fighting for their fourth and final gold medal.

It will be their final because the Olympic committee has voted to remove both softball and baseball from future Olympic competitions.

The sports were declared too American for the world stage. They are the first sports to be removed from the line up since polo in 1936.

Track and field are working on rebuilding their image this summer after the doping charges that have tested the sport as of late.

Especially with the backlash created by the arrest of former track star Marion Jones.

China's national icon is hurdler Liu Xiang. Xiang is the first Chinese athlete to win a gold in track and field and that feat has pushed him to superstardom in China, even bigger than basketball star Yao Ming.

Also, Tyson Gay, an American, and Usain Bolt of Jamaica will attempt to bring honor and glory to their sport with a tight race for the title of "world's fastest man."

Citius, altius, fortius is the Olympic motto which means faster, higher, stronger.

Starting August 8 the world will be united as they watch and cheer for their athletes as they attempt to swim faster, jump higher, and be stronger than their competitors.

Few of us will be able to make the trip to Beijing, but from the comforts of our living rooms we can watch the rivalries, politics, heartbreaks and triumphs that the 2008 summer Olympics are sure to provide.



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## the Almanian

"ALMA COLLEGE'S STUDENT RUN NEWSPAPER SERVING THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1907."

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Almanian is a newspaper published not only for the students at this institution, not just for the faculty on campus, and not solely for the administrators who work for Alma, but for all people interested in Alma College and the lives it touches. The writers, editors, publishers, and distributors of this newspaper are dedicated to producing an interesting, accurate, timely, fun, and error free newspaper on a weekly basis in order to inform and educate the people for whom it is intended about the culture and nature of Alma College.