

The Almanian

Volume CI

Issue 9

Friday, November 16, 2007

"Serving Alma College Since 1907"

UNDER THE COVER

Newly elected city officials are sworn in, the community ice rink is set to return, and the city's little league bears cost for field face-lifts.

SEE NEWS PG. 2

Comedy Central television host Stephen Colbert releases I Am America (And So Can You!).

SEE FEATURE PG. 4

Overly involved students face recurring problems.

SEE OPINION PG. 5

Students lead the way in creating Alma College's first-ever ski team.

SEE SPORTS PG. 7

BY THE NUMBERS

1621

The year when the first Thanksgiving was celebrated by the Plymouth colonists and the Wampanoag Indians.

1941

The year when President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving.

3

The number of places in the United States named Turkey.

INDEX

NEWS.....1-2
FEATURE.....3-4
OPINION.....5-6
SPORTS.....7-8

Sigma Chi hosts Derby Days, sees great success

HADLEY BOEHM
STAFF WRITER

"Derby Days is one of those events that highlights some of the reasons why I joined Greek life at Alma College: life-long brotherhood, service, and having an great time in the process," said Sigma Chi brother Will Allen (09).

This year, the brothers of Sigma Chi hosted Derby Days from October 28 through November 2.

Derby Days is a traditional fundraiser that chapters of the fraternity across the

U.S. and Canada put on to raise money for charity. The money that is raised is given to Sigma Chi's two official philanthropic organizations: the Children's Miracle Network and the Huntsman Cancer Institute.

"Derby Days has been a wonderful experience. ... It is a chance to assist two inspiring charitable organizations. I had the opportunity to visit the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Utah over the summer. While there, I witnessed the stories, innovation, and need surrounding cancer research.

The visit reinforced my belief in service," said Allen.

The first Derby Days was hosted by the Sigma Chi brothers at the University of California, Berkeley in 1933. Since then, it has evolved and, in the 1960s, took on a philanthropic approach becoming what it is today.

Derby Days is a week long event in which the sororities are asked to participate and compete. "The sororities did an amazing job and put in a lot of effort during the week. The entire chapter

SEE DERBY PG. 2

College deepens Ecuadorian relationship

THOMAS MCGUIRE
STAFF WRITER

While Alma College has maintained a close relationship with La Academia Latino Americano in Quito, Ecuador, for over eight years through its study-abroad and spring term programs, several members of Alma's senior administration and faculty recently traveled to Quito to discuss the next stage of this relationship, which could potentially yield huge benefits for both institutions.

"What's happening is [La Academia Americano] is in the process of beginning an accredited college. What we were talking with them about was the possible ways that their college and our college can interact in the future," said Michael Selmon, provost of Alma College.

Completion of this accreditation process could potentially benefit Alma students in several ways.

"One benefit is the plan for an English-language institute down [in Ecuador]. It means that Alma students who go to Ecuador will have a whole new set of courses that they can take," said Selmon. "It won't just be the language courses now; it will be courses particularly in the areas of business, international business, entrepreneurship, environmental sciences, and biology."

One of the more exciting developments, however, may come to fruition as early as 2011.

"The other main thing we've talked about is the possibility of their students transferring to Alma and finishing their degree at Alma," said Selmon.

According to Selmon, he expects as many as several dozen South American students each year to take this opportunity and come to Alma.

The nationality of each individual student arriving from La Academia Americano will not be limited solely to Ecuadorians.

SEE MANN PG. 2

SEE ECUADOR PG. 2

Journalist reflects on America's history



Photo by Tony Rosenblum

While on campus Charles C. Mann discussed his most popular book, *1491*, and gave a preview of his upcoming piece. Both discuss discoveries that question current thoughts on the first Americans.

HADLEY BOEHM
STAFF WRITER

"Only at a place like Alma College would a chemist be introducing a journalist who is writing about archaeology," said Melissa Strait of the chemistry department as she introduced Charles C. Mann Monday night in the Heritage Center.

Mann is perhaps most well known for his 2005 book, *1491* in which he discusses the origins, population size, culture, and environmental influence of the peoples living in the Americas prior to the arrival of Columbus and the Spanish in 1492. The ideas he shares in this book fly in the face of most traditional

thought concerning when the first peoples arrived, how many there were, and their impact on the environment.

Mann is a journalist by trade and has served as a correspondent for numerous prominent magazines.

In the May 2007 issue of *National Geographic*, Mann authored an article titled "Colonial Landscapes: America, Found & Lost," which discusses an alternate theory of his and a growing number within the science community - what Europeans actually encountered upon their first visits to the New World.

The following is an excerpt from this article that he includes on his website.

"In movies and textbooks, the [Jamestown] colonists are often depicted as arriving in a pristine forest of ancient trees, small bands of Indians gliding, silent as ghosts, beneath the canopy. ... In fact, the three English ships landed in the middle of a small but rapidly expanding Indian empire called Tsenacomoco."

Keeping with the theme of both his well known book and many of his articles, Mann addressed some of what he and others believe to be popular misconceptions about American history.

Mann said that many scientists are now finding data that suggests the first humans in the Americas did

Ecuador from pg. 1...

"It is so wonderful because these students that will be coming are not only from Ecuador. They will be coming from Columbia, Brazil, from Argentina and from Panama," said Margarita Krakusin, professor of Spanish at Alma.

In regards to what classes the visiting students would take, "Our hope is that the students coming from Ecuador are not just taking classes in their major," said Selmon. "They'll come to Alma, take classes in various departments and distributive requirements and, in that sense, they'll spread themselves across the community."

The present developments would not have been possible without Krakusin, who

pioneered Alma's relationship with Quito eight years ago.

"I've always been crazy about giving the opportunity to the students to see the world for themselves, because I know that, when you do [travel] when you are young, you will be more likely to continue to travel and knowing people."

Krakusin is extremely excited about the cultural and academic implications for both the Alma and South American students.

"The Ecuadorian students will come here and they will be able to see how the American kids live in the dormitory, how they do things, and what they do during the weekends. That will be really neat," she said.

Krakusin's Ecuadorian

colleagues also share her excitement about the opportunities that this development affords.

"They are crazy about this because it is an opportunity for them to have an American college degree after being in the states for one year. And for our students it's the same situation. [They] will have the opportunity, if they want, to have a double degree, one in Ecuador and one in America," she said.

The program, however, has been met with some caution by Alma faculty.

"Of course everybody is a little cautious about any [new] project, but I think that, with this project, Alma doesn't have anything to lose," said Krakusin.

Mann from pg. 1...

not arrive 12,000 years ago via the Bering Strait as previously accepted, but more likely arrived 20,000-35,000 years ago.

Mann also cited examples of massive cities such as Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan in South America and Cahokia in North America to counter the claim that all early Americans lived in small hunter gatherer groups with simple shelters.

He said that populations were probably much higher before 1492, and the wilderness observed by early settlers was "created by an inadvertent slaughter of Native Americans by European disease."

In addition, Mann discussed the previously unexamined impact of early inhabitants on the environment, saying "native peoples weren't perfect stewards of the environment." He gave examples like the

mounds, man-made canals and logging in Cahokia, raised highways in the flooded Amazon basin, and the creation of artificial soil to show that native people often participated in what he called "large-scale reshaping of the environment."

"Scientists revise explanations based on new information, and here's a chance to see a guy who's interacting with local cultures and has the skill to write about it," said John Leipzig of the Center for Responsible Leadership.

Mann has turned upside-down the stories that many are taught in high school. Instead of the picture of untamed wilderness, occupied by few simple people that comes to mind for many, Mann suggests that well before Columbus "the whole of the Americas was touched, [and] they bore the mark of human hands."

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Derby from pg. 1...

is extremely grateful for their support," said **Matt Foley (09)**, Sigma Chi brother and Derby Days chair.

At Alma, Derby Days is run based on a point system in which each event has a certain point value. The higher a group places, the more points it receives. At the end of the week the sorority/fraternity with the most points is announced as the winner.

Most brothers serve as coaches acting as a liaison between the sorority and the fraternity. They also participate with the sororities in the traditional activities that happen throughout the week.

Perhaps the most noticeable event was the "Change War" in Hamilton Commons. Each of the sororities had a container into which coins could be added for positive points. Paper money could be used as negative points.

Another popular activity was the Brother Auction, where brothers were sold to the highest bidder. They were bought by sisters from any of the sororities, or from other brothers to do chores in the fraternity house. Other events included a Brother Hunt and Derby Rock, a mock rock dance that each sorority rehearses and performs.

Each year, Derby Days has some competitions based around its theme. This year's theme was the "Sigma Chi Games," based ESPN's X-Games, and the final event of the week was a Road Rally picture scavenger hunt.

The sisters of Alpha Xi Delta were this year's Derby Day victors. As a thank you for their participation and support, the brothers of Sigma Chi always invite the winning sorority over to the fraternity house and cook them breakfast. In addition, the winning sorority receives part of the money raised to donate toward its own philanthropy.

At a national level, all undergraduate chapters of the fraternity have raised over \$4.2 million for charity. "This year, our chapter was very successful in raising a very large donation for the Children's Miracle Network," said Foley. Donations for the week totaled just over \$3000.

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Outside the 'Bubble'

SIMONE MISHLER
STAFF WRITER

New Officials Sworn In

The four newly elected commissioners were sworn into service. Larry Mott will be a new face to the commission while Lisa Comer, Greg Mapes, and Melvin Nyman are returning to service. When the commission reconvenes for the new calendar year, newly elected officials will begin their terms. Mott will then be an active member of the commission. The whole commission thanked those who chose to exercise their vote. Voter turnout was higher for this year's election compared to past

years.

Ice Rink for City and College Use

An ice rink maintained by the college will be available for both student and community use. The resolution, approved by the commission, allowed the city and college to enter into a maintenance and operations contract. The availability of the rink is still to be determined - but the year's schedule has been proposed.

Award Received

The Distinguished Budget Presentation Award has been presented to the City of Alma for the eleventh

consecutive time. This award is the highest honor granted for government budgeting. Alma's fiscal year budget for 2007 received the award from the Government Finance Officers Association. Alma is one of 29 cities receiving the honor out of thousands of eligible governments.

Little Leaguers Take Initiative

Alma's Little League Association has chosen to take responsibility for bearing the costs of rehabilitating their ball fields. The total cost of the project will be \$1808.87 and focuses on restoring quality to the restroom facilities. New fixtures and doors will be installed. The commissioners thanked the group for taking the initiative to gather funds

for the project.

Commissioner's Comments

Mayor Nyman, wearing a Marine City sweatshirt, admitted to losing a bet over the Alma High School football team's regional playoff game. The bet, made with the mayor of Marine City, was on the outcome of the match. Had the Alma panthers won, the Marine City mayor would have had to go about daily business wearing a kilt. Since the panthers were defeated, Nyman was to go about his mayoral duties supporting the victors. "I think I got the better deal of the bet," said Nyman about his loss.

The two foot bridges in Alma have recently been tested to ensure that they are

structurally sound. After concerns had been raised about the bridges' state, the commission had them checked for public safety. Phillip Moore, city manager, confirmed that the bridges are sound to "reassure that the public is safe."

"It has been an amazing season for Alma sports," said City Attorney Charles Fortino. The commission congratulated Alma High's football and volleyball teams for their playoff performances, as well as acknowledged the Scot's respectable football record.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled City Commissions meeting is at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, November 27, at City Hall

visit: www.ci.alma.mi.us

When telling jokes, females are tougher to please than males

BRITTANY LEWIS
STAFF WRITER

There are many ways men and women differ: socially, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Another difference is comedy.

Men's humor is so much simpler than women's. While talking to a friend about the differences at lunch - explaining how he laughed at almost anything - I observed him making a smiley face on his hand with whipped cream and giggling. As he did this, he stated, "As long as the person telling the joke doesn't truly believe what they're saying, it's funny."

"I don't like people being derogatory," he said and complimented himself on using a big word. A couple guys around him agreed that if the jokes were meant to hurt people, they weren't funny. One told me that he preferred random jokes like "that's what she said," and "your face."

Women's humor is more logical. "I love inside jokes. In the sorority, I can say something about, 'Do you remember that one time...'" and people will know what I'm talking about," one girl at lunch told me. The table of sorority sisters agreed on the fact that they loved movie quotes and "The Office."

One woman I asked stated that



Kat McPeak, Ana Galloway, and Elena Cangelosi laugh together over an inside joke -- one form of female preferred humor

Photo by Anthony Rosenblum

it would be easier to make a list of jokes that she doesn't like. "I don't like kicking people when they're down, 'The Simpsons', racism to be mean, people throwing up, and making fun of [mentally] retarded people," she said.

Asking a group of guys about the difference between men and women's humor, they said, "sexual and not sexual." They said that what they like is "Family Guy", "The Simpsons", and "Super Bad". They also

said, "I hate jokes that have to be explained and inside jokes. If you can think about the joke for a while and then understand it, that's alright, but not when it has to be explained." They also enjoy dirty humor and "that's what she said" jokes.

One thing that men and women agreed on is that they like sexual innuendos. "I think women can be even more perverted than men sometimes," a man I talked to stated. "Sexual innuendos are even more fun if you think about

them for a minute," another mentioned.

"Men try to one up each other. They are always trying to do one better. Women are trying to make bonds," I was told by a guy I talked to in the cafeteria. This is supported by a joke I found on ahajokes.com, "If Gloria, Suzanne, Debra and Michelle go out for lunch, they will call each other Gloria, Suzanne, Debra and Michelle. But if Mike, Phil, Rob and Jack go out for a brewsky, they will affectionately

refer to each other as Fat Boy, Godzilla, Peanut-Head and Useless."

It is shown in studies that different parts of the brain are used by men and women when processing the same jokes. Women use the more analytical region of their brain more than men do when processing what's funny. This study, done by Allan L. Reiss, a Stanford University psychiatrist, shows that women don't think that they will laugh, so it is more rewarding when the joke is funny.

When men process something that is funny, it resembles the thought process "Oh! A joke. Must be funny. Funny is good!" Which proves what comedians have been trying to tell us - women make tougher crowds. They analyze everything before the jokes start; they have to scrutinize what you're wearing and how you present yourself.

When women tell something funny, it will typically be a story like, "You'll never guess what happened to me today in the grocery store!" Men are more simplistic and enjoy humor in nicknames and making fun of each others' shortcomings.

So if you want to entertain women, make it funny and look good doing it. If you want to entertain men, find a shiny object!

John Rybicki lights up the campus with the power of language

AARON POOLEY
STAFF WRITER

Visiting professor in creative writing, John Rybicki, provides a new perspective on the poetic craft by challenging writers of all ages to explore what they might have never known possible in their thoughts and passions.

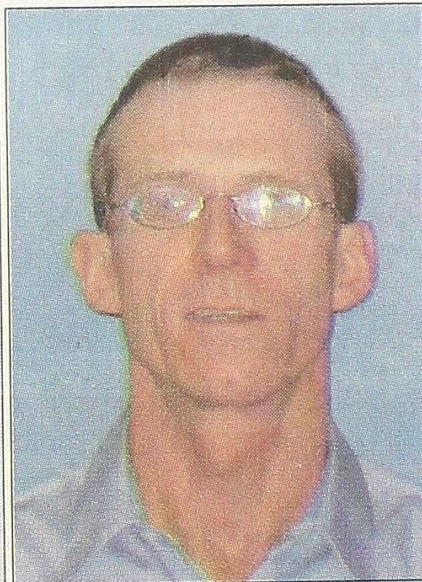
For many years, Rybicki held writing workshops with students in inner-city Detroit. Rybicki said, "I'm evangelical about the holiness of the sentence - I love pulling light out of kids - linguistic light. It imbues my life with a sense of higher purpose to get inner city kids to set fire to the page - at times literally healing the world's wounds with the power of language."

A girl by the name of Itza - a second-grader in one of John Rybicki's poetry workshops - provided the kind of example of poetic craft that Rybicki can inspire within his students. Itza writes, "I am Five Years Old / and I am in Mexico. My mom / is making me a big pie to swim in / My hair is covered in apples / My aunt is kissing her boyfriend / who looks like a dog and he smells / like dirt and dust. He doesn't know / how to love a woman."

Currently, Rybicki is working through Hospice with children that have experienced some form of loss. Some of these children have lost a father or mother, or a parent has left, or a parent is severely disabled. Rybicki said, "Some of these

What people discover in his classes is this fuse. It's not a one-inch fuse, it's a fuse that's a mile long — that's ten miles long — that's as long as your whole life. It's a fuse that makes people feel more alive and appreciate being alive. That's one of John's gifts — he's a fuse-lighter."

William Palmer,
Dana professor and co-chair of English



kids have experienced a litany of losses, but the page is waiting to lap up their light."

William Palmer, Dana professor and co-chair of English, explained how he first met John Rybicki through a reading with the library series, sponsored by the education department.

Palmer said, "He works a lot with kids. He goes around the country and helps elementary kids and older [kids] learn to write poetry. He helps tap into their natural imaginations to write poems. How he does that is amazing - he really does help kids write amazing, wonderful poems. I could tell from his reading that he was a wonderful poet, with this unique style and voice. His poetry is like Walt Whitman's poetry - it's bold, it's honest, it takes lots of chances and risks - he has similes and metaphors that

are wild with imagination and thrilling to read."

Palmer provided his interpretation of two of Rybicki's poems, the first entitled, "Julie Ann at the Bone Marrow Unit, Zion, Illinois".

Palmer said, "Years ago, John's wife was at the hospital getting a bone marrow transplant. John goes outside, and she stands at the window to watch him and he's juggling - he's performing for her, to make her feel better, to make her feel good and alive. He's juggling, and John writes, 'Three floors below your hospital window / lofting fish or birds that graze against my hands / and fly off; juggling cancer cells and carnations / slipping in the bowling pin / we snuck out of that alley in Maine. Then I'm juggling / freight trains, and angels, and elephants / dropping them all.' There's someone out there, juggling all of these

surprising things - freight trains, angels, elephants - to make her feel better. If we can help somebody that's sick to feel better, than maybe that helps ease the illness. ... John writes—using his imagination to help people feel better."

To provide an everyday example of how John Rybicki lives the poetic craft, Palmer said, "John speaks in poems - his vocabulary - when you talk with him. It's like he's writing a poem - full of images, full of sounds, full of passion. His ordinary speech isn't flat or boring the way most speech is - it's as if he's writing a poem on the spot—for you."

The poem "Yellow-Haired Girl with Spider", the title poem from his 2002 chapbook, depicts a woman who once had a spider live under her arm, and she never shaved so that the

spider could live.

Palmer said, "Now this doesn't make sense - most people wouldn't understand this, except this poem has a kind of integrity and its own kind of sense. There are many things that don't make sense that make sense - not in logical ways, but in intuitive ways or spiritual ways. So the woman in this poem likes to lift up her armpit so that all the bugs and beetles that get caught in the hair of her armpit are there to feed this spider that has found its home with her. Now that's kind of crazy, but that's the kind of poetic move that John can do."

Palmer, in regards to the personal influence that John Rybicki's presence on this campus has made on him, said, "John is helping me play with my imagination more. He's inviting me through his writing - through his personality - to experiment more with being wild, with my images and my imagination. Everybody has fuses inside of them that they don't know about. John is able to light this fuse of imagination in people. So when he lights this fuse - it's not like a bomb going off - it's a light that is lit. What people discover in his classes is this fuse. It's not a one-inch fuse, it's a fuse that's a mile long - that's ten miles long - that's as long as your whole life. It's a fuse that makes people feel more alive and appreciate being alive. That's one of John's gifts - he's a fuse-lighter."

Psych majors spill thoughts

LAUREN SYPNIEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

Psychology lies beneath the surface of many varied fields as well as our daily routines. For the world around us, studies in psychology blossom.

"Psychology is more so a rainbow than [other areas of study]," said Carol W. Slater, professor of psychology at Alma College.

Slater earned a bachelors degree in psychology at Brooklyn College in 1952, a Ph. D. in psychology at the University of Michigan in 1960 and a Ph. D. in philosophy at Michigan State University in 1990. She has been teaching at Alma since 1967.

Slater believed that going into psychology "looked like a good way to make the world a better place." She said, "The world needs people who know things about [psychology]."

"What we are looking for," continued Slater, "are students who say, 'I never thought about that before', or 'I never thought of it that way.' We get excited when students think about it this way."

However, there are many types of psychology for students to think about. These include biological, comparative, social, developmental, quantitative, and abnormal psychology.

"There are so many types," said Slater. "If you want to do something with the word 'psychology' in it, then you have to do graduate work." On the other hand, according to Slater, one does not have to go on with the degree. "You can use psychology in law, medicine, and in many other ways."

The Alma College catalog backs up Slater on this point,

saying that "undergraduate work in psychology is required for professional preparation in a wide range of psychological specialties and neuroscience; it also provides an appropriate foundation for work in such areas as cognitive science, public health, law, medicine, social work, management, and the ministry."

"I like abnormal psychology," said **Michelle M. Maskart (11)**. "My sister, 26, is bipolar. I have trouble getting it. So, I think, 'she's sick; she can't help it.' I don't understand and most people don't. I want to figure out why she is that way."

Abnormal psychology studies behaviors in order to describe, foresee, and clarify patterns that are considered abnormal. Many times, this knowledge leads to clinical psychology and the treatment of patients with psychological disorders.

"I would like to work with children in a clinical sense," said **Hannah K. Wingo (09)**. "I think a big thing with psychology is that it is an indirect way to try to help individuals find the best path for themselves."

However, when she first began, she was not sure what she was interested in.

"But I started taking the courses and became intrigued by all of the nuances. It came naturally. I had to work at it, but it seemed common sense to me."

There are many reasons for entering the field of psychology. For Slater, it was a way to change the world. Maskart wanted an understanding of psychological disorders and considers becoming a therapist.

According to Wingo, "Basically, I like to work with people. I like meeting people, I like talking to people."

The Colbert Report joins the literary world in the form of *I Am America (And So Can You!)*

KRISTEN HAIGHT
STAFF WRITER

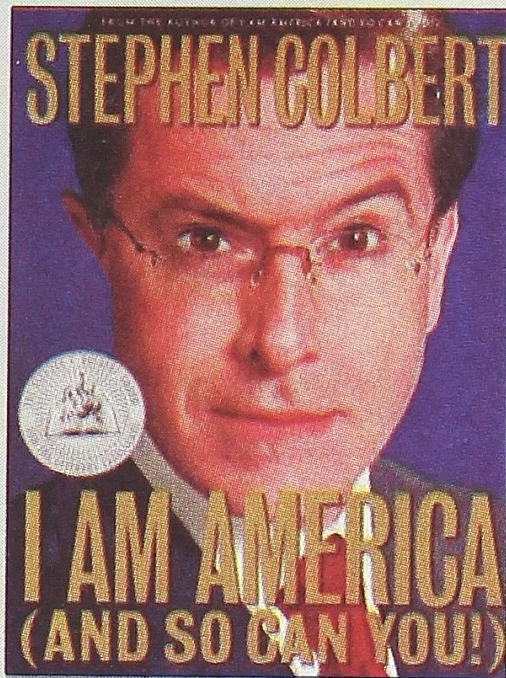
The synopsis of late night fake pundit Stephen Colbert's new book, "I Am America (And So Can You)" begins: "Congratulations - just by opening the cover of this book you became 25% more patriotic."

It is a perfect example of the type of extreme statements one might hear on Colbert's late night television program, "The Colbert Report." The host's wit and pseudo-conservative antics have inspired a devoted following, especially among college students. Since the release of his book, Colbert has used his show as a promotional tool.

But can the book live up to his hype?

The answer from many reviewers is mixed. The *New York Times* said, of the book, "The show is sharp and innovative in ways that could have followed it to the coffee table, but that hasn't happened. The full-monty Colbert television brilliance doesn't quite make it to the page."

The review continues to point out that the book is an extension of "the Colbert persona, that of a self-loving loudmouth perched on the famous fine line between stupid and clever." But the book is ultimately well received, and the *Times* concludes that "the sharp-elbowed Mr. Colbert



will deservedly work his way toward the top of best-seller lists, no matter what he has to do to current competitors like Alan Greenspan, Ann Coulter, Oprah Winfrey, Eric Clapton, or Mother Teresa."

As in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, there is a common tendency among book reviewers to agree that "I Am American (And So Can You!)" lacks something in the deadpan delivery and slyly serious political commentary that Colbert does so well in person.

One review said, "Funny as 'I Am America' is, it lacks that critical force."

The book is thought to be unlikely gain him many new fans who aren't already in on the joke, as the *Seattle Times* points out, "Those who read the book but haven't watched the show won't have Colbert's voice running through their

heads, so the book may sometimes fall flat."

Regardless of these qualifiers, the book seems to have the potential to be almost as quotable and comically enjoyable as the show. Critics cannot seem to resist repeating their favorite lines, and highlights include opinions on cloning ("no free labor is worth this much trouble"), a fence for the U.S.-Mexico border ("I'm talking about something that can be seen from space, with double-wall construction, machine-gun nests and

a flaming moat loaded with fireproof crocodiles"), and the Hollywood Blacklist ("I would have named enough names to fill the Moscow phone book"). His chapters cover a wide range of topics from the environment to terrorism to religion, and include pictures and charts with titles like "Things that Are Trying to Turn Me Gay."

Finally, the book includes a much-anticipated transcript of Colbert's 2006 speech at the White House Correspondent's Dinner, where he praised President Bush for ignoring facts when making policy decisions, saying that "reality" has a well known liberal bias.

Colbert himself has declared the book to be "a train to Cold, Hard Realityville," and while that might not be where it really ends up, critics agree that most people will nonetheless enjoy the trip.

Symphony Orchestra plans to enchant and captivate listeners at upcoming concert

AARON POOLEY
STAFF WRITER

The Alma Symphony Orchestra, blending familiar classics and contemporary compositions, prepares for its second concert, November 18 at 4 p.m.

Although this concert is officially entitled, "Sublime and Spectacular — A Symphony, a Suite and a Saxophone Concerto," Murray Gross, conductor, said that most concerts do not have real themes. He said, "Pieces are put together in a musical array for different reasons — but there's no single theme for this concert. I knew going in that I wanted to do a saxophone concerto, and I also wanted to work with our saxophone instructor, Jonathan Nichol. I thought that this piece would be fun and exciting for the group to do. Some people, when they think of new music, think of it as somewhat strange — but sometimes strange can be fun. This saxophone concerto has a strong pop influence — it's melodic — it's a piece that I think the audience will enjoy hearing. It has been a challenge,

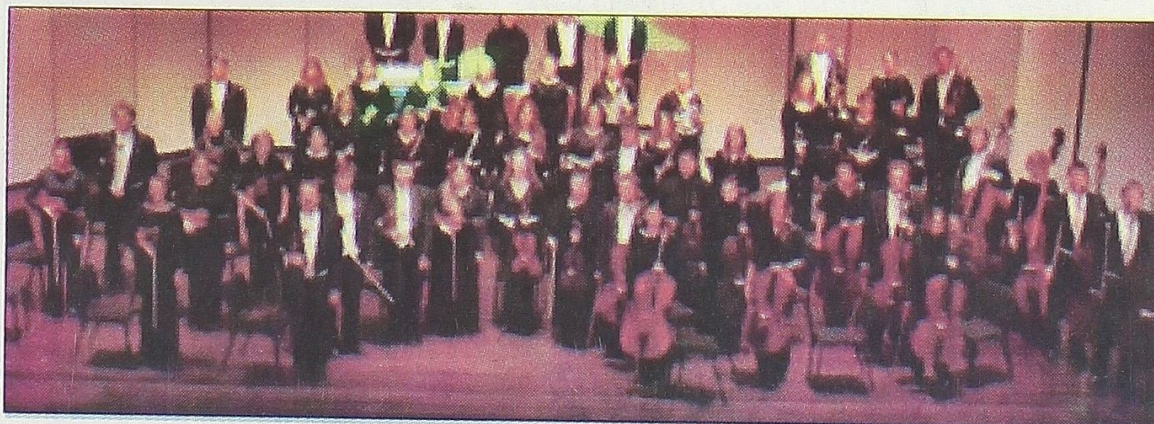


Photo courtesy of Alma Website

but fun for the group to play."

The saxophone concerto was the piece that Gross began with when first planning the concert.

Music history professor Scott Messing explained the background of two of the works featured in the upcoming concert.

On Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 8 in B minor, entitled "Unfinished," Messing said, "This symphony is called *Unfinished* because there are only two movements of (what would normally be) four movements in a symphony. We're not sure why there are only two movements — we have evidence that he started to write another movement.

Schubert had begun sketches, but we don't know why he never wrote four movements."

Messing described another major composition featured in the concert, written by Maurice Ravel of the early 20th century, a suite entitled, "Ma Mere l'Oye" or "Mother Goose" translated into English. Messing said, "Originally this piece was written for a piano duet, but Ravel later worked this into an orchestral suite."

Messing's program notes say, "Four of the five movements have titles that derive from children's stories of French writers of the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries."

The best known is Charles Perrault, whose "Stories of Mother Goose" supplied the inspiration for the suite's first two movements: "The Sleeping Beauty's Pavane" and "Petit Poucet", known as Tom Thumb in English, who is surprised after birds eat his bread crumbs."

When new pieces are introduced, Gross explained that he wants to balance the contemporary works with familiar classics, covering many time periods and pieces from various countries and composers of different nationalities. The concert will begin with a piece

from the 18th century by Mozart. Gross said, "The march, by Mozart, is an appetizer — just a short light something to wet the audience's appetite." The Schubert symphony follows, finishing the first half of the program, as a dark, brooding piece, which has been used many times for film soundtracks.

The second half of the concert opens with Ravel's "Mother Goose Suite". Gross said, "This is great piece about color — the color in the sound of certain instruments — and how sounds fit together. In all, there are five movements to this piece. Each movement has a different character that represents that movement."

"In one movement you have conversations of the Beauty and the Beast — the clarinet represents [beauty] and the contrabassoon represents the beast. The last movement, entitled "The Enchanted Garden", is this beautiful piece — long and stretched out, slow music. This is, then, a significant contrast to what the audience will hear in the saxophone concerto that follows it."

Too much organizational involvement creates problems

HADLEY BOEHM
STAFF WRITER

The Alma College student body is a very, very active group, but I question whether involvement in campus organizations, athletic teams, and service projects can become too excessive after a certain point.

Filling out a multitude of different applications in the past few months has made me realize the emphasis that our society's academic institutions and scholarship committees place on extra-curricular involvement. The space available on most applications I have filled out has far exceeded the number of activities I have had to fill it up, and I thought I was a very involved student!

Beginning in high school,

students are subjected to constant pressure to become involved and be active in both the school and community. Mom, Dad, and teachers always said the more things you have to put on your application or resume the better luck you will have getting into college.

The problem is that we emphasize quantity and not quality, and we are all at fault. I think application processes need some revision. I have yet to fill out an application that asks me to specify who I helped through the service projects I participate in or the specifics of what is actually done by the organizations of which I am a part. They just ask for a title and the number of years of involvement.

Well, I am not a believer that either of these is necessarily indicative of the actual caliber

of an applicant's abilities. I can think of numerous examples of people with big names and important titles who are incompetent and ineffective, and there are many average Joes who excel at what they do. I am sure you are reminded of a few examples yourself.

My point in all this is that the number of organizations in which we are involved should not be what matters. The most important consideration should be given to the quality of work that is produced.

The over involved Alma student has a hard time with this concept, and I am saying this from experience. For many students, joining one organization soon leads into a vicious cycle of ever increasing commitments to other groups.

What do we end up with? A bunch of students who are

involved in so many groups they barely have time to do keep up with school and make all the meetings, let alone take on a position in the group or participate in activities.

All nighters, coffee, energy drinks, and multitasking are the over involved student's best friends, and a planner is elevated to biblical status. Speed walking, skipping meals, ditching friends for meetings, and using the whole weekend to catch up on homework are also common occurrences. In short, if you are too busy, you are not as healthy, and you do not have a life.

Most people soon realize that they are over-booked, and they have to back out of commitments they have made. The sad thing is it is often those with the best intentions that become so over-involved.

I reach a dead end when I get to

this point. I want to participate in every activity, but I have homework or need to get more than 3 hours of sleep at night. I often ask myself, "How much am I letting the group down by not coming to this?" and I end up feeling guilty about having to miss out. I have slowly realized that any person who frequently has to make such decisions falls into the category of being over involved — There! I admit it!

To help preserve your sanity (or at least keep what is left of it), here is a little advice from somebody who has been around for a little while. Think hard before you decide to take on another thing and make sure joining or getting involved is the right thing to do for you. Pick what you like best and put your whole heart into it; a few things well done are far better than a thousand things poorly done.

New album, 'Unbreakable,' means Backstreet's back...again

SIMONE MISHLER
STAFF WRITER

Someone tell VH1: the search for a "man band" is over. The Backstreet Boys launched a new album last Tuesday entitled "Unbreakable". The boys — now men — are back with their distinct and powerful vocals; however, they are not the boys of old. Fans will notice some significant changes to the band — these are not the boys from the 90s.

In making the switch to "man band" there are bound to be some sacrifices. There are some limitations to what our favorite harmonized men can do these days. Alas, the group choreographed dance sequences have taken a hit — apparently dancing like Michael Jackson is not as easy at the age of thirty... after a few knee surgeries.

On the bright side, the boys have a new look that suits their more mature direction. No, they do not wear body armor,

or dress up like Halloween characters, but, they still rock their subtly matching button-up shirts — the buttons are simply done up now.

That adorable front man, Brian Littrell, is as soulful as ever in his vocals. The "new" Brian reminds me of the attractive substitute teacher every middle school girl wished for when their math teacher was sick. He may be thirty-something but you can still call him sexy.

The band's youngest member, Nick Carter, is not 17 anymore. He even has some tattoos to prove his legality! Personally, I am glad to see that Nick is no longer dating Paris Hilton and is in the company of his home boys again.

Every band needs a bad boy, and AJ is more than happy to still be rebelling in his late twenties. Angst, crazy hats, and facial hair — staples of AJ's bad boy image — are still represented in the "man band" look. One might wonder how AJ's look could get better with age. Well,

after finishing alcohol abuse rehabilitation — when it seems he cannot be any cooler — AJ bursts back on the scene with a mohawk.

Where would The Backstreet Boys be without Howie D?

Howie receives the award for most improved comeback look. Sure, it may have taken 34 years to figure out the right hairstyle, but Howie finally did it. His clean-cut hair, combined with his heart-wrenching solo in the

first video, "Inconsolable", has put Howie in at least the top three of the group — which is sad, since there are only four of them now.

Unfortunately, Kevin has not taken the opportunity to tour with the band again. While the other four were making the latest album, he was busy being a father... or something to that effect. In reality though, he was always the lame one. Was it just me or did he always look like an extra for The Matrix?

The Backstreet Boys have proven, with this latest album, that they, unlike many before them (New Kids on the Block), have staying power in the music world. Alright, they can't dance, their shirts are buttoned, and Kevin is MIA. Still, hearing their unique voices gets at the awkward adolescent in all of us. They make us believe that one day someone won't care who we are, where we're from, or what we did. So, jam on Backstreet fans because Backstreet's back, alright?



Photo courtesy of bsb.nicklachee.us

The cover of The Backstreet Boys' sixth album, "Unbreakable."

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.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear, Dear, Dear Underclassmen,

Allow me to introduce myself in case we are unacquainted: my name is Monica; I'm a senior at Alma about to be kicked out of here with a major in English, and a minor in Sociology; I'm the one flying around campus in the scooter (say hi sometime); I like to think of myself a kind spirit who believes in the virtues love, wisdom, and respect. Introductions taken care of, allow me to voice what I have learned thus far about our institution of learning.

The November 9th issue of our beloved Almanian included an opinion article on Alma College failing "to live up to academic expectations" (pp 5). First, I respect that indeed it is the opinion column of the paper, and we enjoy the right to free speech—blah, blah, blah. It is clear that you, dear opinion holder, come from an education background that encourages high academic standards and personal involvement—wonderful for you, one of a fortunate few! You clearly have a high drive of performance you wish to keep active. I applaud this, for these are characteristics of the ideal college student. After all, you weren't granted acceptance to Alma College on a whim.

That being said, however, there are a number of bumps in the road, so to speak, in the presented argument. While you may come from a superb, encouraging high school, where you probably took upper-level A.P. courses, it is important to realize that not everyone has been so blessed. This is where basic-level courses come into existence. The purpose of introduction courses is to ensure all are on a common level before proceeding into upper-level courses. Some students are only taking these distributive courses unrelated to personal interest because they have to, which would explain the lack of motivation. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but these courses are not meant to encourage individual thinking—this comes later. Welcome to being a college freshman at any post-secondary institution. From the stand-point of a busy upper-classmen—one of most, if not all—looking back on their first year or two, I must say that I envy you who has "so much free time." Regarding that, by the way, here is my advice: if you are an underclassman finding yourself with extra time on your hands, I suggest you look into the many amazing organizations present on our tiny campus. While Alma College is small, we have the extreme privilege of having a group to fill the interest of every individual; these groups only have to be searched for, and if you have trouble knowing where to look, schedule a meeting with your advisor (yes, they are there for a reason besides approving the upcoming course schedule—they don't just give a damn, they give a big damn).

Whether you can believe it right now or not, Alma College will challenge the hell out of you. If you were to save the letter you are currently reading and pull it out again when you are four months from graduating, you'll notice a change in opinion. No, Alma College is not the place for every student (obviously). Stick out the first year, give it a chance! If you still haven't been sucked into the black-hole of feeling at home as so many of your peers have by mid-sophomore year, perhaps considering transferring (nothing wrong with that). I have learned that it is best not to open one's mouth until one has thoughtfully considered the present situation. Alma will prepare you for the big world outside the bubble—and, I swear by experience, that it is a huge world. Enjoy what you have while you can because time doesn't just fly when you're having fun. I am fully aware that I have much left to learn in life, therefore limiting the right I have for telling others how to live, believe, or think. You may see what I have said in this column as a soapbox, of which you have every right to; however, I have only presented my learned Alma-life lessons to perhaps be of value to others besides myself. Just ask me, any upperclassmen, a professor, administrator or anyone older (or younger!) than you what they have learned in life. No doubt you'll hear some amazing responses.

With Senior Sincerity,

Monica Rentfrow
o8mkrent@alma.edu

P.S. They're professors, not teachers. It's all about respect.

Little thanks for Thanksgiving

LAUREN SYPNIEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

So, I suppose everyone is all ready to return home for the extended weekend, looking forward to the Thanksgiving break starting Thursday.

I agree, the long break from classes will be greatly enjoyed. That is, all except for the Thanksgiving part of it.

What is the whole hullabaloo about, anyways? The little pilgrims made their great journey across the "big blue," met some Indians who showed them their ways, and then they all ate corn and other dishes.

I understand the whole idea of giving thanks for the gifts, moments, and life received, as well as all other things that people are grateful for, yet this is not the case anymore. At least not to me. Now Thanksgiving is a day full of a bloated stomach and of dread.

Let me start with what it is now all about: turkey. Not only do you have to eat it on Thursday, but on Friday, Saturday and Sunday as well. Turkeys are everywhere: little kids color turkeys, people put turkey stickers in their home windows and the vast majority of people feel obligated to make the turkeys from an outline of their hand.

And, of course, there is also the inevitable food dishes that go along. There is the puke colored stuffing that, for some reason, we just decide to shove inside the middle of a wild game bird. Hello?! Disgusting! And the cranberry Jell-O or whatever it actually is. Who mixes cranberries and celery together? Remember: cranberries should never be picked, let alone eaten. They should have been placed

in the highest boughs of the tree and attached with unbreakable glue... or they should have been poison. This, I confess, would be more interesting, as I could sit stealth-like in the woods and watch as the deer that are stupid enough to come over and eat them topple over dead.

And yet, I confess, there are some enjoyable foods to eat, like mashed potatoes over mashed potatoes cooked in mashed potato sauce. However, for as much as I go on about it, the food is not the most terrible part of the holiday. Do not think to misinterpret me, because truly it is not enjoyed. But there lurks - in the darkness - a more sinister demon. Something which takes the holiday and tears it in two: the inevitable football game.

Perhaps Thanksgiving would be a wonderful holiday when family could come together, chat, and give thanks for what has been given to them. They could tell stories of "back in the day."

Uncles could reminisce when they used to be paperboys together and -how they fell

through the local pond while ice-skating. Their children, nephews, and nieces would be laughing and sharing their own stories of times longed to be remembered.

But, no. Instead, in my family at least, there is the kitchen filled to the brim with women gossiping about things only women would dare to speak about and, in the background, there rises the obnoxious and raucous cries of the men from the living room as they root the football game on.

Why get together, just to watch football, when it's something you can do any other day? If you are going to travel and have your relatives travel as well to make the Thanksgiving dinner happen, why not make it a memorable day?

And yet it never changes. Year after year: women in the kitchen, loud men in the living room. I expect it will always be the same. I suppose I have to accept the fact that Thanksgiving has (and most probably always will) be in my memory as the holiday I am not thankful to have.

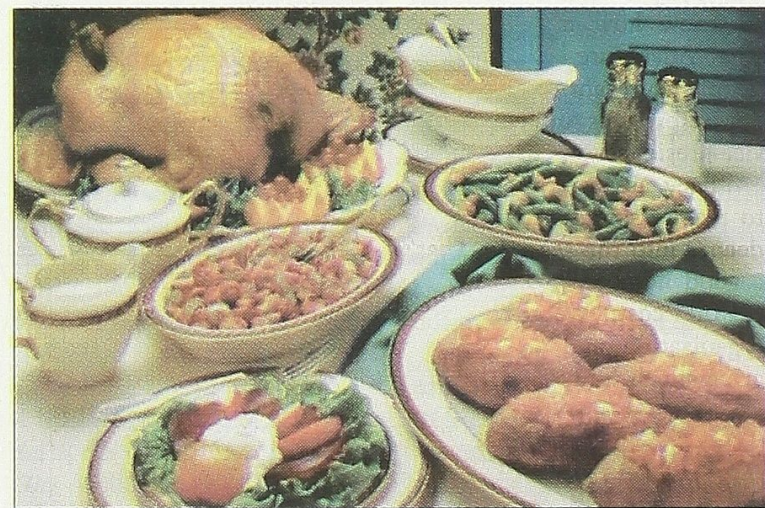


Photo courtesy of about.com

Traditional Thanksgiving dinners often provide food for the next few days, and are a far cry from the original venison, wild fowl, swan, eel, and lobster served at the first Thanksgiving.

"Art-gasm" offers relief from college stress

KATE LOVE
STAFF WRITER

Have you seen the eye-popping, postcard-like signs posted around our Alma campus? You know, the neon pink, orange, and yellow posters? I certainly have noticed them - practically everyday on my way to class.

The first time I saw the poster, I only glanced at the title and chuckled silently to myself, "The Artgasmic Experience." When I came upon another of these posters, I decided I had to stop and read what it said, because the title had captured my attention.

"The Artgasmic Experience" . . . "An All-Night Create-A-Thon" . . . "All Creative Disciplines Welcome" . . .

An all-night long art party? Interesting in itself. But then I started thinking more about this topic and realized that this "All-Night Create-A-Thon" would be a very stimulating experience for budding artists,

free spirits, and overloaded students. For example, say you have three exams this week, plus two quizzes, and a paper due on Friday. By Saturday your brain would be fried and frazzled, am I correct?

You would probably need your own special time to vent your frustrations, relieve that shoulder tension that has been throbbing from crouching over so many books, and, to put it blatantly, get a little more use out of the other side of the brain. Well, here's your solution!

Okay, I know what you're going to say next. The idea of staying up all night long might interest you just a bit, but to do art . . . well, let me help you out by saying that it's not exactly MY cup of tea, either. Don't get me wrong. I love to go and look at art in museums or even in homes of people I know. For me, art is a way to escape what can sometimes be referred to as "the harsh reality" and enter my own little world where I can create my own story by looking at a picture. Some may say that

art isn't for everyone though, and I have to disagree - especially in this circumstance.

I, at first, thought the event would only be for art students because, well, I've never heard of an entire twelve hours devoted to a subject that included everyone. But I very quickly saw that the event is open to the public and is for "All Creative Disciplines". It's also free.

So, deciding I would investigate this Artgasmic Experience, I asked a friend of mine taking an art class where I could find more information. She sent me an invite on Facebook to the event where it gave an explanation as to how the idea came about (it is inspired by Scott McCloud's "24 hour comic") and some rules for the night (no preparation, the clock never stops ticking, and, when you're done, photocopies will be sent to Scott McCloud).

To me, this Artgasmic Experience seems like it's going to be fun and interesting on both ends. I might just have to check this out for myself (and I suggest you do too!).

Skiers band together to form first ever ski team

CHELSEA CLARK
SPORTS EDITOR

There is no snow on the ground and no ski hill for miles, but Alma skiers are determined to launch a team this winter.

The team will be joining the 30-year-old Midwest region. They will race against teams from Michigan State, Western Michigan, Grand Valley, Eastern Michigan, and Albion.

"There is no division by size," said **Adam Valentino (08)**, team captain, "It is our first year as a team. The school classifies us as a club, but the other schools will see us as a varsity team."

To accommodate not having the facilities or snow for practice, the team has been getting together for 'dry lands'-meaning indoor soccer.

"It helps us build team camaraderie, as well as balance and coordination," said Valentino. "They're all really important for skiers."

"We do not get to practice on the skis with Alma's difficult curriculum. There is no time. There is no place. You have to know how to ski already. The Adventure Club is for people who want to learn," said **Jennafer Watson (09)**, club vice president.

They are expecting fifteen to twenty skiers once they get deeper into the season. "That's a good number, proportionally to the cost. We are a new organization and we are not given much. It is an expensive



Photo courtesy of Larry Welton

Senior Adam Valentino races down the slopes during his highschool career. Valentino is coming off of some knee injuries and is hoping to make it to nationals this year.

sport," said Valentino. Watson transferred here from Western Michigan and said, "On Western's team, we had fifty, but we have a good number for our size."

As the ski team is still in its infancy, the skiers have their personal reasons and motives to go out and race every weekend.

"I have been injured the past

couple of years, but I want to make it to nationals this year," said Valentino. "Skiing gives people the opportunity to get out of Alma for a couple of weekends and take advantage of an eye opening and prominent sport in Michigan."

"My goal is to ski well and to enjoy being on the team. I have been skiing for years

and, for me, it is not about the racing," said Watson. "Some of my friends from Western know Adam [Valentino] from his skiing. There are kids there that will give you the competition if you want it."

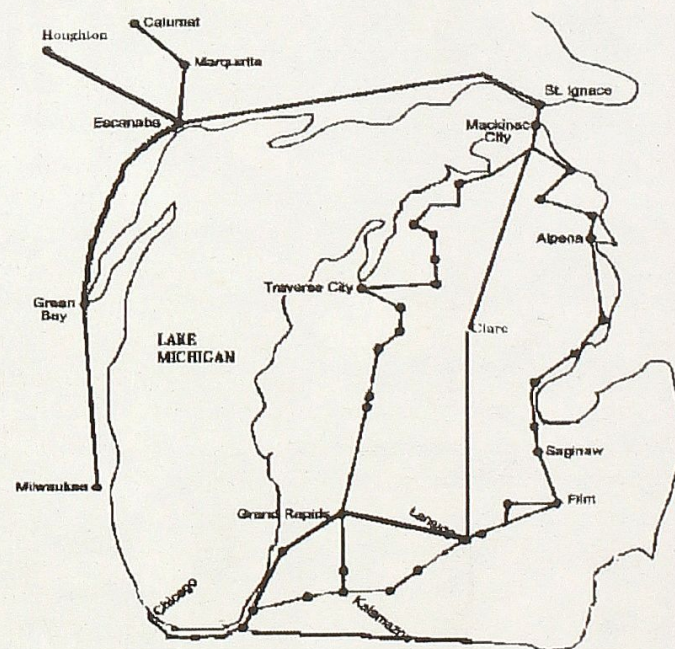
"At the races I chill and have fun with my friends," she said. "Competition is what you make of it."

The ski team's first races are on the last weekend of Winter Break, January 12 and 13, at Chrystal Mountain. The season lasts for approximately five weeks, ending at regionals in Marquette. The team's other races will be held at two more times at Chrystal Mountain and once each at Schuss and Canonsburg.

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Shockers lead race for flag-football championship

IAN FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

The flag-football season will reach its climax this Sunday as the playoffs show some of the school's best intramural talent.

Alma's flag-football program is quite similar to a professional football league. Teams sign up earlier in the year in teams of seven to 10 and play set match-ups every Sunday. The season is only four weeks long, with each team playing a total of five games in the regular season, one game per week, and one week playing two games. The league coordinators then place the top six teams in a bracket-style playoff series to see who the season's champion will be.

Games are played similarly to regular football games, except for a few small differences. The object in flag-football is not to tackle the person with the ball, but to tear a flag attached to a belt around the waist of the ball-carrier, indicating that they are down. Also, games are played in two halves, and on a shorter and narrower field, to compensate for the fewer

number of players.

This year, there are eleven teams participating in the flag-football intramural program.

"I was pleasantly surprised to see how many players there were this year," said Julian Springer, director of the Stone Recreation Center and coordinator of the flag-football program. "It was neat seeing so many people wanting to get out there and be active and have fun while doing it."

This Sunday is the day for the final rounds of play for the season, as the top six teams get ready to face-off against each other in a winner-take-all championship series. The winners of the championship round will win intramural champions t-shirts, as well as the title of 2007 flag-football champions.

The play starts with the top two seeded teams having a bye, the Shockers (5-0) and Staff Infection (4-1). The number three team, Team Haslett (4-1) will play the number six team, (Black Lightning (3-2). The number four team, Team Thiry (3-2) will play the number five

team, Team Sluiter (3-2). The winner of the three-six match up will play the number two seeded team, Staff Infection, and the winner of the four-five game will play number one, the Shockers.

The Shockers do have the best record thus far, but watch out for the other teams to step up their game to knock the Shockers out of the top spot this Sunday, starting at 11 p.m. at Bahlke field.

"I not real sure what to expect on Sunday," said Springer. "The teams all look like they could win it, but the Shockers have been predicting their championship all season long. We'll see what happens."

After flag-football is over with, the volleyball program takes over Alma's intramural scene.

"We have 22 teams this year signed up for volleyball, which is outstanding," said Springer. "The season started [this past week], and it looks to be an exciting season ahead of us."

If you are looking to for some fun, stop by the Stone Recreation Center for information on a sport that may interest you.

Lions performance drops sharply after first quarter interception

IAN FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

"We looked terrible," said wide receiver Roy Williams. "Real terrible. It's not championship football right there - it's not what we're about. The only thing we've got going is we get another chance [tomorrow] against a good New York team, and that's what we've got to look forward to."

This was the emotion being broadcast by the entire Lions team last Saturday when the Lions fell short to the tough Arizona Cardinals team, 31-21.

They had some momentum early in the first quarter when an interception, followed by a 34-yard return, led to a Lions touchdown to give the Lions the early lead of 7-0. The Lions lost this momentum on the first play of their next drive which resulted in an interception.

"We just didn't play good. We did not play good in the first half and dug ourselves in a hole in the second half,"

**Jon Kitna,
Detroit Lions Quarterback**

"We just didn't play good," said quarterback Jon Kitna. "We did not play good in the first half and dug ourselves in a hole in the second half."

The Lions headed to the locker room, losing 17-7, to try and regain possession of the ball-game.

They drove from their own 18-yard line in an attempt to put more points on the board, but lost the ball as a result of a fumble near their own end zone. The Cardinals took the chance to use the Lions' bad luck against them and scored another touchdown just five plays later.

Detroit would never take the lead again, and the Cardinals gathered another win to up their record to 4-5.

The Lions have their work cut out for them in the next two weeks, with a home game against fellow NFC competitor, the New York Giants, also 6-3, followed by a Thanksgiving-day game against NFC rival, the Green-Bay Packers, just four days later.

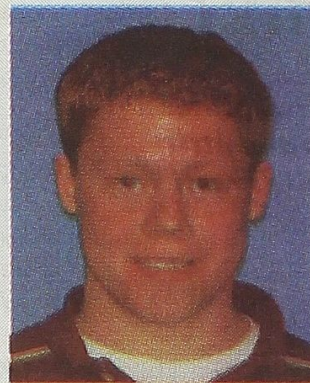
"If we're going to be what we said we are, then we have a chance to put ourselves back in the [playoff] race," said kicker Jason Hanson. "We slipped up [last weekend], but we have to get some wins. I think this is the season right here - these next two games. If we come back and do what we're supposed to do, then it's going to be fun. If we don't, well then we're going to dig ourselves a hole."

The Giants suffered a week ten loss last Saturday against the Dallas Cowboys, but did not give up without a fight. They stuck with the Cowboys for the first half but fell off pace after penalties hurt both the offense and the defense. New York lost 31-20.

Watch for the Lions to come on strong in the first quarter, as the Giants seem to be a very good first-half team. The Giants may struggle on defense against the Lions' surprisingly well-executed offense, if they don't change their strategies. Also, pay attention to quarterback Eli Manning and tight-end Jeremy Shockey, as they seem to be the leaders of the tough New York offense.

The Lions have one of the toughest schedules left to play in the NFL, and Sunday's game will definitely have an impact on the Thanksgiving-day game against the Green Bay Packers.

Be sure and see what the Lions do to regain their momentum from the first half of the season.



Scots fall to Adrian, lose share of MIAA title



Photo by Brent Riley

Senior running back Kyle Ryan dogging past an Olivet defender earlier in the season to score a touchdown. Last Saturday, the Scots completed their season with a loss to Adrian, 21-30. Three Scots were named on to the first MIAA teams. They were seniors Joe Cline, receiver, Wren Chellis, left tackle, and Zac Zanotti, defensive lineman. Five were named to the second team: Seniors Tyler Wellman, Alex Caatin and Brian Lennemen and Juniors Jeremy Stephens and Kyle Percival. Joe Cline finishes his career with 234 caught passes for 3282 yards and 29 touchdowns. That averages out to 91.2 yards a game for the 36 games that Cline played in. This is his third consecutive year being named onto the MIAA First Team Offensive. The Maroon and Cream finished the season 5-5 and were one half away from sharing in the conference title, as they were leading at half time against Adrian 14-3.



Graphic courtesy of Detroitlions.com
The Lions host the Giants Sunday at 1 p.m.