

# MANSFIELDIAN

SPRING 2026 *magazine*



## BREAKING BARRIERS

Molly McLeer Makes Another Historic Moment for Mansfield Football

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# THE MANSFIELDIAN

magazine



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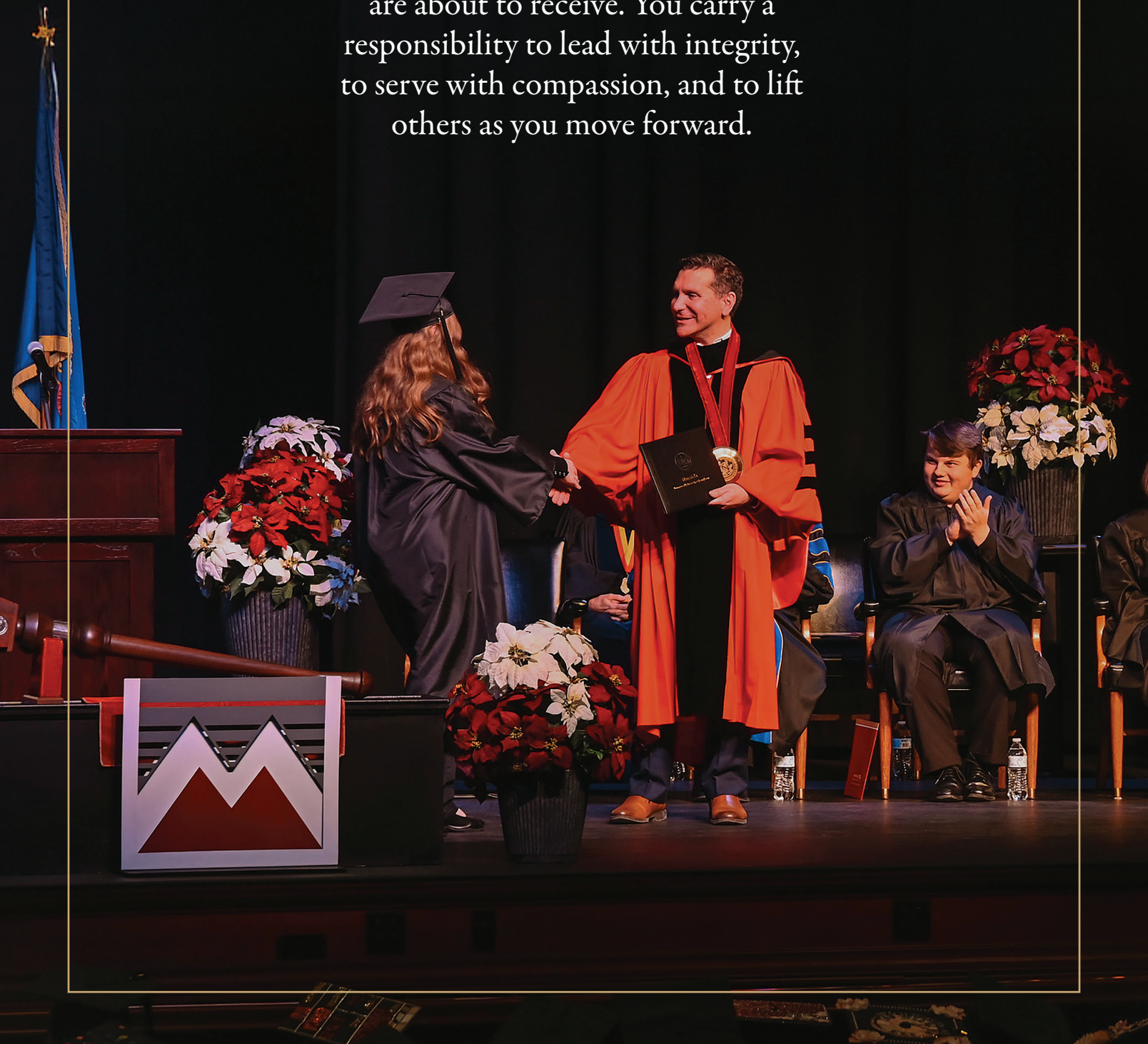
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# CELEBRATING *New Beginnings*

You carry more than the degree you are about to receive. You carry a responsibility to lead with integrity, to serve with compassion, and to lift others as you move forward.





Accomplishment, new beginnings, and new opportunities were celebrated at fall commencement.

With December ceremonies held for the first time on each campus—Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield—commencement was also a celebration of new beginnings for CU. Interim president Jeffery Osgood spoke at selected ceremonies on each campus.

“Today is a day of celebration. It is a day of reflection. But more than anything, it is a day of profound possibility,” said Osgood.

Osgood became CU’s interim president on August 1, 2025 coming from West Chester University where he was executive vice president and provost, serving as the institution’s chief operating officer and chief academic officer. Osgood is currently the candidate under consideration in the search process for CU’s permanent president.

“Each of you reached this moment through perseverance, passion, and resilience. You navigated challenges, embraced opportunity, and demonstrated the grit and determination,” Osgood told the graduates. “You are here today not just because you made it through, but because you grew through what you faced.”

“Commencement, like the holidays, invites us to pause. To step out of the noise and remember what truly matters,” said Osgood. “The most important things in life are not found on a screen or a résumé line. They are found around tables, in living

rooms, on long drives home, in laughter with people who know us well, and sometimes in the quiet moment when a pet settles into our lap and reminds us what it feels like to matter.”

“I’m reminded of something Dick Van Dyke once said. He counted himself among the luckiest people in the world because he spent his life doing work he would have chosen even without reward. He said he felt lucky simply to bring a little light into the world.”

“At its best, education does exactly that. It lifts the human spirit. It awakens possibility. It calls the best in us forward and asks us to put it in service to something greater than ourselves.”

“Now you stand at the threshold of what comes next. The world you are entering is complex, fast-changing, and filled with real challenges, but also extraordinary opportunity.”

“Wherever your path leads, remember this: your knowledge is a tool, your passion is a guide, and your character is the foundation of your impact. Do not be afraid to take risks. Do not be afraid to challenge the status quo. Progress has always belonged to those willing to act with courage and purpose.”

“You carry more than the degree you are about to receive. You carry a responsibility to lead with integrity, to serve with compassion, and to lift others as you move forward.”

“Graduates, the world is waiting for your ideas, your voice, and your light.”

## Nathan Brinker

### CU Student Trustee

Nathan Brinker has been appointed to the Commonwealth University Council of Trustees. A junior health and physical education and pre-athletic training double major from Lock Haven, Brinker will represent the Lock Haven campus as a student trustee.

Brinker is a student employee in the Parsons Union Building at CU-Lock Haven and is involved with several campus organizations including serving as president of the Full Gospel Fellowship Club, a member of the Student Auxiliary Services (SAS) Board, and Student Government Board. In his position as student trustee, Brinker says he is interested in giving students a greater sense of connection across all Commonwealth University campuses.

“I believe I can be a voice of reason and understanding for both my campus and my peers,” Brinker writes in his trustee application. “I often hear students share thoughts, both positive and negative about their experiences, but many don’t know how to express those ideas or where to direct them. I want to help change that.”

“Through SAS, I have been involved in evaluating and making financial decisions that affect many demographics on campus,” Brinker says. “It has helped me see how committed I can be to my peers, while also contributing to the future of the campus community.”

## CU Website Wins Pair of International Golds

The CU Strategic Communications and Marketing team has earned international acclaim, taking home a pair of gold awards for the commonwealthu.edu website at the 2025 Hermes Creative Awards one of the world’s oldest and most prestigious creative competitions.

Administered by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP), the Hermes Creative Awards honor outstanding work in traditional and emerging media. Each year, competition judges evaluate the international creative industry’s best work.

The CU website won gold in the Educational Institution Website category and received a second gold for Project Achievement in Website Consolidation, recognizing the successful unification of multiple university properties into a single, user-focused digital experience.

Launched in June 2024, the Commonwealth U website unified three legacy university websites and a microsite into

a single, cohesive platform. The website reflects the unique history, identity, and traditions of CU’s four campuses, while delivering a streamlined user experience. Features such as campus-specific filters for academic programs, news, events, and profiles allow users to tailor their web experience to their respective needs.



# TO LEARN, TAKE ACTION

**Karl Kapp Publishes 'Action-First Learning: Instructional Design Techniques to Engage and Inspire'**



Early in his career, long before he was a university professor, Karl Kapp worked as a trainer in industry. And to prepare for his new job, he attended training.

He recalls arriving at a training center in an industrial park. “I heard a lawn mower humming in the background as I took my seat near one of the windows. I saw an overhead projector at the front of the room next to a huge stack of slides the instructor would use to teach the class. Immediately, I struggled to stay engaged. The instructor monotonously recited information directly from the slides and his dog-eared teacher’s guide. He spoke with no emotion, as if unaware of the two dozen learners in the room. Slide after slide after slide.”

The lawn mower was a highlight of the day, and Kapp thought to himself, “There has to be a better way.” Kapp, professor of instructional technology and director of the Institute for Interactive Technologies at Commonwealth University, in April 2025 published *Action-First Learning: Instructional Design Techniques to Engage and Inspire*.

The author or coauthor of more than half a dozen books on the convergence of learning, technology, and business, Kapp’s latest book is making waves. On Amazon, it’s ranked 70th in books on “leadership training.”

In *Action-First Learning*, Kapp covers nine types of learning experiences in one volume—from card and board games, escape rooms, and branching scenarios to augmented reality and AI-powered coaching. Kapp also includes a chapter by instructional designer Amy Pape (a Commonwealth University alumna) about how to improve action-first learning by making it more accessible. Each chapter includes a case study, a design checklist, as well as tips on how to leverage AI to help create action-first learning.

“Academic research and personal experience all tell us that when learners do something right away during the learning process, they are more fully engaged,” says Kapp. “The immediate action sets the tone for the rest of the instruction. Action for action’s sake is not the goal of action-first learning.



The goal is purposeful and meaningful action—always tied to specific learning outcomes.”

Many of Kapp’s previous books are about using games and gamification in instructional design—a concept that has since taken off with his gamification and interactive learning courses on LinkedIn Learning, gamification built into learning platforms as a matter of course, and even gamification graduate certificates.

## CU Awarded 5-Year TRIO Grant to Support Students

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded CU a federal TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) grant to improve college retention and graduation rates among low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities. The five-year (2025–30) grant total for CU is \$4,855,160.

CU's TRIO Student Support Services programs are led by campus-based directors including Kelly Foran (CU-Bloomsburg), Natalie Serafini Lombardi (CU-Lock Haven), and Kim Lamar Shelton (CU-Mansfield).

This grant will allow CU to further its commitment to ensuring all students regardless of educational barriers can succeed academically and develop personally at Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield.

Additionally, the directors stressed that the TRIO SSS program levels the playing field and strengthens the student-experience by equipping our students with the resources, guidance, and support to graduate.

Bloomsburg was awarded \$332,393 per year for a total of \$1,661,965, while Lock Haven was awarded \$353,530 per year for a total of \$1,762,650, and Mansfield was awarded \$286,109 per year for a total of \$1,430,545.

## CU Programs Earn Top Rankings

Several of CU's master's degree programs have achieved top rankings by outside organizations.

CU was ranked **No. 1 on the 2026 Best Master's in Counseling Programs** in Pennsylvania list by Counseling Psychology for its master's in school counseling and master's in clinical mental health counseling programs. Courses for both programs are delivered 100% online through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous classes with full-time and part-time options.

CU's **Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction** was ranked **No. 1** in Pennsylvania for 2026, according to [mastersineducation.org](https://mastersineducation.org). The 100% online Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction program offers concentrations in alternative education and social, emotional, and behavioral wellness and includes the option to earn certificates in English as a second language, e-learning specialist, instructional game design, or an interest-based track.



## CU and Corning Community College Partner for Seamless Transfer Pathway

Commonwealth University and SUNY Corning Community College have announced an enhanced partnership that streamlines the transfer process for students pursuing a bachelor's degree. The agreement provides SUNY CCC graduates direct entry to the Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield campuses of CU with full junior status, helping students save time and money while advancing their educational and career goals.

As part of the transfer scholarship agreement, eligible SUNY CCC students may receive annual, renewable merit scholarships of up to \$4,500. Students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher who live on campus are eligible for the maximum scholarship amount.

Commonwealth University offers more than 80 innovative degree programs across its Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield campuses. As a member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, CU's tuition is among the lowest in the state.

The partnership also provides innovative credit transfer tools like the Transfer Equivalency Self-Service (TESS), which helps students determine how their credits will apply to their intended degree.

# MANSFIELD HOMECOMING 2025



## MOUNTIES COME HOME

Mansfield's 2025 Homecoming weekend welcomed generations of Mounties back to campus on September 26–28, with alumni and students alike celebrating their shared pride and lasting connections.

The weekend kicked off with the annual Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament held at Corey Creek on Friday morning. In the evening, four new members of the Mansfield Alumni-Athletic Hall of Fame were inducted at Decker Gymnasium, with Jason Manwaring '04 (baseball), John Miller '94 (football), Jake Myers '14 (sprint football), and Harry Hillson 1987–2019 (baseball coach) honored. The music department wrapped up the evening with the first of two PRSIM concerts for the weekend.

Downtown Mansfield came alive Saturday morning for the Homecoming Community Parade before the Mansfield Days event at Smythe Park in partnership with the Mansfield Chamber of Commerce. Tailgaters set up and enjoyed the beautiful fall weather before Mountaineer field hockey took on Kutztown, and sprint football hosted Penn at Van Norman Field. Bobby Repp (Musical Theatre Organization) and Cassandra Heath (AST) were crowned Homecoming king and queen.





**SAVE THE DATE!  
HOMECOMING 2026  
IS SEPT. 26**





## There are no shortcuts in **NUTRITION**

Commonwealth University Nutrition  
and Dietetics Program Accredited;  
Now Available on All Campuses

**K**eto, paleo, Mediterranean, vegan, low-carb, low-fat. Diets today come in more flavors than ice cream in the supermarket. And each diet has its passionate supporters.

But there are no shortcuts to healthy eating, says Dr. Mary Feeney, director of Commonwealth University's Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics Program.

"People often ask, what is nutrition? Our diet—what we eat in our meals regularly is only part of it. Nutrition also has a psychological component, a financial component, and a cultural component," says Feeney, based at Mansfield.

In the classroom, Feeney sees her role as bringing back a measure of skepticism in an age of conflicting diet gurus. Her students are often surprised by the foundational factors that influence food choices—not just cravings, but practical issues like availability, especially for poor college students or student-athletes when dining halls are closed.

"Nutrition plays a crucial role in preventing and managing many health issues," says Feeney, a '01 Mansfield alumna. "I started as a psychology major. I became interested in working with eating disorders, which can be quite prevalent. I thought that to have a comprehensive understanding, my psychology

and counseling background should be complemented with knowledge about nutrition."

The Nutrition and Dietetics Program has recently had its full accreditation continued by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and is now available on all of Commonwealth University's campuses, Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield.

Historically, the Nutrition and Dietetics Program and accreditation status have been granted to the Mansfield campus since 1973. The program has two concentrations: Dietetics, which prepares students for a variety of careers, and sports nutrition, which prepares students to work in fitness and sports. A nutrition minor is also offered.

Before returning to Mansfield as a faculty member, Feeney worked in a variety of roles in the field, including a youth residential facility, community nutrition in Tioga County, and as an outpatient dietitian in an HIV clinic. On the academic front, after completing her dietetic internship in May 2007 at Marywood University, Feeney passed the registration exam to become a registered dietitian. She also completed my master's degree in sports nutrition and exercise science and a doctorate



in human development with an emphasis in health promotion, both from Marywood University.

“Is food medicine? Yes. Without food, we get sick,” says Feeny. “Even so, recently, processed and ultra-processed foods have become the latest demons. Fats were demonized in the 90s, then it became carbohydrates, and now it’s processed and ultra-processed foods. I think they have a place in people’s lifestyles and diets; the issue is just how much processed food they are eating.”

“I usually tell my students we have an 80/20 or 90/10 rule, where 80 or 90 percent of the time, we aim for whole foods from the food groups, and the remaining 10 or 20 percent is what I call ‘treating yourself.’ However, we must consider people with food insecurity,” she says. “Sometimes all they can afford are processed and ultra-processed foods. And if we think about something like bread, even if it’s whole grain, it’s still a processed food.”

The Nutrition and Dietetics Program has recently had its full accreditation continued by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and is now available on all of Commonwealth University’s campuses, Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield.

Feeny emphasizes looking past trends in nutrition. For example, there are misconceptions in the low-carb and high-protein diets. “If you are an athlete and you eat a ton of protein, it doesn’t automatically become muscle. Your body processes it, and it becomes fat and sugar just like everything else. It probably makes your liver work more. That’s counterproductive. When it comes to fats, it only takes about 3% of the energy needed to break down the fat and convert it back into its usable form.”

“I don’t like to categorize food as ‘good or bad.’ The only bad foods, in my opinion, are dirty food, poisonous food that will kill me or make me sick, and moldy food.”

To learn more about the nutrition program at Commonwealth University, visit [commonwealthu.edu/nutrition](https://commonwealthu.edu/nutrition).



BUILDING ON A *legacy*



# BUILDING ON A LEGACY

Dettwiler commits to support Mansfield choral music

By Ryan McNamara

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**P**eggy Dettwiler, retired director of choral activities, has committed a portion of her estate to support choral music at Commonwealth University-Mansfield through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation.

Dettwiler served as director of choral activities at Mansfield for 35 years, transforming a small rural program into an internationally recognized choral powerhouse through her visionary leadership and commitment to students. She retired from her role at Mansfield in June 2025.

“I am deeply honored to provide financial support for students attending Mansfield,” says Dettwiler. “Mansfield is located in the rural mountains of northcentral Pennsylvania. As a farm girl from northern Illinois, I can relate to rural life here in northern Pennsylvania and the challenges to find funds to attend college. Some say that we are in the middle of nowhere, but I believe that we are in the middle of everywhere. I hope that this scholarship will help some students to attend Mansfield.”

Dettwiler grew up on a farm in northern Illinois before moving near Madison, Wisconsin, to teach music. She earned her bachelor’s degree in voice performance and a master’s degree in music education from the University of Wisconsin, then earned a second master’s in choral conducting from the University of Texas, San Antonio. Dettwiler went on to earn a doctorate at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where she would also meet her future husband.

When Dettwiler came to Mansfield in 1990 as director of choral activities, she thought she would stay for only two or three years. However, she credits the university, support for the music department, and the talented students with rural backgrounds like her own as the reason she stayed for 35 years. “It has been such a pleasure to work with these students in a beautiful rural setting,” says Dettwiler, looking back on her career.

Having been afforded the opportunity to travel to Europe as an undergraduate student, Dettwiler knew she wanted to share that experience with her own students. “The most profound memories come from the nine European tours I was able to organize and offer to our Mansfield students over the years. For some students, it was the first time on a plane or out of the country!”

Highlights of the European trips include moving a judge to tears with a performance of “Danny Boy” in Zwickau, Germany; in 2002 earning a special award for Artistic Interpretation, winning the Gospel and Spiritual category in Graz, Austria, in

2008; and being invited to perform at Carnegie Hall by one of the judges after the women’s chorus won the 2011 competition in Wales.

Mansfield students performed at Carnegie Hall as the chorus of nuns alongside professional vocalists during The Sound of Music concert performance in 2012. Afterwards, a representative of Rodgers & Hammerstein remarked that it was the best nuns’ performance they’ve featured. Five years later, the choir was invited back to Carnegie Hall for a production of *Candide* that was reviewed as “superb” by the New York Times.

An emotional farewell concert was staged in Dettwiler’s honor as part of Mansfield’s Alumni Weekend in June 2025. Before the farewell concert got underway, Dettwiler was surprised to learn that a scholarship in her honor had been established by Strunk and fellow alumni through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation. In recognition of her many years of dedicated service and brilliant choral leadership at Mansfield, the music scholarship will be available to an outstanding member of the Mansfield Concert Choir. In a show of their continued commitment to music at Mansfield, Dettwiler and her husband Jürgen Thym, helped endow the scholarship with a significant donation of their own.

Alumni from several eras, dating back to the 70s, traveled near and far to honor Dettwiler through music at her farewell event. The group moved through eight pieces before Dettwiler gave her closing remarks, sharing with the audience in Straughn that she was grateful for the past and excited for the future. The formal program closed with Ralph Vaughn Williams’ “O How Amiable,” which includes the line “O prosper thou our handiwork,” a fitting notion given Dettwiler’s handiwork in bringing so many together in celebration.

The choir concluded with a performance of “A Celtic Blessing” in which Dettwiler invited anyone who knew the song to join them on stage. Afterwards, choir and audience members alike waited to personally thank Dettwiler for the passion she instilled in each of them.

Mansfield offers academic programs in vocal and instrumental music performance, music education, and music technology along with a variety of instrumental, vocal, and theatrical ensembles for students to explore and grow as performers and teachers. To learn more about the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation or to make a gift, visit [mountaineerfdn.org](http://mountaineerfdn.org).



## Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation Climbs to \$3.2 million in First Year

In its inaugural year, the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation (MUMF) raised \$3.2 million to support students, faculty, and programs at Commonwealth University-Mansfield.

The MU Mountaineer Foundation was formally recognized as an affiliated entity by the Commonwealth University Council of Trustees in 2024, establishing it as the sole, officially recognized foundation dedicated exclusively to supporting CU-Mansfield and its students.

“We are deeply grateful for the remarkable support from our alumni and friends, whose generosity has directly impacted current and future students through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation,” says Gretchen Sechrist, Mansfield campus administrator and interim vice provost for undergraduate education at CU. “Raising \$3.2 million in our first year is a powerful testament to the strength of our partnership with the Foundation and our community’s shared commitment to building a strong and vibrant future together.”

Several major gifts marked the Foundation’s first year, including:

- \$1 million from **Roger Maisner** for athletic scholarships
- \$500,000 unrestricted estate gift from **Dick Horton '68**
- \$500,000 from **Mark Doherty '95** for athletic scholarships
- \$300,000 estate gift from **Edith Johnson '50** to support music scholarships
- \$200,000 estate gift from **Bryan Lane '88** for the alumni legacy scholarship
- \$50,000 from **Robert Strohecker '91** for health and science scholarships
- \$30,000 from **Rod Pursell '88** for the Mansfield Stadium Campaign
- \$27,000 for the **Janice M. Kennedy/George W. Cass Scholarship** – Americans to Study Abroad
- \$26,000 from **Tom '71 and Janice '72 Stephens** for teacher education scholarships

In addition to major contributions, the Foundation has fostered strong grassroots support. During Mansfield’s third annual All In Day of Giving, more than 450 donors contributed over \$80,000 in just 24 hours.

“We are incredibly proud of what we’ve accomplished together in our first year, and deeply thankful to the donors who made it possible,” says Kate Billmeyer, executive director of the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation. “The success over the last year is a clear signal that our alumni and supporters believe in the power and promise of Mansfield.”

MUMF is committed to transparency and collaboration with alumni and campus partners. Its offices are located on the second floor of South Hall on the Mansfield campus.

To learn more or get involved, visit [mountaineerfdn.org](https://mountaineerfdn.org).

## Pursell '88 Kicks-Off the Stadium Campaign with \$30,000 Gift



Mansfield Alumni-Athletic Hall of Fame member Rod Pursell '88 kicked off the Stadium Campaign for Mansfield with a \$30,000 gift to support the renovation project through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation.

“When I believe in something, I commit to it,” says Pursell. “Mansfield

is about opportunity, and this is an opportunity to make our campus better. Now we need others to step up and make a commitment to support current and future Mansfield students.”

Mansfield’s Karl Van Norman Field and Maxson Track stadium complex is set to undergo a transformative \$4 million renovation. The project will modernize the stadium, elevate the student experience, and enhance a vital campus and community gathering space.

The project includes new artificial turf at Van Norman Field, a resurfaced Robert T. Maxson Track, and upgraded stadium

seating. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring, with completion in time for the fall 2026 athletic season.

Additional enhancements are possible via donor support through the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation.

Pursell was a four-year letter-winner as an offensive lineman on the Mountaineer football team from 1983-86. He was a two-time 1st Team All-PSAC East selection (1985 and 1986) and earned Little All-American Honors in 1986. Pursell was the first recipient of the Frank Butsko Award, the highest honor a Mansfield football player can receive.

Pursell and his family have also been longtime supporters of Mansfield students’ academic pursuits through the Rod and Donna Pursell Endowed Academic Scholarship, which was established in 2013.

To support the Stadium Campaign for Mansfield, connect with Kate Billmeyer at the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation at 570-204-2052 or [kbillmeyer@cu-mansfield.org](mailto:kbillmeyer@cu-mansfield.org). Learn more about the MU Mountaineer Foundation at [mountaineerfdn.org](http://mountaineerfdn.org).

## Edith Kendall Johnson '50 Music Room Dedicated

The Edith Kendall Johnson '50 Music Room inside Butler Music Center was dedicated in September 2025, during Mansfield’s Homecoming Weekend.

The renovation and dedication of the room was made possible through a \$300,000 gift from Johnson’s estate to the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation to support music scholarships, retention efforts, and student priorities at Mansfield.

The renovated room includes modern technology, teaching tools, and instruments similar to what music education students will use in classrooms during their student teaching placements.

Edith’s sons, Kendall and Charles Johnson, along with other family members, traveled to Mansfield to participate in the dedication. Commonwealth University Interim President Dr. Jeffery Osgood, university

leadership, music faculty, foundation staff, and student leaders were on hand to show their support.

“This generous gift from the Johnson family will provide music scholarships and music education resources that make an immediate impact on the music teacher training program at Mansfield,” says Dr. Nathan

Rinnert, music education coordinator and co-assistant chair of the music department. “Hopefully, the significance of gifts like this is felt in the school music programs and local communities in our region. Our goal is to send out top-notch music teachers who will inspire generations of lifelong musicians and music lovers.”

Born in Marienville, Johnson graduated from Mansfield with a bachelor’s degree



in music education in 1950. She taught grade school music in Kansas City, orchestrating many performances and shows throughout her career. After retiring from teaching in schools, Johnson continued to teach piano in her home on her beloved Steinway grand piano until her last recital in 2013. In total, Johnson taught piano for 70 years.



# BREAKING BARRIERS

Molly McLeer Makes Another Historic Moment for Mansfield Football

**Molly McLeer refuses to be the girl who “can’t.”**

That has been the driving message for McLeer, a freshman on Mansfield’s sprint football team.

That drive, that mindset, and that message all led her to a barrier-breaking moment on Oct. 17, 2025 when the Springfield, New Jersey, native took the field for Mansfield’s sprint football team in the Mounties’ 34–18 victory over Saint Thomas Aquinas.

She played on the offensive line in Mansfield’s big win—echoing Mansfield’s history as the birthplace of night football, where a game was played under lights for the first time in 1892.



In fighting for yards on the offensive line, McLeer became the first female football player in Mansfield football history and the first woman ever to take the field in a Collegiate Sprint Football League game.

Believed to be just one of two women currently rostered on a collegiate football team, McLeer says she has always wanted to make history.

“The only thing I’ve ever wanted to do is play football and be able to make other girls believe that they could do anything boys can do,” says McLeer.

No doubt, her goal was always to break barriers. And, the football field was where she hoped to do just that, thanks in large part to a strong support system.

McLeer, who started playing football in the fourth grade, said her mother was not sure about her playing football at first. It took some time for everyone, but they quickly realized she was a football player.

“My first year, it took about two weeks before any of the boys would actually hit me,” says McLeer. “You know that good parents teach their kids not to hit girls. But once I put the pads and helmet on, I wasn’t a girl anymore, and I was just a football player.”

It took the others, including parents and fans, time too.

McLeer recalls, “People would often ask my mother and father, ‘Who’s your son?’ They would proudly say, ‘Number 72, she’s a girl.’ Some people didn’t like it, but my parents never wavered. They’ve always supported me.”



That feeling resonates with Peggy Carl, Mansfield's associate director of athletics.

"Molly's debut must have felt so satisfying for her," says Carl. "There is nothing better than stepping out into the competitive arena of the sport one is passionate about. With that game in October, she joined the next generation of role models for little girls by teaching them that anything is possible. The fact that she is doing this at Mansfield is both heart-warming and wonderful. As a beneficiary of Title IX myself, I am so very proud of Molly as she steps into this new chapter of her athletic life."

During her first visit to Mansfield, McLeer knew this was where she wanted to make history.

"I visited a few places, but when I came to Mansfield, everything just clicked. Coach (John) Evans was genuinely excited to meet me. He didn't make it feel like a diversity thing or a publicity stunt," says McLeer. "He just treated me like a recruit. When I left campus that day, I told my dad that Mansfield is it."

"We are very fortunate to have been chosen by Molly and her family to further her education and play football," says Evans. "During the recruiting process, I always have current players watch film of potential recruits with me. A recent graduate and All-CSFL offensive lineman, Kellen Herman, watched her film with me and said 'coach, she is pretty good, do we have a chance?'"

McLeer credits the team and coaches for providing her with such a strong start to her college career and time at Mansfield.

"For the first time, I don't just love going to football practice because I love football," says McLeer. "I love going because I love these people. They treat me like one of them. It's the best environment I've ever been part of."



## Finding Connection in Athletics

Mansfield's new Director of Athletics Andrew Petko recalls that while he was a student at the University of Buffalo, he had an internship with the Buffalo Sabers in professional sports. He learned a valuable lesson.

"I really enjoyed college athletics more," he says. "Professional sports are super corporate, and the players come and go. With student-athletes, they appear to stay for one to four years, but in reality, some stay for life, because many alumni stay connected to their alma mater."

The possibility of building connections drew the college athletics veteran to Mansfield.

"One of the things that attracted me to this job is that there are special people who want the best for Mansfield, whether that's the people who work here, alumni, or those who give back. There are a lot of opportunities to do even better than before, and that makes it attractive."

Petko joins the Mountaineers from Central Washington University, where he served as deputy director of athletics since 2022. At Central Washington, Petko oversaw facilities projects, including a \$60.5 million renovation. Prior to that, Petko was the assistant athletic director for internal operations/CFO for athletics at Minot State in North Dakota from 2019-22 and was at Division I Loyola Marymount from 2011-19.

For Petko, students come first. "Not everyone wants to go to a big university. We want everyone to know what Mansfield is all about and make sure we're not the 'best-kept secret.' And we need to make sure that we're taking care of our student-athletes. That's the priority. At Mansfield, it's about building the whole student-athlete experience."

"The best thing about college athletics is watching a student come in as a recruit and seeing them grow and develop over time," says Petko. "You build strong connections with them. I love staying connected with alumni and watching them become successful. Whether someone was here for a short time or 50 years ago, we want them to know that we still care about them."

## Woodring Scholarship Established to Support Track & Field, Cross Country Athletes

The Woodring family has committed \$25,000 to the Mansfield University Mountaineer Foundation to establish the Michael “Woody” Woodring ’74 Scholarship to support Mountaineer track & field and cross country student-athletes.

“The Michael ‘Woody’ Woodring ’74 Scholarship is a way for his generosity and desire to help others to continue to live on, positively impact Mansfield students, and give back to a place that meant so much to him,” explains Lauren Woodring, Michael’s daughter.

A native of Pittsburgh, Woodring earned a scholarship to compete on the Mansfield track & field and cross country teams. He graduated from Mansfield with a degree in political science in 1974 and earned his juris doctorate at Duquesne University. Woodring used his law degree to work in the leasing office of PNC Bank.

He is survived by his wife, Diane, and two children, Lauren and John.

“Just as the impact of a campus experience extends beyond four years, a donation ensures that Mountie Athletics continues



to thrive for generations,” says Andrew Petko, Mansfield director of athletics. “This scholarship will sustain our support of Mansfield student-athletes who strive for excellence in competition, in the classroom, and in life.”



## CU-Mansfield’s Tawney Named Mid-Atlantic ‘General Manager of the Year’ by Aramark

Donald Tawney, general manager of the Mountie Food Co., has been honored with the prestigious “General Manager of the Year” award for the Mid-Atlantic region by Aramark Collegiate Hospitality. This recognition celebrates Tawney’s outstanding leadership, financial stewardship, and unwavering commitment to enhancing the student dining experience.

Over the past three years, Tawney has distinguished himself through his ability to rally his team and deliver a dining program that resonates deeply with students. Under his leadership, The Mountie Food Co. has experienced a notable increase in student satisfaction, as evidenced by both internal survey systems and third-party dining audits. His team’s dedication to listening to student feedback and fostering meaningful connections has proven to be a key differentiator in the program’s success.

The Mid-Atlantic region of Aramark Collegiate Hospitality encompasses Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia, spanning 35 public and private institutions.

# Happening AT MANSFIELD



## MOUNTIE PRIDE TAKES THE SPOTLIGHT

From floats and drumlines to hometown pride, Mansfield's Homecoming Parade lit up Main Street in true Mountie fashion. Campus and community came together to celebrate spirit, tradition, and all things red and black. To see the full post and to follow us on social media, scan the QR code to learn more.



## A LEGACY HONORED: Dr. Richard Soderberg Dedication Ceremony

The Mansfield community came together to honor Dr. Richard Soderberg for his decades of service and groundbreaking work in fisheries science. The third-floor south reading room of North Hall was officially dedicated as the Richard Soderberg Natural Resources Center, recognizing his lasting impact on students, research, and the field. To see the full post and to follow us on social media, scan the QR code to learn more.



## HERE'S TO THE CLASS OF 2025!

Friends, family, alumni, and future Mounties—join us in celebrating Mansfield's Class of 2025! From snowy mornings to sunny victories, this class has left its mark on Mountie County. Once a Mountie, always a Mountie. To see the full post and to follow us on social media, scan the QR code to learn more.



## MANSFIELD KNOWS HOW TO THRIVE!

Mounties wrapped up the spring 2025 semester in the best way possible—with food, friends, and a whole lot of fun! From laughter-filled moments to shared memories, this celebration was pure Mansfield spirit. To see the full post and to follow us on social media, scan the QR code to learn more.

### A NOTE TO PARENTS

If this issue of *Mansfieldian Magazine* is addressed to a daughter or son who has established a separate residence, please notify us of that new address by sending an email to: [magazine@commonwealthu.edu](mailto:magazine@commonwealthu.edu)

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## On a Path to Grad School and Discovery

By **Jaime North**

This spring, Emma Wonsick will put the final touches on an impressive resume for graduate school in her pursuit to become a biomedical researcher.

The senior CU-Mansfield biology-cell and molecular genomics major has spent three years researching the effects of T cells within the tumor microenvironment, a focus she chose because of the significant impact cancer has on many lives.

“Better understanding how the immune system functions during tumor development can lead to discovering new therapeutic targets and better models for testing cancer therapies,” says Wonsick. “Studying cancer immunology could contribute to important advancements in immunotherapy, which is becoming a very effective cancer treatment.”

Last spring, Wonsick earned first place for this research at the 56th Annual Meeting of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania University Biologists. She was one of two Mansfield students to win an award—four others earned second place in their respective research categories.

“Research is a continuous learning process,” says Wonsick, who was last year’s Mansfield Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year as an



outfielder for the softball team. “It can be long and difficult. Sometimes you’ll get unexpected results, and you get to try to figure out why, which may lead to a new, unexpected finding.”

Initially uncertain about her career path, Wonsick discovered a passion for cell biology as a sophomore, which led her to the cell and molecular genomics track. She credits this program—and her research advisor, biology professor Kristen Long—with preparing her well for a future in medical research.

“Dr. Long encourages students to think critically to understand the content, rather than trying to memorize material,” says Wonsick. “This teaching style immediately made an impact on me and allowed me to excel.”

“Dr. Long’s lab is special because she knows how to challenge her students. When she introduced me to research as a sophomore, I was overwhelmed. Now, I feel confident in my ability to properly conduct and present research. She’s helped me realize my potential and achieve it.”