

BMA Alumni News

Serving Lake Ariel, Philadelphia and Blue Mountain Academies



Race 4 Eternity



Jim Slater is a four-year graduate of BMA graduating in 1985. Jim also attended Andrews University and graduated with a double major in Communications and Business Administration. At work, Jim is known for being a “numbers guy,” but outside of work, he has many varied interests. He loves doing what he calls “epic adventures” for fun. His adventures have taken him hiking across Death Valley and down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Jim has a goal of someday hiking from the lowest point in the United



States to the highest, as well as completing the Four State Challenge, which involves hiking in four states on the Appalachian Trail in one day. He has numerous triathlons under his belt, including being a two-time finisher of the Chattanooga Ironman.



“There is nothing like the shared memories of a place in time. They bring the joy of experiencing something bigger than yourself. Groups like band, choir, clubs, or intermural sports encouraged you to accomplish more than you ever thought possible.”

*“That is the excitement around the **Race 4 Eternity** campaign started by my classmate, Jim Slater. For those who haven’t heard his inspirational testimony, here is a brief summary. This September marks the 40th anniversary of Jim’s neck injury. Through the grace of God, and quick thinking by Blue Mountain Academy faculty and staff, Jim survived an accident that could have left him paralyzed or possibly taken his life.*

“Jim has chosen to celebrate this milestone by raising \$200,000 for the BMA worthy student fund. This lofty goal is impossible to reach without individuals who have the desire to be part of something greater than themselves. One of the strategies is to inspire BMA alumni from each decade to come together and raise \$10,000 per decade towards the goal. For the Decade of the 80’s we are targeting a goal of \$100,000 (\$10,000 per class year).

“Your contribution, great or small, will provide the BMA experience for a worthy student who wants to be part of something great. Prayerfully consider a donation that will provide an unlimited return on investment; not only in Hamburg but ultimately in Heaven.”

Amy Ortiz Moretta **Class of '85**

(Amy Ortiz Moretta is an active member of the BMA Alumni Association, and class agent for the Class of 1985. For more information on the decade challenge for ‘Race 4 Eternity’ visit the class’s Facebook page – BMA Class of 1985).

(continued...)

Jim Slater (continued):

Mr. Slater has also participated in many domestic mission trips, as well as international mission trips to Ireland, the Dominican Republic, and Kenya. He is very active in his local church, where he is the church treasurer, along with being involved in music and speaking.

Jim and his wife Sarah currently live in Grand Haven, Michigan, and have five adult children who live all around the country. Mr. Slater is the Vice President and Chief Investment Officer of a boutique investment advisory firm in West Michigan, and has worked in various sectors of the financial industry over the past 30 years.

Jim Slater is a devoted father to his adult children, and looks forward to the upcoming wedding of his daughter this August. One can hear the love, concern and excitement Jim has for his children when he speaks of them. Not a day goes by without a phone call to at least one of them, and most of his travels involves visiting one of his kids. But even more than his children, Jim loves his Heavenly Father, and everything he does, from his epic adventures, to his professional life, to his hobbies, Jim keeps God at the center.

Jim will be attending the ASI conference in Florida early August to promote the fundraiser and give credit to his reasons for “giving back.”

Won't you consider giving back too?

About “Race for Eternity” Jim in his desire to “give back” has presented the Blue Mountain Academy Administration and the BMA Alumni Association Executive Committee with an exciting fundraising idea benefitting the students of Blue Mountain Academy, and maintaining the Academy’s and the Alumni Association’s motto, *“They shall be all taught of God” John 6:45*. Scheduled to participate in a Triathlon, September 26, 2021, Jim is asking you to “race” with him in building a sustainable funding source for the present and future students of Blue Mountain Academy. Of the \$200,000 goal, just over \$19,600 has been raised.

Mr. Slater credits the staff and education at BMA instrumental in connecting him to Christ, he would like the current and future students to have the same opportunity. Thus, the title, “Race for Eternity.” Jim believes each student should have the opportunity to know Christ and have a home in eternity with Christ.

To watch Jim’s powerful video regarding the campaign and his reasons for creating this opportunity, please go to:

<https://youtu.be/IL6QtyMMaz4> or
<https://www.bma.us/race-for-eternity>

In order to support this wonderful opportunity in giving back and providing a future in Christian education for current and perspective students, please go to:

<https://ironmanfoundation.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.Participant&participantID=2496#donate> or
<https://www.bma.us/race-for-eternity>

There will be a rally for Jim at the Southern Adventist University church fellowship hall on Thursday, September 23, 2021.



In Memoriam

We have recently been notified of the passing of the following alumni and former staff members:

James H. Aumack (1964 graduate; Ass't Boys' Dean 1979 – 1980; Boys' Lead Dean 1980 – 1984, and 1986-1988)

Dietrich C. Dennis (1988)

Note: Dietrich was 1988's class agent.

Millie Ryan (former Girls' Dean 1963 – 1968)

Tricia Sorenson (1971)

Steve Wilson (former faculty member – Gymnastics Coach)

Let us remember their families in prayer with the loss of their loved ones.

The above list may not encompass everyone, as we can only report on those we have been notified of.

Hope for Today

“For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for Him and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for other Christians, as you still do.” Hebrews 6:10

NLT

James H. Aumack, attended **BMA** for all four years, graduating in 1964. In 1965, Jim married his high school sweetheart, Diana Marie Draia Aumack in Youngstown, OH. Mr. Aumack was an Assistant Dean at BMA from 1979-1980, becoming Lead Dean 1980-1984. Returning again in 1986 for two more years as Lead



Loved by many, James was described as a who lived the Fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – loving Jesus.



from Dean. person peace,

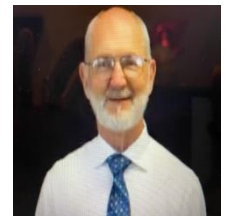
During the times he wasn't a dean, Mr. Aumack travelled the highways as an over-the-road truck driver. Because of his passion for young people, James taught youth Sabbath School for a number of years. On July 27, 2021, James peacefully passed away surrounded by family. He leaves behind his wife of 56 years, Diana, his children, James Troy Aumack and Sherry Aumack Reppert and their families. A celebration of life service is to be held August 21, 2021 at the Collegedale SDA Church.

Millie Runyan is preceded in death by her husband "Doc" Runyan, also a former BMA faculty member who passed recently. Millie began her career as Dean of Women at Blue Mountain Academy in Hamburg, PA from 1963 - 1968. In 1968, the family moved to Collegedale, TN where she held the position of Head Dean of Women at Southern Missionary College until 1986. In 1980, while working full-time, raising children, a grandson and taking care of her

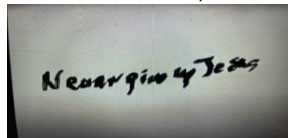


elderly mother, Millie managed to complete her Bachelor's Degree in Behavioral Science from Southern Missionary College. In 1987, Don and Millie moved to Robinson, IL, where she earned her Master's Degree in Counseling from Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, IL in 1991. Her family proudly remembers the day she marched in her cap and gown at graduation next to her son Kevin who had also earned his Master's degree. Millie found her true calling as the Team Leader / Mental Health Therapist at Southeastern Illinois Counseling Centers, Inc. in Robinson, IL. After her retirement in the fall of 2000, Millie worked with at-risk youth at A.C.E. Afterschool Program until 2010; and also served on the Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors.

Steve L. Wilson began with BMA in December of 1997 as a gymnastics coach. Steve's enthusiasm for life and Christ resonated through both his work at BMA and his personal life with friends and family. As evident in the representation at his funeral services, those that knew Steve from each and every school, academy and educational venue or summer camp he attended or was employed with knew Steve for his camaraderie, his joy of life and his love of Christ. Steve was never short of expressing encouragement and appreciation to others. Steve was also active in his church and during COVID helped set up a food bank and distribute food to those in need continuing his mission of expressing God's love. Steve leaves to memory his wife, Rhonda, three children Gary, Loren, and Brianna; grandchildren, a host of family members, and friends. Most recently a Dean of Highland Academy in Portland, Tennessee,



Jim's last written message to his friends, family and especially the 2021 graduating class of Highland Academy, was "Never give up Jesus." Heather Severance in a song she wrote in dedication of Steve, and the life he lived, used Steve's message. Some of the song's words are shared in memberance of Steve, his faith and his love of Jesus:



“ ‘Never give up Jesus,’ He’s never given up on you. And there’s no pit of suffering, His love won’t see you through. No matter what life throws your way, you can face it with a smile, ‘Cause when you ‘Never give up Jesus’ somehow He makes it all worthwhile.” “ ‘Never give up Jesus,’ Just four simple words, Yet out of all I’ve hoped to reach you, this is the best thing you can learn. This world is quickly fading; it’s sick and dying just like me, So ‘Never give up Jesus,’ He is your eternity.”

Graduation Weekend Highlights in Pictures



Aim: "Aim for the sky, with God by our side."

Colors: Black and red

Motto: "Bold as an eagle, with strength from the Lord, united we stand and together we soar."

Song: "Bold as an Eagle"

2021 class agent will be Jared Piliero – jaredpiliero21@gmail.com.



bma scholars

May 14, 2021 began a weekend of excitement as BMA celebrated 18 graduates. With graduation exercises culminating on Sunday, May 16, 2021, parents and family, friends, and BMA faculty and staff watched as the senior class of 2021 became graduates and alumni of Blue Mountain Academy.

Speakers throughout the weekend's events included: Burney Culpepper, BMA Principal; Rose Bechtel, faculty member; Bruce Kimball, faculty member; PA Conference President, Gary Gibbs; PA Conference Treasurer, Carlos Charmichart; and five members of the Blue Mountain Academy Praise Team: Anna Bondarchuk, Everaldo de Araujo, Summer Dekle, Nathan Dialectakis, and Joohyun Kim.

As BMA is of a diverse community, graduates representing eight countries read their class Bible verse each in their native language. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31 KJV

Each of the 18 graduates received scholarships from various colleges and universities to include, but not limited to: Andrews University, New York Institute of Technology, San Francisco University, Southern Adventist University, Union College, Walla Walla University, and Washington Adventist University. Various scholarships totaling over \$560,000 have been awarded to the graduates.

Faculty member, and a 2021 class sponser, Rosemarie Bechtel gave the Friday evening service illuminating on the class' overall theme of 'Bold as an Eagle.' Referencing the eagle in not only their chosen Bible verse, but the class' Aim, Motto and Song, Mrs. Bechtel challenged the graduates to study the life of the eagle and soar like an eagle thru life's storms. Reminding the students they are a family, Rose Bechtel encouraged the graduates that in building their faith, they continue to encourage each other, communicate with one another and hold each other accountable on their relationship journey with their Christian faith. Amplifying that God and His spirit has tied their hearts together and will continue in spirit to keep their hearts tied together. While the class may be small in numbers and diverse in their ways, they are a family, and how they have unity in God's spirit. As the opening services came to a close, Mrs. Bechtel referenced their class motto and gave courage to the graduates, "To be bold as an eagle with strength from the Lord and depend on God's strength and not their own."

Rosemarie Bechtel is a graduate of BMA, and class agent for the Class of 1982.

If you have a student interested in attending Blue Mountain Academy, please view BMA's website at: <https://www.bma.us> for registration and enrollment details. Registrations are still being accepted.

News You Can Use!

Representatives from Conewago Construction, Tilden Township, Blue Mountain Academy, and the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists joined members and staff of the Pennsylvania Conference for the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Conference office - our Mission and Evangelism Headquarters *on the campus of Blue Mountain Academy*. The new facility will repurpose the front portion of the building previously used for a variety of things including industry, auto mechanics, the Adventist Book Center—now the BMA Food Store, and the BMA sign shop. The BMA Food Store has moved to a new home in the back portion of the building. Industry and the sign shop will continue to operate from their locations in the building.

The new office facility will be equipped in ways that allow the Conference to powerfully advance God's mission in Pennsylvania. It will also be home to the



CORE evangelism training school for young adults, and provide space for training and meetings for pastors, teachers, committees, and members. The new location will also allow for easier partnership with Blue Mountain Academy as well as Adventist WholeHealth Network, also located on campus.

“God has called His last-day people to reach everyone, everywhere with the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ,” shares Gary Gibbs, Conference president. “As members of the Pennsylvania Conference, He has assigned us this corner of earth as our mission field. The harvest of souls Jesus will reap at His return will in a large part be influenced by our attention to the mission God has entrusted to our care. This new facility will enable us to provide training and create resources which will better equip us to finish the work and share the good news of Jesus Christ and His soon return.”

The new office building, voted overwhelmingly by constituents at the October 2020 session, is scheduled in late 2021.

Alumni (in Music) Spotlight

If you are a past, present or current student attending Blue Mountain Academy, you are bound to be involved with music. Music surrounds BMA through band, bells, song, orchestra, and so much more. You are either participating within the music departments or listening to their music. Some of our alumni have continued their love of music throughout their lives.

Pamela (Yingst) Griffin (1966) is a proud BMA alum. Although her husband, Darrell, did not attend BMA, their paths first crossed on BMA's campus when Darrell sang for a program. Pamela's brothers, Robert and Brian also attended Blue Mt. **Pamela** and Darrell live in Boston, where Pamela has been a very successful fundraiser for charities such as UNICEF and educational institutions. Pamela is also an accomplished plant-based cook who enjoys teaching cooking classes. Darrell is a Senior Digital Fellow at Boston University's Institute for Health Systems Innovation and Policy. This singing duet, **'PerformancEdge'** often sing with Darrell playing his guitar. Pamela and Darrell have two sons, Adam and Avery and four grandchildren. **Look for the introduction of 'Pamela's Pantry' in our next issue of the BMA Alumni Newsletter.**

Alumnus, **Julie (Karpenko) Reid (1992)** continues her love of music with husband, Charles Reid and their children. **Julie** and Charles have been



making music together since meeting in a production of an opera at the Spoleto Festival, USA, in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1996. Julie is a music educator in the Lakeshore Community Schools in Stevensville, Michigan. Julie has taught voice at Indiana University, South Bend, Indiana and at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Charles Reid, tenor, is an active international performer of operatic and concert repertoire. He has performed on many famous stages, including nine seasons with New York's Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Reid serves as Associate Professor of Music and Voice Area Coordinator at Andrews University. Together, they enjoy performing concerts and have been heard around Europe and the U.S.A. Active in their communities, the Reids have served as Home and School Leaders at both Blue Mountain Elementary School and Ruth Murdoch Elementary School. Julie currently serves as a member of the RMES school board. Together, the Reids lead Earliteen Youth Ministry / Sabbath School and are active in the music ministry at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University. Julie and Charles are the proud parents of three wonderful children, Sam, Leah and Luke.

Even though **Camme Carlson Watkins (1986)** and her mother, a **1960** graduate, **Barbara Joan Galambos Carlson**, no longer reside in Pennsylvania, their family has a solid history and commitment to Blue Mountain Academy. Their deep connection to BMA stems from a family of uncles, aunts and grandfather who were actively involved in area churches, including Hamburg's and Lansdale's, in addition to the Hamburg SDA Elementary School, where Camme's Aunt Edie taught for several years.

We Need Your Help!

If you are in touch with a past faculty member who taught in the various music departments, please either provide us with their contact information or ask them to get in touch with the Alumni Association at bmaalumniassoc@google.com . We are interested in hearing from them as we would like to do something special for the faculty members of the Music Department during Alumni Weekend 2022. Thank you.

The Columbia Union Conference is trying to locate Penelope Kellogg Winkler. If you know Penelope, please ask her to contact us at tar291@outlook.com to receive the contact information and message from the Columbia Union Conference. Thank you.

In our efforts to lower postage costs, please provide us with your email address, and the alumni newsletter will be emailed to you directly. You may send your name (ladies, please also include your maiden name), graduating year, and email address to: bmaalumniassoc@google.com .

The Alumni Association Executive Committee is looking for an alumnus who might be interested in filling the position of 1st VP. If you are a motivated person, looking to help the Alumni Association grow in a more active and positive direction, please submit a letter of interest to Dwight Salkey at dwrightsalkey@gmail.com .

Missing Members.... We have several alumni whose addresses are no longer current. If you are in touch with any of the following persons, please ask them to provide us with their current mailing address and/or email address. They may reach us at bmaalumniassoc@gmail.com .

- 1973 Robinson, Gary
- 1973 Varmer, Candy
- 2007 Dawson, Steven
- 2007 Reese, Nicole
- 2010 La Fuente, Kevin D.

Alumni (in Music) Spotlight (continued)

Camme's Mother, **Barbara**, who often accompanies Camme when she sings, is cofounder with Camme's father, Jerry Carlson, of the Serenity Singers who sang at almost every camp meeting held at BMA since 1973, in addition to seven other surrounding state's camp meetings and churches - mostly SDA but many other denominations as well.

As for **Camme**, she grew up singing in the Serenity Singers and went to Greater Philadelphia Junior Academy now called Huntingdon Valley Christian Academy. Camme started BMA in her Sophomore year where she studied piano and organ under Mrs. Edison and voice with Mrs. Schreck who was a great mentor to her. In her Senior year, Camme had the privilege of becoming class Vice President and graduated in 1986. While attending college, Camme began private vocal opera studies at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and has had over 12 years of study in opera which brought her to sing with the Bel Canto Lyric Opera Company of Philadelphia for over five years. Although Camme has many years of music education and many credits in Business Administration, her official degree is in Fine Arts and Graphic Design and has been a Guest Speaker at a few of BMA's Career Days with Randy Nash, her cousin. Randy is also a graduate of BMA.

Camme is married to her husband of twenty-three years, Bill Watkins, and is a mother of two sons - Coltyn, 21 and Gavin, 16. The family has made their home in Pearce, AZ and still performs music whenever possible. Camme's husband runs his own garlic farm and is also a guitarist. Camme's "day job" is as a Marketing Representative for Valley TeleCom Group. Camme has served as a board member and board President on many community organizations and is currently serving as an elected Board official for the Sunsites-Pearce Fire District.

Learn more of our Alumni in Music in our next issue of the BMA Alumni Newsletter.

Alumni Association Updates

Zoom meetings with the class agents have started in an effort to keep class agents up to date on the activities of the alumni association so they can pass information to their individual class's alumni. The recent focus is of supporting the fundraising campaign Jim Slater has initiated. The campaign is an effort to help with tuition expenses for worthy students. Amy Ortiz (class of 1985) has challenged her class to reach a goal of \$10,000 collectively. And is challenging other classes of the 80's to do the same. Please contact your class agent if you are interested in participating in this challenge. As your class agent is a liaison to the Executive Committee, please contact them with your concerns or ideas for the Alumni Association to consider, in addition to notifications concerning change of address, the passing of a classmate, etc. If you are interested in contributing to the newsletter, please submit your article to: bmaalumniassoc@gmail.com . We are interested in hearing about our alumni.

Are you interested in becoming a class agent?

The following classes are in need of an agent - 1957, 1973, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1996, 2007, 2009, 2015 and 2017.

Class agents play an integral role in the operations of the BMA Alumni Association. Please contact us at bmaalumniassoc@gmail.com .