

Fall 2026

Landscape

For Alumni and Friends of Landmark College

The Gift of the Game

Austin Huettl '08 delivers thousands of basketballs to the Philippines.

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Cover photo: Austin Huettl '08 in Igaras at one
of the 350 public basketball courts he personally
visited while donating thousands of basketballs
in the Philippines.

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From the President's Desk

One of my personal goals is always to leave anywhere I've been better than I found it. I recommend this to everyone.

This issue of Landscape is filled with stories about members of the Landmark community who have done just that. They have made positive differences in ways both big and small. And our world is better as a result of what they have done and, in some cases, continue to do.

We invite you to read about Chuck and Nan Strauch and the entire Strauch family whose presence continues to be felt on campus every day, as well as other former trustees who are no longer with us but whose impact lives on in the memories of so many members of our community.

This Landscape also profiles long-serving faculty members who have recently retired, including the final founding faculty member, Dr. Linda Kerr. For many Landmark students and their families, these faculty members were (and remain) the face of the College and a source of happy memories and inspiration on their journeys ahead.

You'll also have the chance to meet Dr. Phip Ross, a graduate of Landmark's professional certificate program in neurodiversity. Dr. Ross,

who serves as faculty member and program chair of Developmental English at Southeast Community College (SCC) in Lincoln, Nebraska, was recently named the 2026 Sam Kirk Educator of the Year by the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

As we draw the celebration of Landmark College's 40th anniversary to a close, we also want to acknowledge the 25th anniversary of the Landmark College Institute for Research and Training. The work of the Institute has allowed thousands of people around the world to become part of the College's commitment to advancing the interests of neurodivergent individuals and the communities that support them. The work we do together is as important as what we are able to accomplish ourselves.

Finally, our cover story for this Landscape is about Austin Huettl '08 who has discovered a path to sharing the Landmark message of believing in yourself and helping others in an incredibly moving way.

Austin's work — that conveys these powerful messages through something as simple as a basketball — is a testament to the power of thinking differently and finding unexpected



solutions to problems we may not even have recognized as problems.

Austin's story, and all of the stories in this Landscape and those that we share on a regular basis, have this element in common — between the "idea" and its ultimate manifestation in the world, a lot of things have to happen. These things do not happen without the hard work, persistence, and dedication of individuals and teams.

But remember, positive change happens in ways both big and small. And while we wait for the "big idea" to arrive, we can make each and every day better for ourselves and the people around us.

I hope that you are inspired by the stories of these Landmark community members who have and are making a difference to make your world — our world — a better, more inclusive space.

Best wishes,

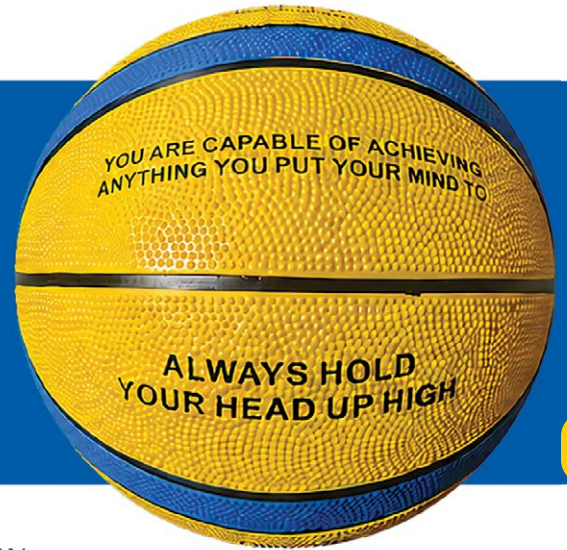
Jim Dlugos, Ph.D.
President, Landmark College



A smile says it all: sharing a celebratory fist bump with a young basketball recipient in Santa Lourdes, a coastal barangay in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan. All photos provided by Austin Huettl.

The Gift OF THE GAME

By Don Miller



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Thousands of children in the Philippines have new basketballs because a Landmark College graduate saw a need — and chose to do something about it.

In 2017, **Austin Huettl '08** traveled to the Philippines to visit his friend and fellow Landmark College alumnus **Luigi Santos '07**, a Filipino native who'd played basketball with him at Landmark. It was the first of nearly 20 trips Austin has made to the country to date.

"Luigi and I spent hours on the courts together in college, so we talked a lot about basketball," said Huettl. "Hands down, it's the most popular sport in the Philippines. In small towns, the public courts are like our town squares — a place where people of all ages gather."

Huettl also had a firsthand view of the game's sobering economic realities. Even where public courts exist, few families can afford equipment or shoes. "But kids always find a way," said Huettl. "One boy built a backboard out of scavenged wood, old nails, and a rim made of rebar, then hung it on a coconut tree so he could play."

He recognized the one thing kids couldn't build on their own: basketballs. "Balls, if they were available at all, were years old, worn nearly smooth, and barely bounced. I knew that was where I could make the biggest difference," he said.

That realization stayed with him long after he returned home.

A few years ago, after his grandfather passed away, Huettl's mother shared a story he had never heard. Walking through a park on a chilly day, his grandfather saw a man who was homeless. He took off his jean jacket, slipped a \$20 bill into the pocket, and handed it to him. "There's a little something in there to help you later," he said," Huettl recalled. "He didn't wait for thanks. He simply chose to make a difference in someone's life.

"I decided that's what I want to do."

A Gift With Landmark Roots

Growing up in Orange County, California, Huettl's sport was baseball. That changed quickly when he arrived at Landmark in 2006.

Rumors of the new 6'10" student caught the attention of John Wood, LC's late basketball coach and a resident dean. "I'd never played on a basketball team before," said Huettl. "But Coach wouldn't take no for an answer. He devoted his spare time

to working with me, and eventually I earned a spot as a starter — my best game ever was a triple-double." (double digits in points, rebounds, and assists in one game.)

Off the court, Huettl remembers Coach Wood and his wife Ellen, former resident dean and volleyball coach, as mentors. "They became my campus parents," he said. "For them, education came first, sports second. They taught us to help others and treat people right. Those lessons stayed with me."

Six years after graduating from Landmark with an A.A. in General Studies, Huettl bought an awning manufacturing business in nearby Huettl, California. "We found a unique niche and turned it into a promising patio market," he said.

The self-described "serial entrepreneur" said this and other business ventures have allowed him to travel to more than 80 countries for business and pleasure. "Lately, I've been thinking of myself as someone trying to build community around the world through sports," he said. "Bringing people together — that's really become my focus."



On a court in Sofronio Española, Palawan, two basketballs tell the story: one worn from years of play, the other brand new.

A Vision Takes Shape

Building community through basketball in the Philippines made sense to Huettl. He placed a modest first order of 100 basketballs in 2024. “I wanted to see what was possible,” he said. “That first order was my proof of concept.”

The response convinced him to think bigger. Drawing on his manufacturing background, Huettl reached out to more than 80 manufacturers and vendors in China and the Far East. “Finally, one design just popped,” he said.

Bright yellow and made of durable rubber, each ball carries a printed message. “I wanted every kid who picked one up to have something encouraging to read. I want them to believe they’re capable of anything they set their minds to, not just on the court but in life,” said Huettl. “Many are messages inspired by

Coach Wood and Steve Stanley (a former assistant coach at LC). They always told us that whether you win or lose, keep your head up and walk off the court knowing you gave it everything, and treat people the right way.”

During one of Huettl’s visits, Santos introduced him to a friend’s uncle, Sandy Arespachaga, an assistant coach with the TNT Tropang 5G, one of the 12 franchise teams comprising the Philippines Basketball Association (PBA).

That connection led to a meeting with Jojo Lastimoso, TNT’s manager and a PBA Greatest Player. “Jojo invited us to partner with their basketball camp, RHJ on Tour, featuring former NBA player Rondae Hollis-Jefferson as top billing,” said Huettl.

The team originally planned to give away a handful of balls per site. “But I wanted

to do more, so I offered to cover the extra production costs if they’d handle logistics,” said Huettl. “Ultimately, we gave away 3,000 basketballs in 20 provinces. Since each game is two teams of five, those balls touch the lives of 30,000 kids every time they play.”

Everywhere they went, Huettl also searched for public courts to visit on his own. In all, he distributed balls to kids he found playing on 350 courts.

In the future, Huettl hopes to meet with more PBA owners to discuss scaling his project nationally. “I remember sitting on the bench with Jojo,” said Huettl. “He looked at me and said, ‘What do you want to do — give a basketball to every kid in the Philippines?’ I told him that if I can, that would be great.”

Huettl is struck by how unassuming and grateful the kids are, especially girls,

who rarely have access to a ball. “Almost every time I hand a ball to a kid — boys and girls — they try to give it back when they’re done playing,” said Huettl.

“I say to them, ‘No, this is YOUR ball now. Please share it with your friends. And every time you hold this ball, remember that you’re capable of anything you put your mind to. Never forget someone halfway across the world is cheering for you.’”

As Huettl learned from his grandfather and his LC coaches, it’s about choosing to make a difference. “I may not be around to see it, but someday, one of these kids is going to be a star,” said Huettl. “A sports announcer will ask them, ‘What started your career?’ And they’re going say, ‘This big guy named Huettl came here when I was a kid, and gave me a ball.’ That’s going to be pretty cool.” 🐼



Lapu-Lapu City Mayor Cindi Chan welcomed the coaching staff of the RHJ on Tour basketball camp, joined by Huettl, during their visit to the island city.



A court in Caoayan, Ilocos Sur, filled quickly as Austin brought basketballs — and plenty of excitement — to local kids of all ages.



Huettl and fellow LC alumnus Luigi Santos (standing), with a family friend in Manila.

Editor’s Note:

A video highlighting Huettl’s work in the Philippines — Behind the Basketball — can be seen on YouTube at

<https://youtu.be/3J2w0jeOQX8>

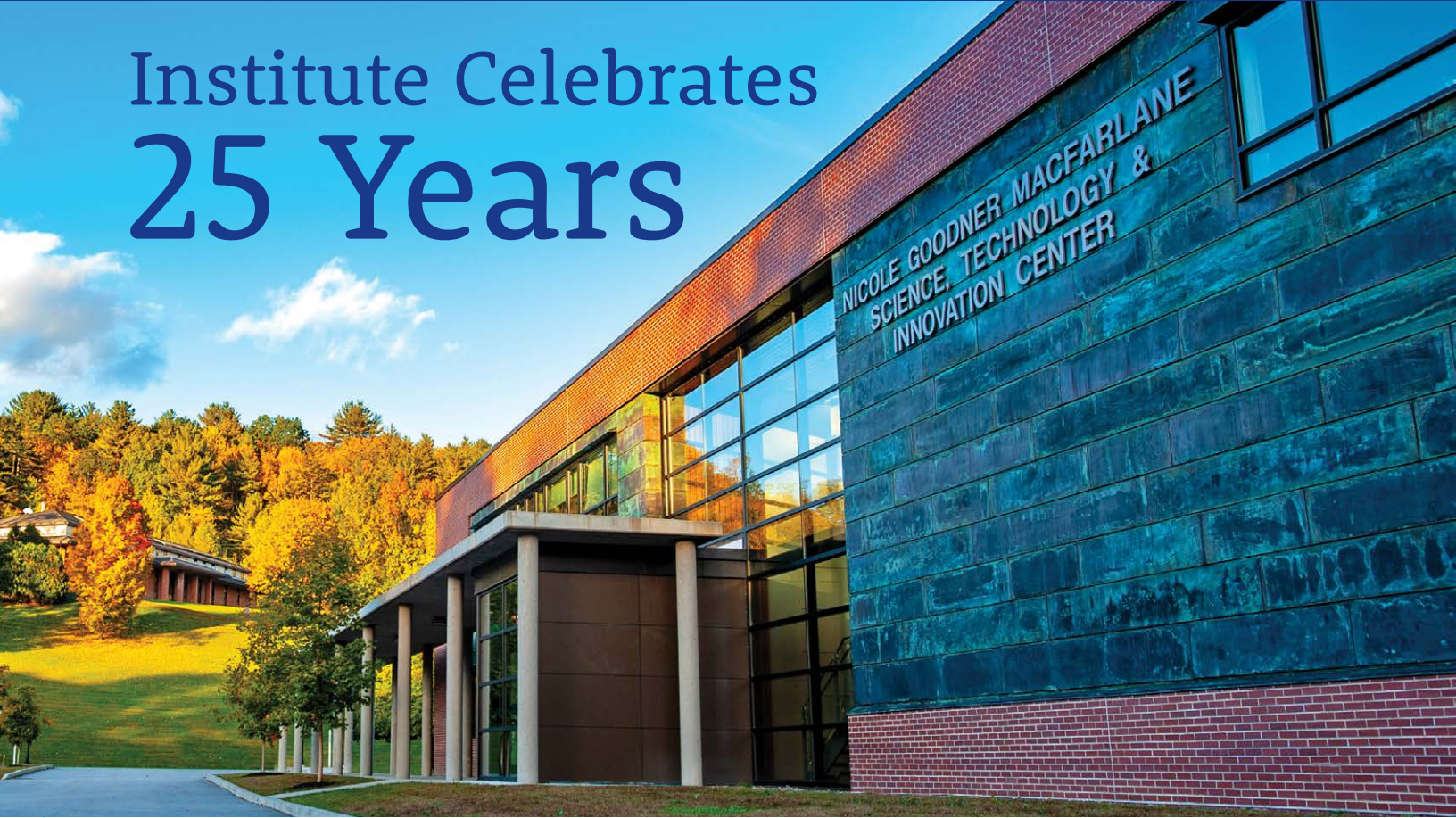
or by scanning the code:



FULL COURT PRESS — GET INVOLVED

Huettl invites Landmark alumni and friends who would like to be involved in this project — whether by contributing financially or joining him in the Philippines to distribute balls — to message him on Instagram @tourwithaustin.

Institute Celebrates 25 Years



The Landmark College Institute for Research and Training (LCIRT) was established in 2001, although the College's mission to improve education for neurodivergent learners arguably began with the creation of the institution in 1985. As founder Dr. Charles Drake said at the College's first commencement ceremony in 1986, "I treasure the dream that this will become a center for the dissemination of talent and information, not only to this community, but to this whole state and the entire region." That dream started taking shape in the 1990s, as faculty and staff began providing professional development to other educators. In 2000, the College received a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to formally create LCIRT.

Over the past quarter century, LCIRT has worked with thousands of educators to advance learning opportunities for students who learn differently through webinars, in-person trainings, the annual Summer Institute for Educators, and the Professional Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity, among other offerings. It also supports the needs of employers who want to leverage the talents of neurodivergent thinkers. On campus, LCIRT's work also plays a critical role in informing the College's own pedagogy through research projects with faculty members and provides students with opportunities to be researchers themselves.



DR. ADAM LALOR
VICE PRESIDENT FOR NEURODIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Scan the QR code to
watch a mini-documentary
about the history of LCIRT.**





A breakout session at LCIRT's 2025 Summer Institute, which brings dozens of educators to campus each year to learn best practices for teaching neurodivergent learners.



Lynne Shea, M.A.,
Founding Executive Director

"Landmark's mission includes the sharing of best practices

in education for supporting those who are neurodiverse, and this openness to collaboration and growth has been a feature of the Institute for many years. It has been satisfying for me to see the evolution of the research component over the last decade, and to have engaged with so many esteemed colleagues and collaborators in the field during my time at the College. I am so pleased that this work continues to grow and reach even more educators, researchers, and students in the quest to influence the education of those who learn differently."



Steven Fadden, Ph.D.
VP for Research and Institute Operations 2005-2011

"I'm grateful to have had the opportunity

to help contribute to the growth of LCIRT and Landmark College. It was so exciting to work with so many dedicated students, faculty, staff, and community members to develop a thirst for research, and explore approaches to expand the importance of research and professional development focused on neurodiversity and education."



Manju Banerjee, Ph.D.,
*VP for Educational
Research & Innovation
2012–2022*

"Congratulations to
LCIRT on this milestone

accomplishment! LCIRT is a powerhouse of research, innovation and professional development in the field of learning differences. It is nationally recognized for its research, prestigious grant awards, and top-class professional development offerings. Given its unique role within a postsecondary institution, LCIRT has been bringing research to practice for the past 25 years. I see it continuing to grow and inform a broader understanding and acceptance of how we learn and our learning differences."



Adam Lalor, Ph.D.,
*VP for Neurodiversity
Research & Innovation
2023–present*

"Forty years after Dr.
Charles Drake said

to the first class of Landmark College students "I treasure the dream that [Landmark College] will become a center for the dissemination of help and information...to this whole state and to this region," I am beyond thrilled to say that LCIRT has not only fulfilled this dream, but surpassed it! Today, LCIRT touches the lives of educators and neurodivergent students across the nation and the globe. With a growing team of researchers and professional development scholars, LCIRT is poised for its next 25 years of working on behalf of and alongside people with LD, ADHD, and autism to build a more neuroinclusive society. LCIRT's future is unquestionably bright!"



STRIVE Continues to Expand STEM Access Across Vermont

STRIVE (Science and Technology Research Initiative for the Vermont Economy) is a NSF-funded program coordinated through LCIRT. In its second year, it has brought neuroscience, STEAM programming, and grant support to schools and communities statewide.

In March, a team led by LC Research Scholar Gabrielle Ewall Ph.D., (pictured above), alongside four Dartmouth College Ph.D. students and recent Landmark College alumnus Anastasio Bonhomme '26, brought a workshop called BrainSTEM to Bellows Falls Union High School during Brain Awareness Week. Using simple perception exercises, the team helped students explore how the brain processes signals — and, in turn, how differently each of us learns.

STRIVE also has fueled momentum at the Black River Innovation Campus (BRIC) in Springfield. Once the heart of Vermont's machine tool industry, Springfield is now home to BRIC's STEAM camps and afterschool programs, where students engage with tools ranging from drone soccer to virtual reality.

Other recent initiatives include a hands-on program at Main Street Middle School in Montpelier and ongoing K–12 Mini Grants offering up to \$2,500 in reimbursement funding for STEM projects statewide.

Twenty-five years after LCIRT's founding, STRIVE reflects the Institute's continued commitment: connecting Landmark College's expertise in learning differences with Vermont's broader STEM education pipeline.

Learn more or get involved at strivevt.org.

Filling In the Gaps

By Chris Lenois

Professional Certificate graduate Dr. Phip Ross receives 2026 Sam Kirk Educator of the Year Award from the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

One might look at receiving an honor like the Sam Kirk Educator of the Year Award as a culminating event in a teaching career. But for Dr. Phip Ross, who was presented with the award during the 2026 Learning Disabilities Association of America annual conference in St. Louis, Missouri, this past February, the accolade has instilled a sense of further responsibility.

"It puts the onus on me to continue to support other faculty and push an agenda of being aware of different learners," Ross said while reflecting on the accomplishments of the award's namesake, Sam Kirk, who is widely considered the "father of special education" in the United States.

After obtaining his master's degree in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Ross spent most of the next decade teaching at the high school level. In 2003, he was drawn to apply for an instructor position in the Developmental English program on the Lincoln campus of Southeast Community College (SCC) as a way of "supporting the underdog," even though it was not necessarily his area of expertise at the time.

"I had a sense that these were students who were placing below university- and college-level entrance, and so there were some academic gaps and perhaps other kinds of social challenges," Ross recalled. "But I did not have any special education background."

Nevertheless, Ross found the work rewarding, and he returned to the

University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2013 to earn his Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction. He continued to seek further professional development opportunities because he observed that his teaching methods worked well for some students, but not all of them.

"It was a necessity, and also a desirable challenge, to figure out how I could be a better teacher and reach more students," Ross said.

The Professional Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity offered by the Landmark College Institute for Research and Training (LCIRT) kept appearing in Ross' keyword searches. The program's online delivery model combined with the opportunity to take the courses in a sequence over multiple terms convinced him to give it a try, and he was quickly won over by the experience.

"Landmark was exceptional in filling some of those skills gaps and knowledge base that I needed in order to retool my classroom strategies," said Ross, citing the videoconference sessions with other educators as especially valuable. "Everybody was sharing their work and that often helped cross-pollinate other people's projects. It just elevated everybody."

Ross is now the Developmental English Program Chair at SCC. His accomplishments since completing the Professional Certificate program are what prompted SCC's Dean of Arts & Sciences, Carolee Ritter, to nominate him for the Sam Kirk Educator of the Year Award.

He led the effort to redesign the structure and curriculum of Developmental English course sequences and facilitates training



Dr. Phip Ross with former LDA CEO Cindy Ciproletti after receiving the 2026 Sam Kirk Educator of the Year Award. Photo courtesy of LDA.

with faculty and tutors to promote a broader understanding of learning differences. He also developed SCC's Transitions Program, a noncredit course that prepares students for college-level courses through practice in reading, writing, math, computer skills, and study strategies.

"Landmark's emphasis is on looking at the whole student," Ross said. "To me, that's a big part of what a developmental English instructor is required to do. It was affirming to me that there's a clear connection between what Landmark does and the way that I see education." 🐦

Hearts & Minds & Imagination

The Power of Learning Differently

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Landmark College raised more than \$400,000 at its annual Spring Gala, titled “Hearts & Minds & Imagination: The Power of Learning Differently.” The event was held on Thursday, April 30, 2026, at City Winery NYC at Pier 57 in New York City. Funds raised supported student scholarships, career services, internships, study abroad experiences, online learning initiatives, among other programs. Photos by Satya Tisman.

*Anastasio Bonhomme '26
accepting the Student
Impact Award alongside
Marc Thurman '18 and
LC President Jim Dlugos.*





Professors emeriti (and married couple) Linda Kerr and Dan Toomey accepting the Founders Award.



Alumnae **Theo van Roijen '00** (far left) and **Andrea Tolliver '00** (far right) pose with Kitty Brengle (center in red) and her invited guests.



Special guest Jake Sussman of Superpower Mentors.



LD Luminaries Hoda Kotb (left) and Kate Snow (right) of NBC News with Jamie Cygielman (center), who accepted the Corporate Champion Award on behalf of Mattel.



Auctioneer Cate Smit (onstage) energizes the crowd during the live auction.



Yar Deng '23, Marc Thurman '18, and Anastasio Bonhomme '26 strike a pose.



(From left): Alumnus Gavin Weiland '25 and his family, Kristina Clark and John Kemmerer, are all smiles after making the winning auction bid for Harry Styles tickets.

Faculty Retirements

By Chris Lenois and Lachlan Francis

Jill Hinckley 39 Years

Not only has Jill Hinckley watched Landmark College evolve over her nearly four-decade career, but she has also been one of the drivers of change and progress every step of the way.

Landmark's inception coincided with Hinckley completing her master's in education and English at Keene State College. She was working with an alternative high school that served students removed for legal or disciplinary causes — many of whom were diagnosed with a learning difference — when her husband, Tom, was hired as one of the College's founding faculty members. She joined him the following year.

Even in those early days, Hinckley found herself pulled into administrative roles, including supervising tutorials and serving as a department chair. "I liked being part of creating things and having a voice in how that happened," she said, citing a first-year experience program that organized students into cohorts of "learning communities" as an early example.

In 2012, Hinckley made the transition to a full-time administrative role as academic dean of education, a career shift that coincided with the College's goal to create baccalaureate degrees. Hinckley chaired the task force that researched how other institutions had evolved their two-year degrees into four-year programs and developed the necessary upper-level courses for a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies.

Beyond the academic aspect, Hinckley said the introduction of bachelor's degrees also allowed the College to provide more leadership opportunities to students, which changed

campus culture for the better. "It would feel like a little bit of heartbreak each time there were really remarkable students who gave a lot to the community and then they were gone," she said.

Alumnus **Martin Lukowski '02**, who was one of Hinckley's advisees, said, "Jill kept me accountable. There were a few times that she called my dorm room because she knew I wasn't in class and that the interaction with my teachers was what would keep me engaged. It was understanding what I needed as a student and pushing me to grow because she believed in me. Jill encouraged me to take classes that I would not have otherwise — and of course she was right that I would enjoy them and do well."

At the May 2026 commencement ceremony, Vice President for Academic Affairs Karrie Kalich Ph.D., announced Hinckley would be conferred the title of professor emerita. She said she is excited about the College's recent changes to its

General Education program and the increasing focus on career readiness. She is also proud that the College has increased the number of neurodivergent faculty during her tenure as assistant vice president for academic affairs.

"Landmark draws a unique group of faculty and staff. Sometimes, it's because they have people close to them who have dealt with similar things. Sometimes, it's a passion to be of use," Hinckley said. "And I think that's why people here pull together so much. Because it really is about trying to meet students where they are and help them get to where they want to go." 🐾



Rich Grumbine 36 Years

For nearly all Rich Grumbine's 36 years of teaching at Landmark College, he has done what he loves most: getting people outside and curious about the natural world around them.

Since moving to Putney in 1989 to take a job at the then-fledgling Landmark College, Grumbine has published three field guides to his adopted hometown, covering: winter tree twigs, summer tree leaves, and flowering plants of Putney. He continues to lead guided wildflower walks and nature hikes that draw on decades of careful observation.

At Landmark, Grumbine built a reputation as a professor who believed science was best learned outdoors, hands in the soil. He led students through summer field investigations that turned the surrounding landscape into a classroom: counting hermit thrush and chickadee populations, cataloguing native plants, and tracking red-backed salamanders on campus.

One of his most enduring contributions was a summer field course built around the health of Putney's own Sacketts Brook — a project in partnership with the town Conservation Commission that was both serious science and of genuine service. "I really enjoyed creating opportunities for students to learn more about the natural sciences while also engaging with local government partners so that their work could make a difference," Grumbine said.

That course was so popular that it outlived its original

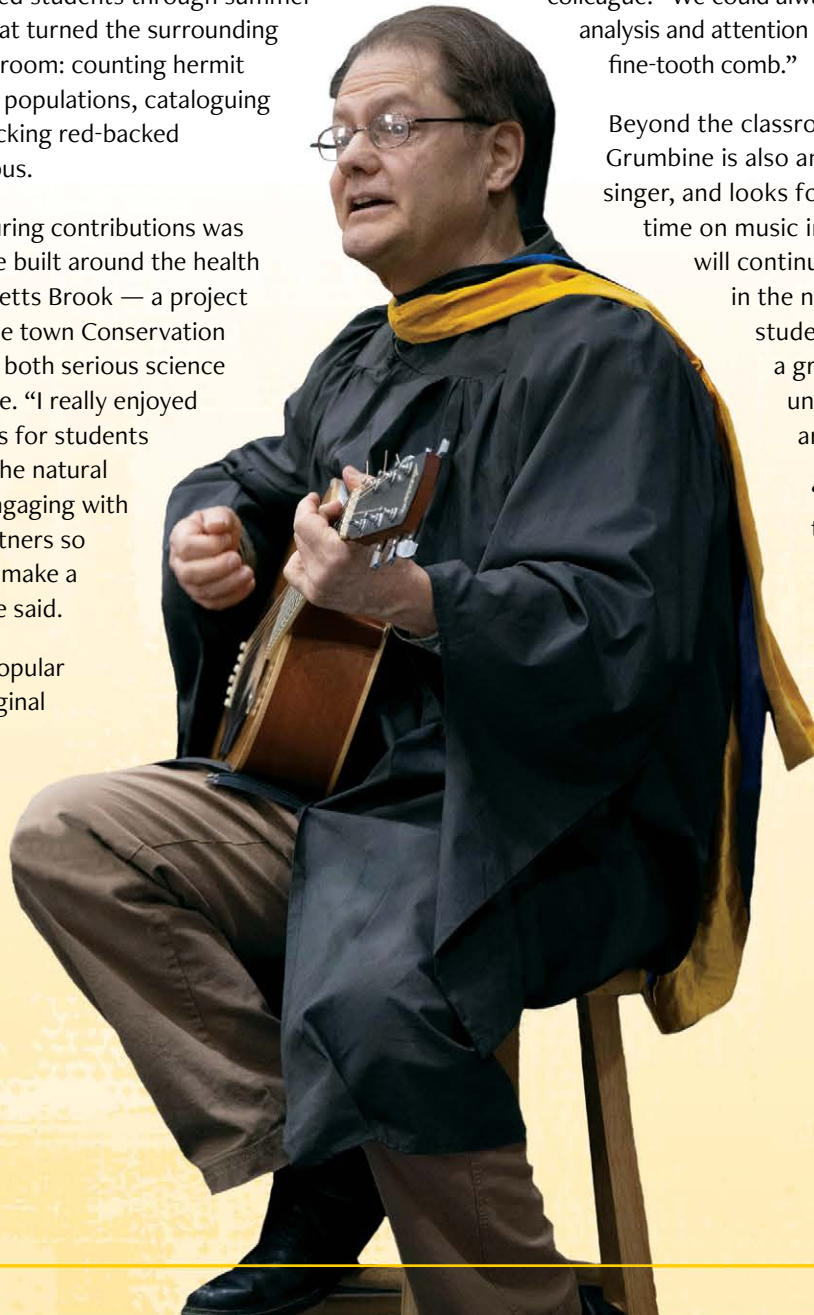
run several times over: A colleague taught it for a decade afterward, and today, Denise Burchsted Ph.D., carries it forward, still monitoring the brook where Grumbine first brought students years ago.

Longtime friend and Landmark colleague Tom Hinckley, who worked alongside Grumbine in the science department for roughly 30 years, lauded him as a steady professional partner. "Rich is a great teacher — so patient and soothing," Hinckley said. "He really knows his stuff, and he is always there for his students. He does projects, he gets his hands dirty — he both gets and gives a good taste of science."

Hinckley also pointed to Grumbine's reliability as a colleague. "We could always count on Rich for sober analysis and attention to detail. He has an inner fine-tooth comb."

Beyond the classroom and the field, Grumbine is also an avid guitarist and singer, and looks forward to spending more time on music in retirement. And he will continue to lead local outings in the natural world, guiding students young and old to find a greater connection and understanding of the world around them.

"Nature doesn't simplify things for you," Grumbine said. "It's alive, it's always changing, and it can be messy. That is exactly why it's such a good teacher." 🐸



Linda Kerr 33 Years

Dr. Linda Kerr's professional career was shaped by her connection to three Landmark schools: First, Kerr was a tutor at Landmark School in Beverly, Massachusetts. Then, she helped to open Landmark West school in Los Angeles in 1983. Two years later, she returned to New England as a founding faculty member for Landmark College.

Even Kerr's decision to step away from Landmark to pursue her Ed.D. at Harvard Graduate School of Education was influenced by colleagues like Jim Baucom and Carolyn Olivier, both of whom studied there, as well as her own desire to learn more about reading and cognitive development. That decision would later prove instrumental in helping her evolve along with the institution and the students it serves.

Kerr first became aware of Landmark when she accompanied her younger brother on a visit to Landmark School because he was considering attending its summer program. He met with Olivier for an interview.

"I was very impressed with how well she communicated with my brother," Kerr said. "I'm not sure, because it was so long ago, but I believe I met with the educational director Archie Campbell before leaving campus to apply for a summer teaching job. I was amazed that such a place existed."

A senior at Bates College at the time, Kerr's teaching practicums included working with neurodivergent learners in Lewiston, Maine, public schools.

Kerr would eventually follow Baucom and Carolyn and Jim Olivier to Putney to help found Landmark College. She became Chair of the Tutorial Department by her second year.

It was during this time that she met her future husband, fellow faculty member Dan Toomey. After leaving Putney to attend graduate school at Harvard and work in the reading lab there, Kerr often returned to Putney to tutor during Landmark College's summer sessions.

When she helped found Landmark, she was teaching study skills and education courses, advising, and academic consulting. By

the time Kerr finished her doctorate, Landmark was shifting away from the tutorial model she helped establish, and Ken Gobbo, now professor emeritus, recruited her to teach in the psychology program, where she remained for the next 20 years.

Colleagues and alumni have applauded Kerr's ability to reach students where they are.

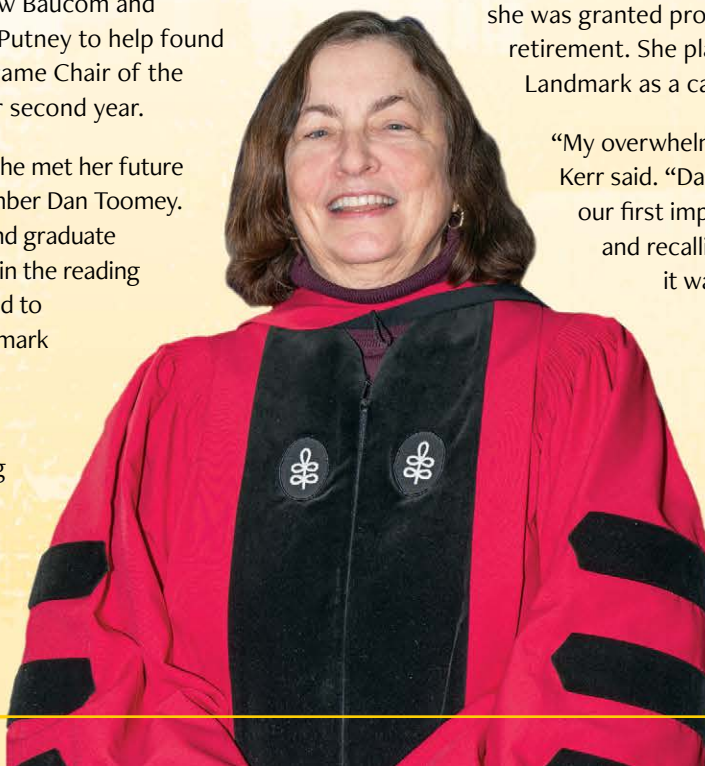
"Linda has a gift for listening to students and offering light and a way forward that honors who they are," said Academic Dean of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies Solvegi Shmulsky. "Regardless of the situation, Linda approaches it with kindness and compassion, thinks nonjudgmentally, and resists the temptation to get cynical."

Alumna **Elizabeth Russell '94** said she would have never graduated without Kerr's guidance on organization and scheduling. "For the first time in my life, I saw what time was," said Russell, who now holds master's degrees in elementary school teaching and library science from Fordham University and the University at Buffalo, respectively. "When I was a staff developer for teachers and administrators, I would plot out my whole day on a legal pad and break it into half-hour increments, then color-code it based on the type of activity. What she did has stuck with me in various iterations for years."

Kerr and Toomey were honored with the Landmark College Founders Award during the spring 2026 fundraising gala.

Like Toomey, who was named professor emeritus, she was granted professor emerita status upon retirement. She plans to stay involved with Landmark as a capstone evaluator.

"My overwhelming emotion is gratitude," Kerr said. "Dan and I have been reflecting on our first impressions of Landmark College and recalling what an exciting prospect it was for both of us. Little did we know then how our individual decisions to join the College in 1985 would shape both our personal and professional lives." 🐘



Peg Alden 26 Years

When Peg Alden arrived at Landmark College in 1999, she was one of the first faculty members on campus to hold a doctorate. Alden's doctorate was in education, with a focus on multicultural education, but she had no formal background in learning disabilities.

"I felt like I knew nothing," she recalled of those early days, describing the experience of starting her career from scratch despite years of prior work in higher education. What carried her through, she said, was the mentorship of colleagues and a campus culture that took pride in helping one another deepen their understanding of how students learn best.

That willingness to keep learning — and to keep moving — came to define Alden's nearly three decades at Landmark. She began as a faculty member and tutor, then stepped into a staff role managing a Title III grant, work that helped lay the groundwork for what would become a robust culture of peer-reviewed scholarship among Landmark's faculty.

"This was kind of the beginning of getting our faculty published in peer-reviewed journals," she said.

In 2012, she took on a new challenge as director of the Office of International Education, overseeing what she has fondly called "the wild west of study abroad." Looking back, Alden said one of the qualities she valued most about Landmark during those years was the freedom to move fluidly between faculty and staff roles, following new opportunities as they arose rather than staying confined to a single lane.

That study-abroad work left a lasting mark on the students who passed through it. **Daniel Cabaniss '25** still counts his semester in London among the most formative experiences of his time at Landmark.

"My time studying away in London was unforgettable," he said. "I was able to see the writings of the Bard come to life in the halls of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the theaters of the East End. Traveling with Landmark taught me an incredible amount and reignited my passion for exploration."

Underlying all of Alden's work was a consistent educational philosophy: Get students out of the classroom, whether in the local community or overseas. Her career has centered on field-based and community-based learning, built on the conviction that students with learning differences often thrive when academic material is grounded in direct experience.

Among her most memorable teaching experiences was a course called Perspectives in the Liberal Arts, in which she often brought students to the Southern State Correctional Facility to study the criminal justice system firsthand.

For Cabaniss, who took the course, Alden's impact extended well beyond the syllabus.

"Peg was my rock here at Landmark," he said. "In the classroom, she was an incisive teacher who challenged me to think deeply about complicated topics like mass incarceration, and out of the classroom, she was a joyful and reliable advisor who gently shook me out of my catastrophizing to assure me that I'd get into that required class for my major."

"She was an integral part of the Landmark community, and will be dearly missed," Cabaniss concluded.

Retirement, for Alden, doesn't mean slowing the pace of engagement so much as changing its terms. She plans to keep doing much of what she has always done — just with less stress attached. Alden has nearly three years remaining on her term on the Putney Select Board, of which she is vice chair. She also plans to spend as much of her free time as possible between now and November working on voter turnout efforts. Closer to home, she's looking forward to spending time with her first grandchild, born recently.

On Landmark's campus, just a short walk from her Putney home, Alden leaves Landmark College having helped to forge the institution's culture of scholarship and experiential learning. 🐾



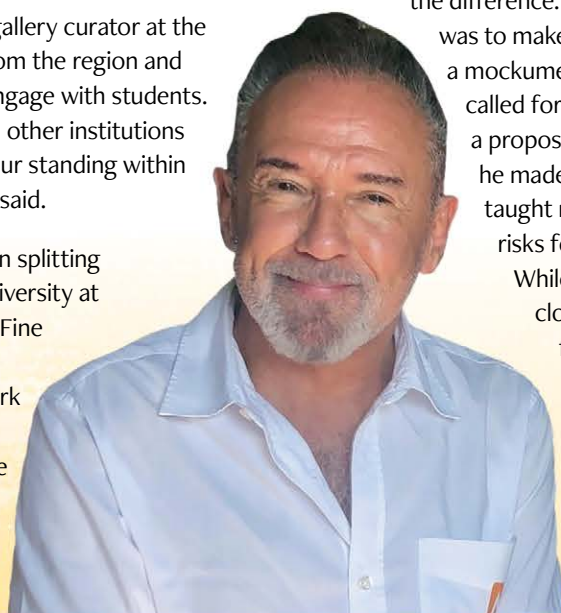
Humberto Ramirez 20 Years

Humberto Ramirez spent almost half of his 20 years at Landmark College serving as chair of the Department of Visual Arts in addition to teaching classes. And while he jokingly refers to that eight-year stint as a “ridiculously long time,” his leadership was instrumental in creating facilities that enabled the arts program to flourish.

The audio and media labs, the painting studio, the green screen room, and the main gallery space in the Fine Arts Building were all created or received significant upgrades during Ramirez’s time as chair. He is quick to credit the support of colleagues like Maria Forte and Jennifer Morris, as well as past presidents Lynda Katz and Peter Eden, for making these spaces possible.

Ramirez also originated the role of gallery curator at the College and began inviting artists from the region and beyond to exhibit their works and engage with students. “The gallery put us right on par with other institutions here in the northeast and elevated our standing within the academic community,” Ramirez said.

Prior to Landmark, Ramirez had been splitting his time between teaching at the University at Buffalo and the Vermont College of Fine Arts. His family had grown to love Vermont after moving from New York City, so the position at Landmark College allowed him to commit more fully to the Green Mountain State.



Ramirez admitted that working with neurodivergent students was a new challenge for him, but one that he embraced. “It was a very radical paradigm shift that made me rethink everything I knew about teaching in higher education,” he said, while noting that the College provided him with training upon being hired. “It really had me on my toes for a couple of years, but eventually I began to understand the nature of the constituency and needs of the students. And I would say it’s been a very rich 20 years.”

“I had Professor Ramirez my first semester at Landmark, back in fall 2006, for a filmmaking class, and it quickly became my favorite,” said **Devon Flynnperrault ’09**. “He was as passionate about teaching as I was about making movies, and that made all the difference. For our final project, the assignment was to make a documentary, but I had this idea for a mockumentary instead — not exactly what was called for. I wasn’t sure he’d go for it, but I wrote up a proposal anyway, and he said yes. The fact that he made me feel comfortable enough to even ask taught me something I’ve carried ever since: Take risks for the things you’re passionate about.”

While his time at Landmark has come to a close, Ramirez will remain on the faculty for the Vermont College of Fine Arts. He also recently moved into a more spacious studio and is particularly excited to focus on new paintings. Visit humbetoramirez.net to see his work. 🐦



The Office of Health, Counseling, Wellness held a retirement party for Victoria “Tori” Tilson (far right) on February 26, 2026. Tilson joined Landmark’s counseling staff in 2002 and served as director of Counseling for the past five years. Also pictured (from left) are current director of Counseling Meg Spicer; former counselor Matthew Cherry; counselor Brielle Miller; counselor Jeffrey Hawkinson; and therapy dog, Bug.

Alumni Notes

By Gen Mangiaratti and Lachlan Francis

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Initially, **Mark Boehme '02** thought he should master building rockets before founding a school. He also considered composing scores for film, and loves to play sports.

“It turns out that doing all those at one time also doesn’t make you a very good student,” Mark said. “Not enough time to study.”

After struggling with traditional learning, he transferred to Landmark College, which he said gave him the skills for success. From there, he completed his degree at a community college and a university in his home state of Texas. After testing his wide range of interests, he got his degree in math with a minor in physics, then went on to complete a master’s in sociology. He worked with a nonprofit and obtained a teaching certificate before becoming a math teacher at a school in Austin, and taught for over a decade.

Then, inspired by his time at Landmark and seeing a need both at home and abroad, Mark teamed up with his wife, special education professional Katie Boehme, to start their own school for diverse learners. Together, they founded a new iteration of the Harmon School, designed to support students with dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and executive functioning challenges. The remote, K-12 school utilizes online instruction paired with offline learning, including physical textbooks and cursive writing.

“There’s a big component that’s about the multisensory aspect, which we know works for kids with dyslexia, for kids with ADHD, and limiting the cognitive load,” Katie said.



Katie and Mark Boehme '02 and their children, Finley, 9, and Wesley, 5, in front of the Texas State Capital in Austin. Photo by the Boehme family.

Harmon School was originally founded by Mark’s grandmother, Lois, in 1952, also in the spirit of teaching diverse learners. In her brick-and mortar school, Lois championed methods such as hands-on discovery and outdoor play at a time before these ideas were widely embraced, according to the Harmon School website.

Mark said reopening as a remote school for neurodivergent students felt like a perfect opportunity.

“Landmark does this. They are a niche that cater to a particular group of students. There’s a need there. They service that need,” Mark said. “It kind of clicked, where I was like, ‘Oh, I lived that experience.’ I know what it personally is, and what it feels like.”

Visit **harmonschool.com** for more information on Harmon School. 🐦

Though a viral online Jeep™ commercial featuring **Mark Gessner '02** starts off heartwarming, things quickly take a dark turn.

Gessner is the voice of Big Mouth Billy Bass, a mechanical fish that sings Al Green's "Take Me to the River." A little boy is inspired to give Billy his wish, so he and his dad pile into their trusty Jeep to take Billy to the river. They release Billy, who shockingly begins to swim, and even turns around to wave goodbye. The wholesome moment is short-lived before Billy is attacked by a bear and then an eagle, which can be seen carrying Billy through the Jeep's sunroof on the drive home.

"My job is so much fun," Gessner said. "I got to get on a plane, fly to Vancouver, British Columbia, go to the most beautiful state park maybe I've ever seen, and hang out with brilliant actors and brilliant creatives."

He added, "Then you get to see it come out, and you get to see people pass the



*Mark Gessner '02.
Photo by Jesse Teeters.*

link around. People have differences of opinion about whether it's funny or not."

The darkly humorous ad, strategically released the week of Super Bowl 2026, is one recent highlight of Gessner's acting career. In a tech commercial, he plays an overconfident customer trying to weasel a deal offered by a phone company out of a car dealership. In an ad for a human resources company, he plays a pizzeria owner who, after outsourcing his payroll

tasks, has enough free time to stuff literally anything with melted cheese.

And on "NCIS: Hawai'i," Gessner played Special Agent Neil Pike, a role in which he showed off his fluency in Japanese when his character went undercover to catch members of the Yakuza smuggling weapons.

Before Gessner pursued his longtime dream of acting, he had internalized a lot of doubt about his chosen career. He said his time at Landmark, and particularly the support of his advisor Matt Dall and other faculty and staff, helped him see that his dream was possible. After finishing his associate degree at Landmark, he went on to study acting and earn his bachelor's from Marymount Manhattan College.

"If Matt Dall's focus and determination to sort of drag me kicking and screaming toward success is the comet, then the long tail of the comet is my success in this world as a professional, as a man, as a husband, a father," Gessner said. "Because all of these things take focus, as they should. They deserve focus. He taught me ways to deploy that focus, and I'll never stop being grateful." 🐼

When Zack Steinbaum '21 was head coach of the Landmark College soccer team, it was no secret that he was a fan of the adventure show, "One Piece."

So when his time as coach recently wrapped up, his team knew just what to do as a send-off: The players procured a straw hat like the one worn by the show's main character, and before presenting it to him, passed it around to everyone on the team as well as those who had turned up to practices and shown support.

This is one of the ways that Landmark helped him find community. He earned an Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies from Landmark in 2021, and completed his bachelor's in psychology at the University of Mary Washington in his home state of Virginia.

"Landmark, academically, really helped me with a lot of learning strategies,



*Zack Steinbaum '21
wearing the gift his team
presented at the 2026 Sports
Awards ceremony.*

ways to balance my time, and how to be a successful student," Steinbaum said. "And being in the Landmark environment, where you're not the only person who's struggling with learning disabilities, but everyone else

has their own story, has their own reason to be there — it gave me a lot of social confidence."

He returned to Landmark in 2025 as a graduate assistant, and became assistant coach before working his way up to head coach. He has worked as a paraprofessional and at a summer camp, and begins a Master of Science in Counseling at University of Vermont this fall. His goal is to be a children's therapist.

"I had a therapist growing up, as many people do, who really helped me, so I want to be able to give back that same way," he said.

When he returns to Vermont for graduate school, he plans to visit Landmark to see his former soccer players in action again, and hopefully play in an alumni game.

"Ever since I went to Landmark, I fell in love with Vermont," he said. "I'm excited to come back." 🐼



A production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at Living Memorial Park in Brattleboro, featuring the mural painted by Rhiannon Greywolf '19 as a backdrop. Photo by Adrienne Major.



Alumna Rhiannon Greywolf '19 is now gallery manager at Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, and is the painter of a mural depicting a starry night on the outdoor stage at Living Memorial Park in Brattleboro. Photo by Evan Warren.

Every evening for close to five weeks, **Rhiannon Greywolf '19**, gallery manager at Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, headed straight from her full-time job to the outdoor stage at Living Memorial Park, where for an average of three hours, she would paint.

The end result is a scene of a starry night in the woods with life-sized trees and bushes, painted across five wooden panels. Greywolf created the mural, which still stands at the popular Brattleboro park, as a backdrop for a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," directed by Landmark College Professor of Literature Adrienne Major for Vermont Theatre Company. The show was part of an aptly named summer theater tradition, Shakespeare in the Park.

"They were going to bring their own moon. They were going to have the very iconic 'Midsummer Night's Dream' swing that they were going to cover in garland," Greywolf recalled. "I really wanted to complement all those things."

Her backdrop blends a deep blue sky into teal green forest, framed in the foreground by skinny trees and large, soft-toned bushes. Across the sky are spatters and swirls of pale yellow stars. Light purple streaks on the bushes and trees create the effect of moonlight.

Major approached her about the mural at the recommendation of Professor of Visual Arts Samuel Rowlett, Greywolf's former instructor.

"It's kind of funny how this all fell into place because ever since I was in high school, I had always been interested in set design," Greywolf said. "This opportunity in particular just felt like a perfect little segue into that."

Greywolf took two gap years after high school to determine what she wanted out of college. After careful consideration, she enrolled at Landmark, where she earned her associate degree in life sciences in 2017, then her bachelor's in studio art in 2019. While at Landmark, she interned at Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, where she returned as a full-time gallery associate and was eventually promoted to gallery manager.

She said the support she received from Landmark faculty and staff provided her with confidence.

"They have such a beautiful way of walking alongside you toward the answers that you're looking for, instead of just giving them to you," Greywolf said. "They're able to meet every single student where they're at. I can't think of another place where you could possibly feel that much belonging." 🐼

Michaela Hearst '14, a clinical social worker and doctoral student in education, recalled that before attending Landmark College, she didn't know how to write an essay — or she thought she didn't.

"It turns out I did. I just needed the tools to help me out with that," Hearst said. "One of the things that I learned is that we do as much unlearning as we do learning."

And when she moved away from rigid standards under which she felt stuck, she found writing essays to be a strength.

"Having professors and community with an inherent understanding of the neurodivergent brain was really invaluable," Hearst said.

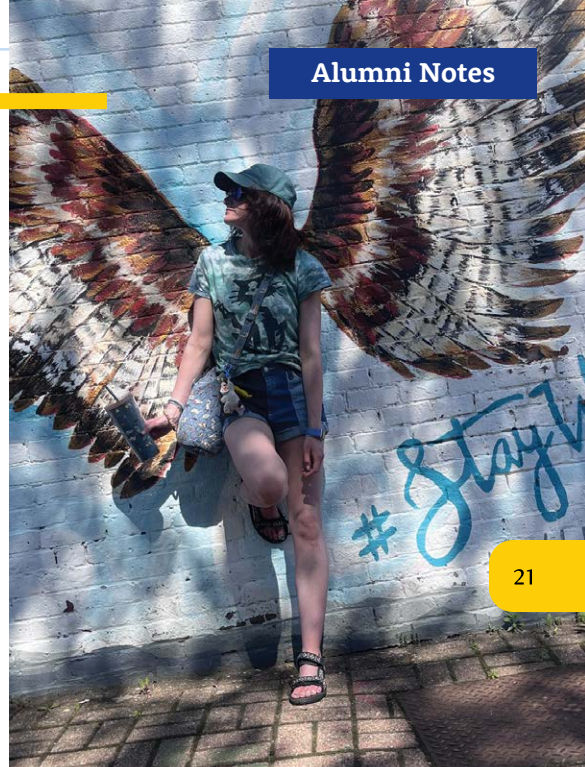
She would go on to blog for Understood.org, a nonprofit that provides resources on learning and thinking differences. She wrote informative essays about her experience with nonverbal learning

disabilities, including a letter telling her 17-year-old self, "It will get better."

At Landmark, she earned an associate degree in liberal studies with concentrations in creative writing and psychology. From there, she completed a bachelor's in psychology at Manhattanville University. She went on to earn a master's certificate in dyslexia studies and language-based learning disabilities from Southern New Hampshire University, and a Master of Social Work from Hunter College. She is a licensed independent clinical social worker and pursuing a doctorate in education from Antioch University.

"I love writing, and I want to be able to say I'm an expert in my field," she said. "In terms of my research, I'm a subject of my own dissertation. I've lived what I'm talking about."

Visit understood.org/en/people/michaela-hearst to read Hearst's essays on [Understood.org](https://understood.org). 🐦



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Michaela Hearst '14 is a clinical social worker who has written about her experience with nonverbal learning disabilities for Understood.org. Photo by Leo Brennan.



Headshot of Ryan Bergin '20 by Zui Gomez.

If you scroll part of the way down the homepage of **Ryan Bergin '20**, you'll come across his soulful rendition of Lana Del Rey's "Video Games." He sings in front of a white backdrop, his voice holding the longing and hope of a troubled relationship.

The Brooklyn resident's goal is to make it as an artist. He was already taking singing lessons when he decided to properly study acting, which he now does at the Lee Strasberg Institute.

Last year, he was accepted into Epic Players, a New York theater company that aims to spotlight neurodiverse talent. At a holiday party with the group, he had a chance to impress Broadway stars with his cover of "Mercy" by Duffy.

"I'm just very excited to see what the future has in store," he said. "So far, the people that I've met have been so encouraging and kind, and I'm really thankful for all of it."

He credits Landmark with teaching him how much he enjoys independence, while offering him a place to be accepted and learn at his own pace.

"It was a real safe haven, and it was a place for me to really grow and learn more about myself," he said. "It's a place I really needed to go to."

Visit Bergin's website at ryan-bergin.squarespace.com for more information on his artistic career. 🐦

Grant Svarre '18 wanted to be a photographer since he was a child. In school, he recalled, he was good at art classes, but struggled with academic tasks like writing.

When his family learned about Landmark College, he jumped at the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment while continuing to pursue his dream of photography. He earned an Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies from Landmark in 2018.

"I've always been a creative person," Svarre said. "I did photography at Landmark, too, so that was cool."

Now, he has a full-time photography career, working with hospitality, luxury event companies, and more.

"When you look at a hotel, you book it because the pictures look nice," Svarre said. "That's where I come in." He also helps companies strategize their social media content.

In May, his photography accompanied a feature in *Forbes* on "World Gin Week." This summer, his nightlife photography was highlighted in "The Grand Salon: Le Blanc Evening," an exhibition of emerging artists in Manhattan.

Visit Svarre's website, grantsvarre.com, or his Instagram, [@_mr.visuals](https://www.instagram.com/_mr.visuals), to see more of his work. 🐦



Grant Svarre '18 is celebrated for his nightlife photography. His photo "Fred Again," shown in a frame, was featured in "The Grand Salon: Le Blanc Evening," an exhibition of emerging artists in Manhattan. Svarre is at left. Photo courtesy of Grant Svarre.



Elizabeth Russell '94 stands next to a sign for St. Mary's Church of England Primary School in Banbury, where she works in a newly created role showcasing her many skills. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Russell.

Elizabeth Russell '94 remembers the moment a psychiatrist put his pen down and said, "You're a textbook case. The education system failed you."

She was 21 when diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD), now called attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD.

"My mom had me tested for learning disabilities about every five years since I was in kindergarten," Russell said. "They would say, 'she's smart, but she needs to pay attention. She needs to concentrate.'"

Each time, she was left feeling like her challenges were her fault. By the time she received her diagnosis, she was attending a state university and struggling. She transferred to Landmark, where she was paired up with Dr. Linda Kerr as her tutor. Russell recalls Kerr providing her with a blank schedule, which together, they filled in and color-coded. For example, if English was pink, her notebook for her English class was also pink, so she would never grab the wrong notebook. Kerr also helped her with time management.

"I feel like she saved my life," Russell said. "I wouldn't have graduated from college. I cannot even imagine where I would be right now if I hadn't gone to Landmark."

From here, she finished her bachelor's degree at University of Vermont, and obtained two master's degrees: one in elementary education from Fordham University, and the other in library science from the University at Buffalo. Her education and skills would eventually take her overseas, to an elementary school in England, where she is now working with children who have experienced trauma, teaching literacy, and even setting up a library program.

"Once I learned how to learn, there's no stopping me. There's a thirst that could not be quenched," she said. "Landmark has stayed with me forever. It really was such a transformational experience."

She has returned to campus in recent years to teach during summers, and her son, Andrew, attended the high school summer program.

"He thought it was great, and it served him well," Russell said. 🐦



Yishay Garbasz installing 'Most Tasty Rice' at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York City for her 2015 show "Severed connections: Do what I say or they will kill you." Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Gallery and the artist.

Remembering Yishay Garbasz '96

Interdisciplinary artist and alumna **Yishay Garbasz '96** passed away unexpectedly in March at age 55. She was widely recognized for her powerful work exploring trauma, memory, and identity. Garbasz often spoke of her time at Landmark College as foundational to her journey, noting that it was here, at the age of 25, that she truly learned to write.

Professors and advisors of Garbasz remember her as a remarkable and resilient individual whose time at Landmark was marked by determination and grace. As an older, international student from Israel, and navigating a hilly campus in a wheelchair, Garbasz approached each challenge with strength and adaptability.

After her time at Landmark, Garbasz went on to study at Bard College, spend time in a Buddhist monastery, and ultimately settle in Berlin, Germany, where she built an influential artistic career. Garbasz's artwork has been exhibited in galleries and museums around the world, including Tokyo, Seoul, New York City, Miami,

Boston, Berlin, Paris, and London. Her work was featured in Phaidon's Great Women Artists as well as in Prestel's Citizen Woman: An Illustrated History of the Women's Movement. Her artistic contributions were also featured in the College's 30th Anniversary Alumni Art Show in 2015 and the 40th Anniversary Alumni Art Show in Fall 2025.

On her former website, Garbasz described her work as being "engaged in a continual process of making the invisible visible, making the unsightly tenderly seen." Her work spanned large-format photography and sculpture, often centered on reclaiming memory and amplifying marginalized voices. Her projects explored subjects ranging from her mother's experience during the Holocaust to the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, the realities faced by refugees, and violence against women and trans individuals. She believed in art as a moral and political force for good.

Garbasz remained a deeply engaged and generous member of the Landmark

community throughout her life. She returned to campus in Fall 2011 as a featured speaker in the Academic Speaker Series, reflecting on her experience and the profound impact the college had on her path. She shared her work and perspective again in 2021 through the virtual panel discussion Why We Can't Have Nice Things?, centered on art as activism and life with learning differences. As recently as this past spring, Garbasz was offering mentorship and guidance to the faculty- and student-organizers of the Neurovisions Film Festival and was planning to serve as judge.

Beyond her work, Garbasz was known for her generosity, courage, and devotion to others. She remained committed to supporting fellow artists and advocating for communities often overlooked or silenced. She leaves behind a lasting legacy — as an artist, a mentor, and a cherished member of the Landmark College community. She will be sorely missed. 🐦

Dear Fellow Landmark College Alumni,



Landmark College conferred its first-ever bachelor's degree graduating class in May 2016. Being part of that class felt like stepping into a pivotal point in the College's legacy. The 12 of us were helping build momentum for future students to continue pushing further. In the decade since, the College has continued to grow and expand opportunities for students who learn differently.

I look fondly back on my time at Landmark, first entering in Fall 2011 and completing my associate degree in Spring 2014. Before graduation, I was approached about staying for the new bachelor's degree program, and I readily agreed. During my years on campus, I was heavily involved with the softball team, WLMC Radio, Campus Activities

Board, the Game Room, and served as a Campus Ambassador, Orientation Leader, and Resident Assistant. For the next two years, I stood shoulder to shoulder with my cohort as we studied, worked, and pushed toward graduation together. We were tested, and we met those challenges with grace and determination.

Since graduation, many of us have completed advanced degrees while growing our careers and families. Landmark became the launching point for so many of those goals.

Landmark was crucial not only to my educational growth, but to my growth as an individual. The College had such a profound impact on me that I continue to support it today through the Alumni Advisory Board as Landmark evolves to meet the needs of new generations of students.

As chair of the Alumni Advisory Board, I invite all alumni to stay connected with the Landmark community and reflect on the impact Landmark had on your own journey. Whether you attended for one semester, completed a certificate, earned a degree, or spent years building lifelong friendships here, Landmark is part of your story — and you remain an important part of ours.

I encourage you to reconnect with classmates, attend alumni events, share your experiences, and continue being part of the growing alumni community. Together, we help ensure future students have the same support, encouragement, and opportunities that shaped so many of us.

With gratitude,

Rachel Brown '16
Chair, Alumni Advisory Board
Landmark College



Alumni Advisory Board

Rachel Brown '16, Chair
Mac Beattie '92, Vice-Chair
Cullen Ewell '24, Secretary
Nathaniel Campbell '99
PJ Dudinetz '24
Sara Fradkin Dunne '16
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Blain Namm '00
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Marc Thurman '18
Theodora van Roijen '00

landmark.edu/AAB

Seeking New Members

If you are interested in joining the Alumni Advisory Board, please email:

alumni@landmark.edu

Landmark's Founding Benefactor

By Lachlan Francis

The Landmark College community mourns the passing of Charles S. “Chuck” Strauch, founding chairman of the Landmark College Board of Trustees, and the most generous benefactor in the College’s history. Strauch died peacefully at his home on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, on May 10, 2026, just days short of his 91st birthday.

For more than four decades, Strauch helped imagine, build, and sustain the institution that today stands as the nation’s premier college for students who learn differently. His belief in Landmark’s mission — and in the potential of every student who walks its campus — has shaped nearly every chapter of the College’s story.

A Founder’s Vision

When Dr. Charles Drake set out to establish Landmark College in 1985 on the former campus of Windham College in Putney, Vermont, Chuck Strauch was at his side. As founding chairman of the Board of Trustees, he helped turn an ambitious idea — a college built entirely around students with learning differences — into a living institution. It was, at the time, a singular notion, and it required founders willing to take a risk on something the world had not yet seen.

Chuck Strauch was exactly that kind of founder. Over the decades that followed, he served as chairman of the Board of Trustees and later as chairman emeritus, offering steady guidance through the College’s formative years and well into its maturity. His wife, Nan, who predeceased him in 2018, served for many years as a Landmark College trustee in her own right, making the Strauch family one of the most deeply woven into the fabric of the institution.

A Legacy Built into the Campus

Chuck and Nan Strauch’s generosity is visible across the Putney campus and woven through the programs that define Landmark College today. Their support helped make possible the Strauch Family Student Center, opened in 1997, which remains a hub of campus life — home to Student Affairs, Health & Counseling, the bookstore, the Fireside Cafe, and the everyday gathering places where students build community.

Their giving also helped create Charles Drake Field, the Nicole MacFarlane Science, Technology & Innovation Center, and early digital learning efforts that led to the creation of LC Online, the College’s pioneering venture into online education for students who learn differently.



Nan and Chuck Strauch at the 2016 gala fundraiser.

In 2022, Chuck made a \$3 million gift on behalf of the Strauch family — the largest single donation in the College’s history. The gift anchored Landmark’s Imagine Campaign and was directed toward expanding LC Online and developing satellite programs modeled on the College’s Bay Area Success Center in California, extending Landmark’s reach to students far beyond the Putney campus.

Also in 2022, Chuck Strauch received the first Landmark College Founders Award. In remarks given while receiving the award, Strauch said that “As a guy who has achieved some success in business, I can tell you that there is no place in my life has had more of an impact than Landmark College.”

An Entrepreneur’s Spirit

The drive Chuck brought to Landmark was the same drive that defined his remarkable career in business. A 1957 graduate of Lehigh University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering, he spent much of his professional life leading and revitalizing technology companies. He served as chairman and founder of GAServices, chairman and CEO of PairGain Technologies, president and CEO of MSI Data, chairman and CEO of Magnusson Computer Systems, president of Memorex, and executive vice president of Gould Inc. For the last thirty years of his life, he devoted himself to providing lines of credit to small businesses — a continuation of his lifelong commitment to entrepreneurship and economic opportunity.

That commitment extended naturally to education. A passionate advocate for educational opportunity and school choice, Strauch supported initiatives aimed at expanding opportunity for disadvantaged communities. His work for Landmark reflected the same instinct: a conviction that talent and potential are distributed far more widely than opportunity, and that the right kind of institution could close that gap.

“If It Is to Be, It Is Up to Me”

Those who knew Chuck Strauch knew his guiding philosophy, a phrase he returned to often and passed down to his children and grandchildren: “If it is to be, it is up to me.”

It was more than a motto. It captured the optimism, resilience, and sense of personal responsibility that animated his life. He held an uncommon respect for ordinary people — the workers, teachers, parents, veterans, and community leaders who quietly sustain the country he loved — and he credited his own success to the values instilled by his parents, the sacrifices of the generations before him, and an abiding faith. He spoke often of his gratitude for Nan, his wife of 60 years, his family, and the opportunities afforded to those willing to work hard, take risks, and persevere.

A Lasting Impact

Chuck Strauch is survived by his five children — including **Charley ’87**, an early alumnus of the College — 16 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren including **Maggie Holgate ’17**, who carry forward his legacy of determination, resilience, optimism, and service. At Landmark College, that legacy lives in every student who discovers a way to learn that works for them, in every building that bears the mark of the Strauch family’s generosity, and in the very existence of an institution he helped will into being more than 40 years ago.

Landmark College President Jim Dlugos reflected on the Strauch family’s impact at the College in a note to campus staff and faculty, writing that Chuck and Nan “were both deeply committed members of the Landmark community and served the College with extraordinary generosity and care.” In recognition of Strauch’s legacy at the College, campus flags were flown at half-staff throughout the week of his passing.

The College extends its deepest condolences to the Strauch family. Chuck’s vision helped shape Landmark College from its earliest days, and his belief in the potential of every learner will continue to guide the institution he loved for generations to come.

Those wishing to honor Chuck Strauch’s memory may consider a gift to the Charles S. Strauch Endowed Scholarship Fund. Please reach out to Carol Nardino at advancement@landmark.edu for more information.

The College is also planning an on-campus recognition event in honor/memory of Charles and Nan Strauch in the coming months. Stay tuned for more information.

In Memoriam



Dr. Pola Rosen (*d., December 23, 2025*)

Pola was a lifelong advocate for education whose professional career and volunteer leadership reflected her unwavering belief in the transformative power of learning. She served on the Landmark College Board of Trustees from February 2007 through November 2013, where her insight, enthusiasm, and dedication helped advance the College’s mission.

Throughout her tenure, Pola was a passionate ambassador for Landmark College. As publisher of *Education Update*, a newspaper devoted to educational issues and dialogue, she regularly highlighted the College’s innovative work and ensured Landmark’s story reached educators, policymakers, and families across the country. Her commitment extended beyond the pages of the publication, she also created opportunities for Landmark students, including hiring one as an intern at *Education Update*, reflecting her belief in the abilities and potential of every student.

Pola’s influence reached far beyond Landmark. Through her work as a publisher, writer, and civic leader, she connected educators, policymakers, and community leaders while advocating tirelessly for educational access, equity, and opportunity.

Pola will be remembered for her intellectual curiosity, generous spirit, and steadfast commitment to expanding educational opportunities for all learners. Her advocacy for Landmark College and its students continues to inspire our community.



Charles Manley (*d., December 14, 2025*)

Throughout his life, Charles answered the call to serve, devoting his time and talents to educational intuitions that shaped young minds and hearts. His commitment to Landmark College began in February 2005 when he joined the Board of Trustees. He later served as board chair until November

2011, providing thoughtful leadership during an important chapter in the College’s history. His connection to Landmark was also deeply personal, his daughter, **Julie ’96**, and grandson, **Ryan ’17**, are both proud Landmark College graduates.

Charles led with kindness, humility, and dedication. He believed deeply in Landmark’s mission and championed its students with compassion and conviction. When engaging with students, faculty, or staff, his warm presence, genuine interest in others, and approachable nature left a lasting impression on everyone fortunate enough to know him.

Whether leading a Fortune 500 company or helping guide Landmark College, Charles was admired for his integrity, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to helping others succeed. His legacy lives on through the countless lives he touched and the enduring impact of his service to Landmark College.

An Enduring Investment in Education



Financial Strength Provides a Strong Foundation

Landmark finished FY 2025 with \$86.1 million in total assets with \$61.5 million in net assets and has had positive cash flow for 5 consecutive years. Endowment per student stands at roughly \$75,000, placing Landmark in the top third of colleges nationally. As of June 30, 2026, the endowment is \$39.2 million.



Responsible Management and Careful Stewardship

Approximately 78% of the endowment is board-designated, reflecting long-term stewardship by the Board while preserving flexibility to support institutional priorities. With an annual capital budget of approximately \$1.5M in each of the last 5 years, Landmark has no deferred maintenance backlog, positioning the College to grow rather than play catch-up.



Growing Role in Educating the Neurodiverse Community

Five years of consistent growth in the number of students enrolled in Landmark College programming. Half of the on-campus students are pursuing a bachelor's degree. Enrollment in our Graduate Certificate program has grown four-fold since its accreditation in 2018, greatly expanding the network of professionals who become Landmark advocates.



Track Record of Fundraising Success

Over the last five years, giving to Landmark has grown consistently with over \$5 million in charitable support during FY 2026. Of note, giving from Alumni has doubled in this timeframe and engagement in on and off-campus events has grown substantially.

Thank you!



Office of Institutional Advancement
19 River Road South
Putney, VT 05346-8517



Alumni Homecoming and Reunion Weekend

Sept. 26 & 27

landmark.edu/homecoming2026