

# CANOPY

A PUBLICATION OF THE AQUINAS COLLEGE OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT

# THANK YOU!

CELEBRATING AQUINAS COLLEGE'S HISTORIC \$61 MILLION  
CONTRIBUTING TO MORE COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN







## CANOPY

FALL 2021

*Canopy is a publication of the Aquinas College Office of Advancement. Whether you are near or far from Aquinas College, we want you to know about the great things happening in our Saints community under the enduring canopy of our beautiful campus.*

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Photography  
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Design  
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## CONTACT US

Email [advancement@aquinas.edu](mailto:advancement@aquinas.edu)  
Call (616) 632-2820  
Visit [aquinas.edu](http://aquinas.edu)

## AQUINAS COLLEGE

1700 FULTON ST. E  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49506

Aquinas College is an equal opportunity employer and an inclusive educational community rooted in the Catholic Dominican tradition. Aquinas College provides a liberal arts education with a global perspective, emphasizes career preparation focused on leadership and service to others, and fosters a commitment to lifelong learning dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the common good. Aquinas College values:  
Faith, Learning, Service, and Community.

From Our  
Vice President  
for Advancement

Dear Alumni and Friends,

We have extraordinary news to share! **The historic Contributing to More (CTM) Comprehensive Campaign has come to completion, surpassing the goal with over \$61 million raised in support of the Aquinas College mission.** Honorary chairs Ted Thompson and Sister Mary Aquinas Weber, and campaign co-chairs John Lowery, Kate Wolters and the late Deb Bailey reinvigorated the CTM Campaign in late 2019, leading over 40 dedicated volunteers and steering the effort through the pandemic to ultimate success.

The College secured unprecedented multimillion-dollar gifts over the course of the CTM Campaign, raising over \$16 million for scholarships; growing the Aquinas endowment to \$52 million; building the new St. Thomas Aquinas Fulton Street entrance and Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel at the heart of campus; strengthening our technology infrastructure; stewarding and beautifying our 117-acre campus; and finally, raising \$25 million to renovate and expand Albertus Magnus Hall of Science. **I am filled with gratitude for each person who contributed to making this possible.**

With the close of the CTM Campaign, we now turn our attention to scholarships. Virtually every one of our students receives some form of scholarship, provided directly by the College — upwards of \$18 million this year alone. Our goal for 2021-2022 is to encourage unprecedented levels of scholarship philanthropy to help address this critical need.

We are launching a new giving opportunity that allows individuals, families or businesses to establish named funds with giving levels starting at \$6,000 pledged over four years (that's \$1,500 per year or \$125 per month). Contact me at [gina.covert@aquinas.edu](mailto:gina.covert@aquinas.edu) to learn more.

Thank you, Saints, for everything you have done and continue to do for this world-class institution. **It is great to be a Saint!**

Warmly,



Gina Covert, CAP®  
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### CONTEMPORARY WRITERS SERIES FEATURING MATT MENDEZ

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11

7:30-8:30 P.M.

WEGE BALLROOM

COMMUNITY-WIDE EVENT

Matt Mendez is the author of the short story collection *Twitching Heart*, and the Young Adult novel *Barely Missing Everything*, named a 2019 Best YA Book by Kirkus, Seventeen Magazine, NBC Latino and Texas Monthly. See future guest speakers at [aquinas.edu/contemporary-writers-series](http://aquinas.edu/contemporary-writers-series).

### SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18

11:30 A.M.-1 P.M.

INVITATION ONLY

This is Aquinas College's annual celebration bringing together student scholarship recipients and scholarship benefactors.

### CHRISTMAS ON CAMPUS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

5:30-7:30 P.M.

COMMUNITY-WIDE EVENT

This is a drive-through event with a fun twist for families this year. Cruise through campus to enjoy the festive lights and receive warm Christmas greetings along the way. Families may then stop by

Cook Carriage House for a visit with Santa Claus, complete with cocoa, cookies and a photo keepsake. The drive-through portion is free. Registration is requested for Santa visits and the fee is \$5 per person, (*free for children under 2*). Register at [aquinas.edu/christmas22](http://aquinas.edu/christmas22).

### SOCIAL SAINTS KALAMAZOO

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17

4:30-6:30 P.M.

OLD BURDICK'S, 100 W. MICHIGAN AVE

Alumni are invited to enjoy a pre-game get-together at Old Burdick's before cheering on the AQ Men's Basketball team playing against the Broncos at the Western Michigan University Arena at 7 p.m. Registration is \$20 and includes dinner, drinks and a discount code for purchasing a game ticket. Register at [aquinas.edu/socialsaintskzoo](http://aquinas.edu/socialsaintskzoo).

### SOCIAL SAINTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

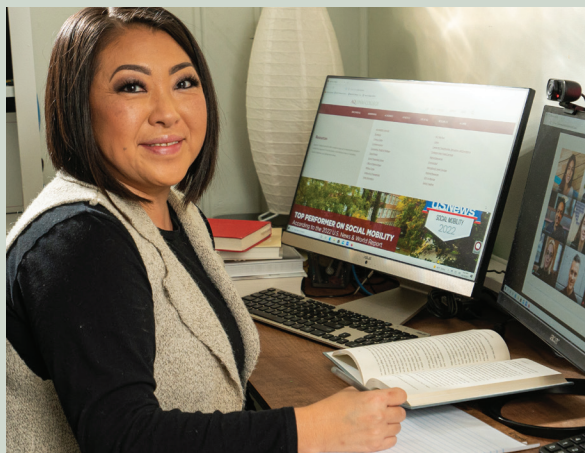
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2022

6-8 P.M.

OLD EBBITT GRILLE, 675 15TH ST NW

Saints in the Washington, D.C. area are invited to join President Kevin Quinn for dinner, drinks and catching up at Old Ebbitt Grille. The cost is \$20 per person. Register at [aquinas.edu/socialsaintsDC](http://aquinas.edu/socialsaintsDC).

## Come Back to Aquinas in a Different Way



### Now Enrolling for Spring Semester

Reconnect with your Aquinas community, gain new inspiration and update your skills.

Continuing Education offers over 60 areas of study during the day and six majors in the evening format. You can also choose from four graduate-level programs:

- Master of Management
- Master in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Master in the Art of Teaching
- Master in Education (Both the traditional M.Ed. and the new Accelerated AME)

*Spring classes begin the week of January 10.*

Ready to come home? Visit [aquinas.edu/admissions](http://aquinas.edu/admissions) for details.



3Things to Know

## President Kevin G. Quinn

**Aquinas Sees Record Number of Student Internships**

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we saw a record number of Aquinas College students gain valuable hands-on work experiences during the 2020-21 academic year. Our AQ Advantage Center works with over 200 organizations locally and nationally to help students build their resumes with real-world experience. We believe internships are an important stepping stone in preparing our Saints for a life of purpose and success.

**New Initiative Focused on Student Scholarships**

In a recent conversation with a group of alumni who graduated 50 years ago, I asked how many were first-generation college graduates. Everyone raised a hand. I followed by asking how many of them received a scholarship to attend Aquinas. Again, all hands raised. Aquinas has a long-standing commitment to making the exceptional experience we offer accessible to all students. Scholarships today are our largest budget expense and core to achieving our mission. This year, I am launching a new initiative to raise these critical philanthropic dollars for our students. If a scholarship was part of your AQ experience, I hope you will join us!

**Welcoming New Trustees**

Aquinas recently announced the addition of three members to the Board of Trustees. New members include Matt Biersack, M.D., president of Mercy Health Saint Mary's and Margaret Kennedy, CPA, director, private company services assurance at PwC. Returning to the Board is Robert C. Woodhouse, Jr. '77, MM '92, president of Restoration Technology, Inc. I am pleased to welcome the diverse experiences and perspectives these leaders will bring to our work of advancing the mission and values of our Catholic and Dominican educational community.



# Aquinas College Completes Historic Fundraising Campaign, Surpassing Goal

ALUMNUS PETER STURRUS '77 AND HIS WIFE CAROLYN GAVE THE LARGEST INDIVIDUAL DONATION IN AQUINAS' HISTORY—A \$3 MILLION DONATION IN SUPPORT OF OUR NEW LEED-GOLD HALL OF SCIENCE.

PETER AND CAROLYN STURRUS ATRIUM





To kick off Homecoming weekend, Aquinas College made headlines with the announcement of a record-setting gift, which helped complete our historic Contributing to More Comprehensive Campaign. This news culminated in a community-wide celebration and dedication of Albertus Magnus Hall of Science.

For the dedication, Monsignor William Duncan offered a blessing of the new science facility. Sister Damien Marie Savino, FSE, Ph.D., dean of science and sustainability, alumna Dr. Patricia Gussin '67, student Michelle Thompson '23 and President Kevin Quinn offered remarks. Board Chair Marcie Hillary '97 announced to the crowd that the College had received the largest individual donation in its history for the new LEED-Gold certified Hall of Science — a \$3 million gift from Peter '77 and Carolyn Sturrus.

During the event, Peter shared that he and Carolyn were drawn to the project by the opportunity to support science and faith-based education simultaneously. In recognition of their generous donation, the atrium, which bridges the renovated portion of Albertus Hall and the new addition, has been named the Peter and Carolyn Sturrus Atrium. The Sturrus Atrium connects the Peter M. Wege Wing, recognizing a significant donation from The Wege Foundation, with the Sister Mary Aquinas Weber, O.P. Wing, named by another significant gift made anonymously to honor the College's chancellor emerita.

The gift propelled the College past its CTM Campaign goal with more than \$61 million raised, another historic accomplishment for Aquinas.

"We are deeply honored and humbled by Peter and Carolyn's extreme generosity," said President Quinn. "The new science facility is transforming the way we serve our students. It is a point of pride for all Saints and a symbol of the future of Aquinas College."

This is not the first major gift Aquinas has received from the Sturruses. In 2008, they were lead donors for the construction of the Sturrus Sports & Fitness Center, which sits at the opposite end of campus from Albertus Hall.

"We feel joy and satisfaction in extending the arm of God's love to students from all walks of life," Carolyn Sturrus said. "We believe if anyone has any inclination to give, there is no better cause than education."





# HOMECOMING 2021

4 DAYS OF EVENTS WITH A LOT OF AQ SAINTS SPIRIT!







Scan here to see more photos and watch the recap video.

Save the date for Homecoming: September 15-18, 2022



1886 Legacy Society

# Featuring Dr. Tony Foster '73 and Linda Nemec Foster '72



Linda and Tony live in Grand Rapids. They enjoy visiting campus with their family, especially their granddaughter, Lyla. They say being on campus feels like coming home.



Linda and Tony jokingly tell people that they have three children: a son, Brian, a daughter, Ellen, and the Contemporary Writers Series at Aquinas College.

The idea for the Contemporary Writers Series was conceived in the late 1970s when Linda was in the Masters of Fine Arts program at Goddard College in Vermont. There she was exposed to world-renowned authors and poets who were at the start of their careers. “The aura of being around these people helped me appreciate readings and class discussions with talented authors. I always thought that if I had the wherewithal and chance to do something like this at our alma mater, I would.”

In the mid-90s, and after years of success in their careers, Linda and Tony presented the Contemporary Writers Series to Aquinas leaders. They spent a couple of years building the infrastructure, funding the operating budget and later started an endowment for ongoing support.

The list of authors who have come to Aquinas through the Contemporary Writers Series is nothing short of phenomenal, including the likes of Seamus Heaney, Michael Ondaatje and Joy Harjo. This year is no exception, with the Contemporary Writers Series marking its 25th season.

#### Their Story Began at Aquinas

Tony and Linda met when they were freshmen in a humanities class in 1968. She was from Cleveland, Ohio, and on a full-ride GM scholarship to study political science, sociology and economics. Tony had attended St. Joseph Seminary for high school, and at the time, it was set up that all seminarians would go to Aquinas for two years before going to a seminary elsewhere in the country to gain wider experience leading to a BA.

Tony left Aquinas junior year to attend the University of San Diego but, as he describes, “I began thinking that my life was being guided in a different direction.” Years of working as an orderly during the summer months and volunteering at St. Mary’s led him to think about medicine. After successfully taking an anatomy class in San Diego—quite a change from his philosophy major—Tony left the seminary and returned to Aquinas to double major in philosophy and biology with a chemistry minor. He graduated in ’73 and went on to Wayne State University Medical School. He proposed to Linda that same year.

Tony enjoyed a long career as a general surgeon before retiring in 2017.

“Aquinas allowed me the opportunity to think about the true course of my life and supported me in the decisions that I made as I proceeded in my career. It prepared me to take on the rigors of medical school and beyond,” Tony said.

After earning her MFA, Linda has authored twelve collections of poetry, including *The Blue Divide*, *The Lake Michigan Mermaid* (2019 Michigan

Notable Book), *Talking Diamonds* and *Amber Necklace from Gdansk*. In 2003, she was named the first Poet Laureate of Grand Rapids, Michigan. She continues to write, publish and teach—with no current plans to retire—and just completed a new manuscript of prose poems.

“Aquinas opened the door to my life. I met the love of my life here. His love is in every image I imagine and every page I write,” Linda said. “I also met some of my best friends here. These connections have supported, encouraged and nurtured me. In addition, I took a course in Creative Writing from Herbert W. Martin which helped lay the groundwork for pursuing my career in poetry.”

#### Giving Back

Tony and Linda have chosen to give back to Aquinas in a variety of ways. In addition to the Contemporary Writers Series, they recently donated both a work of art and a significant monetary gift to benefit Albertus Magnus Hall of Science. They also funded the Foster Planet Walk on campus. Linda and Tony plan to leave a bequest to the College that includes part of their extensive book collection for the library.

“AQUINAS OPENED THE DOOR TO MY LIFE. I MET THE LOVE OF MY LIFE HERE. HIS LOVE IS IN EVERY IMAGE I IMAGINE AND EVERY PAGE I WRITE.” Linda said.



The 1886 Legacy Society recognizes those who include Aquinas College in their estate plans. Members receive updates from leadership, recognition in our publications and invitations to special Aquinas College events.

#### JOIN THE 1886 LEGACY SOCIETY

If you'd like Aquinas College to be a part of your legacy, like Tony and Linda, let's connect. Contact **Mary Slafkosky**, senior philanthropy officer, at (616) 632-2453 or [mvs002@aquinas.edu](mailto:mvs002@aquinas.edu).





# A SUMMER DEDICATED TO SCIENCE

**Name:** Yadira DeLeon-Lopez

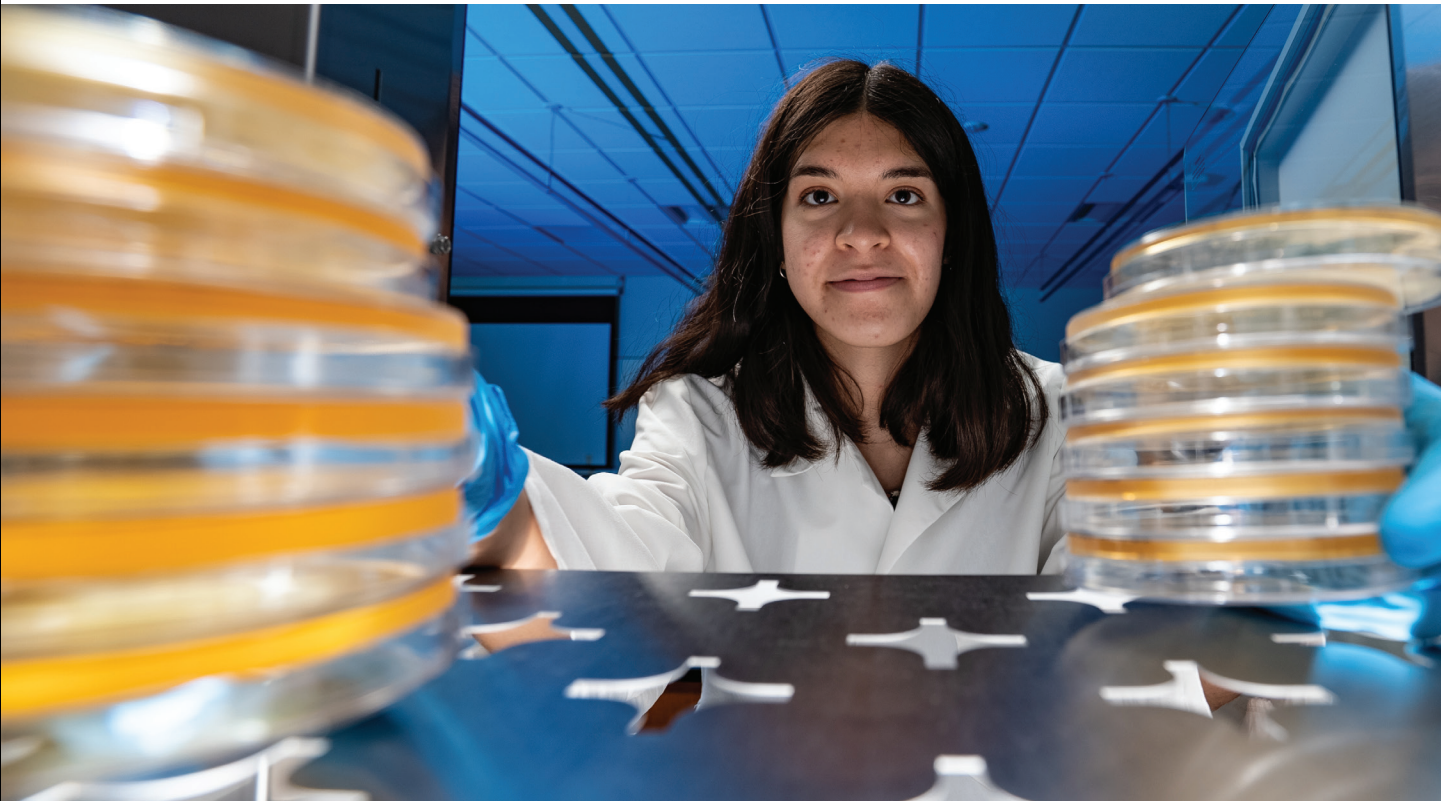
**Year:** Senior

**Areas of Study:** Health Science major, Spanish minor

**Plan for the future:** Health activism and advocacy for vulnerable populations

**Activities:** Vice president of Latinx Student Association (LXSA), Writing Center consultant, STEM Scholars mentor, interned at Kent County Health Department and Friends of Grand Rapids Parks volunteer





Yadira DeLeon-Lopez was one of six students selected to participate in Aquinas College's highly competitive Mohler-Thompson Summer Research Grant Program. Over the summer months, Yadira teamed up with Dr. Rebecca Flaherty, assistant professor of biology, to study Group B Streptococcus (GBS). GBS infections can be passed from mother to baby in utero and, in some cases, may lead to life-threatening illnesses for the baby.

Their research explored whether certain cell signals might play a role in an infant's immune response to GBS. They investigated why some strains of GBS are eliminated rapidly by the immune system, while others cause severe infections. These new insights could lead to the development of diagnostics and therapies to ward off infections, and ultimately, save babies.

"It's neat to know that our findings could one day lead to better outcomes for mothers and babies," Yadira said. "This experience has allowed me to take what I have learned in my classes and connect it to real-life research. It is

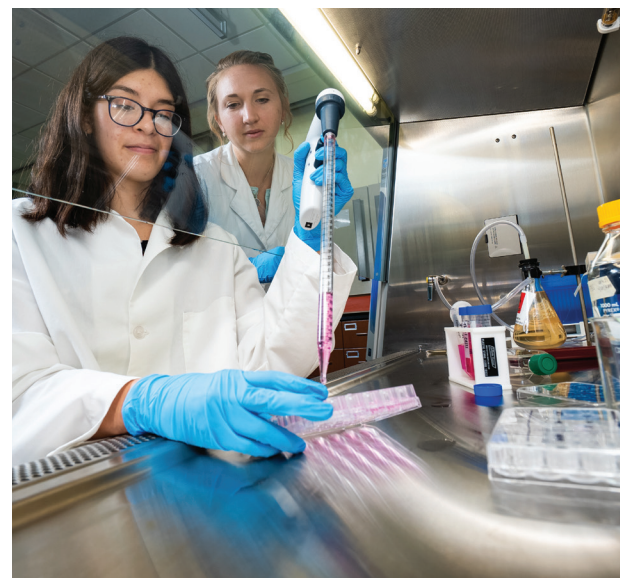
one thing to learn about a chain of cells in a textbook, but we were working with the actual cells in the lab."

To finish out her Mohler-Thompson Summer Research experience, Yadira will host poster presentations about the research findings at conferences throughout the year.

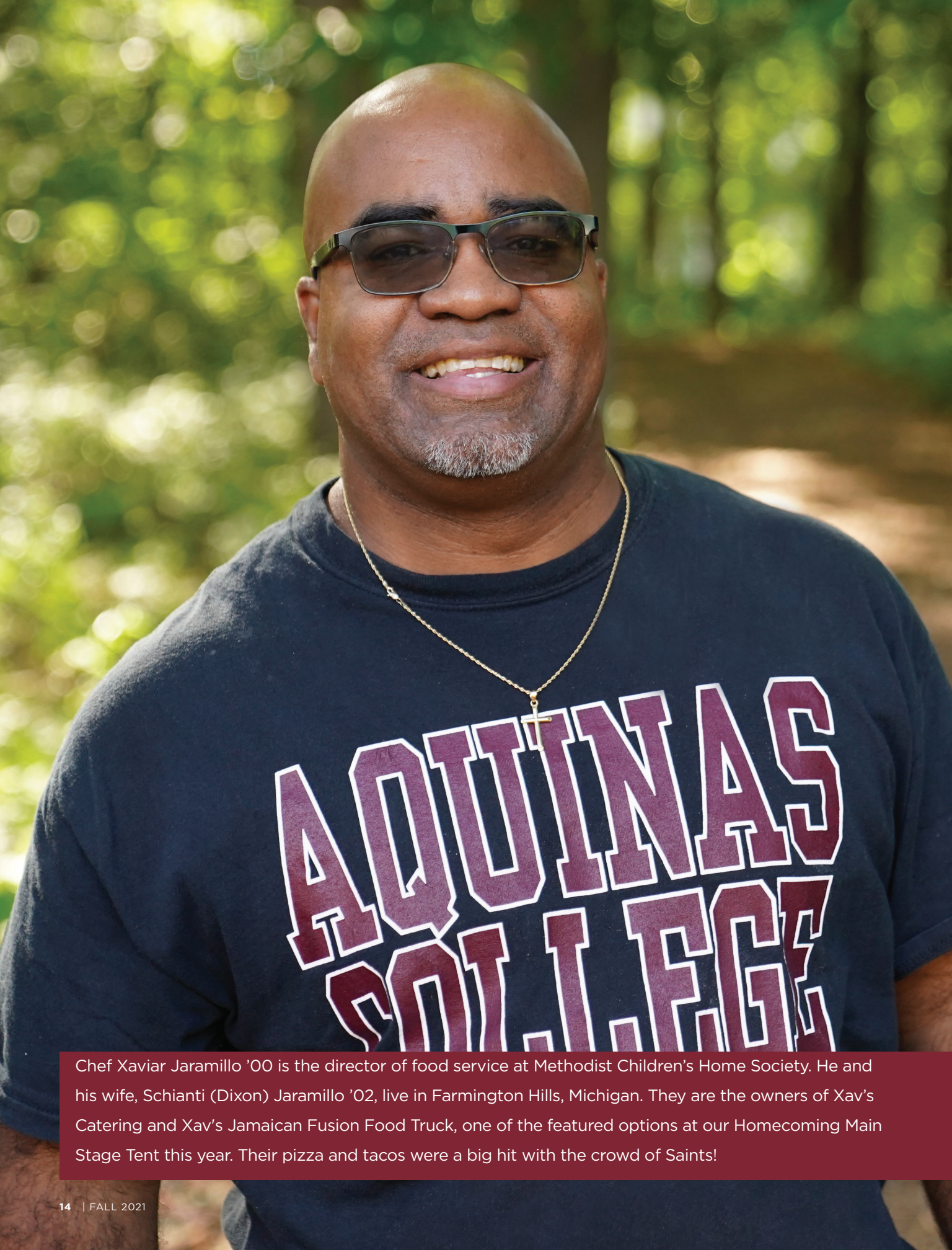
"This is what we do in science to communicate what we learn through research," Dr. Flaherty said. "Through this program, students like Yadira are learning lab techniques, documenting and contributing to research that has the potential to make a difference. This is not a typical undergraduate experience, and we are proud to offer meaningful opportunities like this at Aquinas."

**"THIS EXPERIENCE HAS ALLOWED ME TO TAKE WHAT I HAVE LEARNED IN MY CLASSES AND CONNECT IT TO REAL-LIFE RESEARCH."**

Yadira DeLeon-Lopez







Chef Xaviar Jaramillo '00 is the director of food service at Methodist Children's Home Society. He and his wife, Schianti (Dixon) Jaramillo '02, live in Farmington Hills, Michigan. They are the owners of Xav's Catering and Xav's Jamaican Fusion Food Truck, one of the featured options at our Homecoming Main Stage Tent this year. Their pizza and tacos were a big hit with the crowd of Saints!



## Giving Back to AQ

# 5 Questions with Xaviar Jaramillo '00

In each issue of Canopy, we feature an alumnus or alumna who has given back to Aquinas College with financial support. Chef Xaviar Jaramillo made his first donation to Aquinas during his senior year. Since then, he has frequently shared his time, talent and treasure with the College. Chef Xaviar hosted our Love at First Bite virtual cooking class for alumni in early 2021.

### 1. What brought you to Aquinas? How did you choose to attend AQ?

I came to Aquinas to run cross country. I am from New York, so I didn't have the opportunity to be around many grassy fields and trees growing up. I chose Aquinas after seeing the gorgeous pictures of the campus that were sent to me during recruitment.

### 2. How did your experience at Aquinas shape who you are today?

During my time at Aquinas, I had the privilege of meeting Stella Ferris '88 † [Director of Aquinas' Multicultural Department from 1989 to 2002]. Through her encouragement, I went on several service learning trips. I went to Haiti and Mexico and also helped with hurricane relief in New Orleans. These experiences inspired me. I remain dedicated to continuing the legacy that Stella instilled in all who knew her—to give of yourself, to give your time and to lend a hand.

### 3. In what ways did your education at Aquinas prepare you for your role today?

My education at Aquinas has helped me become the leader and business owner I am today. Having small class sizes where I was able to connect with my professors allowed me to grow and develop my skills. I also think that through the liberal arts, being able to take a variety of classes shaped my views on how to approach various situations I've encountered throughout my career.

### 4. What makes Aquinas College special?

One of the best aspects of Aquinas is how the faculty and staff encourage students to be actively involved on campus. I took this to heart during my time in college. I was even given the nickname "Mr. Aquinas." I joined everything I could and was very active in clubs and organizations.

### 5. As an alumnus, why is giving back to the College important to you?

When I think back on my time at Aquinas, there were so many faculty members who went above and beyond to help me during my four years. They provided counsel when I needed direction and encouraged me to never give up on my dreams. These individuals poured so much into me. I believe in giving back to them and supporting those who are following me with that same encouragement.

#### LET'S CONNECT

*If you are an alumnus who wants to explore ways to get more involved, we'd like to hear from you! Drop us a line today at [alumni@aquinas.edu](mailto:alumni@aquinas.edu).*



An aerial photograph of Aquinas College, showing a large red brick building with a green roof and several chimneys. The building is surrounded by a lush forest of trees in various stages of autumn, with colors ranging from bright yellow to deep red. A small courtyard with a fountain and a rectangular pond are visible in the foreground. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

AQUINAS COLLEGE

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