Community Connections Flourish in New Spaces

When Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett gave his State of the City address live from Alverno College in March 2015, he emphasized the need for partnerships throughout the city. He hailed Alverno as a model for this approach.

Alverno student Kadiijiha Jones provided a heartwarming and humorous welcome to Mayor Tom Barrett.

“This is an academic institution renowned for connecting its students in a meaningful way to the outside world—building connections and partnerships. That serves its students well and benefits our entire city,” said Barrett, whose speech drew more than 700 people to the newly revamped La Verna Commons.

Building connections, fostering collaboration and instilling effective citizenship are the Alverno way. Community connections will continue to strengthen thanks to the significant campus upgrades, funded by the Promise & Power campaign.

The campaign expanded much-needed student spaces and services. The additional benefit is Alverno can offer the community-at-large multiple and beautiful spaces for events ranging from a mayoral address to weddings, and from corporate conferences and executive breakfasts to nonprofit appreciation dinners.

“We serve the community by fostering partnerships to meet a variety of needs,” says Jessica Wegner ’95, ’05, events and space coordination manager. “We look at what will benefit our students and give them experience with community members while also offering a unique venue for businesses and community members to hold events.”

For example, Alverno’s Career Education Department partners with Northwestern Mutual to have the company’s employees hold mock interviews with Alverno students. Alverno’s Human Resources Department partners with local organizations and businesses to host a wellness fair.

Recently, the Greenfield School District held professional learning workshops on campus. Every summer, the College Board rents an entire floor of classrooms to host AP workshops for educators.

In addition, for the past four years, Wisconsin Community Services (WCS) has held its annual employee recognition event at Alverno, and the organization will use La Verna Commons for the first time this year.

“We selected Alverno for various reasons: location, ample parking, atmosphere, reputation, and quality of food and service,” says Melva Darrough ’00, human resource
specialist for WCS. “As an alumna, I highly recommend Alverno.”

Darrough isn’t the only alumna to recommend Alverno. Wegner says 90 percent of facilities rentals come through referrals—oftentimes from alums.

Kelly (Gillingham) Pearse ’10 (photo below) saw Alverno as the perfect place to tie the knot last November, and she wasn’t disappointed.

“Alverno has always held a special place in my heart,” she says. “On the day of my wedding, the staff were all vital to making sure that everything went smoothly, and it did.”

Students and education are certainly the primary focus on campus. However, it is beneficial when other groups see Alverno as a place to be for events and happenings.

“Anytime Alverno gets its name out there, it strengthens our connections,” Wegner says. “Alverno is aware of what’s happening in the community around us.”

And Alverno certainly wants the community to be aware of all the college offers.

~Heidi Jeter