

THE ALTAMONT SCHOOL



The College Counseling Advantage

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THE ALTAMONT SCHOOL

is a premiere coeducational independent school for students in grades 5-12. For 50 years, its rigorous academic requirements, leadership education, athletic opportunities and personalized college search program have given students outstanding preparation for higher education and professional leadership.



To show what they learn about To Kill A Mockingbird, Dan Carsen’s students create post-trial press conferences featuring the attorneys for the prosecution and defense of Tom Robinson. (Sanvitha Chava, Finn Washmuth, Emily Fortune)

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Cover: Altamont’s College Counseling Office guided the Class of 2026 to acceptance at 137 colleges and universities and \$8,424,064 in scholarship offers.



MV Rushing, McLean Pitts and Zachry Richmond break loose in Altamont’s production of School of Rock.

Features

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The Altamont School magazine was printed using environmentally safe UV ink and varnish and recycled paper.

WELCOME TO ALTAMONT!

Help us welcome outstanding new faculty and staff!

Natalie Bennie

Director of Debate

Ph.D., Communication Arts & Sciences, Pennsylvania State University (2026)

M.A., Communication, Wake Forest University

B.A., Fellow in Communication, Samford University

Natalie Bennie is a Fulbright Scholar, Rhodes Scholarship finalist, debater, debate coach, communication scholar, consultant and educator. In addition to her service as a debate coach for Wake Forest University and Samford University, she was a member of the United States National Debate Team. She is Co-founder of Neo Communications consulting, and has served as campaign manager or debate consultant for a dozen political campaigns. She was Co-Chair of the Board of Directors and Chair of the Advocacy Committee for Equality Alabama.

Alex Dillard

Head JV Boys Basketball Coach

B.S., Physical Education, University of Arkansas

Alex Dillard has served as head and assistant coach for AD3 Hoops, Pell City High School and Spain Park High School. Prior to that service, he played professional basketball for Lithuania, Sweden and Brazil.

Dorothy Ewing

Director of Admissions & Enrollment Management

B.S., Business Administration, Thomas Edison State University

Dorothy Ewing joined Altamont with extensive experience in independent education leadership. She served Birmingham's Hilltop Montessori School as Admissions Director and Interim Head of School,

and was Head of School for the Hillsboro School in Helena. She also served as the innovative, data-driven Membership Development and Operations Manager for the American Montessori Society.

Maggie Kamowski

Substitute Coordinator

MA.Ed., Secondary Education and Teaching, UAB (2027)

B.A., French Language and Literature, University of South Alabama

Maggie Kamowski is an experienced Altamont substitute teacher with a passion for language and literature in both English and French. Her international experience includes study at the University of Angers, France.

Lulu Lancaster

Head Girls Soccer Coach

Masters of Sports Management, University of West Alabama

B.S., Jacksonville State University

Lulu Lancaster is an experienced collegiate and club soccer player with a passion for player development, team culture, and creating positive learning environments.

Amy Maddox

AP World History, AP Econ Teacher

National Board Certification

Local/State/National Teacher of the Year

M.A., Education, University of North Alabama

B.A., History, University of North Alabama

Amy Maddox comes to Altamont after more than a quarter-century of distinguished history and government teaching at Vestavia Hills High School. As an active advocate of civics and law education, she has led state champion and national finalist

teams in the Center for Civic Education's We the People competition, and has opened many professional doors for students called to law and public service.

Kaylen Montgomery

Head JV Volleyball Coach

B.S., Exercise and Nutrition, University of Montevallo

Kaylen Montgomery comes to Altamont with extensive coaching experience, most recently for Alabama Performance Volleyball. She has served as a volunteer youth league coach and athletic trainer for multiple sports in addition to service as a camp counselor. She also was Lead Teacher at Aim Academy and Teen Center Director for Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

JoVanka Ward

Director of Community Life

M.A., Technology Integration. Nova Southeastern University

B.S., Sports Management/Athletic Administration. Hampton University

JoVanka Ward expands her Altamont role significantly, remaining our Varsity Girls Head Basketball Coach as she becomes Director of Basketball Operations and leads our new Community Life office. In addition to her extensive secondary and college coaching experience, she has served as a high school Assistant Athletic Director and is the founder and Executive Director of the Alabama Heat Elite AAU/Exposure Basketball Organization. She also is an experienced health, PE, life skills and driver's ed teacher.

Fang Yang

Mandarin Teacher

Fang Yang is known to many Altamont families for her previous work with our Mandarin students. We are happy to welcome her back as she brings her extensive language teaching experience to the lead role for that program.

Samantha Yates

Long-term substitute for Integrated Math I and I/II, Statistics

M.Div., Theology, Medicine, and Culture Fellow, Duke Divinity School

B.S., Biochemistry, Washington and Lee University

Samantha Yates joins Altamont this fall with a strong academic foundation in quantitative sciences, extensive nonprofit and volunteer service, and experience as a long-term substitute teacher at Trinity School of Durham and Chapel Hill.

The College Counseling Advantage

The 51 graduates of The Altamont School's Class of 2026 were accepted to 137 colleges and universities. Fifteen will continue their education in Alabama and 36 will attend out-of-state colleges, including three abroad. They earned \$8,424,064 in scholarship offers and accepted more than \$1,989,820. That's a typical story for Altamont graduates, not only due to the work of students and teachers, but also because the College Counseling Office ties together students' achievements, personalities and aspirations to help them find the best college fit and the best return on their investment in Altamont.

Amanda Hardie, Director of College Counseling, is a former college admissions executive, and knows well what those offices look for in applicants. Assistant Director Cindy Bond is a veteran counselor from a large Birmingham-area public school system. Together, they bring insight, order, reassurance and even fun to what could otherwise be an intimidating experience.

Building Relationships

"We're set up for success out of the gate," Bond said of Altamont's size and community focus. Students get to know teachers, counselors and each other long before the eighth grade, when she and Hardie become directly involved in academic

advising. By the time the college search begins in earnest, the counselors already have insights to guide the process. They can look beyond a student's academic record, for example, to help them balance their college applications with Altamont's extensive extracurricular opportunities in leadership, athletics, arts and academic teams. Often, students do not see how unique those experiences are, but the counselors know and have been watching closely. "I can't imagine many situations and many school setups where that's even possible," Hardie said.

The Search

Hardie and Bond meet with every junior to learn even more about their goals and help develop a plan to achieve them. The counselors also lead juniors on a fall trip to introduce the enormous number of college options in Boston, but they also recognize that many students are finding what they want close to home.

"We have students going to Ivy League schools and very highly selective colleges and universities and we are so proud of them," Hardie said. "But our students are looking for a good fit that's going to help them achieve their career goals or find out what their career goals are."

College counselors
Amanda Hardie
and Cindy Bond



As the cost of college increases, she observed, it is also hard to ignore the combination of in-state tuition, high scholarship awards and world-class opportunities at Alabama universities.

To help families make the best choice, the counselors arrange college financing seminars and maintain a packed schedule of college visits to Altamont. "Having the opportunity for the representatives to come to our school and meet our students here really helps to put a name with a face and helps the students make that point of contact with someone who's probably reading their application," Hardie said.

The counselors noted that college representatives are welcome throughout the day at Altamont, while some schools allow visits only during certain periods. That allows for more visitors, longer sessions and a richer experience for students. "The representatives get to present some information, but then the students actually have a chance to ask the questions that are on their minds, about that particular school or even just college applications in general," Bond said.

In addition to these campus visits and the Boston trip, Altamont also supports the counselors' solo visits to colleges in the US and abroad so they can make informed suggestions and develop

connections that serve students. Hardie noted that one graduate in the Class of '26 will attend University of St. Andrews. Hardie toured St. Andrews and other Scottish universities on Altamont's behalf in 2024 and so was able to share personal experience about the student's choice. "I've seen this," she said. "I've experienced the city, I've been in the classroom spaces, I've spoken with Admissions." That personal insight is not possible at many schools, she said, due to caseloads, budgets or different priorities.

Whatever path they choose, Altamont students enjoy a college search rooted in that kind of personal attention, trusted advice and willingness to work hard to find the best match. The rewards for the student are seen in their satisfaction and success after graduation. For the counselors, the rewards are in the process as much as that outcome. "When a student does work with Amanda and me or trust us with something," Bond said, "I would say we both truly believe there's no higher honor."

Meet our graduates on pages 25-28!



Boehm Builds Partnership with the *Lakeshore Foundation*



Altamont senior Jack Boehm was drawn to the school's C. Kyser Miree Ethical Leadership Center through its Middle School LEAD program, never imagining how deeply involved he would become as an Upper School student. Then, at a Miree Center event showcasing the work and needs of local organizations, he connected with a representative of the internationally acclaimed Lakeshore Foundation, an Olympic and Paralympic training site which serves over 4,000 people annually through accessible physical activity, sport, recreation, advocacy, policy and research.

"I'm a big sports guy," Boehm said. "I've played basketball, I played a bunch of sports growing up." He also coaches a local middle school travel basketball team. And yet, he said, "I had no clue that the Lakeshore Foundation was so close to me in Homewood. How did I miss this?"

Boehm was inspired to volunteer with the foundation in the summer of 2025, and his work ranged from support for Olympic and Paralympic athletes to playing pickleball with more casual clients. "It's not just a place for accessible sports," Boehm said. "It's also a place for older people to come and get some activity." He noticed that friendly rivalries on the court united people and kept them returning. "It was just building those relationships that I thought was the best part."

Boehm soon saw a way to develop a long-term initiative that could provide a source of volunteers for the organization and help him share the inspiring work. Miree Center Director Beth Dille encouraged his interest and suggested that he cultivate The Lakeshore Foundation as an official Community Partner for the 11th grade. At Altamont, each grade level collaborates with local organizations in this way to enhance students'

educational experiences through shared goals, resources and meaningful engagement. The relationships also support the missions of the partner organizations.

Boehm accepted the challenge and organized a thrilling schoolwide demonstration of wheelchair basketball featuring students, teachers, Lakeshore Foundation athletes and instructors. He also arranged for Altamont's entire junior class to spend a day on the organization's campus, learning more about its mission, hearing from Olympic athletes, and sampling the full range of its activities.

"Ms. Dille gave me the keys to this thing," Boehm said. "So, my job is not just organizing the field trips, organizing how to get everything situated, meeting the people, understanding the ins and outs. I was also orchestrating a community partnership and making sure that they knew what

all that looks like and what that looks like in the future, even after I leave. Whatever I made of it was what it was going to be." As daunting as it might seem to carry all of that responsibility and work, it's also an essential experience for a student considering a professional life in business leadership. "I feel like that'll take me pretty far," Boehm said.

The enthusiastic response of Boehm's classmates points to the next phase of his initiative—preparing to hand off the work to students who share his interest and commitment. Some have already joined him as volunteers, and others are ready to follow. "It's a great advantage, being able to tell them what they're getting into," he said. "I'm blessed to have everybody enjoy what I put together for them."



Princeton Prize Honors Moody's Support for *Black Girls*

The Princeton Prize in Race Relations honored graduating Altamont School senior Edén Moody for her work to advance racial equity. She is among more than 2,000 U.S. high school students who, through action and service, have demonstrated leadership in advancing racial equity or promoting racial understanding in their schools and communities. “We continue to learn and gain hope from these young leaders as they advocate for and amplify the voices and lives of those who have been marginalized,” award organizers wrote in their announcement of the honors.

Moody has distinguished herself in numerous community leadership positions, including her tenure as president of the Youth Philanthropy Council and secretary of GirlSpring, a national platform that amplifies the voices of girls. Working in Altamont’s C. Kyser Miree Ethical Leadership Center, she developed a self-love curriculum specifically tailored for young Black girls and published as *Bold, Black, and Beautiful: 12-Month Guided Affirmation Journal*, filled with powerful affirmations and thoughtful prompts that encourage confidence, self-love, and pride in one’s identity.

Early in her life, Moody observed—and experienced—that young Black girls often face a lack of representation, which creates self-esteem issues. Her affirmation journal aims to raise young Black girls’ self-esteem, allowing them to say and live out affirmations that have been written by someone who looks like them. She also led a small group of girls in her community, engaging them in conversations about their lives and troubles. She plans to continue her advocacy work in college and pass on her small group to another Altamont student. She is considering creating a nonprofit organization dedicated to the cause.

The Princeton Prize is the second recent honor for Moody. The Youth Serve organization presented her with its Youth in Service Award for Advocacy after her selection by a panel of judges amongst her peers in the Birmingham metro area.

“Edén Moody is a powerful example of what it means to lead with purpose,” said Miree Center Director Beth Dille. “Through her work in the Miree Center and the publication of her book, she is reaching hearts both locally and globally. It is only fitting that her impact has been recognized with the prestigious honor of the the 2026 Princeton Prize in Race Relations for the state of Alabama.”

Quinney, Stephens Join Stranger Things Universe



Braxton Quinney voices the role of Dustin Henderson (center) in the animated series Stranger Things: Tales from 1985.

Altamont has earned a reputation for outstanding theatre experiences on campus and in regional and state competition. Students also move freely between the school's Cabaniss-Kaul Center for the Arts and local stages, building experience and skills sufficient even to propel them into the Stranger Things universe, one of the most popular entertainment franchises of recent years.

Eden Stephens played the role of Debbie Miller in the final season of the critically acclaimed Netflix series about a group of 1980s teens fighting to save the world from an interdimensional monster. Braxton Quinney voices the character of Dustin

Henderson for the ongoing animated series Stranger Things: Tales from '85, taking up the role originated by Gaten Matarazzo in the live-action series.

Stephens and Quinney have worked together on many theatre productions, but due to project secrecy neither knew of the other's Stranger Things work until the casts were officially announced. There were clues, including unexplained absences and a Dustin bobblehead figure in a local recording studio where both were working separately.

But even as the actors began rehearsals for Altamont's production of *The 29th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* last fall, each was in the dark about what the other was up to professionally. Then Netflix announced the cast for the animated series shortly before the Altamont show opened, and Stephens attended the red-carpet premier party for *Stranger Things* shortly after. The actors still couldn't share details of their work, but they suddenly had something new in common. "I saw Gaten at the premiere, and I was like, 'oh, I go to school with the guy who's your voice,'" Stephens recalled.

Thanks to recording studios in Birmingham and filming based in Georgia, both actors have been able to stay close to home. "You always hear that

L.A. is the big place where everything films, but I guess Atlanta has kind of become the L.A. of the South," Stephens said. "It was really nice, because I could come home on the weekends." The location helped her balance schoolwork, too. While Quinney is able to do his recording after school, labor laws require downtime and work/school balance for minor actors who spend long hours on sets. Many of Stephens' fellow actors were in homeschool due to inflexible public-school schedules, but she didn't have to make that choice. "Altamont was really nice about it," she said, and allowed her to work with teachers via daily email and assignments, and test when she returned to school during the semester when she did most of her filming.

*Stephens and Quinney join Esme Brouwer and Cecily Denson onstage for *The 29th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee**



Fans

Quinney and Stephens were fans of *Stranger Things* before they had the opportunity to work with the familiar characters. When the actors had opportunities to audition for *Stranger Things* roles, the process was so long and guarded that they hardly believed they would be chosen for the parts. Even now, they are fans first.

"I'm still thinking about *Stranger Things* as a show that I love, not as much something I was in, because I feel like it's so much bigger than that," Stephens said.

"It's a surreal experience," Quinney said of his role in such a high-profile project that he had enjoyed for so long. It is particularly meaningful to him because the animated series was created for a younger audience that hasn't yet seen the live-action series— an audience that includes his brothers. "They can get a chance to be introduced to it before they go on to watch season one," he said, "and I think that being a part of that is something special."

New Challenges

Both actors have been on stage for many years, and although that work has opened doors to opportunities onscreen, they find the acting requirements to be very different. "If I were to act the same way I do in theatre it would just seem kind of unnatural, because with theatre, you're so far away—so, big expressions and big voice," Stephens said. "With film, it's super close to your face so you have to just tone everything down."

For Quinney, the challenge includes not only that volume and pitch control but also having to perform realistically in a tiny space. He learned in musical theatre that facial expressions and body movement can be heard as well as seen. "Every time I go in the booth, I'm standing up and I'm acting everything out," he said.

Quinney—recommended by Netflix for an Emmy Award—continues his work for the animated series, and both actors expect to return to theatre this year. They are open to the next acting opportunities, whether on stage or on screen. "I love both of them a lot, and I think I want to keep on doing both of them at the same time," Stephens said, "but theatre is always going to be what I started with, and it's what I know the best."

See Braxton Quinney and Eden Stephens in Altamont Theatre's production of *Come From Away*, Nov. 13-14 at 7pm, and Nov. 15 at 2 p.m.



*Eden Stephens prepares for a scene with a Demogorgon monster on the set of *Stranger Things*.*



Lillis Taylor Returns to Altamont With The March Quilts

When alumna Lillis Taylor '98 returned to Altamont to teach art last year, she brought with her a global perspective on arts, industry and ethics, and a passion for Alabama's unique culture.

"The first thing that I can say woke me up to art in general was the America in The 20th Century class that I took with Mr. [Martin] Hames, in tenth grade," said Taylor, now an accomplished textile artist and educator. "Just seeing how the human condition is explained through art and poetry and music, I thought, 'oh, okay, this is what I want to do with myself'".

Taylor had to leave Birmingham to refine that idea, and was eager to find a community where her values and interests were reflected. Alabama followed her. She studied industrial design at the University of Washington but also had a class on the Civil Rights Movement that took her deeper into that history than she had ever been.

A local exhibition introduced her to Birmingham photographer Spider Martin's images of the movement. Another featured the celebrated quilters of Gee's Bend. "This is from Alabama?" she thought. "How is it possible that I don't know that?"

For her first job after college, Taylor designed books and toys that were manufactured abroad. At 24, she found herself in China addressing production safety concerns and realized she was on the wrong path. "I can't be a part of this," she decided. "This global supply chain is too big for me. I just want to focus more on community and local and transparent and ethical."

Taylor didn't plan to express that as a quilter but she wanted to learn to sew when she returned to Alabama. She found the Birmingham Quilters Guild and met a new friend and partner there. "The magical spirit of Annie Bryant pulled me

in," Taylor said. Together, they founded Bib & Tucker Sew-Op in Woodlawn. They formalized the multigenerational, multiracial nonprofit on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the three Selma to Montgomery Marches of March, 1965, and announced their organization to the community by launching the March Quilts Project. "Everyone has a story about a quilt," Taylor observed, and that immediately builds connections between people. "Then we can start having deeper dialogues."

Taylor and Bryant facilitated quilting workshops at schools, hospitals, community centers and churches as a way to promote dialogue about civil rights and gather personal textile blocks to form storytelling quilts. Children and adults in 25 sewing sessions in Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham hand-stitched 461 fabric blocks that divided perfectly into three quilts. Participants in the civil rights marches were among those creating blocks, adding an especially powerful element of personal experience and memory.

The project added quilts each year under different themes, and currently has 16 quilts. Taylor recognized that this distinctive Alabama art needs to reach a national audience, so she left the locally-focused Bib & Tucker Sew-Op and created the separate March Quilts organization. She envisions a mobile exhibition vehicle equipped and decorated specifically for touring the quilt collection across the country. "We've been in white-wall galleries before, but the beauty of these quilts is that they belong to everybody," she said.

Altamont plays a key role as the March Quilts organization pivots from making to sharing. The quilts are currently in residence at the school to serve students and teachers as primary sources that connect and enrich the humanities, social sciences, arts and sciences. Altamont will also host a public exhibition of the complete set of March Quilts October 18. The event will complement fall visits to the school by The John R. Lewis Legacy

Detail from The March Quilts 1, Montgomery, 2015



Institute and the Southern Exposure Film Festival, showcasing Altamont's importance as a center for meaningful community conversations.

In her classroom, Taylor pairs her industrial design approach – one that creates a path to applied fields such as architecture and engineering - with the tactile nature of craft, which builds rigor, patience and resilience. In addition to learning about the issues at the heart of the March Quilts, her students create soft sculptures, sew quilt blocks of their own, and develop personal fan flags with symbols and colors to represent their individual identities. It's all handwork, and students often comment about how relaxing it is— a triumph of arts education in an era when anyone's hands might otherwise be scrolling anxiously and consuming rather than creating. "I want everyone who comes in here to feel like they could build something if they wanted to," Taylor said. They are, and they will leave The Altamont School not only with that enviable experience of this particular art, but also with an understanding of its unique place in the culture of their city and state.

See The March Quilts at The Altamont School Sunday, Oct. 18, 1-3 p.m.



AJ Gallitz, Nandhini Gutti, Joe Porter (Valedictorian), and **Maddie Winslett** were National Merit Finalists.

Math students earned top state rankings in the annual Math Kangaroo competition. **Adwitha Bellam** and **Manasvini Chava** were ranked #1. **Aditi Bellam** and **Jagguth Gutti** were ranked #2. **Rama Al-Balas** was ranked #3 and **Charlie Yancey** was ranked #5.

The top 2026 Poetry Competition honors went to **Arisa Khan** (MS) for “America, America” by Saadi Youssef, and **Ethan Billups** (US) for “Invention of the Drive By” by Jacob Mayberry.

Nine graduates in the Class of 2026 earned the Global Seal of Biliteracy. French: **Alden DuMontier, Powell Fry, Marko Maglic-Kinnunen, Mia Mayo** and **Maddie Winslett**. Spanish: **Nandhini Gutti, Molly Mathew, Abby Swiney** and **Virginia White**.



After a year of impressive experiences and honors for Altamont Debate, **Serena Blutter, William McLain** and **Max Feinstein** represented the school at the National Speech & Debate Association National Tournament, one of the most competitive academic events in the country.



Jaishnav Gutti won the Altamont Spelling Bee and the Jefferson District Spelling Bee for Private and Parochial Schools, then earned 2nd Place overall in the Jefferson County Spelling Bee.

French students earned dozens of individual and group and individual honors at the Alabama State French Convention, including the Grand Prix award for the group presentation French Music Through Time.

Creative writing students earned five awards in the University of Mississippi Writing Competition and 8 Gold Key awards, 25 Silver Key awards and 14 Honorable Mentions at the regional level of the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.



Altamont's Scholars Bowl Team was the 6A division champion and advanced to the state tournament.

Vassili Trenin won a statewide piano competition and **Ben Poczatek** toured Portugal with the US Guitar Orchestra as the group's youngest member.

Samarth Arora won 1st Place in a scholastic U1200 USCF rated chess tournament in Atlanta, and then finished third in the middle school category of the Alabama State Scholastic Chess Championship.



Ethan Billups, Sanjana Gaddamanugu and **Aiden Owens** represented Altamont at Alabama Girls State/ Boys State.

Altamont's **Junior United Nations Team** earned several honors, including Outstanding Nation, for their representation of Iceland, Fiji and Côte d'Ivoire at the annual state JUNA conference.



Altamont Theatre earned Best-In-Show and individual honors at the district and state levels of the Trumbauer Theatre Festival for the fourth consecutive year, and carried The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee to a regional stage at the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC).



ALTAMONT

ATHLETICS



Go Knights!



Sanders Honored for Academic, Athletic Achievement

Class of 2026 Salutatorian
Aubrey Sanders earned the The Bryant-Jordan Student-Athlete honor for AHSAA Area 3A. The annual scholarship competition recognizes students who, by ability and effort, have achieved excellence in both academics and athletics, and who motivate and encourage all segments of the student population to strive to be the best they can be.

In addition to his demonstrated achievement in a school where all classes are taught at the honors level, he was a respected leader on campus, on the baseball field and in the Birmingham community. He served as SGA president and Class President, and worked with the YMCA Summer Lunch Program, UAB Youth Advisory Board, and Ignite Hoover, for which he collected more than 1,000 books for donation to children in need. He was captain of Altamont's varsity Baseball Team for two years, defensive player and teammate of the year.

Nominating teachers praised Sanders' ability to ask thoughtful questions and make insightful connections. Pattie Bank is among them, having taught Sanders in the seventh grade and served as his advisor for six years. "Even at that young age, I could see his dedication to learning," Bank said. "Inquisitive and curious, he was always willing to go the extra mile for a deeper understanding of the topic."

"In my twenty-six years of teaching," Bank continued. "I cannot recall a student leader more respected and loved than Aubrey. From our youngest fifth graders to his peers in the twelfth grade, Aubrey is known for his integrity, his commitment to excellence, and, most importantly, his kindness."

Sanders is continuing his academic and athletic achievement as a student and baseball player at Johns Hopkins University.

This was a year of incredible victories for Altamont Athletics! For every state, section and area championship and podium result, individual athletes also earned top honors and set school records.

The **Girls Indoor Track and Field Team** was the state champion.

Sarah Marshall retained her crown as the state varsity mountain bike champion.

The **Girls Golf Team** was section champion and state #2.

The **Boys Soccer Team** was area champion and state #2.

The **Boys Basketball Team** was the area #2.

The **Boys Indoor Track and Field Team** was the state #2.

The **Girls Outdoor Track Team** was the section champion and state #2.

The **Baseball Team** was area champion and advanced deep into state playoffs.

The **Varsity Volleyball Team** was the area champion.

The **Girls Cross Country Team** and **Boys Cross Country Team** were section champions.

The **Boys Golf Team** made history by advancing two players to the State Tournament.

The **Boys Outdoor Track Team** was section #3 and finished in the state top 20.

Signed! **Cruz Cunill** – Huntingdon College (Baseball) **Jack Hoover** – Trinity University (Track and Field) **Aubrey Sanders** – Johns Hopkins University (Baseball)



Mera Al-Balas - Most Outstanding MS Art Student

Julianna Anderson - Pignarre Cup, Neal Cup

Ever Andrews - Warren R. Splitt Award

Ethan Billups - William Ransom Johnson Dunn III Award

Serena Blutter - Allene Benners Martin Cup, Joyce Ackerman Scholarship (US)

Jack Boehm - Ann Robinson Vrocher Alumni Scholarship

Lila Butler - Altamont Citizenship Award

Emory Carter - Most Outstanding Photography Student (MS)

Manasvini Chava - Donovan Award

Cruz Cunill - Paul Nii-Amar Amamoo Award

Oliver Dorman - Joyce Ackerman Scholarship (MS)

Claude Dumas - Bausch and Lomb Junior Class Science Award

Alden DuMontier - Jeanne Classé Armes de Paris Medal, Global Seal of Biliteracy (French)

Powell Fry - Global Seal of Biliteracy (French)

AJ Gallitz - Hallie Porter Shook Cup, Margaret Gresham Livingston Leadership Award

Jagguth Gutti - Francina Benejam Spanish Award

Jaishnav Gutti - Robert L. Johnson Math Award

Nandhini Gutti - Brooke Hill Cup, Clarice Locke Award, Global Seal of Biliteracy (Spanish)

Abigail Harwood - Mignon Comer Smith Book Award

Ryan Holley - Lynn Clark Creative Writing Scholarship

Jack Hoover - Gainey Arts Prize

Emily Isbell - Helen C. Abele Award

Carla Jimenez-Arellano - Nancy Perrin Bailey Award,

Syrianna Johnson - Smiley Award

Marko Maglic-Kinnunen - Global Seal of Biliteracy (French)

Molly Mathew - Global Seal of Biliteracy (Spanish)

Mia Mayo - John Wallace Johnston History Award, Global Seal of Biliteracy (French)

Emma McLain - Speech Arts Club of Birmingham Book Award

Will McLain - Katherine Ireland Mitchell Award

Coco Morris - Most Outstanding Visual Artist Award

Harper Nelson - Most Outstanding Theatre Student (MS)

Aadi Patel - Lily Cup

Joe Porter - Faculty Cup, Joseph Wheeler Sewell Award

Caleb Quinney - Sarah Ward Whiteside Cup

Aubrey Sanders - Rushton Cup, Most Outstanding Mandarin Student (US), Carver-Gorgas Senior Science Book Award

Abbey Sellers - Joseph Wheeler Sewell Award

Kaylyn Sun - Mandarin Award

Abby Swiney - Global Seal of Biliteracy (Spanish)

Audrey Thrower - Margaret Matthews Gage Prize in American History

Gregg Weaver - Sophia Mize Clifford Music Award

Megan Wetta - Most Outstanding Middle School Musician

Virginia White - David Hart White Spanish Award, Global Seal of Biliteracy (Spanish)

Maddie Winslett - Susan M. Hulsey French Prize, Mignon Comer Smith Book Award, Global Seal of Biliteracy (French)

Will Wright - John Wallace Johnston History Award



Barajas Earns Mullins Teaching Prize

Spanish teacher Nadia Barajas earned Altamont’s 2026 Edna Earl Mullins Endowed Teaching Prize in recognition of her demonstrated leadership abilities and outstanding achievement in teaching.

The Madrid native is “a consummate professional, one whose integrity, scholarship, and enthusiasm enrich our students and our school,” said Assistant Head of School JP Hemingway upon presenting the award in a spring assembly. “Sra. Barajas is supremely humble, and her integrity and student-centered ethos often keep her out of the spotlight. Nonetheless, her students adore her, and her colleagues respect her tireless approach to academic and personal excellence.”

Barajas is known for an engaging and nurturing teaching style that balances rigor and relationships. She often challenges students through immersion experiences in Birmingham’s Spanish-speaking community. “From reading popular novels in Spanish to visiting local radio stations, Sra. Barajas’s students engage with Spanish and see the real-world benefits of learning another language,” Hemingway said.

Barajas challenges herself, too. She recently completed an M.A. degree in Continuing Education in International Teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language at the University of Salamanca, Spain, and she is currently working on her Neurolanguage Coaching Certification. “Her journey of professional development speaks to her commitment to her students and our school,” Hemingway said. “Sra. Barajas is an amazing educator who not only believes in our mission – she lives it every day.”



Harris Named AWLA Teacher of the Year

Altamont French teacher Allison Harris was named the Alabama World Language Association’s 2026 French Teacher of Excellence and Teacher of the Year at the organization’s annual conference. The AWLA citation notes that Harris “exemplifies excellence in world language education through her passion, leadership, and commitment to students.”

Harris joined Altamont’s faculty in 2013. Since then, in the words of Altamont Academic Director of Languages Larry McCain, she has distinguished herself as “a student-centered, tireless advocate for world language instruction.”



THANK YOU FOR CELEBRATING WITH US!

As we reflect on an extraordinary Golden Anniversary year celebrating 50 years of our school community, The Altamont School extends our heartfelt thanks for your generous support of our Altamont Fund and for helping make this milestone so meaningful. Whether you joined us at our Golden Masquerade Gala, the Golden Golf Tournament, alumni reunions, or the many community celebrations throughout the year, your presence and generosity strengthened the bonds that have defined our school for five decades. Together, we raised nearly \$500,000 in support of our exceptional faculty and staff, our students, and the broader school community; a remarkable achievement that simply would not have been possible without you. I thank you for believing in our mission, investing in our future, and helping ensure that the next 50 years are as inspiring as the first.



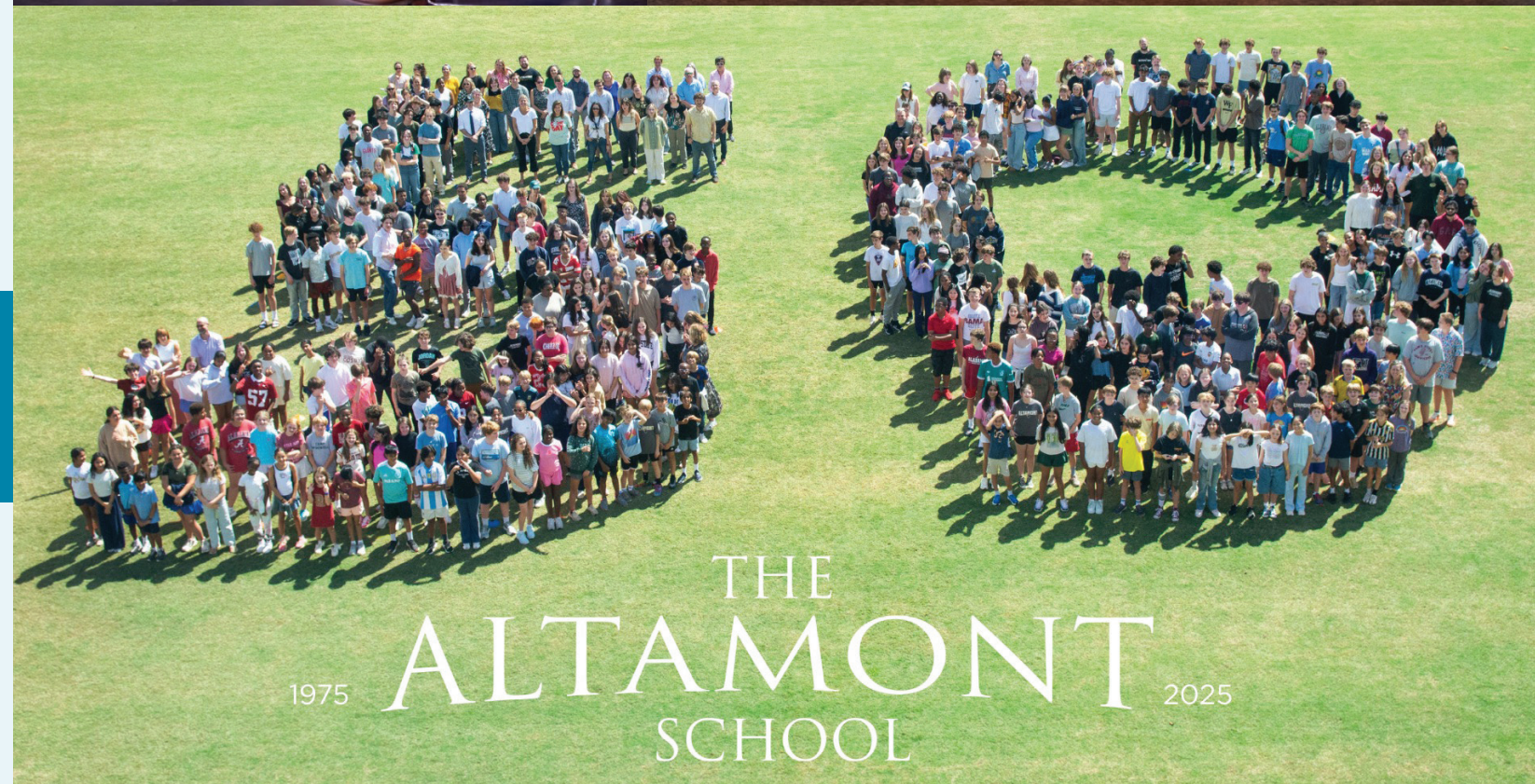
***We couldn't achieve such success
without each of you,
and we are most grateful.***

Stephanie Brooks, CFRE
Chief Advancement Officer

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- **Monthly giving** — Donors who provide monthly support are now members of the Roundtable Society, with access to exclusive updates and special event invitations.

Join the
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SARA HARRIS GUIDES *Artemis II To The Moon and Back*



Many of us were riveted by NASA's Artemis 2 mission to the Moon this spring. Few of us knew that aerospace engineer and Altamont alumna Sara Harris '01 played a key role in the success of that mission as Guidance & Targeting Engineer at NASA Johnson Space Center.

After graduating from Altamont, Harris earned a bachelor's degree in Engineering, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at Princeton University. She then earned a master's degree in Science, Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis. After earning a doctorate in Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin, she remained in Texas as an engineer for NASA. Altamont Magazine had some questions about her amazing academic and professional achievements.

Your academic record seems to define a clear trajectory to your current work with NASA. Was that your long term goal, or did you just find this academic interest early on and follow where it led?

I think my interest in working in the space industry started around my junior or senior year of high school at Altamont, so I knew starting college that I wanted to study aerospace engineering. And I was fortunate in that I ended up really enjoying all of my aerospace classes - I know lots of people

who started down a particular path and then realized it wasn't really what they wanted, or that something else interested them more, but for me I was pretty much hooked from the start. Actually getting my foot in the door at NASA was really a bit of luck; my graduate advisor at Texas had me working on a research grant with one of the engineering groups at Johnson Space Center, and our technical liaison for that helped me line up an internship there, which ultimately led to my job offer when I graduated.

How would you describe your NASA role for our readers?

I work on the guidance and targeting system for Orion, which is basically the system that tells the spacecraft how to get to where it's going. On the Artemis II livestream, whenever they mentioned "onboard targeting" for any of the burns, like the trans-lunar injection or the return trajectory correction burns, that was my system computing which direction (and for how long) the engines needed to fire to keep the spacecraft on course. Before flights, this means a lot of analysis, testing, and software development to make sure everything is ready for the mission. Then during flights, I work shifts in the Orion Mission Evaluation Room (or "MER") to do real-time monitoring (and troubleshooting if needed) of the guidance and targeting system for the mission.

Have you been attached to the Artemis program since its inception?

I guess technically, I've been working on Artemis since before it was Artemis. I started full time at NASA in 2012, right after the Constellation program was cancelled. Orion was still very much an active project, but it wasn't attached to a specific program at that point

So, you worked on Artemis I as well. How did your work for Artemis II differ?

I did work Artemis I. That was actually the first time that I got to see the algorithm and software that I wrote fly in space, so that will always be a very special memory for me. As far as pre-flight work, Artemis I involved a lot more "from scratch" type development - we had to build up the whole system and figure out how everything was going to work in general. For Artemis II, we had most of that initial development work already done and so our focus was more on improving specific pieces of the system based on what we had learned from Artemis I and on the new challenges specific to Artemis II. Actual flight support for the two missions was pretty similar in terms of the tasks and responsibilities that I had, but the vibe for Artemis II was definitely different because we had a crew onboard. The stakes are so much higher, and everyone can definitely feel that.

Space missions have so often been depicted for the screen that there's a popular expectation of breathless moments when everyone is waiting to see if the thing that's supposed to happen really does happen, and then dramatic problem solving if it doesn't. Is there really that tension as you're monitoring key moments of the mission?

It really is like that! If anything, there are probably more of those moments in a real mission than what's depicted on screen, but they're typically smaller issues, or they're caught so early that they get solved before they ever become critical. Of course some of those moments are universal - I think everyone holds their breath waiting to

see the main parachutes come out on re-entry - but there are also little moments that might only matter to a small team of people, but for that team, that moment is everything.

Which moments of a mission have your team cheering?

Seeing the crew home safely is definitely the biggest celebration moment, but there absolutely are smaller ones along the way as well. For my team, our system was done after the final trajectory correction burn, so once we got through that and got confirmation that we were on target for entry, we could have a little victory lap because our system had performed exactly the way we needed it to. Much like the breathless/tension moments, I think every team has their own small celebration moments throughout a mission.

Do you have a personal vision of where the Artemis program could lead?

My hope is just that we keep exploring and inspiring people. I really feel like the Artemis II mission was a fantastic example of what space exploration can and should be, certainly in terms of scientific benefit, but also in the way that it brought people together and gave people something positive to follow. The official motto of the Artemis II mission was "For all humanity," and I think the mission lived up to that. I hope future missions do, as well.

Did any particular Altamont experiences or teachers help you along this path?

Absolutely yes, and it would be hard to choose even just a few experiences or teachers. Certainly Mrs. Tent was a big influence on my interest in math and science, but I really have to credit the overall Altamont experience. I didn't realize what a unique academic environment Altamont was until long after I had graduated, but I was very fortunate to be at a school that could give me the challenges and the opportunities that I needed to be successful.



KNIGHTS NATION



Add your profile to the Knights Nation alumni site to help us build a vibrant alumni network!



UAB Information Security Engineer **Robby Ballard '03** and Senior International Officer/ Executive Director of International Faculty & Staff Immigration Services **Catherine Crowe '99** both earned UAB VIP Awards.

Mary Boehm '71 and **Ricky Bromberg '78** were the Distinguished Alumni honorees at our annual Alumni Holiday Party.

Lillie Sloss Breslow '10 and husband **Sam** welcomed baby boy Harrison Dean Breslow in March.

Cameron Givianpour '08 was named the inaugural Dikeou Real Estate Fellow at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law.

Shay Howell '04 was named an Environmental Defense Fund Climate Corps Fellow.

Virginia Rushton Koebley '08 and husband **Sam** welcomed their third baby boy, William Robert Koebley, in February.

Herman Lehman '78 and his wife **Susan** were co-recipients of the Montevallo Chamber of Commerce's 2026 Civic Leader of the Year award.

Justin Onwenu '14 received Altamont's Young Alumni G.O.L.D. Award.

Lauren Perry '21, Jesse Hungerpiller '21, and Zoe Jacks '19 spoke with our juniors and seniors to offer insight and encouragement about the transition to college.

Mary Alice Reilly '09 earned her Licensed Certified Social Worker–Clinical (LCSW-C) credential, and continues her work as a psychotherapist in the Washington, DC, area.

Ford Rushton '10 and his wife welcomed a son in June.

Margaret Schedler '23, a junior at Bryn Mawr College, earned a Hanna Holborn Gray Research Fellowship to support her Holocaust scholarship in Austria.

Christena Holcombe Smith '08, Trinity Perdue '18 and **Austin Senseman '01** shared their paths in engineering, medicine and AI for an all-school assembly.

Marianne Williams '10 earned a Psychology degree at Auburn University, then went on to the International Culinary Center, ALMA culinary school in Colorno, Italy, and Michelin-starred Borgo San Jacopo restaurant in Florence. She is a recipe tester and developer for the People, Inc. Test Kitchens in Birmingham, with recipes featured in Food & Wine, Southern Living, and a variety of other publications.

The team of **Chris Nicholson '99, Patrick Brannon '00, Catherine Phillips Crowe '99, Marliese Thomas '99, Arthur Crenshaw '99** and **Jamie Rediker '00** won the annual Battle of the Brains contest vs. Indian Springs.

Higher Education Milestones

Adele Benson '22- B.A. in Law and Policy, Dickinson College

Josiah Brock '22- B.S., University of Pennsylvania

Sam Choun '22- B.A., Psychology and Business, Brandeis University

Anna Foweather '22- B.S., Data Science and Psychology, Southern Methodist University

Meghan Goyal '22- B.A., Economics, Dartmouth University

Carson Hicks '22- B.A. in Psychology, Auburn University

Chase Hoover '22- B.S., Health and Exercise Science, Millsaps College

Maggie Huffman '22- B.F.A., Illustration, Concept Art and Character Design, School of Visual Arts

Shay Howell '04- M.B.A./M.P.A., Sustainable Solutions, Presidio Center, University of Redlands

Zoe Jacks '19- M.A., Medieval Studies, University of York

JoJo Kelly '22- B.S., Biology, Northwestern University

Adrienne Lagman '02- Ph.D., Sociocultural Anthropology, University of Michigan

Jack Langloh '22- B.B.A., Business Information Systems and Finance, Texas Christian University

Abigail Marshall '22- B.S., Exercise, Performance and Health Optimization, Auburn University

Noraa Maxey '22- B.S., Biology and Pre-Medical Studies, Howard University

Beverly Perkins '22- Yale University

Davis Reese '22- B.S., Economics and Spanish, University of Alabama

Jack Roussel '22- B.F.A., Industrial Design, Auburn University

Ajani Salvary '22- B.A., Political Science and Government, Knox College

Madeline Stephens '22- B.A. Psychology, Auburn University

Will Van Wezel '22- B.S., Business Administration and Accounting, Auburn University

Jeffrey Youngson '22- B.S., Astrophysics, Rice University

Remembrances

Merrill Bradley '45

Robert R. Fleenor Jr. '87

Pat Goodhew '58

Jim Kyle '66

George “Buzzy” Matthews '51

Hank Rust '63

Alan E. Head, Sr. '49

Tom Trammell '76

Melanie Drake Parker '55

Charles S. Gaines III '60

A Great School Community



Dorothy Ewing brings more than her extensive experience as a leader in Montessori education to her new role as Altamont's Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management. She is also an Altamont parent, with the admissions process and first-year family experience still fresh in mind.

From the beginning, I knew I had to be a part of this team. My family chose Altamont as a natural progression for hands-on, experiential learning, and, as a Montessorian, I was impressed by the whole-child approach.

I experienced first-hand what an Altamont education can do for your student as I watched my own child be challenged and supported by his teachers and peers to work hard and become his best self. In addition, the students here are dynamic, well-rounded, and fun! Imagine a school where every faculty member is rooting for your child's success- that's The Altamont School.

I love the wide menu of academic subjects and electives that help students find their passion and purpose. Students are exposed to numerous ideas and experiences that they can't get anywhere else, especially in the fifth and sixth grade.

A great school community is more than the teachers and peers who support your student, but one that supports the whole family. The Altamont School is not just your child's school, but your school as well. I invite you to experience the warmth and connection of our community and encourage you to take part in as many activities as you can to get to know who we are. And when you're ready, I hope your family will find its place here with us. We can't wait to meet you!

Dorothy Ewing,
Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management



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