Mike Pollen ’77 and his wife, Peggy, were named 2014 Distinguished Citizens of the Year by the Midnight Sun Council, Boy Scouts of America, in December. Read more about them at www.midnightsunbsa.org/distinguishedcitizen.html.

1980s

Curt Freeman ’80 was appointed by Gov. Sean Parnell to a geologist seat on the Oil and Gas Competitiveness Review Board in July 2014. The board’s purpose is to take a complete view of oil and gas exploration, development and production in the state and make recommendations to the Alaska Legislature. Curt, who lives in Fairbanks, is the president of Avalon Development Corp., the chairman of the Geologic Mapping Advisory Board for the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys, and a member of the Alaska Miners Association and the Society of Economic Geologists.


Norm Davis ’84 was inducted into the Alaska Wrestling Hall of Fame in February 2015. He has coached high school wrestling in Alaska since 1985, except while serving in the Marine Corps from 1986-1991. He lives in Fairbanks with his wife, Kim, their seven children (including Norm Jr. ’14 and Michael Ana ’12) and one grandson.

1990s

Cynthia Teniente-Matson ’89 became president of Texas A&M University-San Antonio in February 2015. Previously she was vice president for administration and chief financial officer for the California State University Fresno and vice chancellor at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

1970s

Dana Thomas ’74 received the UA Foundation’s Edith R. Bullock prize in 2014. The prize is the largest award presented by the UA Foundation’s board of trustees each year. A longtime administrator and faculty member who helped develop the statistics program at UAF, he retired in December 2014 as the UA vice president for academic affairs. He was born and raised in Fairbanks.

Tom Emmer ’84 was elected to Congress in 2014 as Minnesota’s 6th district representative. Tom has seven children with his wife of more than 20 years, Jacqueline. Read more about him at http://emmerforcongress.com.

Mike Sfraga ’84, ’97 and vice chancellor for UAF University and Student Advancement was chosen by the U.S. State Department to help lead a new initiative to address issues faced by Arctic governments and people. He will serve as one of two “distinguished scholar leaders” of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative.

1960s

George Gordon ’62 and Linda Gordon ’65 established the George E. Gordon and Linda C. Dahl Gordon Rifle Team Endowment at UAF to provide scholarships for qualified rifle team students. George, who passed away recently, received an Alumni Achievement Award for Business and Professional Excellence in 2009.

Andy Warwick ’66 was named the School of Management’s 39th business leader of the year. Warwick began working as a certified public accountant in 1978. He and Rick Schikora formed the accounting firm Warwick and Schikora in Fairbanks shortly thereafter. Andy will be honored at a dinner in Fairbanks on April 17.

Gail McIver Phillips ’67 – “My husband, Walter Phillips ’65, ’68, and I, along with several other friends who were all involved in the beginning of the Iditarod, have published an anthology of stories about how the race got started and how dedicated volunteers kept the race going during its first ten years. Check out our webpage at http://Iditarodfirsttenyears.com. The book will be available to the public in January 2015.”

Mike Dreydoppel ’85, ’88 retired from the UAF Police Department in October 2014 after 30 years of service. Dave was a student firefighter while enrolled at UAF, eventually transitioning to the police department as a community service officer and ultimately dispatcher.

Wendy Brennan Wenke ’87 completed a Master of Arts degree in security studies at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security in September 2014. Wendy has held numerous positions within the Alaska National Guard, currently serving as the deputy director of the Joint Staff, Joint Force Headquarters, where she is responsible for the Alaska National Guard’s ability to support command and control of assigned Army and Air National Guard Forces during domestic operations in accordance with the National Strategy for Homeland Defense/Security.
Heidi Drygas ’00 became the labor commissioner for the state of Alaska in January 2015. Previously she was general counsel for the Alaska District Council of Laborers. She runs a blog, Chena Girl Cooks, as noted in the fall 2014 Aurora.

Shane Powers ’01, ’10 was named the 2014 Firefighter of the Year by the State of Alaska in October. Shane grew up in Fairbanks and has worked for the Fairbanks Fire Department for eight years, splitting his time as a firefighter assigned to an engine and a paramedic running calls with an ambulance. Read more about Shane at http://bit.ly/FDNMSShanePowers.

Kirk Thorsteinson ’02 — “I was promoted to major in the Alaska Army National Guard effective April 16, 2014. After completing the UAF Army ROTC program and graduating from UAF I moved to Portland, Oregon, where I earned a Master of Divinity from Multnomah Biblical Seminary and received ordination through Central Bible Church in 2005. I am ecclesiastically endorsed by the Associated Gospel Churches and have served as chaplain for the 49th Missile Defense Battalion, 3-297th Infantry Battalion, 761st Military Police Battalion, and currently serve as the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade chaplain. During 2006-2007 I served as the Security Forces North chaplain stationed at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and am a graduate of the Chaplain Captain Career Course. My awards include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal and Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. My wife Jennifer and I have a 4-year-old son named Craig. I live and work in Juneau where I am a human resources consultant with the Alaska Department of Administration’s Classification Studies Team. I also serve as the chaplain for Veterans of Foreign Wars Taku Post 5559, American Legion Auke Bay Post 25, and have clergy privileges with the State of Alaska’s Department of Corrections Chaplaincy Program.”

Sherri Wall ’02, ’05 was the second place winner of the 2014 Economist Educators Best in Class Teaching Award given by Cengage Learning and the National Economics Teaching Association in November. The awards recognize innovative and notable instructors of economics. View her winning video at http://bit.ly/Wallvideo.

Patricia Watts ’04 had her first novel, “Watchdogs,” a story of crime and passion set in Fairbanks, published in 2013 by She Writes Press. She works as an investigator in Anchorage and is completing a second book.

Etsuko Kimura Pederson ’05 — “I released my modern music CD for two and three pianos. This CD was funded by the Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Award for music composition. (This is the second time [I have] received the award.) All players of this CD are from the UAF Music Department: Dr. Zilberkant, Dr. Eder, Mr. Dowgray, Mr. Felkel and me. [Proceeds from] CD sales will be donated to the Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund in Sendai, Japan.”


Pearl Kiyawn Nageak Brower ’04, ’10
Magenlee James ’11

Glenna L. Muncy ’98
Gordon L. Puller Jr. ’10
Da-ka-xeen Mehner ’07, UAF assistant professor of Native arts, was named a 2015 Eiteljorg Contemporary Art Fellow by the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, Indiana, in December 2014. Read more at http://bit.ly/UAFMehner.

Penny Gage ’08 has been program officer of initiatives with the Alaska Community Foundation since December 2014.

Rodney Collins ’09, ’12 was named Outstanding Student of the Year as a doctoral student in the School of Engineering and Environmental Science at the University of Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Transportation Center named him 2014 student of the year based on his achievements and the promise of his future contributions to transportation.

Keri Knight ’14 was named the Great Northwest Athletic Conference selection for the NCAA Woman of the Year Award in June 2014. Keri was an outside hitter for the Alaska Nanook volleyball team, a three-year starter and captain for two seasons, all while compiling a 3.85 GPA. For two years, she served as the Nanooks’ Student-Athlete Advisory Committee president and was chosen as the 2013-2014 Nanook Athletics Advisory Committee Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year. She was also named the 2013-2014 outstanding student of the year for the School of Management.

Angela Wade ’14 was certified as a police officer in the state of Alaska in April 2014 by the Alaska Police Standards Council. Angela is a tribal citizen of Chickaloon Native Village, graduated from the police academy at the UAF Community and Technical College and began working as a tribal peace officer with the Chickaloon Village Tribal Council Justice Department in 2013.

John Messick ’13 and Mollie Murray ’12 completed a 2,185-mile thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail in 177 days. Read all about it on their blog at http://readwritewander.wordpress.com.

Lee Salisbury, professor emeritus of speech, died March 8 in Bainbridge Island, Washington. He was 87.

Lee began teaching at UAF in 1955 and retired in 1988. Lee directed nearly 100 plays during his tenure with the university. He served on what is today the Alaska Public Broadcasting Commission, and his work helped create KUAC FM.

Lee began his stage work as a young man in New York. He came to Alaska at the suggestion of his sister-in-law, Druska Schaible, who was UAF’s dean of women and head of the Biology Department.

For many years, Lee was the speech and drama program’s only faculty member. Plays were staged in the gym, which is now Signers’ Hall. Productions had to work around basketball games and ROTC training. Schaible Auditorium, named for Lee’s sister-in-law after she died in a fire, opened in 1957, but it lacked a real stage.

Lee’s advocacy led to construction of the Fine Arts Theatre at the Regents’ Great Hall in 1969. The Board of Regents renamed it the Lee H. Salisbury Theatre in 1993. Lee returned to Fairbanks in 2007 to direct the play “Picnic,” celebrating the theatre department’s 50th year.

Lee and his wife, Lesley, had four children — Lisa, Tom, Lex and Druska. Lesley died in 1998.
Joseph C. Thompson, an associate professor of philosophy and humanities, died from lung cancer Aug. 4, 2014, in Fairbanks. He was 49.

Joseph received his master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was deeply committed to the Philosophy and Humanities Department, and to his students. He advised the UAF Socratic Society beginning in 2008, and lectured and participated in philosophical debates on campus on numerous occasions.

Joseph moved to Alaska in January 1999 to teach at UAF. He was a popular teacher who delighted in opening his students’ minds to the vast and intricate possibilities of the world. “I’m getting paid to rave intelligently about things that I just love! Architecture, sculpture, mythology, painting, music, Shakespeare. That has got to be my favorite,” Joseph said of his introductory humanities class during a 2010 Sun Star interview.

Joseph’s intellectual energy was reflected in the classes he taught, among them History of Ancient Greek Philosophy, Contemporary Philosophical Problems, Feminist Philosophy, Aesthetics and German Metaphysics. He was also a keen speed chess player and spent many hours outside the classroom playing with his students.

Joseph’s exuberance for teaching and learning earned him the 2014 Emil Usibelli Distinguished Teaching Award, UAF’s most prestigious teaching award. He received several Excellence in Teaching awards from the College of Liberal Arts, among other commendations.

He is survived by his wife, Trina Mamoan, an associate professor of Russian and French at UAF. A memorial scholarship has been set up in his name.