2026 AMU Alumni Awards Honor Faith, Leadership, and a Lifetime of Service

Announcement

October 22, 2026

Ave Maria University Celebrates the Remarkable Achievements of Its Alumni at Homecoming 2026

During Homecoming, October 23–25, Ave Maria University gathered to celebrate the remarkable achievements of its alumni, honoring graduates from the classes of 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 whose lives have become a living testament to the University's founding mission. The 2026 Alumni Awards brought together members of the AMU family, from pioneers who walked the halls of the Michigan campus in its earliest days to graduates making their mark in medicine, law enforcement, ministry, education, and family life.

The ceremony was made especially meaningful by the presence of Chancellor Tom Monaghan, Chairman Rainey, President Middendorf, and Father Joseph, who were graciously present to hand out the awards and recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of our alumni. Each honoree, in their own way, embodies the virtues Ave Maria University seeks to cultivate in its students: a deep faith rooted in Christ, a mind formed by the intellectual and moral virtues of the Catholic tradition, courageous leadership in the dialogue between faith and reason, and a steadfast commitment to serving the Church and society.

The evening began by celebrating those remarkable individuals who helped build Ave Maria University from the ground up. Couples like Jacob and Mary Blanchard, Jon and Marie Fidero, and René and Mary Delgado were recognized as Pioneers for their service as Resident Assistants, Student Government leaders, and household stewards during the University's formative years on the Michigan campus.

Their legacy extends far beyond those early days. The Blanchards continue to form students on campus and shape the culture of AMU. The Fideros remain deeply involved with the University, with two of their children currently enrolled as students and an annual alumni gathering they host at their home. The Delgados reflected on watching the University grow from Ypsilanti to Naples and ultimately to the vibrant Ave Maria Campus, sharing their conviction that the best chapters are still ahead.

The Alumni Dedication to the University Award recognized graduates who have woven Ave Maria University's mission into their everyday lives, generously giving their time, talent, and resources to sustain the community that shaped them. Brian Trymbinski, Emma Martin, and Charles

Mickens were honored for their continued engagement, whether through active involvement with the Alumni Board of Directors, mentoring the next generation of students, or remaining connected to the AMU family long after graduation.

The Ambassador Michael Novak Excellence in Career Award celebrated alumni whose professional achievements reflect the excellence AMU strives to instill in its graduates. Shannon Hale, Dr. Christine Angeles, and Dr. Joe Traver were recognized for their accomplishments in their respective fields, from law to medicine, carrying forward the formation they received at AMU into lives of dedicated service and professional excellence.

Perhaps most moving was the presentation of the Jon Scharfenberger Service to the Community Award, named for the beloved alumnus whose passion for pro-life advocacy and pastoral care left an indelible mark on the University. Jon was honored posthumously, with his parents, Dennis and Anna Scharfenberger, accepting the award on his behalf.

Recipients Travis Gonzales, Adam Fuselier, Travis Speier, Jerome Ibarra, Jasmine McCormick, and Christopher and Beth Kambach were recognized for answering the call to build a more just and compassionate world. Through ethical policing, Catholic youth formation rooted in the Theology of the Body, faithful pastoral care and counseling, and nursing and midwifery that honors the dignity of motherhood, each recipient carries forward the spirit of service and love of Christ that defined Jon's life.

The 2026 Alumni Awards were a beautiful reminder that the mission of Ave Maria University lives on through its graduates. From the pioneers who helped establish the University's foundation to alumni serving their communities today, each honoree reflects the enduring impact of an AMU education.

The University extends its heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to all the award recipients and to the families, friends, and members of the AMU community who joined in celebrating their achievements. Their lives are a testament to the enduring bonds of faith, friendship, and service that unite the Ave Maria family and inspire generations to come.

Read online for photos and videos:

https://alumni.avemaria.edu/news/2026-amu-alumni-awards-honor-faith-leadership-and-a-lifetime-of-service