

Supporting Student Health and Wellness

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025-2026



AINSLEY GRANT

Meet Ainsley Grant

President of Healthcare Outreach Club and third-generation Allisonian

Ainsley Grant, a Biopsychology student and Mounties women's soccer athlete from St. Stephen, NB, is the incoming president of Mount Allison's Healthcare Outreach Club, which invites students to get involved in community projects. Last year, students hosted fundraising events in support of the Canadian Cancer Society and prepared and delivered to Sackville Memorial Hospital patient care packages filled with books, socks, and other items.

The club also works with Sackville's Drew Nursing Home and Nursing Home Without Walls, a provincial initiative that partners with long-term care homes to provide supports and services to older adults still living in their own homes. Student volunteers visit seniors in their homes for tea, coffee, and conversation, as well as organize outings for socialization and physical activity. Grant, who last year led the recruitment of student volunteers, says the experience is beneficial to the health and wellness of both the seniors and the students, creating opportunities to meet wonderful people, learn a lot, and grow as an individual.

"It is really important when you are at university to immerse yourself in community life," says Grant. "One of the big things I love about Mount A is that there are so many ways to get involved, and with a variety of ages."

Grant is also a mentor at Marshview Middle School, as a varsity athlete coaches area youth, and is a volunteer with the SMILE program, which pairs Mount Allison students with children and youth with special needs, supporting their participation in activities hosted by a local YMCA.

Grant is a third-generation Allisonian. Her grandfather Colin Grant graduated from Mount Allison in 1962 and in the 1970s returned to the University as a professor. He was a resident in the Drew Nursing Home at the time of his passing in 2024.

"It's really special to be able to give back to the Drew because the staff there does a lot of great work and made a big difference in my grandfather's life," she says. "They continue to make a big difference in my grandmother's life. She [Sheina (Crawford) Grant] is a member of Nursing Home Without Walls and runs her own support group for people who are caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's. I've learned a lot from her in terms of her leadership and work ethic, and she inspires me to want to do more."



RUTH CHRISTIE ('26), EMILY BROWN ('26), MacKENZIE CURWEN STRACHAN ('26)

Interdisciplinary Health Studies

The University celebrates the first three graduates of Mount Allison's Bachelor of Arts and Science in Interdisciplinary Health Studies. This degree program, launched in 2022, delivers a multifaceted approach to the study of health. Students take courses in biology, psychology, ethics and philosophy, and social issues and culture. They engage with such complex issues as health care for an aging population and confronting global pandemics.

The first graduates plan to pursue careers in a range of health-care areas, including public health, epidemiology, public policy, and midwifery.



LUCAS ORFANIDES

Meet Lucas Orfanides Accessibility Coordinator for the Mount Allison Students' Union

Lucas Orfanides is the accessibility coordinator for the Mount Allison Students' Union (MASU) — consulting with students on specific concerns, working with MASU executives and University staff on accessibility policy, and sitting on the University Senate disability committee to bring student perspectives into institutional decisions.

"I am proud to be a part of making our campus a more inclusive and more accessible place," says Orfanides. "As a student with a disability, I understand how difficult the challenges can be and making sure every student feels welcome at Mount Allison is a cause that is near and dear to my heart."

Orfanides is a Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) student and is thrilled for the opportunity to work on disability policy.

"I think one of the fantastic things about Mount Allison is that we have this drive toward trying to include everybody, but often it's hard to put that into practice, even when the desire exists. It is really important to me to help push theory into practice."

Orfanides is also co-founder of Mount Allison's newly resurrected Debate Club, president of Edwards House residence, and incoming president of an environmental club where students volunteer in the clean-up of local parks. In January, Orfanides and Dr. Ian Sutherland, Mount Allison's president and vice-chancellor, co-authored an op-ed for the *Globe and Mail* on the value of a liberal arts education in an AI future. Orfanides has also written for CBC on AI and accessibility.

Windsor Foundation Supports Students

New gift will help the Meighen Centre welcome new students

The Windsor Foundation has made a gift of \$60,000 to the Meighen Centre, supporting Pre-Orientation activities for new students.

Mount Allison's Meighen Centre supports students with disabilities and medical conditions, permanent or temporary, by providing academic and campus accommodations. Each year, first-year students registered with the Meighen Centre are invited to campus early for Pre-Orientation, welcoming them to the University and Sackville and allowing them to move into residence before the intensity of general Orientation Week and the first week of classes. Participants learn about campus and community resources, how to apply for academic accommodations, and how to feel comfortable communicating with faculty about their needs. There are also social events where participants can build friendships and develop a sense of belonging.

"The most rewarding thing for me has been going through this year and seeing all these friendships that I know started with pre-o, that I watched start, and seeing that they are still friends today," says Lauren West ('26), who led Meighen Centre Pre-Orientation in 2025. "I'm passionate about inclusion and knew I could help create a space where incoming Meighen Centre students, like myself, feel supported, confident, and ready for this new chapter."

The Windsor Foundation is a longtime supporter of the Meighen Centre and health and wellness initiatives at Mount Allison, helping the University pilot new resources and deliver important mental health programming.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Windsor Foundation," says Cindy Crossman, Mount Allison's director of Accessibility and Student Wellness. "This new gift enables us to offer meaningful Pre-Orientation programming for students — creating opportunities to build connections, fostering a sense of inclusion, and giving students time to become familiar with their new environment. This early engagement helps ease the transition to university and lays a strong foundation for students to thrive throughout their post-secondary journey."

Cancer Research Lab

Mount Allison's first cancer research lab has been established under the leadership of Dr. Emily Drake. The lab is focused on children, adolescents, and young adults living with cancer. Drake is an affiliated scientist in pediatric hematology/oncology at IWK Health, and the lab will provide Mount Allison students opportunities to be involved in important, real-world research.



AVA HORWOOD

Meet Ava Horwood

Mount Allison’s Wellness Intern shares her passion for health care and community work

Ava Horwood says her passion for community work and ensuring people get adequate health care comes in large part from her grandmother, a nurse who teaches practical nursing at Lambton College in Ontario and runs a day program for neurodivergent adults.

This past year, Horwood, a Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) student, was Mount Allison’s wellness intern. Each year, this student position works with partners across campus and in the community to ensure students are getting vital health and wellness information, resources, and access. The intern manages social media accounts and is involved in Wellness Week, a recurring campus event focused on health education, stress management, and self-care.

“While I do not plan to be a doctor or nurse, I am interested in working in public policy and think this is a really good experience to prepare me for that,” Horwood says.

“I’m passionate about getting people, especially in rural areas, access to adequate health care, and to ensuring students have the resources they need because your health is so important to continuing your academics and achieving your goals.”

Horwood also collected student feedback on a new Quiet Zone in Jennings Dining Hall, which recognizes that the University’s large dining hall can be loud and overstimulating for some neurodivergent students, and really for anyone looking for a quiet place to eat.

As an active member of the Mount Allison Students’ Union (MASU) and assistant don of Windsor Hall residence, Horwood wanted to use the internship to strengthen University-wide efforts in support of student health and wellness. She says connecting groups throughout campus for better collaboration is key and hopes to do more of this when she returns as the wellness intern for the 2026-27 year. She also wants to work to make students better informed of the mental health resources and health practitioners, such as massage therapists and chiropractors, available in the community beyond campus and how students can use their MASU health benefits and insurance plan to access these resources.

Horwood is also co-president of the Mount Allison Rotaract Club, dedicated to bridging the gap between Mount Allison students and the Sackville community. The club’s recent events included hosting a thrift fashion show fundraiser for the Sackville Food Bank and a community spaghetti dinner at the Sackville Curling Club.

This summer, Horwood is working on a project that compares how Mount Allison and a university in Queensland, Australia, are addressing accessibility issues on campus.

Lily’s Magical Mind

Health Studies student Lauren Peveril published *Lily’s Magical Mind*, a children’s book designed to normalize and celebrate neurodiversity by encouraging children with autism to feel proud of who they are while also helping their peers build empathy and understanding.

“*Lily’s Magical Mind* gave me the opportunity to combine my academic background with my personal passion for health advocacy,” says Peveril. “As someone diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in early adulthood, I wanted to create a meaningful resource that could help children better understand their diagnosis.”

Peveril aspires to a career at the intersection of health care, policy, and education.

“Writing about autism and sharing parts of my own journey required vulnerability, but the process taught me that authenticity can be a strength. Additionally, I gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of accessible health communication and the role stories can play in shaping how people understand themselves and others.”

Lily’s Magical Mind is available through popular online retailers.

Men’s Hockey Reunion

Dozens of former members of the Mount Allison Men’s Hockey team recently gathered in Sackville to share memories and enjoy the enduring camaraderie that comes with participation in sports. Alumni from as far back as 1960 were in attendance, and new philanthropic commitments were made in support of student-athlete awards. The University is grateful for the generosity of alumni and their commitments to the physical, mental, and social well-being of future generations of student-athletes.

TOP UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY IN CANADA

Mount Allison is once again recognized by *Maclean’s* annual University Rankings as the #1 university in Canada — 26 times in the last 35 years!



Connecting on Health

Mount Allison welcomed Dr. Andrew Furey and Dr. Allison Furey to campus to deliver the Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Speaker Series lecture and spend two days meeting with students.

The Honourable Dr. Andrew Furey is a physician and former premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. Dr. Allison Furey is an attending physician in the emergency department at NL's Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre.

In addition to delivering a public lecture, the couple spent time connecting with students in Health Studies and in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE), as well as others interested in health care.

The Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Speaker Series was established in 2025 to explore connections among physical and mental health, community well-being, and leadership.

"One thing that really stayed with me from their talk is that leadership isn't something separate from health or wellness," says Chemistry graduate Ainaz Giahi ('26). "If you want to be a good leader, you need balance. You need to be healthy. Wellness isn't a 'nice extra'; it directly affects your judgment, how you handle pressure, and how chronic stress can quietly lead to poor decisions. Leadership isn't about being perfect; it's about being sustainable."

Giahi says something that resonated with her was Dr. Allison Furey's emphasis on happiness and care as not distractions, but as drivers that can help fuel motivation when working in the often very challenging health-care sector.

Giahi recently founded MedSolve, a health-care initiative focused on reducing pill waste and medication discards in hospitals. Giahi plans to pursue a career in medicine while continuing to build MedSolve and work at the intersection of health care and sustainability. She is interested in developing a stronger understanding of health-care policy, with the goal of contributing to system-level change alongside clinical practice.

Building the New Centre for Health and Wellness

Construction is underway on the Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Centre for Health and Wellness, which will include 26,000 square feet of space for a variety of sports and recreation activities and a walking track. The centre will encourage students and everyone in our community to lead active lifestyles.

The building is named in recognition of a transformative \$5 million gift from Scott McCain ('78, LLD '20) and Leslie McLean ('81). This accessible facility will begin its life next year as an interim library while the University's R.P. Bell Library building undergoes extensive renovations. It will be transformed into a permanent sports and recreation complex in 2030-31.

The project recently received \$3 million in funding from the Government of New Brunswick.

