



Ronald Glen Watkins ('70)



Gene C. Fant Jr. ('84)



G.J. Hart ('84)

involvement in her school's Military Kids Club, establishing a student color guard and encouraging students to draft classroom rules during Constitution Day.

★ After a nationwide search, Gene C. Fant Jr. was named the eighth president of North Greenville University in Tigerville, South Carolina. ★ Mary Beth Harrison-Cunningham is the manager of the Parent Resource Center of Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools. ★ G.J.

Hart, executive chairman and CEO of California Pizza Kitchen, received a 2017 Silver Plate Award from the International Foodservice Manufacturers Association. The IFMA awards recognize the nation's top food service operator talent.

86 Dave Verhaagen is a clinical psychologist and co-founder of Southeast Psych. He and his wife, Ellen, have four adopted children ranging in ages from 19 to 22. They recently moved to Nashville, Tennessee. He says JMU graduate psychology professor Lennis Echterling has remained one of his favorite professors and one of his biggest influences.

93 Melvin J. Brown has been named superintendent of Reynoldsburg City Schools in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, effective Aug. 1. He had served as deputy superintendent of Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) City Schools since 2015.



Pearl Scott Almond ('30) with JMU football players and her daughter, Libby Atkinson.

Alumna turns 108 years old

One of JMU's oldest living alumni, Pearl Scott Almond ('30), celebrated her 108th birthday in May.

Born May 25, 1909, in nearby Port Republic, Virginia, she graduated from the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg – the school's name at the time – on June 10, 1930, with a two-year teaching diploma, three years after finishing her studies at Port Republic High School.

"Since she was living in Port Republic, she obviously knew about Madison, and since she wanted to be a teacher and the cost of attendance was affordable for her family, she chose Madison over the other colleges that were much farther away," writes her son, Henry H. "Hank" Almond Jr. of Harrisonburg, Virginia.

While a student at the college, Almond's expertise as a woman raised on a farm led to a trip to the Big Apple.

"As a member of the local 4-H Club in 1929, she was selected to represent the club in a poultry-judging contest in New York City, where she became the first female to win the New England Poultryman Trophy for first place in poultry judging," her son writes. She traveled to Madison Square Garden, the arena so named for its original location, Madison Square, which was named for James Madison.

Henry Almond relays that his mother was close to two other students in the teaching training program, women she mentioned as Margie and Martha. The women stayed in contact and visited each other many times at their respective homes here, in Northern Virginia and in Florida until Margie and Martha passed away many years ago.

Almond has lived in Rockingham County, Virginia, all her life. As she planned, she taught children for a total of 29 years, first in the two-room Mt. Pleasant School east of Elkton for three years and at Grottoes Elementary School for another three years.

After marrying H. Hilton Almond in 1938, she left the classroom to raise their son and daughter, Libby Atkinson, and help run the family dairy farm. In 1951, she resumed teaching, this time at McGaheysville Elementary School, where she remained on the faculty until retiring in 1974.

Her teaching expertise extended to McGaheysville United Methodist Church, where she taught Sunday school classes for many years, among other volunteer responsibilities. She also remains a member of the Shenandoah Valley Chapter No. 76 of the Order of the Eastern Star.

Almond resides at an area assisted living home, where she visits with family and friends.



Frank Payne's ('89) passion for JMU is clear. An avid member of the Duke Club, Payne is also involved in several partnerships in the horse racing industry. "I've won two races," he says. "My silks are JMU purple and gold!"