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Young alumni gatherings strengthen community ties

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YOUNG ALUMNI GATHERINGS STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY TIES

A GLANCE at the campus calendar reveals that almost every day is full of activity at Furman. All kinds of events are scheduled, but rarely does Furman's outreach touch multiple cities on the same day.

On February 21, however, Furman celebrated its presence across the nation when the Alumni Office sponsored the second Furman Young Alumni Day, building on the success of the inaugural program in 2012. The first celebration focused on eight cities; this year, with the help of a host of volunteers, we scheduled Young Alumni Day receptions in 10 cities across the country. Turnout for the events was exceptional, as more than 500 young alumni — graduates from the last 20 years — took part.



Events were held in Atlanta, Birmingham, Charlotte, Chicago, Nashville, New York, Washington, D.C., and the South Carolina triad of Charleston, Columbia and Greenville. For the second straight year the "Paladins in D.C." group led in attendance with more than 120 participants, with Charleston, Atlanta and Greenville close behind. The energy from the events was shared on social media, as participants tweeted and posted pictures and status updates.

The evening focused on strengthening the young alumni community within the targeted cities, which attract the majority of our recent graduates. Furman representatives were on hand for seven of the gatherings, bringing news from campus. All events were stocked with Furman paraphernalia and food provided by the Alumni Association.

The geographic base for our alumni is rapidly expanding, as our graduates are settling farther and farther away from "home." Recent graduates are making a splash in the most competitive cities and industries across the United States and throughout the world.

For them, events like Young Alumni Day create community and a true family feeling. As Monica Handa '07, who helped to plan the Washington event, says, "The benefit of Furman alumni events in the D.C. metro area is their ability to connect alumni in a big city where networking is the key to success. In addition, regular alumni events like Young Alumni Day are a great way for recent transplants to acclimate to the city."

The gatherings also serve as reminders that Furman is committed to supporting its graduates as they navigate life after college. Events like Young Alumni Day offer a social outlet often needed by newcomers to a city.

But Furman doesn't stop there. The Office of Career Services offers career counseling and support for life, a benefit often overlooked after alumni secure their first jobs. The Alumni Office can also provide up-to-date custom networking lists to help graduates with job searches and professional development.

Young Alumni Day may be one of the university's newest traditions, but its success suggests it will have a permanent place on the annual schedule. Furman plans to hold its next Young Alumni Day in July to welcome graduates from the Class of 2013 to their new cities. The goal is to add two new cities, taking the total to 12 locations, and to continue to build participation.

Alumni should make sure that Furman has their current email and home addresses so they can stay in touch about activities in their area. Anyone interested in bringing a Young Alumni event to their town should email leo.fackler@furman.edu.

FAMILY WEEKEND 2013 is scheduled October 4–6. Parents, grandparents and assorted other kin are invited to see what campus life is like for their Furman student (or students), and to enjoy such activities as a student talent show and a football game. This year's foe is Elon. And it should be pointed out that the tailgating along Furman Mall during Family Weekend is second only to that of Homecoming. Some would say it's even better!

A brochure describing the weekend's activities will be mailed to families in the coming weeks. Learn more by visiting furman.edu/parents, or by contacting tom.triplitt@furman.edu.

HOMECOMING 2013 has a late date this year: November 8–10. Classes ending in 3 and 8 will hold special reunions, but everyone is invited to return for a weekend of memories and nostalgia. Samford will provide the opposition on the gridiron.

THE ALUMNI OFFICE is partnering with Furman's Learning for You program to offer expanded travel opportunities for alumni. New programs are in the works, so watch for information in the mail and at alumni.furman.edu.

— LEO FACKLER

The author, a 2003 graduate, is associate director of the Alumni Association.