



NEWSLETTER

President's Pen

Dear Piedmont University Community,

As we enter this season of gratitude, I find myself reflecting on the many reasons to be thankful for our Piedmont community. Every day, I see the impact of people who care deeply - faculty who go the extra mile for their students, staff who ensure our campus runs with warmth and excellence, and students whose curiosity and drive remind us why our work matters.

I am especially grateful for each of you - our trustees, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors - for your commitment and dedication to our mission. Because of your unwavering support, Piedmont continues to grow stronger, serve our students better, and deepen its connection to the community we proudly call home.

As we pause to give thanks this November, I hope you share in the pride of all we've accomplished together - and the promise of what's still ahead.

Sincerely,
Marshall M. Criser, III

November 2025

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Sims Pursues HSA Degree to Build a Future of Service

by Terrie Ellerbee



For Bonnie Sims, a freshman at Piedmont University, the decision to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Human Services Administration was rooted in a simple truth: a love for helping people. She was also drawn to Piedmont's supportive environment and close-knit community.

"Helping others has always been at the heart of who I am. That's what inspired me to choose this program," Sims said. "I chose Piedmont because it is close to home and a lot of my friends have attended Piedmont in the past."

Piedmont's Human Services Administration program prepares students for dynamic careers in the field, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to lead and manage organizations that serve individuals and communities in need. Grounded in an understanding of human behavior, social justice principles, and organizational management, the program empowers students to make meaningful contributions to society through ethical leadership and advocacy.

Students gain a strong foundation in sociology, psychology, and social policy, while also learning practical skills in counseling, organizational leadership, and program development. The curriculum includes core courses such as Introduction to Counseling, Social Policy and Program Development, Organizational Behavior and Leadership Theories, and Senior Seminar, as well as internship opportunities that provide real-world experience.

The Human Services Administration degree is offered exclusively on Piedmont's Athens campus, providing a flexible path to graduation for students who are passionate about serving others and making a difference.

Although just starting her journey, Sims is already thinking about her long-term goals.

"My immediate plans after graduation are to go a little further and pursue a degree in counseling," she said, noting a particular passion for working with the elderly population.

And her advice for anyone considering the program?

"I would recommend this program to future students because if you love people and helping others, I believe this would be a great fit."

With its combination of academic rigor, hands-on experience, and supportive faculty, Piedmont's Human Services Administration program continues to prepare students like Sims to build a future of service—one that changes lives, including their own.

For more information about the Human Services Administration program, [visit piedmont.edu/human-services-administration](https://piedmont.edu/human-services-administration).



Donovan Continues Record-Breaking Career with Stellar Fall Season

by Joseph Garwood



The numbers and accolades are simply staggering for Piedmont women's golf senior Erin Donovan. Two-time All-American. Two-time USA South Player of the Year. Nine-time individual tournament winner. 20-time USA South Weekly award honoree.

However, after already cementing her status as a Piedmont Athletics legend through her first three seasons, Donovan has somehow managed to reach new heights through the first half of her senior campaign.

This fall, the Southaven, Mississippi native has stepped up as a leader of the Piedmont women's golf team as it has reached a top 40 national ranking.

Individually, Donovan opened the fall strong as she held off a deep field to win the Transylvania Fall Kickoff by four strokes over her closest competitors.

That set the stage for arguably the biggest win of her Piedmont career. At the prestigious Golfweek October Classic, against many of the top-ranked teams in NCAA DIII and a field of 119 other golfers, she proved ready for the moment.



Looking to claim her Piedmont record ninth individual title, she sat in seventh place coming into the final round, four strokes behind the leaders. She raced out to a fast start with three birdies on her first eight holes.

While she made bogey three times over a five-hole stretch from No. 9 to No. 13, she refocused for the final few holes and made birdie on the par-3 16th. Now, she needed a birdie at the last to claim the solo title.

Not knowing where she stood on the leaderboard, Donovan was faced with a 50-yard wedge shot for her third shot into the par-5. She nearly holed it, and only needed a tap-in to take the title with a final round of 3-under 69.

Donovan has now won the individual title in 9 of 31 collegiate events played, good for a 29% winning percentage. For context, Annika Sorenstam's career winning percentage on the LPGA Tour was 23% and Tiger Woods' career winning percentage on the PGA Tour was 22%.

Congratulations, Erin!

'Honey' and Pink Roses: Ten Years of Melba Magic

by Terrie Ellerbee



Hers is “the face that runs the place,” to quote a coach walking by the station where “Miss Melba” greets students, faculty, staff, and visitors at the dining hall. In the heart of our home here at Piedmont, the place students refer to as “the caf,” Melba Lewallen makes magic.

When Miss Melba joined Piedmont in 2015, she brought her quiet strength, unwavering faith, and a passion for serving others. If you ask anyone — students, faculty, or staff — they’ll tell you the same thing: Piedmont wouldn’t be Piedmont without Miss Melba. The impact she has made can’t be measured in time, even as she marks a decade of service.

She’s the kind of person who remembers your name and if not, you are “honey” until she does. She’ll ask how your mama’s doing. She might offer some advice, a prayer whether you need it or not, and a smile that somehow makes the worst day feel bearable. Her hugs? They are “chef’s kiss,” as the students might say.

Now in her sixth decade of life (though you’d never guess it watching her move), Miss Melba is a frequent participant in the Peachtree Road Race. She has been in 15 of the July 4th events so far, typically running with her daughter, Abbie, and sister, Shelia. “I don’t run all the time,” she said with a laugh. “I start training in April usually.”

She is married to Jr. and Miss Melba is a woman of deep Christian faith, of grace in action. For her, working at Piedmont is more than a job - it’s a calling - and students sense it. Those who may have trouble connecting with their peers know Miss Melba is a safe space.

“I love these students,” she says. “I pray for them. I want them to know someone’s looking out for them.”

The students love her right back. They come to her for encouragement, a listening ear, or just a moment of calm in a sometimes-chaotic world. For many, she’s a reminder of home. For others, she’s the first person who made them feel truly seen.



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'Honey' and Pink Roses: Ten Years of Melba Magic, cont.

by Terrie Ellerbee

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"Every time I've come into the caf, Miss Melba always makes me smile. She's just the sweetest person ever and she works so hard," said **Junior Brooklyn Bolch**, a Speech Pathology major. "I'm so thankful she's at Piedmont."

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"I love Miss Melba because of her willingness to fight for everybody," said **Senior Aubrie Burrell**, who is majoring in Design and Technical Theatre.

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"Miss Melba is the sweetest person on earth," said **sophomore and Political Science major Amirjon Latipov**. "Every time I walk into the caf, she is a ray of sunshine."

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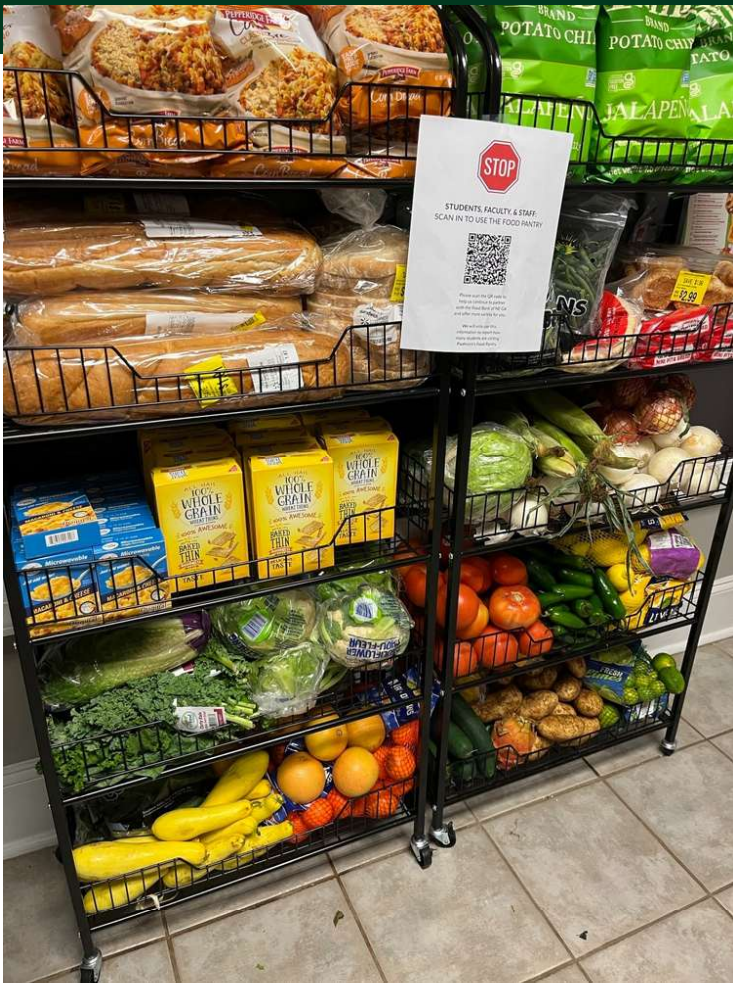


She doesn't seek the spotlight. She never has. The Piedmont community tried to return to Melba a little of what she gives every day on Nov. 12. She was given pink roses (her favorite) and hundreds of special stickers — of Miss Melba herself — were handed out. The faces of students who received the stickers lit up with smiles as they eagerly took them and went to find Miss Melba and wish her a happy 10th anniversary at Piedmont.

Ten years of Melba Magic. A legacy still unfolding - and a reminder that sometimes the quietest voices carry the most powerful love.

Piedmont's Food Pantry Brings Food and Fellowship to Campus

by Grace Wills



On a cold, rainy Wednesday in November, four people dart in and out of the back entrance of Lane Hall to a packed van. They bring tens of boxes, bags, and wagons full of fresh food inside to be sorted and shelved for a program that has quickly become one of the most popular spots on campus: Piedmont's Food Pantry.

The people shaking the rain off themselves and beginning the work of stocking are the Student Success Center staff and student workers. This is a weekly task for them — driving to the Northeast Georgia Food Bank in Clayton, hauling the food inside, and sorting it for consumption — and today is no exception, despite the rainy weather. They sort, stack, label, and move the food with tireless energy, eager to restock their shelves with what they described as possibly their biggest food haul yet.

The size of the haul is necessary; since its inception, the Food Pantry has regularly seen hundreds of visitors per month. Just last month, there were nearly 300 visits, and as awareness spreads, more are expected.

The pantry, open to Piedmont students, faculty, and staff, began in 2022 but recently expanded as the result of an idea tossed between Director of Student Support Services Ineke Dyer and Director of Campus Experiences and Operations Chelsea Wilkes: what if Piedmont partnered with the Northeast Georgia Food Bank to bring food to campus? From there, the Student Success Center staff worked to make it happen. Now, the front lobby of Lane Hall overflows with food.

"Fresh fruits, vegetables, and bread make up a large part of our food pantry. Thanks to our partnership with the NE GA Food Bank, we're able to salvage food that would have otherwise gone to waste," says Learning Center Coordinator Oliver Howington.



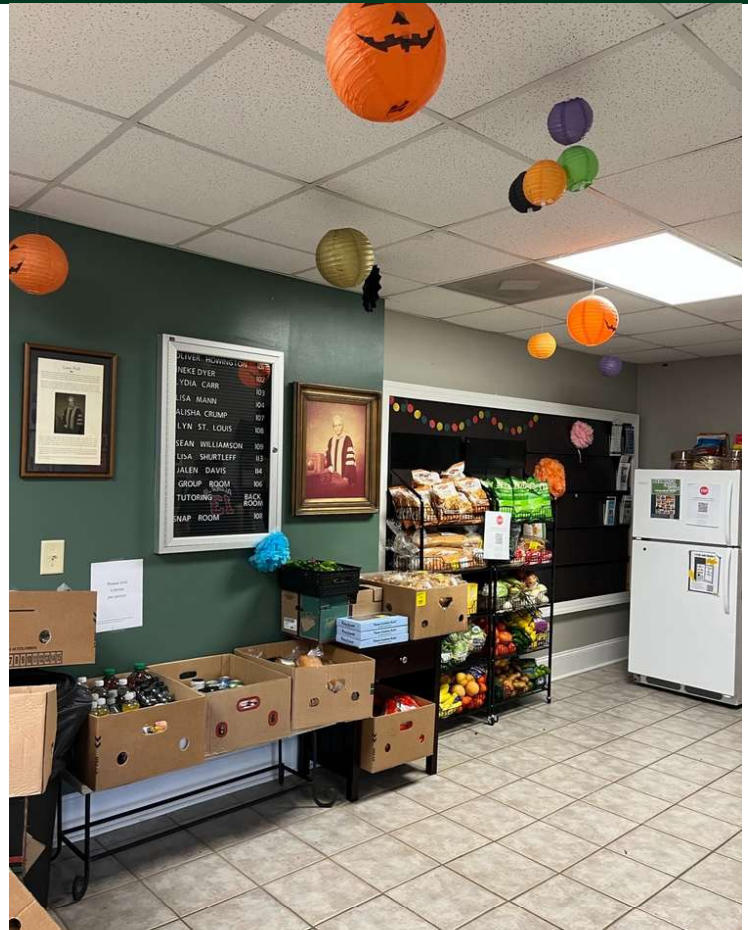
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Piedmont's Food Pantry Brings Food and Fellowship to Campus, cont.

by Grace Wills

In addition to fresh food, there are hundreds of snacks and premade meal options to take home or eat on the go. Student feedback reflects a special appreciation for the latter: "I have snacks when I haven't got groceries or dinner," says one. Another comments, "This is an amazing resource... sometimes students have no time to pick up food and drink. This helps!"

The holidays can be a stressful time in school, especially if financial hardship is involved. The Food Pantry aims to relieve some of that stress, as Dyer comments: "With food prices continuing to climb, this food pantry hopefully alleviates some of the financial burden of accessing food/snacks and other necessities and allows our students to focus on their education without the added stress of worrying about food." Based on the crowd that visits the pantry daily, it seems that hope is well-founded.



Before the restock is even done, students are lining up to visit the food pantry. One asks if the food pantry is ready for visitors yet. "Just a minute," says a student worker with a smile. "Then we'll be back to serving."

If you would like to support Piedmont's Food Pantry and our mission to keep all our Lions well-fed, you can give by visiting piedmont.edu/giving and designating "food pantry" in the description.



Giving Day 2025

2nd Annual Day of Giving December 2, 2025

THANK YOU for your support last year! To build upon that success, please consider helping in one of the following ways to champion Piedmont's cause again this year:

- Plan to make a gift to Piedmont through one of the special Giving Day emails you receive.
- Encourage your friends, family, other Piedmont alumni, and donors to donate that day.
- Like, comment, and share our Giving Day social media posts on your personal networks. All engagement helps spread the word!

We are SO GRATEFUL for our supportive community and know your participation will make this day a success.



If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Haley Watts, Piedmont University Gift Officer, at 706.776.0134 or hwatts@piedmont.edu

Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

11/18 Piedmont University String Orchestra
11/20 Piedmont University Wind Ensemble
11/20 Art Reception: Christmas at the Museum: Jan Walker & the Kingdom of Neep

DECEMBER

12/5-6 37th Annual Lessons and Carols
12/12 Fall Commencement

JANUARY

1/22 Art Reception: Handwork 2026: Jennifer Graff and Thaddeus Erdhaul

For event details, or to view the full calendar, please visit [here](#).