

Website reaches out to AHS alumni

Organizers hope to bring together classes for reunion

BY PAT FITZGERALD
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The Albemarle High School Alumni Association has put together a comprehensive website featuring thousands of former students and teachers.

The site, www.albemarlealumni.com, has the names of approximately 20,300 alumni and 1,200 teachers. It's designed

to bring together classes from 1954 to 2011.

"This is a whole-school site," said Stan Maupin, a 1967 Albemarle High School graduate and one of the major players behind the effort. "It's not just a class site."

Organizers are racing to build out the site because they are using it to get the word out about A Night to Remember. The May 13 event will honor Ben Hurt, principal of AHS for its first 30 years.

The group describes the event as the first ever, all-year reunion in the Charlottesville area. More than 600 people from Virginia

and 23 other states are expected to attend.

Maupin said more than 13,000 students graduated from AHS during Hurt's 30-year tenure and he can still remember "every single one."

"We're going to remember him because he remembers us," Maupin said.

Charles "Connie" Crenshaw, a 1958 Albemarle High School graduate and chairman of the Alumni Association, said a team of former students began working on the site in August, feeding tons of information to Maupin. The free site went live

in November.

Crenshaw said the site has been a major boost to the Albemarle High School Alumni Association, which only got off the ground in fall 2008.

"Now it's become part of us," Crenshaw said. "We expect a lot from it."

Albemarlealumni.com is more than just a list of student names.

In addition to featuring profiles of students and teachers from the past 58 years, the site features a dozen old class yearbooks that can be searched digitally and

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downloaded or printed, a memories section that includes two excerpts from a WCHV broadcast of one of the undefeated 1966 Patriots football games, as well a way to help locate lost alumni and keep up on current alumni news.

"I think it's going to be the key to success for the future of the Albemarle Alumni Association," Crenshaw said. "It's just amazing. We have people who have been on the site from every state except North Dakota and Wyoming."

Bonnie Sandridge Little, a 1967 graduate, helps keep track of former students who have died and adds their name to the "In Memory" section.

That section includes a link to the former student's obituary, if available. In addition, people can add a remembrance of students.

"We have depended on registered AHS students to let us know about members who have passed on," said Little, who also uses Legacy.com's ObitMessenger service, as well as The Daily Progress' and Richmond Times-Dispatch's websites, to keep track of alumni who have died.

Other links on the site include a Daily Progress article on the Class of 1970's 40th reunion that came together mostly through the Internet and another Progress article from 1977 on what happened to members of the AHS Class of 1967.

The site also has a digital juke box featuring the top 20 hits from each year, a video featuring Christmas scenes from Charlottesville in the 1960s and vid-

eos and photos of the former Ridge Drive-In, which was a popular hangout for students until it closed in 1979.

"The long-term goal is to bring everyone together on a regular basis, not just for a weekend at a reunion every five years," Maupin said. "It's already connecting people who didn't even know they went to Albemarle together. I just found out that a business associate in Richmond for more than 20 years is an

Albemarle grad."

"It really is a [great] communication tool," Crenshaw said. "It's brought us closer together after all these years."

Although albemarlealumni.com already has the email addresses of some 3,500 alumni, organizers are adding email addresses every day.

"That means the majority of the Alumni Association is not registered," Crenshaw said. "We'd like to get the word out to do so."



DAILY PROGRESS SCREENSHOT

The website www.albemarlealumni.com is designed to bring together classes from 1954 to the present.