



MHEAC SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Connecting alums across Europe

From the European Council Chair

After the hot, hot days of summer we have had across Europe, I hope you are now enjoying the last bit of the season, wherever you may be. It is a pleasure to share this latest edition of our Mount Holyoke European Alum Newsletter with you. Our community continues to thrive through local and online gatherings, shared stories, and the anticipation building around our upcoming European Alum Symposium in Edinburgh, which is for the first time open for virtual attendance!

Read on to find out about upcoming events, inspiring alum journeys, and updates from past events, evidencing the breadth of our connections that bring us together across countries and generations. Thank you to everyone whose time, ideas, and enthusiasm continue to strengthen this vibrant Mount Holyoke alum network



across Europe.

I look forward to seeing many of you in the months ahead.

Warmest regards,

Catherine Jourdan '95
Chair, European Alum Council

Stay current by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), our [website](#), and the [Mount Holyoke European Alum Newsletter](#).

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MHEAC Edinburgh Symposium

Register now for online attendance



Excitement is building as we move closer to the Edinburgh Symposium for a weekend of thought-provoking conversations, inspiring speakers and the opportunity to connect with Mount Holyoke alums across generations, backgrounds and locations.

With the Symposium just a few weeks away, we wanted to share an update for those already joining us in person, as well as some exciting news for those who can't make it to Edinburgh.

In-Person Attendance Update

The Symposium is now sold out for in-person attendance. We are working our way through the waiting list as places become available, and if you are already on the list, please keep an eye on your inbox. We will contact you as soon as a place opens up. If you would still like to join the waiting list, please use the [registration link](#) to add your name.

For those who are already registered to attend in person, **we can't wait to welcome you to Edinburgh!**

As you finalize your plans, please make sure to check our [FAQs](#) and [Recommendations](#) pages. There is also still availability for some [tours and optional events](#), so please take a look and register for any that you'd like to join. And if you're planning to travel elsewhere in the UK while you're here, don't hesitate to reach out. We have alums based throughout the country and are happy to help with recommendations.

New this Year: Join us Virtually

The excitement around the Symposium has also highlighted just how many people would love to take part but aren't able to travel to Scotland. So, this year, **we are delighted to offer virtual attendance for the first time.**

A virtual ticket gives you the opportunity to experience the heart of the Symposium from wherever you are.

Virtual attendees will be able to:

- Join **all panels and keynote sessions on Saturday and Sunday via Zoom**
- Hear directly from an exceptional group of Mount Holyoke speakers, alums and leaders in their fields
- Connect with fellow online and in-person alums and attendees
- Take part in the conversations and ideas that make the Symposium special
- Be part of this year's Mount Holyoke Symposium community, without needing to travel to Edinburgh

We already have alums from around the world signed up virtually, and we are excited to expand the Symposium community even further.

If you can't be with us in person, we hope you'll join us online.

[Register for your Virtual Ticket Now](#)

We Look Forward to Seeing You!

The European Alum Symposia were created to bring the Mount Holyoke community together, and we're delighted that, this year, that community can extend far beyond Edinburgh.

Get your virtual ticket and join us for the conversation, wherever you are.



Awards, Achievements and Acknowledgments

Celebrating achievement, service, leadership, and community across MHEAC

Elle Mader '26

MHEAC Award for Graduate Studies in Europe



Warm congratulations to Elle Mader '26, who is the recipient of this year's MHEAC Award for Graduate Studies in Europe! 🇬🇧 🇪🇺

Elle is in the process of moving to Europe to pursue an MPhil in Earth Sciences at the University of Cambridge. She received her monetary award and diploma on campus in a small ceremony during commencement weekend. Attendees included British alum Virginia Ross '66 who delivered the diploma on behalf of the European Alum Council, and April Stroud '99 who represented the McCulloch Center.

The MHEAC Award for Graduate Studies in Europe, managed in cooperation with the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives at Mount Holyoke College, annually offers a monetary award to a Mount Holyoke graduating student who wishes to pursue graduate work in Europe. Take a look at the list of previous winners on the [MHC Global Alum Alliance website](#).

Nicole Ratté Guttormsen '91 – Norway

MHC Alum Association Loyalty Award



Congratulations to Norwegian alum Nicole Ratté Guttormsen '91, who was the recipient of the MHC Alum Association Loyalty Award at her recent class reunion.

Nicole is the current Secretary of MHEAC and she has been an active member of the European Alum Council for many years.

Her loyalty to MHC is undisputed: besides her current commitment to MHEAC and the Norwegian alum community, her alum volunteer career includes 35 years as class agent, 15 years as class secretary and 15 years as class co-scribe! Nicole could not be present in South Hadley in May, but she looks forward to receiving the award in person in Edinburgh in November. Well done and big thanks from the entire European alum community!

María Pilar Garcés García MHCG '91 – Spain

First Female Rector, University of Valladolid in Spain



Huge congratulations to trailblazing alum María Pilar Garcés García MHCG '91 on her recent appointment as rector of the University of Valladolid in Spain, one of the oldest universities in the world. Pilar, a former language fellow at MHC and a specialist in English philology and English studies, is the first female rector in the institution's more than 800-year history. Philology is the study of how languages are structured, how they develop over time, and how they are related to one another.

As the university's new rector, she aims to enhance the transformation of the institution into a modern, agile, and human-centric university. Her administrative strategy centers on cutting red tape, elevating academic research, and boosting the university's national and global profile.

The University of Valladolid is a public university located in the city of Valladolid. Established in the 13th century, it has 19,000 undergraduate students and more than 2,480 professors.

Zeynep Kurmus Hurbas '96 – Turkey

Certified Volunteer Forest Firefighter



Congratulations to Turkish alum Zeynep Kurmus Hurbas '96, who recently completed her training to become a certified Volunteer Forest Firefighter in Istanbul. Zeynep is the MHC alum rep for Turkey. She has been training with Istanbul/Kadikoy Municipality's Urban Search and Rescue team for over two years now. Since last year, she has also been a certified trainer, giving communications and teamwork training sessions to volunteers as well.

The sessions are not limited to earthquake-related disasters and emergencies; they also aim to build disaster/emergency-resilient neighbors. Her local area (with a population of 40,000) has about 100 volunteers who have completed all their training and are ready to spring into action. Accompanying Zeynep during the sweltering heat of the past few weeks was, of course, her beloved water bottle from the 2024 MHEAC Symposium in The Hague!

Erica Lutes '02 & Zosia Brown '95 – Belgium & Luxembourg

Changing of the guard in Belgium & Luxembourg

Located at the heart of Europe, Belgium and Luxembourg jointly boast a population of over 25 alums, mostly located in the Brussels area. Erica Lutes '02, who headed the local alum group with enthusiasm and flair for many years, recently decided to step down from her role, passing the baton to Zosia Brown '95, also a US native, who has been living in Belgium for years.

A huge thank you to Erica for her amazing service to the local and European alum community and a warm welcome to Zosia, wishing her all the best in her new role!

You can read more about Erica and Zosia and their lives and personal and professional achievements below.



Thank You, Erica!

A huge thank-you to Erica for her amazing service to the local and European alum community.

Building Bridges Through Education

Erica Lutes '02 has built a meaningful career in international education as Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in Brussels. Based in Belgium for more than 20 years, she helps students and scholars pursue life-changing educational exchanges across borders. Erica also reflects on how Mount Holyoke strengthened her confidence, leadership skills, and commitment to public service. [Read her full interview in the "In the Spotlight" section of the Global Alum Alliance website.](#)



Welcome, Zosia!

A warm welcome to Zosia, with best wishes as she begins her new role.

Finding Community in Belgium

Zosia Brown '95 has called Belgium home for more than a decade, raising her family in an international environment while dedicating her time to schools, community groups, and volunteer work. A history major at Mount Holyoke, she values Belgium's rich past, multilingual culture, warm people, and central location in Europe. Now representing Belgian and Luxembourg alums in MHEAC, Zosia hopes to strengthen local connections through traditions such as

Mountain Day and Founders Day. [Read her full interview in the "Global Lives" section of the Global Alum Alliance website.](#)

Enjoy!

Past & Upcoming Events by Country

Belgium – Erica Lutes '02



May 2026

Belgian alums gathered for drinks and nibbles in Brussels, welcoming Zosia as the new MHEAC country delegate and thanking Erica for her many years of enthusiastic service.

Denmark – Evelina Poumpalova '97



June 2026

Mini summer reunion in sunny Denmark! Evelina '97, Diana '97, and Karin '95 got together in Copenhagen and enjoyed the sunshine while tasting some delicious local baked goods and more 😊.



July 2026

Great catch-up in Copenhagen with Georgia- and Denmark-based alums and family members!

France – Barbara Greer '79 & Méryem Puill- Châtillon '80



July 2026

A very special meeting of alums at the National Archives in Paris! They checked out Napoleon Bonaparte's last will and testament and celebrated America's independence with drinks at a nearby café.



July 2026

A meeting of classmates (1995 Sphinxes!) and former neighbors in the French capital.



Upcoming Event!

Date: Sunday, 4th October

Time: TBA

Location: Paris

Details forthcoming on the [Mount Holyoke European Alum Facebook page!](#)

Georgia – Deborah Wild '97



June 2026

A summer meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia, where Anna '96 and Deborah '97 got together at the ZEG Storytelling Festival, an event that unites storytellers, thinkers, and makers from across disciplines and continents for conversations that challenge assumptions, reshape perspectives, and forge connections that outlast the weekend.

Germany – Catherine Jourdan '95



April 2026

Silvia Chiesa '11 gathered Berlin-based alums at Treptower Park for a refreshing afternoon together.



June 2026

An extraordinary alum reunion in Osnabrück, Germany, where Vijaya '89, based in India and a founding member of the Global Alum Alliance, met up with local alum Karen '94 for a very special musical celebration.



Upcoming Event!

Date: Thursday, 12th November

Time: 17:00-18:00

Location: <https://mtholyoke.zoom.us/j/97216278540>

Germany-wide Zoom! See you online!



Upcoming Event!

Date: Monday, 5th October

Time: 18:00

Location: Cafe Haidhausen at Franziskanerstraße 4, 81669 München-Au-Haidhausen

Mountain Day in Munich, Germany!
Join fellow Mount Holyoke alums for this annual tradition.

[RSVP to Catherine](#)



Upcoming Event!

Date: Friday, 18th September

Time: 18:00 – 21:00

Location: Berlin

Meet at the bottom of the waterfall in Viktoriapark (intersection of Großbeerenstraße and Kreuzbergstraße). From there, we'll take the "mini-hike" up the rocky paths to the National Monument at the top.

Once we reach the summit for our group photo and city views, we'll head back down to Golgatha Biergarten at the base of the park for well-deserved drinks and snacks.

Great Britain – Virginia Ross '66



April 2026

Alums in London got together at the Garden Museum for a private viewing of an amazing exhibit of works by Jane Hammond '72.



June 2026

Alums in London met at Ben Elwes Fine Art in Mayfair to see the exhibition 'One People, Two Shores: Anglo-American Art in the Age of Revolution'. They were also treated to a fascinating talk by Mount Holyoke College Professor of Art History Paul Staiti, who discussed the exhibition and his new book, *The Killing of Jane McCrea, An American Tragedy on the Revolutionary Frontier* (Westholme, 2026).



July 2026

Traditional annual summer family picnic in Regent's Park, London.



Upcoming Event!

Date: Saturday, 3rd October

Time: TBA

Location: Edinburgh

Details forthcoming on the [Mount Holyoke European Alum Facebook page!](#)



Upcoming Event!

Date: Saturday, 3rd October

Time: TBA

Location: London

Details forthcoming on the [Mount Holyoke European Alum Facebook page!](#)

Greece – Ioli Christopoulou '01



August 2026

Great alum meeting in Athens, where MHEAC local delegate Ioli Christopoulou had lunch with Rochelle Calhoun, president of the MHC Alum Association, who was vacationing in Greece.

Iberian Peninsula – Elizabeth Ta’eed ’09



April 2026

Alums from Portugal, Germany, and the UK got together for a spring BBQ lunch in the Algarve.



Upcoming Event!

Date: Friday, 16th October

Time: 18:37

Location: 1927 Gelateria, [Rua do Bonjardim 136, Porto 4000-114](#)

Join us for Mountain Day in Porto!

Italy – Claudia Palmira '95



May 2026

Alums in Rome welcomed Catherine Jourdan, chair of MHEAC, with an aperitivo at Claudia Palmira '95's amazing art studio. The classes of 1977, 1994, and 1995 were represented.

The Netherlands – Silvia Maulini '80



April 2026

A very special Pakistani cooking workshop led by Komal '15.



Upcoming Event!

Date: Saturday, 3rd October

Time: TBA

Location: Utrecht

Details forthcoming on the [Mount Holyoke European Alum Facebook page](#)!

Norway – Nicole Ratté Guttormsen '91



July 2026

A joyful meeting in Oslo between a Norwegian and a visiting American alum, who was traveling solo after a cruise through Northern Europe.

Sweden – Nisha Nilsson '91



May 2026

Spring brunch in Stockholm.



July 2026

Summer picnic in a lovely park in Stockholm.



Upcoming Event!

Date: Sunday, 20th September

Time: 14:00

Location: Queen's Gelateria & Café, Hornsbergs Strand 35, Stockholm.

Join us for Mountain Day in Stockholm!

Ongoing Virtual Events



The well-established **Sunday evening virtual M&Cs** continue to be very popular with alums from all over the world! If you wish to connect and chat with other MHC alums from all generations, please feel free to join every Sunday evening at 8:00 PM (CET) 7:00 (GMT) at <https://mtholyoke.zoom.us/j/99698796120>.

The link to the sessions is also pinned in our [Mount Holyoke European Alum Facebook](#) group page each Sunday morning, together with a yummy cookie recipe, courtesy of Corinne Morgan '13.

Join Us for French!



Parlez-vous Français?

Are you eager to practice your French and connect with Francophile alums from all over the world? Remember to join Méryem Puill-Châtillon '80 every other Thursday at 6:30 pm CET for an hour of French conversation and fun. This bi-monthly event is open to all levels.

Bienvenue à toutes!

Check the [MHEAC Facebook](#) or email mhceurope@gmail.com page for the date of the next meeting! À bientôt.

Zoom link: <https://mtholyoke.zoom.us/j/92564224779> - no code required!

If you did not receive this newsletter as an email directly to your inbox, and you want to keep up with the latest from the Mount Holyoke Alum Community of Europe...

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