Homecoming 2004 was a wonderful time for Bethel alums to return to campus, visit with old friends and reacquaint themselves with the college. The beautiful weather gave a magnificent backdrop to all of the weekend’s festivities, which began on Thursday with a concert featuring Christian music groups 4HIM and Palisade. Both groups displayed amazing vocal talent and provided an enjoyable concert experience for all who attended.

At Friday’s Alumni Chapel, the 2004 award recipients were the featured guests. Karl Kirkman (’74, Alumnus of the Year), Michael Hosinski (’82, Professional Achievement in Education), Margaret Wilson (’84, Lifetime Achievement) and Dr. Paul Erdel (Honorary Alumnus) shared wisdom they have learned by each conveying one insight they wish they had known when they were young adults. They were then honored on Saturday morning at the Alumni Awards Brunch where they each received their award and a Bethel College afghan from the Alumni Association.

Throughout the weekend, many alumni took in a good cup of coffee and live music at the Sufficient Grounds Coffee House, one of the newest additions to the Bethel campus. The music was provided by a variety of groups and individuals, including current students, alumni and community members.

Families had fun cheering our varsity men’s basketball team to their first victories of the season at the YMCA/Memorial Health Systems Fall Classic, winning against Davenport University and Judson College. Some families in attendance even had the opportunity to get on the court during halftime to participate in games sponsored by the Alumni Board. The men’s soccer team also scored a major win by defeating Goshen College in the Mid-Central College Conference championship game, finishing the season undefeated in the conference.

The classes of ’54, ’64, ’74, ’79, ’84 and ’94 attended class reunions and had a good time reliving memories from their
college days. Reunion booklets were compiled from information previously submitted by class members and were distributed that evening to all reunion participants, who enjoyed browsing through the stories and updates of their classmates.

The traditional King and Queen Pageant topped off Saturday’s events and included themed videos produced by members of the homecoming court. The evening culminated with the crowning of seniors Jordan Garrett-Medeiros and Jen McDonald as homecoming king and queen.

Bethel student Brittany Laidig is among 33 first-generation college students honored with the Independent Colleges of Indiana’s “Realizing the Dream Award.”

The award, which is funded by a Lilly Endowment grant, recognizes first-generation freshman students who excel in the classroom and in campus or community activities. Recipients receive $1,000 to be used toward tuition.

Presented annually to students at Indiana’s 31 independent colleges, the award also celebrates the roles played by teachers in shaping student aspirations for a college education. Honorees select the elementary or secondary teacher who most influenced their decision to attend college. Each teacher selected receives a $1,000 professional development award. Laidig chose Allison Clay, her health and physical education teacher at Grissom Middle School. Clay is a 1996 graduate of Bethel College.

Award winners and teachers were honored in October at a banquet in Indianapolis. Dr. Louis Gatto, “Realizing the Dream” program director, praised the accomplishments of previous classes of recipients, who have a 92 percent graduation rate — approximately double the national collegiate graduation rate. “There is no better incentive than this success story to encourage college attendance by others who do not have the benefit of a family college tradition,” he said.