

# HONORABLE MENTION

The Newsletter of the Honors Program at  
Western Connecticut State University

June 2006



## 2006 Steven Neuwirth Honors Award Recipient

This year the Honors Council awarded the second annual Steven Neuwirth Honors Program Award to sophomore Stefanie Bascom. Named for the late founder and former director of the Honors Program, the award is given annually to the Honors Program student who works the hardest to promote the program. Bascom was recognized for her work in reorganizing honors housing in Pinney Hall and for initiating the new first year honors housing area in Litchfield Hall. The amount awarded this year was \$400.00. The award is made possible by the generous donations of Steven's friends and family. Margaret Solomon, Steven's widow, presented the award at the Arts & Sciences Honors Convocation on May 1st. Last year's winner was senior Maria Lateef.

## 2006 Connecticut Collegiate Honors Conference

On April 29<sup>th</sup> four students from WCSU's Honors Program took part in the sixth annual Connecticut

Collegiate Honors Conference at Saint Joseph's College in West Hartford. Presenters or performers were Tristan Fischl (Philosophy contract major) who presented a paper entitled "False Sovereigns: Excepting Democracy," Danielle King (Music) who did a spoken word performance of Jimmy Locust's "Peace Control," Laura Sullivan (Ant/Soc) who presented a paper entitled "In Pursuit of Identity: Federal Acknowledgement and the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation" and Katy LaLonde (Ant/Soc) who presented a paper entitled "Understanding Homosexuality Cross-Culturally." Next year's conference will be at Eastern Connecticut State University.

## The Honors Student Organization (HSO) 2005- 2006 Happenings

The honors student group ACCESS renamed itself the Honors Student Organization (HSO) this year to give the organization clearer name recognition. This year's officers were Maria Lateef (president, Social Sciences/Secondary Education major), (Edgar Harding, vice-president, Music major),

Laura Sullivan (treasurer, Anthropology/Sociology major) and Jennifer Mancuso (secretary, Psychology major). Dr. Murray (English) served as their advisor. The group cosponsored a clothing drive for victims of the fall earthquake in Pakistan with the Muslim Student Association and teamed up with honors students from Bethel High School for an event with elementary school students at Stadley Rough Elementary School in May. Thanks to Maria Lateef for her outstanding work as HSO president for the last two years!



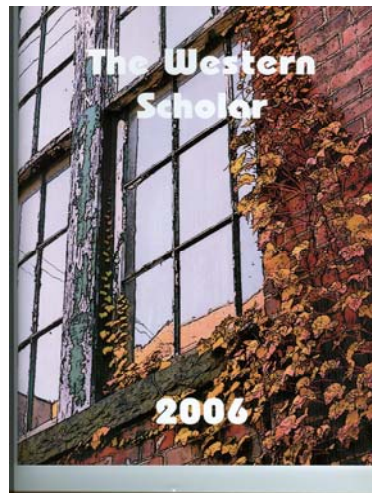
HSO students and Bethel High School AP/Honors Students at Hord Academy in Danbury.



Students from the HSO and the Muslim Student Association Pack Boxes for Pakistan Relief

## The 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of the *Western Scholar*

This year marked the tenth edition of *The Western Scholar*, the Honors Program journal. Nine projects were selected from fifteen submissions. This year the format changed to reflect student work from throughout various honors courses and



Cover of 2006 Edition, Photo by Orianna DeMassi

enhancements rather than only the Honors Seminar. Jessica Karjanis, a junior English major, served as editor of this year's journal. If you would like to be put on a mailing list to receive future copies of the journal, please email the program secretary at [occonnorm@wcsu.edu](mailto:occonnorm@wcsu.edu).

## Dr. Leslie Pray Speaks to Honors Biology Students

Students in Dr. Ruth Gyure's Environmental and Health Honors Biology course recently heard from and took part in a discussion with the biologist Dr. Leslie Pray, a freelance science writer. Pray spoke



Leslie Pray, Ph.D., freelance science writer

to the honors students about her recent article "Soiled Genes: Can toxic exposures be inherited" which appeared in the November/December 2005 issue of *Orion Magazine*. Pray is also the author or editor of *Oncogenomics: The Future of Cancer Care* and *Scaling Up Treatment for the Global AIDS Pandemic*.

## Honors Program Co-sponsors Two Panels on the State of Higher Education in the U.S.

In October the Honors Program, along with the Psychology Department and Social Sciences Department co-sponsored a panel discussion of honors students in conjunction with the showing of the first part of the PBS film, "Declining by Degrees." The film chronicles some of the major problems now affecting higher education in the United States. Honors student panelists Lorien Crow (English), Deepti Bhvasar (Nursing), Rosa Kyek (Psychology) and Faith Hunt (Psychology) spoke afterward about some of the issues and problems they have encountered in their time in higher education. The use of the panel to discuss the film is featured on the film's website ([www.decliningbydegrees.org/join.html](http://www.decliningbydegrees.org/join.html)). In April the Honors Program cosponsored the showing of the second part of the film "Declining by Degrees." This was followed by short presentations by Larry Hall (Director of Admissions), Melissa Reid (American Studies student) and Steven Ward (Honors Program Director).

## Awards for Honors Program Students

Members of the Honors Program received numerous university, school and departmental awards this year during the Honors Convocations held the week of May 2nd. Some of these awards were:

Stephanie O'Brien (Marketing) received the Barnard Award. Kami Bacon (English) received the Dean of Arts & Sciences Award. Tristan Fischl (Philosophy contract major) was third place in the national Eli Weisel Essay Contest. Danielle King (Music) received the Russell Freyer Award. Lorien Crow (English) received the Barbara Winder Award in Writing. Amber Wilk (Math) received the Grandahl Award in Mathematics Education. J.J. DePasqua (Meteorology) received the Jonathan Mottley Memorial Scholarship in Meteorology. Franziska Stutz (Psychology) received the Outstanding Underclassman in Psychology Award and was a recipient of an Isabelle Farrington Scholarship. Stefanie Bascom (undeclared) received the Steven Neuwirth Honors Program Award. Laura Sullivan (Anthropology/Sociology) received the Truman Warner Anthropology Recognition Award. Erin Cohen (Economics) received the Leonard Dente Economics Recognition Award. Dawn Fletcher (Social Sciences) won one of the W. Jason and Ellen M. Hancock Student Scholarships. Sara Waterfall (undeclared) received the Grace B. Robertson Scholarship. Rosa Kyek (Psychology) received the School of Arts & Sciences Foundation Scholarship and the Willerman Award in Psychology. Bonnie Heald (English) won the Baubles Award in English. Finally, Elianna J. Santiago (Psychology) won the Outstanding Junior in Psychology Award. Congratulations to all the winners! If we missed you, please let us know and

### The Honors Student Special Projects Fund

The Honors Council is currently seeking donations from alumni and local foundations to establish an Honors Student Special Projects Fund. The Fund will be used to help support honors program student research and travel. The twelve-member University Honors Council will administer the fund.

If you are interested in making a donation to the fund please make a check payable to the WCSU Foundation and mail to Honors Program, Warner Hall 224, WCSU, 181 White Street, Danbury, CT 06810. All contributions are fully tax deductible.

we will include you in the next newsletter.

## Alumni Update

Over the past year we have received updates from several of our alumni. Here is who we heard from and what they are up to:

Allison Healey is attending Law School at Harvard University.

Tyler Balding is attending Law School at George Mason University.

Joann Korniluk is attending Graduate School in History at George Mason University.

Mike Cohen is attending Graduate School in Economics at the University of Connecticut.

Dan Richland is attending Law School at Hofstra University.

Donna Albano is in her second year teaching health education at J. Barlow High School.

Jessica Blake is obtaining her Masters at Long Island University in Literacy and Special Education. She also works part time at the Davis School in New Rochelle, NY.

Bernadette DaSilveria is Director of Admissions and Marketing at Harborside Healthcare.

Katie Helbig is an RN at New Milford Hospital and is working on her Masters in Health Education.

Edgar Harding is a guitar teacher at James Daniel Music. He is considering graduate music composition programs in Texas and Louisiana.

Daniel Deponte is Business Analyst at Louis Dreyfus Energy Services in Wilton, CT. He is also working on his MBA in Finance at Fairfield University and will be getting married in August of this year.

Michelle Rommel does product management and marketing for a travel seller and is studying for several travel industry certifications.

Elizabeth Richland (Rivers) is teaching music at a K-2 school in Bay Shore, NY.

Kara Illium is looking for a local job and considering a Masters in Library Science.

Heide Lock is licensed office technician for the

Building Department in the town of Bethel, CT. She is considering a obtaining a Masters in Community Counseling.

Alecia Leite is working and considering graduate school.

Joyce Pasquarella is volunteering at the Danbury Museum and Historical Society and transcribing and researching Civil War documents.

Breamond Ostrander is a science teacher at Immaculate High School, a part time MRI technician and is working on a MS in Science at SCSU.

If you would like to be included in the next newsletter, please let us know where you are and what you are up to. Send updates to Honors Program Secretary, Micelle O'Connor, at [oonorm@wcsu.edu](mailto:oonorm@wcsu.edu).

## DeMasi Holds Fundraiser for Endangered Wallabies

In late January first year Honors Program student Orianna DeMasi held a photo exhibit and fundraiser in Warner Hall to raise awareness and



First year student Orianna DeMasi stands by her photo exhibit

money for endangered Wallabies. Demasi's interest in wallabies developed last summer when

she spent several weeks in Australia working in a rehabilitation center. DeMasi also spent part of her winter break doing a poster session in Nebraska based on her work with Dr. Novozhilova in the Math Department. Her paper, entitled "Matrix Form of Series Solutions to Ordinary Differential Equations," was also presented at the Spuyten Duyvil Conference at Manhattan College over spring break. She will be spending part of her summer identifying mosquitoes at the Connecticut Agricultural Station in New Haven.

## Honors Students Work to Increase Merit Aid in Connecticut

Honors program students Sara Waterfall (Undeclared) and Shauna Morasco (Finance) spent part of the spring semester researching ways to increase the amount of merit aid awarded to students in Connecticut. As part of their project, Waterfall and Morasco investigated the merit scholarship program of various states, including the recently introduced Adams Scholarships Program in Massachusetts. They also met with university administrators and one of the state legislators who helped draft a failed 2001 bill to establish a merit scholarship program in Connecticut. They are currently working on drafting a petition to be signed by university students from public universities throughout Connecticut. They are also working to have a public hearing on the issues in the near future. If you would like to aid them in their efforts please contact Sara at [lull@freelands.net](mailto:lull@freelands.net) or Shauna at [shauna101020@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shauna101020@sbcglobal.net).

## Bacon Helps Launch Peer 2 Peer Program

This year Kami Bacon, a senior English major, along with Diane Olsen assistant director of WCSU's Academic Advising Center, launched a new peer advisor program at WCSU call P2P (Peer to Peer). The program's goal is to help better acquaint first year students with the university by

linking them with a senior mentor. Several Honors Program students served as mentors in the program. Because of the success of the program university administrators have decided to expand the program significantly next year. Bacon's efforts were recognized in a spring *Danbury NewsTimes* article.

## Fischl Places Third in Wiesel Essay Contest

Tristan Fischl, a senior philosophy contract major, recently won third place and a \$1,500 prize in the prestigious Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Essay Contest. Fischl was select from among 4,000 entries for his essay "Speaking for Themselves: Aphasia and the Poetry of Witness." The essay uses his grandfather's loss of speech as a result of a



Tristan Fischl, Photo by Carol Kaliff

stroke as the background for a discussion of how language serves as an ethical medium. In an interview with *The Danbury NewsTimes* Fischl stated that "The real ethical principle was that in being in silence he (grandfather) is in danger of losing his relationship to himself and others." Fischl wants to take next year off and study German before beginning his graduate studies in philosophy. First place in the contest went to a student from Duke University and second place went to a student from Yale.

## 2006 Honors Program Graduates

The Honors Program Graduated 24 students from the full and associate program this year, the largest class in the history of the program. In the back row (left to right) are: Rosa Kyek (Psychology), Faith Hunt (Psychology) Katy LaLonde (Ant/Soc), Melinda Tarsi (Political Science), Heide Lock (Social Science), Evan Harmon (Economics). In the first row (left to right) are: Melissa Grant (Psychology), Jenna Rao (Psychology), Stephanie O'Brien (Marketing), Heather Gunnoud (English), Debra Siepman (English), Erin Cohen (Economics), Michelle Kelfkens (Accounting) and Maria Lateef (Social Sciences/Secondary Ed.). Not pictured are Jason Shaver (Ant/Soc), Kami Bacon (English), Edgar Harding (Music), Mary Kokalari (Math), Tristan Fischl (Philosophy), Jennifer Mancuso (Psychology). Lauren Clearwater (History), Keira Morin (History), Georgio Skroubelos (History/JLA) and Tracy Gordon (Elem. Ed./Social Sciences)



The Honors Program at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut publishes *Honorable Mention* annually in June. Members of the Honors Council for 2005-2006 were Dr. Margaret Murray (English), Dr. Judy Sullivan (English), Dr. Chris Kukk (Social Sciences), Dr. Ruth Gyure (Biology), Dr. William Joel (Computer Science), Dr. John Coleman (Management), Dr. Marjorie Callaghan (Music), Dr. Patricia O'Neill (Psychology), Ms. Orianna Demasi (Undeclared major, Student Representative), Mr. Richard, Grant (student rep) and Dr. Linda Vaden-Goad (Dean of Arts & Sciences). Dr. Steven Ward is the director of the program and Ms. Michelle O'Connor is the program secretary. Correspondences may be addressed to: Steven Ward at [wards@wcsu.edu](mailto:wards@wcsu.edu).