Day of earth-friendly events to culminate with Jane Goodall talk

Folk life, environmental presentations set the stage for renowned primatologist

by Sherri Hill

American Student Organization (LASO) and the Connecticut Folklife Project, the daytime events will celebrate families, communities and the environment. The public is invited and admission to these activities will be free.

A Native American blessing ceremony will start the celebration at 1 p.m. on the Midtown campus Quadrangle. Numerous hands-on activities set up at stations on the Quad will follow, so attendees can participate in any or all of the offerings throughout the afternoon. Among the options will be a chance to make some multicultural crafts, an opportunity to observe a demonstration of the Roots and Shoots Peace Doves in flight, and an environmental talk by WestConn student Will Michael, who hosts “The Connecticut Naturalist” show on cable television. There will be drum circles, the Flags of Hope Project, which will let attendees make flags inspired by Tibetan prayer flags; May Pole dancing, face painting, and other activities for all ages. Free musical performances on the Quad will feature the Irish trio Full Gael at 2 p.m. and the Latin American ensemble Sirius Coyote at 3:50 p.m. There will be a concert by special guests the Work o’ the Weavers, a performance group that celebrates America’s pioneering folk quartet The Weavers, at 5:15 p.m. in the Ives Concert Hall. The group has the “stamp of approval” of Pete Seeger and the other surviving Weavers, who have collaborated on the tribute group’s script and joined them occasionally for performances.

WestConn Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Howard Russock, who also serves as chair of the Jane Goodall Institute at WestConn, has worked to coordinate Goodall’s visit with Dr. Rick Asselta, director of the Roots and Shoots program that is a component of the Jane Goodall Institute. Both have worked tirelessly to promote Goodall’s mission and inspire student groups and others to follow her example.

“Dr. Jane” is one of the great figures of the 20th and 21st centuries,” Russock said. “She is engaged in the longest ongoing study of animal behavior in human history. She’s an activist, a humanitarian and a really inspiring person to hear.”

And he agreed.

“The main theme I’d like to point out in terms of the day’s events and Jane’s visit is that children and young adults can make a difference in the world.”

Dr. Jane Goodall at Earth Day 2004
Theatre artists students to perform in Alumni Hall, then take ‘Blue Window’ to New York

by Sherri Hill

“Your place, or mine?”
The question takes on new meaning in the Craig Lucas play “Blue Window,” which will be staged by the WestConn theatre arts department for two runs — in two different locations — in May.

At 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, May 20 and 21, “Blue Windows” will be staged in Alumni Hall on the University’s Midtown campus. The following week, from May 26 through 28, the play will be performed at the Urban Stages theatre, 250 West 30th St. in New York.

The public is invited and tickets will be $15 at both locations. Free tickets for WestConn students with valid I.D. will be released at “curtain” at all performances, if seating is still available. Tickets for all shows can be purchased by calling (203) 875-8872.

Patrons who want to enjoy dinner before their theatre experience at the May 20 and 21 Alumni Hall shows on the WestConn campus can buy a combination dinner-theatre ticket for $55. A silent auction to raise funds for the theatre arts department also will take place during the dinner-theatre event, which will begin at 7 p.m.

WestConn’s theatre students have been bringing their shows to New York for about a dozen years. It’s one of the advantages of attending college in a community so close to New York City.

And, ironically — or not — this play is set in the city.

“This is a play about urban life in New York City for several young professionals in their 30s,” said Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts Pam McDaniel, who will direct “Blue Window.” “It’s about people who live in close proximity to one another, yet have difficulty making contact. It’s about interconnectedness and simultaneity.

“The set will consist of a single room that represents the living rooms of five identical city apartments. It’s seen as one, but portrays the action of all five. Eventually, the five different spaces collapse into one room and separate worlds for the final confab,” McDaniel explained.

The show has been double-cast, and each cast will perform as a unit. Patrons can attend the play more than once, and the performance will be unique because each set of actors interacts differently.

The performers, by role, include: Colleen Di Tamando, of Manchester; and Sarah Cavanna, of Branford, as Libby; Chris Van Jura, of Hasbrouck Heights, N.J., and Tyler Donahue, of New Milford, as Grier, Ryan Bar, of Oakville, and Sean Josephs, of Ridgefield, as Norbert; Ashley Malcolm, of East Hartford, and Stephanie Caproni, of Bethel, as Alice; and Katie Poirier, of New Milford, and Jennifer Van Buskirk, of Norwalk, as Boo. Bethel resident Tom Farrell will play the part of Tom in both casts, and Cheryl Haller, of Shelton, will portray Emily in both casts.

The play’s technical roles will be filled by Roger Connor, of Newtown, as production/composer/manager; John Dafflis, of New Milford, as assistant director; Stephanie Madonna, of New Haven, as stage manager; Jerrit Young, of West Haven, as assistant stage manager; Katie Anderson, of Naugatuck, as set designer; Dan Hassemer, of Orange, as lighting designer; Alison Murphy, of Glastonbury, as costume designer; Peter Tamaro, of Danbury, as sound production manager; and Sarah Ahearn, of Norwalk, as assistant costume designer/props.

Theatre Arts Department Chair Frank Herbert will serve as producer.

“We’re having a blast with this production,” McDaniels said. “The play pays real attention to the lyrics and rhythm of conversation. It’s almost orchestrated conversationally. And it’s fun to watch because it folds back on itself, comments on itself — and everything eventually becomes crystal-clear.”

Touching on subjects ranging from segregation to personal relationships to Social Security, well-known Eleanor Roosevelt biographer Dr. Blanche Wisen Cook brought the former first lady’s life for a WestConn crowd in April. Cook occasionally offered her imitation of “E.R.” in the outspoken first lady’s own words and frequently prefaced her statements with “in my opinion,” during her lecture about “Eleanor Roosevelt, Women and Power.”

More than 100 students, educators and members of the Greater Danbury community attended the informative event in the Student Center Theatre.

A distinguished professor of history and women’s studies at John Jay College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Cook has written two volumes about Roosevelt and is working on her third and final book in the series. Cook talked about how she became interested in writing about Roosevelt, describing the woman as a grassroots activist and human rights crusader who encouraged people to help themselves rather than depend on aid from politicians.

“Shes really believed that you have to create and build community, Cook said. “You have to organize block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, community by community to get your needs met.”

Cook painted a multifaceted portrait of the popular Roosevelt, saying she was a woman who could rant and rave at times. She interspersed lesser-known stories about Roosevelt’s suspected love affairs (with men and women) and her ownership of “growling, snarling, nipping, biting dogs” with more well-known examples of Roosevelt’s stands on poverty, segregation and other highly charged political issues.

“We must understand that we will all go ahead together, or we will all go down together,” Cook quoted Roosevelt.

“There was no group beyond her concern,” Cook added. “There were no people outside her imagination.”

The Danbury Public Schools Teachers’ American History Grant from the U.S. Department of Education funded the lecture. A group of Danbury public school history teachers secured the grant to support programs that boost their knowledge and enhance classroom instruction. WestConn is one of several partners working with the school district to provide the programs.

“Through this collaboration, we have learned that working together benefits all parties,” said Dr. Ellen Durnin, WestConn’s dean of graduate studies and external programs.

The evening included a performance by Bread & Roses, a trio of women who sang about poverty, peace and human rights. Cook also accepted questions from the audience, and she signed copies of her book during a reception after the lecture.

Western Connecticut State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer, fully committed to the goal of providing equal opportunity and full participation in its educational programs, activities and employment without discrimination.

Eleanor Roosevelt biographer shares insights

by Yvonne Johnson

Western Connecticut State University is an especially active/affordable opportunity for students, making it one of the best places to study for the arts. The school offers a wide variety of courses, from acting to playwriting to stagecraft, and students can choose from a number of majors, including theatre arts. The theatre department is connected to the nearby city of Danbury, giving students the opportunity to perform in local productions. The department also has a strong focus on social justice, with a recent production highlighting the struggles of women in the feminist movement. The department is dedicated to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of background or identity. The theatre department also partners with local organizations to create community events, further enriching the educational experience. Overall, the theatre department at WCSU is an excellent choice for students looking to pursue a career in the arts or develop their skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.
Inauguration Week Events

Clean-up effort unites both campuses with community

Volunteers came out in droves as WestConn partnered with the City of Danbury for Community Clean-Up Day on April 9.

Campus creativity evident at several exhibits

A WCSU Photography Show, Authors’ Exhibit and Authors’ Bibliography showcased the diverse and prolific talents of WestConn’s faculty, students and staff. Events at an Opening Reception in Warner Hall on April 11 were impressed by the wide variety of photographic images in both color and black & white. The mounted photos continued to draw admires at all the Warner Hall events during Inaugural Week.

Next door, at the Ruth A. Haas Library, display cases housed a sampling of the written works in print created by members of the university community. A compiled Authors’ Bibliography provided a broad view of the breadth of scholarly and creative endeavors.

Westside Campus Center project moves ahead

WestConn students, faculty and staff joined state, city and other officials on a crisp April morning during the Inaugural Week to move the university’s 45,000-square-foot Westside Campus Center another step closer to opening.

More than 125 people gathered in the gravel lot near the Westside Classroom Building to break ground for the $17 million center that will be the first such facility on the university’s Westside campus. Meant to serve as the student union or hub of student life on the Westside campus, the facility will provide a full-service cafeteria and dining area, game room/pub, fitness center, multipurpose meeting and conference rooms, student activity space, lounge areas, and related campus-life and student-life facilities.

President James W. Schmotter said the three-story building scheduled for completion in fall 2006 is part of the continuing transformation of WestConn’s facilities to better serve student needs in and out of the classroom.

“Look what we’re accomplishing here,” Schmotter said, referring to a number of recent construction projects on the university’s two Danbury campuses. “This is not the last piece; this is the next piece.”

Timothy Duran, the chairman of the Student Center Board of Directors and a student member of the Connecticut State University Board of Trustees, praised the project. “I can’t think of a more exciting thing for the ‘Westside campus than this building,” he said.

Harambee students share slam poetry

One of many Inaugural Week events was a slam poetry presentation by students from the Harambee Youth Center in Danbury. Harambee provides recreational, educational, social and cultural programming for local youth. It’s a place that changes lives, which is why the April 12 Student Center performance made perfect sense.

“They say there’s poetry everywhere,” said Norman Riley, a Harambee volunteer, before turning the stage over to 16-year-old Juan Vasquez and 17-year-old Jeannette Lin, who recited original poems accompanied by music.

“I really believe the kids have something to say, and for me it’s a deeply moving experience,” Riley said. “Nobody cares enough about these kids.”

WestConn’s Center for Professional Development (CPD), the outreach arm for the education department, cares. The CPD has supported the Harambee Youth Center for nearly 50 years, sending WestConn students to work with Harambee students, donating needed equipment and supplies, and recently donating funds for the student poets’ work to be compiled in a creative writing magazine.

Nicholas Leigherdance Company provides choreography demonstration

The Nicholas Leigherdance Company, in an appearance sponsored by the WCSU Dance Team, provided a stunning and creative modern dance performance on April 12. Afterward, the company comprised of six dancers, including Assistant Professor of Communication Khalida Logan, answered audience questions about choreography and creating dance.

Nemzer Symposium focuses on human rights

Junior social work major James Farrell provided a very personal glimpse at the effects of social and economic injustice, sharing his own experience in helping New York City homeless people, during the 29th Annual Beatrice K. Nemzer Symposium on April 13.

Farrell, winner of the university’s newly created Ray Stroland Social Justice Writing Competition, shared his winning essay with the nearly 60 students, faculty members and professional social workers who attended the symposium in Pinney Hall on the Westside campus. A panel of three speakers then addressed the conference topic: “Social Work — The International Dimension,” talking about their work with international relief and human rights initiatives around the world, as well as their experiences helping immigrant populations living in the United States.

Dr. Diane Falk, a social worker and educator, called social work a global profession. “I see social work as part of a much larger brotherhood and sisterhood working for human rights around the world,” she said. Jennifer Carlson, the international relief services intern for her local chapter of the Red Cross, and clinical social worker Ruth Campbell, also shared their perspectives.

The Great Danbury area to participate in the festivities. The reason was simple: The ties between the university’s two campuses and the community run deep, and the inauguration provided a perfect opportunity to celebrate the many mutually beneficial partnerships that exist between WestConn, the City of Danbury and local organizations.

On April 14, those collaborations were the focus of a poster presentation, “Our Dynamic Communities: Unique Faculty/Community Partnerships,” in Warner Hall. Faculty members in the Ansell School of Business, School of Arts and Sciences and School of Professional Studies hosted poster presentations, which provided more than two dozen examples of the ways in which WestConn works with local businesses and organizations.

The days of a university being up on a hill are gone,” President James W. Schmotter said at the event. “We’ve always been part of the community. We’ve always relied on the kinds of partnerships that we see displayed on the posters here. We team up and it just enriches what we do.”

An evening at the Opera wraps inaugural events

The week of inaugural events came to an end with a reception for WestConn alumni and friends, followed by a performance by the WCSU Opera Ensemble. President of the Alumni Association Board of Directors Thomas Grucetti said the Alumni Association wanted to bring the Inaugural Week to a very pleasant and informal, yet upscale setting — so everyone could toast the great week of events.

Those who attended the opera were treated to selections from “La Traviata,” “La Fille du Regiment,” “Carmen,” “Tannhauser” and “Die Fledermaus,” performed in German, French, Italian and English in the first combined performance by students with voice faculty. Faculty soloists included Margaret Astrup, Michele McBride, Perry Price and Boyd Schlaefer.

William Braun accompanied on piano.

“The days of a university being up on a hill are gone,” President James W. Schmotter said at the event. “We’ve always been part of the community. We’ve always relied on the kinds of partnerships that we see displayed on the posters here. We team up and it just enriches what we do.”

This is the first time that we’ve had a night of this nature,” said Music Professor Astrup, who directed the performance. “We were very honored to be part of such an auspicious occasion.”
Looking both backward and forward. And because inaugurations are a time for faces, because he could look backward and forward at the same time.

Because the deity is relevant to us today, He was often depicted with two doorways. In the 20th century, we have been a 'People’s University' that has changed lives... That is a heritage of which we can be proud.

That is a heritage of which we can be proud. This university has a rich and honorable past, a past that is well described in the title of Professor Herbert Janick’s centennial history: ‘A People’s University.’

First, the school has served people in the region, young and old, who otherwise would not have been able to benefit from a college education.

Second, the college has not just been located in Danbury, it has been an integral part of the cultural and intellectual life of the community. In art galleries, concert halls, auditoriums, and meeting rooms, WestConn faculty have enriched the lives of all the people in the western part of the state.

For over a century, we have been a ‘People’s University’ that has changed lives. During those years, we have understood what William Butler Yeats meant when he said that ‘Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.’ And the fire begun here in 1903 has burned brightly ever since.

That is a heritage of which we can be proud. And it’s a heritage in which we find enlightenment every day.

In the 20th century, our ‘People’s University’ launched graduates into careers that were predictable, usually pursued here in the familiar surroundings of the Northeast. Similarly, we prepared our students to be productive citizens and members of a society that was generally predictable, manageable and understandable.

But the current century looks quite different. And being a ‘People’s University’ for the 21st century involves different ways of thinking about how we go about our work. Some of these emerge seamlessly from our historical mission; others are not so predictable, because they respond to the new challenges and opportunities we face.

Today’s students are bound for lives in a period unprecedented in human history in terms of global interconnectedness and rates of technological, social and cultural change. Unlike their alumni predecessors, our graduates will change jobs and careers numerous times; they will be presented, as citizens, with personal decisions on very difficult issues. When does life begin and end? What is one’s responsibility with regard to our personal and collective economic futures? Where do personal values and public morality intersect in the age of the Internet, the iPod, 100 channels on every HDTV screen, and Howard Stern?

This environment, I submit, places new and different responsibilities on our ‘People’s University.’ To continue to fulfill our historical mission of changing lives, we must at a minimum do four things:

First, we must be globally focused, affording our students not only an academic, but also a personal, appreciation of a world where people of different cultures are connected as never before, and also where they bump up against each other in new, and even dangerous, ways, as we saw in the events of Sept. 11.

Second, we must be technologically competent, providing a foundation for all students to participate effectively in a world where memory, bandwidth, and connectivity are expanding exponentially.

Third, we must provide not only the short-term professional competence to launch careers in particular fields, but also the habits of intellect, problem framing and lifelong learning that will enable graduates to be successful throughout their lives.

Fourth, we must adapt our pedagogies, admissions and financial aid policies, and student support services to ensure academic success for 21st century students. These students have grown up in a much more complex world than most of us did, and they bring their own particular experiences to the campus.

I have full confidence that we have...
the will, the imagination and the dedication to do this, to be the very model of a ‘People’s University’ for the 21st century, not just for Danbury, Fairfield County and Western Connecticut, but for a wider audience as well.

Let me explain how that will happen.

To begin with, we must remember the two characteristics of WestConn that Professor Janick so clearly defined: First, we provide access to higher education and are fundamentally committed to student learning. Second, we do this within the context of our location in one of the most dynamic regions in the nation. Not only do we contribute to our region, but also — like Alan Merten’s university — we draw upon it.

Those characteristics have been evident throughout our history; and they have also been repeated countless times in our Values and Vision process, a four-month exploration of our community’s dreams and aspirations. That process has been incredibly helpful, because in the dozens of sessions with hundreds of participants, we’ve heard far more consensus than difference about what’s really important to us. From that process, I’ve identified four pillars that, like the columns of a classical temple, support both the structure and purpose of our institution.

These pillars are characteristics that touch many areas of the university, that are valuable to our stakeholders, that are credible and achievable, that are marketable, and that will help us develop a unique comparative advantage — a ‘big idea’ that will make us known far beyond Connecticut.

The pillars of which I speak are mastery, creativity, diversity, and opportunity. Let me define each one in the context of Western Connecticut State University.

One: Mastery. By this I mean both the mastery of our faculty over their intellectual domains and the manner in which they personally share this mastery with their students. Our hallmark has long been, and is today, the caring, personal relationships that students have with faculty.

In the classroom, laboratory, library, studio, playing field and faculty office; we change lives the old-fashioned way — one student at a time.

Mastery also reflects our commitment to building and nurturing a vibrant academic community, a commitment we reaffirm through every hiring and personnel decision we make and through ongoing attention to the enhancing of our intellectual skills and professional expertise.

Finally, mastery speaks to the skills, knowledge and attitudes that our graduates present to the larger world after they leave our campus. It is our responsibility to be confident that the learning goals we establish have been attained and that we can demonstrate this to those who hire, educate, and elect our graduates.

Two: The second pillar is Creativity. This not only is necessary to prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century, but also is an area in which we have special competence.

Our programs in the arts — music, theatre, visual arts — are one of our unique strengths. Perhaps as much as any disciplines here, they take advantage of the talent present in Fairfield, Litchfield and Westchester counties and nearby in New York City. We can do things here you simply can’t do elsewhere, and the state has recognized this by funding our new Arts Center.

This new facility is an exciting prospect, but we must do more than simply move existing structures and programs to a new location. We will create a new School of the Arts in the years ahead, and that school I firmly believe, holds the promise of becoming one of the premier institutions of its kind in the Northeast.

By creativity, however, I mean more than just the arts. Franklin Delano Roosevelt once observed that true happiness lies in the ‘thrill of creative effort,’ and this holds in all fields of human endeavor.

Because of our size, collegiality and history, we have unique opportunities to be creative in the development of interdisciplinary programs of power and relevance. We have seen a promising example of that in our new Center for Financial Forensics, which focuses on corporate governance and ethics. Many opportunities for similar collaboration exist.

I also believe we can be creative in the development of effective new pedagogies and in addressing the problems that beset many institutions with our history and mission. For example, what new approaches can we develop to address a high rate of student attrition from the freshman to the sophomore year? What creative strategies can we employ to build an academic community that engages students in learning seven days a week — in residence halls, student centers, playing fields and student organizations? How can we transform our two-campus landscape from a problem into an opportunity?

Three: Diversity is the third pillar that supports us. I am a firm believer in the argument advanced by the University of Michigan in its 2003 Supreme Court case. ‘The exposure to — and better yet, the valuing of — human diversity enhances learning. Living here in Danbury, Conn., with all of our tapestry of different people, we experience this every day.

We can take better advantage of this tapestry by deepening our community partnerships, by continuing to increase the diversity of the people who work and study here, and by reaching further afield to bring more representatives of other world cultures to our academic community.

Another dimension of diversity relates to academic background and intellectual approach. Here, again, we can build more bridges across disciplines and provide additional benefit from diversity. This already happens, for example, with our science departments and nursing, or with mathematics and business. But we can do even more.

Four: The last pillar upon which we here at WestConn rest is Opportunity.
The new residence hall and parking garage located on the Westside campus received an Award of Merit in the 2005 Connecticut Building Congress Project Team Awards Competition. The award was for a project in the “above $10 million construction cost” category. WestConn Director of Planning and Engineering Tom Carlucci and CSU Associate Director for Project Management and Engineering Eric Lessone will attend the May 17 award ceremony in New Haven.

DeCarlo named Employee of the Quarter

University locksmith Wayne DeCarlo received the Employee of the Quarter Award for the third quarter at a recent ceremony. During the event, President James W. Schmotzer announced DeCarlo’s role in the controlled access and safety of the university, and the fact that he was the “go-to guy” for the locks in the new Westside residence hall.

Freedom LIVE 2005 supports U.S. troops

“Freedom LIVE 2005” again paid tribute to U.S. military troops and their families by staging a live variety show on April 3 in Warner Hall. As the war in Iraq moves into its third year, the creative skits, live music and comedy routines performed by WestConn students were recorded to be sent to soldiers serving overseas. The public was invited to the free show, which was the brainchild of Associate Professor of Communication Karen Rafferty, a U.S. Army veteran.

Employment options found at Career Fair

The Career Development Center hosted the 10th annual Career Fair for alumni and students on April 6 at the O’Neill Center. Many of the more than four dozen exhibitors on-hand reported they were pleased with the potential candidates they encountered.

Branson Ultrasound Vice President for Human Resources Byron Peterson said he was looking to fill two openings in the information technology (IT) field. “My current intern brought a couple of their friends to the fair, and I’m very satisfied with the students I met. I found candidates for both of my openings, so I’m pleased. We’ve been here every year, and we have a lot of WestConn graduates. We’ve found the IT students are superior candidates. They’re very well-groomed in their profession.”

Child Care Cabaret showcases campus talent

On April 7, the ninth annual Child Care Cabaret offered an evening of entertainment that simultaneously raised funds to purchase enrichment and educational tools for the children, said Marlene Carey Gernert, director of the WCSU Career Development Center and a member of the WCSU Child Care Board of Advisors.

“The show was great, and I was really pleased with the variety of students, faculty and staff who participated — really, every segment of the campus was represented on the CSU. Gernert said. “This was the first time the cabaret was held on campus, and we had a packed house with a very enthusiastic audience. We appreciate the donations people made for raffles and the auction, and are pleased to say that in the seven years since the Child Care Center opened, we have been able to award nearly $27,000 in childcare grants through the generosity of our WestConn family and fundraising events like the cabaret.”

Computing Conference well-attended

WestConn hosted the 10th Connecticut State University (CSU) Academic Computing Conference on April 9. Open to faculty, instructional and administrative personnel of the CSU System and the Community/Technical College System, the conference was sponsored by the CSU System to provide a forum for sharing information related to the use of computing in higher education.

“The conference, hosted by WestConn, was very exciting,” WestConn Chief Information Officer Lorraine Capobianco said. “Our representatives, Marlene Davis and Rich Montague, did a great job attending to the details of hosting. The presentations covered many academic disciplines and were rich with content, so it was a challenge to decide which presentation to attend. This conference showcased technology being used in myriad ways and demonstrated the excellence of the CSU faculty.”

Debate Society does it again

“The WCSU Roger Newman Debate Society continues to rack up awards. Erin Barnes, a member of the society, outlined some recent highlights. “The debate team has won many individual speaker awards, which means hundreds of students who debate at each tournament, our team has had a member in the top 10 at every debate,” she said. “In one of the tournaments we went to, the Big East Regional Championship in Vermont, our team came home with five trophies.”

The Search Committee has begun reviewing the applications received for the position of vice president for institutional advancement, and will continue its review of opportunities through mid-May. The committee includes Deans of the School of Professional Studies Dr. Lynne Clark Chair, Professor of Marketing Dr. Ron Brown, Director of Theatre Frank Herbert, Intern Vice President for Institutional Advancement Dr. Koreo Anin-Wright, and President of the WCSU Alumni Association Rich Staley, and Chairman of the WCSU Foundation Board Hal Whiting. The committee will invite the final three candidates to campus on June 14 through 16.

Holistic health fair draws crowds

WestConn’s Institute for Holistic Health Studies and the Connecticut Holistic Health Association hosted two well-attended events in April. On April 7, they presented “The Power of Imagination and Positive Energy to Heal. An Evening With Judith Orloff, M.D.” More than 250 people attended the event, which featured a talk by the popular California “energy psychiatrist” following by a signing of her latest book.

“Terry, was a nice event.” Rajula said the Orloff event raised close to $60,000 for student scholarships in the health promotion and exercise sciences department.

“Give credit to Professor Emeritus Dr. Jeanette Tedesco,” Rajula said. “Her goal was to give back to the college, to the department and university she worked at for so long, and these events are successful because of her importance she placed on supporting students in our program.”

WCSU Barnard Scholars named

On April 14, the Connecticut State University System presented 12 outstanding seniors from the four Connecticut state universities with the Barnard Distinguished Student Awards. WestConn’s student recipients are Steven Ortiz and Michelle Nelson. Steven Ortiz, of Danbury, is a music education major with a 3.90 grade point average (G.P.A.). He served as president of the College Music Educators’ National Conference chapter. He has taught general music classes at the Danbury Center of Education in Danbury and served on the executive board of the Education Club. Musically, Ortiz performs as a soloist and as a member of numerous WestConn musical ensembles; he also has played in several of West Conn’s theatre arts musical productions. As a trombonist, Ortiz performs actively in Connecticut and New York and has performed in Costa Rica and Australia. Off campus, Ortiz was music director for the Sons of Portugal School of Music.

On April 17, Sigma Tau Delta, and as president of the壶 Hall Council at the off-campus residence, the Wellesley Inn. She became active in resident life during her second year at WestConn serving as a resident assistant, office assistant and academic advisor. Her academic achievements led her to receive a Merit Scholarship and three awards from the Western Connecticut Residential Life Office for the highest cumulative G.P.A. in her residence hall.
Inaugural week event celebrates the many ways WestConn is ‘Changing Lives’

by Sherrill Fell

Students, alumni, faculty and staff came together in Warner Hall on April 12 to celebrate the many ways WestConn changes lives. The stories that were shared were inspiring, engaging, humorous and heartfelt — and all provided proof that “we are very much in the business of changing lives, and we have some great examples of how that takes place here,” Dr. Schmotter said at the onset of the event.

Roy Young, president of Fairfield Processing and past chair of the WCU Foundation Board, recalled when he and his wife, Ginny, were cast as walk-ons in the WestConn theatre arts department production of “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.”

“Ginny and I found ourselves falling in love with the students, faculty and staff of this wonderful theatre department. We attended every rehearsal and we learned about the students — their commitment to their job, or even two jobs, while attending school. That’s why we created a scholarship for the theatre department. There are many ways that you can be involved and change lives, and Danbury is rich in talent, ideas and generosity.”

Next on the program were five WestConn alumni who shared their unique stories about how WestConn changed their lives.

Justine Rakich-Kelly, a 1996 graduate, now serves as executive director of the Children’s Law Center of Connecticut. As a student, she discovered in her interactions with the faculty member she most admired, Dr. Harold Schmotter, and the others she encountered that she truly belonged here and that people really care.

“What was my pivotal event at WestConn?” Rakich-Kelly asked. “There wasn’t just one — it was a series of life-altering decisions and events. . . . The words ‘Can I help you?’ meant so much to me then.” “I found out that the faculty, here is to help you become what you want to become. And it only takes those four words.”

Donna Albano, a non-traditional student who graduated in 2004 in a bachelor of fine arts degree in theatre at Barlow High School in Redding. She said it was extremely daunting to attend college after 40 — especially when her son was a student at WestConn.

“My son teased me about my color-coded folders and shook his head when I admitted I answer all the professors’ questions and ask a lot of questions, too,” Albano said: “It took me many years to get my degree and the experience was gleaming and wonderful, but the rewards far outweighed the struggle.”

Jane Sherlock, who obtained a bachelor’s degree in 1984 and a master’s in 1991, is associate director of WestConn University Publications & Design and an adjunct in the English department. Before reading one of her essays about “My Connecticut Neighborhood” that has been aired on WSHU National Public Radio, Sherlock spoke about her history at WestConn.

“I am an alum, I work here, and I also teach here,” she said. “I loved being a student here in this nurturing, encouraging and challenging environment. We have incredible students who are smart and hard-working — and I see them earning their degree in a very real way in the world. I feel like I really grew up here at WestConn.”

Michael Cohen, a 2004 graduate who will attend the University of Connecticut as a doctoral student in Statistics and Quantitative Methods in Applied Microeconomics, transferred to WestConn from Dauphin University.

“There are lots of resources here that aren’t at the big-name universities my friends attended,” Cohen said. “WestConn graduates get better jobs and it’s a jewel of a university. While my high school counterparts are a hundred thousand dollars in debt to pay for their educations, every dollar I spent at WestConn was well spent. I took advantage of one of the best-kept secrets in the world — an education at WestConn.”

Maid MacArthur, who obtained at bachelor’s degree in 1985 and a master’s in 1999, is a correctional treatment director at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury. She told the audience that as a Haitian immigrant, she came to WestConn looking for the American Dream.

“In the words of one foot on the ground (the WestConn campus) and never really I would still be here,” she said. “WestConn is truly contagious, and I can’t seem to leave. I graduated not once, but twice — and every time I drive by and see a new building going up, I feel I own a piece of this university: I feel like I need to be here.”

As each story was shared, the swelling of pride could be felt in the room. Faculty and administrators were pleased to hear them make a difference in students’ lives. Alumni felt drawn together by their common experiences at the university, regardless of what era they were here. And the many current students in the room couldn’t help but realize they, too, are part of something larger.

About a dozen students had tried, in advance of the event, to put that feeling into words in the form of responses to a “Changing Lives” essay contest. The top threeUnderstanding the importance of affording access — for first-generation college attendees, for the sons and daughters of recent immigrants, and for career changers trapped in today’s turbulent economy. By that, I do not mean that we should become an open enrollment institution. Fulfilling our academic mission requires that students arrive here with preparation appropriate to enable them to take full advantage of what our faculty offer.

To that end, we have developed closer collaboration with community colleges and with high schools to enable all students admitted to WestConn to have equal chances to succeed. We do that already with our colleagues at Danbury and Bethel high schools, and many other opportunities for such collaborative production exist. We should also continue to work to improve our own pre-college programs.

There are two manifestations of this,

First, we must continue to be true to our roots as an institution that emphasizes the importance of

The second manifestation of opportunity is the ability we have, in our unique region, to develop innovative partnerships that benefit our students, the university and the community. In the arts, in education, in business and in social services and community development, we can be an even more active partner. We have several models in place already, for instance our nursing partnership with Danbury Hospital and our Executive Forum, which provides educational programs for the executive directors of area nonprofits.

Mastery, Creativity, Diversity, Opportunity. These are the four terms we use on the forum for the unique in which we will build our “People’s University” for the 21st century. As we proceed with our work — recruiting students, hiring and retaining faculty, developing academic programs, implementing strategic planning, improving physical plant — everything we do should reinforce these pillars. It’s from them we draw our strength, and I believe we’re only just beginning to realize just how imposing that strength can be.

Let me return to the Roman god with whom I began. The most famous sanctuary dedicated to Janus is a portal in the wall of the Forum through which the Roman legions ceremonially marched to war. And whenever Rome was at war the doors of that portal always remained open. We have always engaged in conflict in a military sense, but we are at war with the economic circumstances that defy human dreams; we are at war with the complicity and cynicism that corrode human understanding.

That’s why we keep the portal of this university open — open every year, every semester, every day, for all students, like our predecessors, march together through that portal — every year, every semester, every day, every hour.

To light the fire that is education. To change lives.
NAY 2 – 7 The communication department and the Media Production Society will present the first WestConn Film and Video Festival: “Rebuses: The New Pathway for Film and Video.” The screening will feature open-sourced images of short films by independent and student film or video producers from New England and the tri-state area. The screenings will be from noon to 2 p.m. in the Student Center Theater. The public is invited to this annual event at which scholarship and award recipients are honored. For more information, call (203) 837-9461.

NAY 3 Painter Don Spaulding will discuss his work at 11 a.m. in Room 101 of White Hall on the Midtown campus. A former commercial illustrator, Spaulding is best known for his paintings depicting scenes from the American West and Southwest. His lecture, sponsored by the West Farm Trust, will be free and open to the public, and it will be presented as part of the university’s Master of Fine Arts lecture series. For more information, call (203) 837-8410.

NAY 5 The Western Connecticut/Ellis Island Foundation program will present the premiere of “El Pueblo Unido” (“The Community United”) at 5 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. This film, shot in documentary in English with some subtitles, this film will be shown in 2004 in El Ellis Island Foundation Assistant of Professor of History, Dr. Carla Bandhauer. For more information, call (203) 837-8650.

NAY 9 The WCSU Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble will host an 8 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the spring sky, Saturn and Jupiter from 9 to 11 p.m., at the Westside Observatory and Planetarium on the Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public. Call (203) 837-8672 for more information.

NAY 10 The Institute for Holistic Health Studies at WestConn and the Danbury branch of the Connecticut Holistic Health Association will present “Homeopathy in Health Care and Treatment,” a lecture by Diana Quita, at 7 p.m. in Warner Hall on the Midtown campus. Registration and networking will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the program will begin at 7 to 8:15 p.m. Admission will be $5 for CHHA members, $10 for non-members, and $1 for senior citizens. WestConn students, faculty and staff with valid I.D. will be admitted free. For more information, call CHHA Danbury Branch Director Dr. Jeannette Tedesco at (203) 753-0686 or (203) 837-8612.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 3 The WCSU Wind Ensemble, conducted by Dr. Fernando Montecalvo, will perform “Side Street” and George Gershwin’s “Porgy and Bess.” For more information, call CHHA Danbury Branch Director Dr. Jeannette Tedesco at (203) 753-0686 or (203) 837-8612.

MAY 4 The School of Arts and Sciences will host an Honors Convocation at 7:30 p.m. in lves Concert Hall on the Midtown campus. The public is invited to this annual event at which scholarship and award recipients are honored. For more information, call (203) 837-9461.

MAY 5 WestConn will host an 8 p.m. planetarium show, followed by telescope viewing of the spring sky, Saturn and Jupiter from 9 to 11 p.m., at the Westside Observatory and Planetarium on the Westside campus. The event will be free and open to the public. Call (203) 837-8672 for more information.

MAY 6 The Wind Ensemble, conducted by Dr. Kevin Jay Isaacs, will perform “Carmina Burana” by Carl Orff, “Rising,” at 8 p.m. in Alumni Hall on the Midtown campus. The public is invited to this annual event at which scholarship and award recipients are honored. For more information, call (203) 837-8445.

MAY 7 The theatre arts department and LaMar Prazeres will produce the world premiere of “Dame Ama” at 7:30 p.m. in Warner Hall on the Midtown campus. Tickets will be $30 for adults, $25 for seniors and $20 for students under 18. WCSU students with valid I.D. can obtain free tickets at the Student Center Information Desk. For more information, call Dr. Rick Aseltine at (203) 837-8276. (See story on page 1.)

MAY 8 - 22 WestConn will host its 2005 Commencement Ceremony at 10:30 a.m. on the athletic practice fields on the Westside campus. The public is invited and a reception will follow. For more information, call (203) 837-8906. See story on page 7.

MAY 8 – 26 The theatre arts department will present the One Man Play “Blue Window” at 7 p.m. in the Urban Stages Theatre, 258 West 30th Street between 7th and 8th avenues in New York. The public is invited. Tickets will be $15. WestConn students with valid I.D. will be admitted free at “curtain” if seats remain available. For more information, call (203) 837-8672. See story on page 2.

MAY 10 The Institute for Holistic Health Studies at WestConn and the Danbury branch of the Connecticut Holistic Health Association will present “Homeopathy in Health Care and Treatment,” a lecture by Diana Quita, at 7 p.m. in Warner Hall on the Midtown campus. Registration and networking will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the program will begin at 7 to 8:15 p.m. Admission will be $5 for CHHA members, $10 for non-members, and $1 for senior citizens. WestConn students, faculty and staff with valid I.D. will be admitted free. For more information, call CHHA Danbury Branch Director Dr. Jeannette Tedesco at (203) 753-0686 or (203) 837-8612.