“Scholar Activists”

Scholar activists engage in their communities, they build houses, curriculum and relationships. Scholar activists examine the existing realities, and question the inequities and injustices. Scholar activists build coalitions and develop allies, and assign new ways of doing and being. They struggle towards change and justice, and celebrate with joy the creations and triumphs. Thank you Connecticut College Scholar Activists.

- Tracee Reiser
Associate Dean for Community Learning
Director, Office of Volunteers for Community Service
Associate Director, Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy

The Connecticut College OVCS Literary Magazine
Vol. III Summer 2009

Editors:
Jennifer Superson ‘08, OVCS AmeriCorps VISTA
Tracee Reiser, Associate Dean for Community Learning

Contributors:
Tammie Reid ‘01
Rebecca McCue, Associate Director of the Holleran Center
Eric Dooley-Feldman ‘09
Cherisse Cruz ‘09
Soraya Palmer ‘07
Madeline Noi ‘12
Madeleine Ignon ‘09
John Sargent, ISAAC (Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication) Educator
Ken Fogle, RMMS (Regional Multicultural Magnet School) Educator
Dana Zichlin ‘09
Michael Meade ‘10
OVCS Staff
True Learning: Family-School-Community Partnerships
By Tammie Reid ’01, OVCS Alumna

The family is the context in which children’s primary socialization takes place, and it has the most significant and lasting impact on their development. Families provide nurturance, affection, support, guidance and opportunities for growth. Likewise, the school is the context in which children are afforded formal opportunities for learning. In schools children learn the core subjects and also receive encouragement from teachers toward the development of important skills and behaviors. Teachers also provide children with the critical motivation for learning and for achieving academic and life-long success. Communities provide the context for which families and schools coexist, and although they don’t necessarily have direct impact upon children’s development, a community’s well-being can be a decisive factor in how families and schools function as contexts of development.

Because children require myriad opportunities to grow and learn, neither families nor schools can act alone in providing these opportunities. Toward the end means of ensuring children’s overall healthy development, I believe strongly that families, schools, and communities must work together to provide children with “contexts of success”: overlapping developmental contexts in which all children consistently experience success across various developmental domains: cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual.

Effective family-school-community partnerships allow for deliberate and ongoing interaction between the most important contexts in children’s development. Moreover, it is the bidirectional nature of the relationship between families and schools – that is, both contexts are ascribed value, contribute human and cultural resources, engage in ongoing communication, promote children’s achievement of goals, and resist blame yet share accountability and responsibility for children’s developmental successes and failures – that largely impacts children’s development. Communities that are committed to children’s development are healthy contexts in which families and schools gain access to resources and have their practical and felt needs met in tangible ways.

When children are provided consistent and ongoing support across and between the various contexts in which they develop, the impact is shown to be positive and far-reaching. When family-school-community partnerships are in place, everyone benefits. First, teachers understand and appreciate their students’ life experiences outside of school and are able to connect with them in ways that are meaningful and relative. Second, school-community partnerships ensure that schools use the vast resources of the community to educate students. Students learn inside and outside the classroom about their community’s rich history and they see firsthand the many good things and people in their own neighborhoods. This is a way of positively contaminating the community: when the school is successful in educating students, students are able to bring this education back to the community, thereby changing the community. Also, students’ cultural and life experiences are validated as they come to see that their community is valuable and rich with learning opportunities. This mining of community resources must become a priority for schools and communities alike. Finally, as parents participate in schools, they develop a bond with teachers and staff and make children’s bond with members of the school community more likely.

While family-school-community partnerships are essential, they are not easily constructed or maintained. To that end, what becomes most important in developing and sustaining these contexts of success is approach. For success to occur, the approach needs to be a deliberate one: integrating the influences of children’s developmental contexts requires systematization toward identifying and utilizing all of the many resources that positively impact children’s development. Successful partnerships ensure that all of children’s developmental contexts are intentionally connected so as to share valuable learning and resources. This sharing and aligning of developmental resources works to create a hub of opportunity for every child so that none fall through the cracks; the most vulnerable children have access to enriching opportunities that are the norm for more privileged children; and success is encouraged from birth through adolescence so that all children are prepared to enter school, have the requisite skills when they exit, and are able to become engaged citizens in society long after schooling.
This past spring the new class of Holleran Center sophomores embarked on their first adventure in the Certificate Program in Community Action and Public Policy (PICA). All sophomores take the Holleran Center’s Gateway Course: Public Policy and Social Ethics and the Community Learning Seminar, which includes connected community learning experiences outside of the classroom that engage the students in direct experiences with the issues they are studying in class.

One of the issues that the class studied was homelessness. While the students read articles, engaged in class discussion and listened to guest lecturers on the topic, ten students chose the project of organizing the second annual Walk for the Homeless, which took place on April 27, 2009. Over 120 students, faculty, staff and additional members of the New London community came together to walk approximately three miles through downtown New London. The purpose of the walk was not only to raise much needed funds for the New London Homeless Hospitality Center but to raise awareness about the issues of homelessness right here in our community.

Every evening the Homeless Hospitality Overnight Shelter welcomes an average of 50 guests and offers a safe, warm community. The Day Time Center provides a place of hospitality and support to more than 70 individuals who struggle with the challenges of being homeless. The walk raised over $6,000 for the Center and also educated walkers and donors about some of the underlying causes of homelessness. Walkers carried signs and the walk was marked with signs stating facts about homelessness. The event also included a cappella and spoken word performances by Connecticut College students.

In the gateway class the students learned about homelessness from a variety of perspectives. Guest lecturers in the class included leaders from the New London community who are fighting to keep the homeless shelter open and find a permanent location for the shelter. Students learned about the arguments for and against having a shelter in New London and followed the debate as it played out in the local newspaper.

The students also heard from the director of the CT Coalition to End Homelessness who believes that funding should be geared towards creating supportive housing rather than creating new shelters. This idea advocates that families and individuals who are homeless should not be in shelters for a long time if they lose their homes. Instead, government should allocate funding to provide housing and supportive services for them. Furthermore, the individual or family would be set up in an apartment and assigned a case worker who would assist them in addressing the underlying issues that caused them to become homeless. These issues may include financial insecurity, medical or health issues, mental illness, drug abuse or a combination of issues. The students learned about programs in other states that

(Continued on next page)
have had a lot of success with this model.

In addition to hearing from experts in the field and planning all of the logistics of the walk, the students volunteered at the Homeless Hospitality Overnight Shelter, the Day Time Center, and the Community Meals Center. For the students, this was the most meaningful aspect of their work in the gateway course. They shared how they were able to build relationships with guests at the shelter and eliminate stereotypes they had held about those who are homeless.

While there were guests with mental health and addiction issues that were chronically homeless, students also met guests who once had homes and went through a series of unfortunate events that led them to become homeless. Some were college educated and had lost their jobs or their health. Many did have friends or family with whom they lived for a time, but there came a point when they just did not have any place to go and they turned to the shelter.

The students realized that for many people, including themselves, the reality of being homeless is sometimes only a few unfortunate or unlucky incidents away. The students learned that while supportive housing is an important, long term plan for addressing issues of homelessness, there still needs to be temporary shelters like the Homeless Hospitality Center.

**Holleran Center PICA Speech: The Power of Community**

By Eric Dooley-Feldman ‘09

Throughout the past four years at Connecticut College, we have been bombarded with waves of information. The theories, data, history, and predictions we learn all contribute to a greater understanding of the ecological and social state of our world. The realities are often grim. And then the question inevitably arises…what can I do? I am one twenty-one year old in a world of almost 7 billion people. Can I really effect global change?

The answer of course, is yes. However, what happens when not only I, but a group of persons orient themselves towards positive change? The result is more profound and widespread than any individual could achieve alone. This is the power of community.

These past four years I have seen what a group of persons with a common set of intentions can achieve. From the Federation of Damanhurst, one of the largest ecologically and socially responsible communities in the world, to networks of farmers in the most rural areas of Malawi, community offers sources of support and cooperation to its members. These communities not only effect large-scale change, but also provide the opportunity to serve as an example for humanity, an example of a responsible and exciting way of life.

This is why we must work together. This is why we must leave our insecurities, close-mindedness, and selfishness behind, and extend our hand across the table. We must share our stories, resources, and ideas with one another. We must look beyond the materials and egos that so often shade our perceptions of what is truly important in life. We have the power to bring change. This is an honor and a privilege. We must take advantage of it.

As the founder of Damanhurst once told the community citizens (to paraphrase): “Why have we come together to form this Federation? Think of each and every-one of us as a candle. When the wind blows, a single candle will easily be extinguished. However, when the wind blows a thousand candles banded together, they will not be put out. We are a shining beacon of hope in the dark of night.”
It was four years ago when I stepped onto this campus ready to immerse myself into the culture here at Connecticut College and to explore the endless opportunities available to students. Although I was excited to embark on my new journey, I was weary of the success I was going to achieve and the challenges I was going to be confronted with. As a Latina and from New York City, Connecticut College was much different from what I was used to back home. Although I struggled within the first year of being here, there was one place that was, and still continues to be, a support system for me and many students on this campus. It was Unity House that was my home away from home and the place that guided me throughout my years here. From transitioning as a freshman, to becoming comfortable with myself on this campus as a sophomore, to finding my voice as a junior, and now graduating as a senior, Unity House has been there every step of the way. Much of who I am today is because of the people at Unity who have helped shape and mold me into the young woman I have become.

Currently I am a senior here at Connecticut College majoring in American Studies with a concentration in comparative race and ethnicity. When I first arrived at the beginning of this year, I was not sure if I was ready to leave Conn. College behind and begin a new life in the real world. Was I going to be prepared? What am I going to do with my life!? I had all these questions and more. It was then that I was introduced to the “Exodus” program at Unity House. Exodus is a support system for underrepresented juniors and seniors who are seeking guidance with their plans after graduation. Through Exodus, you are given a mentor with whom you have one-on-one consultations with throughout the year. In your meetings you discuss your career plans and objectives, apply for jobs, discuss graduate school options, as well as set and adhere to a tentative plan of action in order to fulfill your goals. It was through this program and the meetings with my Unity House mentor that I was able to plan ahead and leave Connecticut College with a clear sense of what my future career path would look like. What’s great about the Exodus program is that it allows students to get a jump start on their goals and allows them to take advantage of amazing career opportunities. If I could offer any advice to soon-to-be-juniors and seniors it would be to apply and take advantage of this amazing program! If you are unsure of what your plans will be after graduation, or if you are scared of what’s to come, then Exodus is right for you. Senior year can be a very stressful and overwhelming time. You have many things happening at once, but having a support system during this time is incredibly important and useful. I now feel confident in my future success and I owe part of this to the help of Unity house, my mentor, and the Exodus program.

Mission Statement:

As Connecticut College’s Multicultural Center, Unity House contributes to the educational mission of the College by providing leadership and support in the College’s commitment to diversity and multiculturalism. We serve three distinct constituencies-students of color and other underrepresented students, the larger campus student body, and faculty, staff and alumni. Our mission is, therefore, three-fold.

1. To provide academic, cultural and personal support to students of color and other underrepresented students on campus, while helping them develop intellectual, social, and leadership skills.
2. To collaborate with other college departments and offices to educate the larger student body on issues of diversity and multiculturalism.
3. To provide support for and collaborate with staff, faculty and alumni of color.
My mother once told me that when a deer is in the face of what we call trauma, such as when it gets hit by a car or attacked by a pack of wolves, that it has the ability to release itself from its imprisoning state of disturbance by shaking, jumping around, head butt-ing, or making noises, until it can revert to “normal,” completely un-phased by what has happened. Humans on the other hand, replay violent images over and over again, sometimes using life to jump into situations that look similar to where they experienced the trauma, other times jumping into what they feel is the opposite of what they once experienced, getting stuck in some-thing like Post Traumatic Stress. Trauma literature is made up of texts that explore how our collective psyche deals with those memories that continue to haunt us. Something once thought of as facing only veterans of war has been used to describe African Americans and the legacy of slavery, as displayed in such works as Morrison’s *Beloved*, and the legacy of rape among black women, as described in Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Over the years, it has become clear to me that the process of writing creatively is the only way for me to be free of these nightmares of my past.

Systematic violence affects the oppressor and the oppressed in very different, but sometimes equally, devastating ways. It is important for all of us to re-member the first time somebody tried to take away the possibility of becoming an artist from us and told us never to follow our dreams. As a West Indian American Black and queer identified woman, I am well aware that history has robbed many who look like me of the freedom, the will, and the confidence to speak and to put what is felt or spoken into writing. I believe that when Audre Lorde wrote that poetry was not a luxury, she was writing about me.

Writing as well as the act of knowing are often used as tools to segregate rather than to empower. However, the freedom to write is also intrinsically tied with the plight of Black American lesbian girls who are taught that dreaming is for white people with money, and that the daily attacks of violence, discrimi-nation, and hopelessness that we share are meant to be kept quiet, unwritten and unimportant.

Therefore, this catharsis through writing has never been able to free so many of us that have been told over and over again that our stories are not worth our words.

Working in NYC as both a Teen Zine instructor and an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) Specialist in after-school programs for underserved students of color, I have realized that most of my students do not have any idea that they could possibly have some-thing to say. I work with students who more than often do not believe that their education is relevant, do not believe this world was made for them, and have not been given the tools to read or write at grade level, much less write and think creatively. When my stu-dents do write something down, holding a pen in their hands then becomes a radical act.

The students from my Teen Zine workshop de-cided to title their magazine, “The Write Voice: Voice of a Muted Soul” to illuminate the fact that our so-called apathetic, Hip Hop/ iPod generation can begin to undo a history of being denied the freedom to live equally simply by speaking, by telling their stories, and most importantly, by recording these stories into words. I believe in teaching writing both as a tool for empowering one’s identity and as a tool for healing from the traumas of racism, sexuality and gender-based violence, adultism, and the overall oppression of our dreams.
I buried my daughter today
And I can't think of one thing to say
No idea what to do, how to feel, what to think
Do I continue as a human being
In this society
The society in which I buried my daughter today

This was a fertile land of opportunity
That was meant to feed and cultivate
The different opinions, feelings and personalities
However, we grew in droves of similarity
And for that reason my daughter has withered away

And I am burning up
From the spirit of who she was
And could have been

She wasn't drowned by the abundant
Death of gang violence
She did not bake under the scrutiny
And misconception of women's beauty
As being for pleasure of men...Truly
She refused to be blown carelessly
By materialistic gains and false promises
That haunt the youth in pursuit of sexuality

She stood strong and deep-rooted in
The acknowledgement of her past
Knowing of the generations
By face or name that came before her
And yet she lays there unmovingly
Her eyes glassy and expressionless
Her honeysuckle sucked dry
Her potential crushed, seeping
Into the graveyard dust where
I buried my daughter today

She may have come gasping to me
But she ran with dying breath into the thick wall
6 feet tall of society and died there
And I...I will sit here with the guilt eating at me
And I am sorry, so so sorry
For the face I have and my skin that breathes

While I work constantly, my body taxed
Half its juices and it doesn't matter

(Continued on next page)
Matter that something could fall on me
Kill me and leave you destitute
Because of where we grew I will breathe
That poison every day as I work my 9 to 5 job
And slave away and I do it gladly
To pay for your piano
And math games you love so much
Not knowing that you too sit there
And breathe in this bubble pink death
That littered your walls since you were 5

Slushing through your veins
And I none the wiser, but you came to me one day
Heaving, stumbling and said “mommy I can't breathe”
And I knew something was wrong
When I buried my daughter at 15...today

You were supposed to, my child
Chase your two year old in its tantrum
And I the grandmother was
Supposed to grow old and spoil him
But you have heaved and slowed
Till you came to a halt
And I can't accept this

I made sure you were home by 7:00
And knew your friends, bed was 11:30
I checked over homeworks
And any problems you had
But if it was beyond my comprehension
I would push so you could find someone
That did understand

I instilled you with respect and
Dignity for your body and culture
I made sure you knew that

We were not just monkey people
From the jungle, but rather kings
And queens taken from our throne
and yet you lay there unmovingly
And not from the stones and bones
That are thrown at us constantly,
But the silent death dealer
Around the corner as you
Run care free and breath

This toxic fume that is ignored by
Higher and fairest society
And I am crushed, my heart broken
And I am standing here in a rage
And helpless....

Madeline Noi is from Bronx, NYC and works in the Holleran Center. She's going into her sophomore year and studies behavioral neuroscience with a Japanese concentration.

S.O.A.R., The Connecticut College chapter of Society Organized Against Racism provides a healthy atmosphere for the discussion, involvement, and action in the area of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and culturism within and beyond the Connecticut College Community. Part of our major programming year is our annual SOARFest that incorporates the surrounding areas of New London and Connecticut College in a day of cultural performance, displays, arts and crafts and more. S.O.A.R.'s initiative is to provide people with consciousness programming that will hopefully lead to a common community with all. “Together we stand, divided we fall.” S.O.A.R. is for all students, faculty, and friends.

www.conncoll.edu/diversity
Art Thesis Prized with The Leo & Ann Higdon Annual Art Award

Artist Statement, By Madeleine Ignon ’09

My senior thesis has been an exploration of the deconstruction and reconstruction of the emotional and physical home. At the core of my work is the concept of re-building home after tragedy or trauma. Reading about and seeing images of the incomprehensible loss caused by Hurricane Katrina, as well as researching about the psychological destruction in the minds of Iraq war veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, I began thinking about what it takes to make a home and what happens when a person loses it, or a part of it. It takes an entire life to build a home, but a single event or experience to fragment it.

My visual imagery is comprised of layers that I use to build an entire picture. I assemble parts to make a whole, but pieces are left out, questions unanswered. I make art to merge the young naive version of myself with the fully formed and informed person I am becoming, and to feed my need to understand loss.

The bed has emerged as a strong but quiet icon in my work. It is a symbol of security and comfort but also vulnerability, a space easily penetrated. For me, making a piece is like making a bed, a careful and loving process that ends in the construction of something safe yet fragile. There is safety in the four walls of a bedroom, four posts of a bed, four edges of a sheet of paper, the space in the middle of a pillowcase. The pillowcase represents home, and the process it undergoes represents the process of handling trauma and coping.

The Leo & Ann Higdon Annual Art Award was established in 2007 by Connecticut College President Leo I. Higdon and his wife Ann, avid art collectors; the prizes are given to outstanding art students.
Home Foreign Home: Using Theater to Find a Home for Diverse Cultures
2009 Fulbright Fellowship, By Julia Norton ‘09

With a plate of French fries in front of me, I sat mulling it over in my head: for the second year in a row, my high hopes had been dashed by an overzealous portrayal of a Brechtian musical, as Connecticut College’s German Theater Workshop troupe was once again defeated at Mt. Holyoke’s annual German Theater Festival competition. Time to take matters into my own hands, I thought to myself. This was by no means the biggest heartbreak of my life, but it ignited my competitive spirit and set the ball rolling for a chain of events which, retrospectively, seem to follow a very logical and consequential path, but really were the result of moments of spontaneity, ambition and the seizing of opportunities.

* * *

My diverse interests, which range from immigration and education policy to theater and music, have often made it difficult to find a single group with which I could associate. Not to mention that spending two formative years of my life in Germany, one as a high school student and one as a college student, has also left with me two homes, thousands of miles apart. As the only government major working at a theater festival two years ago, no one could quite understand why someone studying politics wanted a summer internship making costumes. Conversely, sitting in my college international relations courses I could not really identify with many of the students there, some of whom show up to class in their business causal attire, fresh from an internship in a local politician’s office.

At Connecticut College, I found a way to pursue all of these interests, before it was clear to me how they interrelate. I found my niche in the Theater Department working in the costume shop, I sewed, dyed and styled for many of Conn’s main stage theater productions and I acted in the German Department’s German Theater Workshop course. I also delved deeper into the issues of ethnic and race relations, immigration and education policies as an international relations major and a member of the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. I built off of these New London experiences during my study abroad junior year in Freiburg, Germany by working extensively in the Mercator Project as a teacher and research assistant at the Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg for my Holleran Center PICA internship. The Mercator Project gives funding to educate future teachers and provides them with first-hand experience working with students from an immigrant background who need support in math and German, creating lessons aimed to promote cultural diversity.

All of these projects and experiences came together when I returned to Connecticut Senior year and started the long process of applying for a Fulbright Fellowship. I developed my Fulbright project as a Teaching Assistant in Germany for an opportunity to integrate my experiences in the arts with my interest in the very real issues of immigration and violence young people in Germany are faced with today. My project will be to establish an after-school English-language drama club that encourages students from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds to work together on small skits or a play that promote peace, diversity and cross-cultural dialogue.

Most schools in Germany today, whether in a small town near the Black Forest or in the heart of Berlin, have students from a wide variety backgrounds, be it second generation immigrants or those who arrived in Germany six years ago to as recently as six months ago. Teachers in German schools are not trained to deal with such heterogeneous student populations, nor do they know how to support students who are struggling with language or who are just trying to fit into a foreign environment. The repercussions of such school failures range from low graduation rates of immigrant students to violent clashes between young people within schools and communities.

To address some of these issues, the Fulbright Commission of Germany has recently developed a new program for their teaching assistants called the “Diversity Initiative.” I have been selected, along with 20 other teaching assistants, to teach in German schools with a high proportion of immigrant students to give them the opportunities and attention the German school system has previously denied them. Theater provides a safe environment for intercultural interaction as well as an opportunity for all students to build confidence, close friendships and form a sense of belonging. Relationships that develop on-stage behind the safe “mask” of a character and script lead to deeper personal relationships off-stage. Additionally, working together on understanding the plot, characters
and themes of a play also allows students to discuss serious issues in society. It creates an environment where students can feel comfortable talking about similar personal situations, opening up a dialogue on violence and discrimination, identity and fitting in, topics that are relevant to students no matter where they are from, but are left out of most school curricula.

Concurrently with the development of my Fulbright project, I began thinking again about my ambitions a year before to take the German Theater Workshop into my own hands to create a prize-winning performance. Due to my past experience in theater and general enthusiasm to become more involved, I was put in charge of the Spring 2009 German Theater Workshop class. I wore a number of hats including: director, dramaturge, casting agent, costume and set designer. I chose a play called “Heimat Fremde Heimat:” Home Foreign Home. This play is based on biographical information drawn from interviews conducted by the author, Luise Rist, to explore the concept of “Heimat” (home or homeland). Her play reveals a shared sense of loss of “Heimat” among both immigrant youth in Germany and survivors of WW II.

Rist also wove in many historical events, ranging from World War II atrocities to current news and popular culture. The combination of current and historical material in the play was paired with a multicultural and multi-lingual cast of characters, including Lebanese, Polish, Turkish and Russian pupils and German retirement home residents, played by an equally diverse cast of Conn students representing a wide range of nationalities, class years, language capabilities and acting skills. Heimat Fremde Heimat allowed me to experiment with ideas about how a play can address the issues I will be facing in the German classroom, support foreign language learning, and create bonds between students who otherwise may never have met each other.

Heimat Fremde Heimat was a success, not only because Connecticut College finally won First Place at Mt. Holyoke, but also because it grounded my Fulbright plans with real experiences of how theater can be worked into a school curriculum and essentially create a “home” not only for my diverse interests and experiences over the years, but it can also provide a home and creative outlet for the interests, experiences, talents and cultural backgrounds each student brings to the classroom.
The Third Annual Youth Conference on the Environment for students from schools in New London was held this year on Saturday, April 25, 2009 in the Connecticut College Arboretum. The Connecticut College Arboretum provided an excellent setting for the conference and Arboretum staff and the Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS) provided support and additional resources that were important to the success of this event.

This was the first year that the conference took place in a natural area. The first two years were held in school buildings. Having the Conference outdoors and having access to a variety of eco-systems really enhanced the whole atmosphere of the event and provided program choices that really engaged the 60 participants that came from approximately 7 different New London Schools and spanned grades 3-8.

The conference was sponsored by The New London Environmental Educators Coalition (NLEEC) which consists of representatives from New London Public Schools, charter magnet, parochial, private schools and colleges as well as organizations in the area that are interested in environmental education and issues. The Youth Conference was organized and coordinated by a sub-committee of the coalition that included Stephanie Morton from New London Public Schools Learn and Serve and BEEP (Bateswoods Environmental Education Project), Eco Club teachers from the ISAAC School, John Sargent, and the Regional Multicultural Magnet School, Ken Fogle, the Children’s Librarian at the New London Public Library, Cris Staubach, the Assistant Director at the Connecticut College Arboretum, Kathy Dame, an AmeriCorps VISTA, Jennifer Superson, from the Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS) at Connecticut College, and Jodi Barthel from New London Elementary schools Gifted and Talented program (STET). This proved to be a dedicated group of many talents that worked well together. The planning started in the fall of 08.

The conference was able to run on a very small budget because of all the volunteer help, donation of food and materials, and the generosity of CT College for tables and a tree to plant, etc. Also, the activities were designed to use nature as a resource and materials that were recycled from another source. A kite making workshop, for example, recycled plastic bags from local supermarkets and used sticks cut down from local bushes.

Other morning workshops included nature sculptures, pond dipping with nets from the Children’s Museum of SE CT in Niantic, and a scavenger hunt led by OVCS college students. During lunch on the Knowlton Green, there were activities that prepared for a procession back down to the Arboretum and a tree planting ceremony. There were stations set up for mask and puppet making, face painting, and banner and streamer making from bamboo and sailcloth scraps. The procession proved to be very festive and colorful and included music and singing that emphasized the conference theme of “We are All leaves on the Same Tree”.

The tree planting ceremony was led by Arboretum director, Glen Dreyer, who explained to the students the steps to plant a tree to increase the chances that the tree will thrive. Participants were able to help in the process by putting compost and mulch around the tree roots with shovels. Some of the students read poems about trees that they had previously written for a poetry contest for the planting ceremony. The program ended with the participants each hanging their leaf-shaped name tags on the newly planted tree.

The young participants had an enriching and fun day and many of the parents and adult volunteers remarked about how wonderful it was to have the Arboretum so alive with earth-friendly activities and happy children. Some of the students who attended the conference have had very little opportunity to interact closely with nature. To see them creating sculptures with pine needles, leaves and bark or putting dirt carefully around tree roots was a moving experience.

The article was written by New London Educators, John Sargent and Ken Fogle.

The photo collage on the next page is of the conference. It captures the special spirit of the day.
“WE ARE ALL LEAVES ON THE SAME TREE”

THIRD ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

APRIL 25, 2009

PHOTOS BY DANNY BOROUGHGS, KATHY DAME, AND JOHN SARGENT
Walking through downtown New London Saturday night, April 25th, was an adventure, to say the least. Whether your night started at a gallery opening at one of the many galleries around town (the Hygienic, Golden Street Gallery, MUSE), or you hopped around checking out the musical performances at Eclectic, Bean and Leaf, the El N’ Gee or the Oasis, New London had something for everyone on Saturday night – even a live poetry and dance collaboration at the Carriage House for the more sophisticated types.

For many Connecticut College students, the home base for the night was MUSE Gallery, where the newly formed club, LINCC (Linking New London and Connecticut College), hosted the opening event for its annual photo contest. Displaying student photos of New London, this contest and event was organized in an effort to attract more students to the downtown area of the city. 200 people, both students and NL residents, made their way to MUSE that night, demonstrating the community spirit of New London and also the success of the LINCC event.

Student, Max Sgro, remarked on how events like this one disprove the rumor that downtown New London is not appealing to the College students. Everyone was connected on this night because the LINCC event, as Max commented, “brought the party downtown for students…They’re going to party anyway – you just have to make it attractive and accessible for students to do it down here.”

Owner of MUSE Gallery, Frank Marchany, commented, “students need to know that they can walk safely through NL and have a good time.”

LINCC works to improve links between the College and downtown New London through events like this photo contest and other initiatives that facilitate awareness and partnerships between both communities. We put up posters every week of events going on downtown and have been approved to begin bringing left-over food from the dining halls down to local food shelters next semester. Also, we are working on getting Student Camel Cards to work at local businesses. If you have any ideas about how we can better connect New London and CC, come to the LINCC meetings! There is only one New London, it has a vibrant culture, and we are all an integral part of it. So get downtown and experience it!

Photos from Contest (From Top): Winning Photo by Maria Figliola ’10; another photo by Maria Figliola; and the third photo by Alex Dey ’09.

The theme of the contest was “The New London Experience.”
OVCS’s Year of Community Learning!

*What makes your spirit soar?*

“Linking arms with others”;

“Meeting different people and building relationships”;

“Better understanding the complexities of communities”;

“Seeing the big picture and feeling connected to it”;

“Building houses, curriculum, healthy bodies, and strong minds”;

“Knowing that you are making a difference”.

“Sustaining the pursuit of justice and equity”;

Gratitude and joy to the scholar activists whose spirits soar.

- Tracee Reister
  Associate Dean for Community Learning

The OVCS Literary Magazine is published by the Office of Volunteers for Community Service for Connecticut College faculty, staff, and students, and for all members of the greater New London county community.

Tracee Reiser, Associate Dean for Community Learning, Director OVCS tracee.reiser@conncoll.edu, ext. 2105
Jennifer Superson, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Public Relations Coordinator, jesup@conncoll.edu, ext. 2457

Visit OVCS at http://ovcs.conncoll.edu
P: (860) 439-2458; F: (860) 439-5408