Connecticut College
Office of Volunteers for Community Service

LITERARY MAGAZINE
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Act Now Join the Change
Over four years at Connecticut College I have discovered a wealth of beauty, creative inspiration and fun that New London has to offer. I began community service work my freshman year with New London Main Street, a community organization that works to enliven the arts, music, food and culture of the city through web networking and publicity as well as several community events such as the Fall and Spring Food Stroll, “Fish Tales, Tugs & Sails” and “Celebration of Lights & Song”. Over the years working with the natural foods Co-op in New London, Fiddleheads and the community gardening organization, FRESH, I have fallen in love with the city and the amazing variety of people I meet here. Riding my bike through downtown, I find wonderful surprises around every corner, whether a new art exhibit opening, live jazz or intriguing community forums around topics such as sustainability and cultural diversity. As they say, “Energy flows where attention goes”. If we continue to show our appreciation for New London’s great history and unique cultural offerings, the city is bound to continue flourishing.

3rd Place: John Powell
2nd Place: Maria Figliola
1st Place: Ipek Bakir
Letter From a Community Learner
By Sean Kane

As a spring semester special day student,
I have been volunteering at the New London Community Meal Center
on Friday mornings for the past several months.
This placement is thanks to a referral through OVCS.

While I did not write the following short poem,
the following words hang on the wall at the meal center kitchen,
which I thought may be of interest to the OVCS goals.

It reads as follows:

“There are three kinds of people.
Those who MAKE things happen.
Those who WATCH things happen.
And, those who WONDER what happened.”

Together with fellow students Justin ‘10 and Liz ‘12,
hopefully we are Connecticut College students
who are MAKING things happen...
at this very special placement.

I am learning very much --
and enjoy helping out New London’s homeless and hungry.

Thank you, again, for the referral --
and special opportunity.
Art Thesis Recognized with the Leo and Ann Higdon Annual Art Award
Spencer Sutton ‘10

Artist Statement Medium: Graphite on Arches Water Color Paper

My project is a meditation on the passage of the soul from a station of earthly bondage into a state of celestial transcendence. Although this is the focus of my work, it also reveals the effect of death on the living - the friends and family members who knew the diseased in life and now suffer the blow of losing them. Thus, the project’s true intention is to convey the premise of spiritual transformation and the communal oneness attained through metaphysical process.

Spiritual union is achieved in two different ways in my works. The escaping soul reaches it through transcendence into the over-soul or the celestial life pool. The baptismal flood of the second work represents this union. The mourners also achieve a form of union by engaging in a collective sadness. Groups of mourners represent this unification in the first three works. The bond of collective suffering is thus analogous in my pieces to the union of the individual soul and the over-soul.

I chose the concept of communal trauma, because it is a common theme in many religions. Elements of struggle and pain are prevalent in most of the world religions. This suggests that they are common components of all human life.

My work does not attempt to render a universal aesthetic, but rather project a universal theme. Although I use a number of symbols and icons from certain religious traditions, it is not my intention for all their implications and connotations to be understood by an audience. My only hope is that people feel the despair of my scenes and thus, participate in the spiritual union of religious mourning.

Submersion

The Leo and 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.
(art.conn coll.edu)
Ascension

Procession
Placemaking in New London
By Andrew Irwin ‘10

Growing up in Evanston, IL, once the homestead of Daniel Burnham, I took many placemaking activities such as the summer art festivals, the New Years Eve celebration downtown and the lively sidewalks and lakeside parks for granted. This realization galvanized my passion for Urban Planning as a tool to inspire sustainability, community and economic vitality.

In the transition to bright, healthy, green cities, New London is showing a few signs of success. If you were to ask any one of my graduating peers, there is a clear difference between our freshman year and now. A new influx of galleries, rooted around the Hygenic Art park, as well as interesting restaurants and cafes has gone far in attracting very discerning Connecticut College students to downtown New London. And what of the rest of New London? I am a firm believer that the success of a downtown must be the priority of the city and its economic interests. A vibrant Hodges Square will only follow a vibrant State Street.

It is clear that many people in New London are firmly committed to the sense of place in New London: That special something for each person that sets it apart from the sprawling Waterfords or Grotons of the world. Unfortunately, successful placemaking and urban revitalization cannot occur in a vacuum of poor local government support. Issues of transportation, public health and spatial planning cannot be properly addressed without the support of a local government that has the capacity to encourage collaboration of seemingly conflicting interests. Placemaking is the perfect intersection of these interests. Concerns of sustainability, economic vitality, public health, historic preservation, affordable housing, can all be satisfied in a way that creates restorative, self-renewing systems.

There are many indications that demographic shifts will move more and more people back to cities from suburbs. New London’s position as a transportation hub can be a perfect tool to leverage the creation of an urban lifestyle in southeast Connecticut, with easy access to New York and Boston. To accomplish this, New London has many goals it must reach. I am confident that the crossroads of many important issues of the 21st Century will catalyze positive transformation in the community I have called home these past four years.
Teaching Russian at the Regional Multicultural Magnet School
Sheridan Community Learning Grant for 2009/10
By Andrea Lanoux, Chair, Department of Slavic Studies

The Department of Slavic Studies was very pleased to expand upon our language partnership with the K-5 Regional Multicultural Magnet School this year with the support of a Sheridan Community Learning Grant. During the fall 2009 semester, all 20 students taking Russian at Connecticut College (at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels) participated in the program by teaching Russian on Fridays to all 120 fourth- and fifth-grade students at RMMS. The CC students were grouped into teams of three to four students each to ensure that beginning-level students were paired with intermediate or advanced students. CC students ran six 20-minute sessions on Fridays to complement the RMMS Russian curriculum offered three other days of the week. Because participation in this program was a mandatory component of all CC Russian language courses, matters relating to curriculum and upcoming sessions could be discussed in class, which was a significant improvement over the previous year.

At the end of the fall semester, students completed a program evaluation to gauge learning outcomes as well as student interest in continuing the program. More that half of the students surveyed found the program to be highly valuable and stated that participation in the program helped them to improve their Russian. A handful of students felt neutral about the program; and three students expressed a lack of engagement and dissatisfaction with the fact that participation in the program was mandatory. One consistent comment by CC students was that the 20-minute period seemed too short and not “worth it” given the amount of time and level of coordination necessary to get to the school and back. Conversations with Tarana Akhmedova, the Russian instructor at RMMS, revealed that lateness, failure to appear, and a lack of communication about missed classes continued to be a problem, as in the previous year. Upon further discussions with Tarana Akhmedova, it was decided to make changes to the program for the spring semester to make participation voluntary for both CC and RMMS students, and to lengthen the sessions to 45-minutes.

Shortly before the beginning of the spring semester, RMMS fourth- and fifth-graders were invited to apply for supplementary Russian sessions to be run by CC students, and in response 24 RMMS students enrolled in the program. Because participation was voluntary for both CC and RMMS students, all of the participants were highly engaged and motivated. Eleven CC students participated in the program during the spring: nine on a weekly basis, and two more in enrichment programs. As in 2008/09, CC students assisted in running two, two-hour cultural enrichment programs on the topics of Russian Carnival (Maslenitsa) and Russian Easter (Paskha). RMMS offers several dozen cultural enrichment programs throughout the year, and the Russian enrichment sessions are considered among the most exciting and successful. Each Russian enrichment session involved parent volunteers and members of the local Russian community to introduce RMMS students to Russian foods and cultural practices, as students cycle through stations staffed by CC students.
The curriculum introduced during the spring semester was significantly different from previous semesters: given the high level of student motivation and longer sessions, it was decided to introduce more challenging material, including grammatical concepts (the Accusative and Prepositional cases), longer readings, and weekly songs and websites with Russian cultural materials (see the attached schedule of classes below). This method is much closer to the way foreign languages are taught at the college level, by teaching students to produce grammatically correct sentences rather than memorize discrete lists of words out of context. By the end of the spring semester, some of the RMMS students were exhibiting reading skills similar to those of CC students at the end of the Elementary Russian sequence. Additionally, a number of RMMS parents have inquired about the possibility of hiring a tutor for their children to continue studying Russian over the summer. The response to this program has been extremely positive: CC and RMMS students, faculty, and parents have all expressed enthusiastic support for the continuation of this program.

During the spring semester, RMMS piloted two additional after-school programs in Arabic and Mandarin for second- and third-graders based on the Russian model. CC faculty and students are meeting with RMMS faculty and administration this month to discuss possibilities for expanding these programs and increasing the participation of CC students in the Russian, Arabic, Mandarin, and Spanish language programs. This is an important step in the development of foreign language study at the elementary and college levels, as well as a turning point in envisioning community learning as a foundation for the study of foreign languages and cultures.
Community Contributions:
Pieces submitted by students at Writer’s Block Ink.

The Writer’s Block Ink
By Attallah Sheppard
Founder: Clarissa Beyah-Taylor
Honorary Founding Member of The Writer’s Block Ink

Now your question might be, what does The Writer’s Block Ink mean to me? Well, I’ll sum it up in one word, originality. It all came together with a collective vision so sit back, and let me tell you our Mission: “To arm young voices with the power of pen and prose, reinforcing teamwork, accountability, and responsibility igniting social change on the page and stage.”

The introduction is the formal opening to many of The Writer’s Block Ink productions done by myself and with a mission inclusive of “arming young voices with the power of the pen and the prose” The Writer’s Block Ink has succeeded in becoming one the most demanding as well as fulfilling creative youth programs in the New London area. Started in 2003, the concept of this remarkable program was to offer local youth, ages 11-19, a place to come and utilize writing and performance as tools to make known personal and social challenges on a local and even on a national level. Issues from bullying, teen pregnancy, dreams, domestic violence and self-esteem to global matters like Darfur and Hurricane Katrina have been brought to the community stages through the works of The Writer’s Block Ink.

The many voices that contribute to the growing legacy of this program work every summer as well as through the school year to create original plays. The plays themselves are works of art because every play has a strong emphasis on spoken word poetry, original songs and youth inspired choreography. The Writer’s Block Ink has, in its near seven-year existence, produced and premiered over 10 original plays on stages across Southeaster Connecticut. Pulling together the vision of the younger generations from towns including New London, Waterford, Norwich and Groton, to name a few, and harnessing the arts through forms of various creative expression, every Writer’s Block Ink production is indeed worth seeing.

The most rewarding feature of The Writer’s Block Ink program is that it really pushes students to take the pen and pull from their heads and their hearts and bare all to the streets where they get their inspiration. In doing that, this program builds self-confidence, awareness, improves writing, dancing and acting skills, inspires leadership and most of all reinforces teamwork, accountability and responsibility. The students conceive an idea, develop a plot, evaluate character conflict, cast themselves, write a final script, market and do the ultimate task of performing for the community. The Writer’s Block Ink is a
student run program being that it is for the students and by the students and with the finished product, whether it be for the Summer of the Block program or the Fall programs or even the workshops at local schools and community organizations, the students always deliver.

Personally, I have been involved in The Writer’s Block Ink since its conception in 2003. I have grown in the program in the past seven years progressing from a student to the camp counselor position in the Summer on the Block program as a Block Captain, to the Assistant Director teaching classes to now the Director of our 2010 summer production. In the course of finding my own personal voice through my adolescence, Writer’s Block took me from dancing to acting to writing my own spoken word pieces to now directing. My artistic journey began here on local stages and now has carried me to stages in Washington, D.C. performing my spoken word at creative attractions such as BusBoys and Poets.

I am currently a sophomore business management major at Howard University in D.C., and The Writer’s Block Ink’s mission and constant inspirational environment inspires my vision of opening, performing in and managing my own performing arts school. Being on the Block year after year has taught me how to not only dream but achieve, and I encourage other local youth, aware of their talent or not, to join The Writer’s Block Ink and unlock their potential. Located at 446 Coleman St New London CT 06320. Telephone Number (860) 4425625 or for more information, visit the website writersblockink.com.
This Being
By Kirsten Staller
Writer’s Block Ink

I’m going to make myself a being, one that shows no fear. This being won’t want wars, but is wont to start them. This being will only want peace, but it is unfindable. This being will love everything, and hate everything anyways.

This being will rise from the earth, only as those mystical do. This being will breathe fire and hold every human and non-humans attention. This being will hid under the bed as monsters do, but to give gifts of life that children’s imagination will tinker with. This being will give scholars the ideas to save the world that it was wrought from. This being shall sing the choir of angles and demons, set on uniting them.

This being, set on living on happiness, is dying in this world we call home.
This being, raging a war, on the losing side, is dying, inside to out.
This being, lost it’s spirits, no more giving hope.
This being has no strength to flee the world were the scholars it once inspired, are set to kill it,
This being is long lost to future generations, is long lost to us.
This being . . . no more

Heroes
by Christine Gregor
Writer’s Block Ink

What is a hero? Well if you look into a comic it always said a hero is strong, wears a uniform, has a mask and no one knows who the person is. Well to me all of the above doesn’t apply to the world. A hero can be anyone or anything. But to me a hero is someone who can do the little stuff like donate a little money. Or pick up garbage from the ground or go green that is a hero to me everyday people just doing the little stuff.

Mistakes
by Christine Gregor
Writer’s Block Ink

Mistakes are something you do that you’re not proud about yes you did something wrong! but it how you learn for them to not make that mistake again thought like you will hit twist turn bumps and yes you will make more mistake but mistake are thing that life throws at you. You have to lean to embrace them not dwell on them. Because life is a beautiful Thing. But it can be very hard and it’s up to you if you want to quit or keep climbing that mountain called life.
The first time that you ever did something; exhilaration probably ran through your body with excitement. Even if you did mess up. Say the first time that you have ever done a hand stand, you were probably thrilled, heart beating fast.

When your eyes first set on someone that you knew that you wanted to be with for the rest of your life, or even if you haven’t yet, you’ve heard of the fast beating heart, along with an impulse.

When your heart was broken, even if it wasn’t for the first time, people say that they feel at loss and in the beginning they don’t realize what is happening. They are confused, heart in their throat. When they cry, the tears never stop.

Your first ever embarrassment was accompanied by the blood rushing to your cheeks and your heart thumping in your head.

All of these, every First Evers, were accompanied by fast heart beating. That is what makes a first ever so distinguishable from all of your other memories. It leaves an imprint on you. It makes you who you are today.
Connecticut College is going green. Steadily, the transition to environmentally sustainable practices is developing. Business as usual is going the wayside, being replaced with the use of green architecture standards, eco-friendly products, locally-produced food for the dining hall, and more. Students have been an instrumental force in the green camel revolution, though their work has not been reserved solely for the college campus.

Many students are actively engaged in sustainable pursuits in the New London community. Through the Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS) students work together with community members on many projects such as environmental education and outreach, beach cleanups and invasive species removal at Ocean Beach Park, operating and maintaining Fiddleheads (a regional, farmers co-op located in downtown New London), farming at Sprout (the New London city garden) and much more.

One OVCS program has a huge reach in the field of environmental education: the Arbo Project. Using our treasured Arboretum, trained student guides bring groups of students from New London County on tours throughout the grounds. Each year many local youth get a chance to be outside and learn about the nature of their home in the native plant collections. From preschoolers to high schoolers, the scope of the Arbo Project is huge. Fostering a sense of appreciation and wonder of the natural world is an important step in creating eco-conscious and responsible adults. Connecticut College students do just this through the Arbo Project.

Conn students have most recently developed partnerships with New London businesses and activists alike, to put on a Rooftop Rally promoting energy conservation and renewable energy endeavors. A resounding success, this rally paves the way for more student coordination with local and regional activism. Together with local environmentalists, students are making New London a more sustainable and more healthy place to live. As our environmental awareness increases so does our determination to
OVCS: Nurturing Activism

By Oceane Hooks-Camilleri

When I arrived at Connecticut College as a freshman and discovered that I could complete my work-study hours as a volunteer through the OVCS office I was thrilled but had no idea that this was the beginning of a long lasting relationship with this office. My freshman year was all about exploration of topics that interested me primarily HIV/AIDS prevention so OVCS helped place me in Alliance for living; an organization in New London that is focused on improving the lives of individuals affected by HIV/AIDS in the area. Working at Alliance kept my interest in this topic alive and during my second semester I applied and was accepted to the Holleran centers Public Policy and Community Action program (PICA). A year has passed and I have now completed my PICA gateway course. My focus on AIDS prevention as a human rights issue remains firm and through the PICA program, which has close alliances with the OVCS office, I met other motivated individuals in my class who are set on changing the world in a variety of different fields. I must recognize here that volunteer work or community organizing is not always easy and my PICA peers and I have made commitments of support to each other. Although my group during the gateway course worked at the regional multicultural magnet school creating enrichment programs for the students many of us were also present at the 3rd annual Walk for Homelessness organized by other members of our class. I am now a summer intern in the OVCS office and it has become clear to me that this office and the individuals in it do far more than organize students to volunteer with different community partnerships. They inspire students and push us to explore new avenues, they ask that we be creative and passionate about our community placements and not forget to dream in large scale while being realistic that this scale may not necessarily be achieved. For me OVCS has been the link between my academic interests and my passion for activism, the link that allows me to put my scholarship into action.

Connecti College Students at the 3rd annual Walk for Homelessness.
Letter from Tracee
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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

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