Non-traditional students reach out to support each other

by Yvonne Johnson

Sitting down to do your homework while your 12-year-old works on hers, finding that the library card files you remember have been replaced by computer databases and trying to remember study tips you haven’t used in decades are not typical experiences for Western Connecticut State University’s traditional students. However, these are just a few of the situations the university’s non-traditional students encounter every day.

That’s why two WestConn non-traditional students, commonly referred to as “non-trads” and defined as those who are older than 25, recently formed the WCSU Non-Traditional Student Organization (NTO).

Jeanne Billiet, a 54-year-old Redding resident, and Monica Sievel, who has 46 and lives in Newtown, are heading up NTO with the help of academic advisor Lisa Peck, the assistant director of the Academic Advisement Center, who was a nontrad at WestConn herself. Billiet, a junior social sciences major, is the organization’s president. Sievel, a senior psychology major, is vice president, and Peck is the administrative faculty advisor.

According to university records, more than 1,000 of WestConn’s nearly 5,000 full- and part-time undergraduate students are non-trads. They join non-trads across the country who are among growing waves of adults pursuing undergraduate degrees in recent decades. Universities report that the percentage of older students on campuses has increased dramatically during recent years. These students frequently outperform their traditional counterparts, earning higher GPAs, but they can feel disconnected from other aspects of university life.

Speaking from their own experiences, Billiet and Sievel said non-trads often feel afraid of keeping up academically with their younger counterparts, excited about pursuing what may be a long-standing piece of unfinished business, and anxious about juggling course work with family and work responsibilities. And that’s on top of all the fear, excitement and anxiety younger students encounter every day.

Peck pointed out that these organizations have existed at the university in the past but faded from existence when their officers graduated or students became overwhelmed with other responsibilities.

To get other students involved in NTO, Billiet and Sievel have planned a three-part “Late & Light” series. It’s meant to create the opportunity for the university’s non-trads to mingle with each other and to gain helpful information about WestConn’s best resources. Their first event in September drew more than 30 students for an introduction to the Ruth Haas Library and the resources available there. They also distributed a

Renowned economist to speak for President’s Lecture Series

by Dr. G. Koryoa Ariem-Wright

Dr. Robert H. Frank, author of the 1995 New York Times Notable Book of the Year, “The Winner-Take-All Society,” will address “Does Rising Inequality Harm the Middle Class?” for the President’s Lecture Series at WestConn. The event will be at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 10, in the Student Center Theater on the university’s Midtown campus. The lecture will be free and open to the public. A reception will follow.

President Dr. James W. Schmotter said Frank, Henrietta Johnson Louis Professor of Management in the Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University, is an excellent choice. Frank’s “The Winner-Take-All Society,” co-authored with Philip Cook, an economist at Duke University, was also included in Business Week’s list of the 10 best books for 1995.

“Robert Frank is a most uncommon economist,” Schmotter said. “He is one of the few economists who transcend jargon and quantitative analysis to confront complex issues that matter to us all — ambition, greed, social responsibility, public accountability, trust and community."

Frank holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from the Georgia Institute of Technology. His master’s in statistics and doctorate in economics are from the University of California at Berkeley. Also a professor of economics at the Johnson Graduate School, Frank was the Goldwin Smith Professor of Economics, Ethics, and Public Policy in Cornell’s College of Arts and Sciences from 1993 to 2001. He was a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Nepal from 1966 to 1968, chief economist for the Civil Aeronautics Board from 1978 to 1980, and a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in 1992 and 1993.

In their award-winning book, Frank and Cook tackle the issue of economic inequality in the United States. They focus on the increasing numbers of Americans competing for fewer and bigger prizes, a trend that encourages economic waste, growing income inequality and an impoverished cultural life. The authors place the blame on winner-take-all markets, where a few top performers receive an unequal share of the rewards. The pervasiveness of information about the growing salaries of “stars,” they write, is largely responsible for salary explosions and an even-wider divide in income inequality.

A prolific writer, Frank also is the author of “Luxury Fever: Money and Happiness in an Era of Excess.” “Passions Within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions,” “Choosing the Right Pond: Human Behavior and the Quest for Status” and “What Price the Moral High Ground? Ethical Dilemmas in Competitive Environments.” Frank has presented at hundreds of conferences, seminars and lectures; he’s also written numerous articles, opinions and editorial pieces.

Schmotter said Frank’s presentation will be of interest to all who attend.

“His conclusions have implications for business practices, public policy and ethical reflection,” Schmotter said. “They reach across academic and professional areas, and are especially critical in this election year.”

For more information, call the Office of Public Relations at (203) 837-8486 or the Office of the President at (203) 837-5400.

Wesleyan students meet the president

Over 200 students and faculty members of the Wesleyan University community emerged Monday night to hear University of Hartford President Jerry Wexler talk to them about the university’s commitment to the city of Hartford.

Wexler, who also serves on the boards of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Connecticut College of Education, told students that 4,000 Wesleyan students are enrolled at the University of Hartford’s West Hartford location. In addition, 9,000 students in the Wesleyan/Central Connecticut State partnership program are enrolled at CCSU.

“Wesleyan and CCSU are partners,” Wexler said. “But our greatest strength here comes from our connection with the city of Hartford.

“I believe all of us in this room have a commitment to the city of Hartford, to the hard work that we do, and how we can work together to improve the city’s future.”

Dr. Jerry Wexler, president of the University of Hartford, addressed Wesleyan students and faculty members about the school’s connection to the city of Hartford.

Hartford College News

Hartford Courant
Scholarship reception brings benefactors, students face-to-face
by Sherrill Hill

The altruistic individuals who fund scholarships say a college student would likely say they consider their gift an “investment in the future.” And while that may be true, it’s probably one of the few occasions in which they don’t see firsthand the return on their investment.

That’s why WestConn recently held a reception to introduce a group of scholarship donors to the appreciative student recipients who benefit from their generosity.

About 50 people gathered in Room 218 in the Westside Classroom Building for the festivities in early October. It was the first time the university had undertaken an event of this scale to bring together donors and students, and it was an unmitigated success, Director of Institutional Advancement Mike Driscoll said.

“It was a wonderful occasion for some major donors and outstanding scholarship recipients to meet and learn more about each other,” Driscoll said. “It really demonstrated that the whole is even greater than the sum of its parts. The donors and the students were both appreciative — and everyone was rewarded by the experience.”

During the event, attendees heard personal reflections from some donors and several student recipients. Among the speakers was Dacie resident Kristine Koehler, a non-traditional student and multiple scholarship recipient.

“I was excited — absolutely!” Koehler said after the reception. “I wanted to see the people behind the scholarships. You become curious about people who care and are so helpful, so it was really nice and very exciting to meet them. I had a great conversation with Mr. (Jason) Hancock, who was responsible for one of my scholarships.”

Koehler, who was born in Latvia, started her college education in her native country. She said there are significant differences between the large, impersonal auditorium settings she encountered there and the more personal attention she has received as a marketing student at WestConn.

“There’s like a family — it’s very personal,” Koehler said. “Professors and like people you meet remember you and they know your name. I was glad to be able to thank the donors for their kindness because the more you give, the more you will receive. Hopefully, someday I’ll be in the same position to help others.”

Bethel Food Market owner Anthony Carlucci, a significant scholarship contributor, also attended the reception. A few days after the event, he reflected on what it meant to him.

“This was such a wonderful idea, I will have a continuing relationship with the students as they progress with their education. It was great to be a part of it.”

A similar event is planned for the next academic year, and it may mark the start of several more student-donor relationships, it was announced during the evening that a number of new scholarships have been established.

Nurse-educator continues tradition of caring
by Valerie Flott

Deatrice Rice first knew she wanted to be a nurse when she was a sixth-grader. “My mother was a nurse, and I thought she was the best thing since sliced bread,” the WestConn assistant professor of nursing said. “Everyone in the neighborhood would come to her seeking health-care guidance. Being a nurse was a profession that was highly respected in our small community in Rockland County, N.Y.”

Rice received her Associate of Science in Nursing from Rockland Community College. Her exciting nursing career prior to joining WestConn in 1997 included nursing leadership positions in two New York City hospitals, where she supervised more than 60 employees in post-anesthesia, post-anesthesia and chronic pain management nursing units.

She also served New York University as a graduate preceptor for their nursing administration program. So when she tells her nursing students war stories to illustrate professional dilemmas, they have an authentic ring.

Along the way, Rice received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Husson College in Bangor, Maine, and dual master’s degrees in nursing administration and nursing education from New York University. And in March 2003, Rice received her Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Bridgeport. The hard-earned academic achievement was made sweeter when Rice received the university’s outstanding doctoral dissertation award, which she was thrilled to receive.

“The award is based on quality research,” Rice said proudly. “I chose to enter the Educational Leadership program to expand my horizons with the intent of learning the business of higher education, specifically the role of faculty in higher education.”

Rice chose an interesting topic for her dissertation. “My doctoral research was titled ‘An Investigation of Job Satisfaction and Needs Satisfaction of Department Chairs in the Connecticut State University System.’” Rice explained.

“I found out the chairperson’s role provides many opportunities for within academic to facilitate growth of programs, faculty and the student body. Additionally, there are opportunities to create a collaborative environment and to celebrate the differences and strengths of each faculty member and student.”

“What I learned from my research of department chairperson satisfaction is that it is a difficult role for most, since the chair is between and between the faculty and administration.”

Having participated in doctoral studies in educational leadership, Rice reports that she has learned what means to be a novice in ANV academic and what means to be a master’s degree in nursing administration and nursing education at New York University. “My research agenda now is to continue as a researcher and identify how she can serve WestConn’s students and advance the mission of the university.”

“I have felt most successful in my career when I have been able to bring others along to exceed their own expectations,” she said. “They may not realize their own capabilities because of roadblocks. I like to delete those roadblocks and encourage and enable them to be successful. To me, that is success.”

Despite the pitfalls she’s learned about, Rice’s research made her aspire to become a department chair someday, but not until she has had solid mentoring and more experience in academia. She said teaching is her first love.

“I don’t see getting away from the classroom,” she said. “You can’t lose contact. I think that’s why I’m in teaching, because I have a love of my students and a love of my profession. I am so lucky, because my students want to be there. They want something education, knowledge, insight. They are so motivated, it keeps me motivated.”

Rice’s love of nursing shines through as she talks about her 18 years of clinical experience in New York City at two major teaching institutions. “When I started working, it was funny because they paid me to do something I actually love.” Rice said. “You get to help someone who is hurt or when they are at the lowest of the low. You can help them and make their day, hour or minute better. It is payment in and of itself.”

Rice views nursing as becoming the patient’s advocate. “When you are hurting, it’s good to have someone reinforce that you, as the patient, have the ability to make choices regarding your care,” she said.

The biggest change in nursing today is keeping up with the technology, she added. “There is such a boom of technical advancements. A nurse has to have the ability or the smarts to navigate that.”

Communications

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Faber shares story of Holocaust horrors, survival

Two large Nazis held me down and then they took some kind of pen or razor and drew it in a chemical and carved it into my skin — 161051 — that's my number. ’77-year-old Holocaust survivor David Faber told a sizable Alumni Hall audience in late September. And while those present cringed at his incredibly detailed description, they were rapt as he rolled up his left sleeve and displayed the six digits that remain there still, more than 50 years after they were forcibly inscribed.

It is one thing to read about the horrors committed during the Holocaust, the inhumanity is incomprehensible. It is another thing entirely to hear it first-hand.

For more than two hours, students, staff and members of the Greater Danbury community alternately held their breath and gasped in outrage as Faber described his experience.

Harvard professor illuminates steps for college success

Getting to know your professors, studying in groups and figuring out when to ignore your mother’s advice can be the keys to collegiate success, an expert on the subject recently told students, staff and faculty members at WestConn.

Dr. Richard Light, a professor of education at Harvard University and author of the best-selling “Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds,” visited the Midtown campus in September to offer the wisdom he’s acquired from nearly 15 years of interviews with 2,000 students about their experiences. The interviews are part of the ongoing Harvard Assessment Seminars, which Light directs and is meant to glean successful strategies to enhance students’ college experiences.

Two lectures — one for students and another for faculty and staff — offered enlightening anecdotes and the statistics that backed up the stories.

Among the insights Light shared was that the most important “job” each student has is to really get to know at least one faculty member each semester. This may help the student get more out of any given course, and by graduation, the student will have several professors who can serve as references or write letters of recommendation. With the research-action units in hand, Light and his colleagues who advise students at Harvard have adapted their strategies to include this information in advising sessions.

Light also cited statistics that show studying in groups, especially for science-based courses, provides better results for students.

“The students who study outside of class, even with more work and who are engaged,” he said. “Students who study in groups also are more likely to persist.”

Light pointed out that the people most interested in seeing students enjoy happy, enriching college experiences — their mothers — are often the source of the single worst piece of advice the students receive, which is to “get the required courses out of the way.” Students who take that advice are left with being the least satisfied with their college experiences.

“It doesn’t seem to be a winning strategy,” he said.

Light suggested students take at least one course every semester purely because it interests them.

Light also offered a suggestion specific to WestConn’s teaching faculty members, saying he feels a great deal of anxiety they can help students by reorganizing their courses. Structuring the courses so students have the opportunity to receive feedback and make adjustments or develop skills throughout the semester is helpful, he said.

He suggested delving several assignments throughout the semester, instead of just one final project.

“The students who do the best are the classes where they learn the most,” Light pointed out.

Curious dig up archaeology information at open house

With concerns about traditional health care at the center of national debate and an ever-growing number of alternatives available, the region’s residents will get the chance to learn more about holistic health modalities during several presentations at WestConn in the coming months.

The Institute for Holistic Health Studies (IHHS) at WestConn and the Connecticut Holistic Health Association (CHHA) Danbury branch are teaming up to offer a number of beneficial events during the 2004-05 academic year. Sponsored by Topical BioMedics Inc., Associates in Kentleinning and the WestConn Division of Student Affairs, monthly presentations will explore subjects ranging from Chinese herbalism to positive energy healing to homopathy. WestConn also will host the third annual CHHA Holistic Health Fair next April.

Dr. Jeanette Tedesco, director of the CHHA Danbury branch, said the events are meant to inform members of the community about the holistic health options available throughout the area.

“As human beings, we have free will to exercise choice,” she said. “Informed choice requires knowledge of options. My mission is to present the Greater Danbury community with affordable educational opportunities to expand the knowledge of options available to extend life and improve the quality of life.”

The public is invited to all the events, which will be on the university’s Midtown campus.

The presentations for the fall semester launched with a September panel discussion focused on “Case Studies Using a Holistic Health Medical Model.”

The focus turned to “Holistic Approaches to Pain Management” in October.

Robin Spiegel will present “Aromatherapy: Nourishing Your Body and Soul with Nature” at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 9, in Alumni Hall.

Essential oils are the concentrated extracts distilled from plants, leaves, trees and roots of herbs, which offer health remedies for healing through aromatherapy. In this hands-on workshop, participants will experience the therapies-graded essential oils can support the body, mind and spirit. A certified aromatherapist, licensed massage therapist, reflexologist, and sound and color practitioner, Spiegel has been offering her services for nearly 20 years. Her private practice is based in Rye Brook, N.Y., and New York City. She also is the owner of Ancient Aromatics, an aromatherapy company offering high-quality, organic, therapeutic-grade essential oils.

“Stress Less and Enjoy Life More!” will be the focus of the presentation at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 7, in Alumni Hall.

Dr. Richard Light makes a point during his presentation.

Warner Hall as part of Archaeology Awareness Month, joining archaeologists across the state that focuses on recovering and examining remaining physical remains, such as graves, tools and pottery.

“The goal is to raise awareness and awareness of the event. “We want to let those who are interested know about the program at WestConn and what we’re doing,”

Participants got the chance to see items Weinsten and her students unearthed during an excavation this summer.

Weinsten discussed the projects in which she and her students are involved, including the work students in her Cultural Resource Management course are doing at the Diamond Match Co. site in Ansonia.

Dr. Laurine Weinreb (right) discusses some materials with one of her students during the Archaeology Lab Open House.

Materials on display when WestConn Professor of Anthropology and Sociology Dr. Laurine Weinreb opened the university’s Archaeology Lab to visitors in October.

Weinsten hosted the four-hour open house in the lab on the second floor of
Student shares the spotlight with the salamanders

Bethel native Will Michael is one of the fortunate few who have discovered how to translate an existing avocation into a potential career. He’s taken his lifelong love of the outdoors and found a way to share his appreciation for nature with others. He films it, edits his footage, and airs a television show called “Connecticut Naturalist.”

“Ever since I was old enough to walk, I’ve explored the woods,” Michael said. “Actually, even before I could walk, my parents used to carry me on their walks in the woods.”

His audience is growing, thanks to positive viewer feedback and glowing articles about his hands-on approach to educating others about nature that have appeared in area newspapers.

As a result, the WestConn junior has become somewhat of a celebrity — not only in his home state, but also beyond.

Recently, Michael was named a “Connecticut Youth Hero” by U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman.

The senator’s Web site, http://lieberman.senate.gov/learning/heros.html says, “Connecticut has many hard-working and caring young individuals who help to make our great state a better place. This section of Senator Lieberman’s Web site showcases our best students and their achievements.” The site contains a profile detailing some of Michael’s accomplishments.

WestConn Assistant Professor of Communications Kialda Logan, Michael’s academic adviser, is not surprised by all the attention the media student has received.

“When really is a wonderful student,” Logan said. “He embodies all the qualities that we look for: He’s dedicated to his work, he’s passionate about what he does, and he’s interested in learning whatever he can. He’s always reading and looking for ways to go deeper into the topics we’re studying in class. You don’t have to try to motivate him because he’s self-motivated.”

Michael’s fascination with nature and his extensive understanding of ways of explaining things have resulted in a loyal following of fans and friends who not only tune into his TV show, but also accompany him on some of his adventures. Each spring, they embark on nightly expeditions to explore the yellow-spotted salamanders that emerge only briefly to mate in shallow water-filled depressions called vernal pools. It’s a natural phenomenon few have the opportunity to witness.

“For those who aren’t able to be there, Michael’s cable show provides the next-best thing.”

“The best way to learn, in my opinion, is through observation,” Michael said. “From observing, you learn so much. Then you can read books about what scientists and other people have observed, and apply it to what you’ve seen.”

Hours of research form the basis for each 30-minute show, which Michael edits himself. For more information, he can call upon an impressive list of experts, including WestConn Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Frank Dye; Hank Gruner, vice president of programs and exhibits at the Science Center of Connecticut in West Hartford; and Dr. Michael Klemens, a senior conservationist with the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York City.

Michael met Gruner and Klemens when they came to investigate a vernal pool that looked like an ideal salamander mating site, which his father discovered when Michael was in high school.

“It was the first time I got to see scientists in the field,” Michael said. “I was interested in science but hadn’t thought of it as a career possibility because I didn’t want to be indoors in a laboratory setting. I wanted to be hands-on and outdoors. This inspired me to want to educate other people about natural things.”

Gruner recalled the encounter.

“Will’s dad called to report rare salamanders he had found in the Danbury area,” Gruner said. “When Mike Klemens and I went to investigate and trap some for a research project, we met Will and right away we saw his level of enthusiasm.

“He clearly had spent a lot of time in the forest and fields in the area and had made very accurate observations,” Gruner continued. “He asked a lot of questions that night, and it was clear he was not intimidated by us at all. Afterward, he showed us all the interesting artifacts he had collected in the woods near his home. It was unusual in the sense that someone his age would be so interested in natural history. But it was clear he had learned a lot by spending time out in the field, observing.”

Gruner also praised Michael’s ability to approach science from the natural perspective of an artist, noting that the Science Center of Connecticut recently adopted one of Michael’s suggestions for illuminating a turtle exhibit.

“He’s a great musician, too,” Gruner added. “He writes the nature-themed songs that appear at the end of each of his video segments, and they are very entertaining and of professional quality.”

Currently working as an intern at Charter Communications in Newtown, Michael also gives nature presentations and music lessons to children at area schools and summer camps.

“Will is a gentle spirit, a natural teacher and is great at working with children,” Logan said. “He has the ability and knowledge of someone like Bill Nye the Science Guy, but he has a special quality that reminds me a little bit of Mr. Rogers. He’ll go a long way with his skills at someplace like PBS or National Geographic.”

Gruner agreed.

“I have no doubt that he will achieve what he sets out to accomplish. And whatever that is, it will include a mix of science, enthusiasm, the arts and dedication.”

And probably a yellow-spotted salamander or two.

Information about “Connecticut Naturalist Soundtrack, Volume I” a compilation of Michael’s songs, can be found on the Web site http://www.michaeltheacher.com. The show “Connecticut Naturalists” airs on Comcast Cable’s public access channel 23 in Danbury, Vernon and Middletown. It also can be seen on public access cable in towns served by Charter Communications of Northwest Connecticut and Charter Communications of Western Connecticut.\n
Campus program introduces grade-school students to college life

by Yvonne Johnson

Like many initiatives to introduce potential students to higher education, WestConn’s “Diversity at the University” program in October included information sessions about applying to college, a College Fair and a time to visit with President Dr. James W. Schmotter. But before the nearly 100 participants actually attend WestConn or any other university, they’ll have to make it through elementary school and then on to middle and high schools.

The program brought fifth-graders from Danbury’s Morris Street, Roberts Avenue and Great Plain elementary schools to the university in hopes of getting them interested in college early, said Associate Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. Marshia Daria, coordinator of the effort.

Many of the youngsters may be the first in their family to attend college. The program is part of the university’s ongoing effort to inform such students and their families about the opportunities available at WestConn.

“The goal is to educate students at an early age about college,” Daria said. “We want to start them to think about college now; see it as a positive experience and realize it’s a viable option for them.”

Sponsored by the WCSU Center for Professional Development, the program included practical information about application and financial aid procedures, tips about university housing options and much more.

WestConn elementary education professional semester students helped inform the youngsters about their own experiences and offered plenty of encouragement.

“With a college degree, you can do anything you want to do,” WestConn student Tracy Cassavechia urged.

Several members of the university’s Center Stage team, a performing group that also got involved, led the fifth-graders in a number of interactive, improvisational exercises. The activities offered a chance for the youngsters to see some of the exercises the theatre arts students used to tap their own creativity and have fun, Theatre Arts Professor Sal Trapani said. President Schmotter brought together all the elements of the day when he talked to the fifth-graders.

“As you’re finding out today, learning is fun,” he said. “Attending a university involves a lot of hard work, but it can also be a lot of fun.”

For more information about the “Diversity at the University” program, call Daniela at (203) 837-9359.
Initiative aids counselors who supervise student interns

by Sherrill Hill

A student determines he wants to possibly influence young people, so he decides to pursue a degree in counseling. Hoping to be a school guidance counselor, he enrolls in WestConn’s counselor education program to earn a master’s degree.

“Before we can graduate, the student will need to complete a 100-hour practicum and obtain at least 600 hours of field experience in the form of an internship that takes place over the course of an entire academic year.”

Most likely, those hours will be acquired in a nearby town. But regardless of where the internship takes place, the student will be working under the supervision of an established professional in the field — someone who may or may not have any experience serving as a mentor or boss. The interaction can have a major impact on the student’s future plans, depending on whether it is positive or negative.

“If I’m a certified school counselor with two years of experience and then have an intern assigned to me, I’m going to need training specific to serving as a supervisor,” said WestConn Assistant Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. Michael Gilles. “Supervision is a lot to take on, in addition to the demands of functioning as a school counselor.”

Until recently, there really wasn’t an established model for training such training. That is, until Gilles and several of his colleagues stepped in to fill the void.

“We need to encourage and enhance the skills that supervisors have,” Gilles explained. “That’s why we developed a program in conjunction with the Counselor Educators & Supervisors (CACES) division of the Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA) to provide training for counselor supervisors.”

Music duo visits WestConn

Ulrich Schmid and Amyline Miller perform a noon concert in the Falcon Hall.

Ulrich Schmid and Amyline Miller, members of the Schmid-Miller Duo, offered a day of “all things Beethoven” during an October visit to the Wilton campus. With this event, WestConn joined thousands of performances taking place from Friday, Oct. 8, through Sunday, Oct. 17, as part of the third annual Daniel Pearl Music Day, a global network of performances that uses the language of music to promote the harmony of Humanity.

“Ulrich and Amyline are world-class artists,” said Dr. Eric Lewis, the music director. While at WestConn, the cello-and-piano duo offered lectures, participated in discussions and workshops, and held two concerts. The visit was sponsored by the WCST Orchestra Club, office of student organization within the music department.

Salvadoran speaker shares her perspective

Those interested in El Salvador and its people got a chance to hear from Teresa Pérez, an attorney who survived the civil war that ravaged the country until 1992 and is taking steps to improve the lives of her family and others. Pérez’s discussion of “Alied With the U.S. Against Our Will: A Salvadoran Woman Speaks Out” pointed out the continued presence of Salvadoran troops in Iraq. She also talked about whether Salvadorans want to be allied with Americans in the war, and delved into Salvadoran’s realities in the global economy. Pérez, a mother of two teenage children, lives in San Salvador. She is a co-coordinator for the U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities (USESSC) network, a national grassroots organization that partners U.S. residents and their communities with rural communities in El Salvador.

Non-traditional (cont’d.)

hand-out of orientation information for non-trads, which answers questions about the availability of technology assistance and child care, where to get a parking pass or student ID, and where to get a cup of coffee or a late to eat.

They are planning a second event in November, which will highlight tips on research methods and resources for research papers. During the spring semester, NoToGo will offer the third “Late & Library” session, which will focus on making the most of academic advising and career development resources that are offered.

Sevèl said the group and its events will be tailored to non-trads’ needs and interests, but they will not be off-limits to traditional students.

“We don’t want to discriminate,” she said. “If traditional students want to check in on the questions we do get to offer, they’re welcome.”

Sevèl has developed a great deal of respect for her younger counterparts during her time at WestConn. “The traditional students at this school are the best they’re terrific students,” she said. Praise for the university’s faculty and staff, too.

Billet agreed whole-heartedly. “The doors are open at WestConn,” Billet said. “People are receptive to ideas and very supportive.”

Musician credits WestConn

Ulrich Schmid and Amyline Miller performing at WestConn.

Musician Ulrich Schmid credits WestConn for giving him the opportunity to teach and collaborate. “We are really happy about this opportunity, foster professional development and allow a forum for feedback.”

Nurse-educator (cont’d.)

She sees the parallel between nursing and education, whether it be students or patients.

You can make this profession as expansive as possible,” Rice said. “There is so much a nurse can do besides giving a pill. It’s really his or her opportunity to meet that patient and understand what they don’t know and help them plan their best possible care, to really collaborate.”

Rice, her husband and their two young daughters live in Danbury. She teaches in both the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs. Her subjects include medical and surgical nursing, issues in nursing, and thesis advisement. She has presented papers and participated in panel discussions at annual meetings for the Comparative and International Education Society and is a 10-year participant in the Nurses Health Study at the Harvard School of Public Health. She recently was appointed co-director for the division of Health and Nursing Education in the Organization for the Advancement of Educational Research.

Best of all, Rice’s mother, who is about to become a nurse, is thrilled with the successes in her life.

“it is a joy for her to see me succeed at this level,” Rice said, adding that she hopes to be a similar role model for her daughters.
Westside Nature Preserve is real treasure for Danbury area

by Valerina Roth

There’s a place in Danbury that offers peace and beauty where you can relax and enjoy nature. But if you’re not the sitting-and-relaxation type, you can hike, walk your dog or just enjoy. It’s also a prime spot for bird-watching, it’s a place for orioles and bluebirds, and it has several interesting archaeological sites to explore. This wooded refuge is open 24/7. And it’s free!

The Westside Nature Preserve (WNP) on the Westside campus also is a valuable teaching tool. In addition, biology students use it for senior research projects. Younger students from various schools in the region use the preserve for field botany trips. It’s these attributes — some say “secrets” — that WNP Director and WestConn Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Frank Dye were sold on when he took the job.

He’s getting help on that score. The Northwestern Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau is handing out copies of Dye’s brochure about the WNP to tourists around the state. And now it’s listed in the tourism directory Connecticut vacation guide.”

“It is my passion, my labor of love, said Dye, who conducts tours of the 35-acre preserve. “This was my brainstorm. The idea goes back at least 20 years, when it occurred to me as a biologist that we have this beautiful campus, part of it should be set aside for this purpose.”

In 1993, the nature preserve was officially created by a resolution of the Connecticut State University Board of Trustees. One year later, the WNP Center opened. The site runs with university support, an endowment grant from CNLP, donations, and the tireless efforts of the Friends of the Westside Nature Preserve who pay for plant signage and brochures.

It’s extremely important that by becoming a center, we are taken into account in the long-term planning of the university,” Dye said. “The nature preserve and the university have a very good relationship and we want to keep this going.”

The two-mile hiking trail has been marked with 10 numbered stations that correspond with Dye’s brochure, which explains the highlights. In August, Dye finished putting markers on 10 additional numbered station posts for newer trails. The WNP also added several additional lengths of boardwalk.

“Over the past year, we replaced almost all of the original wooden boardwalk with recycled plastics, which seems to be in vogue today with nature preserves,” Dye said. “The advantage is that it should last forever and is relatively indestructible. The problem we were having was the ATVs riding roughshod over the boardwalks; they were breaking the wooden ones on almost a daily basis, and they are expensive to replace.”

Dye said future plans for the WNP include a natural water treatment facility at the northern part of the preserve where a new magnet school is being built.

“I have been working with the city and state engineers to design a natural water treatment facility, because a lot of runoff will be coming from the parking lot of the new driveway and parking lot of the school,” Dye said. “City Engineer Rob Nault designed a series of holding ponds to deal with the runoff, and we will be planting different species of plants and shrubs that will contribute to treating the water. The Westside Nature Preserve is a major breeding place for amphibians in particular — spring peepers, spotted salamanders and wood frogs — and we will have some of these in this pond as well.”

Dye said the plan is to make the area Missandree Road into an educational exhibit.

“It will be interesting to have a bunch of school children on-site,” he said of the magnet school. “They have this nature preserve as part of their schoolyard, so to speak.”

Some facts about the Westside Nature Preserve may surprise you.

“The largest subset of visitors are people walking their dogs,” Dye said. “Dogs must, of course, be leashed.

“The stream that flows in the nature preserve is unusual because it flows north and, believe it or not, eventually ends up in the Long Island Sound. “We have a little catchphrase, ‘Save the Sound, Support the Westside Nature Preserve.’”

Dye chuckled. Recent water chemical analyses demonstrate that the quality of water is so good WestConn can use it in its science labs and has the responsibility to safeguard its future,” Dye said.

The plant life is so voluminous and remarkable that members of the New York Botanical Society, of which Dye is a docent, come to study it. Some of the plants are marked with identification signs on posts, so visitors can take a self-guided tour with brochures available at the kiosk at the main trail’s base. Dye said more signs are planned.

One of the more enchanting WNP facilities is called dome’s rocket, the flower Marie Antoinette requested be brought to her before she was executed. Dye said, adding there are a couple of acres of the showy, pink-and-purple perennial.

Dye said “It all blooms at once,” Dye said. “If you go there at dusk, it’s as though the floor of the nature preserve is being illuminated from below.”

Dye said he discovered a gnarled ancient oak that he believes may be up to 300 years old on the property. “We also have 13 different native ferns to look at,” he added.

There are three benches to rest, read or meditate on, one of which is by the babbling brook. After touting the preserve, people can walk over to the picnic tables and trash receptacles for picnicking.

The land was once a dairy.

“If anyone is interested in archaeology, there are strange pits, conical in shape and obviously man-made, probably created in the early 20th century,” Dye said. “I have asked people, but no one seems to know what they are.”

Besides the numerous amphibians, there are wall-to-wall deer and wild turkeys at the preserve.

“For those interested in birds, it’s a great place for birds: pileated woodpeckers, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and various songbirds,” Dye said.

“The area is getting so overdeveloped around here that you need these places for the animals to survive,” Dye said, referring to the proliferation of condom, strip malls and housing developments throughout the city.

So think of the WNP as a calm little oasis just waiting for you to come visit.

“From an environmental point of view, from a zoological point of view, from a botanical point of view, from an archaeological point of view, and from an ornithological point of view, we have something for everyone at the Westside Nature Preserve,” said Dye.

The Westside Nature Preserve is at the end of University Boulevard, the main road on the Westside campus. For more information, call Dye at (203) 837-8794 or visit www.wcsu.edu/wnp.

WSCU Observatory to offer stellar events

by Yvonne Johnson

Sky watchers, mark your calendars.

From telescope viewing of the elusive planet Mercury to events spotlighting the conjunctions of bright planets, the WCSU Observatory and Planetarium has a number of activities scheduled for those interested in heavenly bodies to enjoy.

The facility will offer a schedule of planetarium shows followed by viewings of the sky, weather permitting, with the observatory’s 20-inch, computer-controlled Ritchey-Chretien reflector telescope. Such public nights are typically held on Thursday or Saturday evenings, several times or more per month. There also will be occasional special opportunities to view particularly interesting celestial spectacles. Following are the upcoming special events:

• On Friday, Nov. 5, observers will get a 5 a.m. pre-dawn viewing of an extremely close conjunction of the two brightest planets, Venus and Jupiter, in the east-southeastern sky.

• On Tuesday, Nov. 9, the observatory will host a 5 a.m. pre-dawn viewing of the alignment of the moon, Jupiter and Mars in the east-southeastern sky.

• There will be a viewing of the moon near first quarter from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 20.

• There will be viewings of the moon near the Pleiades star cluster from 6 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 19, and from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 15.

• On Saturday, March 12, the observatory will host a viewing of the planet Mercury from 6 to 8 p.m. Mercury often evades amateur astronomers because it’s so close to the Sun that it never gets very far above the horizon, and always only near dawn or dusk.

• There will be viewing of the 2004-05 academic year will be from 7 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, April 16, when stargazers will get to view the first quarter moon and the planet Saturn.

The regularly scheduled public nights began in September and will continue through Saturday, May 28. A looking schedule can be found at www.wcsu.edu/starwatch. Planetarium shows begin promptly at the listed start time and held rain or shine, unless bad weather forces a closing of the observatory road. The shows are followed, weather permitting, by the telescope viewings. All telescope viewings, including the special events listed above, are subject to cancellation based on sky and road conditions.

For more information, call the observatory at (203) 837-8672 or the Office of Public Relations at (203) 837-8486.
Real research projects. And, in this particular research, WestConn is playing a leading role, which is something we are very excited about."

Philbrick then introduced Danbury Health and Housing Department Environmental Director Jack Koszuchowski and WestConn Assistant Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Ruth Gyure, who each outlined their involvement with the project and the history of Danbury.

"We introduced the concept of using trees to remove toxins from the soil — looked like a more cost-effective possibility."

Koszuchowski continued, "We introduced a brief history of the horticultural industry that provided some background on the use of organic materials to stabilize soil."

"We approached the City of Danbury and found a model that worked for us."

"In 2003, more than 200 knee-high saplings arrived from Georgia and were planted in 40 plots within four zones on the Barron Court site. A year later, they are more than 6 feet tall. Despite an anticipated 80 percent survival rate for the southern trees planted in toxic soil in a colder climate, they all survived."

"With all this activity taking place above ground, something is going on in the soil, too. Gyure, a microbial biologist, explained that bacteria living in the dirt are interacting with the mercury in a variety of ways. Her job, she said, is to study these communities of bacteria to see if they have a role in mercury remediation or enhancing or impeding the process."

"I am studying microbes living in their natural environments," she said. "It's exciting to work on applied ecology so close to home."

"When the trees are removed in the summer of 2005, tests will determine whether they were successful in drawing toxins from the soil through their roots. If the process works as planned, chemicals that otherwise might have migrated into ground water or even into the air will become trapped within the trees’ stems and leaves, which will be harvested and disposed of safely."

For more information about the Science-at-Night lecture series, call Philbrick at (203) 837-8773.

**WCSU recognized for information security expertise**

by Sherrill Hill

For obvious and unfortunate reasons, one of the catchphrases in recent years has been “homeless security.” In the aftermath of Sept. 11, the safety of America and its citizens has become a paramount concern for government and academia, while simultaneously developing into its own industry.

While many claim to hold the key to security, WestConn has proved to be a leader when it comes to technology — a fact that was demonstrated recently when the university was named a member of the Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium (HS/DEC). The HS/DEC is a network of the leading teaching and research institutions nationwide that focus on promoting education and research in security, especially as it pertains to homeland security and defense.

In becoming a member of the HS/DEC, WestConn joins an impressive alliance of institutions that includes the New York University Center for Catastrophe Preparedness; the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Network Information and Space Security Center; the Purdue University Homeland Security Institute, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command.

The director of training exercises at the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) sent news of the HS/DEC membership in a letter addressed to WestConn Management Information Systems (MIS) Professor Dr. Marie Wright. “It’s the latest in a series of affiliations and awards recognizing WestConn’s stature as a leader in technological security, due in large part to Wright’s tireless efforts in the field,” he wrote.

Wright’s membership in the HS/DEC also will result in the university’s affiliation with the National Academic Consortium for Homeland Security (NACHS), an organization whose goal is “to help improve the security of the United States and its worldwide interests, while protecting and preserving its values, freedoms and civil liberties, and economic interests and competitiveness.”

“Membership in these consortia further elevates our reputation for distinctiveness and excellence,” Wright said. “This also will allow us to stay on the cutting edge of security information and technology, because the consortia serve as a central repository for information about programs of study, degree options, course offerings and curriculum development in the field. Our students will have a leg up when it comes to applying for graduate school or seeking careers in technology, because this is one more credential that sets us apart and above.”

Membership in the HS/DEC and NACHS are the most recent acknowledgments of WestConn’s commitment to leadership in the field of information technology security.

**For more information, visit [http://people.wcsu.edu/~wrightm](http://people.wcsu.edu/~wrightm).**

**Arts events to offer music, mystery in November**

by Sherrill Hill

On Tuesday, Nov. 23, audiences will have plenty to thank for when the WCSU Concert Choir presents “A Choral Prism: Global Perspectives in Song” at 8 p.m. The more than 100-voice choir will be conducted by WestConn Professor Dr. Kevin Jay Isaacs. The 14 works on the evening’s program have source musical from 10 countries and range from 12 composers or arrangers from seven, and will be performed in eight different languages.

Other upcoming arts events include:

- **Theatre department’s production of “The Mystery of Edwin Drood,”** at 8 p.m. Thursday through Sunday. Nov. 6, 11, 13 and 18 — 20.
- **Abstract artist Hugh O’Donnell** at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 9.
- **The WCSU Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble’s salute to our veterans** at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 9.
- **The WCSU Jazz Combos concert** at 8 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 14.
- **A noon concert on Wednesday, Nov. 17, featuring Volodymyr and Victoria Koshubia, father and daughter pianists from the Ukraine; and**
- **An 8 p.m. recital on Thursday, Nov. 18, featuring performances by nearly a dozen WestConn piano students.**

For more information, call the music department at (203) 837-6935, the Berkshire Theatre Box Office at (203) 837-8770, or the art department at (203) 837-8410.

Science-at-Night provides ‘virtual tour’ of groundbreaking biotechnology research site

by Sherrill Hill

As he introduced the first of several Science-at-Night events planned for this semester, WestConn Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Thomas Philbrick gave three reasons why the evening’s presentation, “WCSU and City of Danbury Use Biotechnology to Clean Up Toxic Waste,” would be coming.

"It involves using a basic biological process to solve social problems such as hazardous waste,” he said. "This has to be the way for our students to get out of the classroom and into the field to work on real research projects. And, in this particular research, WestConn is playing a leading role, which is something we are very excited about."

Philbrick then introduced Danbury Health and Housing Department Environmental Director Jack Koszuchowski and WestConn Assistant Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Ruth Gyure, who each outlined their involvement with the project and the history of Danbury.

"We introduced a brief history of the horticultural industry that dominated Danbury during the first half of the 20th century. He explained that the use of mercury nitrate solutions into which animal skins were dipped to soften the pelt. He then told how the spent toxic baths were dumped into the Still River and its tributaries or merely tossed out the door onto the surrounding soil.

This particular site, located at the corner of North Street and Barnum Court, was once home to a number of hat factories through the years before being acquired by the City of Danbury. Soil testing determined that certain portions of the lot exceeded mercury contamination limits set by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. In fact, ‘hot spots’ on the lot exceeded the 100 parts-per-million limit for residential property by as much as 300 percent.

"In addition to the conventional way by using a bulldozer to remove all the soil to the groundwater level and then replacing the soil would cost almost a half-million dollars for this one-third-acre lot,” Koszuchowski explained. "So we looked at alternatives, and phytoremediation — using trees to remove toxins from the soil — looked like a more cost-effective possibility."

As Danbury’s Environmental Protection Agency Grant to undertake phytoremediation research at the site, the University of Georgia announced it had developed genetically altered cottonwood trees that had demonstrated in greenhouse studies the ability to remove toxins from the soil. It was a perfect partnership.

"In June 2003, more than 200 knee-high saplings arrived from Georgia and were planted in 40 plots within four zones on the Barron Court site. A year later, they are more than 6 feet tall. Despite an anticipated 80 percent survival rate for the southern trees planted in toxic soil in a colder climate, they all survived.

With all this activity taking place above ground, something is going on in the soil, too. Gyure, a microbial biologist, explained that bacteria living in the dirt are interacting with the mercury in a variety of ways. Her job, she said, is to study these communities of bacteria to see if they have a role in

**For more information about the Science-at-Night lecture series, call Philbrick at (203) 837-8773.**