Historic pipe organ to find a home in new WCSU arts center

by Sherr Hill

Western Connecticut State University has acquired a recently $150,000 pipe organ played by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Charles Ives, and the acquisition is expected to enhance the university’s already thriving organ program.

The organ, built by renowned Massachusetts organ builder Johnson and Son, was in the organ was installed in the Second Congregational Church of Danbury on West Street in the late 19th century. The church building dates to 1806 — the organ to a little more than a decade later. What makes this instrument unique — aside from its age — is its history. The only organ played by Charles Ives that’s still in existence.

Because of that history, the WCSU Foundation Inc. recently purchased the organ for $150,000 and will display it in a concert hall of the Fine and Performing Arts Center that will be constructed on the university’s Westside campus.

“The acquisition of this unique historical musical instrument is a natural for us and we jumped at the opportunity,” WestConn President Dr. James W. Schmotzer said. “It enables us to keep an important piece of Danbury’s history in the community. Every time the organ is played in the concert hall in our new Arts Center, we’ll remember that the pipes were the very ones through which Charles Ives made music.”

WCSU President Dr. James W. Schmotzer and WCSU President Dr. Charles Ives Foundation Inc. recently purchased the organ for $150,000 and will display it in a concert hall of the Fine and Performing Arts Center that will be constructed on the university’s Westside campus.

Recognizing the opportunities for broader cooperation, Piscopo and Thompson met with Dr. Estela Lopez, vice chancellor for academic affairs of the Connecticut State University (CSU) System, and Dr. German Bermudez, CSU System executive officer for assessment and learning technologies, to develop a grant proposal for the conversion to online course instruction.

WestConn Professor of Nursing Dr. Patricia Lund and Associate Professor of Nursing Dr. Colleen Delaney also have participated in the planning.

WestConn, WCSU join forces to prepare nurse educators

by Robert Taylor

The nursing departments of Western and Southern Connecticut State universities are joining forces to launch a innovative program in distance learning aimed at preparing a new generation of educators to replenish the dwindling ranks of nursing school faculties nationwide.

Beginning this fall, WestConn nursing students in the Master of Science program will have the opportunity to earn in SCUS courses focusing on curriculum development and the educator’s role in the nursing profession. Grants totaling $175,000 from three state agencies will finance conversion of these courses for online instruction, enabling WestConn to broaden its master’s degree offerings by taking advantage of SCUS’s specialization track in nursing education.

Dr. Barbara Piscopo, who chairs the WestConn nursing department, said this collaborative initiative addresses a critical need to ease the increasingly severe shortage of master’s and doctoral degree graduates in nursing qualified to teach and carry on research in the field.

“Many of our nurse educators are close to retirement, so we will be losing them soon,” Piscopo said. “In general, we do not have enough people interested in becoming nurse educators. This is partly because of the competitive situation in the health care field and partly because of opportunities that are becoming a tenure professor at most universities.”

Piscopo found a willing partner in SCUS Nursing Department Chair Dr. Cesarea Thompson, who readily agreed to open nursing education courses at SCUS to WestConn students.

Thompson said WestConn and SCUS are well-suited to launch this collaborative program.
Henderson named distinguished professor

by Yvonne Johnson

As increasing numbers of qualified students select WestConn as their university of choice, several projects are underway to expand the physical campuses to better serve students. Construction began this summer on the Westside Campus Center, which will serve as the hub of student life on Westside. On the Midtown campus construction of an 800-space student parking garage is set to begin.

These projects are wonderful improvements, yet they will result in fewer parking spaces on both campuses during the upcoming year,” said President for Finance and Administration Maribeth Amoy. “Given these additional pressures and recognizing that parking already was in short supply, WestConn is realigning its plan to better manage parking needs.”

The university instituted a number of changes that took effect in late August. Up-to-date parking rules and regulations are now posted on designated parking maps that show designated parking areas and shuttle bus stops, and shuttle bus schedules are posted on the new website. The plan will be publicized on a WestConn parking permit holder’s map, and visitors should consult the maps and signs for parking spaces.

Overflow parking is available in the city’s Parking Shuttle Service, which provides free shuttle bus service to and from the Midtown campus. The service is available weekdays from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on designated parking area, and they correspond with the maps and signs for parking spaces.

As a result of the changes, the university now has clearly marked areas for visitors to welcome students. Midtown visitor parking will be in the lot next to Old Main and in designated spaces next to University Hall. Westside visitor parking will be on University Boulevard or in spaces prearranged through the University Police Department. Updated shuttle bus service between the two campuses and the Willows Inn has been arranged. The new coach buses feature high-back, upholstered seats; more leg room; improved climate control; greater capacity, and wheelchair access. Buses will run regularly throughout the day seven days a week.

In order for the parking plan to be effective, University Police will strictly enforce these policies. Penalties for violations will include fines and towing. Call the University Police Department at (203) 977-9022 about the new parking rules and regulations. Call the WestConn Card Office at (203) 977-9111 about vehicle registration, decals and hangtags.

University realigns parking plan

by Yvonne Johnson

In an industry where stars come and go and often there’s little longevity, Lyle Russell Cedric “Skeith Henderson has been an icon in the music business for more than 60 years. He’s an internationally revered musician, composer, recording artist and conductor — and due to a recent resolution by the Connecticut State University (CSU) Board of Trustees, he’s also a Distinguished Professor of Music at WestConn.

Henderson was awarded the title at a CSU Board of Trustees meeting in late July. The recommendation for this honor came at the suggestion of WestConn President Dr. James W. Schmitter.

“Skeith Henderson will bring to our students and faculty the wisdom gained in a lifetime at the very center of American popular music,” Schmitter said. “From Bing Crosby, Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra to Fritz Reiner and Arturo Toscanini to the top performers in popular and classical music today, Sketh has known them all. And he’ll be sharing this wonderful store of knowledge and experiences with our students and faculty. We’re proud and honored that he’s joining the WestConn family.”

As a Distinguished Professor of Music, Henderson will serve as a consultant to WestConn’s orchestra and string program to draw on his identification and recruitment of talented local high school musicians. He’ll be a guest conductor or teacher for music-related seminars and classes, and he will present several lectures with demonstrations and instrumental and choral conducting for students enrolled in that curriculum. Additionally, Henderson will conduct a gala concert that will feature WestConn student and faculty performers and special guests. Dr. Dan Goble, chair of WestConn’s music department, believes Henderson’s presence and professional contacts will be incredibly helpful in revitalizing our orchestra program,” Goble said. “He’ll be an invaluable resource in the realities of the music business.”

It’s a business Henderson knows well. He was the music director for NBC Television, the conductor of the “Tonight Show” orchestra, a composer and arranger of film and television scores, and the guest conductor of many symphonic orchestras worldwide. But he is best-known as the founder and conductor of The New York Pops.

According to The New York Pops Web site, the group was founded The New York Pops in 1983 to share his passion for music by bringing the more accessible symphonic pops fare to a broader audience. The New York Pops is now the largest independent symphonic pops orchestra in the United States, and its subscription season is one of the most successful at its home at New York City’s Carnegie Hall. The orchestra is also recognized for its tours as well as for its series of free Summer concerts in New York City parks, which debuted in 1995 and has played to capacity crowds every summer since.

Henderson has received numerous honors for his contributions to music through the years, among them a Grammy Award in 1994. The music also has been recognized for The New York Pops’ well-known music education programs, Henderson received the Handel Medallion, the highest cultural honor in New York City. He’s also been awarded special recognition from the Music Educators Association of New York City. Henderson holds three honorary degrees — one of which, a Doctorate of Human Letters, was conferred by WestConn in 2002.

He will undertake his new role as a Distinguished Professor of Music at WestConn this fall.
Summer Literary Festival something to write home about

by Sherry H Igor

Summer means often brings strawberry festivals, agricultural fairs, music events and more. This summer, Greater Danbury was the setting for what some hope will become a new tradition: a Summer Literary Festival. From Aug. 1 through 5, the WestConn Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Professional Writing program presented nightly literary events on- and off-campus at several sites throughout the community. Renowned novelists, a poet and an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker were featured.

The offerings were varied and well-attended. On Monday night, documentary filmmaker Mimi Kelly screened "Home: The Southern Guys in the Room" at a sold-out Bethel Cinema. Novelist Don J. Snyder talked about his work and read from his most recent novel "Winter Dreams" at Tyrone Mansion on Tuesday. Wednesday featured WestConn Associate Professor of English Dr. Miriam Q. Qi, who read from her novel "When the Purple Mountain Burns" at the Westside Classroom Building. Award-winning poet Cecilia Woloch read from her book "Late" and from her most recent work on Thursday at the Newtown Meeting House. On Friday, Daniel Asa Rose read from his memoir "Hiding Places: A Father and His Sons Retrace Their Family’s Escape from the Holocaust" at the Westside Classroom Building.

During the day, the first cohort of students in the M.F.A. in Professional Writing program attended seminars and workshops conducted by writing mentors and writers-in-residence. The students were involved in an intensive, on-campus residency designed to immerse them in writing and enable them to interact with a community of writers. A second residency will take place in January.

Irene Sherlock, an adjunct professor of English and associate director of WestConn’s Office of University Publications & Design, is one of the program’s writing mentors. After the Tuesday night reading and talk, she was very excited about the festival and the residency so far.

"Don Snyder is a beautiful writer, and he was very generous in sharing his journey as a professional writer with us," Sherlock said. "The room was filled to capacity; the students seem to be really excited about being here, and I was very pleased to see so many people from the community in attendance. There’s a great energy here and it’s very exciting for me, personally, as a writer, to be part of this. I'd say the program is a roaring success, and that’s a testament to all the work that’s gone into it." M.F.A. student Tracey Gould came from Atlanta, Ga., to participate in the program’s writing residency. A corporate writer who focuses on business proposals and marketing pieces, she wanted to learn more about screenwriting.

"Going to Danbury, where this program was very much worth the trip," Gould said. "After the initial nervousness died down, the students and instructors have really interacted well and gotten involved with each other. I’ve really learned a lot. In fact, last night we had an impromptu reading of student work in the middle of the night. I’m looking forward to coming back for the winter residency in January," Gould continued. "I’ve always wanted to see New England when there’s snow."

Snow will come as no surprise to the majority of the program’s 25 students, 14 of whom hail from Connecticut, two from New York, one from Michigan and one from Pennsylvania. But Gould’s fellow students from outside the Northeast — one each from North Carolina, Florida, Virginia and Hawaii — certainly will have something to write home about this winter.

For more information, call (203) 837-4876 or visit www.wcsc.edu/english/rita/.

Theatre arts department takes ‘Twelfth Night’ on the road

Edinburgh show earns rave reviews

by Sherry H Igor

Anyone who’s ever staged a theatrical production can tell you it’s a major undertaking. Besides the cast and crew, there are all kinds of inanimate considerations, too — things like the sets, the costumes, the props, the musicians’ instruments, and more. Theatre arts major Roger Connor Jr. knows this all too well. As company production manager for WestConn’s three-week August production of "Twelfth Night" at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, the senior from Newtown was well-aware of the need to get everyone — and everything — from Danbury to Scotland in time for opening night.

"The hardest thing was to get all the personnel and equipment over there safely," Connor said. "And we brought a lot of stuff." Spring 2005 theatre arts graduate Tom Farrell, of Bethel, agreed.

"As you produce on campus, it’s one thing, but when you perform at a new venue in Edinburgh this time, so we had to learn how to be efficient with the logistics," Farrell said. "That taught us how to adapt to a different environment — especially when you only got 15 minutes to set up for the show, and 10 minutes to break it back down afterward. It was hectic, but it was also a thrill and a rush."

Both Connor and Farrell have experienced the thrill of the Fringe Festival before. WestConn has staged semi-annual productions there for the past decade. It’s one of many off-campus learning experiences the university offers its theatre arts students.

"This has been an amazing opportunity for our students to participate in and see the world’s largest theatre festival," said Theatre Arts Department Chair Frank Herbert. "It’s an amazing resume builder, we’ve played to international audiences, participated in workshops with some of the most interesting people and witnessed great performances. It’s a real eye-opener and very rigorous for our students, who have received critical acclaim for the shows we’ve presented over the years."

Both Connor and Farrell agreed that the audience is a key factor in their experience at Edinburgh.

"It’s an awesome feeling at the end of the show when you get a good response from the audience — it means that despite the language or cultural differences, you got through to them," Connor said. "It’s a really great feeling."

Farrell agreed.

"The majority of our audience in the Berks Theatre at WestConn is relatives, friends and people from our local community," Farrell said. "But at the Fringe Festival, more than 90 percent of the audience is strangers to us. We get a sense of really working to earn our applause, so we appreciate the response. It’s gratifying, real-world and rewarding."

Some familiar faces from home, however, were present for an Edinburgh performance. WestConn President Dr. James W. Schmidt and Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Dr. Linda Vaden-Goad made the cross-continental journey to support the theatre students.

"How great to see WestConn’s theatre department take their 50th musical version of ‘Twelfth Night’ on the road before an enthusiastic, hand-clapping, singing-along audience at the Fringe Festival,” Schmidt said. “For three weeks, they experienced the theatrical life in its totality — rehearsing, marketing the show, and working (successfully) to attract the attention of critics from the United Kingdom’s top newspapers. Everyone at WCSU can be proud of the international recognition these faculty and students have garnered for the university.”

Science building slated to open

The 548-million new science building on the Midtown campus will officially open with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in late September. The three-story building now is home to the chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy and meteorology departments, as well as the WCSU Weather Center. Occupying 122,000 square feet, the structure replaces the 98,000-square-foot Higgins Hall, former home to these departments.

The sorting, packing and discarding have been underway in offices and laboratories at Higgins Hall for several months on and off, and will continue for a while. In the meantime, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Dr. Linda Vaden-Goad is thrilled.

"We are so excited about the opportunities for learning afforded by our new science building!” Vaden-Goad said. "Around each professor’s office is a kind of ‘learning pool.’ The teaching lab is across the hall, the research lab is next door, and just outside each office in the hallway there’s an informal conversation area, composed of a beautiful crescent-shaped wooden bench facing a blackboard. Everything is light — large windows, greenhouses, and an upstairs patio leading to the building’s observatory. This building invites us all inside to participate in today’s conversations in science with curiosity, optimism and discovery.”

Members of the cast rehearse before taking “Twelfth Night” to the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Easterly windmill spins to students during one of the Summer Literary Festival events.

An informal conversation area in a science building hallway.

Easterly windmill spins to students during one of the Summer Literary Festival events.

Easterly windmill spins to students during one of the Summer Literary Festival events.
Amyot brings team spirit to finance and administration role

by Richard Taylor

Ever since she joined the university administration team in January, Vice President for Finance and Administration Maribeth Amyot has sensed a building momentum driving WestConn forward to realize its academic mission.

“There’s a great momentum here — do you feel it?” she asked during a recent interview in her University Hall office. “I feel a lot of energy here. Our enrollment has been growing every year, our faculty is terrific, and we have a facilities program that’s making improvements across the board.

“But our resources are limited, so we want to make sure we align them with our academic priorities,” she added. “That’s really the essence of our job in Finance and Administration: Get the funding, the technology and the facilities to align behind the academic vision for the faculty and students. That’s what gets me excited.”

Amyot places strong emphasis on teamwork among administrators, faculty, students and alumni in setting firm foundations for WestConn’s future. That perspective comes naturally to the longtime head coach of girls’ and boys’ teams in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball program. Her Connecticut Classics team won the regional championship to compete in the 2004 AAU Division I girls’ national tournament; the fundamentals for success in basketball also apply to her role at WestConn, she noted.

“Being a coach and being a supervisor and manager are similar,” Amyot said. “The idea is to get folks on the same page as to their common goals and help them see how they individually contribute to that to be successful as a group.”

As chief financial and operating officer of the University of Connecticut Foundation from 1995 to 2005, Amyot was at the center of a watershed transformation of the UConn physical plant, academic curriculum and athletic program. At WestConn, she oversees a major construction program highlighted this year by the opening of the new science building and start of work on the Westside Campus Center and a second Midtown campus parking garage.

Preparations are under way to draft a new master plan to guide the university’s development over the next decade, and Amyot expects the process will offer the opportunity for input from the entire university community.

“The master plan is an attempt to look forward to see what our enrollment is going to look like, what programs we intend to offer, where we see our growth, where we excel,” she said. “We need to make sure that we have good facilities to support these programs.”

In addition to strategic planning, Amyot’s portfolio includes technology development, building operations and budget management. In her financial oversight role, she sees significant advantages in moving toward a decentralized process in determining resource allocations, giving school deans and other administrators the information and tools for more direct management of their budgets.

“The idea is to place the decision-making closer to the programs, the students and the faculty,” she said.

Amyot has set out to meet informally with faculty, students and administrators on their own turf to talk about the university’s $80-million annual budget and help them understand the resource allocation process.

“I share information, listen to what people want to know, and support them in being more effective administrators,” she said.

“The more people understand the financial aspect of the university, the better decisions we’ll make collectively.”

With state approval overturned, the financial issues are now accounting for just 44 percent of WestConn’s total revenue base. Amyot noted that the university might raise additional funds from other sources, such as revenue-generating summer programs and private giving. She cited tuition increases averaging 5 percent in recent years, coupled with expanded financial aid, as evidence WestConn is striving to remain accessible to students.

As a teen basketball coach and mother of three college-age children, Amyot has an especially keen appreciation for the youthful energy of the WestConn community. Her sons, Gregory and Timothy, recently transferred from UConn to enroll as undergraduates at WestConn. Her daughter, Meredith, played as a member of her AAU’s championship team and this fall enters Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire.

Her family keeps Amyot grounded in the student’s point of view.

“I enjoy being around young people — they have a lot of good ideas and a lot of energy,” she said. “When we meet to make financial decisions, the focus is on the students. That’s where it needs to be.”

Kukk’s enthusiasm for teaching earns Arts and Sciences honor

Professor equates classroom experience to white-water rafting

by Louise Avalon

When terrorists attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, it was an epic tragedy for the nation and an inspiration for WestConn’s Dr. Christopher Kukk, an assistant professor of political science.

Kukk, who was teaching his first semester at WestConn, seized the monumental historical event and used it as an educational opportunity. His assigned reading already had introduced his students to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, so he brought discussion of the horrific event to his classroom.

“It was a time when students had to learn quickly about things outside the United States,” he said.

His students explored the facts of the event, as well as the feelings and causes surrounding it. They delved into questions of right and wrong and good and evil.

“The intellectual net they were throwing out for 9/11 was very broad” Kukk said.

The 35-year-old has continued his enthusiasm and courage in tackling difficult issues, earning Kukk the respect of students, as well as faculty and staff.

“When my students come out of class, I want their brains to sweat, and I challenge them to want more,” Kukk said.

Because he’s a tough professor and demands so much of his students, Kukk was surprised the Student Government Association (SGA) selected him as the School of Arts and Sciences Faculty of the Year for 2004-05.

“It’s a real honor for me,” said Kukk, who admires his faculty colleagues as some of the best minds in the field. “I know my workload for students is very heavy.

“But the honor bears out what Kukk himself contends: WestConn students are exceptionally bright, hungry and eager to learn — even more so than the students he taught in the past at Harvard University and Boston College.

“You don’t have to look too far to find some really, really bright students here,” Kukk said.

That belief makes Kukk stand out with students, said Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Dr. Linda Vaiden-Gonza.

“Dr. Kukk is so wonderful because he sees the potential of each student,” she said. “He deeply believes all students can learn and they can become whatever they hope to become.”

“I really see myself as a guide,” Kukk explained. “Education is not meant to assimilate the ideas of others but to liberate students’ minds, so they can form their own ideas.”

The best way to do that, he believes, is by tackling the challenges.

“I see class as white-water rafting,” he said. “We can go the safe route, and no one is getting wet. Or, we can hit the rocks, and we can get wet and wet.

“It’s obvious Kukk likes to get drenched. He’s starting his fifth academic year at WestConn, where students who were freshmen in Kukk’s first classes here graduated in 2005. During his relatively short career thus far at the university, he’s let his students know he holds them in high esteem, telling them they could compete academically with college students anywhere. His students responded by forming the Roger Sherman Debate Society, and the team’s success has become a point of university pride.

With Kukk as faculty adviser, the team has bested some of the top institutions in the nation, including Cornell and Fordham universities and the University of Rochester. At the time of its defeat, Rochester was ranked No. 1 in the country. The WestConn debaters also got the best of a team from the prestigious University of Cambridge, one of the oldest universities in the world and one of the largest in the United Kingdom.

A big part of Kukk’s philosophy is in and out of the classroom is summed up by the large picture of Robert F. Kennedy that hangs on the back wall of his Warner Hall office.

“What he stood for is more inclusion than exclusion,” said Kukk. “I think when you look at the world as black-or-white, good-or-bad, you’re covering up a lot of important issues that need to be examined and discussed.”
2005 commencement exercises damp but high-spirited

by Yvonne Johnson

WestConn’s 107th annual commencement exercises featured a mix of dignity, playfulness — and some rain. “The skies may be gray and our seats may be damp, but our spirits are high and our hearts are warm,” WestConn President Dr. James W. Schmotter said as he welcomed the graduates and thousands of their proud friends and relatives.

Nearly 1,000 graduates were eligible to receive their degrees during the ceremony, which was the first to be presided over by Schmotter as the university’s eighth president. Tradition was mixed with several light-hearted moments during the May 22 event. The festivities were on the university’s Westside athletic practice field, despite bouts of rain just before and after the ceremony — and with some rain sprinkled in during the event to make things even more interesting!

Excepting the rain, the new elements were added to the traditionally solemn commencement exercises as the result of efforts by a university-wide committee. Headed by Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Dr. Linda Valden-Goad, the committee aimed to make the experience even more meaningful and memorable for graduates and their guests. To that end, a professional photographer took two pictures of each graduate during the ceremony. And the newly minted alumni received fun, themed giveaway items and got to sashay to the popular dance tune “Celebration” by Kool & The Gang for the recessional.

On the serious side, Dr. Jack S.C. Fong, chair of the pediatric medicine department at Danbury Hospital, received the 2005 President’s Medal for his strong support of the university and the community. Bruce Goldsen, a 1982 WestConn graduate who is president and co-owner of Jackson Radio Works Inc. in Jackson, Mich., received the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Even Goldsen’s solemn honor was touched by good humor when Schmotter announced the honoree’s wife, Susan, has established the Bruce I. Goldsen Radio Broadcasting Scholarship at WestConn to commemorate the occasion. The $1,000 scholarship will be awarded annually to a full-time student majoring in communication, with a concentration in media arts, who has successfully completed a year of study at WestConn with a grade point average of 3.0 or better.

“Leave it to Sue to find a way to spend my money without telling me,” Bruce Goldsen joked, earning one of many laughs during the ceremony.

Titters’ appreciation for education, entertainment yields scholarship endowment

by Sheni Hill

Undergraduate students majoring in nursing or theatre arts will be the beneficiaries of a scholarship endowment created by Registrar Emeritus Henry Titter and his wife, Susan, a 1985 alumna of WestConn’s nursing program.

Because they felt an affinity for each department, the Titters structured their gift in a way that would benefit both. In odd-numbered spring semesters, a nursing student who has earned a minimum of 60 undergraduate credits at WestConn toward his or her degree with a 3.5 cumulative grade point average will be eligible to receive the $500 scholarship. In even-numbered spring semesters, the recipient will be a theatre arts student who meets the same academic criteria.

Faculty in the respective departments select the student who not only meets the criteria, but who also exhibits, in the practical application of his or her field of study, the promise of professional success.

Titter explained the motivation in structuring the scholarship in such a way. “WestConn helped my wife, Susan, fulfill her lifelong dream of a career in nursing, and I spent most of my professional career here,” he said. “We decided that endowing a scholarship to assist talented students in nursing, for obvious reasons, and in theatre arts, for all the years of enjoyment we derived from the program, was a good way to say ‘thank you’ for all the university has given us.”

The first scholarship was awarded in spring 2005 to nursing student April Esposito, of Waterbury.

“Winning the scholarship was a complete surprise,” said Esposito, a first-generation college student. “I didn’t apply for this, and I had no idea I was going to receive it. It felt really good to know the nursing faculty selected me.”

Esposito always has wanted to be a nurse. She came to WestConn, she said, because it is close enough to home, yet far enough away. “The nursing is reasonable, and she ‘heard good things’ about the nursing department.

“On the night I received the scholarship, I got to meet Mr. and Mrs. Titter, and they were really nice people,” Esposito said. “It’s wonderful that I won this, and I really appreciate it a lot.”

President’s Gala offers sparkling evening of fun, fund raising

More than 240 guests from the community and the university turned out for the President’s Gala honoring longtime university supporter Ridgefield-based Boehringer Ingelheim Corp. Alumna Terry Eberhard-Asch and her husband, Richard Asch, were co-chairs for this year’s ball, with its “Diamonds & Dancing” theme.

A university tradition for 18 years, the gala is the WCSU Foundation’s primary event to raise philanthropic support for the university. All the evening’s proceeds are channeled into scholarships, grants, and other non-salary university support. Since 1996, the black-tie event has raised more than $850,000 for scholarships, grants, faculty and other university support services. This year’s highlights included the rose raffle for a chance to win a unique piece of diamond jewelry valued at more than $2,000, from Jewelry Designs.

For information about the 2006 President’s Gala, call the Office of Institutional Advancement at (203) 837-8298.
WestConduit opens door to more efficient operations

Technology is great, keeping track of 30 different passwords is not. On Aug. 24, WestConduit came one step closer to cutting some of the clutter with the launch of a campuswide Web portal called WestConduit. The portal is the result of an ongoing initiative to consolidate information sources and make them more easily accessible, said WestConduit’s Chief Information Officer Lorraine Capobianco.

“WestConduit will allow us to build a unified digital campus, an integrated model for delivering student services,” Capobianco said. “Each person on our university community will receive information, Web-based applications and an online experience tailored to the individual’s role and relationship within WestConduit. Features that will be available through the portal include information channels like campus and personal announcements, a campus events calendar, convenient links to university resources, and a single sign-on to Banner Self Serve and WebCT.”

The work began about two years ago, when University Computing conducted an informal needs assessment and began meeting with each campus department and individuals to obtain input that would shape the content, procedures and policies for a unified portal. The final result is a portal that has been customized and refined to reflect the results of that feedback. But the customization doesn’t end there — users and groups of users will be able to access, post and utilize information specific to their interests by personalizing content. The result will be more effective and efficient communication between the university and its constituents. It’s an idea that’s been embraced by all areas of the university.

University Computing solicited the input of end-users from the start, which is why the responsibility of the initiative is expected to be successful. Even the name of the portal is the result of a campuswide effort. WestConduit was selected as the name-the-portal entry submitted by Professor of Anthropology Dr. Rob Whitemore and Adjunct Professor of English Nancy Barse.

Through Sept. 19, WestConduit will operate concurrently with existing systems to enable the campus community to become familiar with its function. After Sept. 19, WestConduit will become the sole source of campus announcements and the only doorway to WebCT and Banner Self Serve. Capobianco said the fall 2005 launch of WestConduit is only the beginning.

“Our portal will evolve over time based on university input,” she said. “This will allow us to provide our community a highly efficient experience by personalizing resources and services through technologies.”

Students combine scholarship with community service

by Robert Taylor

For an organization unknown to most WestConduit students a short while ago, the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS) has made its mark in the current year of its new campus chapter.

The NSCS mission to promote scholarship, leadership and service has provided a solid foundation for an enthusiastic group of students at WestConduit to pursue a broad range of activities, said Associate Professor of Social Sciences Dr. Avnell Mannes, faculty adviser to the organization. Among the most significant has been the group’s commitment to clean up after breakfast and perform other chores on the first Saturday each month at the Dorothy Day Hospitality Center in Danbury. Last spring the NSCS chapter also participated in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life at WestConduit. The chapter organized a concession stand for the event, under the leadership of senior Jenna Rao, the chapter’s vice president of community service.

“I do admire how incredibly active they have been and how much community service they’ve performed over the past year,” Mannes said.

Founded by a core group of academically strong students from diverse disciplines, the WestConduit NSCS chapter inducted 140 members at its first convocation ceremony in October 2004. Chapter President Stephanie O’Brien, a Danbury resident and senior majoring in marketing and management, predicted that invitations issued last spring to freshmen and sophomores who maintained a minimum 3.4 grade point average should yield at least as many new members, doubling the size of the organization to around 280 for the 2005-06 academic year.

The group’s drive last year to collect food and offer supplies donations to local charities demonstrated NSCS can work effectively with WestConduit faculty and staff to support the wider community, O’Brien said.

“We asked professors if we could keep boxes in their classrooms to collect food and offer supplies, and we were pleased that so many allowed us to do it,” she said.

NSCS members delivered donated food items to the Dorothy Day kitchen and office supplies to the Women’s Center of Greater Danbury.

While the NSCS has been most visible in its service projects, O’Brien said the organization also has played an important role in bringing students from diverse academic disciplines and age groups together to socialize and become engaged in university life. One advantage is that membership recruitment requires students to present their freshman and sophomore year, she noted.

“If you join right off the bat, it gives you the opportunity to become involved in a new campus and a new atmosphere,” she said. “I certainly appreciate that now as a senior. It’s made me realize how much getting involved is part of the college experience.”

NSCS members also have online access to the national organization’s extensive services, including merit

WestConduit hosts first Roots & Shoots summit

by Shari Hill

The well-attended Mother’s Day presentation by environmental United Nations Messenger of Peace Dr. Jane Goodall received a great deal of media attention and an interest gathering of college students dedicated to her mission a month earlier at WestConduit lacked the same level of notoriety but was equally important in advancing Goodall’s goal of making the world a better place for animals, the environment and the human community.

On April 1 and 2, the WestConduit Jane Goodall Center for Environmental Studies hosted the Roots & Shoots East Coast University Summit. College students and faculty from throughout the eastern United States convened for the first regional gathering to develop a network of global environmental and humanitarian programs. College-level Roots & Shoots program participants and student groups interested in joining the program attended.

The summit was funded, in part, by resources the WestConduit Jane Goodall Center will receive from an almost $200,000 federal grant appended to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spending bill for state and local environmental agencies in Connecticut Sens. Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman introduced the addition to the EPA budget along with support from Maryland Sen. Barbara Mikulski, whose state is home to the national Jane Goodall Institute.

“WestConduit has been selected to head the Jane Goodall Institute’s university-level Roots & Shoots program, due to (Adjunct Professor) Rick Asselta’s work,” explained Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Howard Russoc, who will administer the grant. “While there are many Roots & Shoots chapters at the K-12 level, there are far fewer at the collegiate level — and WestConduit’s program is one of the most active. We’ll use these funds as seed money to build the program and give us ideas for more meetings like the April summit, enable Rick to travel to other universities to develop these groups, and add additional student interns or office staff to support Rick’s efforts.

“We hope our senators will add this grant to next year’s bill, to support what we’ve accomplished in the first two years, we can look to other federal or outside agencies, such as the Department of Education or the Natural Science Foundation for continued funding.”

Nearly four dozen students representing six universities attended the April summit, including representative from sister schools Eastern and Southern Connecticut State universities, Cornell University, Connecticut College, the University of Vermont- Warren Wilson College in Asheville, N.C., Columbia University, Community College, and Three Rivers Community College in Norwich.

A psychology major Lindsey Goodwic, an intern in WestConduit’s Roots & Shoots program, attended the weekend summit. “It was such a great opportunity to have all these other students with similar interests come here,” Goodwic said.

Even after the summit, the momentum has continued. Two Quinnipiac University students who were unable to attend joined Goodwick in the office of Asselta, who directs not only WestConduit’s Roots & Shoots program, but also the university-level Roots & Shoots programs nationwide. The Quinnipiac students were there to learn how to start a program at their college.

Asselta gave them a rundown of what took place at the summit before explaining how to start a chapter.

“Any number of interesting presentations gave participants an idea of the many ways our chapters can make a difference in the world,” Asselta said.

WestConduit had several items on the agenda, including water conservation efforts being conducted by Assistant Professor of Social Sciences Dr. Christopher Kukik. He’s working with the Candlewood Lake Authority and the Hamden-based Valley Association of Anthropology/Sociology Prof. Laurie Weinstein also discussed her requirement that students be familiar with the state’s Right to Know Act, which performs a minimum of 15 hours community service and her work to establish a Roots & Shoots branch at Western State College in Colorado. The group has partnered to conduct archelogical digs on ancient Indian-American sites.

Partnership, leadership and teamwork are key components of the Roots & Shoots organization, Asselta told the Quinnipiac students.

Photo by Haven Page-Steiner

NSCS WestConduit chapter officers and members (l-r) Alyssa Scalise, Ashlee Kaoz, Uta Thuman, President Stephanie O’Brien, Vice President of Community Service Jenna Rao, Tania Pereira and Zaki Deutchter. Other officers not pictured: Josh McCauley, executive vice president and treasurer; Amy Anesi, vice president for college success; and Christopher Merkle, secretary.

Photo by Haven Page-Steiner

The National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS) has made its mark in the current year of its new campus chapter.
Love of academe lures Stewart to interim role

by Louise Avalon

Dr. Roy T. Stewart Jr. is leaving behind his retirement to play a key — but temporary — role in the WestConn administration.

Stewart said his decision to come to the Danbury campus as interim vice president for academic affairs during the 2005-06 academic year was an easy one.

“It’s an absolutely perfect assignment,” he said.

Stewart, 61, gets to return to the college life he missed after retiring as provost and vice president for academic affairs of Lock Haven University last year. And after a year in Connecticut, he’ll resume the pleasant country life of a retired academic, enjoying the idyllic, rural Mercer, Pa., home — with the pond and nearby woods — that he and his wife, Ginny, love.

His attachment to college life helped draw Stewart out of retirement. “I really missed being a part of a college campus,” he said. “I missed the interaction with students.”

Stewart spent 34 years at two Pennsylvania colleges that are about the same size and have backgrounds similar to WestConn: Community College of Allegheny County in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania and Slippery Rock University. Both are public institutions that started as teaching colleges and grew to encompass broader and more diverse academic aims.

“Roy brings extensive experience at public universities in Pennsylvania with histories and missions very similar to ours here at WestConn,” President Dr. James W. Schmotter said. “His wide experience as a faculty member, dean and academic vice president, as well as his engaging personality, will make him a valuable member of our leadership team.”

“I’m very pleased he will be joining us for a time on our continuing journey of excellence,” Schmotter added.

Schmotter expects to have a permanent vice president for academic affairs this academic year, who will also serve as provost, by July 2006.

The expansion of the position, Schmotter explained, is meant to stress the “centrality” of the position and academics at WestConn.

Stewart has plenty of “interim” or “acting” experience that will serve him well in his role at WestConn. He provided hand-in-hand care in in his position as dean of Lock Haven in 1999 and served as dean of graduate studies and research at Slippery Rock for a year before he was officially nixed to the position.

Stewart had been at Lock Haven seven years as vice president for academic affairs before retiring last year. Prior to that, he was at Slippery Rock for 26 years, serving as vice president and professor of education since 1971 as an assistant professor in the communications department and leaving as dean of graduate studies and research.

Stewart earned Ph.D. in Speech Communication from the University of Illinois. He plans to put his year of experience to use here.

“I think one of my primary objectives is to help the president accomplish his visions and his goals,” Stewart said.

Partnership to train nurse educators (cont’d.)

“Students and faculty members on our campuses recognize the importance of nursing education — in Lambert’s words, they ‘are committed to the future of nursing education’ — and we value the leadership of individuals like Dr. Stewart,” said WestConn Nurse Anesthesia Program Coordinator Nancy A. Kube, R.N., M.S.N.

“We can’t wait to work with him to bring student nurses and educators together for an engaged and dynamic future in nursing education.”

But Stewart still felt it was time to let someone else lead the way.

“I’ve been there, and I think it’s time to let someone else take the lead,” Stewart said.

Stewart said he wanted to do more for the college and the surrounding community before he retired, and he thought the interim position would be a fitting end to his career.

“I wanted to give back to the college,” he said.

“Dr. Stewart brings a wealth of experience and a unique perspective to his new role,” said Schmotter. “He will provide strong leadership and direction to our campus.”

Artifacts, including items related to the original organ.

The organ is an American treasure and a Danbury treasure,” Guerino said. It’s a piece of the past that we’ve preserved and formed the music we love and have listened to since Charles Ives first began to influence new and emerging American musicians.”

Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton agreed.

“This organ really is a piece of history,” Boughton said. “Clearly, it’s beneficial for us to have it preserved and for it to remain in Danbury. I want to thank WestConn for stepping in to help us out as they always do — in this case, to help us keep the organ.”

In the end, it came down to a sense of “community” in deciding where the organ would go.

“A church in Virginia expressed interest in the organ, as did WestConn,” Emanuel Lutheran Pastor Walt Harper said. “It was a tough decision for us, but we decided to go with the goodness of both to keep the organ here in our community.”

Until the Fine and Performing Arts Center is completed, the organ will remain in the West Street church now owned by Danbury Lighthouse Ministries, which has agreed to safeguard the instrument until WestConn is ready to relocate it.

For more information about supporting the effort to preserve and maintain the historic organ, call WestConn Dialogue Institute Executive Director Michael D.www.9/11/campus/12876/Shoots/shoots.html

But each individual is important, too.

“In all our work, we stress the ‘Knowledge-Compassion-Action’ model,” Asselta explained. “Jane Goodall says, ‘One person can change the world and every individual has the power to make the world better.’ We truly believe that.”

For more information, call Asselta at (203) 837-8726.

For more information, call Lunow at (203) 837-8453 or send e-mail to oconnor510@student.uconn.edu.

For more information, call WestConn at (203) 837-8200.

For more information, contact the WestConn nursing department at (203) 837-8546.

12878/Shoots/Shoots.html

For more information, call Moros at (203) 837-8453 or send e-mail to oconnor510@student.uconn.edu.
C A L E N D A R O F E V E N T S

All listings are subject to change. Please call to confirm.

SEPT. 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 WestConn will present the Midtown Campus Coffeehouse for university students, faculty and staff on the first and third Wednesdays of the month. The featured performers on Thursday, Sept. 1, will be theatre arts students, who are also Just book on campus from their time of "Western Night" for a three-week run as the Finger Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. Future performers will be announced. Admission will be free. Call (203) 837-9700 for more information.

SEPT. 2. WestConn will host a meeting of the Council of Connecticut Academy Library Directors in the Fifth-Floor Meeting Rooms of the Ruth Library on the Midtown campus. Representatives from academic libraries in the State of Connecticut are invited to attend. For more information, call Director of Library Services Ralph Halboush at (203) 837-9109.

SEPT. 10. Two noble prize private collections of original American documents and photographs have been combined to create "The Freedom: A History of US" exhibition, which will be on display in Warner Hall on the Midtown campus. The exhibit will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The display will be free and open to the public. For more information, call the Office of Public Relations at (203) 837-9846. See box on page 2.

SEPT. 10 – OCT. 7. WestConn will present "Excursions." An Exhibition of Recent Works by Herman Freeman, Thomas DiGrazia and Pauline Dennis, from Saturday, Sept. 10, through Friday, Oct. 7, at the Ruth Hass Library on the Midtown campus. The exhibit will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. For more information, call (203) 837-9107.

SEPT. 12. WestConn will host a weekly ceremony of remembrance for the first time on Sept. 11, 2001. Terrorist attacks on America on Monday Sept. 10, 2012, on the Quadrangle of the Midtown Campus. For more information, contact Dr. David Mached at (203) 837-9066. See story on page 2.

SEPT. 13. John Ash, a leading authority on contemporary American realism and figurative painting, will be the fall 2011 Visiting Artist at WestConn. Ash will lecture at 11 a.m. in Warren Room 1 in White Hall on the Midtown campus. The author of many books and exhibition catalogs, Ash also has curated numerous exhibitions shown in major galleries, including the National Endowment for the Arts. He will discuss contemporary landscape painting. The event will be free and open to the public.

SEPT. 14. Constitution Day event. Time and location are to be announced. For more information, call the Office of Public Relations at (203) 837-8486.

SEPT. 17. The WestConn Chapter of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars will hold an induction ceremony at 7 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton will be the host speaker, and one student will receive a Briscoe Award for its contributions to the campus and surrounding community during the 2004-05 academic year. The ceremony will be free and the public is invited. For more information, call Stephanie O'Brien at (203) 731-8185. See story on page 1.

SEPT. 17. "Saudo Bermuda and Friends: A Concert of Indian Tabla and Tabla Toning, with a Hint of Jazz." This event will be at 6:30 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. Local students of Indian dance will perform classical and folk dances of India. Bermuda's conman, Burman, a native of Darjeeling, India, has spent his life studying tabla and tabla taming, a circle of tables tuned to a 12 note scale. He adds jazz fusion to the mix of Indian melodies and rhythms. Tickets will be $15 for adults and $10 for children under the age of 18. WestConn students with valid ID will be admitted free. Indian snacks will be available for purchase. The event is sponsored by the Connecticut Folklore Project, the WestConn Office of Multicultural Affairs, the International Students Association and the Student Cultural Commission. For more information, call Judith Czakowsky at the Connecticut Folklore Project (203) 748-1131.

SEPT. 18. Poet and artist Phil Demise Smith will read from and discuss his poetry at 2 p.m. in the Fifth-Floor Meeting Room of the Ruth Hass Library on the Midtown campus. The event will be free and the public is invited. For more information, call the Library at (203) 837-9107.

SEPT. 20. Dan Conner, the vice president for business development at Walt Disney Imagineering, will speak about the fuel cell industry from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. during a political science class in ROOM 044 of White Hall on the Midtown campus. The discussion will be free and open to the public. It is one of several scheduled over the semester for the World Governments, Economics, and Cultural course taught by Instructor Scott Benjamin. For more information, call Scott Benjamin at (860) 210-2146, ext. 129, or (860) 304-3521.

SEPT. 26. A forum titled "Combating Sex Slavery Here and Now: An Exploration of Human Trafficking" will be at 7 p.m. in the Student Center Theater on the Midtown campus. Anti-slavery activist Martha Johnson, of New York City, will speak about sex trafficking as it relates to the United States. A panel that will include Carmen Lomeli, executive secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women for the Organization of American States; State Sen. Andrea Stillman, who authored a legislative study on trafficking of women and children in Connecticut; and former WestConn student Marissa Whittemore, will also participate. Admission will be free and open to the public.

OCT. 1. The Institute for Holistic Health Studies at WestConn and the Danbury branch of the Connecticut Holistic Health Association will present a panel discussion about stress management at 7 p.m. in Alumni Hall on the Midtown campus. Registration and networking will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the program will be from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission will be $15 for non-members, $10 for members, and $1 for senior citizens and non-WestConn students with valid identification. WestConn students, faculty and staff with valid ID will be admitted free. For more information, call Sherry Darby, Director of Public Relations at (203) 731-8456.

OCT. 6. The WestConn Symphony Band will perform at 8 p.m. in the Concert Hall in White Hall on the Midtown campus. The concert will be free and open to the public; donations to the music department will be accepted. For more information, visit www.acsuc.music or call (203) 837-8450.

OCT. 1. Robert Werner, a director for Dias Consulting, will discuss India's economy and America's trade relations with that country from 5:25 to 6:25 p.m. at a political science class in ROOM 044 of White Hall on the Midtown Campus. For more information, call Scott Benjamin at (860) 210-2146, ext. 129, or (860) 304-3521.

OCT. 1. A reception for the James R. Poehl Research Award will be at 4 p.m. in the Ruth Hass Library on the Midtown campus. The public is invited. The award will be presented to the American Production and Inventory Control Society, which has contributed production and management tests to the university, resulting in one of the state's most comprehensive collections on the topic. For more information, call Director of Library Services Ralph Halboush at (203) 837-9109.

Freedom: A History of US
Sept. 10 through 23
Weekdays: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Weekends: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Warner Hall
Midtown campus

The "Freedom: A History of US" exhibition combines two historic, private collections of original American documents and photographs, which will be on display at WestConn in September. The exhibition is free and the public is invited to view original prints of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation. The display will also feature letters and speeches from George Washington, Frederick Douglass, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr. and others. The exhibition will be presented in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution Affiliates Program. WestConn is a Smithsonian affiliate.

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