Four alums draw on their WestConn education to drive new careers.

Feature stories about WestConn alumni

- Timothy Devine
- Siergiej family tradition
- Janette Santizo
Spring 2006

Alumni News

Features

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Regional advantage

In last year’s “Values and Vision” conversations, Western Connecticut State University stakeholders frequently repeated a common theme: that one of our university’s central strengths is the way we employ our regional advantage to educate for global realities. I emphatically agree, so let me share with you what we mean by this observation.

WestConn is located in an especially dynamic and sophisticated region of the nation. We are positioned not only close to major corporations and the intellectual and cultural resources of Fairfield, Litchfield and Westchester counties, but also within easy commuting distance of New York City. Here in Danbury, we enjoy one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse communities in the nation. More than 40 first languages find voice among students of our public schools, and our metropolitan area is enriched by the cultural, linguistic and economic benefits such diversity brings.

WestConn students reap great benefits from our regional position and from our ethnically diverse and culturally rich neighborhoods. Our proximity to New York translates to our theater, music and visual arts students being able to study with teachers whose professional experience includes working in some world-famous venues. Business and science students take advantage of the influences and resources of dynamic local corporations such as Boehringer Ingelheim, GE Capital, Ethan Allen, Branson Ultrasonics and Cendant Mobility. Education and social work students are exposed directly to the reality of human diversity certain to challenge them in their future careers. And our nursing students benefit greatly from our

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Association Board welcomes new members

As I enter the last half of my second year serving as Western Connecticut State University’s Alumni Association (AA) president, I am pleased to report that the board has made significant progress in its goal to “connect” with more people on the WestConn campus. Now, a student representative, Jenna Rao, serves on the AA board. Rao is largely responsible for reviving interest in WestConn’s yearbook, the annual publication that chronicles student and academic life, particularly for the graduating class.

The board also welcomed two additional members: Monica Perry, a nursing graduate who also represents the newly formed WCSU Nursing Alumni Society, and Chris Hill, a recent alumnus who is eager to play ambassador to WestConn’s current student body. These new board members already are bringing new vitality and a different perspective to the AA.

This year, my wife, Lois, and I attended many campus functions. One event stands out as particularly special — the 2005 Wine Tasting that we attended with our close friends and fellow alumni Bill and Sue Ellen (Salvaggio) Hansen. They had not been “on campus” in 34 years and were very impressed with the many capital improvements made in the last decade, particularly the addition of the Quad and Warner Hall, where the event was held. We all had a fabulous time tasting fine wines, sampling food and meeting everyone. The event was again graciously sponsored and supported by Tony Cataluzzi and his wonderful family, and hosted by President Jim Schmotter and his wife, Dr. Daphne Jameson.

I hope more of our alumni will take advantage of the multitude and wide variety of events that are available throughout the year at WestConn.
WestConn Society provides new opportunities for giving

By Yvonne Johnson
Over the years, WestConn, its alumni and the Greater Danbury community have enjoyed a valuable relationship, thanks to the WestConn Society, which has enabled our students and community to grow and thrive, benefiting the region and far beyond. Members of the WestConn Society play a significant role in sustaining this relationship. That’s because funds raised through the WestConn Society support the university in a myriad of ways, including student scholarships, academic resources, and cultural programs and events.

This outstanding partnership program presents another opportunity for you to support the university. In response to the many ways in which members have chosen to offer support, the program has been structured to reflect and accommodate a number of giving levels. Contribution levels begin at $250. To join the WestConn Society, you simply need to complete a membership form and make an annual donation.

Members of the society are invited to an annual luncheon, hosted by WCSU President James W. Schmotter. To request a membership form or receive more information, call the Office of Institutional Advancement at (203) 837-8279.

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Institutional Advancement improves online access

By Yvonne Johnson
Are you interested in making an online pledge, or looking for more information about the Office of Institutional Advancement? In order to better serve you, we’ve recently revamped our Web pages.

Visit www.wcsu.edu/ia for information about the Institutional Advancement departments, which include Alumni Relations, Development and University Relations — comprised of Public Relations and University Publications and Design. The site outlines various giving opportunities. There’s an online form to update alumni and donor information. The online pledge form is designed to make giving to the WCSU Foundation even more convenient, and there’s plenty of other features you may find helpful.

To offer feedback or obtain more information about supporting WestConn, call the Office of Institutional Advancement at (203) 837-8298.

The Connecticut Choral Society (CCS) provided $5,000 in scholarships to voice music students at a recent event. Pictured are (l-r): Professor of Music Dr. Kevin Jay Isaacs; Music Department Chair Dr. Dan Goble; CCS Scholarship recipients Michael Carnaroli, Meagan Johnson, Jordan Rose Lee, Noelle Chave, Hernan Berisso; and CCS Scholarship Committee member Mario Mesi.

Neil and Carolyn Wagner (left), 1952 graduates, were honored at this year’s WestConn Society Luncheon. Individually and together, the Wagners have dedicated themselves to service to their alma mater and their community. In recognition of their many years of service and immeasurable contribution to WestConn and the Danbury community, they were presented with the Distinguished Community Service Award by President James W. Schmotter, shown here with his wife, Dr. Daphne Jameson.
By Yvonne Johnson

The Committee of 200 (C200) is “THE” international professional organization for preeminent women entrepreneurs and corporate leaders. With founding members such as Katharine Graham of The Washington Post and Sherry Lansing of Paramount Pictures, its invitation-only membership list features some of the most celebrated names in business. So it was a particular honor when the group recently recognized WestConn benefactor and honorary degree recipient Ellen M. Hancock as a technology innovator.

C200 presented Hancock, the former chair and CEO of Exodus Communications, with its ninth annual Technology Innovator Luminary Award during a gala at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. Sponsored by chip-manufacturing giant Intel Corp., the C200 Technology Innovator Award is presented to a businesswoman “who has charted new ground in technology by launching, changing or dramatically expanding an Internet venture and moving it toward increased profitability.”

Hancock, who received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from WestConn in 1993, has made a substantial impact at the university and in many other arenas. She and her husband, Jason — a WestConn alumnus and former faculty member — donated $1 million to the university in 2001 to establish the Jason and Ellen Hancock Student Endowment Fund. At the time, it was the largest private gift ever received by WestConn.
By Sherri Hill

Justice and law administration (JLA) alumnus Timothy Devine amassed some impressive credentials as a WestConn student. The Wallingford resident was a four-year letterman and senior co-captain of the men’s varsity basketball team, which won the Eastern College Athletic Conference championship in 1994, his junior year.

In the decade since his graduation, the awards have continued. Devine’s receipt of a WestConn Centennial Award of Excellence in 2002 was an honor that “humbled and surprised” him “because WestConn has produced a distinguished and accomplished list of alumni.”

The walls of his Miami office hold numerous work-related honors: 2002 Federal Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, 2002 Missing and Exploited Children Information Clearinghouse Federal Officer of the Year - 2nd Place, and 2003 and 2004 Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer of the Year awards from the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Florida.

But the memento that means the most to Devine is the photograph of a 3-year-old girl who was at the center of one of the cases he’s investigated as a Secret Service special agent.

“Her photo reminds me that there are worse things in life than working weekends or losing a basketball game,” Devine says. “The things I’ve seen in my casework are unimaginable and beyond comprehension. Each new case is a horror story involving an offender whose conduct is offensive to describe. These investigations have changed me as an agent and as a man.”

Devine’s career path began at WestConn, where he studied law enforcement and worked as a student for the WCSU Police Department in its residential security program. He also built leadership skills here, says WCSU Basketball Coach Bob Campbell.

“Tim is a great person, a fantastic competitor, and everything you’d ever hope for in a team player,” Campbell says. “He became a great leader — pushing himself and his teammates to work harder and do great things. He’s taken those same attributes and applied them to his career, which has contributed to his success.”

After graduating in 1995, Devine was a loss prevention officer for J.C. Penney for a year before becoming an investigative specialist with the FBI. Following a two-year stint in the FBI’s New York Field Office working in counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism, Devine joined the Secret Service.

“As a special agent, I have dual responsibilities of investigation and protection,” Devine explains. “My

From basketball court to federal court:

Devine’s follow-through ensures important victories

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Contributed Photo

Timothy Devine at his office in Miami, Fla. He is a special agent in the Secret Service Miami Electronic Crimes Task Force.
Imagine yourself in the deep reaches of a Manhattan hotel, helping to monitor a parade of vintage automobiles as they are pushed through the hotel's cavernous kitchens. Cooks at stations marked “desserts,” “sauces” and “meats” watch in awe as a long and stately, teal-green 1934 Packard Twelve Phaeton slides from a freight elevator through long halls to the great stage upon which it will be offered, in auction, to the crème-de-la-crème of automotive connoisseurs.

The event was the 2002 New York Auto Salon at the Waldorf-Astoria, and Alexis (Brancato) Chacchia ’95 was responsible for keeping track of the star attractions and interfacing with the prospective buyers. Chacchia, vice president of operations at Premier Financial Services, a multimillion dollar vintage and exotic automobile financing company, had it all under control — thanks to her history degree from WCSU.

History degree? Yes …

Long before Chacchia, who is married with two young children, slpped her résumé under the door of the young-but-rapidly-growing financing company owned by Mitchell Katz in Woodbury, Conn., she already was a confident young woman with a head for detail and an appreciation for the broader context of industry.

“If you had curiosity and a passion for knowledge, the demanding classes of WestConn history teachers like Dr. (Eric) Roman and Dr. (Herb) Janick taught you how to develop those traits into usable assets,” says Chacchia, who commuted to WestConn from her hometown of Carmel, N.Y. “We learned to think analytically. I had entered as an English major but I realized early on that I didn’t want to read and critique literary works as much as I wanted to see how things like politics and commerce fit in the world, and how they shaped it.”

Her experiences at WestConn taught her much about being effective. “Here at Premier I’m expected to oversee the staff,” she says. “I also coordinate systems development and do portfolio management. The company owns and finances more than 200 high-end cars, and has about 20 employees. You have to know how to work with others, to understand budgeting and how to pull things together.”

Katz says when Chacchia applied for a job he had only four other employees. He checked with her former employer, who said, “She won’t be a receptionist for long.” “He was so right,” laughs Katz. “She’s my right arm now.”

A WCSU nursing degree proved equally useful for Amy (Winters) Seibert ’88, who selected WestConn for two reasons: she’d loved the environment of her small home town, Beacon Falls, and wanted the same friendly atmosphere in her college experience. She also wanted to be a nurse. “WestConn had this reputation of having one of the best nursing programs,” explains Seibert. “Like so many in my family, I was drawn to the field of medicine, so that made WestConn an easy choice.

“The training I got was great,” Seibert says. “Going through nursing rotations at high-level hospitals, from White Plains to New Haven and, of course, Danbury Hospital, I handled very real situations. My instructors were so knowledgeable and always there to help.” She was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau, the national nursing honor society, and passed her boards on the first try. “That says so much for WestConn’s nursing program,” she says.

After graduation, Seibert had a nine-year career in nursing. “It was very satisfying,” she explains. “But then it
The alphabet as matchmaker?

Last names, fate and a little luck start family tradition

By Irene Sherlock

With a little help from Cupid, why not? Boy, whose last name starts with S, meets girl, whose last name starts with T, in high school Latin class during the early ’40s when educators still believed mightily in the power of alphabetical order. For this particular boy and girl it was Danbury High School, where he was Edward J. Siergiej and she was Mary Alma Taylor, a few years younger. Fate would have them wait a while for the next push, however. Ed was drafted into the army at 18, after graduation; and Mary had another two years at Danbury High.

“I was in the first class of returning World War II veterans to attend Danbury State Teacher’s College (DSTC) in 1946,” Ed explains. “I’d enrolled just after high school, in a program for students who expected to be called into service.” Apparently the foresighted Ed didn’t waste this preliminary stint at college: he took courses in navigation, calculus and meteorology to supplement the standard college curriculum, and was issued an associate degree in education before he went into the 17th Airborne, a division of the U.S. Army with which he has kept strong ties throughout his life.

By the time Ed returned from the war, his high school classmate Mary, a talented singer, was attending DSTC too. Neither student knew much about the other — in spite of having attended the same high school — and once again Fate intervened: Edward J. Siergiej, president of their graduation class, and Mary Alma Taylor shared space on the same page in the 1948 yearbook when they graduated from DSTC. You might think that would have been the quintessential moment for Cupid to shoot his arrow, but if he did, it didn’t quite make its mark. The two would have to wait a while to see their names printed together again. But the wait was worth it, for the document upon which those names would next appear together turned out to be a marriage license.

It might have been that Mary Taylor, even as a graduating college senior, was a little in awe of this well-traveled soldier whose placement on school rosters had so often neighbored her own. “He’d already lived quite a life by the time we’d started dating,” she recalls.

How that dating finally came about is itself a kismet sort of thing. One day while reading the newspaper, Ed came across an article describing how his former classmate, Mary Alma Taylor, was about to audition for the chorus school of the Metropolitan Opera.

“So that was quite impressive,” Ed remembers, a note of pride in his voice. He mustered the nerve to call her. “As president of our graduation class,” he said, after introducing himself, “I thought I should congratulate you.”

“I was a little astounded.” Mary admits, all these years later.

Somewhere behind the scenes, Fate and Cupid must have been smiling. The couple was married in 1954. Mary taught kindergarten, continued to study voice and sang solos regularly in church. After the birth of their second child she left teaching, but she always sang. “Music is something I have looked forward to each day,” she says.

Ed began his career in education, first as a head teacher in the Fairfield, Conn., public schools, then as coordinator of audiovisual services for the Great Neck, N.Y., school district. In 1953, he received a Master of Arts in Educational Administration from Columbia University and soon after became principal of the junior high school Summer Enrichment Program in Great Neck. In 1970, he was named director of educational communications for the Rockville Center, N.Y., public schools.

Clearly the two held proudly to their growing tradition of service through education. Though Mary herself no longer taught, she always was supportively at her husband’s side throughout his impressive career, which ended in retirement in 1980. The couple now live in Dowling Park, Fla.

“That’s when I got busy,” Ed says, meaning in retirement he went back to work at something he loved. This time it was re-dedicating himself to the historic 17th Airborne. “I’m the executive

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By Irene Sherlock
Ancell School of Business alumna Janette Santizo has spent much of her professional life bringing food to people’s tables. For the past 10 years, in the United States as well as in her native Peru, she has worked in the fast-paced import/export business coordinating international sales between beef wholesalers from Australia, New Zealand, and Central and South America, and packing companies, distributors and retail stores in the United States.

“I’ve worked at both ends of the industry,” Santizo says. “With importers whose main customers are the grinding companies that process hamburger patties for well-known national chains, to distributors who focus on mainly high-end beef products.”

While many of us seldom voluntarily dwell on what goes on in the production of hamburger patties, Santizo has made it her business to become exceedingly knowledgeable about it. During the many years she’s been in the business, Santizo has toured slaughterhouses, packing plants and shipping ports — both in the United States and overseas. Sometimes she was there to solve a business problem; other times, she went for training.

“When I first started in the industry, three of my colleagues and I took a course called Beef 101 at the A&M University in College Station, Texas. It was the first time any of us had set foot in a slaughterhouse and we saw the entire process, which included grading the cattle, de-boning the carcass, then grilling some of the beef the next day for dinner. Of course, after witnessing the death of our beloved, hoofed friends none of us could touch the steaks! I think we all turned vegetarian for a few days.”

Santizo’s occupation was partly born from her love of — and respect for — good food. “I love to cook. And I’m very eclectic about it. My favorite is Peruvian food because of the variety, richness and freshness of the ingredients. It’s what I was brought up on.”

Aside from the slaughterhouse experience, Santizo takes delight in a business whose focus is food. “I love my work,” she says. “I deal with overseas suppliers, exporters, transportation companies, customs people and USDA inspectors. It’s quite a lengthy process, shepherding food from destination to destination. It needs constant monitoring in order to ensure on-time delivery for your customers.”

These days, Santizo might concede her “clients” are a little less demanding — and a lot more grateful. There’s been a slight change. Six months ago, she and her husband, Jorge, moved to Kansas City, Mo., and since the move, she’s been on hiatus from any sort of paying day job, though one would hardly call her unemployed.

Until her next job in the import/export field comes along, Santizo is satisfied to be doing volunteer work with the Red Cross — which means she’s feeding people once again.

“I guess I just like doing that,” she says, smiling. “I drive a van for the Mobile Meals for the Homeless program.” This is work that is always rewarding, she says.

Though Santizo and her husband left their respective jobs in Connecticut when Jorge received the job offer in Kansas City, she says, “We love Connecticut, but we’re pleasantly surprised by the how much we like Missouri — especially now that it’s winter!”

**Graduate Studies alumna imports her talents to the United States**

Contributed Photo
The athletics program completed its fall season and now is wrapping up its winter season that includes team sports such as men’s and women’s basketball, women’s swimming and diving, and the club sport, ice hockey. Both soccer teams had especially exciting seasons. Here are some of the highlights:

**Men’s soccer wins Little East Conference title and hosts NCAA Tournament**

The men’s soccer team earned a berth in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Tournament when it captured the Little East Conference (LEC) Championship with an 8-7 result in the shootout. The Colonials and Rhode Island College battled to a 0-0 double-overtime tie before the sudden-victory session. Sophomore back Ryan Edgley scored the deciding penalty kick after the Anchormen failed to convert their eighth attempt.

WestConn was selected to host the first- and second-round matches of the 2005 NCAA Division III Men’s Soccer Championships on Nov. 12 and 13 at Wheaton College’s Mirrione Stadium in Norton, Mass. The Colonials made their fifth appearance in the tournament, earning an automatic berth after winning the LEC in 1997, 1999, 2000 and 2001.

The Colonials, 15-3-2 and ranked first in the National Soccer Coaches Association of America regional poll late in the season, defeated Endicott College, 2-1, in the first round of the NCAAs. A day later, WestConn’s season ended with a heartbreaking 1-0 loss to Wheaton College.

Despite dropping a 2-1 double-overtime decision to Keene State College in the LEC semifinals, WestConn received a Pool C berth in the tournament.

**Women’s soccer advances to NCAA Division III Championship Tournament second round**


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**Vincent Sheperis and Joe DiMeglio finish record-setting football careers**

Seniors Vincent Sheperis and Joe DiMeglio were instrumental in WestConn’s improvement to 6-4 overall and 3-3 in the highly competitive New Jersey Athletic Conference last fall.

Sheperis, a wide receiver and kick returner from North Kingstown, R.I., added three receiving records to his three previously held marks. Many of Sheperis’ records came from the arm of Bethel, Conn., quarterback DiMeglio. After only a two-year career in Colonial blue, DiMeglio finished his collegiate career with eight school passing records. He holds all records for attempts and completions in a game, season and career as well as passing yards in a season (2,836) and touchdowns in a game (6).

**Field hockey returns to WestConn**

After a 14-year hiatus, women’s field hockey returned to WestConn last fall. Rookie coach Dani McDonnell headed a group of young and dedicated athletes through the school’s first season since 1991. The Colonials finished with a 1-12 record, but were within striking distance in six of their losses, falling to six LEC opponents by three or fewer goals.

**Women’s volleyball rebuilding**

The WestConn women’s volleyball team finished with a 10-14 overall record and was 3-4 in the LEC in 2005. Seniors Stefanie Weise and Lisa Horvay enjoyed outstanding final seasons for new head coach Pablo Baez. Weise led the Colonials with 7.34 set assists and a team-high .251 hitting percentage. Horvay, an outside hitter, had 137 kills, 202 defensive digs and 23 total blocks in 2005. Sophomore Tiffany Phoenix led WestConn with 3.44 kills per game and 35 service aces.

**Women’s tennis finishes at 3-9**

The WestConn women’s tennis team finished with a 3-9 overall record and was 2-5 in dual LEC play. Junior Kendra Sloat led the Colonials from her No. 1 singles and No. 1 doubles position in her third campaign. She finished the season with a 5-7 record at the top singles spot for head coach Alex Aitchison.

Sloat was one of three WestConn players to advance to the semifinals of the LEC Championships, held in late October near Beaver Brook Tennis Club. Ashley Ludwig and Krista Golia dropped an 8-4 decision in the finals at third-flight doubles.

**Women’s basketball rebuilding**

The WestConn women’s basketball team finished with a 4-14 overall record and was 1-9 in the LEC in 2005. Seniors Stefanie Weise and Lisa Horvay enjoyed outstanding final seasons for new head coach Pablo Baez. Weise led the Colonials with 7.34 set assists and a team-high .251 hitting percentage. Horvay, an outside hitter, had 137 kills, 202 defensive digs and 23 total blocks in 2005. Sophomore Tiffany Phoenix led WestConn with 3.44 kills per game and 35 service aces.

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Basketball court to federal court (cont’d.)

Duties include assignments with the presidential, vice-presidential and foreign dignitary protective divisions. My investigative roles have included the Access Device Squad, Counterfeit Squad and Hi-Tech Squad — the predecessor to the Miami Electronic Crimes Task Force (MECTF). The MECTF investigates electronic crimes and operates the Secret Service’s computer forensic examination program in the Miami district.

In mid-2001, Devine earned computer forensic examiner certification, and the MECTF launched its Internet child exploitation initiative.

“During my tour in electronic crimes, I’ve worked undercover on the Internet as a teenage girl and infiltrated child exploitation organizations as a pedophile,” Devine says. “The MECTF has arrested and successfully prosecuted approximately 75 pedophiles and sexual offenders from around the nation. I’ve been involved in 95 percent of these investigations as the case agent, the undercover operative or the forensic examiner.

“A dozen MECTF child enticement cases have been tried in U.S. District Courts and I’ve testified in all of them,” he continues. “As of November 2005, the MECTF has lost only one trial and is recognized as one of the leading child exploitation and computer crime task forces in Florida.”

Devine is the acknowledged expert on this winning team. He uses that know-how when speaking about Internet safety to children at schools in Florida — and here in Connecticut when he returns to the area to visit his family.

“One of my brothers and some of my friends are teachers, and I spend several days speaking to their students about the dangers of the Internet,” Devine says. “My vacations in Connecticut become like a tour on the lecture circuit.”

That’s not surprising to Criminology Professor Dr. Casey Jordan.

“I’m thrilled that Tim has put his JLA degree to work in such an important and impressive way,” Jordan said. “Back in the ’90s, we could not have predicted the realities of Internet child pornography and cyber-predators as a major challenge to our criminal justice system; it’s a real credit to Tim that he’s been able to keep pace with the changing face of law enforcement throughout the years.”

Professor of English and JLA Dr. Harry Schramm, another of Devine’s instructors, agrees.

“Tim is a special person because he’s been able to utilize all his skills — interpersonal, athletic and academic — in building his career,” Schramm says. “He’s a perfect representative of what we do here: he took the opportunities WestConn offered him and ran with them. He’s also tremendously dedicated and is very successful at what he does in a job that must be extremely difficult and demanding. Tim represents society at its highest ideals. He’s our arm in Miami; he changes lives.”
Four Alums (cont’d.)

was time to be a stay-at-home mom for a while.” She and husband Joseph Siebert, also a WCSU alumnus, have two sons. Three and a half years later, ready to re-enter the workforce, Seibert says she had “begun thinking about accounting, about working for a company I could grow with. I had always loved the challenge of numbers.”

She responded to an ad for a job at Premier. Katz remembers their first phone conversation. “I knew immediately that Amy was someone we’d want to work for us. She had a very self-assured tone. No doubt her nurse’s training in handling emergencies helped. She’s turned out to be our trouble-shooter and a terrific problem-solver,” Katz says. “We all count on her and she comes through.”

Laura (Garriepy) Porcelli’s ’89, degree from WestConn is in communication, with a focus on radio and television broadcasting, and her outgoing personality and self-starter initiative made her a shoo-in when she applied to Premier last year.

“I was a commuter student when I was at WestConn,” says Porcelli, “but there were plenty of opportunities on campus to get involved. I worked as a newscaster for WXCI — a great experience — and I also took business classes.” She had been accepted to the University of Massachusetts, but turned down the idea of going to such a huge, not to mention expensive, university. “WestConn appealed to me. It had interesting programs, a well-respected faculty, I could handle the tuition and it was close. I never looked back.”

After graduating, Porcelli married and worked facilitating medical teleconferences. “I was using my communication skills to educate doctors about new drugs.” She then moved with her husband, Doug, to New Jersey when he was transferred. There, she worked for Comcast Cable as a traffic assistant. She got promoted, but had to resign when Doug’s career brought them back to Connecticut. By then, the couple had two small sons.

Essentially a stay-at-home mom, she kept up with part-time interests. “I clerked for the Town of Woodbury and taught Sunday school. When I saw the ad for an office position with this company, I was excited. I knew that here was something new I could learn.”

Whether they graduated 30, 45, or 50 years ago, alumni who returned for Homecoming events had plenty to celebrate.
Liza (Winthrop) Montgomery ‘95, the most recently hired of these four WestConn alums, graduated from WestConn with a degree in history. She had little knowledge of finance at the time. “It was like learning a new language. I’d been an editor at the Newtown Bee for ten years. What I knew about the leasing industry was … well … not much.”

Montgomery had transferred from Ithaca College to WestConn. She, too, encountered the demands that gave the history department its superb reputation. “We were expected to go to the primary source for our research, to painstakingly draw ideas from the historian’s own words,” she remembers. “Being able to debate — to be convincing through concrete fact — was essential.” Montgomery laughs, “Don’t think that doesn’t help when it comes to contract negotiations on cars or shaping a press release. It does.”

As marketing manager, Montgomery does everything from event planning to managing the Web site at Premier, to interfacing with publicists and using her writing and editorial skills in tailoring contracts. “Her first trial-by-fire,” as Chacchia tells it, “was organizing the full complement of travel, accommodations and amenities — the food, furnishings and actual program — for the “Monterey Weekend” in California this past summer.” That event is the largest in the United States featuring exotic and vintage cars.

After that experience, does she still like her job? “Yeah,” says Montgomery with a grin. “This is a niche business, unique, and one where staying fully engaged pays off not just in terms of money but also in the interest factor. When Alexis and I were at WestConn, we worked in the library together. All around us was the wonderful world of imagination and achievement. Back then, at Haas, it was books. Here, it’s fabulous cars and the workings of a dynamic industry. I loved that interest factor then, and I love it now.”

Four exceptional WestConn women, each having negotiated sharp turns on her career road and aware of how her education helped her to handle that challenge. Their boss, Katz, says, “If they are typical of the quality of students WestConn graduates, I’d like a direct line to the university whenever I’m hiring.”
Regional advantage (cont’d.)

Many of these educational opportunities have resulted from the efforts of WCSU alumni. Indeed, it’s often our own graduates who have “opened doors” for the people of WestConn by suggesting partnerships and by bringing their personal expertise to our student population. They, too, are a part of our “regional advantage” and we’re very grateful for their contributions.

To encourage further development of such advantages for WestConn’s students, I’ve announced the establishment of the President’s Initiatives Fund, which will provide financial support to faculty, staff and student projects and programs that advance the idea of employing our regional advantage to educate for global realities. My goal is to stimulate the considerable creative energy of our academic community to develop even more unique ways for WestConn to exploit this particular strength. Stay tuned! The results promise to be exciting. 

Grad Studies alumna (cont’d.)

Santizo is used to picking up and moving camp when necessary. Coming to the United States from Peru in 1995 after finishing a three-year degree program in international business at the Instituto Superior Tecnologico de Commercio Exterior in Lima, she is frank about what brought her here. “I came for the opportunities that exist in the United States,” she says.

Once here, she landed a job as logistics coordinator at the Louis Dreyfus Corporation’s meat and livestock division in Wilton, Conn., and after five years left to work for another food company, Sampco Inc., in Westport. “I hope to own my own import/export business one day,” she says. “Maybe non traditional exports, such as fruits and vegetables from my native country.”

Santizo seems to possess equal portions of enthusiasm for both the pleasure and business of food. Though her chosen career has demanded she work plenty of hours at her job, she’s also managed to earn two additional degrees since coming to America. Armed with a bachelor of arts she earned a Master of Business Administration from WestConn.

“My mother always stressed the importance of education,” she says. Santizo’s mother is a translator in Peru while Santizo herself is fluent in three languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese.

She chose WestConn for her graduate work because of the solid reputation of its business school. “I got a great education at WestConn,” she says.

“Janette was a fine student,” says Fred Tesch, graduate coordinator of WestConn’s M.B.A. program. “She was a resource to everyone in the program — generously sharing perspectives from her South American background and her various work experiences. She also served as a student member of the president’s Values and Vision Task Force.

While Santizo continues to broaden her horizons, both personally and professionally, she keeps close ties with her native land. “A lot of my family still lives there and my husband and I visit as often as we can. Last summer, we went to Machu Picchu in Cusco, the ancient city of the Incas. Every time we return, I’m reminded of how much I love Peru.”

WestConn lost a treasured, longtime friend in 2005 when Lyle Russell Cedric “Skitch” Henderson died at 87. The New Milford resident is remembered on campus as an avid supporter of our arts programs, and frequent participant in various events. He also served as Distinguished Professor of Music at WestConn.

Stay current

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Use additional paper if necessary. Please print or type and return to Office of Alumni Relations, WCSU, 181 White Street, Danbury, CT 06810.

❑ Yes! I want information about the Alumni Association Board and its volunteer committees. ❑ Yes! I want to help organize an event in my area. ❑ Yes! I would be interested in sponsoring an internship with my company.
By Sherri Hill

Fostering a mutually helpful relationship among the alumni, the faculty and the student body of the university is one of the many goals outlined in the WCSU Alumni Association Inc. Mission Statement. It’s an objective Alumni Association Board of Directors President Tom Crucitti ’69 has made a priority during his tenure as president.

“One of our initiatives for 2005-06 was to begin to make ‘connections’ with the university’s undergraduates and student life programs,” Crucitti explains. “Identifying ‘win-win’ relationships has become a priority.”

The first steps in that direction were made with the appointment of three new members to the Alumni Association Board.

Current student Jenna Rao, a senior psychology major from Danbury, is the first student representative to join the alumni board in recent memory. Twice the recipient of the Alumni Association Scholarship, she’s the vice president of community service for the WestConn chapter of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, and the driving force behind the resurrection of the senior yearbook, which will be produced in 2006 for the first time in four years.

“I’m excited and honored that out of all the students at WestConn, I was asked to join the board,” Rao says. “I always wanted to be a part of the alumni organization after I graduated, but I guess I’m getting an early start.”

Monica Perry ’04, a Danbury resident who received her B.S. in Nursing in 2004, is both an alumnus and a current student: she’s pursuing her master’s in nursing at WestConn while working as a cardiac nurse at Danbury Hospital.

“As an undergraduate, I was very involved with the nursing program and was part of the Student Nurse Association, serving on the board all four years and becoming president my senior year. I want to continue to be part of WCSU in any way that I can. I feel that by being on the Alumni Board and forming the WCSU Nursing Alumni Society, I can help make a difference at the university and in the nursing program.”

Waterbury resident Christopher Hill ’01, manager of a relocation division at Hewitt Associates, graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He sees his role on the Alumni Board as building upon the strong relationships he cultivated as a member of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity at WestConn.

“Being on the board is definitely a good opportunity to stay involved, and maintain and expand contacts with other alumni,” Hill says. “There’s a lot that takes place at the meetings and there’s a definite desire to grow the relationship with alumni. The strength I can bring is my connection to student life and the Greek system.”

Already, Crucitti says, the impact of the new members is evident.

Monica Perry ’04
Jenna Rao ’06

Alumni Association Board connects with recent, current students

Save these dates!

March 11, 2006 • Alumni Dinner Theatre

March 17, 2006 CMEA Music Reunion

April 29, 2006 Alumni Dinner Theatre
Jazz Festival Weekend
1940s
Harriet Pisetsy Davis ’41, a retired teacher, lives in an ocean-front condo in Palm Beach, Fla. Her husband, Theodore, passed away in 1999.
Ruby Conn Holloway ’43 has seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She participates in a writing group at the senior center in Washington, Conn.
Eleanor Muro Hegedus ’48 is retired and living in Rowayton, Conn., with her husband, James.
Violet Ziallas Hanegan ’49, a retired teacher, lives in Mendham, N.J., with her husband, Richard.

1950s
Lolly Lawson ’50 lives in Lexington, Mass. Her son, David, was declared cancer-free after a struggle with malignant melanoma.
Fifty years after their first meeting, Barbara Fisher Perkins ’51 and Arthur Perkins ’51 were married on Jan. 22, 2005. They live in Florida and play in the Suncoast Symphony Orchestra.
Both are former music teachers from Connecticut.
Vincent Cibbarelli ’53 retired nine years ago from the University of Virginia faculty and spent a year as acting dean at Longwood College.
He was a consultant to several Virginia school dioceses and presently serves on a church and civic boards.
Mary Carbone DeCarlo ’54 is temporarily back in the classroom, teaching an eight-week, hands-on science class to kindergarten and first grade students at her granddaughter’s school.
Robert Brayton ’55 celebrated his 52nd wedding anniversary with his wife, Ann. They have eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild, and live in Medfield, Mass.
Norman Lubus ’55 was a teacher and school administrator for 36 years, before working as a stockbroker for the last 11. He is retired and lives in Raleigh, N.C., with his wife, Donna Reed ’74.
Dorothy Skoglund Myers ’55 and her husband, Thomas, welcomed twin grandsons, Owen Timothy and Zachary Clarke, on Dec. 12, 2004.
Herbert Crocker ’57 retired in May after having served as the Internship Coordinator for the Administrative Preparatory Program at the University of Connecticut. He also served as director of student teaching at St. Joseph’s College and director of human resources in the Simsbury, Conn., public school system.
He was principal of Simsbury School and has taught in the Darien and Fairfield, Conn., school systems.

1960s
Francis Grosso ’60 is retired and living in Thomaston, Conn., with his wife, Patricia.
Sandra Phinin-Miller ’63 retired in 1993 after teaching for more than 30 years. She winters in the South and spends summers in Connecticut with her family and grandchildren.
Ronnie Gauss ’63 is the senior associate rector of the Bishop Seabury Church in Groton, Conn.
Tony Gorman ’63, a high school soccer referee, has officiated Connecticut-area games for more than 40 years.
Judith Zuratis Lee ’65 is retired from the Watertown Board of Education and lives in Watertown, Conn.
Paul Just ’69 served in the U.S. Navy and taught for 35 years. He will retire in June and plans to spend the next phase of his life wetting a fly line, climbing the Andes and kayaking the rivers of Nepal.

1970s
Kathryn Hilton Martin ’70 and husband, Dr. Alan Martin ’72, recently celebrated their 34th wedding anniversary. They are anticipating the arrival of their first grandchild in spring 2006. Daughter Amy Martin, D.D.S., and her husband, Michael McPharlin, are the expectant parents. Amy’s brother, Todd Martin, a law student at Nova University in Florida is the proud uncle-to-be.
Jeff Anderson ’71 is the current 55-59 age group champion for the 2005 XTerra off-road triathlon series in the Northeast United States.
Bernadine Marro Castronovo ’71, ’75 retired after 32 years of teaching vocal/general music in grades K-12, in the Mahopac, N.Y., school system.
Marc Catone ’72 authored “The Giant’s Chair,” which was released in October. The book’s name is derived from the Giant’s Chair rock formation in the Old Quary Nature Center on the Danbury/Bethel border.
The book contains numerous references to events and landmarks in the Danbury area.
Dr. Robert Valentl ’72 authored “Developing Self-Advocacy,” published by Hawthorne Educational Services in 1989. He lives in Florida with his wife, Marlene, and children Brandon, 4, and Evan, 2.
Mark Graser ’73 retired after 25 years in law enforcement as a police officer and detective. He served 12 years in the U.S. Army in both active duty and reserves in the military intelligence department. He currently is a high school safety officer for the Wappingers Central School District.
Leonard Genovese ’74 received his real estate license and started a new career in residential home sales. He and his wife, Colleen, moved from Middlebury to Oxford Greens, an over-55 golf community.
Jan Maria Jagush ’75, ’81 spent two weeks in Louisiana as a volunteer for the Salvation Army after Hurricane Katrina.
Richard Nigro ’76, ’82 is happy to announce that his daughter, Kristina, graduated from WestConn in 2005 with a degree in business.
Sandra Jean Turner Kissel ’77 graduated from St. Joseph’s College in May 2005 with a Master of Science in Psychiatric Nursing. She received the Best Thesis Award in Nursing for her paper “Maintaining and Breaking the Web: The Role of Relationships with Colleagues, Physicians, Management, Healthcare Institutions and Society in Nurses’ Caring.”
Brenda Cipriani Fegley ’78 received the Nursing Nightingale Award in 2005. This statewide award is sponsored by the Visiting Nurses Association. Fegley lives in Brookfield, Conn.
Darrel Haley ’78 retired after 33 years of teaching in the Carmel School District. He is married to Sharon Hunt ’66, ’72.

1980s
Betsy Bielefield ’81 is a sixth-grade science teacher and middle school cross-country/track coach. She recently completed the Hartford Marathon and climbed (summitted) Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa.
Thomas Courtine ’82 is the warehouse director at crown awards.com. He lives in Carmel, N.Y.
Anthony Palumbo ’83 is retired and living in Chapel Hill, N.C.
Maureen McCarthy Webber ’85 recently moved to Somers, N.Y., after having lived 30 years in Danbury. Her son, Terrence, is engaged to Lisa Golden. Her husband, Dennis, who retired after more than 35 years in education, still teaches Latin part-time.
Julie Sorcek ’86 plays flute and piccolo, and sings in the duo Sheebeg and Sheemore (www.geocities.com/sheebeg_sheemore2) at local coffeehouses and restaurants.
Anna Marie Koulouris ’87 and her husband, Kostas, have owned and operated the Bulls Bridge Body Shop in Kent, Conn, for almost three years.
Kirsten Johnson Dumaresq ’89 is a nutrition education program coordinator at the University of Massachusetts. Kirsten and her husband, Michael, welcomed son Jack Edmond on April 3, 2005.
Caryl Gleissner ’89 and husband, Eric Gleissner ’91, announce the birth of their son, Matthew, on Aug. 20, 2004. He joins 3-year-old brother Eric Jr.

1990s
Alexandra Mease White ’90 and Owen White ’91 welcomed daughter Ashton Audrey on June 3, 2005. She joins big sister, Brennen, 13, and brother, Hunter, 10.
Owen is president of C. White & Son, Inc., a third-generation family gasoline and
2000s

Nina Farrell '00 is a team member of the Regional Heart and Vascular Center at Danbury Hospital.
Andrea Shavers '01 is studying for her master’s degree at the University of Maryland.
Ralph E. Williams III '01 and Priscilla (Durg) Williams '01 live in New Milford, Conn. Ralph started his own CPA firm in December 2005.
Chet Urbanowski '02 is enrolled in the education/school counseling program at Florida Gulf Coast University.
Cara Caggiano '04 is engaged to Matthew Gough '04. The wedding will be Sept. 9, 2006.
Melissa Rae Lahoud '05 competed in the 77th annual Miss Connecticut Scholarship Pageant.

Wedding bells ...

Amy Cash '00 and Stephen Sereyday
Jaclyn Chaber '98 and Michael Baio
Marybeth Garofalo '00 and Matthew D'Amico '97
Lizette Geiger '00 and Cory Plock '98
Jessica Giordano '00 and James Galbraith Jr.
Carrie Keeler '99 and John Demetriow III
Lisa LaForte '04 and Eric Miller
Jennifer Larson '01 and Shawn Kraemer '01
Katherine Marsh '05 and Robert Fonseca '02
Patrice Mead '02 and James McKean '97
Erin O'Meara '05 and Daniel Gaita
Casey Diminico and Ryan Ragan '04
Jamie Shettra and Peter Robertine '05
Christine Rogers '01 and Stephen Santopietro
Susan Maday and William Stewart '00
Kari Tomascak '03 and Allen Amorando II
Tanya White '05 and William Pagano

In memoriam ...

Anthony Coleman '78, Bristol, Conn., March 22, 2005
Richard Mohl Jr. '97, '04, Brookfield, Conn., March 27, 2005
Carolyn Allen Schnabel '35 & '64, Great Barrington, Mass., March 28, 2005
Marianne Coladarci '77, Danbury, Conn., April 8, 2005
Patricia Ganley '81, Stallings, N.C., July 7, 2005
Margaret Ann McGuire '69, Orlando, Fla., July 25, 2005
John Tamas '05, Danbury, Conn., July 25, 2005
Elizabeth Ann Hossan Lombardi '78, Point Pleasant, N.J., Aug. 8, 2005
Karen Rosenthal '98, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Sept. 12, 2005
Linda Bitteker '81, Amelia Island, Fla., Sept. 14, 2005
Robert Kuba '75, Danbury, Conn., Sept 24, 2005
Ann Feltovic '39, Shelton, Conn., Oct. 15, 2005
Margaret Ireland DeSantis '79, Brookfield, Conn., Oct. 18, 2005
Frank Ploski '52, Newtown, Conn., Oct. 29, 2005
Ralph Braibanti '41, Durham, N.C., Nov. 24, 2005
Peter Howland '88, Bethel, Conn., Dec. 1, 2005
Charles Wittman '05, Danbury, Conn., Dec. 6, 2005
David Schenzer '98, New Fairfield, Conn., Dec. 18, 2005

The Alumni Association recognizes the contributions of their late board member, Peter Howland '88.

oil transport company. Alexa is an employment relations attorney working toward a Master of Laws at the Yale University School of Law.
Kelley Donahue Troccolo '91 and Jeffrey Troccolo '95 live in Danbury. Kelley is a human resource manager for Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals. Jeffrey works for the Polygon Air Corp.
Kathryn Hill Colonis '94 and husband, Harry, announce the birth of their second daughter, Marina Isabella, on Sept. 26, 2005. She joins 2-year-old sister Angela Mary. The family lives in Waterford, Conn.
Melanie Luten '94 is an associate in the business and corporate law firm Blalock, Walters, Held & Johnson P.A. Prior to joining the firm, she spent seven years working for a national law firm in Atlanta, Ga. Luten graduated cum laude from WestConn with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management and obtained a Juris Doctorate with honors from the University of Connecticut School of Law.
Monica Connor '95 started a middle school literary magazine for student writing. She also was included in “Who’s Who among America’s Teachers” for the first time. She lives in Sharon, Conn., with her husband, Glenn Koetzner.
David Rotatori ’95 was promoted to assistant controller, vice president, at Webster Bank. He lives in Naugatuck, Conn.
Jeffrey Miller '96 has been named director of business services at Sinclair Community College. Since 1992, Miller has been an active member of the National Association of Purchasing Managers. He also serves on the Inter-University Council Purchasing Group.
Melissa Luks-Fidanza '97 and her mother, Claire Luks, work together at Luks Realty in New Fairfield, Conn.
Jacqueline Rieg-Cerrone '97 lives in Port St. Lucie, Fla., with her husband, Jay, and 3-year-old daughter, Olivia. Rieg-Cerrone works at Bayshore Elementary School.
Marc Huberman '97 is a music composer and performer in the Connecticut and New York City area. He has performed with David Sanborn and Clarence Clemens. He released his first CD in 2002 and a second one will be released this spring.
Cynthia Graves ’98 received her master’s in curriculum in 1998. She teaches high school chemistry in North Carolina, where she resides with her husband, Richard.
Deborah Parsons Bisaccia ’98 and Leonard Bisaccia ’98 celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary in September 2005. Their daughter, Kateyn, was born on June 28, 2004. Deborah is head cheerleading coach at WCSU.
Shawn Scianna ’98, who lives in Fishkill, N.Y., owns Diversified Professional Business Services. He has a 15-month-old son, Patrick.
Alphabet as matchmaker (cont’d.)

secretary and treasurer for the organization, which means that among other things I help organize annual reunions.” Last year the division held their 52nd reunion in Valley Forge, Pa. Ed says the camaraderie and shared experiences of the war bonded the men together.

“They depended on each other for their lives,” Mary adds. She is active in the ladies auxiliary. “This volunteer work has structured our retirement.”

In addition, the couple sometimes travel, returning to the northeast to visit their children and grandchildren. During a visit last summer to their son and his family in Danbury, Ed and his granddaughter Regina, 20, a music education major at WestConn and a fine singer like her grandmother, made a trip to the Midtown campus to see the latest campus developments. They stopped at the Alumni and Friends Circle where the Siergiejs dedicated a brick in 2001. Afterward, he and Regina stood on the landing of the second floor of Old Main, which overlooks the newly refurbished buildings and beautifully landscaped campus quadrangle.

“It was kind of like déjà vu,” Ed explains, describing how his college yearbook included a shot of himself and his classmates on that same landing more than fifty years ago. “That was when Old Main pretty much represented the entire campus.”

A junior now at WestConn, granddaughter Regina is a member of the university’s concert choir. “Music is in my blood,” Regina adds, proud to be among the next generation of Siergiejs. “I didn’t apply anywhere else but WestConn. This is where I wanted to be.”

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<td>April 3</td>
<td>White Hall, Midtown campus</td>
<td>8 p.m.</td>
<td>(203) 837-8350</td>
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<td>WCSU Jazz Combos</td>
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<td>8 p.m.</td>
<td>(203) 837-8350</td>
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<td>(203) 837-8350</td>
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<td>WCSU Opera</td>
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<td>WCSU Opera</td>
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All listings are subject to change. Please call (203) 837-8486 to confirm. For the most up-to-date schedule of campus events, including sports, visit www.wcsu.edu.
WestConn's marketplace

Marketplace order form

Name ______________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________
City, state, zip _______________________________________________
Daytime phone no. w/ area code _______________________________
E-mail address _______________________________________________
Active alumni discount no. ________________________________ (The number on your Alumni Association Membership Card)

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Item total $_________________
10% alumni discount $_________________
Tax (6% CT) $_________________

*Shipping costs: $6.95 first item;
$1.95 each additional item; chairs: $25; diploma frames: $12.95

Subtotal $______________ + Shipping* $______________ = Total $__________________

Make checks payable to and send orders to:
WCSU Alumni Association, 181 White Street, Danbury, CT 06810

A. Gear Western Connecticut State University Alumni crewneck or hooded sweatshirt with logo, 80/20 cotton/poly, gray only, S-XXL, $34.98; T-shirt also available, $16.98
B. Champion WestConn hooded sweatshirt, 50/50 cotton/poly, navy, white, light blue, electric blue, fuchsia or earth tone, S-XXL, $49.98
C. Gear Western Connecticut State University men's polo shirt with logo, 100% cotton, navy, gray, white or athletic gold, S-XXL, $34.98
D. Champion Western Connecticut State University zip-up hooded sweatshirt, 50/50 cotton/poly, gray & white, S-XXL, $39.98
E. Gear WestConn women's T-shirt, 100% cotton, pink, lavender, light blue, light green, gray or brown, S-XL, $16.98
F. Gear WCSU women's hooded sweatshirt, 60/40 cotton/poly, gray & orange, S-XL, $39.98
G. Gear women's sweatpants with WCSU on upper left leg, 100% cotton, navy & gray, S-XL, $34.98
H. Diploma frames, Regency or Gallery styles: $115*, seal and school name gold embossed on black and gold museum double matting. (H3) Regency-mahogany, (H2) Gallery: cherry. Both: gold inner lip 23K. (H1) Signature style frame: $150*, 23K jewelry-quality medallion, black and gold museum double matting, gold embossed WCSU, cherry. (Please specify H1, H2 or H3).
I. WCSU authentic Cat’s Meow Collectible, $19.99 (specify Fairfield Hall or Old Main)
J. WCSU Boston rocker or standard chair – classic maple and black with engraved seal, $295*
What a great time we had!

A. Mortimer Johnson ’42
B. Edith Vogel ’35
D. (l-r): Shirley Nezvesky Beresin ’46, Bernard Beresin, Aloise Heller Mulvihill ’45

Address Service Requested

Parents: If the address label lists a son or daughter who no longer lives at this address, please notify the WCSU Alumni Office of the correct address. Send to: WCSU Alumni Office, 181 White Street, Danbury, CT 06810 or e-mail WestConnAlumni@wcsu.edu.