State Girl Scout CEO to keynote graduate commencement

Jennifer Smith Turner is chief executive officer of Girl Scouts of Connecticut (GSC). As the largest organization in the state serving girls, GSC provides more than 65,000 girls and adults with opportunities and experiences that develop their potential and empower them with self-confidence and leadership skills to improve their lives and the world around them.

Prior to taking the helm at GSC, Turner was president/CEO of Smith & Associates LLC, a company that assists organizations in achieving their strategic and operational potential by providing management consulting, strategic planning and executive coaching.

Turner is the former deputy commissioner for the State of Connecticut’s Department of Economic and Community Development, an appointment made by Gov. M. Jodi Rell. During her tenure as deputy commissioner, Turner was credited with re-energizing the state’s economic competitiveness and for bringing affordable housing to the forefront of the state’s economic agenda.

Turner served as president/CEO of BerkleyCare Network and vice president of W. R. Berkley Corporation (WRBC) of Greenwich. In this dual capacity she was responsible for growing the occupational managed care business of BerkleyCare and providing managed care leadership to the WRBC property casualty operating businesses. Turner also logged 10-year stints in management positions at Aetna Life & Casualty and Travelers Insurance. She interrupted her insurance career in the mid-1980s to serve the City of Hartford as director of personnel and then as assistant city manager.

A native of Boston, Mass., she is a graduate of Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., and received her master’s degree from Fairfield University. A poet, Turner has published two books: “Perennial Secrets, Poetry & Prose” (2003) and “Lost and Found, Rhyming Verse Honoring African American Heroes” (2006).

For more information, call (203) 837-8486.
It was standing-room only at the WCSU English Society’s “The Black Man Cometh” lecture, held Feb. 24 in honor of Black History Month.

Presented by Associate Professor of English Dr. Don Gagnon, the lecture was based on playwright Eugene O’Neill’s “The Iceman Cometh,” which Gagnon wrote for an upcoming anthology. The play was written in 1939 and performed initially on Broadway in 1946. During its time, it was considered one of the most successful presentations of a serious, psychologically developed black character.

“The Iceman Cometh is used to measure O’Neill’s vision of race in America,” Gagnon said. “For a white writer to actually engage black issues on a serious level was particularly noteworthy.”

O’Neill’s prior efforts, no matter how well-intentioned, Gagnon said, were not always successful in creating a greater sensitivity and value to African Americans. Through the creation of Joe Mott’s character, he said, O’Neill overcame earlier challenges with an accurate portrayal of early American experience. “O’Neill did overcome much of his racist thinking,” Gagnon said.

“Mott sidesteps O’Neill’s earlier stereotypes,” Gagnon said. “The character was less of a ‘metaphor on legs’; he was an equal representation of a social organism.”

The play takes place in a barroom where a group of down-and-outs drink and reminisce and talk about their hopes and dreams for the future – otherwise known as their “pipedreams.” Their lives are measured by what cannot be accomplished and Mott shares in that equally with the other characters. Gagnon pointed out that what makes the play stand out in its portrayal of a black man is that Mott was not made a victim of trying to obtain “whiteness.” Mott is “just one of the guys,” Gagnon said.

“What binds the characters at the same level is the inevitable failure to control their conscious minds,” Gagnon said. “The characters all speak the same language regardless of ethnicity with their own inflections.” This is, according to Gagnon, O’Neill’s democratizing gesture.
WestConn steps up Haitian relief efforts

By Lisa Mancini

When the WestConn community learned of the earthquake that decimated a large area of Haiti, a committee was formed to provide financial aid through a series of fundraising events. “WCSU Hearts Haiti” hopes to raise $50,000 to donate to Yele Haiti, a foundation started by multi-platinum recording artist and Haitian native Wyclef Jean. Jean will be this year’s undergraduate commencement speaker.

A number of fundraising opportunities have been employed since the campaign was launched. Thus far, more than $4,380 has been raised. The first step was the creation of a Facebook page in late January. Already, more than 560 individuals are fans.

Beginning in February, bracelets displaying Haiti’s national colors were sold for a suggested donation of $1 in various locations on the Midtown and Westside campuses. More than 1,000 have been sold.

On March 3, WestConn faculty and staff members each donated $5 to wear blue jeans to work. The day was such a complete success that it will be repeated in April and May. That same week, the Newman Club, WestConn’s Catholic Campus Ministry, held a bake sale in Warner Hall. The proceeds of all of the club’s bake sales during the spring semester will go to the Haiti campaign.

On March 7, a class of Zumba, a cross between exercise and Latin dance, was led by Brittany Guertin in the Berkshire Hall gymnasium. Associate Professor of Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences Dr. Robyn Housemann, the organizer of the event, reported that $200 was gained for the fund.

On March 31, “WCSU Hearts Haiti” hosted a luncheon featuring Haitian delicacies in Alumni Hall. More than $6 of the $15 that was sold for a suggested donation of $1 in various locations on the Midtown and Westside campuses. More than 1,000 have been sold.

On April 21, the Manhattan String Quartet is scheduled to perform a benefit concert in Alumni Hall. The suggested contribution of $20 will be charged per person was contributed to the campaign.

A silent art auction is on the planning board for May, as well.

For more information, visit www.wcsu.edu/president/haiti.asp.

Senior wins regional theatre award

WestConn senior Adam Schofield-Bodt, an honors student in the theatre arts department, has been chosen as a regional award winner by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

Schofield-Bodt, who is from Stratford, was chosen as winner for sound design in Region 1, which includes all of New England and eastern New York. His design was for the WCSU production of “City of Angels” directed by Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Pam McDaniel. In April, he will go to Washington, D.C., to compete for the national award.

Started in 1969 by Roger L. Stevens, the KCACTF is a national theatre program involving 18,000 college students and working to improve the quality of college theatre.

WestConn grad awarded Fulbright

By Robin DeMerell

When Ashley Hyde, a 2009 WestConn graduate, traveled to Jamaica last year as part of a university mission, she saw a place where she knew she could make a change.

During the trip, sponsored by the Humanitarian Travel Club, Hyde took part in assisting with medical aid, tutoring students and helping deportees reintegrate into society. “That trip really spurred my interest there. There are an increasing number of Hawaiians being deported from the United States,” Hyde said. “They are sent back after being here for decades with no support. Housing and employment are a problem. And there is a huge cultural issue, a stigma, with being a deportee. No one in the community wants to help them.”

That interest in helping people abroad earned Hyde a Fulbright scholarship. In September, she will move to Jamaica for a year to conduct research on alternative methods of integration for deportees. The end of the year after her studies is completed, she will earn a Master of Science in public health or international relations from the University of West Indies, which will advise and oversee her project.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the Fulbright program is the largest United States international exchange program offering opportunities for students, scholars, and professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide.

The 22-year-old Southington resident learned about the Fulbright last year from WestConn Associate Professor of Political Science Dr. Chris Kukk, who suggested to students in his International Institutions course that they apply for the scholarship. Hyde has a Bachelor of Science in anthropology with a minor in international studies. As an undergraduate, she received an award for Academic Excellence in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences and an Associate Honors Degree.

“When the classes that Ashley took — from her initial major in biology to core courses in anthropology and courses in international relations — gave her a very well-rounded approach to this issue,” Kukk said. “She was given that opportunity at WestConn. Through her academic background here, she was able to develop a research project that was likely one of the best proposals Fulbright received.”

As part of her research, Hyde will speak with deportees about their experiences, why they were deported and the problems they encountered. By collecting this information, she hopes not only to help them secure housing and employment, but hopes to open doors to the community and garner the support the deportees need to succeed in their native land.

“She will take full advantage of this opportunity academically, professionally and personally,” said Kukk. “Ashley is very culturally sensitive and that will help her to find options that will fit their cultural way of living. She’s the type of person who, when obstacles are put in her path, she figures a way around them immediately.”
By Lisa Mancini

Building on the success of its high school-to-college transition program, WestConn has launched a meteorology Bridge Program for students from Rogers Park and Broadview middle schools in Danbury and Bethel Middle School.

WestConn’s Building a Bridge to Improve Student Success program began in 2004 and involved WestConn professors and Danbury and Bethel high school teachers who sought to decrease the number of high school students entering remedial math and English courses in their first year at WestConn. The program was successful; by its fifth year, there was a 33.1 percent decrease in WestConn freshmen who required remedial courses. In 2009, WestConn decided to expand the program to middle school students in Bethel and Danbury to jump-start college preparation.

During the current semester on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, 14 middle school students, recommended by their teachers, are sampling what it’s like to have a career in meteorology. They learn about weather from their WestConn meteorology student mentors and incorporate the information in a PowerPoint presentation, which will aid in the design of their own weather broadcasts from WestConn’s Weather Center. The broadcasts will be shown on Bethel’s community television channel.

Not every child in the program sees a future in meteorology. Program supervisor and Assistant Director of the Weather Center Gary Lessor recognizes that.

"Even if they should decide that a meteorology career is not for them, this mentoring program may inspire them to go into the teaching field." The middle school students will give the teaching field a test drive by showing their peers the knowledge they have acquired through the program.

In addition to the middle school students, the Bridge Program benefits the mentors as well. "Basically, it’s a win-win for college and middle school kids," Lessor said.

Assistant Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences Dr. Abbey Zink, coordinator of the Bridge Program, said Lessor’s enthusiasm for the program is one reason she expects it to succeed. "He has a real passion for weather and working with young people. He’s a great guy, and he’s doing incredible work," she said.

For more information, call Zink at (203) 837-8839.
Lewis to play Mozart premiere in Vienna
By Robin DeMerell

As a violinist with the Manhattan String Quartet, Professor of Music Eric Lewis has performed some of the world’s most treasured classical compositions on countless stages throughout the United States and Europe. At this point in his career, there probably isn’t much he hasn’t seen or done when it comes to playing the violin.

So when he was offered the opportunity to perform the premiere of a newly discovered composition by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Lewis didn’t hesitate to accept the honor.

Several years ago Mozart’s “Sinfonie Concertante” was discovered by one of Vienna’s most celebrated violinists. When Eduard Melkus unearthed the piece in the archives at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, it was incomplete so he immediately went to work to finish it for the world to hear. Melkus, who owned Mozart’s violin and donated it to the museum, restructured the piece and then had it published. He also has written several journal articles on the discovery.

“Sinfonie Concertante” will be performed for the first time this spring in Vienna and Lewis will play the violin part.

Lewis was in Vienna at a music conference with the Manhattan String Quartet in January and he visited with Melkus at his home. Melkus showed Lewis the piece and explained its history. Then the famed violinist asked Lewis to perform in the premiere.

“He said to me, ‘I’ve been thinking about this and you’re the one to perform this,’ Lewis recalled. “My jaw just dropped. Here he is looking at me, an American, and asking me to play this. I was taken aback.” Melkus said Lewis was perfect to play the piece because of his Viennese style, which he developed while at the Manhattan School of Music.

Lewis said the concerto is unique in that it includes the cello, but otherwise he described the concerto as being on a par with other Mozart concertos.

“I love it,” Lewis said. “It’s a fresh, new discovery. It’s appealing, lyrical, exciting.”

The premiere of “Sinfonie Concertante” will be May 6 at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna as part of a music and art series.
WestConn honors Danbury CPA firm at annual luncheon
Fiorita, Kornhaas & Co. receive Community Service Award at March 19 event

By Robert Taylor

The Danbury accounting firm Fiorita, Kornhaas and Co. P.C. was recognized for exemplary professional and public service at the 29th annual WestConn Society luncheon on Friday, March 19.

Joseph A. Fiorita Jr. and Robert J. Kornhaas Jr., certified public accountants and principal partners of the firm, accepted the WCSU Foundation Community Service Award at the luncheon in the Grand Ballroom of the Westside Campus Center. The luncheon, hosted by the WCSU Foundation, also featured introductory remarks by WestConn President James W. Schmotter and a keynote talk by Ancell School of Business Dean Dr. Allen Morton on “The Role of Financial Literacy in a Well-Rounded College Education.”

Founded in 1973, Fiorita, Kornhaas and Co. provides a diverse range of financial services ranging from tax preparation, business accounting and audits to personal financial, retirement and estate planning, corporate mergers and acquisitions, and litigation support. As one of the leading CPA practices in the Danbury area, the firm has provided career opportunities and internships over the years, helping WestConn students to gain experience and build skills in the accounting profession. Fiorita, Kornhaas and Co. is a member of the WCSU Trustees’ Club and the WestConn Society, and sponsors a scholarship awarded annually to a WestConn student majoring in accounting. The firm’s partners, Fiorita and Kornhaas, participate in local and regional professional organizations, corporate boards, and activities supporting the university and the WCSU Foundation.

“Fiorita, Kornhaas and Company has long been one of the most respected professional services firms in the Danbury area,” Schmotter observed. “Through its professionalism, partnerships and philanthropy, it has made a difference — for our community, and especially for WestConn.”

A Danbury native and graduate of Mount St. Mary’s College, Fiorita has practiced public accounting for 39 years, initially at Arthur Andersen and Company and since 1973 at his own Danbury-based firm. His specializations include personal and corporate taxation, mergers and acquisitions, and family, estate and succession planning. He is a member of the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants (CSPCA) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). He serves as a corporator for Newtown Savings Bank and as a director of Brookfield-based Photronics Inc., as well as on advisory boards for a number of closely held companies and charitable organizations. A member of the WestConn Society, Fiorita previously served on the boards of several banks and as a member of the City of Danbury Parking Authority. He and his wife Sally reside in Danbury and have two children and six grandchildren.

Kornhaas is a Danbury native and holds an accounting degree from the University of Connecticut, returning after his 1978 graduation to join the accounting firm founded by Fiorita. Over his 32-year career, Kornhaas has done extensive work on audits and reviews for closely held businesses and nonprofit organizations, as well as providing a wide range of personal financial services including advice on income tax and estate planning issues. He is a member of the CSPCA and AICPA, a corporator for Savings Bank of Danbury, and a former member of the board of directors of the Charles Ives Center for the Arts. He also is active in St. Joseph Church as a member of the parish council. He and his wife Kathy reside in Danbury with their three children.

The WestConn Society represents the oldest continuous giving program sponsored by the WCSU Foundation, and it provides an important source of private donations to support innovative academic programs, outreach opportunities and enrichment initiatives. The goal of the WestConn Society is to sustain a critical margin of excellence to enhance students’ learning experience and invest in faculty and curriculum development.

A minimum donation to the WCSU Foundation of $250 qualifies the donor for annual membership in the WestConn Society and attendance at the annual luncheon.

For more information, contact David Halek in the Office of Institutional Advancement at halekd@wscu.edu.

Paying it forward: Danbury CPA opens door to accounting careers

Tony Cirone took the first steps at WestConn toward building a successful practice as a Certified Public Accountant, and today he pays forward that debt by sharing his professional experience and passion for accounting with a new generation of students.

“I was a student who had to put myself through school,” recalled Cirone in an interview at the Danbury office of Equale & Cirone LLP. “Many of the WestConn students we bring in here are in the same boat. I’ve been where they’re at, balancing the requirements of getting their education while working through their way through school.

“WestConn did a great job in opening our eyes to the various opportunities in the field,” he observed. “What I am trying to do now is to give the students who come here the same opportunities that I got.”

Cirone’s personal experience in working for four years at the firm of Danbury accountant Bob Corey while pursuing studies in the Ancell School of Business to earn his bachelor’s degree in accounting in 1988 made him a firm believer in the benefits of maintaining a longstanding internship and co-op program relationship with WestConn. That relationship began when he became owner in 1992 of a small Danbury accounting firm and has continued to grow since he and fellow CPA Joseph Equale joined forces in 1999 to establish their present partnership.

Cirone’s firm works closely with WCSU Career Development Center (CDC) Director Maureen Casey Gernert and Cooperative Education Director Dr. Anthony Ciarleglio to recruit WestConn students for internship and co-op positions. About six years ago, Equale & Cirone introduced an annual recruitment program in coordination with the CDC to schedule visits to the WestConn campus each fall to interview student applicants for full-time employment after graduation. Finalists are invited back for a second round of interviews at the firm’s office, and all candidates receive feedback from Equale & Cirone offering guidance to strengthen their resumes and interview skills.

It is no coincidence that some of the firm’s most successful new hires have previously interned there, he noted. “You have to have the foundation first, and then you build from there,” he said.

The Equale & Cirone internship program begins by introducing students to the fundamentals of bookkeeping, payroll and tax preparation, and business accounting, as well as database management and other support services for the firm. With these fundamentals in place, interns move on to more challenging accounting tasks such as preparation and analysis of accounting tasks such as preparation and analysis of financial statements, tax planning for businesses and individuals, and financial planning for individuals and businesses. All candidates receive feedback from Equale & Cirone offering guidance to strengthen their resumes and interview skills.

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On Saturday, May 1, WestConn will “jazz” up its annual gala by ditching the tuxes and evening gowns for some fresh air and inspired music. Grammy Award-winning jazz composer and artist Maria Schneider will headline the university’s 24th annual gala, which will be held in a festival tent on the grounds of the university’s Midtown campus, 181 White St. in Danbury.

Abandoning the traditional sit-down dinner in favor of al fresco hors d’oeuvres and jazz will serve to showcase WestConn’s status as the state university for the arts. Timing the fundraising gala to coincide with the annual Jazz Festival will allow music lovers and university supporters to come together to enjoy a festive evening that will support student scholarships and honor two local philanthropic organizations: The Hord Foundation and the Latino Scholarship Fund. The gala is open to the public and tickets for the event are $200 per person ($150 for faculty, staff and their guests).

The gala will feature a private performance with Schneider conducting the WCSU Jazz Orchestra under the tent, as well as preferred seating for Schneider’s concert with her band in Ives Concert Hall as part of the Jazz Festival. Channel 3 Eyewitness News anchor Kevin Hogan will emcee the evening’s events.

Schneider, who studied at the University of Minnesota, the University of Miami and the Eastman School of Music, was one of the first artists to use ArtistShare, a fan-funded Internet platform, to produce an album. Her 2004 effort, “Concert in the Garden,” was the first Grammy Award-winning recording sold solely via the Internet. The Jazz Journalists Association named “Concert in the Garden” Jazz Album of the Year. The organization also named Schneider Composer of the Year and Arranger of the Year, and honored her group with the award for Large Jazz Ensemble of the Year.


For more information, to purchase tickets or to learn about sponsorship opportunities, call (203) 837-8279.
WestConn exhibits collected works

An exhibition of works from WestConn’s collection was displayed from Feb. 24 through March 16 at the Higgins Hall Gallery in Higgins Hall.

The works were assembled from various collections on the Midtown campus, most notably the Truman Warner Anthropological Collection from the archives at the Haas Library. This unique collection consists primarily of ceremonial masks and hand-carved musical instruments from Africa, Asia and New Guinea. During his travels in the 1960s through the 1980s, Warner collected many of the pieces for use in his anthropology classes.

Other selections in this exhibition included a diverse group of paintings dating from the early 20th century to the present, along with a collection of 20th century prints. Various methods of etching, woodblock, silkscreen and lithography by artists such as Robert Natkin, Leonard Baskin and Will Barnett were represented.

AlphaGenix donates stem cell kit to WCSU

Ask and you shall receive. That is exactly what happened when Dr. Frank Dye, professor of biological and environmental sciences, broadcast a request to seven commercial companies for a stem cell kit to use for his Cell Biology class. Dr. Stephen Hall, president of life-science company AlphaGenix, responded to the request.

Because of budget limitations, it would not have been possible to purchase a stem cell kit for Dye’s Cell Biology class. Dye admitted, “I really could not afford the supplies out of my course budget.” Typically, stem cell kits range from $800 to $1,000, so the AlphaGenix donation of a stem cell kit for free is worth celebrating.

Of his donation of rat and neural stem cells, Hall stated, “I try to always take time to offer resources to universities for further education.” As an adjunct professor of biomedical sciences at the University of South Dakota, Hall understood financial constraints. “For one vial of stem cells we (AlphaGenix) charge about $500, which is a million stem cells. Supplies are pretty expensive, too, and you have to order more media (for proper maintenance). I provided Frank with more media,” Hall said.

In late February Hall shipped three vials of stem cells on dry ice to Dye. Stem cells will continue to grow indefinitely if you take care of them properly,” Hall said. Because of AlphaGenix’s generosity, Dye’s Cell Biology students will have the opportunity to explore stem cells for years to come.

Women’s Center of Greater Danbury brings new program to campus

The Women’s Center of Greater Danbury has had a strong presence on campus over the past few years, assisting with students in crisis. Recently the Center brought a new program to campus that focused on the male role in ending relationship violence starting in mid-March through May.

“One Man Up” was designed for students to openly discuss and learn about issues of sexuality, relationships and masculinity. The goal was to empower men on campus who do not condone violence to speak up and be heard. The program engaged students by learning to successfully challenge acceptance of relationship violence and give them an opportunity to take collective leadership.

“I think this is an exciting, new initiative,” said Sharon Guck, WCSU coordinator of Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse Prevention Services. “Research shows that men on a college campus can play a pivotal role in changing the attitudes of other young men regarding violence in relationships. In my experience, opening up a dialogue with these young men can be the first step in raising awareness, changing attitudes and ultimately their behaviors.”

Both men and women participate in the 90-minute session comprised of group discussion and activities and held Wednesday evenings on the Midtown campus.

Cirone (cont’d.)

statement preparation.

In a challenging employment market where smaller accounting firms like his have seen a marked increase in job inquiries, Cirone emphasized the importance of gaining on-the-job accounting experience through internship and co-op positions before graduation as a means for applicants to stand out in a competitive application pool. At the same time, he views the firm’s successful collaboration with WestConn and the CDC as an effective vehicle for Equale & Cirone to develop and recruit future full-time employees — both for new hires immediately after graduation and for prospective hires among graduates who may choose to return to the area after working for a large national or regional firm.

“Students today need to be flexible in taking advantage of the opportunities currently available, and persistent in pursuing those opportunities,” he observed. He encouraged WestConn undergraduates to use the resume, interviewing and employment resources offered by the CDC as a means to gain the skills needed for a successful job search.
It was fitting that Mark Gegeny was recognized as the WCSU Employee of the Semester at a ceremony in the Westside Campus Center, the realm from which he serves countless customers.

Gegeny, operations manager for the Student and Campus centers, has many official duties, including running the university box office, supervising 25 student workers, ensuring the Campus Center coffee house, The Daily Grind, is operating smoothly and, most important to many people, reserving rooms in the Student Center and Campus Center and setting them up for events.

Fred Cratty, director of Employee Relations, oversees the Employee of the Semester program.

“I had good reasons for Mark receiving this award,” Cratty joked. “I knew the room would be set up correctly.” Gegeny’s dedication to detail, devotion to students and great attitude were mentioned often during the testimonial before he accepted his award.

“I’m one of those who one time I’ll book a room two weeks in advance, the next time it’ll be two hours,” said Daryle Dennis, assistant dean of Student Affairs. “Mark always gets the job done.”

Tammy Hammershoy, director of Alumni Relations, said Gegeny never fails to work through the complex requests he gets from her.

“The people who put on the events get the credit, and we don’t often look to the people behind the scenes,” Hammershoy said. “Some of the setups for my events can be pretty intense, but with Mark, they always go well.”

Paul Simon, director of the Student and Campus centers, hired Gegeny.

“Mark was treasurer of the Student Government Association when I met him,” Simon said. “He was a little nebbish, a little kid just sitting there doing his job.”

Gegeny progressed from a position as a graduate worker in 2002 to his current responsibilities.

“As a supervisor, there is nobody better,” Simon said. “I would never trade him away to anybody.”

University President James W. Schmotter noted that Gegeny’s dedication to detail, devotion to students and great attitude were mentioned often during the testimonial before he accepted his award.

“Mark is at the front door,” Schmotter said. “And thanks to Mark, we always look great.”

After Gegeny accepted his Employee of the Semester plaque, he thanked everyone in the audience including his wife, Marie, who “keeps me in line.”

And he referred to the previous Employee of the Semester ceremony, during which honoree Charles Alexander, university judicial officer, was honored and expressed great emotion about the recognition.

At the time, Gegeny said, standing in front of his admirers, “I didn’t understand it. Now I do.”

WestConn student Jamison Odone showed up at Warner Hall on March 9 to sign copies of his recently released book, “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” he didn’t plan on selling out of books.

More than 30 people showed up to meet Odone and purchase a copy of the book, the first in his “Stickfiguratively Speaking” series from PublishingWorks Inc.

“Literary nonsense turns to whimsical imagery with a macabre twist in the pen-and-ink drawings of Jamison Odone,” the publisher said. “Stick figures have never emoté this much energy as each page brings a certain curiosity to a new light in this deconstruction of Lewis Carroll’s classic.”

In addition, Odone’s book has received rave reviews from critics, including one from Publishers Weekly.

“Mixing text with stick figure illustrations, Odone follows an Alice who is now somewhat pluckier than in her original incarnation as she meets the iconic Wonderland residents,” wrote Publishers Weekly. “What is thankfully lost in the translation are the political subtexts that made Carroll’s original work less like a fairy tale and more like a story of caution. Alice is simply a girl who outwits the bumbling and the bad rulers of Wonderland. ... Odone’s lighthearted take on the characters is refreshing: it allows the story to breathe and see itself in a new and magical way.”

The second book in the series, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” is due out in September.

Odone also is the author of “Honey Badgers” and illustrator of “The Bedtime Train,” both children’s books.

This year’s graduating class just got a lot smarter. At this year’s May commencements, WCSU graduates will wear “green” caps and gowns made from 100 percent, post-consumer recycled plastic bottles.

This new line of graduation wear, named GreenWeaver, is manufactured by Oak Hall Cap & Gown. The garments are made of fabric spun from molten plastic pellets and it takes an average of 23 bottles to make each gown. Based on WCSU sales, this will prevent approximately 17,000 plastic bottles from ending up in a landfill. According to the manufacturer, the gowns are soft and virtually indistinguishable from the traditional polyester used to make graduation wear.

And what’s even smarter about purchasing the new caps and gowns is that for each cap and gown purchased, Oak Hall will make a contribution to a campus environmental group.
A. As part of Women’s History Month, WestConn presented “Mentoring Monologues.” Participants who honored their women mentors included (l-r): Assistant Director of the Academic Advisement Center Lisa Peck, Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. Virginia King, Elizabeth Cotter, Carmine Coco DeYoung and Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. Darla Shaw.

B. On March 11, Enrique Morones, founder of Border Angels, a nonprofit volunteer organization aiming to stop migrant deaths along the U.S.-Mexico border, discussed “Border Angels, Border Realities and Immigration Today.” Morones, the recipient of Mexico’s 2009 National Human Rights Award, has been recognized as one of the 100 most influential Latinos in the United States by Hispanic Business Magazine.

C. Catherine Hardwicke, director of “Twilight,” met with communication students during the day and delivered a public lecture at night about “Beyond the Script: How to Choose a Film Project” on March 11.

D. Richard Varner, Aerospace Education Specialist from NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, held a training session on Feb. 23 to help area teachers bring the science of the Hubble Space Telescope to their classrooms.
A. Students participating in Science Horizons descended upon WestConn’s Midtown campus in February, with display boards summarizing their research taking over the Berkshire Hall gymnasium and the Science Building Atrium.

B. Freshman Elizabeth Dandeneau plays her flute during the music department’s third annual James Furman Honors Recital. Accompanying Dandeneau is Andrew Gordon. 

C. (l-r): Chelsea Pinero, as Lucienne, and Anna Giordano, as Raymond, in the theatre arts department’s spring production, the farce “A Flea in Her Ear.”

D. Members of the WCSU Colonials Women’s Basketball Team react with elation as they clinch their Little East Conference title on their home court. The Colonials went on to compete in the NCAA-Div. III tournament, making it to the second round. 

To see a gallery of images from this event, visit wcsu.edu/flickr.