

news

SEPTEMBER | 2023

Message from the Director & Assistant Director

Greetings from the Irfan Kathwari Honors House on the Middtown campus of Western Connecticut State University! The 2023-24 academic year is one of renewal for us here in the program and at WCSU. As the newly appointed Director and Assistant Director of the Kathwari Honors Program under a new University President (and with a new mascot!), we have focused our efforts right away on community renewal by welcoming our incoming class to the newly re-opened Honors House and by creating a slate of new events and learning opportunities that you'll read about in this and forthcoming newsletters. We are working on reinvigorating the Honors curriculum to adjust to post-pandemic realities and listening to our faculty, alumni, and, especially, our students about new directions they'd like to share and experience. With the assistance of our generous endowment from the Kathwari family, we will continue to offer opportunities for travel, for study, for research, for professional development, and for fun to which few students at any university have access. If you are an alum of the program, we hope to re-connect with you and hear about your ideas for providing connections and opportunities to our current students. We hope you'll come visit during our Open House on 10/26! All our best wishes -

Dr. Brian Clements & Caitlin Kennedy

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Meet the KHP Team



Dr. Brian Clements - Director

Dr. Brian Clements has served WCSU since 2004 in roles such as Assistant Dean of the Macricostas School of Arts & Sciences, Chair of the Writing Department, Founding Coordinator of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative and Professional Writing, and Professor. He is the author or editor of over 15 poetry collections and anthologies, including such projects as the NY Times New & Noteworthy selection *Bullets into Bells: Poets & Citizens Respond to Gun Violence* (Beacon Press) and the online project *Every Atom: Reflections on Walt Whitman at 200*. **EMAIL:** clements@wcsu.edu, KH House 102F



Caitlin Kennedy '12 - Assistant Director

Caitlin joined WCSU and the Kathwari Honors Program in August of 2023. She is a graduate of the WCSU class of 2012 with a B.A. in English and a M.A. in Global Development and Peace from the University of Bridgeport. Caitlin served in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone and has spent most of her professional career developing and managing responsible study abroad curriculum and programs. **EMAIL:** kennedyc@wcsu.edu, KH House 102D



Jocelyn Villacreses - Honors Assistant

Jocelyn Villacreses is a senior biology major and chemistry minor. Along with being an Honors Assistant, she is the President of the Honors Students of Compassion Club (HSOC). After graduating she plans to apply to medical school to become an OBGYN. **EMAIL:** honors@wcsu.edu, KH House 102E



Michelle Rochniak - Honors Assistant

Michelle Rochniak (she/they) is a senior professional writing major and women's studies minor. She coordinates the social media for Honors and also co-edits *Perspective*, the Honors Program's magazine. After graduating, they wish to pursue grad school and then a career in academia. **EMAIL:** honors@wcsu.edu, KH House 102E



Gabriella Dane - Honors Assistant

Gabriella Dane is a sophomore biology major (pre-med track) from New Milford. She is the newest addition to the Honors Assistant team and assists with events and management of the Kathwari Honors House. **EMAIL:** honors@wcsu.edu, KH House 102E

Honors Students in Action

WCSU Day of Service

Kathwari Honors students, staff and faculty organized two volunteer groups this year for WCSU's Day of Service. Students worked alongside honors professors, cleaning, clearing, planting and seeding in the **Jane Goodall Permaculture Garden** on the Midtown Campus. Honors Professor, Christel Autori, who served as the group leader said, "Everyone worked hard and had a great time! I was honored and humbled to be their team leader."

Another group of honors students volunteered at the **Housatonic Habitat for Humanity's Re-Store**, which is a thrift warehouse that sells donated furniture and materials at discounted rates. The funds that they raise at the ReStore go directly to fund the building of affordable homes in the community and provide free basic home repairs to elderly and veterans who are living on fixed incomes. The honors volunteer group worked on property cleanup and garden landscaping. The Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity, Kristen Keil, who is also a proud graduate of WCSU, where she completed her undergraduate degree in 2002 and earned her MBA in 2008, wrote, "I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation to you and the WCSU Honors Program for the outstanding work you put into the Habitat Restore Gardens cleanup project on September 15. It has never looked better!"



Honors Faculty Spotlight

Dr. JC Barone's documentary, *a life we imagined*, is awarded Best Documentary at the Jane Austen International Film Festival.

Professor of Communication and Media Arts Dr. JC Barone was invited to screen his new documentary, "a life we imagined," this summer at the prestigious Jane Austen International Film Festival, a competitive independent festival held annually in Jane Austen's Georgian city of Bath, England. As a result of the screening and subsequent judging, Barone's film was named "Best Documentary" at the festival.



The website dedicated to Barone's film describes it this way: "Anarchist. Rabble Rouser. Artist. Visionary. Kate Millett's transformative art colony created a nurturing space where women could freely explore their artistic endeavors and challenge societal norms. For four decades, the women's art colony offered sanctuary for community, creativity, sisterhood and empowerment. A place where women could experience freedoms that the Women's and LGBTQ+ civil rights movements were fighting for, but that were not yet available in mainstream society. 'a life we imagined' features interviews with Millett and women at the colony." [READ FULL STORY](#)



Dr. Jessica Schofield is elected Chair of the Honors Council.

Dr. Jessica Anderson Schofield earned a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Missouri in 2017 and a B.A. in Global Studies and Political Science from South Dakota State University. She specializes in the study of international relations and comparative politics. Her research focuses primarily on issues relating to international human rights and enforcement of human rights law through international courts, and she is currently working on a project examining allegations of African bias in the International Criminal Court.

Dr. Schofield also conducts research on topics relating to women's rights, LGBTQ+ politics, and African politics. Dr. Schofield has served on the honors council since 2020. During her time on the council, she worked to revise the bylaws and served on the search committee for the new program director. She was also an honors student herself as an undergraduate.

Upcoming Honors Events



Kathwari Honors Program Meet & Greet

Honors Students and Faculty are invited to re-connect with the Honors community and to meet new Director Dr. Brian Clements, new Assistant Director Caitlin Kennedy, and the program's benefactor, Mr. Farooq Kathwari, Chairman and CEO of Ethan Allen, headquartered here in Danbury. Light refreshments will be provided.

WHEN: Wednesday, September 27th from 12:30 – 2:00pm

WHERE: Kathwari Honors House



Honors Community Series: MOVIE NIGHT (movie selected by IG poll)

Honors Students: On the 1st Thursday and 3rd Monday of each month, let's get together for community nights, each night with a different theme...think movie nights, game nights, craft nights, jam session nights and more. Snacks will be provided.

WHEN: Thursday, October 5th at 7:00pm

WHERE: Kathwari Honors House



Honors Community JEOPARDY NIGHT

Honors Students: On the 1st Thursday and 3rd Monday of each month, let's get together for community nights, each night with a different theme...think movie nights, game nights, craft nights, jam session nights and more. Snacks will be provided.

WHEN: Monday, October 16th at 7:00pm

WHERE: Kathwari Honors House



Honors Seminar: Leadership in Health & Medicine

Twelve Honors Students will attend a seminar on Leadership in Health & Medicine at Danbury Hospital with Dr. William Begg, Chair of Emergency Medicine. Dr. Begg will deliver a short talk to the students, invite several of his colleagues among Danbury Hospital leadership to offer comments and advice to students, lead discussion, answer student questions, and offer a brief tour of the hospital.

WHEN: Wednesday, October 25th from 12:30 - 2:30pm

WHERE: Danbury Hospital

MORE INFORMATION will be emailed. Open to 12 honors students, first come, first served.



HSOC: HONted Movie Night

All WCSU Students: Join the Honors Students of Compassion (HSOC) for their annual HONted Movie Night! Food will be served.

WHEN: Wednesday, October 25th from 6:00 - 8:00pm

WHERE: Kathwari Honors House



KHP OPEN HOUSE

All Members of the WCSU Community - Faculty, staff and students are invited to the Kathwari Honors Open House. Come check out our house, meet the staff and learn more about the program.

WHEN: Thursday, October 26th from 2:00 - 4:00pm

WHERE: Kathwari Honors House



Imagination Station

Honors Students: Imagination Station is a community space for students to work on any creative projects or papers, or simply relax and enjoy the good vibes.

WHEN: Every Tuesday, 2:00 - 3:00pm

WHERE: Haas Library 508 (meeting room in the back of the 5th floor)