From summer’s terrific displays of lightning and thunder; the hurricanes and tornadoes that storm their way into fall; and winter’s snow squalls and blizzards, weather was a hot topic at Western Connecticut State University’s second Tri-State Weather Conference.

On April 25, more than 150 people interested in meteorology attended the event in the Science Building on the Midtown campus. The purpose of the conference was to enhance education, professional development and communication among private and public sector meteorologists, researchers, educators, students, emergency management officials and weather enthusiasts.

“It’s a research conference where meteorologists who conduct research present their findings,” said WCSU Assistant Professor of Meteorology Rob Eisenson. “And the term meteorologist includes the amateur hobbyist to the professionals.”

Eisenson said he came up with the idea for the conference after traveling the East Coast to similar events. The conference is sponsored by the WestConn Student Chapter of the American Meteorological Society (AMS), New York City/Long Island Chapter of AMS, NOAA/National Weather Service/Upton/NYC, N.Y. and NOAA/National Weather Service/Taunton/Boston, Mass. More than 160 people attended the first conference in October 2006.

“I thought there was nothing of this type in the New York metropolitan area and we needed one. We have a beautiful facility here with the Science Building,” Eisenson said.

This year, several forecasters from the National Weather Service in New York made presentations, including one on the regional tornadoes of 2007 and Tropical Storm Hannah. There was also information on the forgotten blizzard of 1886.

“It’s more about this is what happened and this is why it happened,” Eisenson said. “It’s a chance to network. You get to talk to professional meteorologists. For students it’s a great opportunity to talk to those who may hire them.”

To see a gallery of images from this event, visit wcsu.edu/flickr.
President-to-President scholar Curtis looks forward to new challenge

By Robin DeMerell

Setting goals is one thing — reaching them is quite another. And Juanita Curtis does both with grace and ease.

Curtis was chosen as this year’s recipient of the President-to-President Scholarship awarded jointly by WestConn and Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury. The annual grant pays full tuition costs for an exemplary associate’s degree graduate at NVCC to complete the final two years of studies and earn a bachelor’s degree at WestConn.

A mother of four, Curtis lives in Waterbury with her husband, the Rev. Ricky Curtis. She earned her associate degree in liberal arts from NVCC, one of many goals. Another recent goal for Curtis was overcoming her struggle with obesity. After tipping the scales at 300 pounds, Curtis is now at a comfortable weight and getting her bachelor’s degree is her primary focus.

Curtis, who maintained a 3.9 GPA at NVCC while raising her four school-age children and working the midnight shift at a local healthcare facility, will be studying communications in the fall. “I liked everything about WestConn,” said Curtis. “The courses offer flexibility and the professors and advisers I met with have been wonderful.”

Curtis applied for the scholarship last year and said she had a positive vibe from the very beginning of the process. “I knew that WestConn had something for me and I knew I would excel here,” Curtis said. “For so long, I concentrated on my family and marriage and put my dreams on the back burner. Then you hit a certain age and you have to do what’s screaming inside of you.”

Nervous and excited, Curtis is looking forward to beginning classes and thinks she’ll just ease into the workload. “It’s like the weight loss, once I set my mind to something, I usually do it,” said Curtis. “And I knew this was meant to be.”

From classic Indian, belly and Bollywood dancing to reggae, ragga and reggaton music, the Multicultural Fair at WestConn celebrated the diversity of our community.

In collaboration with various community organizations, including Danbury Children First and the Girl Scouts of Connecticut, the event was held on May 8 and attracted dozens of people from the community to sample ethnic foods and browse through boutique items at tents and tables set up in the quad.

“The university believes that diversity is a resource and a priority, and it’s important to our educational mission,” said former WCSU Director of Multicultural Affairs and Affirmative Action Dr. Bryan Samuel, who organized the event. “It’s important to have an active role in supporting these types of programs because they expose people to various cultural programs and activities that are prevalent in Danbury and the region.”

The event showcased arts and crafts, businesses, services and food from a wide variety of local eateries. The food samples included fried wontons and sticky chicken fingers from Danbury’s Pho Vietnam restaurant, and perros encarnados and roasted chicken and ribs from Amigos Deli.

“Flags from more than 100 countries were displayed and there were more than a dozen cultural and ethnic group performances, including dance from Sons of Portugal Folklore Dance Group and Nida Chillara Dance School.”

“Learning to embrace the traditions of other cultures enriches our lives and draws people to the community,” Samuel said. “The more your community grows, the deeper and richer it is.”
Daniel Asa Rose headlines M.F.A. reading series

By Robin DeMerell

Introduced as having the "tone and timing of master comedians," best-selling author Daniel Asa Rose and journalist and writer David Holub wrapped up a weeklong series of readings as part of the university's Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Professional Writing program.

Rose's "Larry's Kidney" has been called a "side-splitting tour de force," "skillful, funny fascinating," and "a satisfying, hysterical page-turner" by some of the leading literary critics. And Rose says it was the support and guidance from some of the most talented writers he knows from WestConn's M.F.A. program who helped him over the hurdles when he was writing the book. Rose read from "Larry's Kidney: Being the True Story of How I Found Myself in China with My Black-Sheep Cousin and His Mail-Order Bride, Skirting the Law to Get Him a Transplant . . . And Save His Life" on Aug. 7 before an audience of 60 in the Student Center Theater.

Reciting passages about his sometimes humorous, sometimes sober quest for a kidney on the Chinese black market, Rose recalled stirring coffee with sunglasses, "how foreigners recognize each other abroad. He then risibly expresses his relief when he almost has his hands on a kidney and finds out he "probably won't go to jail" and then realizes he has no idea how long they will have to wait for this illicit organ.

Holub, a graphic designer at The Hartford Courant, is a recent graduate of the M.F.A. program. His work has appeared in more than 20 publications including "The Café Irreal," "The Dream People" and "Bust Down the Door and Eat All the Chickens."

Rose, who connected well with the audience that he also instructs as part of the writers-in-residence program, said he asked for and received helpful advice from students and instructors during a previous engagement at the university. Rose has participated in the M.F.A. residency and public lecture series at WCSU for the past five years. "I love the opportunity to hang out with my colleagues," Rose said. "WestConn's M.F.A. program is a warm environment. It's a great community and it's very supportive. Writing is such a lonely existence; it's very isolated. To be able to pool your resources and take solace from each other is rare and wondrous."

By Sherri Hill

The Danbury Public Library, WestConn and the Danbury Public Schools conducted a press conference on Monday, Aug. 24, to announce the launch of the second annual One Book, One Community (OBOC), an effort to encourage everyone in Danbury to read the same book this fall. Although many communities across the U.S. sponsor similar reading programs, this project is one of the few where a city, public school system and a university have formed a partnership to coordinate a community-wide reading initiative.

The co-chairs of the OBOC committee, Danbury Library Director Mark Hasskarl and WCSU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Linda Rinker, spoke at the press conference, along with other local dignitaries.

This year’s book selection is the best-selling memoir “Hurry Down Sunshine” by Michael Greenberg, which details the true story of his teenage daughter’s descent into madness. From her first episode on the streets of New York City’s Greenwich Village to her time in a psychiatric ward, Greenberg painstakingly chronicles the effects of mental illness on his family. WCSU has assigned the book to all incoming freshmen as part of the university’s First-Year Experience. More than 100 copies are available to check out at the Danbury Public Library. The book can be purchased at local bookstores.

In addition to being encouraged to read the same book, Danbury residents and students will be invited to participate in a variety of complementary programs. Events will include book discussions and a lecture by Greenberg in late October.

An Amazon.com "Best of the Month" in September 2008, “Hurry Down Sunshine” is reviewed on the bookseller’s Web site in glowing terms: “Michael Greenberg’s spare, unflinching memoir begins with a bang: ‘On July 5, 1996, my daughter was struck mad.’ ‘Hurry Down Sunshine’ chronicles the summer when 15-year-old Sally experienced her first full-blown manic episode — an event that in a single stroke ‘changed her identity and, by extension, that of her entire family. Simply told and beautifully written, Greenberg’s memoir shines a stark light on mental illness, painting a vivid picture of a brain and body under siege — mania as a separate living thing squatting within the patient. As a writer who lives ‘so much in his head,’ Greenberg is particularly anguished by his daughter’s fractured psyche, and his honesty about being both sickened and fascinated by his daughter’s condition is breathtaking.”

Greenberg has been a columnist for The Times Literary Supplement of London since 2003. His fiction, criticism and travel pieces are widely published.

Support for the OBOC project is provided by Danbury Hospital, FRIENDS of the Danbury Library, Savings Bank of Danbury, Union Savings Bank, Yankee Penny Saver, The News-Times, El Canillita and Tribuna Newspaper.
Ribeiro inspires student researchers at WestConn to follow her lead

By Robert Taylor

Dr. Ana Ribeiro’s path since her graduation from WestConn in 1995 has not always been smooth, but her launch of a successful career at the cutting edge of neurobiological research provided a message of inspiration for a new generation of students attending her keynote talk at the fifth annual WestConn Research Day (WRD) on May 14.

Ribeiro holds a bachelor’s degree in biology from WestConn and Ph.D. in cell and molecular biology from Fordham University, now plays an important role as a postdoctoral fellow in pioneering research activities at the Laboratory of Neurobiology and Behavior at The Rockefeller University in New York. Noting Ribeiro was the first WestConn graduate to present the keynote address since WRD was founded in 2005, President James W. Schmotter observed she offers living proof of the university’s familiar motto, “Stay near, go far.”

“Our speaker is a great example of how that really happens for WestConn students,” Schmotter said.

A native of Danbury who spent part of her childhood in her parents’ homeland in Portugal, Ribeiro conducted tests of water quality in the Housatonic River for her senior thesis under the supervision of Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Frank Dye. Faced at Fordham with the loss of her principal faculty adviser due to illness during her doctoral program, she recalled that she turned adversity into professional progress by sharpening her mentoring and research skills in the lab and presenting her findings at professional conferences.

“Everything in life is an experience and an opportunity,” she told students at the WRD talk. “Even if you experience misfortune, use it as productive time. Push yourself, don’t be satisfied, because you never stop learning. You have to stay ahead of your field because it is constantly evolving.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Employee of the Semester Alexander brings compassion to his job

By Paul Steinmetz

Shelton resident Stephanie Ardizzone received the WCSU Provost Prize honoring outstanding student research during the closing session of the fifth annual WestConn Research Day (WRD) on May 14.

Ardizzone, a computer science major who is entering her senior year this fall, received the award for her research project titled “Implementing a Multi-Tier Architecture in Java.” The prize, funded by the WCSU Office of the Provost and presented by Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Linda Rinker, will provide $1,000 toward expenses for Ardizzone’s presentation at a professional conference.

Ardizzone conducted her project under the guidance of WCSU Professor of Computer Science Dr. Gancho Ganchev. She was one of six students who presented their research work to university faculty and staff during the opening WRD luncheon seminar at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9
Suzanne Darrow’s homecoming in May to cross the Feldman Arena stage and receive her WestConn master’s degree marked the completion of an improbable journey that began eight years ago — and reached her destination only because she and her thesis adviser refused to let 1,700 miles separate her from her goal.

Darrow’s long path to a master’s degree in education with an instructional technology option took a singular twist five years ago when she moved with her family to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. There, the Middletown native and former teacher at Cornwall Consolidated School in Connecticut embarked on a new career combining her skills in education and information technology, first as a technology coordinator for Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas and since 2007 as IT supervisor for faculty technology support and Blackboard Course Management System administrator at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI).

Yet she never gave up on completing what she had begun at WestConn in 2001, despite the special challenges of continuing her studies from St. Thomas and keeping current in the rapidly changing field of instructional technology. Those challenges would have been impossible to overcome without the support of Dr. Theresa Canada, associate professor and chair of the WCSU Education and Educational Psychology department, and Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. John Caruso, who structured and mentored the unique distance-learning program that enabled Darrow to fulfill her thesis requirements.

“I had taken a two-year hiatus in my master’s program, and left this thesis requirement sitting there as this horrible burden,” she recalled. After a discussion with Caruso last fall, she said, “I decided the time had come to just get it done, to do something innovative and cutting-edge that would relate to the work that I’m doing here (at UVI). The more resources that I have to bring our teachers up to speed on instructional technology, the better off our students will be.”

In Caruso, Darrow discovered a kindred spirit whose experience in government and academia with online research and information-sharing since the dawn of the Internet age inspired him to pursue distance learning to earn a master’s degree in education from George Washington University, an institution at the forefront of research on instructional technology. His research has influenced his work with Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. Janet Burke to develop curriculum for the instructional technology option in the WCSU master’s program in education.

Over more than three decades, Caruso noted that he has mentored four WestConn graduate students residing abroad — in Japan, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and now the U.S. Virgin Islands — to create customized master’s thesis programs suitable for distance-learning techniques and appropriate to their respective research subjects. Like the three master’s candidates before her, Darrow demonstrated academic excellence.

“‘For Suzanne, it involved writing a 60-page research paper and infusing a lot of what she developed in theory and practice into her own teaching environment,’” he said. “‘At the outset, I told Suzanne, ‘I don’t want a dead-end project — you have to choose a subject that will make you better at what you’re doing.’”

Darrow’s thesis theme, “connectivism” — a learning theory set forth in 2004 by Canadian education researchers George Siemens and Stephen Downes — dovetailed her personal online learning experience and reinforced her professional skills in providing IT instructional and curriculum support for faculty and students at UVI.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9
President Schmotter makes special trip to hospital to present degree

It wasn’t until two days before her graduation from WestConn that Jenna Morabito really learned the hard way that things don’t always go as planned. Due to have her first baby in late May, Morabito figured she had about a week to recover from childbirth before receiving her nursing degree with honors at the May 24 commencement ceremony. But then, on the Friday before graduation, the labor pains started. After nearly 72 hours of labor, Morabito went to the hospital early Monday and gave birth to Nico Ung-Morabito via caesarean section. She had missed her graduation. Friend and fellow nursing graduate Najah Mahfoud said that after six years of hard work and sacrifice, Morabito deserved that special moment. So Mahfoud sent an e-mail to President James W. Schmotter asking if he would confer Morabito’s degree at Danbury Hospital.

On Thursday, May 28, Morabito stood in her cap and gown and received her bachelor’s degree with honors from Schmotter. Surrounded by friends, family and several nursing professors, including Dr. Karen Daley and Joan Palladino, Morabito said she was honored by the special ceremony. “I couldn’t believe this. It was so nice of the university president to come here and do this,” Morabito said.

Morabito’s proud grandparents, Mary and Richard Rosa of Danbury, also were there to witness the milestone. “She worked so hard,” said Mary Rosa. “Every time we looked at her, she was studying. She had to do this today.”

WestConn at Waterbury recognizes graduates

President James W. Schmotter and Dean of Graduate Studies and External Programs Dr. Ellen Durnin participated in a graduation recognition event on April 27 to honor students who completed studies last spring as participants in the WestConn at Waterbury RN to BSN program, a WCSU curriculum designed for registered nurses seeking to earn a bachelor’s degree in nursing. Professor of Nursing and RN to BSN Coordinator Dr. Barbara Piscopo offered remarks, and WCSU Career Development Center Director Maureen Casey Gernert delivered the keynote talk at the ceremony on the Naugatuck Valley Community College campus in Waterbury. Pictured are, (l-r) front: Kerry Petrello, Robin Murdock, Sandi Stephens and Amy Dumschott. Center row: Piscopo; Katrina Carotenuti, Sarah Campbell, Kimberly Baker and Durnin. Back row: Keona Dawson, Aida Sadeghi, Donna Viner, Kendra Damon-Smith, Angela Somerville, Schmotter and Gernert. Also recognized at the event were two WestConn at Waterbury management students (not pictured) who earned bachelor’s degrees in business administration.

More than 980 students received undergraduate degrees as their friends, families and loved ones filled the Westside Athletic Complex stadium on Sunday, May 24, for WestConn’s 111th commencement. Newsweek columnist, author and television analyst Jonathan Alter spoke about leadership themes he learned while researching Franklin Roosevelt for his 2006 book, “The Defining Moment: FDR’s Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope.” Alter was awarded a Doctorate of Humane Letters, honoris causa.

At a separate graduate commencement ceremony on Friday, May 22, in the Feldman Arena of the William O’Neill Athletic and Convocation Center, 174 students received graduate degrees. Three educators also received doctoral degrees. Michael P. Meotti, commissioner of Higher Education in Connecticut, was the commencement speaker.

As important as the actual degrees received are the feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction experienced by our graduates. Whether they enrolled at WestConn upon graduating from high school, after a stint at a community college or other university, or after decades in the workforce — every member of the Class of 2009 had something to celebrate at commencement.

To see a gallery of images from these events, visit wcsu.edu/flickr.

This page:
A. The sun shone on the undergraduate commencement ceremony on May 24.
B. A master’s degree recipient hugs one of her supporters after the May 22 graduate commencement ceremony at which Commissioner of Higher Education in Connecticut Michael P. Meotti spoke.
C. Stephen Price is heading to France on a Fulbright Scholarship he received prior to graduating with a Bachelor of Music.
D. Newsweek columnist, author and television analyst Jonathan Alter delivers the undergraduate commencement address.
WestConn students learn legislative process from state Capitol internship

By Robin DeMerell

Whether it’s their debate team skills or the lessons they learned in the classroom, several WestConn students learned that they are well-prepared — academically speaking — for life in the state Capitol.

Nine students from WestConn were selected as legislative interns for the 2009 General Assembly session in Hartford. There were some 90 interns selected this year from private and public colleges around the state. “Our students comprise a significant percentage of this year’s total legislative internship body,” WCSU Director of Cooperative Education Anthony Ciarleglio said.

Ciarleglio attributes WestConn’s 100 percent selection rate this year to both a “successful track record with this program over the years” and to an “increasingly well-prepared WCSU applicant pool.”

From attending committee public hearings and reporting back to Rep. Vickie Nardello (D-89th Dist.) to listening to lobbyists, sophomore justice and law major Denise Morelli of New Fairfield said she learned a lot about what goes on in Hartford.

“I never realized how much time it really takes to be a legislator. And the amount of constituent contact is very high, as they are constantly calling to express their opinions,” Morelli said.

Sean Swanson, a senior political science major from New Britain, is working with Rep. Bob Godfrey (D-Danbury). “I’ve enjoyed learning about the actual process: seeing the strict rules that committees and the House of Representatives follow, the way debate follows certain formats and the give-and-take that goes on to get people to vote for legislation.”

Both Morelli and Swanson said that internships are a valuable part of a college education and that WestConn prepared them well. “Internships are key to giving students like me the experience we need for jobs in the real world,” Swanson said. “WestConn’s political science program and debate team are both top-notch and helped me learn how to quickly analyze situations, and form my own opinion about them, which has allowed me to engage in the high level of conversation here at the Capitol.”

“Internships at this level are very important, primarily because we are at a pivotal point in our lives where we are trying to decide what we would like to do,” Morelli said. She added that her professors helped instill in her the ability to adapt to situations and think on her feet. “I receive little instruction on how to handle tasks here, and because of my experiences at WestConn, I am able to figure out pretty quickly how to handle different responsibilities.”

Students report to a chief administrative aide, but also work directly with the legislator to whom they are assigned. They also attend seminars at the Capitol regarding the state budget and related topics.

Praxair awards $50K to WestConn

‘Bridges’ program will benefit from grant

By Paul Steinmetz

Praxair Inc., with worldwide headquarters in Danbury, Conn., has made a gift of $50,000 to WestConn in support of a partnership between the university and two local school districts that helps students become college-ready before they enter WCSU.

The program, “Building a Bridge to Improve Student Success,” was begun in 2004 by teachers at Danbury and Bethel high schools and faculty at WestConn. The program improves student performance before they enter the university and also helps them save money by avoiding the need for extra classes to prepare them for college-level work.

“This is a program that works. Bridges is successful because teachers and professors work side by side, sharing ideas and putting them in place to serve students,” said Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Linda Rinker. “Now, in addition to English and math, we are making plans to include science in the program, and we may be able to extend it to the middle schools as well.”

“By establishing a framework for effective collaboration between our high schools and the college, WestConn’s Bridge program creates a positive ripple effect throughout our community,” said Nigel Muir, president of the Praxair Foundation. “The program’s measurable success in helping more Danbury-area students enjoy a successful college career is an investment in our future.”

Vice President for Institutional Advancement Dr. G. Koryoe Anim-Wright thanked Praxair for its gift. “Praxair is a generous community supporter,” Anim-Wright said. “We are happy to be able to work with our neighbor on this project, which serves students and their families and benefits the entire region.”

President James W. Schmotter also praised the company. “Praxair understands that institutions in our region are interconnected, and that we must work together to improve economic competitiveness and quality of life,” Schmotter said. “While Danbury and Bethel students are the direct beneficiaries of this generosity, the entire community will be enriched by the better-educated citizenry and higher-skilled workforce that will result from the increased access to academic success that the Bridges program provides. It’s a great legacy for Praxair, and we are very grateful.”

The need to address remedial classes at the university level is a national issue, with 28 percent of entering freshmen needing at least one such course in 2000, the last year studied, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

The Bridges program has demonstrated significant success since it began in 2004, when juniors at Bethel and Danbury high schools took a college-level placement test. The test results showed that 61 percent of them would have been placed in remedial classes at the college level.

By the third year of the program, only 15.5 percent of entering freshmen from Danbury and Bethel needed to take remedial writing classes.

In math, 62 percent of the students tested in their junior year of high school would have had to take remedial classes at the university. By the third year, only 40 percent of the entering freshmen from Bethel and Danbury high schools actually were enrolled in remedial math.

In addition, students who go through the Bridges program at Danbury and Bethel high schools are more likely to stay in school after their first year of college. At WestConn, 20 percent more of these students continue on to their sophomore year than students from other high schools.

The Connecticut State University System has declared the Bridges program a “beacon of excellence” and has made it a model for programs at Southern, Central and Eastern Connecticut state universities.

Praxair, Inc. focuses its community support in the countries, cities and towns where it operates and further concentrates on four areas: community health; public libraries; higher education and diversity; and employee volunteerism.

Praxair, Inc. is the largest industrial gases company in North and South America, and one of the largest worldwide, with 2008 sales of $10.8 billion. The company produces, sells and distributes atmospheric and process gases, and high-performance surface coatings. Praxair products, services and technology bring productivity and environmental benefits to a wide variety of industries, including aerospace, chemicals, electronics, energy, food and beverage, healthcare, manufacturing, metals and others.
Campus Briefs 8

M.F.A. graduates’ works exhibited in NYC

Selected painting and illustration works by nine 2009 graduates of the Master of Fine Arts program were exhibited from June 16 through July 4 at the Blue Mountain Gallery in New York City. An opening reception for artists featured in the 2009 Thesis Exhibition was held on June 18 at the gallery at 530 W. 25th St. in Manhattan.

The annual show, which also ran for three weeks in April at Higgins Hall on the Midtown campus, marked the capstone of studies in painting and illustration pursued by the M.F.A. graduates. “The Thesis Exhibition is the summation of two years of intensive creative study, which involves extensive interaction with resident and visiting artists,” the M.F.A. exhibition guide observed.

Artists whose works were shown at the Manhattan gallery included Jessica Bartlet, Karen Bartone, Bryn Gillette, Janice Nichols, Tracy Powers, Jennifer Wheeler, Carmen Canal, Jim Gabrielli and Perry Obee.

The featured paintings and illustrations revealed a wide spectrum of artistic skills and creative interests, from Bartone’s visually rich still-life images of fruit and Gabrielli’s illustrations of motorcycles’ varied forms and functions to Powers’ exploration of suspended animation against the background of amusement parks. Canal’s ethereal watercolors were drawn from her series on the fairy tale heroine Sleeping Beauty, while Wheeler’s kaleidoscopic paintings offered stark contrasts between bright images and dark content.

Works by Bartlet, Gillette, Nichols and Obee presented their individual creative perceptions of the complex relationships between interior and exterior reality, and between the real world and the imagination.

Danbury Hospital honors Goodrich

Assistant Professor of Nursing Robin Goodrich has been a practicing registered nurse for 20 years in the highly technical and specialized areas of medical-surgical, maternal-child and neonatal intensive care (NICU). Her commitment to her profession was acknowledged last year when she was recognized by Danbury Hospital at its Every Day Heroes Luncheon as “Nurse Exemplar,” thanks to a nomination by her colleague, Christine Raymond.

“Her bedside skill is unsurpassed in regard to her ability to operationalize the nursing process to deliver the most technical intensive care, as well as to carry that step beyond to the expert level of keen anticipation of her patients’ needs,” Raymond wrote in her nomination letter. “She extends her care to naturally include the emotional support and educational needs of her patients’ families. … Robin supports her co-workers with the same focused dedication that she shows her patients,” Raymond continued. “I cannot think of anyone who has done more to demonstrate engagement in learning and growth opportunities to maintain excellence in practice and performance than Robin Goodrich.

Goodrich said, “What is most significant to me is that a colleague for whom I have the highest regard nominated me. We have worked together for many years and both of us care for the sickest and most acute patients side by side. Being a nurse, you don’t look to get recognized for your duties. That’s what is so significant about this award. Equally rewarding is mentoring — both my peers in the NICU and my students at WCSU. It is about giving back to the profession; it is an obligation and a reward.”

Goodrich is certified and maintains professional practice in Level III NICU nursing. She has been a member of the WCSU faculty since the fall of 2007, first as an adjunct clinical faculty member and now as an assistant professor of nursing. She received her diploma from Arnot Ogden Medical Center School of Nursing in 1987, Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Phoenix in 2004 and Master of Science in Nursing from WestConn in 2007, in the clinical nurse specialist, nurse educator track. Goodrich currently is a doctoral student at Teachers College, at Columbia University.

For the latest in WestConn news and event listings, visit wcsu.edu/newsevents

media mentions

A sampling of local media stories that mention WestConn. All appeared in The News-Times unless otherwise noted.

NAPOLEOON! WE THE PEOPLE! THE PHILADELPHIA JURISDICTION

One of his celebrated bicorn hats is there, a relic of the 1809 Battle of Essling, in the center of the exhibition’s final room. And on a wall by the exit, the facsimile of his signature reminds visitors why they came to the National Constitution Center, and paid as much as $17.50 when so many other venues on and near Independence Mall are free. “Napoleon,” it says. A French emperor may seem at first a curious focus for the center, which opened its grand space on the mall six years ago, its mission to inspire the “awareness of the Constitution and its relevance in Americans’ daily lives,” with permanent exhibits and programs that enliven the nearly 222-year-old document. … Kevin R.C. Gutzman, an associate professor of history at WestConn, who specializes in U.S. revolutionary and constitutional history, sympathizes with center officials. “That’s a problem scholars have all the time: If we are thrilling each other, then we’re not appealing to anyone else.”

MARVEL OF SCIENCE

Measure your stress. Build a bike online. Feed “Ester the Digestor” to understand how different foods affect the body. Watch dinosaurs roar in 3-D and learn about climate change from a baking sheep. … The new 144,000-square-foot Connecticut Science Center was an idea born nearly 20 years ago by visionaries hoping to inspire children about science. … WestConn professor Theodora Pinou will have children talk about turtles and navigation made into an interactive exhibit at the center in the future. It’s part of a collaboration between the center and Connecticut State University System scientists.

SUMMER SIZZLES AT IVES CONCERT PARK: PLAYS, CONCERTS AND FESTIVALS GALORE ON WESTCONN’S WESTSIDE CAMPUS

Summertime often means enjoying the weather, spending time with family, relaxing, and maybe learning something new. The Charles Ives Authority for the Performing Arts is offering a chance to do all those things July through September with the Fine Arts and Family Series and the Union Savings Bank Summer Concert Series at Ives Concert Park.

STUDENTS RACE TOWARD BRIGHT FUTURE

Devante Pratt watched his car — made of balsa wood, carrying a soda can, powered by the sun — streak across the courtyard. In that heat, at least, he was the king of solar speed. … That was one of several triumphs so far during Pratt’s stay at the Green Light Academy — a four-week summer school on WestConn’s Westside campus. He also learned to swim at the WestConn pool. … By the end of the month, the 60 students — from high schools in New Haven, Bridgeport, Fairfield, Stamford and Norwalk — will have refitted their solar cars to run on small fuel cells. … The academy, led by Casey Jordan, is funded by a $1 million grant from the state Department of Education.

WESTCONN PREPARES FOR ITS NEW ARTS CENTER AT 10 years old, Jennifer Caraluzzi sang the national anthem before a Mets game at Shea Stadium. Last month, Caraluzzi, 22, sang WestConn’s school song at graduation in front of her classmates and teachers, including professor Kevin Isaacs, who wrote the song. … Her success underscores the legitimacy of the plans under way to build a facility to house the School of Visual and Performing Arts that WestConn created three years ago by bringing together its art, music and theatre arts programs.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: OPERATION CARE PACKAGE HUGE SUCCESS AT WCSU

Sure, good things come in small packages. But sometimes, they come in big packages. This is one of those times. Actually it’s five of them. What began this spring as a WestConn junior passing around a card to a friend in the military quickly grew into big boxes filled with gratitude for U.S. soldiers serving overseas. “It was pretty amazing through September with the Fine Arts and Family Series and the Union Savings Bank Summer Concert Series at Ives Concert Park.

Abigail Disney to speak

Philanthropist and producer Abigail Disney will show her documentary “Pray the Devil Back to Hell” and tell the story of its filming when she presents the Steven D. Neuwirth Arts & Sciences Lecture at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 8, in the Ives Concert Hall in White Hall on the Midtown campus.

Disney, the granddaughter of Walt Disney, a cofounder of the Walt Disney Co., made the film about a group of women who helped to bring peace to war-torn Liberia.

The annual lecture is named for Dr. Steven Neuwirth, a professor of English and a specialist in Early American literature and history. He died in February 2004 after a long struggle with a rare bone tumor disease known as chordoma.
Working in paradise (cont’d.)

“Connectivism is a learning theory for the digital age,” she observed. “Connectivism takes into account our access to a diversity of digital resources and how they affect our approach to teaching and learning today, to the point that teaching has been revolutionized to take full advantage of these new methods of learning.”

Darrow finds the theory of connectivism especially well-suited to the contemporary classroom without walls, as teachers cope with the growing demands of lifelong learning to keep pace with the rapid and unceasing evolution of their fields of instruction.

“Access to technology has changed the learning process,” she said. “As instructors, it is becoming more important for us to know how to teach students to locate information, rather than simply to teach the information itself. “We’re becoming more of a learning community — we’re not afraid to be more open-ended and give students a leading role in finding their own resources and contributing to building the curriculum,” she noted. “This entire process in working with Dr. Caruso has been a lesson in connectivism. He let me choose my own topic and provided his open support, giving me encouragement and advice and supplying me with current articles and resources but not over-directing me in what to do.”

Caruso observed that connectivism reflects an educational environment transformed from the dawn of the Internet era 25 years ago, when he first started up email service only to discover that scarcely 60 account holders were registered statewide. Today’s proliferation of search engines, social networking and other digital resources has loosed a flood of information access “so overwhelming that no instructor can deliver it to a student in the traditional fashion,” he said. “Teaching has become a collaborative process where faculty and students work together. As they share information using blogs, Twitter and other forms of instantaneous communication, the learner becomes truly involved in the teaching process, and the instructor learns from the process as well.”

Darrow has discovered that some of her best instruction in emerging technology applications comes from her daughters, Jade, 15, and Alice, 12. “They have helped me understand how they use online communication tools both academically and socially. Technology is just a natural tool for them.”

She has also found that technology-savvy students at UVI often provide the impetus for innovations such as generating more widespread use of the Blackboard Course Management System, which provides online access to course materials, syllabi, assignments and a broad range of interactive teaching tools. Earlier this year, Darrow helped to launch UVI’s new Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), a joint effort between the Provost’s office and the IT department to provide facilities and resources for faculty technology training and teaching support. The center provides the means for faculty to use emerging educational technologies for more effective course development, management and instruction.

Darrow’s return to WestConn to receive her master’s degree at the May 22 graduate commencement ceremony fulfilled a long-cherished dream — that came true thanks her mother, Mary Ann Darrow, of Middletown.

“The whole time I was working on my thesis, I kept seeing a vision of myself on the stage getting my diploma and having my family see me graduate,” she recalled. “My mother, my sister and my best friend were there at my graduation. My mom was so proud — she has a master’s in education, and now I also have a master’s.”

“I feel so blessed by my experience at WestConn,” she added. “It took me eight years to get through the program, which is very untraditional, particularly in technology. The fact that the university was so willing to work with me made me feel so supported.”

Darrow’s thesis provided the theme for her presentation at a professional conference in July in Washington, D.C., discussing applications of connectivism principles within the Blackboard system. Already she is preparing for the next leg of her academic journey, with plans to seek a doctoral degree in education with a technology concentration from Northcentral University. The Arizona-based university’s no-residency online program will enable Darrow to complete her course work and degree requirements from St. Thomas, a small and tight-knit island community she has come to call home.

“It was great to go to Connecticut for the graduation, but I kiss the ground when I get back here,” she said. “I love it, and I can’t see myself going anywhere else any time soon. You can’t do any better than paradise!”


Ribeiro delivers WRD keynote (cont’d.)

Ribeiro has established her place at the forefront of neurobiological research in her studies of the biochemical mechanisms through which estrogens affect behavioral arousal and vigilance control, as well as elements of the brain’s anatomy and chemistry that influence behavioral changes in response to the availability or scarcity of basic resources. These studies have broad relevance in understanding human behavioral responses and public health issues, such as the impact of estrogen-level changes during menopause, the relationship between neural chemistry and sleep disorders, and the restoration of sensory and motor functions after traumatic brain injuries.

Ribeiro has presented her research at more than 20 scientific conferences in the United States and abroad, published numerous articles and reviews in professional journals, and written book and encyclopedia chapters on research topics. She has received the Young Investigator Award from the American Sleep Disorders Association, and research grants from foundations and professional organizations including the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

In her WRD address, she urged WestConn students to take full advantage of academic and extracurricular opportunities during their undergraduate years to explore their interests, strengthen their skills, and set personal and career goals for future achievement in the near and long term.

“Find your ‘north’: Ask yourself, ‘What is my dream, what do I want most in life?’” she said. “Don’t do things just to please your parents or your professors — do it for yourself! Don’t underestimate yourself, ask questions, find the value in any job or experience. You will learn, and want to learn more — that’s what it’s all about.”

She assured the young researchers in her audience that WestConn will provide solid academic foundations for their future careers through their course and laboratory studies, participation in academic clubs, and the mentoring of dedicated faculty members in their chosen fields.

“The courses that I took at WestConn made me fall in love with science,” Ribeiro recalled. “I’ve come back to tell you what a value you have here. WestConn provides you with a great opportunity to get a solid background in whatever field you want to master.”

“Thank you, WestConn, for the many opportunities I was given,” she added. “You launched my career. It was the dedication and mentoring of the faculty here at WestConn that inspired me to be a professor and a scientist myself.”

Ardizzone takes Provost prize (cont’d.)

Warner Hall on the university’s Midtown campus. WRD 2009 also featured a poster exhibition in the Science Building Atrium of 38 research projects completed by WestConn undergraduate and graduate students during the 2008-09 academic year.

Ardizzone demonstrated in her seminar presentation how she used the Java programming language to design and build multiple levels of a processing architecture supporting a graphic interface for banking functions similar to those performed by an automatic teller machine. She observed that the Java architecture offered flexibility in making programming changes and capacity for efficient handling of multiple system users and recurring database access.
A. Children of WCSU employees show off the puppets they made under the direction of Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Elizabeth Popiel during Take Your Child To Work Day.

B. Football legend Joe Namath (l) oversees his football camp, held each summer on the Westside campus.

C. WCSU alumnus Josh DeBonis conducts a seminar during the Connecticut Film Festival.

D. Assistant Professor of Anthropology Dr. Bethany Morrison and students explored a Revolutionary War-era site that had never before been investigated. Morrison was the project field director at the site, where troops under the command of Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam wintered in 1778.
This page:

A. Students participating in ConnCAP get a lesson in science aboard the “Bio Bus.”

B. Representatives of more than 50 local businesses spoke to students, accepted resumes and explained the details of job openings they offered at the 14th annual Career Fair, hosted by the Career Development Center.

C. Strings students honed their skills at WestConn’s popular Summer Music Camp.

D. (l-r): Karolina Wojteczko and Victoria Chiera perform during the spring production of “The Marriage of Figaro” by the WCSU Opera Ensemble.

E. The theatre arts department production of “Reynard the Fox” drew enthusiastic crowds to Ives Concert Park for the Fine Arts series.
By Robin DeMerell

By building solar sprint cars, a group of high school students learned “green-collar” skills including converting engine power from solar to fuel cell on the grounds of WestConn’s Westside campus.

The students were part of a summer program hosted by Green Light Academy. The academy is one of many educational and cultural programs offered by Beacon Preservation Inc., a nonprofit organization designed to promote environmental conservation, sustainable energy options, and “green-collar” skills necessary in today’s environmental sector of the economy.

Green Light Academy is made possible through a grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education, the 1772 Foundation, and the generous support of private donors.

There were more than 50 students from high schools around the state participating in the program that focuses on science, math and technology — and the new “green-collar” skills being promoted by many industries.

The four-week summer residential program was for students in grades 10 through 12. Students lived in university housing, dined at the Westside Campus Center, used the university’s classrooms and computer labs, conducted experiments in the laboratories of WestConn’s state-of-the-art Science Building, explored the Westside Nature Preserve, and enjoyed the many playing fields, gymnasiums, and recreational facilities on both the Midtown and Westside campuses. Taught by experienced professors and certified teachers, the students learned through hands-on skill-building exercises, such as the solar sprint cars.

After building the cars on July 15, the students raced them on July 16, joined by several representatives from Fuel Cell Energy in Danbury. On Friday, the students converted the cars from solar to fuel cell.

SAVE THE DATE! SUNDAY, NOV. 8, 2009

ELEVENTH ANNUAL WINE TASTING

TO BENEFIT STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

WILL BE HELD SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2009

AT 4 O’CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (203) 837-8832.

Open House

For the latest WestConn news and event listings, visit wcsu.edu/openhouse

You. Unlimited.

This is our promise to you.

Sunday, Nov. 1, 2009

SAVE THE DATE!
SUNDAY, NOV. 8, 2009

WINE TASTING

TO BENEFIT STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

WILL BE HELD SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2009

AT 4 O’CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (203) 837-8832.

Need directions? Please visit wcsu.edu/directions.

SAVE THE DATE!
SUNDAY, NOV. 8, 2009

WINE TASTING

TO BENEFIT STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

WILL BE HELD SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2009

AT 4 O’CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (203) 837-8832.

Need directions? Please visit wcsu.edu/directions.

Building ‘green’ cars at WestConn is just the beginning

Congratulations to our recent retirees

Please join us for this year’s retirement ceremony at 5 p.m., on Thursday, Oct. 15, in Warner Hall, followed by the WCSU Jazz Faculty concert at 7 p.m. in Ives Concert Hall.

Maureen Alviti
Aram Aslanian
Gale Bienvenue
Winston Blake
Walter Boelke
Jim Bucko
Linda Carpenter
Joe Cillizza
Paul Collins

Tony Cunha
Gloria Folan
Loretta Gentile
William Hawkins
Rolf Johnson
Cheryl Lynch
Debbie Maffeo
Hugh McCarney
Tom Millard

Elaine Miller
Howard Russock
Bob Simpson
Maryellen Smith
Ah-Mei Tompsett
Dick Van Houten
John Wallace
Fred Zarnowski