

The Tamarack

Our college. Our news. Our voice.

Naugatuck Valley Community College

December 1, 2019

Waterbury, Connecticut

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Beyond the Margins

Anjelika Rodis

A 58-year-old man sits just outside St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen, staring forlornly across the street. Hunched into his puff jacket, a square of cardboard beneath worn shoes, “John” chooses to remain anonymous, but is willing to speak with me. “Homelessness is a difficult problem to solve,” he says. “I feel as though I’m here, but no one wants to look at me, or acknowledge any of us really.”

Unfortunately, many more people like John exist along the margins of Waterbury. We can no longer ignore this issue, which has slowly converged towards the center of the country’s political dialogue. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the Federal Reserve, approximately 4 in 10 adults would have trouble paying a \$400 emergency expense, meaning millions of Americans are one financial setback away from hardship—and perhaps homelessness.

With the financial security of so many Americans tenuously supported by a floor that could cave at any moment, what are the invisible barriers preventing some of our country’s dispossessed from moving upward? Recent interviews with a few Waterbury residents enduring homelessness identify a lack of mental health services and addiction resources as growing concerns.

In the wake of the opioid crisis, some express frustration with inaccessible care. “It’s incredibly difficult to get consistent treatment with so many hurdles to clear,” says another man who preferred anonymity. Doctors require waivers to prescribe suboxone, an opioid consisting of buprenorphine and naloxone that binds to the brain’s opioid receptors. It mitigates withdrawal symptoms and cravings, while capping its euphoric effect



Photo Courtesy of Shutterstock

to prevent a level of highs experienced on drugs such as heroine.

Of the 800,000 doctors who qualify, however, only 31,000 have the waiver, and as of 2016, the number of patients a single doctor can provide treatment to has increased from 30 to 275 under the Obama Administration. While this increase may seem a major stepping-stone, it is far from a perfect solution.

“We need to reform the treatment method somehow. Yeah, doctors can see more people, but many want us to foot a portion of the expenses up front. That’s money many of us don’t have, and it’s incredibly hard to be a homeless addict trying to get social security to

cover that. I have to pay about \$60 for a scheduled treatment somewhere down the line, when I could be using that money to survive in the moment.” He continues emphatically, “But that’s not the biggest problem. Look at me.” He pulls up a pant leg to reveal paper towels taped to his knee; carefully lifting the makeshift bandage, he reveals a large, surgical cut. “A lot of us out here who get high? It’s common to get injured. Many of them, like me, are in pain—and hiding out in factories somewhere—we can’t even access that help or get food.”

A black market for suboxone is an unsurprising consequence when treatment is inaccessible to the poor. Many attempt to alleviate

withdrawal symptoms by self-medicating. However, stigma feeds this desperation. “I self-medicate because it’s cheaper to get it off the street, but that’s just one side of getting better. I can’t get the right therapy while I’m still trying to get social security. It takes money to escape this, but when you’re an addict, and life sucks, it’s easy to spend money to fuel that addiction when the resources aren’t available. Unfortunately, not many people ‘self-medicate’ properly because they don’t have the therapy aspect, so they end up misusing suboxone. Then people, especially people who are supposedly meant to help you, believe you don’t want to get better. And that’s not true.”

“None of us want to be in pain. None of us want to be here. I’ve overdosed about 18 times in my life, and at one point would spend \$3,000 a week to feed my girlfriend’s and my habit. She would sell her body for that money, and God knows, getting into dangerous situations where she could easily get raped. No one should be living like that.”

As we endeavor to bring marginalized members of our society to the forefront, we must understand the choice to seek help while remaining anonymous is perhaps, a result of the shame and misunderstanding of being written off as “homeless,” rather than recognized as a person in pain. Some discussed animosity they encounter from the general public, law enforcement, and social workers.

“People treat me like trash or like I’m so different from them. I was told I should just get up and work,” said John. “And I already do. I used to go to NVCC about thirty years ago. I graduated, actually. The only thing separating us from you is that one uncontrollable moment where your life falls apart.”

A True Statesman

Kathleen Chesto



Photo Courtesy of Flickr

Elijah Eugene Cummings was born in Baltimore, January 18, 1951, four years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, igniting the Montgomery Bus Boycott. As Cummings grew, attending a segregated Baltimore elementary school, and listening to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s radio broadcasts every Sunday, he was only marginally aware of the Civil Rights Movement growing in the nation around him.

The summer of 1962 changed that. At eleven years old, he went to a neighborhood pool with a group of friends, not knowing

they were among the first black children to integrate the Riverside Park pool. The boys were met by a crowd of angry white residents; carrying signs reading, “Keep our pool germ free,” they pelted the children with rocks and bottles. Hit in the face and scarred for life, that was only one indelible mark Cummings carried from the incident.

A black woman who tried to help was injured; even as she bled, she tried to protect the boys. They knew her as “Miss Mitchell”; Cummings later learned she was an attorney in town: Juanita Jackson Mitchell, a legendary civil rights lawyer. Cummings never forgot her. At that moment, only eleven, he declared he would become an attorney.

Cummings told *Baltimore Magazine* one of his strongest childhood memories was being told “He couldn’t: couldn’t swim in that pool, couldn’t go to the nicer, newer white school, couldn’t go to college, couldn’t get into law school.” However, mentors believed he could. “Doc” Freidman, owner of the local pharmacy, gave him his first job, paying his Howard University application fee. Once there, Cummings received letters of encouragement—and an occasional \$10 bill—from the pharmacist.

Serving as student body president at

Howard, Cummings went on to earn his law degree at the University of Maryland, becoming one of the most respected lawyers in Baltimore. Elected to the Maryland House of Delegates, he was the youngest chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus and the first African American speaker pro tem, the member presiding in the speaker’s absence. Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996, at his swearing in, Cummings promised his time in Congress would be centered on “a mission and a vision to empower people.”

Cummings became well-known for his ability to work with those on both sides of the aisle. Rep. Trey Gowdy, whose confrontations with Cummings often made headlines, said, “It’s not about politics to him; he says what he believes...And with Mr. Cummings, it’s coming from his soul.”

Bemoaning the current political climate, Cummings reflected, “Those at the highest levels of government must stop invoking fear, using racist language and encouraging reprehensible behavior. As a country, we finally must say enough is enough. That we are done with the hateful rhetoric.”

Recently, John Heilemann asked if Cummings had an answer to our current divisive, political climate. He responded, “The answers are painful...To see this as I walk through the evening of my life...it makes me want to work night and day for the rest of my life to make sure we make the best of

the situation...this is about the soul of our democracy.”

Cummings died October 17, 2019. In a statement, his wife, Maryland Democratic Party Chair, Maya Rockey Moore Cummings, said, “Congressman Cummings was an honorable man who proudly served his district and the nation with dignity, integrity, compassion and humility. He worked until his last breath because he believed our democracy was the highest and best expression of our collective humanity and that our nation’s diversity was our promise, not our problem.”

On Thursday, October 24, Rep. Cummings lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda, the first African American Congressman ever to be so honored. His funeral, at Baltimore’s New Psalmist Baptist Church, was attended by two former U.S. presidents, a large cohort of powerful American leaders, and thousands of ordinary citizens. In one of many stirring eulogies, President Barack Obama said of Cummings, “Elijah became a lawyer to make sure that others had rights, and his people had their God-given rights, and from the statehouse to the House of Representatives, his commitment to justice and the rights of others would never, ever waver.”

Elijah Cummings was 68 years old. His integrity, sense of justice, compassion, and leadership will be deeply missed.

Thanks to the Jon S. Randall “Peace Page” for information and references.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



That's the Spirit!

It's finally December; the days are getting shorter and the semester's winding down to a close. I'd like to start by wishing everyone good luck on finals, and congratulations to everyone who's made it this far. Whether you're a new student, continuing, or about to graduate, finishing a semester is always an achievement.

School is one of those things we have to take one step at a time. If we go too fast, we wear ourselves out, but going too slow can mean nothing gets done. We all have our own pace, of course, but when seeking a degree, each semester is a big step, and a step that should be rewarded. So over winter break, give yourself a big pat on the back; you've earned it! Of course, relaxing can be hard even without school. Work and other responsibilities come to fill the void that is free time. Holidays can be stressful for many reasons, sometimes because we feel everything needs to be perfect.

Each winter, we're flooded by advertisements and movies preaching the meaning of Christmas. I don't know why I never see movies made about any of the other winter holidays, but that's just a pet peeve of mine and beside the point. Real life doesn't look like the movies, as everyone knows, but the expectations of the perfect holiday gathering are woven into the fabric of our society. I don't celebrate Christmas; I celebrate Yule, but still I feel those expectations have influenced how we celebrate and how we plan our celebration. In the end, we start comparing what we do to what we think we should do.

In yoga we learned about non-possessiveness. I've talked a bit about this before. It doesn't mean you have to go live a minimalist lifestyle. Rather, the way I'm using it refers to not holding onto expectations or notions. Just because you enjoyed something once doesn't mean it will satisfy you next time around. Often our past experiences can also influence what we expect. We want things to be the same as they were last year or the year before, but since the world's ever-changing, that way of thinking simply does not work. And when things aren't how we expected, we tend to be disappointed.

If we try to make everything perfect, it never will be; nothing is perfect. When something doesn't go to plan it just hits that much harder. It's important to focus on what you want to do this year, rather than what you did last year. Break traditions you feel you don't need; do what feels right; and be with the people you want to be with. That, I think, is the true spirit of the holidays, not just Christmas, but any winter holiday focused on keeping joy through the darkest months.

Happy holidays, everyone, and see you next semester!

Gwenydd Miller
Editor-in-Chief
tamarack@nv.edu

CORRECTION: In our November front page story, "People (Without Homes)," an editing error resulted in a misleading statistic. The printed article read: "In our state, one in five children is homeless," but it should have stated, "In our state one in five homeless persons is a child." It was not our intention to inflate an already troubling statistic. We appreciate Professor Faryniarz, who drew our attention to the error. ~ The Editors

Loved it? Hated it?

Send us your letters in response to articles, features, and profiles in The Tamarack. Limit them to 200 words and email them to tamarack@nv.edu with the subject line READERS RESPOND. Letters may be edited for length and grammar.

Debt-Free CC

Kathleen Chesto



Representatives (l to r) Will Haskell and Gregg Haddad at the podium.
Photo Courtesy of Kathleen Chesto

Wednesday, October 30th, Representatives Gregg Haddad and Will Haskell from the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement held an open forum at Founders Hall to discuss the proposal before the state legislature to fund community college education for all CT high school graduates.

President De Filippis introduced the representatives and thanked them for their presence and continued support of community colleges. She pointed out NVCC's own efforts to garner community support, evident in Founders Hall itself, and spoke to the ongoing need of support from the state. Maureen Chalmers, President of the 4Cs, also welcomed the group.

Rep. Haskell began the meeting by stressing the need of today's students. In 2017, CT students had the highest college debt in the country. College tuition has doubled over the past 10 years, while funding has remained flat. Steady enrollment declines are due in large part to the issue of affordability.

All of this must be seen against the backdrop of a state where 70% of jobs will soon require some form of higher education. Lack of higher education does not only hurt the student. Reduced purchasing power of individuals without a college degree means delays in buying a first home, or a new car; this, in turn, affects the entire state economy.

College needs to be affordable for all. Business leaders need to know they can rely on the state to create a young, educated workforce. Some businesses have already chosen to leave CT because they believe we cannot provide the educated, young workers they need. Others have chosen not to come.

Rep. Haddad addressed the bill the Higher Education Committee has presented to the

legislature. Their plan follows the best practices of those states—New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee—that have already introduced free community college and found it financially sustainable and educationally effective. Tennessee now has the highest graduation rates in the country.

Initially, the plan would be offered to full-time students who are recent high school graduates and new to college. The committee is aware a large group of non-traditional and part-time students are not addressed in this plan, but believe it is a way to begin. Students would be required to fill out FAFSA and apply for any available federal loans. The state tuition plan would become available once a student had exhausted all financial aid and scholarships. Students would be required to maintain a satisfactory academic average.

The hope is the program would be funded by a new i-lottery system draw game available on phones. The Office of Fiscal Analysis anticipates the system earning \$60 million in five years.

Governor Lamont is currently vetting the new lottery, and results will be revealed with the budget statement in January. If the system is not feasible, the governor is committed to finding other means of funding the debt-free community college proposal. The anticipated cost was \$6 million when the bill was first proposed, but this may have increased.

Other states with similar community college programs have reported an unexpected side effect of having all students file for FAFSA. Where many had not formerly applied, additional FAFSA applications have led to an increase in federal money coming into the state. The CT Office of Fiscal Analysis reported the plan could potentially bring CT an increase of federal funds that would exceed the plan's cost. An interesting footnote: 90% of community college students remain in the state after graduation. They will become our educated workforce.

The representatives accepted questions from the audience, ranging from who would receive aid to what effects this would have on present state support and funding. In closing, those present were invited to write to Governor Lamont supporting his efforts in finding funding for our community colleges. Postcards were provided. If you support tuition free community college for all students, please inform the governor and your representative of your approval.

Women's Center News

Introduction and Events

Nicole Hayes



2017 NVCC alumna and a 2019 Wesleyan University graduate with a double major in African American Studies and Psychology who has been an integral member of The Tamarack, Nicole Hayes is a recent educational assistant hire for the Women's Center,

assisting the Center with planning and executing campus events.

NVCC's Women's Center is devoted to carrying out events around issues related to feminism, gender, and domestic and sexual violence. The Center's 2019-2020 academic year theme is a pledge to end period poverty. The Center plans on addressing this global issue on a local level. Students and staff are encouraged to donate menstrual products to the Center, located in Kinney 405, as well as bringing items to events sponsored by the Center.

Our inaugural events focused on period poverty were held in November on the Waterbury and Danbury campuses, where the short film, *Period. End of Sentence.* was viewed and discussed. Posters around the room provided global information pertaining to period poverty, making the experience interactive for students.

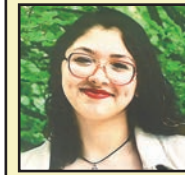
The Center plans on hosting similar events in the spring semester, such as presenting its annual *Vagina Monologues* performance as part of the February 26th V-Day event. For those interested in attending, participating as an actress, stage manager, director, or behind the scenes, you can get more information by emailing nhayes@nvcc.commnet.edu or jpetitfrere@nvcc.commnet.edu.

We also plan on celebrating the national observation of Women's History Month occurring in March. These events will embrace women's contributions to American history as well as pay tribute to the women's suffrage movement, which led to ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920.

April 23rd will feature Take Back the Night. The Center looks forward to working with the campus community and is excited to revitalize the Women on Campus student club. Interested students should contact me at the above email. Have a happy ending to your fall semester, and be sure to keep a look out for our future events. We would love to have your community support!

Editor's Note: This is the first appearance of a new monthly Women's Center column. We are thrilled to have Nicole Hayes, our former Senior Staff Writer, back as a regular Tamarack contributor.

SGA PRESIDENT



Farewell, Fall

Happy December, everyone. Congrats on all the good work you've done this semester, and best of luck with all the final projects and exams you need to complete in order to make it to winter break! December is always a great time to reflect on how far we've come. I know I'm relieved that this semester is finally coming to a close, and I'm looking forward to what the future holds.

Speaking of the future, next semester will be here soon, so I hope you've all registered for spring classes. It's easy to get so caught up with your current workload that next semester is the last thing on your mind, but don't forget to sign up for classes before leaving for winter break.

I also hope you won't forget that on December 4th, from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm, the SGA will be having our annual Holiday Party. It will be a winter wonderland with music, free food, and hot chocolate. I hope to see many of you at the event in Café West.

The last SGA meeting of fall 2019 will also be on December 4th. Weekly meetings will resume in February. I want to thank all the members of the SGA for their hard work and participation this semester. I also want to thank my fellow officers for their continued dedication and passion. I am looking forward to working with you all next semester.

If you didn't get a chance to get involved this semester, I encourage you to do so next semester. SGA clubs and events provide an excellent opportunity to get to know new people and try new things. It's never too late to get involved in your school community; you'll be happy you did.

Happy Holidays, Happy New Year, and I hope to see you all next semester!

Regards,
Tabitha Cruz

Dance Forum

Megan Boyd



In these photos, provided by Dance Professor Megan Boyd, participants take part in the 2019 Dance Educators Forum. Photos Courtesy of Megan Boyd

Once again, our campus was host to the *Dance Educator's Forum*, which brought a group of passionate dance instructors to NVCC on November 5th. Created by Elena Del Vecchio Rusnak, the forum is now a re-inaugurated annual event, co-sponsored by Naugatuck Valley Community College and Connecticut Dance Alliance. This is a unique professional development day for dance instructors in CT, as well as for college students planning to become dance teachers in public schools and studios. Workshops this year were instructed by Cheryl Wirth Santulli, from WAMS; Merly De La Hoz-Cookson, alumna of NVCC; and Diana Harris, current adjunct instructor of dance at NVCC. The event was a great success, and we look forward to bringing it back in 2020.

The Tamarack

"Standing, like a resolute tree, as your source for news."

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EDITORIAL

Conflicting Proposals

Our state is rapidly reaching the point where a higher education will be needed, simply to earn enough to support bare subsistence. As the cost of living and tuition increase astronomically, so does the indebtedness of college graduates. In 2017, CT students graduated with the highest student debt nationwide, according to The Institute for College Access & Success, a non-profit focused on affordability of college in America. Cost is a serious obstacle to college attendance for many.

The Debt-Free CC Plan, to become available in 2020, will provide CT high school graduates who've never attended a community college with full tuition and fees for 72 credits at any of our community colleges. Students must be fulltime, will be required to complete FAFSA applications, and all scholarships and federal funds must be exhausted before they're eligible for state funding.

This is a necessary step, and I applaud the state legislature for its action. However, I disagree with some implementation terms. Our community colleges have many non-traditional students, supporting families, and attending school part time. They are excluded from this aid. "Students who have never attended a community college" excludes all those currently struggling to complete college. It also excludes those who've had to drop out for financial reasons.

At the same time, the inclusivity of the bill's language allows all CT high school graduates since 1999 to access this aid. I've been unable to find limitations based on financial or academic need. This means a gainfully employed person with a four-year college degree is eligible, if they've never attended a CC. A single mother who dropped out to care for her children, and is in desperate need, however, is excluded. An excellent academic standing is no advantage; the poor record of a graduate with no community college attendance is no detriment.

Legislators recognize the bill is imperfect, but they must start somewhere. I agree. I simply don't agree this is the place to start. While college has become more of a necessity, education is still a privilege. Perhaps it's outdated to believe attainment should require work and responsibility, but this bill verges on entitlement. Sadly, many who are most in need are least entitled under the current bill.

The source of money for this plan, according to legislators, will hopefully be the new i-lottery, plus additional federal funds from FAFSA. That sounds reasonable, a truly workable idea, but it leaves me confused.

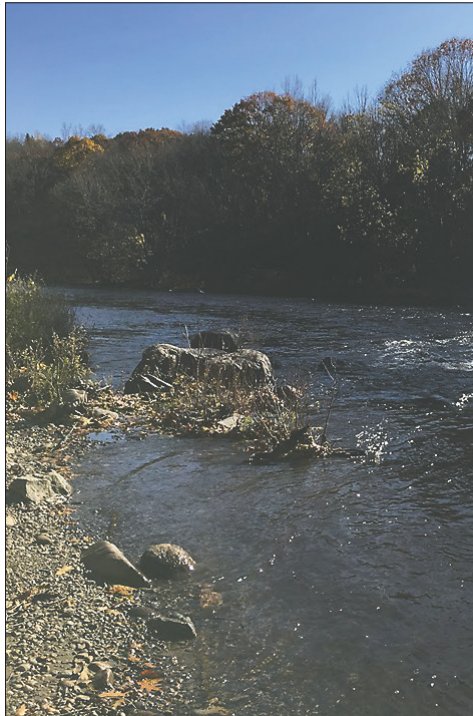
I spent time this past summer studying "Students First," trying to understand the state's consolidation plan for community colleges. While some systems within our colleges need streamlining and coordination—central offices for registration, billing, admission transfers, and IT, appear reasonable—the massive nature of consolidation seems unnecessarily extensive and expensive in implementation. Any objections or suggested alternatives are met with the incontrovertible fact: the system is running out of money. The more controversial idea: this is the only way to fix it.

No matter where you stand on Student's First, its driving force is the dwindling reserves of community colleges and the necessity of sharing resources in order to keep all our institutions open. We appreciate student need has been made a priority in the reconfiguration, but it seems disingenuous to say it's all about students, as the website implies. It's all about finances.

Couldn't some of this "newfound" money be used to fix what's broken in the present system, while maintaining what works well at our individual colleges? My experience at NVCC is that students are already "first," to everyone, from maintenance through administration. Hopefully, these plans won't threaten that.

A River's Resurrection

Kathleen Chesto



The first Naugatuck River Festival was celebrated on Saturday, October 26, in Linden Park, Naugatuck. For those who have lived in the watershed of the river for the last fifty years, the walk along the river path, with its stunning views of the water, and the grassy banks supporting picnickers and vendors, seemed only a little short of miraculous.

It was mid-afternoon when my husband and I reached the park. As we began our walk, a gentleman in his seventies approached us, recognizing we're of an age to appreciate his excitement. Arms spread wide to take in the sparkling rapids and open spaces along the river, he asked, "Could you ever have imagined this, forty years ago?"

No, we could not. We moved into the Naugatuck River watershed area in 1970, when the river was considered one of the most polluted in the country. The stench greeted you five miles outside Naugatuck. When we asked new friends in the city how they lived with it, they responded, "That's the smell of money." The family's father was employed by Uniroyal, whose production of rubber and the eponymous Naugahyde was one of the major polluters of the river.

Flowing south from Torrington to Derby, dropping 540 feet in elevation, producing a

steep gradient and rapidly flowing water—occasionally characterized by rapids—the Naugatuck River was ideal for hydropower development. This waterway contributed to the industrialization of the valley in the 1700 and 1800s. However, the river fell victim to the economic success of those industries. By the early twentieth century, the Naugatuck Valley led the world in brass production. The waste from those mills, along with waste from smaller supporting industries and sewage from Waterbury and Naugatuck all drained into the river.

Hurricanes in the 1950s caused disastrous flooding which led to the construction of a series of walls and dams, further constricting and contaminating the flow of the river. Fortunately, major changes in state and federal pollution control laws, upgrades to municipal waste water treatment plants, natural and intentional dam removal, and the transition away from heavy industry in the Valley eliminated the stench and began to restore the quality of the water. Still, with the river debris-littered from years of garbage and metal dumping, the steep banks along the Naugatuck stretch of river remained intentionally overgrown, in an attempt to hide the pollution from public view.

A 5 million-gallon sewage spill in the river in October 2017 led to initial attempts to clean the river. Under the guidance of local environmentalist, Kevin Zak, the Naugatuck River Brigade was formed. Primarily peopled with scout troops, but receiving frequent input and help from professionals and business people in the city, the brigade began removing debris from the river, eventually clearing its banks. Now, for the first time in over a century, river views are once again visible.

The Naugatuck River has been the lifeblood of Waterbury and Naugatuck. It seems only just that the people of both cities have united to restore the river to life. Mayor N. Warren Hess said, "Naugatuck wouldn't be here without the river, and 90% of our people don't know we have a beautiful river running through our town." He'd always had a vision for the space, but could not have done it without all the support and help from the town members. Saturday, while the youngest generation played on the banks and swings at Linden Park, those in the grandparent generation stood quietly awestruck by the resurrection of our river.

Brass City Ink Bonus

Tamarack Staff

In November, we ran a piece by NVCC printmaking student, Hannah Vitarelli, featuring the local business, Brass City Ink, she runs with partner, David Duncan. Space constraints prevented inclusion of photos showing their screen-printing process, so we wanted to correct that! For info on the business, check them out on the web at BrassCityInk.com, email info@brasscityink.com, or call (203) 493-0919.



Examples of Brass City Ink's custom prints
 Photos Courtesy of Hannah Vitarelli.



Vitarelli inks a screen in preparation for printing.



Duncan demonstrates the printing process.



The PTK C4 event ran Wednesday, November 6th, from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM in Café West. Working in shifts, (along with the PTK officers and helpful members) representatives from Financial Aid, the Registrar's Office, and CAPSS were present. Their mission was to get students to commit to graduating.

This photo of PTK Chapter President, James Pretty, was taken near the end of the event when he wheeled his makeshift podium out into the hallway to attract more students to take the pledge.

Happenings @ Other Colleges

Anjelika Rodis



Western Connecticut State University

WCSU's observatory will host a planetarium show and telescope viewing on December 7th. A one-hour show, from 5:00 – 6:00 PM, in the planetarium will precede the sky observation from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. Weather permitting, attendees can expect to see Uranus, Neptune, and the Pleiades cluster. The event is free and open to the public. WCSU's observatory and planetarium are located on the university's Westside Campus at 43 Lake Ave. Extension in Danbury.



Wesleyan University

Wesleyan University

Brendan Fernandez will exhibit *Inaction*, a sculptural and performance-based installation, at Wesleyan's Zilkha Gallery. The exhibit will be open December 1st and run from Dec. 3rd – 8th from 12:00–5:00 PM, with a special performance by Charles Gowin on December 5th at 5:00 PM. Guided tours will be available on Saturdays. This event is free and open to the public. For more information visit: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/cfa/galleries/zilkha-exhibition/pages/current/10022019-brendan-fernandes-inaction.html>



New York University

From December 2nd – March 23rd, NYU's Latinx Project will exhibit *Afro Syncretic*, curated works from nine artists exploring African influences in Latinx communities. Curator Yelaine Rodriguez aims to provide work that challenges contemporary trends which question and undermine black influence. The exhibit will be open weekdays from 11:00 AM–8:00 PM in the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center on 53 Washington Square South. The event is free and open to the public.



Yale University

Yale University

Yale will be screening *Where Chimneys Are Seen*, directed by Heinosuke Gosho, at the Whitney Humanities Center on December 1st from 7:00–10:00 PM. The film follows two couples during Japan's industrialization in the 1950s and examines common struggles of the nation's lower-middle class. The event is free and open to the public.

Center for Teaching Ending Well

Dr. Patricia Pallis

Dr. Pallis, a longtime Center for Teaching Committee member, is a past CFT Teaching and Learning Consultant. Professor of English, she is currently LABSS Division Humanities Chair.

Mark Twain, the American humorist and novelist, once wrote “never put off till tomorrow what may be done day after tomorrow just as well.” While I find Twain's statement pretty amusing (and a good explanation for the state of my desk and my laundry basket), it's not very good advice for college students.

As the end of the semester approaches and the next adventure looms, I think we'd all be better off to avoid putting anything off until tomorrow. Put in the time needed to write those final papers and study for those final tests and complete those final projects. Sometimes, the tasks can feel overwhelming, but believing in yourself and creating space for yourself to do the work will get you through successfully.

Here are some useful tips that served me well when I was a student (and continue to serve me well now):

- Get enough sleep and eat good food (both kinds of nourishment will keep you going).
- Carve out time to study and don't let others interfere with that time.
- Set achievable goals for end of semester work. Make sure goals are specific and doable. Prioritize them, so your focus is where it needs to be.
- Consider a study group or study partner. Engaging with other students can help you stay motivated. Be sure your study group or partner is as serious as you are.
- Ask for help if you need it. The college is filled with people who want to help you to succeed; remember, in particular, that your faculty want you to succeed, but they might not know you have questions if you don't ask.
- Build in breaks and rewards. Celebrate your successes.

But once the semester is over and you are on to that next adventure (whether it be the next semester, a new job, or anything else), I would also encourage you to give yourself time to reflect; look back a bit and consider how you've grown and what you've accomplished. Take some time to value the experiences of this semester—the things you've learned, the research you've engaged in, and the friends and connections you've made.

And I'd also encourage you to think about how where you've been (including those moments that maybe weren't as successful as you hoped—because we all experience that, too) has had an impact on who you are in this moment. Leaving time and making time for reflection is a good way to bring all the new experiences and knowledge together.

Between the Bookends News from the NVCC Library

Jaime Hammond



Jaime Hammond is the Director of Library Services.

“Adulting” is a relatively new term for a very old concept: learning all of the things associated with going from young adulthood to, well, regular adulthood. A quick search on Instagram proves that this is a concept many people are thinking about, with 2.5

“Adulting” is a relatively new term for a very old concept... MILLION posts tagged #adulting and another 264,000 posts tagged #adultingishard. We feel you; it really is.

I'm sure you can guess where I'm going with this...and you're right. The NVCC Library has your back with some critical guides to adulting, such as:

- *The Financial Diet: a total beginner's guide to getting good with money* (READING COMMONS NON-FICTION HG 179 .F324 2018)
- *College Rules! How to study, survive, and succeed in college* (READING COMMONS NON-FICTION LB 2343.32 .N57 2016)
- *The Healthy College Cookbook* (READING COMMONS NON-FICTION TX 715 .N683 2009) and
- *The Bullet Journal Method: Track the Past, Order the Present, Design the Future* (STACKS BF 637 .T5 C38 2018)

We've got books on cooking, car maintenance, how to set up a budget, staying organized, and much more! Come in and check one out; it could be an important first step toward #adultingmadeeasy!

Over the winter break, the library will be open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. (We will be closed on Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.) You can stop by to use the computers, borrow a book or a movie, read a magazine, or relax on one of the couches. If you're taking a winter session class, you can make an appointment with a librarian for research assistance or use the group study rooms to meet with classmates.

And finally, as you finish up those research papers, don't forget that your library staff are here to help with research questions and citations! Have a great end of the semester and wonderful winter break!



Address, Don't Suppress

While October is officially Mental Health Awareness Month, any time we support people dealing with mental health issues, we provide a benefit to the individual, their family and friends. November 4th, the NVCC Student Activities Office coordinated a Fresh Check Day to both raise awareness and decrease the stigma of mental health issues on college campuses.

Across the nation, the impact and occurrence of college students experiencing anxiety, depression and mental health issues has increased significantly. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 40 million adults suffer from an anxiety disorder; 75% of them experience their first episode while in college. The 2018 National College Health Assessment, implemented by the American College Health Association, notes that 53% of college students reported feeling hopeless, and 85% felt overwhelmed by everything they had to do at some point within the past year. Furthermore, 82% of students felt exhausted (not from physical activity), and 48% found it very difficult to handle their academics. Clearly academic, personal, employment, and financial burdens students face take a toll on performance and wellbeing.

Fresh Check Day promotes positive mental health and suicide prevention by creating an uplifting atmosphere to honestly discuss mental health issues and concerns. Another goal of Fresh Check is to help students access mental health resources both on and off campus. If you were not able to attend the event, we want to ensure you are aware you can reach out to someone on both NVCC campuses if help is needed.

The Center for Academic Planning and Student Success (CAPSS) has counselors available to assist students in both Waterbury and Danbury. If you need assistance dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, or just need someone to talk to, please stop by Kinney Hall (Room 520) in Waterbury, or see Tammy MacBrien Downs in Room 309 in Danbury. Resources available for off-campus support can also be accessed through the United Way 211 system.

Health Navigators are prepared to recommend and connect you to resources for mental health, basic needs, housing, and much more through either the 211-phone number or www.211.CT.org. There are also multiple resources accessible through the college website at www.nv.edu/student-life/where-to-go/safety-support.

Mental health issues are not something to be ashamed of but something to be addressed and treated. The CAPSS office is here for you. We'll do what we can to help support you through the obstacles you may face during your journey at NVCC.

**Regards,
Bonnie Goulet
Director of Student Development Services**

Checking In

Tamarack Staff



SGA Educational Assistant Lisa McManus at a table on suicide awareness and prevention.



The Food Justice Club was represented by Janel Abdul-Lateef and Jordyn Wilson (l to r)

Wellness took center stage at NVCC as Fresh Check Day returned to the College on Monday, November 4th. The annual event, once again held in Café West, offered students, staff, and faculty a chance to come together around a topic often relegated to silence: mental health. Several student clubs, academic

programs—DARC and Human Services, for example—and community organizations took part in the event, featuring colorful table displays and engaging activities. While the mood was upbeat, and the services provided were

meaningful, at its heart, Fresh Check Day is a response to a serious concern, one which has impacted NVCC directly.

Life is stressful, now more than ever. With anxiety and depression on the rise, and the



Human Service Club members, Dominique Casillas, Anelis Quinones, and Beatrice Myrthil

unique pressures of college, an event like this should reassure every NVCC community member that people care and resources are available. Fresh Check Day is a reminder to take time to notice, to reach out, to offer a listening ear, and maybe even a referral to a professional, when we recognize someone is suffering—even if that someone is our self. Maybe we should think of every day as Fresh Check Day; our campus and larger community would surely benefit.

Honoring Adjuncts

Journey to the Past

Dr. Colleen Darnell



Photo Courtesy of Alberto Urcia

Each semester, I look forward to my art history classes at NVCC's Waterbury campus. I enjoy sharing the great artistic achievements of humanity's first thirty thousand years, from Paleolithic caves to Gothic cathedrals. My favorite part of class is always ancient Egyptian art, because I am an Egyptologist.

I earned my BA and PhD in Egyptology from Yale University, where I also taught classes

"I enjoy sharing the great artistic achievements of mankind's first thirty thousand years, from Paleolithic caves to Gothic cathedrals."

in hieroglyphs and Egyptian history. Twice a year, I travel to Egypt to participate in archaeological expeditions. One of the most exciting moments of my career was on Christmas Day 2010, when I discovered a Roman city in the desert east of the Nile. A German scholar had been to the site in 1904, but he only visited for a day and thought the buildings were constructed maybe a couple of hundred years previously. Following his sketch map, literally like a treasure hunt, I returned to the site with my Egyptian colleagues. By studying the broken pottery scattered around the buildings, I was able to determine the city was built between 400 and 600 CE. I had discovered a city that had been lost for over a thousand years!

As an Egyptologist, I publish books and articles about ancient Egyptian literature, religion, and history. My most recent book, published in October 2018 and co-authored with my husband John Darnell, is called *The Ancient Egyptian Netherworld Books*. It is the first complete English translation of the hieroglyphic texts in the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, texts dating to about three thousand years ago.

In 2013, I published two books: *Imagining the Past: Historical Fiction in Ancient Egypt* and *Echoes of Egypt: Conjuring the Land of the Pharaohs*. Amazingly, three thousand years ago, Egyptian scribes wrote stories set two or even three hundred years earlier—they had a genre of historical fiction. *Echoes of Egypt* is a catalog of a museum exhibit I curated at the Peabody Museum of Natural History, which explored how ancient Egypt has influenced art and architecture around the globe. There is even a cemetery right down the street in Naugatuck that has Egyptian-style walls and gates!

I have appeared in almost a dozen television documentaries. I am most proud of a six-part series for National Geographic, called "Lost Treasures of Egypt," that debuted in April 2019. I like to share my enthusiasm for ancient Egypt and all of the topics in Art History I with my students. There are so many times when I will learn more about a particular object because one of my students asks a really great question. If you decide to take art history in the future, I look forward to taking that journey with you!

Circling

Tamarack Staff



November 8, 2019, President De Filippis and the President's Circle Committee inducted five members to the President's Circle, 2019-2020. The student honorees—Salma Akter, Rola Ammar, Jyrel Hawk, Kayla Mills, and Beatrice Paulin—were joined in celebration by family, friends, administrators, staff, and faculty. Presented with a blazer and pin, the inductees officially accepted responsibility as NVCC student ambassadors.

The ceremony provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate academic excellence and commitment to the values of the institution, including giving back to the larger community. Hospitality Professor Karen Rotella delivered an inspirational keynote speech in addition to supervising her students, who once again provided a delicious array of refreshments.

With advice and encouragement from previous inductees, Christopher Gordon, Irisa Hoxha, and John Williams—and words of welcome and appreciation offered by President De Filippis, and committee members, Beth Monchun, Susan Houlihan, and Bonnie Goulet, these five are on their way to doing even more great things for our campus and the Greater Waterbury community.

(Pictured l to r: Hawk, Paulin, Hoxha, Akter, Ammar, Mills, Williams, and Gordon).

SPEAK UP Are you interested in where your Student Activities Fees are spent? If so, voice your opinion at NVCC's Student Government meetings held every Wednesday, 4-5 p.m. in L501, across from the Library. For more information call 203-596-2185, stop by S516, or email SGA@nvcc.commnet.edu.

Out of the Dark

Name Withheld

We face many horrors today, from the climate crisis to school violence. One way through this darkness is to focus on what matters: family, friends, school, hobbies, work. Sadly, not everyone can find meaning in those things. According to the World Health Association, close to 800,000 people take their own lives each year; for every suicide completed, there are an estimated twenty attempts. Suicide has been listed as the 18th leading cause of death worldwide.

Many people, me included, have lost a loved one to suicide, and it's not uncommon, when going through a dark period, to have thoughts about ending one's life. However, following through with that impulse is completely different. This often happens when a person is unable to shake the pain or quiet thoughts of worthlessness—ultimately deciding suicide is their only way out.

I've struggled with such thoughts, and many people I know have also. One dear friend was lost to suicide a few years ago, and that, ironically, was when I was able to break free of such thoughts. My heart remains right there with those who are still stuck in that cycle of despair.

There are many different types of depressive disorders that can cause suicidal thoughts or actions. This is something we must always be on the lookout for, but we should be especially vigilant in winter months. Depression peaks in winter for many reasons; with it, suicide levels rise. Some reasons are holiday stress and loneliness, along with high expectations being unmet. Another factor, Seasonal Affective Disorder, is brought on by reduced light in winter; this reduced light negatively affects serotonin production. For some, this leads to depression.

For those who know they're prone to depression, taking extra care to recognize the signs, and to communicate with a trusted individual, is especially important. Therapy can be a lifesaving option, and hospitals and treatment centers are a resource in cases of emergency. There are many organizations, including suicide hotlines, that can help. Sometimes the world can feel like a trap, with isolating walls all around, muffling our voices. It's key to remember such times are temporary, that things can change for the better.

There are many ways to make a difference for someone considering suicide, including recognizing depression and offering to listen. There are even courses available to earn certification in mental health first aid. Of course,

even with such education, it's not always possible to prevent a suicide. Sometimes, sudden mood swings and impulsive actions make a deadly combo. Other times, an individual hides the pain so well no one notices.

Such tragedies catch us completely off guard. While there may be no easy solutions, one thing is certain. Pain and problems rarely go away if we simply ignore them. Pretending suicide doesn't happen is never the answer. If you're suffering, or sense someone else is, speak up, seek help. Silence comes with a heavy price.

The People Left Behind

Name Withheld

In this original prose poem, an NVCC student reflects on a friend lost to suicide.

Why are all the bells chiming? Why all the sudden praise? Why is everyone giving fanfare, just because she's loose from her chains? *She was too weak and fragile*, her suffering was too great, now she's free to fly wherever. *She's now in a better place.*

Why is everyone so quiet, with heads bowed low in grief? We're finding now in this hushed excitement, that even the strongest can learn to be weak. Still no one looked beneath the surface enough to see her pain. Now no one will ever know, all the things she had yet to say.

No goodbyes were given, no one had the chance. She left this world on a summer night, the time sure goes too fast. Now all eyes are turning to the girl they once all shunned. And now everyone is mourning the person she never was.

If she were here to see it, wouldn't she be thrilled? All dotting and affection, it's just too bad it's filled with guilt. Why are they all singing as though she was some angel bathed in light? As if everything she did was perfect, even taking her own life.

Why do we praise the dead, and make the living wish they were? Right now, the ones who are alive don't get *nearly as much attention as her*. Maybe she'd have mercy on them if only they'd looked her way. If she knew how much we'd miss her, maybe she'd have stayed.

Why does everyone suddenly care about *that stupid, selfish girl*? She forsook all of us on the day she left this world. Pain does not end at the end of someone's life; it just grows stronger in us all: the people left behind.

Necessities or Luxury Items?

Nicole Hayes



Photo Courtesy of Nicole Hayes

Period poverty, or menstrual inequity, is a sanitation issue affecting people around the world. Period poverty is defined as "the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, and hand washing facilities, and or, waste management."

People often believe period poverty only affects developing countries, but this is a fallacy. Research collected from Period Equity, a leading U.S. legal organization dedicated to ending period poverty, indicates "Many in the US are forced to make a terrible choice between buying food or menstrual products. Those who are unable to afford tampons and pads are at risk of isolation, infection and even missed days of school and work. These

problems are well documented around the globe. And they're happening here too."

Not having access to basic sanitary products has a negative effect on those who menstruate because it further perpetuates the negative stereotype about menstruation being "dirty." Around the globe, the misconception that periods are unsanitary causes those who menstruate to be ostracized and prohibited from participating in basic activities, such as playing sports, swimming, or even entering sacred places when they are menstruating. This, in large part, is due to the lack of access to reliable information about the reproductive process.

It is also important to note not everyone who menstruates identifies as a girl or a woman. Such is the case for transgender, non-binary, and genderqueer peoples who still have vaginas, uteruses, fallopian tubes, and ovaries. These populations are often more vulnerable when it comes to lack of accessibility and affordability of menstruation products.

Breaking the taboo of even talking about menstruation is only one part of the solution, highlighted by National Period Day, created October 19, 2019, which called attention to ending period poverty. The other part comes from governments supporting policies that guarantee those who menstruate access to menstrual

products. Currently, activists around the globe are asking their governmental representatives to help illuminate menstruation inequity by creating policies and programs that end menstrual inequity.

One such individual is US Congresswoman Grace Meng who, in March 2019, introduced Menstrual Equity for All Act (HR 1882), which would increase accessibility and affordability of menstrual products. This bill would ensure "Incarcerated individuals and detainees, including those in immigration detention centres [sic], will have free pads and tampons." It also states, "Individuals will be allowed to use pre-tax dollars from their health-flexible spending accounts to purchase menstrual hygiene products," among other provisions.

Ending period poverty on a national level will help alleviate the "nearly one in five girls [who] have missed school due to lack of menstrual products." Currently, there is a 5% "luxury" item tax on menstrual products. Activists are concentrating their efforts state-by-state to remove this "pink tax" which makes a profit of 150 million dollars per year in states where it is applied. The 5% "pink tax" on menstrual products is a burden on America's most vulnerable population: the poor and homeless.

Editor's Note: NVCC's Women's Center recently screened the short film, *Period. End of Sentence.* on period poverty. For information on the film, contact nhayes@nvcc.commnet.edu.

Face from the ACE

Veteran Instructor

Lisa Amatruda



Hello! My name is Lisa Amatruda, and I'm a writing tutor and Modified Supplemental Instructor for English at NVCC. I have a Bachelor's of Science degree from the University of Maine and a Master's in Education from Boston University.

The same day I graduated from college in Maine, I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. I was fortunate, as a distinguished graduate, to get to pick my career field in the AF. A few weeks after graduating college, I packed my car and drove cross-country to my training and first duty station in Utah. I loved the Air Force! I lived and travelled all over Europe, then eventually started a family and transitioned from active duty to the US AF Reserves.

While living in Washington DC, I taught for three years at Howard University. I taught several courses, mostly specializing in Leadership and Management. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching college students and knew I would come back to it eventually.

After moving from the DC area to Connecticut, I continued being assigned to the AF Reserves in the DC area. I actually spent half my military career working at the Pentagon. I did many jobs, but my last five or so years, I worked as Chief in the Nuclear Enterprise Human Capital Strategy Office. This was very interesting work! I worked full-time primarily from my home in Woodbury, but I did go to DC about 7-8 weeks a year. I travelled back and forth for about 18 years.

I'm the proud mom of four. My oldest, Nicholas, is a senior in Computer Engineering at Rochester Institute of Technology; my second oldest, Matthew, is a plumber, also living in New York. My third, Anna, works in a day-care center in Southbury, and my youngest, Sophia, is a high school senior in Woodbury.

I retired from the Air Force a couple years ago. Upon retirement, I opened another business (I'm also co-owner of a Woodbury gas station/convenience store). I've always loved wonderful, old wooden furniture, so I started a business, The Painted Tree, saving vintage furniture from being tossed away and added to landfills. I restore and update pieces for resale; this next part of my journey started with a brick and mortar store, then transitioned to more custom work and an online business. I love working with old, forgotten furniture, but my real love is teaching college students.

I love working with students and helping them discover they can be good writers and students. I recommend everyone stop by the ACE. NVCC cares about your success; we provide tutors in just about every subject (e.g. Writing, Math, Science, Computers, Music, and Horticulture). We're open M—TH: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM; F: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM; SA and SU noon – 4:00 PM. Come by and see us; we're here for you!

Tamarack EDIT MEETINGS

Tuesdays 2:30 pm, S519
ALL WELCOME!!

Public Safety Department



Routine Number, Ext. 58113.

Emergency Number Ext. 58112

The department is staffed:

24 hours per day • 365 days per year

On the Court

Hardwood

John Williams



The NBA's 74th season started October 22, 2019. The Lakers and Clippers headlined the doubleheader on opening night. Both teams underwent major changes in

the off-season, adding star power to their respective rosters. Anthony Davis teamed up with LeBron James on the Lakers, while the Clippers added 2019 NBA Finals MVP, Kawhi Leonard, and six-time All-Star, Paul George. The battle for Los Angeles will be fun to watch this year. Both teams are poised for successful seasons.

The 2019-2020 season will have the most parity it's had in over a decade. There are no "super teams" this year. The talent is spread across the league. Most teams now have two "star players" and role players. It reminds me of the days of Jordan and Pippen; Stockton and Malone; Kemp and Payton; Ewing and Starks; Kareem and Magic; Kobe and Shaq. There are several power duos across the league. Here are the rankings according to Nick Nagel of ESPN 99.1 FM:

1. LeBron James and Anthony Davis - Los Angeles Lakers
2. Kawhi Leonard and Paul George - Los Angeles Clippers
3. Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving - Brooklyn Nets
4. Steph Curry and Klay Thompson - Golden State Warriors
5. James Harden and Russell Westbrook - Houston Rockets
6. Damian Lillard and CJ McCollum - Portland Trail Blazers
7. Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons - Philadelphia 76ers
8. Giannis Antetokounmpo and Khris Middleton - Milwaukee Bucks
9. Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray - Denver Nuggets
10. Donovan Mitchell and Mike Conley - Utah Jazz
11. Luka Doncic and Kristaps Porzingis - Dallas Mavericks
12. DeMar DeRozan and LaMarcus

13. Kemba Walker and Jayson Tatum - Boston Celtics
14. Pascal Siakam and Kyle Lowry - Toronto Raptors
15. Blake Griffin and Andre Drummond - Detroit Pistons

The fact that talent is spread throughout the league gives a majority of teams a chance to claim the Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy. During this transition, the Eastern Conference has improved the most it has in years as well.

The Toronto Raptors won the title last season and look to repeat in 2019-2020. Can the team get back to the Finals without their Finals MVP, Kawhi Leonard? It seems like a lot to ask. LeBron James is looking to win his first title with the LA Lakers as he goes into the final stage of his career. Right now, is the perfect time for him to make a bid for the title. Adding Anthony Davis to the roster helps.

Harden and Westbrook also look like a dangerous duo. The two played together in OKC earlier in their careers. If they can get back the magic they once had, look out NBA! The Rockets already had a playoff team before Westbrook arrived this year. James Harden has gone toe-to-toe with the Warriors. Unfortunately for Harden, the Warriors had too much fire power and won the 2018-2019 Western Conference Semifinals.

The Denver Nuggets are looking to improve from their outstanding 2019-2020 campaign. The team was ranked second in the Western Conference with a record of 54-28. Nikola Jokic received his first All-Star and All-NBA First Team selection. On July 9, 2018, Jokic signed a five-year, \$148 million maximum contract extension with the Nuggets. Seems like the money was well worth the investment.

I look forward to seeing what Jokic and the Nuggets will do this year. And there should be some exciting gameplay all across the hardwood. What team are you rooting for?

Veteran's Voice

\$avings\$ in the Name of Vets

Rick Bellagamba



Veterans' Day, November 11th, has come and gone. It's the one day of the year here in the United States set aside to celebrate and recognize the service and sacrifice of the brave women and men who have paid some kind of price while in our military. We especially honor and commemorate those who paid the ultimate price and never made it home. However, to many, it seems Veterans' Day has become just another excuse to entice the public to enjoy discounts on everything from cars to clothing. The words *Veterans' Day* seem almost always to be followed by the word *Sale*. Have we lost track of the real meaning of Veterans' Day as we seemingly have lost track of the real meaning of Christmas?

Many restaurants bestow a free meal for Veterans on November 11th, but what they really want is for the veteran to show up with their family. It actually seems like a legal scam: one free meal is a small price to pay to fill those booths with paying family members. Clothing retailers will give Veterans' Day discounts to anyone in an attempt to sell more—maybe more than the customer can actually afford—all in the name of "celebrating veterans".

Another scam? Many retailers claim to show their respect for veterans on a daily basis,

by offering veteran or military discounts. But you have to ask for it in most cases; it's often not openly advertised. As a veteran, I know how I feel when asking for a military discount in the checkout line, and hearing, "Sorry, we don't have that." But these same retailers will have a Veterans' Day Sale. I believe I speak for most Veterans when I say we don't want to be put on a pedestal for serving our country; we just want some respect. So, America, go ahead and take advantage of discounts in the name of our veterans—but try to remember us with respect as you save some money on that new mattress.

Speaking of respect, I don't think Americans show enough respect for our first responders; many of them see us on the worst days of our lives, and their only goal is to make it better. None are braver than the firefighters—like those in California—fighting on the front lines. They battle disasters that, at times, might seem like a vain attempt, but they have not and will not quit the battle.

There should be a national holiday to celebrate, to show our respect for first responders. A bonus: It would give us a chance to save some cash during the sure-to-be-popular First Responders' Day Sales.

God Bless America and all its heroes.
Rick Bellagamba US Army 1971 - 1974

PTK Column

Make a Difference

Steven Jones



When you hear the words, Phi Theta Kappa, or honor society, what comes to mind? Maybe some student spending hours in the library researching the next paper? Perhaps someone carrying a backpack stuffed with books, laptop, and notebooks. While that's part of it, being a hardworking, well-rounded person is what it takes to belong to PTK. Invitation to join requires a student maintain a 3.4 average for at least 18 credits.

Areas where PTK offers its members growth opportunities include:

- Scholarships available only to members
- Leadership development studies
- Five Star Competitive Edge program, providing self-paced online professional development plan to build soft skills and create leaders
- Campus projects
- Public service projects to benefit those in need.
- Extracurricular academic activities
- Networking and transfer connections
- Regional, national, and international conventions

The local PTK chapter, Alpha Theta Epsilon, has been active in areas of campus life to encourage their peers through events such as:

- Fundraising bake sales in Prism Lounge
- Dress for Success: this event sought donations from NVCC community members of lightly used professional attire which were donated to Acts 4 Ministry, Inc.
- C4 (Community College Completion Corps): a daylong event held in Café West where students were encouraged to take the pledge to graduate. The event was supported by reps from CAPSS, ACE, Registrars, Financial Aid, and the library who answered questions a student might have concerning obstacles to graduation.
- Attendance at several regional PTK conferences which drew community colleges from around New England.
- Hosting a NE Regional Leadership Training Conference, a first of its kind regional collaboration between our chapter and NE Regional Advisors and officers to provide training to chapter advisors and officers.

The focus for Alpha Theta Epsilon has been making a difference in the lives of those in need. This led them to host an event, Coats for Coffee. The goal was to gather donations of gently used coats. A Waterbury nonprofit, Acts 4 Ministry, Inc, currently distributing household items to those in need, was chosen to receive the donations collected during the day-long event.

Each officer and member of PTK has the desire to impact school, work, or wherever they go. Belonging to PTK, as the following points taken from their website state, helps each member make a difference by:

- Creating a stronger, more engaged student body
- Encouraging higher graduation rate
- Providing opportunities to be campus leaders who care about their peers and their community
- Providing national and international recognition for the achievements of members

Next spring semester, the chapter will provide chances for members to participate in serving, the Competitive Edge Program, and campus activities. Be a person who's not just concerned with good grades, but cares about the NVCC community and its outreach to our cities and state! Join PTK and MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



A Trip to the Met

Alyssa Katz



Photo Courtesy of The Met website

Fall and winter are the perfect seasons for a day-trip to New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. In October's Revolutionary Rhythms, I detailed the wonderful guitar exhibit that was our main draw, but once at the museum, the rest of the day we explored art from Ancient Greece, the Medieval Period, and Dynastic Egypt. Two other exhibits that ran through early October were Leonardo da Vinci's "St. Jerome" and "Art of Native America".

We started with Greek art, consisting of several pieces of pottery and bronze statues from various regions of Greece over the centuries. Some interesting works included "Bronze Man and Centaur," from the mid-8th century B.C.; and "Bronze Plaque with Odysseus under the Ram," from the second half of the 6th century B.C. This one depicted a scene from The Odyssey when Odysseus escapes the cave of the cyclops, Polyphemos. It was interesting to see other trinkets—like gold jewelry—almost looked new, and that some of the smallest figurines and gems were so detailed.

Speaking of intricately detailed, in the Medieval exhibit, one particular piece, "Triptych with the Mandylion," made in Russia in 1637, was breathtaking. According to the description, the panel included the history of Veronica's veil, the cloth on which Jesus wiped his face, leaving an imprint of his image, on his way to Calvary. On the front, was an image of Christ surrounded by gold and various jewels—it must have taken a lifetime to create. Included in this section were also delicate stained-glass windows, several statues of the Virgin Mary, and multiple pieces depicting various events in the life of Christ.

Viewing Leonardo da Vinci's "St. Jerome," on loan from Vatican City, was quite unique. It was just the painting under a single spotlight, yet art enthusiasts hovered around it, discussing the elements of the piece. What is missing in the upper right-hand corner? Why is the painting unfinished? These questions were enthusiastically debated.

Entering the Arms and Armor exhibit, we were met by an intimidating group of armed guards on horseback that looked like they were about to charge. Studying the swords, we learned they were from areas of Germany, Turkey, Spain, Italy, China, Japan, and so on. With hilts gilded with jewels, handles made of gold and carved with intricate designs—these weapons looked too fancy to use. The row of samurai also appeared rather menacing.

Tombs (such as the "Tomb of Perneb") and sarcophagi and sphinxes filled the Egyptian exhibit, along with loads of hieroglyphics. There was even a temple; inside was a statue, "The Priestess Tagerem," from the Ptolemaic period. It was fascinating to be surrounded by objects we generally only see in movies.

Lastly, the "Art of Native America" exhibit displayed items created by different tribal members, dating to the 1800s. Articles of clothing made with beads, feathers, and animal skins were shown; there were even wooden masks and a quiver and arrows. In addition, a painting, "The Battle of Little Big Horn," fought in June 1876 between Lakota and Cheyenne tribes and federal troops led by Colonel Custer, was displayed.

There was so much to see, we spent the whole day there, without even getting through one entire floor. But our visit wasn't about checking artworks off a master list; it was about appreciating art and culture spanning centuries. If you've never been to the Met before, prepare to be awed—and make sure to wear comfortable shoes!

Coffeehouse Recap

Christian Soto • Photos: Gwendydd Miller

The Music Society's first and only fall coffeehouse took place in Founder's Hall on Thursday, October 17th. From the opening, with a solo rendition of the national anthem, to the closing, with the Fermata the Valley set, the evening was filled with warm music, familiar faces and fun.

A cellist was a lovely surprise addition to the small gathering of instrumentalists. Duets, solos, and



groups, including the musical theatre group and the jazz band, Sol Fa So Good, filled out the rest of the program.

Founders Hall, while lacking the warmth and comfortable familiarity of Playbox, still provided an elegant and well-lit atmosphere in which the performers shined. The extremely large audience, made up of faculty, students, and community members, all had a wonderful evening. Join us this month for Carols and Cocoa (look for details on campus bulletin boards!)



L to r: Quartet: Ryan Bisson, Jason Seabury, Kira Mason, and Gil Harel



Sean Gorman sings and strums.

“...the evening was filled with warm music, familiar faces and fun.”



Cellist Dylan Janin entertains.



DAT Professor Lou Romao on guitar.

JOIN US THIS MONTH FOR CAROLS AND COCOA (LOOK FOR DETAILS ON CAMPUS BULLETIN BOARDS!)

One Chance for Dance

Jalon Copeland

Students from the NVCC Dance Department dance classes, members of the Terpsichorean Dance Ensemble, and a special guest artist for the fall semester are ready to share their talent. They are going to perform on Mainstage in the Arts Building for a one-night-only Fall Dance Showcase on December 6th. The event will take place at 7:00 PM, with tickets costing just \$5.

All the dance pieces were created and will be performed by students. With all things considered, the process of putting everything in motion is being overseen by Professor Megan Boyd, Head of the Dance Department. Boyd said, "If we have a production in the dance program every semester, we'll [continue to] have a very vibrant dance program." She also mentioned reaction to the previous showcases has been very positive. Each showcase has also included basket raffles during intermission. As the shows progressed per semester, Boyd decided to add a special guest



Photo Courtesy of Office of College Marketing

artist to each of the showcases.

Including the special guest artists' pieces creates opportunities for students to work with professional choreographers. The featured artist this semester, Dana Rainey, is also a professor here at NVCC. It's a different experience when it comes to working with professionals,

even if they are faculty members at the college. There's a line that divides them, and it shows. "Make it happen or make it up" is one of many quotes Rainey uses to keep her students motivated and ensure they're not disturbed about messing up a movement during the dance.

As the days grow closer to the showcase, students are adding the final touches to their pieces. The Terpsichorean Dance Ensemble has very interesting pieces to add to the shuffle, ranging from subtle movements to unique formations. Dance Club is excited about performing, and the officers wish the new members good luck and encourage them to have fun.

After all the rehearsal, I'm excited to share this new work, and to celebrate the efforts of my peers. I'm sure audiences will appreciate the time and energy that's gone into perfecting our pieces. We have some exciting stuff in store. It makes me wonder what's going to happen for the Spring Showcase.

FACE IN THE CROWD A Semester of Growth

Olivia Rivera

My name is Olivia. I'm a freshman, focusing on psychology. I plan to finish my Associates and move on to a four-year university to continue my education, hopefully earning a Masters. One thing on my bucket list is becoming a Counseling Psychologist or opening my own clinic to help others.

Though my time at NVCC has been short, I've already made fond memories. I struggle due to social anxiety, but I feel I've grown over the semester, talking to classmates and going to social events held at school. To other people, this may be something that doesn't need to be thought about; they just go enjoy the time before moving on with their lives.

For me, and possibly others, simple things

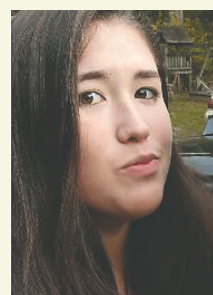


Photo Courtesy of Olivia Rivera

like going to club meetings or the Transfer Fair, feel like the world is closing in. If I go to these events, it's hard to socialize with others or even talk in general. It's to the point I'll visibly shake and have to leave. However, I've encountered a handful of amazing NVCC staff and students who've made my time here easier.

Something that's truly helped me through the process of surviving is college theater; it's honestly been a major outlet. My Acting 1 class is the most accepting, warm class I've ever taken; the students and professor make the experience 100% better. If you're interested in trying out acting or theater, I highly

encourage you! It's one of the best communities to be part of, especially if you enjoy acting. I occasionally volunteer at high schools to support struggling theater programs, help them stay afloat, and produce at least one show per year.

In my spare time, I enjoy writing. I've been writing a book for about three years. I'm in the process of creating a language for a species of people within the series. I've also written a play I'm currently working to get published. Writing has been a creative, healthy outlet I'd recommend to anyone who's stressed and just needs to vent out problems.

Personally, I find NVCC an open, accepting place. Groups and clubs offer support for almost everybody. I can confidently say my first semester's been a blast. Compared to my high school, NVCC makes it easy to be who I wish and explore myself through activities and opportunities.

alumni SHOWCASE

Cathy Fiske Ruszkowski

Team Success

While attending Naugatuck Valley I was able to work, take fulltime classes, and participate in sports as well as the arts. I was able to pursue many interests and have a wide spectrum of experiences broaden my worldview and round out who I was as a person. What do these experiences have to do with an education? They connect what's learned in the classroom to real life.

As a team member of NVCC's Softball Club team, as well as its first Women's Basketball Team (yes, once upon a time there were sports!), I learned to appreciate the coach's role. Much like a coach, learning to teach, direct, and improve your team are tantamount to a successful career in management. Every day is comparable to running drills, looking for improvements, and encouraging successes.

Participating in a musical production, *My Fair Lady*, as well as being a choir member, were amazing experiences that further instilled how to be a valuable member of a group. I was able to see how the huge undertaking of producing a play is broken down and dissected, so it can be undertaken in smaller bits that aren't overwhelming.

I was able to use the experiences of being part of a team in my roles as parent as well as manager. Breaking down tasks, planning ahead, training and directing a team, being a role model, I learned most of this at NVCC. What I learned in classes such as Psychology, Public Speaking, Criminal Law, and Field Biology, has come into use in my daily life to make me more effective as a manager, as a parent, and as a member of society.

Not only am I Bakery Sales Manager for Big Y Foods, but I'm the proud parent of three teenagers. What I learned also helped me be a better "first teacher" to my children, and I think (I hope) they benefited from my education as well! Leadership qualities I learned at NVCC helped propel me into leadership roles for their school's PTOs, as well as coaching numerous soccer, softball, and basketball teams. And no, I'm not a Tiger Mom or Helicopter parent...I swear!

What Naugatuck Valley Community College provided to me was more than just a scholarly education. I received an education in living. Being part of the NVCC team is something for which I'll always be grateful.

Many Voices

Mitchell W. Maknis



Photo Courtesy of Larry Kenney

The entertainment industry has the power to convey a sense of nostalgia; favorite shows make an indelible mark. Actor Larry Kenney has provided hundreds of voices in varying media over the span of his admirable career, leaving a lasting impact. At 73, he continues to breathe life into historic characters.

Kenney was born in Perkin, Illinois, and at fourteen, found work as sports reporter for the local *Perkin Daily Times*. His responsibilities included attending high school sporting events, taking photographs, and submitting stories. An avid sports enthusiast, Kenney enjoyed his time in journalism and considered a future career as a sports reporter. However, two weeks before his sixteenth birthday "the big radio show in the area" WIRL, offered him a job. By the end of his first on-air experience, Kenney "knew [he] was going to do this" for a living. Working his way to a fulltime position, Kenney honed his voice impressions, branching into commercial work.

Actor Larry Kenney has provided hundreds of voices in varying media over the span of his admirable career

After his radio vocation brought him to Chicago, he received a call from a representative of

Don Imus, asking if Kenney would collaborate on the wildly popular, NY-based, *Imus in the Morning*. Kenney accepted; after a year of phoning in voice impressions of historical figures, such as Richard Nixon and General Patton, Kenney relocated to the Empire State to work on the show daily.

These broadcasts garnered attention from producer Earle Doud, who approached Kenney to portray Nixon in the satirical record *The Honest to God! We really mean it! Very Last Nixon Album* (1974). Kenney recalled how, in 1963, Doud produced *The First Family*, a comedy record portraying President John F. Kennedy. He remembers it was "the top selling album of all time until the Beatles came around." So instead of taking a lump sum for his work, he signed a contract granting him a percentage of album sales. Unfortunately, "They sold about four records and [he] never saw a penny from it."

As his career progressed, Kenney further utilized his extensive vocal range, replacing the established, well-known voices of commercial cartoon characters: Sonny, the Cocoa Puffs

Cuckoo Bird and Count Chocula. Kenney also hosted the TV game show, *Bowling for Dollars*, from 1976-1979. Every Friday, after working a five-day week on his radio show, he'd be rushed to Madison Square Garden to record five, half-hour shows. This vigorous schedule wore Kenney out, so he decided to focus solely on radio and commercials.

A few years later, Kenney's agent informed him of an audition for a cartoon show. Kenney nervously waited with twenty other actors to be called in. He recalls the room being covered with illustrations of landscapes and characters for the series, *Thundercats* (1985). Kenney was told to audition for two characters of his choosing. He read for Lion-O, leader of the Thundercats and Jackalman, one of Mumm-Ra's mutants.

A week later, Kenney got the call informing him he'd been cast in both roles. With *The*

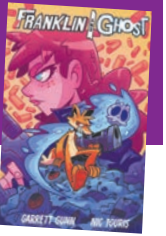
Thundercats' success, Kenney found himself working alongside his co-stars in a variety of other animated and Claymation Rankin-Bass Productions, including *The Life & Adventures of Santa Claus* (1985) and the

acclaimed series, *Silverhawks* (1986). Kenney looks back fondly on these times referring to them as "the golden years of voice acting," elaborating that from the 1960s through the 1980s there were lots of job opportunities and few actors in the profession.

Now, in the everchanging industry, Kenney confides how work can sometimes be scarce. He transitioned with the times by working on renowned video games such as *Mafia II* (2010), *L.A. Noire* (2011), and *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018). Kenney discloses the craft has changed drastically. Instead of acting with fellow cast members, he finds himself isolated in a recording booth. Even when he was flown to Warner Brothers' California ranch to record his role as Claudius in *The Thundercats* (2011) remake, Kenney was alone in the studio.

Kenney is touched by the candor and appreciation of his fanbase. He continues to protect and honor the legacy he's created by sharing his time and talents with fans whenever possible. To keep up with Larry Kenney's convention appearances, follow him on his social media outlets.

RECENTLY READ



Franklin and Ghost
Written by Garrett Gunn
Illustrated by Nic Touris

From comic distributor, Source Point Press, comes the stunningly original first volume of *Franklin and Ghost*, an irreverent science fiction comedy. It follows the chaotic exploits of interstellar miscreants Franklin and Ghost on their zany and blood-drenched adventures on planet Earth.

Upon reading the first few pages of this vibrantly colored comic, I was entranced by the stunning visuals and immediately drawn into the insanity of the story. During the show-stopping introduction, writer Garrett Gunn ingeniously solidified the titular characters' quirks and personalities. For instance, Franklin, a verbally abusive fox, is only too happy to dirty his paws with blood. Then there's Ghost, a floating skull ensconced in flames who continuously bashes heads with his alien counterpart. The chemistry of these two extraterrestrials is impeccably showcased in these opening pages that serve as a wonderful prelude of things to come.

Originally, I perceived *Franklin and Ghost* as one dimensional but as the story progressed, I noticed both visual and verbal subtleties. This level of detail resonated with me and strengthened my emotional connection to these characters. Gunn's writing couples perfectly with Touris' illustrations, giving the story a pleasant aesthetic and an underlying sense of emotional depth. Gunn proves himself to be a master wordsmith, eloquently weaving explicit language throughout the story that correlates flawlessly with the rising stakes and gives a true sense of urgency to their proclamations of profanity. Franklin and Ghost's unmitigated wittiness steals the show; however, additional characters, such as the stoic and equally aggressive Delilah, add their own flair to the story.

As the plot progresses, I felt the story's pacing seemed slightly rushed. That being said, I was completely engrossed with this extraordinary tale and found myself unable to put the book down. Comic collaborators Garrett Gunn and Nic Touris have masterfully crafted a unique science fiction comedy to captivate readers throughout every vivid madcap panel all the way to its poignant conclusion. I highly recommend picking up a copy of this graphic novel and immersing yourself in this wacky world before these troublemakers make their way to the small screen in the upcoming animated series, *Franklin and Ghost*. The series will feature the voice talents of Sean Schemmel (*Dragon Ball Z*) as Franklin, Billy Bob Thornton (*Television's Fargo*) as Ghost, and Veronica Taylor (*Pokémon*) as Delilah. You can purchase *Franklin and Ghost W.F.T. Edition* from your local comic shop, or order it online at www.SourcePointPress.com.

Review by Mitchell Walter Maknis

Botany Band Tamarack Staff



Alex Miller, Amy Dumschott, Joey Soto, and Carissa Berardi (Prof. Faryniarz in rear) dig a hole for one of the trees



Students (l-r) involved in the tree-planting: Megan Barrios, Deano D'Amico, Monty Robson, Mads Sheikh, Amy Dumschott, Carissa Berardi, Bryan Oliveira, Josh Bent, Andrew Conway, Alex Miller, Joey Soto, Cassandra Cornut, Hannah Voghel, Angelina Santos, Alyssa Voghel, and Michele Volovski (not pictured).



Amy Dumschott and Alex Miller prepare the root ball for planting. Photos Courtesy of Joe Faryniarz

On November 7th, joining the movement to help thwart climate change, the students in General Botany planted three Baldcypress trees (*Taxodium distichum*) near the campus vineyard. Their local effort will help to absorb carbon dioxide as part of the Global ReLeaf initiative.

One of the trees will be dedicated in memory of Professor Anthony P. Vitarelli, Emeritus,

who was the first botany professor at the college. *The Tamarack* staff thanks Prof. Joe Faryniarz for this gesture of good will—toward a former colleague and the environment—and congratulates his students for making a difference.

Alumni Art Exhibit

Mitchell W. Maknis

November 7th, Prof. Parlato's creative writing class met in Founders Hall for a preview of the Alumni Art Show before the opening reception. Parlato called it an ekphrastic field trip, explaining, "Works of art can inspire people in different media. Someone's painting may lead to you writing a poem or story."

Taking his words to heart, I entered the gallery with an open mind and was immediately struck by the varying artistic works created by the eleven Alumni students—Jordan Antrum, Angel Bleggi, Beth Edwards, David Flook, Isabella Hernandez, Sarah Kushwara, Emily Mansi, Joshua Poole, David Rascati, Madeeha (Mads) Sheikh, and Quiana Stanley—whose work was showcased. The art ranged from sophisticated finger paintings to unique pottery, with prints, digital art, photography, and sculpture on display.

I felt the art pieces really represented each artist's psyche and showcased their multitalented niche. For instance, the hidden faces in Sarah Kushwara's oil paintings gave her work a sense of otherworldliness that contrasted with her use of rich tone and color. I also admired the innovative mixed media pieces by David Flook who blended the digital world and finger painting to create something unique and meaningful.

The works that really caught my attention were by Mads Sheikh, whose linoleum block prints, entitled, "I Know You Know" and "Read My Lips," applied simple imagery that implemented visually powerful messages. Her gouache painting, "In My Room," also stood out, emanating a distinctively personal message about who Mads is.

When asked about her creative process, Sheikh responded her "work focuses on identity and transformation, [as well as] the perception of who we are and how it changes from person to person." She further explained her work is inspired "by social justice activism and counterculture aesthetics."



Beth Edwards' sculpture, a powerful mixed media commentary on the current presidency
Photo Courtesy of Tamarack Staff

"My work focuses on identity and transformation, [as well as] the perception of who we are and how it changes from person to person."

Mads Sheikh



Art Club President Mads Sheikh, who curated the exhibit, poses in front of some her work.
Photo Courtesy of Tamarack Staff

Professor Parlato ended our trip by stating, as a faculty member and creator himself, he believes in "supporting artistic expression on campus, whether it's art, literature, theater, or music." I heartily agree with this statement and feel that, like creative writing, each piece of art tells a story.

All artwork presented is for sale. Though sales will be handled by the artists, their contact information is available by emailing Art Professor Amanda Lebel at alebel@nv.edu. You can also purchase original artwork on December 5th, as members of the Art Club and Printmaking Class hold a sale to benefit the Amazon Rainforest. A "Prints for the Amazon" reception will be held from 2:00 – 3:00 PM in the 5th Floor Walkway between Kinney and the Arts Building. Stop by and enjoy!



Visitors admire the artwork at the Alumni Show
Photo Courtesy of Amanda Lebel.



I Don't Get Paid Enough for This S#@t!

Alexander Wilson

Did you know not one single US state has a minimum wage sufficient to live on? Unbelievable, right? I didn't believe it either, until I did some research. Federal minimum wage is \$7.25 hourly. Multiply that by 40 hours weekly times 52 weeks per year, and you get a total salary of \$15,080. In reality, how many of us actually work 40 hours per week, all 52 weeks per year?

A CNBC article regarding cost of living by state showed every single state has a cost of living above \$20,000. Connecticut's cost of living is estimated at \$26,785. While we do have a minimum wage higher than \$7.25, working full-time still equals total annual income of \$22,880. These numbers don't account for taxes, emergency funds, or any needs besides the basics of food and shelter.

There's something wrong here. Minimum wage jobs aren't just for high school kids looking to make some pocket money. Many jobs are halted at minimum wage, and adults who have no choice but to accept any job are working these so called "unskilled labor" jobs.

Exactly what jobs are "unskilled"? People in fast food jobs are just as skilled as people in restaurants. Those in department stores must have constant knowledge of inventory and prices. Even in grocery stores, not everyone is a cashier, and people in other departments have all sorts of duties besides stocking shelves.

Not to mention every single job has an intense amount of emotional labor. Do you know how hard it is to force a smile for eight hours, while your feet and back hurt from standing all day? I do. I'm guessing many of you do, as well.

The moment increasing minimum wage is

mentioned, the first argument is: "Won't stores have to raise prices?" Maybe. Or, maybe corporate executives buying their third homes and sixth sports cars can do without these superfluous luxuries. Rich people get and stay rich because they exploit our labor and snatch up all the profits.

Jeff Bezos isn't pouring money back into the economy. Trickle-down economics only works if there's actually money being put into the economy, instead of hoarded by a handful of multi-billionaires. Taxing the rich doesn't seem like such a bad idea, if you ask me.

Another argument: "If this job is only making \$15 per hour, why should that job make \$15 per hour too?" My best example is EMT workers. They make an average of \$15.38 hourly. Why should people in entry level jobs make the same amount as people who got trained for a skilled job? Because entry level workers also get trained for skilled jobs. Raise the wages of EMTs, too.

Not everyone can justify or afford going to school or a training program just to work a supposed "better" job. This idea a bachelor's degree is the new high school diploma is ridiculous. College costs more than ever before, and we barely make enough money to live. Debt is inevitable. It doesn't have to be, though.

The workforce is filled with people struggling to live, coming up short year after year, because wages in America suck. It's unfair to blame that struggle on our morning coffee runs, our inability to save, our supposed laziness. I gave you the numbers; if you don't believe me, look for yourself. People shouldn't have to live paycheck to paycheck. That's not living, and \$7.25 an hour is barely a wage. We really don't get paid enough for this.

FACE IN THE CROWD Saving Grace

Gloriastena Dinall

Greetings, fellow *Tamarack* readers! I'm Gloriastena Dinall, and as a wonderful wife, and mother of four children, I am very hardworking and caring. I also offer a good ear to anyone in need. I'm currently enrolled here at NVCC, working on my second Associates degree. One might ask, "Why on Earth is this woman working on another Associates?" I'll get to that as soon as I tell you a bit more about myself.

First things first: let's start with my name and a little more about me. My mother named me after my dad's late sister, Gloria, and her sister, Tina. She decided to slap a silent I in the beginning, an s in the middle, and there you have it: Gloriastena. Every time I look at my name it makes me proud. I have the amazing opportunity to be named after two remarkable women. My aunt Gloria was quiet, humble, and hardworking, always making sure her family was well taken care of. Aunt Tina is feisty, hardworking, funny, and loves her family. I would have to say I'm a mixture of them both. I love hard and go out of my way to make sure my friends and family are taken care of.

I love to hear the sound of laughter; it keeps everyone happy. In my spare time, I love to crochet, practice hairdressing, read Christian fiction, spend time with my family and friends, and draw. My faith is also a very important part of who I am. I'm non-denominational Christian, and I attend church at Victory Christian Center in Danbury. At my church, I'm the Youth and Dance Director, as well as one of the leaders of praise and worship (singer). I'm not one to push my religion on anyone. I believe everyone has the right to believe what they want to believe, and we need to learn to coexist.



Photo Courtesy of Gloriastena Dinall

As I said before, I'm currently working on my second Associates degree. General Studies was my first, and Early Childhood Education will be my second. The only explanation as to why I went this route is simply because life happened. At one point in my life, I wanted to be a clothing designer. At another point, I started classes to be a nurse; hence the reason I have a General Studies degree.

During that particular time in my life, I was given an art kit by two different people. I took that as a sign that designing clothes was the direction I needed to head. Soon after, I realized how difficult life had become. I went through a very difficult and dark place in my life due to sexual assault. I let go of everything, including my passion for designing clothes. Because of this horrific act, I flunked out of WCSU, and fell into a deep depression.

When I was able to come out of the darkest point in my life, I began to pick my pencil back up and start to doodle and draw my concepts of fashion again. I started off by drawing flowers, which became a therapy for me. I was able to open up to people more and began to trust again. At one point, art was my second saving grace, God, of course, being my first. He and art brought me through, and I am grateful for that.

Earth Matters

California

Wildfires Rage

Mckenzie Thomas

California experienced a late October outbreak of major fires from Sonoma County to areas in Southern California, including the greater Los Angeles area. With names like the Kincaid, Tick, Maria, Hillside, and Easy Fire, these rapidly moving blazes have charred more than a quarter million acres, displacing over 200,000 residents and killing three.

In Simi Valley, seasonal Santa Ana winds strafed the south coastal region, pushing flames dangerously close to the cliffside Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. Though firefighters saved the library, many structures statewide were not as fortunate. Hundreds of homes have been lost; the resulting economic impacts, such as those from the ubiquitous fires in Sonoma's wine country, may not be understood for months.

According to the non-profit, non-partisan newsgroup CalMatters, four million people live in areas vulnerable to fires, and while wildfires have long been part of seasonal cycles, their frequency and severity have drastically increased in the last five decades. CalMatters cites climate changes, which produce longer fire seasons—beginning in May and lasting until December—as adding 78 more “fire days” than fifty years ago. Furthermore, the cycle of drought, insects, and disease is not improved by rains, because vegetation growing up around 150 million dead, downed trees is non-native and opportunistic, providing plentiful kindling for future fires. An example of the enormity of the problem: 80% of trees in the Sierra Nevada Mountains are dead.

The state's largest utility company, PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric) has made changes following recent devastating fire seasons, as it was learned one in ten fires originated with their equipment. To curb sparks and power arcs, they've chosen to cut electricity when drought and high winds are expected. Unfortunately, this solution has proven a great hardship personally and regionally. One deliberate October blackout in northern California cost residents and businesses an estimated \$2.5 billion—and endangered the lives of citizens dependent on electricity for personal medical devices. PG&E is in bankruptcy from liability claims relating to their accountability in starting several fires.

On the frontline battling the conflagration, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, also known as Cal Fire—in addition to deploying men and women on ground—have one of the world's largest fire-fighting aircraft fleets, including S-27 air tankers and Huey helicopters. Governor Gavin Newsom has been praised for his comprehensive fire response, and his rebuke of the greed of the nation's largest utility, PG&E. Maintaining their lack of attention and money-above-safety focus have contributed to fire disasters, Newsom pressed PG&E to offer credits to utility customers, saying it was the least they could do for citizens in affected areas. PG&E agreed.

Though most fires have been contained, a November blaze, the Barham Fire, threatened studios and mansions in LA. Warner Bros. was evacuated November 10th, with fire spreading to nearby Griffith Park and creating a smoky backdrop for the iconic Hollywood sign. Fortunately, with low winds, the blaze was quickly contained, destroying “only” 34 acres. President Trump again criticized Cal Fire, threatening to order FEMA to withhold aid to thwart fires because they did not manage forests well by “rak[ing] the forest floor.” Cal Fire pointed out the federal government is responsible for managing much of California's woodlands, with 18 forests federally-owned. They declined comment on Trump's recent, unsolicited, and wholly unconditional promise of aid to Russia to battle Siberian wildfires.

19-Year-Old Spinster

Tabitha Cruz

Recently, I attended a family celebration with my mom's side. Entering the crowded living room, I watched my step—the room was littered with small children running wild. In the corner, my aunt fed her newborn, while also making sure her 1-year-old and 4-year-old didn't eat too much sugar. She greeted my mom and continued talking about her new grandbaby and how excited she was to be a grandma and mom.

This directed the conversation toward me (as expected), when my family asked when I'll finally give my mom grandbabies. I made a face at my mom, and my mom at me, as I replied, “Never.” My uncle was shook. He began telling me my sole purpose was to have kids, that I was “only put onto this Earth to have kids.” I answered with a simple “Gross,” and “I guess.”

Later, the same uncle reminded me I should have at least three kids. I didn't respond. Unbeknownst to me, I've become somewhat of a pariah and disappointment for not already having kids. Mom reminded me her side of the family, traditional Puerto Ricans (whatever that means) straight from the island, expect young women to get married and be young housewives, like that's an excuse. She further reminded me I'm career-oriented, and there's nothing wrong with that.

A little later, my other uncle asked in Spanish when I'm finally getting married. A little disgusted, I asked, “What?” He then repeated the question in English—like that made a difference—and when I gave the same response, he told me it was time I settle down, as if my hardcore days of studying and going

to school have become a problem. I mentioned I have no money to get married, have kids, or do anything close to settling down while going to school. He just laughed and said, “Sure.”

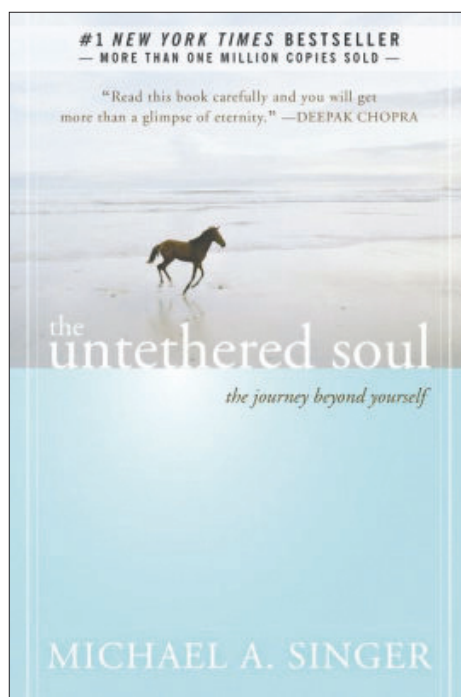
It genuinely bothers me that whatever good I may do for myself, and try to do for my community, doesn't matter because I'm not having children. My value is only attached to the man I decide to marry—and the number of eggs in my ovaries that actually produce—not the strides I'm making to better myself. I'm on my way to becoming the first in my family to hold a degree, but my extended family is frustrated I haven't started a family.

My brothers never get asked these questions, nor do they get treated the same for wanting to be sexual beings. When my brothers announce they have girlfriends, they get a beer and a pat on the back. When I get a boyfriend I'm told, “Daddy should grab the shotgun.” For a family that wants me to start having children, there's still a ton of pressure on young girls in my family not to be “sluts” and not to have sex. Yet, at some point between being a virgin and turning 20, I'm supposed to have my first ten kids.

My brothers get to have sex and be in relationships just for the sake of it. I, on the other hand, should settle on the first boy I date. Apparently, he'll be the one to whip me into shape and make me have kids. I have no issue with women who decide to start families young, but the way their decision is respected, my career goal should also be respected. It seems there are so few career options for me. While my brothers can become anything they dream of, I'm stuck. It's either spinster, slut, or mother. And I don't even get to choose.

Relax and Release

Jillian Parlato



When faced with turmoil, inner or outer, it's second nature to distract oneself from these issues instead of facing them head-on. Perhaps this is a natural instinct; after all, nobody wants to be plagued by the issues they face, and sometimes delving into other matters can seem to alleviate this stress. However, at the end of the day, avoidance does not equate to conflict resolution, and can even exacerbate an issue. This is why we should deal with our problems instead of pushing them aside. In his book, *The Untethered Soul*, Michael Singer has a special method of healing: Allow yourself to experience negative emotions, but don't let them overwhelm you.

For me, there are a good number of issues to which I could apply this cathartic approach. I'm a person who deals with a lot of insecurity; something that triggers this is being around attractive people. As ridiculous as it seems, around people I believe to be better-looking than myself, I become nervous and more self-conscious, suspicious they may be judging me for my own perceived flaws. I now realize

that, instead of overanalyzing their intentions and interactions, I should simply process this anxiety, and do so rationally. Surely, they aren't thinking about how ugly I may or may not be, and if they are, are they really worth my time? So, I'll learn to relax and let it go, while not neglecting the importance of feeling my emotions.

Another problem I face is procrastination: oftentimes, I put off dealing with tasks that could be accomplished promptly if only I could stir up the motivation. I suppose it connects with the theme of distraction, except in this case, it occurs with more tangible matters, such as deadlines and social commitments. I find it more pleasant to escape to a fantasyland where I'm not obligated to take on responsibility of any sort, illusion and delusion becoming my good friends.

All the while, though, I'm aware this doesn't help my case, but only further contributes to my stress in a semi-endless cycle. I now realize the best way to cope is to face my problems and do so with resolve—tackling them like opponents in a ring. This may hurt at first, but holding onto negative energy will always hurt more. The quicker I power through these things holding me back, the quicker I can let go of unwanted nagging in my head.

The last dilemma I face is a general feeling things are going to go wrong. Regardless of circumstances, I tend to jump to conclusions, and entertain the worst-case scenario of any situation. While I know this is not only pessimistic, but also illogical, sometimes it seems to be an involuntary reaction. From now on, instead of expecting the worst all the time, I'll accept that some things are out of my control, and all I can do in the meantime is try my best. Even if I don't succeed, I won't let it define me: moving on does wonders for the psyche.

Ultimately, I really admire Singer's approach to spiritual betterment through emotional release. In the past, this “let-go” method has worked for me, but I haven't utilized it consistently. Reading this book was a definite reminder that it's futile to grant our anxieties approval to overtake us.

Thank You All

Fit for Gratitude

Kathleen Chesto



Photo Courtesy of NVCC Fitness Center

Are you aware our college has a state-of-the-art fitness center? When I first learned of it, I anticipated the type of room provided by hotels: limited space and more limited equipment. I was not expecting an expansive area with a wall of windows reflected by a wall of mirrors, carefully maintained equipment, showers, and locker rooms. If you haven't been there, check it out. It's across from the bank of elevators in on the ground floor of Tech Hall, open from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM most weekdays.

A conversation with the director, Karen Puskas, made me realize many people helped make this possible. The center opened in 2009 with Karen as director and paid staff and students. It was closed in 2012 due to budgetary reasons. It simply cost too much to provide the necessary staff to keep it open.

The student body protested at the time. Nursing and physical therapist assistant students, in particular, helped keep the protest alive for four years, through changes in student population. Thanks to their efforts, and strong support offered them by Karen Blake, Director of Student Services, the center reopened in January 2016.

But it reopened with limited personnel. Puskas, rehired for 17 hours a week, and one student assistant, formed the entire staff. Without volunteers, the hours of operation would have been extremely limited. The nursing and physical therapist assistant students united to form the original volunteer group who enabled the center to function.

As their student schedules grew more complex, some of our willing adjuncts stepped in to fill the gap. Faculty members Rich Walsh, Egbert Most, and Carlos Plaza currently give their time to make the center available to all of us. More volunteers would keep the center open for even more hours.

I asked Rich Walsh what led him to volunteer. He was using the facilities, he said, riding his bike to the campus and using the showers before class. Though he belongs to an outside gym, he finds this one is so convenient—so he felt somewhat responsible. He also is committed to making good health possible and accessible to the student body.

For Rich, it is about creating a welcoming space where people don't feel intimidated by exercise. He is eager to help people get started, and Puskas reported some students come regularly during a particular volunteer's time on duty. While volunteers are not allowed to assume the role of trainer, all three are knowledgeable and helpful.

The NVCC Fitness Center is used 1,000-1,200 times per semester. We owe several people thanks for this invaluable asset to our campus: Karen Puskas, for all the work she has done to obtain state-of-the-art equipment and her ongoing service and availability; the nursing and physical therapist assistant students who kept the need on the table while it was closed, and who helped staff it when it opened; Karen Blake, who supports so many student endeavors; student workers, and particularly, our generous volunteers. To all the aforementioned, and to anyone we've overlooked, we thank you.

Ask Nicole

Facing Defeat

Dear Nicole,

I wanted to see if you can help me. I see you started college in 2008. I want to finish college as soon as possible, so my first question is what keeps you going? Is there a job you are pursuing, or do you just enjoy learning? I put a

“...what keeps you going?
Is there a job you are
pursuing, or do you just
enjoy learning?”

lot of time and effort into my work, and if I had to redo a class, I would feel very defeated and not want to redo a whole class. So, my second question would be: Have you ever felt defeated after failing a class or having other troubles involving college, and what made you keep moving forward after that? ~ Thanks, G.W.

Dear G.W.,

Thank you for writing to me! First off, remember, college isn't a race! It's better to take some time and finish well. What keeps me going in college? Honestly, I love to learn and I love the journey college takes me through. My last semester at WCSU in 2016 was honestly one of the biggest challenges. I made it through with the help of my fiancée (now my husband). As for this degree in Paralegal Studies, I will finally graduate in May 2020. I would honestly love to go for a Master's in English, so I can teach college students, but my husband thinks it's a good idea to take a break. I think he's right after the number of hours he's seen me studying and stressing over grades.

Have I ever felt defeated? Yes, when I bombed one of my recent exams! I struggle with chronic back pain, and it's a big distraction in my life. A few days before an exam in my litigation class, I had spinal injections. Unfortunately, the procedure was not successful, and it left me in more pain. The day after the procedure, the doctor called to see how I was feeling, and I told him I wasn't any better. He then said there was nothing more he could do for me.

I remember standing in the middle of BJ's, crying my eyes out. Later that day, I took my exam. Only five questions, which should have been easy, right? Not that time. I did my best; unfortunately, I only got a 60. I was so angry all my pain and emotions got in the way of my academics. All I can do is own up to it and do my best on the next exam. I know that's easier said than done. For me, the key is not to give up, but to keep my goals in mind. That helps me continue going strong.

The end of the semester is right around the corner. If you need help, remember: Don't be afraid to ask a friend, or visit the ACE. Don't be afraid to ask for help; it's okay. Even things I know I'm good at, if I get stuck, I ask for help. You don't need to go it alone; a support system can make all the difference. Good luck with everything, and I wish you the best! ~ Sincerely, Nicole Zappone

NOTE: Addresser's issue contained an incorrect address. Send questions to dearnicole@comcast.net.

Disclaimer: Ask Nicole is designed for NVCC students and others to discuss college-related topics (academics, college transfers, school/life balance, etc.). Questions, sent anonymously, will be answered as such. Content should be appropriate for all audiences. By submitting a question, you grant The Tamarack permission to publish it. Names and contact details will never be included or shared.

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Queer Code

Not a Prude, Just Asexual

Alexander Wilson



It's frustrating being told you're "too picky," or "just haven't found the right person," or it's got to be "a medical issue." It really sucks when all that's on TV are sexual, romantic relationships, and every advertisement's cashing in on sex appeal. Sex is everywhere, whether we like it or not. Many asexual people do not. No, being asexual isn't just for bacteria. Asexuality is its own complex spectrum within the LGBTQIA community. Generally, asexual people (sometimes shortened to "ace") lack sexual desire and/or don't experience sexual attraction. Several nuances exist for how much or little someone experiences in terms of sexuality.

Demisexual people can experience some levels of sexual attraction and may enjoy occasional sex. This doesn't make them less asexual. Demisexual people often need to form very close bonds before they can have sex with someone. Big deal, you say; everyone's like that. Really? Ever have a one-night stand? Ever go on Tinder looking to have sex with someone a few times just to get it out of your system? I know some will say no, but some will also say yes.

Grey-asexual people generally experience little to no sexual attraction, or it may fluctuate based on certain factors. They, too, may enjoy sex occasionally. Asexual doesn't automatically mean celibate, though that may be the case. There are also sex-repulsed asexual people who want nothing to do with sex and experience no sexual attraction. They're likely to turn off the TV if a sex scene comes on. That doesn't make them immature. Sex is just gross to look at for some people. I personally fall on the grey-ace part of the spectrum. It's how I've always been.

Explaining that to doctors is always fun. Some medications I'm on should mess with

my sex drive, apparently. Obviously, testosterone is supposed to elevate it, but my anti-depressant lowers it. Whenever my doctor asks if I'm sexually active, I tend to say, "Yes, but not since ____" (usually a month past). She's offered to change my medication, but I've explained I've always had low sex drive. It's never really interested me.

It took a long time to accept that was okay. Many asexual people question whether they're "broken". Starting in late middle school, sex education tells us people start experiencing sexual attraction in their later teen years. What are we supposed to think when we don't have that desire supposedly every human has?

Asexuality is perfectly normal. Not everyone has a high sex drive; not everyone lacks a sex drive. That's just how humans are. We experience life differently based on several factors. Why would sexuality, or lack thereof, be any different?

I frequently hear, even from LGBT people, that ace people don't belong in the queer community because they haven't been oppressed like other LGBT people. Mostly, the argument is towards cisgender heterosexual aces. Well, if they don't experience sexual attraction, they're not heterosexual. What else can I say? Earlier, I listed different things we're told, and assumptions made about us. In light of that, you're going to tell me there's not difficulty based on sexual orientation? Yeah, okay.

Maybe you're on this spectrum but never had words to express it. You're okay, you're not broken. Past sexual activity doesn't devalue asexuality. It's okay if you've had or currently have romantic partners. You can still have relationships and be asexual. The two aren't mutually exclusive. Remember, you define your sexuality, in your own terms. Don't let others tell you what you should be feeling or how to "do" your sexuality. Live and love as you want.

A grey-ace—not prudish—Alexander

“Be a Man About It.”

Kathleen Chesto

“No, thank-you. I would rather be *Just like a woman.*”

In October, political signs began flowering along Southbury's lawns and roads. One strongly urged us to vote against changing our charter so the word “selectman” became “selectperson.” I was chagrined someone actually thought the change was worth fighting over, or deserving of a referendum. I was horrified when the town voted against changing.

English is male-biased, one of the more biased of modern languages. Widespread recognition of that bias is relatively new. The disease that lies behind this bias, reflecting and perpetuating it, was not given a name until the 1960s: sexism. While raising consciousness was a significant social development, eradicating bias is far more difficult. Not only our words, but our laws, our cherished stereotypes, our metaphors, all demand revision. Words do more than convey our thoughts; words shape our thoughts, reinforcing assumptions and attitudes.

Every conqueror in history has recognized this truth. Why else is English the primary language of Ireland and India, when both had their own well-developed languages, far more ancient than the language that suppressed them? Why is there so little Greek in English and so much Latin? To truly control a people, one must control their culture, their thoughts; both are shaped by language.

The oppression and exclusion of women is rooted in our exclusive language. We teach little girls running to the nearest restroom, that “Man” on the door means “This is not for you.” It is very hard for that little girl to consider becoming a policeman, a fireman, or several other careers in our lexicography, when the name itself so clearly states, “This is

not for you.” We can open careers to women, but we'll never remove stereotypes without changing the language. Research in linguistics and social psychology has shown, according to Hellinger, “...stereotypes are both facilitated and reinforced by language.”

Many masculine metaphors are positive, while feminine are negative. Consider the beginning of this article, or “the wisdom of Solomon” or the “strength of Atlas” compared to “Pandora's box,” and “nervous Nellie.” Nouns for community are male: fellowship, brotherhood, etc. What is seen as “manly,” in a male, is often “witchy” in a female. “I now pronounce you man and wife” clearly states a woman exists only in relation to a man. What makes a child “illegitimate” other than the absence of a man? What are we teaching young girls who grow up hearing this?

Analyst/author Emma Jung stated, “A word has the effect of reality on undifferentiated minds.”

Our language is so engrained in our culture, though, we are resistant to change. Women are often worse than men in this regard, and I suspect we form the majority of Southbury voters. Most men in my circle of friends are insightful and aware enough to be embarrassed by sexist language. I suspect we women are all still a little afraid of being considered “bitchy,” another lovely female adjective.

Women have come a long way from finally winning the vote, but it will take a change in language to effectively change our culture. For now, we women of Southbury might be wise to address the head of our town council as “Selectwoman Manville,” despite his gender. Others might recognize just how uncomfortable gender exclusive words can be.

That's What She Said



The Little Feminist that Could

Jessica Ney

“Though she be but little, she is fierce,”

Shakespeare's age-old phrase, has come to celebrate the power that can come in small packages. But few people really encompass what that might truly means. In most recent news, my mind goes to Greta Thunberg, a champion fighting climate change.

Thunberg has unfortunately been torn up by politicians and the mainstream media; people already find her too emotional, or too unemotional, or too passionate, or even unhinged. Already, society is telling her to quiet down, yet she bravely faces rooms full of adults, amazingly undaunted by their ignorance and aggression. How awesome that a young girl can stand her ground and speak the truth, even if it is to deaf ears.

The attempted suppression of Greta's message is an excellent example of how early censorship starts in our world. A young person's voice is shaped before they can even begin to form sentences. We tell them how to behave, what to believe, what they should like, so on and so forth. We hush them, we tire of their questions, we discourage imagination and creativity. The media tells them how to look, what is desirable, who and what are important.

I wonder how much different the world would be if we told our children their ideas and opinions are important. If we allowed the Greta Thunbergs of the world a platform to take part in creating the future. How many young minds could stir up real, profound change, if only we'd let them?

These young minds depend on us to teach them, to love them, to encourage them. The changes we fight so hard for every day mean nothing if they die with our generation. Now more than ever, we must remind our girls, and our boys, that they are special, that they can make a difference. We must reassure them their voices matter and they are worthwhile.

We are the foundation of tomorrow. Our shoulders are the stairs these children will take to the top. The time to start laying that path for this next generation of young women and men is now—if it hasn't already passed. Every pair of capable hands should be involved.



Stop the Stigma

Aaron Smith

Today stigmas are everywhere, whether they're about low-income neighborhoods, where someone went to school, or even the music someone favors. It's not uncommon to hear remarks like: "You went to a public high school? You must have an average/below average GPA," or "You live in that area of town? You mustn't have worked hard enough to get out of there." Or even: "You listen to (metal, rap, country etc.)? You don't know what good music is."

When we put labels on things like this, we create stigmas. Why? It seems when we're faced with something we have little or no knowledge about we'll grasp onto whatever explanation seems plausible. This is especially true when it comes to mental illness or psychological disorders. These labels create an unnecessary burden.

People who have been diagnosed with a mental disorder, often fear the stigma and shame society puts on their illness, so they might not attempt to seek treatment. Is it any wonder, when, instead of trying to understand and help them recover, we ostracize and isolate them? This only worsens the impact of having a mental disorder.

American sociologist Erwin Goffman said, "There is no country, society, or culture where people with mental illness have the same societal value as people without mental illness." He said this back in 1963. Though that isn't that long ago, we've made a lot of progress in 50+ years. Yet, for some reason, when it comes to mental illness, that attitude still remains true to this very day.

Not to mention the media plays a big part in the matter. Whenever a crime happens, the media is very quick to hit the "They had a mental illness" button. This makes things worse by painting a false narrative that a person will a mental disorder is a danger to society and is more likely to commit a crime, when that's not true at all. In fact, the opposite is true. According to MentalHealth.org, "...people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population."

The fact is, mental disorders can manifest at any time, at any age, and no one should be judged for having one. We must stop defining people based on mental disorders they may experience. Whatever it is you happen to be going through, that does not define who you are. You define who you are. There are some simple ways you can reduce the stigma around mental disorders:

1. Do the research and learn the facts.
2. Use that knowledge to help educate others.
3. Treat others with respect and dignity.
4. Be supportive and encouraging.
5. If you recognize someone is suffering, encourage them to seek help.

And remember, as Wayne Dyer said, "The highest form of ignorance is when you reject something you don't know anything about." Education and empathy go hand in hand.

Not Just a Class, a Lifestyle

Gwenydd Miller



Yoga is considered a great way to exercise and improve flexibility. Some also use it as a form of meditation and relaxation. If you were to take a yoga class, you'd find those perceptions are valid. However, if you delve

deeper into the history and teachings of yoga, you'd find yoga is much more complex than the pop culture exercise routine it's morphed into. In Kate Pelletier's class, HUM130: Philosophy and Practice of Yoga, you'd learn yoga is not just an activity, but a lifestyle.

Lots of people say they like yoga, but most don't know what yoga really is. The majority just scratch the surface, and many misconceptions exist about yoga, not because things people learn aren't true, but because they don't look in-depth to fully understand. I'm taking Philosophy and Practice of Yoga this semester. The class clears up common misconceptions and gets to the heart of the subject. In it, we've learned in depth about the eight limbs of yoga and gained a deeper understanding of other terms, such as the chakra system (the body's complex energy channels) and asanas (the body postures).

In addition to the course content, a major reason to take HUM130 is Professor Pelletier herself. Her incredibly friendly and charming personality makes it a class people want to show up for, and not just for a grade. Everyone in my class has said, at some point, it's their favorite class. Of course, just because it's a yoga class doesn't mean there's no homework. Kate gives chapters to read and written assignments every week, but it is my favorite homework to do. It's also probably the cheapest class I've taken; the only materials are two small books and a yoga mat.

Another great part is, unlike other yoga classes offered here, Philosophy and Practice of Yoga is a full 3-credit course. I wouldn't say it's an easy class, but the class offers a break from typical academic stress. The subject matter brings revelation and insight into a more relaxed way of life. It's a great experience, and I've learned a lot. You don't have to worry if you're not flexible or in great physical shape either; as Kate said the first day, "All you need for a yoga body are: 1) to have a body, and 2) to do yoga."

Pelletier is offering a new class in the spring, on how to teach yoga. Look for HUM231: Teaching Yoga 1, while registering for classes. It's a class more focused on the poses, and each pose's effect on the body. It is the perfect second step, especially for those interested in becoming a yoga teacher. I intend to take this class in the spring, and I'd highly recommend either class, not only to fill an academic requirement (though they do), but to evolve as a person.

Melodic Meditation

Jason Hesse

Stress, for many of us, can be something of a mortal enemy in our daily lives—a relentless nemesis that lurks around every corner, waiting to pounce. It generally appears during big and important moments, but sometimes, it is ever-present. This is when we feel like we're drowning in responsibility, or guilt, or whatever the cause might be, drowning beneath such large waves it begins to take on us a physical toll.

In short, stress is a bitch.

But stress is a natural consequence of life and comes with being invested in something. So how do we prevent it from taking over? The immediate instinct is to avoid it, to run away from stressful situations and avoid having to process it at all. However, this only compounds the problem. Stress builds up beneath the surface, until it bursts in a moment where holding it down is no longer possible. Obviously, this is a poor solution.

I would recommend meditation, but not in the way you might expect. Normally, meditation is depicted as sitting alone in a quiet—usually dark—room not moving a muscle and trying to keep your mind empty and clear. But that sort of meditation is difficult, and takes time to get used to. I'd suggest something that, while similar in intent, may be a little more accessible.

All you have to do is bring headphones and your preferred portable music player somewhere outside (ideally in direct sunlight), sit down, and play some music you're very familiar with. It doesn't matter if it's pop or rap or country or heavy metal—the key is to do nothing but listen carefully. Try to hear something

you hadn't noticed before, or try to hear every single instrument or audio track used in each song. Don't sing along, don't play any air instruments, don't even tap to the beat. Just listen. Use the music as an anchor to keep your mind from wandering to any other thoughts. It's okay if it does, but don't linger; always come right back to the music.

Much like with traditional meditation, afterwards you should feel calmer and more focused, and the effects of any stress should be seriously diminished. This is also a good exercise for when you're feeling anxious or restless—overflowing with excess energy.

Mindfulness meditation is an important habit to get into, especially in the modern lives we live, constantly bombarded with stimuli and information. We never really give our brains a break. There is a concept in sports psychology of *Stress and Recovery*: the importance of allowing periods of recovery during moments of inactivity. That might sound like a tautology, but it is all too common to fill our moments of inactivity with more activity—checking texts, social media, or engaging in casual conversation. Thus, many people naturally neglect the *Recovery* side of the equation—until they finally arrive home after a long day and find themselves too exhausted to do anything.

So, with finals and final essays quickly bearing down on us all, don't forget to give your brain a moment to recover between marathon sessions of study and work. Mental health is the most important thing. Besides, don't you want to feel less stressed?

Readers Respond

Dear Editor,

After reading Kathleen Chesto's "People (Without Homes)," I know when I see people on the streets, it is a real situation happening to a lot of people. People who work minimum wage can barely survive because truthfully, it is not enough....Chesto emphasizes that, "One third of Waterbury's homeless are working, at least part time." I like that this is mentioned because there are people out there working, but they cannot support themselves or their families. The money that is being made nowadays is not enough to keep a home, a car, or have dinner on the table every night. Prices are rising, and it is not making it any easier for people to pay the bills.

People in power say higher education plays a big role in getting far in life and having money. Chesto writes, "Over 61% of adults experiencing homelessness had a high school education; 16% had higher education in technical or graduate schools." Some homeless people have an education and/or higher education, and I am glad Chesto shares this because people going into trades or trying to get into good paying jobs seem to fail, even

though they obtained an education. I hope this can get resolved soon.

~ Sincerely, Anthony Campana

Dear Editor,

After reading "The Gender Battle," the message is very clear. Each person should be treated equally, no matter their gender or how they sexually identify. At the end of the day we all are just people living our lives trying to be happy. All should be accepted for who they are, no matter what they choose to be. In today's world there is so much room for acceptance and freedom. Same gender marriage being legalized in 2008 made a spark for recognizing that happiness and love is not only male and female but it is anyone of any gender joined together. Everyone enjoys happiness in this life and should not feel unaccepted. I guess what I'm trying to send across to the author is I agree with your views; everyone should be treated equal and should respect others.

~ Best Regards, Natalie Alves

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