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# John Hazen White School of Arts & Sciences Newsletter, May 2011, Vol. 16, Issue 3

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# NEWSLETTER

May 2011

Volume 16, Issue 3

*A&S Publicity  
Committee*

## JWU Campus Reads: *No Impact Man*

By Dr. Michael J. Budziszek, II

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This year, the JWU Campus Reads committee, co-chaired by Dr. Donna Thomsen and Dr. Laura Galligan, selected the book *The No Impact Man*, by Colin Beavan. The book chronicles the journey of one man’s project to reduce his and his family’s carbon footprint while living in New York City. This book was shared among all campuses and was enjoyed by students and faculty, and it was a fitting choice as the School of Arts & Sciences is rolling out its sustainability minor. The goal this year for the JWU Campus Reads committee was to create a series of events involving student and faculty participation leading up to the lecture by Dr. Beavan at Xavier Auditorium that was simultaneously broadcasted to the Denver campus. The following day, Dr. Beavan was the keynote speaker at the Cassola Conference.

In preparation for Dr. Beavan’s visit, members of the Campus Reads committee planned a variety of events aimed at raising awareness of pressing environmental issues in the spirit of Dr. Beavan’s mission. I also got involved and organized a Facebook group on which over 200 students, faculty, and Dr. Beavan are members. The Facebook page served as a resource for the JWU community to find out about upcoming dates of JWU Campus Reads events and as a place for discussion. The JWU Library participated by setting up resources on Lib-Guides, where students and faculty could access various resources to expand their understanding about sustainability and also research deeper into Dr. Beavan’s mission. Ken Schneyer directed his efforts into creating a Twitter group for students and faculty. Faculty member Patricia Overdeep organized movie nights during which the JWU community watched and discussed *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour*, narrated and produced by Leonardo DiCaprio and *Six Degrees Could Change the World*, produced by the National Geographic Society. A recycled clothing drive was headed by the International Fashion Society benefiting the Hope House. In the context of sustainable eating, the Market Place, on selected dates, served locally grown and sustainable foods. David Rocheleau organized a sustainable dinner for Dr. Beavan and participating faculty members, but, sadly, Dr. Beavan had to decline but there was no waste. The dinner was enjoyed by those who worked hard organizing the various events.

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Over the course of the year, many guest speakers addressed local environmental concerns and sparked discussion among the student body. Guest lecturers and topics include: “Individual Actions and Experiences Lowering Environmental Impacts in Rhode Island” by Greg Gerritt, an environmentalist with the Environmental Council of Rhode Island; “Climate Change, Hospitality and Tourism” by Curt Spalding from the Northeast Region Environmental Protection Agency; “Rhode Island’s Efforts in Reducing Environmental Impacts” by Arthur Handy, who is chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, Rhode Island General Assembly; “Wind Farms in Rhode Island” by Chief Development Officer Paul Rich of Deepwater Wind LLC; and “Climate Change –The City of Providence Taking the Lead” by Matt Stark who is the director of policy and planning for the city of Providence.

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# Award-Winning SciFi Author Visits JWU

By Ken Schneyer

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James Patrick Kelly, possibly the most prominent science fiction writer in New England, spoke to the students of LIT 4010 (Science Fiction) on April 21. He described the evolution of the genre from the middle of the 20th century until the present day and also took numerous questions about his own writing process.

The difficulties in differentiating "science fiction" from "fantasy" were central to Kelly's presentation. For example, time travel is usually presented as SciFi, but since it's almost certainly impossible under the laws of physics, wouldn't it be more appropriate to call it fantasy? In recent years, we have seen the advent of "Slipstream," a genre in which the unexpected becomes the norm.

In response to student questions, Kelly said that he attempts to create publishable-quality work on a page-by-page basis, not proceeding in the manuscript until he is satisfied with what has been created theretofore. This is in sharp contrast to the methods of other writers, who cheerfully produce "awful first drafts" and plan to make them presentable in their second, third, and fourth revisions. When one questioner asked about the ethical choices starkly presented in many of his stories, Kelly speculated that it might be the result of "attending parochial school right through college."

2011 is one of Kelly's big years. His novelette "Plus or Minus" has been nominated for all three of science fiction's highest honors: the Hugo Award (voted by fans at each year's World Science Fiction Convention), the Nebula Award (voted by authors who belong to the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America), and the Locus Award (selected by the editors of SFF's most prominent professional magazine). "Plus or Minus" appeared in the December issue of *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* and will soon appear in audio form on the prominent podcast *Escape Pod*.

Kelly is no stranger to awards. His novelettes "Think like a Dinosaur" (required reading for this year's LIT 4010 students) and "10<sup>16</sup> to 1" both won the Hugo Award, and his novel *Burn* won the Nebula. He has been nominated for these awards more than a dozen times. This spring, LIT 4010 was offered on the Providence campus for the first time in several years. It is scheduled to run again in the spring of 2012.

## TAPA Anyone?

By Mari Dias

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Many of us love to eat tapas as a prelude to a spicy Spanish meal; however, the TAPA referred to here is not a single appetizer but a new charter school. Trinity Academy of the Performing Arts is in its first year and currently houses one 7<sup>th</sup> grade, with plans to add one additional grade every year. The 34 seventh grade students, chosen by lottery, attend this unique school where the arts are infused in all the subject areas.

Nutrition majors in Dias's psychology class signed on to assist TAPA with a grant directed at raising awareness of hunger and the homeless. With the gracious and efficient assistance of Deirdre Newbold from the Feinstein Community Service-Learning Center, Dr. D and her students joined the TAPA community every Friday afternoon. Psychology students facilitated small group role-plays on the issues, showed a film entitled *Hidden in America*, and conducted a "what would you do" activity. In keeping with the theme, the JWU students, along with the TAPA students, designed healthy, nutritious, and cost-saving dishes. Each course was prepared, served, and relished by the TAPA students and staff as they learned about the food pyramid and healthy, affordable eating.

The final service activity includes a visit to Amos House where they assist in a large clean-up activity.

Kudos to the JWU psychology students who presented their project in the form of a video, filmed and edited by one of the TAPA students. JWU students also conducted a meta-analysis that focused on the existing empirical data on nutrition and homelessness and the developmental theories of adolescence and the application of these to their experiences at TAPA.

## 2011 Academic Symposium

By Nancy Jackson

The Second Academic Symposium of the John Hazen White School of Arts & Sciences was held on May 5, 2011, in the Yena Center Presentation Room. The students offered brief presentations of their work before receiving their awards. A reception for presenters and attendees followed the program.

The Academic Symposium recognizes students' superlative contributions to undergraduate scholarship at Johnson & Wales University. Numerous faculty members were involved in nominating and evaluating student work from every A&S department – a process that involved the review of dozens of submissions in three categories: research papers, multimedia presentations, and creative projects. The six students who received awards were singled out because of their work's clarity, originality, insightfulness, and thorough grounding in serious scholarship. Their work will be featured in JWU's electronic Scholars Archive, adding to the growing collection of distinguished undergraduate work.

Selections to the Second Academic Symposium, John Hazen White School of Arts & Sciences, Johnson & Wales University 2010-11

Otto Neubauer “Maelstrom” Nominated by Ken Schneyer (Humanities)

Nicole Brooks “Paramour” Nominated by Tammy Garcia (English)

Ross Poquette “Improving Business Performance” Nominated by Terry Novak (Honors)

Abby Miller, Taylor Horn-Speck, Blair Mondino, and John White “Computational Stylometry”  
Nominated by Eileen Medeiros (English) and Richard Cooney (Math)

Frances Flowers “Retinal” Nominated by Laura Galligan (Sciences)

Sean Foley “World War II Technology” Nominated by Matt McConeghy (Science)

The John Hazen White School of Arts & Sciences 2010-2011 Academic Symposium Committee consists of the following members: Economics-Alexander Katkov, Larry LaFauci; English-Sheila Austin; ESL-Ann Schroth, David Hood; Humanities-Michael Fein (Committee Chair); Mathematics- Lucy Ligas, David Capaldi; Science-Matthew McConeghy; Social Sciences-Nancy Jackson.

## Rebuilding Japan

By Shannon Aiton

On April 21, the final *Casual for Community* day for the 2010-2011 school year raised \$302 for the Japan Society – Japan Earthquake Relief Fund. On March 11, an 8.9 magnitude earthquake and a tsunami struck Japan. The earthquake killed thousands, and its devastation was far reaching. The magnitude of this earthquake created 23 foot waves that crashed into the surrounding shoreline. Since this time in March, Japan has continued to witness more aftershocks and devastation. The *Casual for Community* donations will aid victims of the Tohoku earthquake in Japan.

The *Casual for Community* program is designed to enable staff and faculty to join in the valuable work done by the Providence area nonprofit agencies that serve as Community Service-Learning (CSL) sites for our students. We schedule one *Casual for Community* day each term with the proceeds benefiting one of our CSL sites. However, when a natural disaster strikes we use the fundraiser to benefit those stricken by a force of nature. Faculty and staff buy a \$3 badge that allows them to dress down on the specified day.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make this *Casual for Community* day successful!

## ***Academically Adrift-A Teaching Conversation***

By David Hood

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On April 5, Donna Thomsen, teacher of the year, welcomed 16 faculty members from across the university to discuss a recent read of hers, *Academically Adrift* by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa. In this book, the authors describe, in great detail, the outcomes of a survey they created that was given to 2,400 college freshmen in America. The findings, as Donna puts it, “were alarming.” She chose this book to open up a rousing conversation about the very serious question: What’s happening to America’s colleges?

The group listened as excerpts from the book were read. Participants were asked to share what they found on blogs and in news articles during their homework assignment, which was given the week before. Most of the discussion centered around the implications that this book will have on administration, staff, and faculty at Johnson & Wales. This led into a philosophical discussion about where JWU stands in comparison to other American institutions.

One of the many points raised was the idea that a shifting trend to treat students as customers as opposed to students has not only hurt education but has put the generations that we see in our classrooms today in jeopardy of not learning how to think. This statement led to the conclusion, agreed to by most discussion participants, that administration, faculty, and staff all need to heed the point that there is a difference between persistence and learning. Currently, too many colleges are worried about persistence (also defined as retention) which is reflective of the thought, “If you stay there, you will learn.” Learning, however, was the original schema of the great American university system, a system that was originally built on the belief that, if you teach and engage the students, they will stay.

Currently, I am reading the book and I look forward to further conversation about the direction academics is going to take in the future. I encourage everyone to search the internet and read the blogs about the book that stirred Donna Thomsen so much that she felt it necessary to share it with a lucky few. Thank you, Donna!

## ***Raise Your Voice: Sustainability Matters!***

By Bonnie Gaines, JWU AmeriCorps\*VISTA

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Following in the footsteps of the 2010-2011 *Campus Reads* initiative, Johnson & Wales University Providence Campus students requested and were awarded a \$500 *Raise Your Voice* mini-grant to create an on-campus educational campaign focusing on environmental sustainability to reduce waste.

The *Raise Your Voice* Campaign is a competitive grant program sponsored by RI Campus Compact, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education. The 2010-2011 *Raise Your Voice* campaign is focused on collaboration among campus communities and empowering student leaders to raise awareness and create social change about a local or statewide issue. *Raise Your Voice* provides opportunities to listen to student voice, support student civic engagement, and address public issues crucial to our democracy.

This year, Johnson & Wales University’s *Raise Your Voice* campaign program’s primary activities consisted of educating the campus community on making one simple daily change to their coffee ritual and a Rhode Island panel discussion featuring Rhode Island sustainability experts.

In the United States alone, over 58 billion paper coffee cups are disposed of each year, clogging our landfills. While many students understand the basics of sustainability, the majority of students have never been given an incentive to build these principles into their daily lives. During the week commemorating Earth Day, three JWU Student Leaders In Community Engagement (SLICE) students, Morgan Osbourne, Kim Gallagher and Dara Barto, joined forces to introduce students to simple sustainable practices. At hosted table events, the team gave a free mug to students as an incentive to begin using a mug rather than throw away coffee cups. The mug students received entitled them to free coffee for the month of April at the on-campus Starbucks. The strong hope was that students would think twice about using paper or Styrofoam cups and choose their reusable mugs instead.

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# Faculty Longevity Awards

By Mark Duston

On Friday, May 6, 2011, Johnson & Wales University honored faculty for their years of teaching service. The ceremonies were held in the Culinary Museum on the Harborside Campus. Dr. Akhil Gupta acted as master of the ceremonies and, after initial welcoming remarks, noted that Johnson & Wales was “an island that escaped the storms outside.” Bucking many of the trends exhibited outside the university, we showed 7.8% rise in retention and banked heavily on the value “People Care.” Concluding the opening remarks, he introduced the President of the Providence Campus, Dr. Irving Schneider.

President Schneider welcomed attendees and participants. Admitting that this was his last longevity ceremony, he stated that, over 41 years, while some things changed, some things looked the same. In particular, experienced faculty were to be recognized and honored. He then introduced the deans of the schools and colleges to present awards for from 5 to 20 years of service.

Dr. Angela Renaud, representing the School of Arts & Sciences was first to make presentations. First to be acknowledged were A&S faculty completing 5 years of service. These were Dr. Dorothy Abram, Margaret A. Shaw, David Spatt, and Ryan Tanish. Faculty completing 10 years of service were Dr. Guy R. Bissonnette, Scott E. Palmieri, and Ann M. Schroth. Recognized for 15 years of service were Michaela Decataldo and Desiree Schuler. Dr. Renaud then read certificates for those completing 20 years of service. Dr. Ernest G. Mayo has served the university in many capacities including being chair of the College of Business, introducing a curriculum in Criminal Justice, developing the Security Management program and teaching in the School of Arts & Sciences. Gail St. Jacques was honored for a career that has “adapted to the learning style of today’s students” where using technology and graphing calculators has changed the way our students face their math requirements.

Following presentations by the deans of the other colleges, Dr. Schneider personally made awards to recipients of 25 to 40 years of service. At the 25 year level, Dr. Amy Neeman was honored. Dr. Neeman was particularly recognized for her work in serving the university’s international population and the English Support Program. She is noted for fostering a truly global community at Johnson & Wales. Gwenn Lavoie has made 30 years of contributions to the university. First hired to teach foreign languages before there was a School of Arts & Sciences, she also taught courses in Hospitality/Travel Tourism. Professor Lavoie adapted and used her personal travel portfolio to teach these courses. She now specializes in teaching foreign languages including French and Spanish. Recognized for 35 years of service, Dr. Nancy Jackson was recognized for being the first chair of the Social Sciences Department. She created the Women’s Center at J&W and served as its director. In 2006, she received the Arts & Sciences Teacher of the Year award. Robert D. Christopher was cited for his 40 years of service to the university. He is currently the faculty member with the most seniority and second only to Dr. Emilio Cappamacho in total years of faculty service to the university. Twice he has received the College of Business Teacher of the Year award. He was named the first chair of the Department of Economics when the department was formed. He continues today following the department’s transition to the School of Arts & Sciences in 2009.

Acknowledging four retirees from the School of Arts & Sciences, Dr. Angela Renaud, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, first recognized Joseph Alfano. Capping a career of 57 years teaching mathematics, he spent the last 19 at Johnson & Wales. The University Committee on Academic Rank has particularly benefitted from his chairmanship. While recognized as “old school” enough that a former student is also currently on the faculty at J&W, he is “new school” enough to be appreciated by his students. Dr. Matthew McConeghy was also presented. He was the first chairman of the Computer Science/Mathematics/Science Department in the School of Arts & Sciences. He has been a consistent advocate and adopter of technology with a nationally recognized web-site. He was awarded an Eisenhower grant for work on the Wanasquatucket River Basin. He retires with interests in boating and fiddling.

Also retiring but not present were Deborah Ridolfi and Paulette Levy.



# From WAC to WID: The Conversation Continues

By Karen Shea

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I attended the annual spring Writing across the Curriculum workshop with one question in mind: “What exactly is the difference between WAC and WID?” Dr. Mare Davis, who has been the director of the WAC program for fifteen years, answered my question in her introductory remarks. While Writing across the Curriculum focuses on writing that begins in the English Department and “fans out to the rest of the university,” Writing in the Disciplines is “less centralized” and “takes writing to the disciplines themselves,” she explained.

Recently, Mare has been instrumental in setting up advisory boards for the College of Business, the College of Culinary Arts, the Hospitality College, and the School of Technology. These advisory boards will distribute a faculty survey in order to determine what kinds of writing our students are already doing. They will also support faculty in creating assignments that will help students practice their writing skills. The interest of the faculty is apparent, as teachers across the disciplines have recently been expressing their curiosity about what our students are writing university-wide. “The conversation is already starting,” Mare claims.

Faculty attending the in-service discussed “What writing situations will our students face in their careers?” and “What criteria define successful college writing?” From accounting to culinary arts to English, students are being asked to write engagement letters, audits, reviews, letters, menus, and academic essays. Regardless of the kinds of writing in which their particular students are engaged, all of the teachers agree that terminology, structure, audience awareness, and critical thinking are skills that students need in order to write well. Students must “be aware of how much their writing represents them,” one teacher commented.

Although the teachers unanimously recognize the importance of having good writing skills, they also have very real concerns regarding how to add more writing into the curriculum. “How can we do writing in an economics class that has forty-five students in it? . . . There’s simply not enough time.”

One solution to this problem, Mare suggests, is group work. In fact, she shared a sample team activity that she has used successfully in her Advanced Composition and Communication class. Rather than simply *learn about* business writing, Mare asks students to *embrace* business writing. Her assignments are in the form of memos, and students submit their assignments in the same format. Students work in teams, often communicating and reporting their progress in writing. Mare claims that communicating in writing stresses clarity and fosters responsibility amongst her students. “It becomes harder to slack off if the details are in writing,” she notes. The students also compose meeting minutes, just as their professors do at JWU. “This is business writing – *real* business writing,” Mare says.

It is exciting to be a part of the conversation of Writing in the Disciplines. Stay posted for upcoming WID events, as Mare is hoping to have a F.A.C.E.S. session in the fall, and she is also working on creating a WID website in the upcoming academic year.

## A Successful Year of Dorm Study Groups

By Ryan Tainsh

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So, the academic year that saw our mandatory attendance lifted saw a spike in attendance. But, where? Well, dormitories are the answer!

It certainly perks your spirits when you enter a room filled with twenty eager students ready to pick your brain on topics ranging from mitosis to MLA, especially when the students are attending a voluntary, afterhours review session. Over the past academic year well over one hundred students have attended dormitory study sessions held at night in various dormitories at the Harborside Campus. With the help of Resident Directors and Assistants, these sessions were fueled by pizza, ping-pong, and academic participation.

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# What does community outreach and civic engagement mean for the JWU campus?"

By Susan Connery

In 2008, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recognized Johnson & Wales University's Providence campus with one of their prestigious Community Engagement Classifications. But what does this mean for our campus going forward? What should community engagement and outreach at JWU look like in the coming years, considering what is happening in Rhode Island and on the national scene with service-learning and civic engagement? To get some insight on these questions, the Community Service-Learning Faculty Advisory Committee hosted a professional development opportunity on April 13 inviting Rick Battistoni, Ph.D, a professor of political science at Providence College with over 20 years as a leader in the field of community service-learning, civic education, and engagement, to facilitate this conversation. As the founding director of the Feinstein Institute for Public Service at Providence College, the first in the nation degree-granting program combining community service with the curriculum, and the designer and director of service-learning efforts at Rutgers and Baylor Universities, he is a perfect resource for faculty in all disciplines.

"From an outsider's perspective, JWU has come a long way. Congratulations on the Carnegie Classification designation! JWU is recognized as one of the more successful 'fourth credit option' models for service-learning, and I commend you on the length of time JWU has been at this work. I realize JWU has successfully and meaningfully navigated a CSL requirement for graduation and that many of your sites are in their second decade. You have a seasoned and talented staff, and one can see that JWU has a commitment to the CSL Center," said Battistoni.

Battistoni laid out what he saw as the newer and more promising directions community engagement work has taken over the past few years, nationwide, both in terms of themes and frameworks and in terms of campus-community partnerships.

## Trends and New Directions

- Global Citizenship, which includes International CSL: local/global
- Student Leadership in Service: students as colleagues, leadership education and experiences, skill building aspects of CSL such as Bonner, Scholarships for Service, or Federal Work Study Programs)
- Majors, Minors, and Concentrations: community service/engagement/studies, etc.
- Engaged Departments: unit coherence and a standard expectation for majors
- Civic Vocation/Careers for the Common Good (social impact careers): connecting community-based work/learning to career development, aspirations to make a difference while also making a life/career

## Conceptual Themes:

- Civic Professionalism
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Sustainability/Sustained Development

And finally he recommended some of the **Community Collaborations** JWU could engage in:

- College Access and Success (collaborating with RI Campus Compact and nationwide)
- School Nutrition/Let's Move (collaborating with the College of Culinary Arts)
- Economic Development
- Global Emphasis (collaborating with the International Institute of RI, ESL, etc. )
- Digital Divide

Rick Battistoni provided us with new directions and next steps suggestions about how to more broadly transform higher education.



# Musings

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## Future Farmers Offer Future Education Lessons

By Ryan Tainsh

This Spring I was honored to judge the Future Farmers of America (FFA) skills challenge at the 2011 Massachusetts Chapter's Annual Conference in Sturbridge, MA. This was a most interesting and enjoyable experience to say the least. In this challenge, competitors based in Massachusetts' high school and members of a local chapter of FFA could showcase any process that could be used on a working farm.

The FFA is a student group founded in 1928 with the goal of developing strategies for feeding future populations. Their programs have taught many a student that agriculture was a multifaceted discipline that calls on many skills and talents. The FFA has continued to support members and push them towards a variety of careers. Today, the FFA has local chapters in all 50 states, each active in career exploration and industry support.

The farming skill demonstration was presented to a panel of three judges, all professionals in a variety of fields. The presentation contained background information on the process, the relevance to rural life, and culminated in a demonstration of the process. The presentation was then evaluated based on completeness, correctness, quality of presentation, and on the quality of their responses to judges' questions.

The presentations ranged from how to groom a pet rabbit to how to field-dress a goat for eating. The eagerness and interest the students took in presenting the processes was refreshing. Beyond enjoying learning a wide variety of farm-worthy techniques, I instantly noticed they truly cared for the process and how well they would perform. I took a few things away from this experience that I feel that I can apply to my teaching here at the University. Firstly, students with passion are most motivated and excel more easily. The passion the competitors had was palpable from the start of the program. They were eager to succeed and, therefore, thoroughly understood what they were presenting. Secondly, this passion may not be present when a student is first introduced to a topic. I spoke with a number of teacher mentors at the conclusion of the program and they explained to me that the students choose their topics and many had little or no previous experience with the skill they had chosen. It was then up to the teacher to further introduce the students to the process and empower the students to succeed.

All said, this experience was one to make me think more about student motivation and interest. Especially in many fields that students feel they are weak, motivation and empowerment may be more the strategic answer than any. I witnessed young competitors having little experience with public speaking and dissemination enchant an audience with not only stellar presentations, but with zeal and passion, which was contagious. I hope to pass this bug onto my students too.

# Teaching the Multicultural Literature of Junot Diaz

By Wendy Wagner

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To take advantage of the incredible opportunity afforded by the imminent visit of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Junot Diaz, the Teaching Multicultural Literature series presented an in-service on March 15 to discuss teaching Diaz' short stories. Dr. Wendy Wagner (English) and Dr. Saiyeda Khatun (English) co-presented the workshop.

Dr. Wagner began the workshop with a discussion of Diaz's biography and a brief history of the Dominican Republic, focusing particularly on the dictatorship of Trujillo and the relationship with the United States. It is important to focus on the historical and cultural context of Diaz and his work because Diaz himself sees the stories he tells as being inextricable with his dual identity as a Dominican and as an American from New Jersey.

Then the discussion turned to Diaz's short story, "Fiesta 1980," which appeared in Diaz's collection of short stories, *Drown*. The central character of "Fiesta 1980," Yunior, has a difficult relationship with his father, whose adulterous secret Yunior must keep. "Fiesta 1980" works well when paired with the Julia Alvarez story, "The Kiss," a story also centering on a young immigrant's relationship with her father. Both stories focus on the child's rebellion against the father's authority, either passive-aggressively (like Yunior) or confrontationally, like Sofia in Alvarez's story. Paired together, these stories foster discussion about masculinity, sexuality, appetite, and social class ambitions.

Dr. Khatun turned the focus towards two other stories by Diaz, "Aguantando" and "Negocios." These two stories serve as bookends, exploring Yunior's relationship with an absent father whom he believes will return to bring him to America but who is really living an alternate life in America without his Dominican family. These stories work well with poems that reveal ambivalent feelings about flawed fathers, such as "My Papa's Waltz," by Theodore Roethke, and "Those Winter Sundays," by Robert Hayden.

Several of the faculty who attended the workshop were familiar with Diaz's work, leading to a thought-provoking discussion not only of Diaz's major themes but of the challenges of teaching Diaz's writing. Diaz intersperses popular culture references into his stories, making them occasionally difficult to follow, and he intersperses Spanish words frequently, which can confuse students unfamiliar with the language.

## Junot Diaz: witty, thought-provoking, profane

By Wendy Wagner

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When students filed into Xavier Auditorium on March 23 to hear Pulitzer Prize winner Junot Diaz speak, perhaps they were expecting a formal, erudite professor talking about highbrow literature. What they experienced instead was a witty, thought-provoking, and at times profane speaker who focused on his passion for reading, writing, and exploration of American immigrant identity.

Diaz is known for his 2007 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, a story about Oscar, a Dominican immigrant living in New Jersey, seeking love and acceptance while dealing with a seeming curse that has afflicted his family for generations. Oscar is what Diaz calls a "ghetto nerd," interested in science fiction and fantasy, much like Diaz himself is.

When Diaz approached the podium, he immediately took an informal tone with the audience, commiserating with them over being dragged to hear him talk. A college professor himself at MIT, Diaz was comfortable addressing students and talked about his own experiences in the classroom.

Diaz read a story he had written called "Alma," which appeared in *The New Yorker* in 2007. The frank sexuality of the piece impressed the audience, and Diaz later admitted that he learned from his sisters, critical readers of his writing, that, if he wanted to tell stories about political and social issues, he should embed these issues in humorous, sexual, passionate stories.

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## **The Miscast Broadway Musical Review** By Gwenn Lavoie

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This writer has attended and reviewed countless JWU productions over the years, but none was more entertaining than the JWU Players' most recent foray into song and dance entitled *The Miscast Broadway Musical Review*.

You may wonder about the use of the word "miscast" in the title. I did, too, and it took a few numbers for me to realize that some males were playing female roles and vice versa. Very clever! Although I was quite familiar with many of the songs, I was not sufficiently familiar with the casting of the different Broadway shows to spot the clever cast changes right away. They added a whimsical note to numbers we all know and love.

Sixteen highly talented JWU students, under the expert direction of Drs. Mari Dias and Geraldine Wagner, sang and danced their way into the hearts of every audience member that day. The outstanding choreography was directed by Teresa Pearson, a dance therapist here in Rhode Island who works with senior citizens throughout the state.

The audience enjoyed tunes and dance numbers from many Broadway shows such as *The Lion King*, *Chicago*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Cabaret*, *Wicked*, and many more. It was easy to spot trained voices and practiced hoofers among the cast members. Their combined energy and enthusiasm quickly spread to the audience members who were seen humming and toe-tapping throughout the performance. It was surely a fun afternoon!

The student producer for this show was Connor Langton (Hospitality College, '13). The cast members included: Brittany Abber, Mike Magyar, Alicia Albernaz, Kevin Flynn, Paris Whalon, Samantha Nickerson, Katy Fuller, Laura Hosmer, Carrie Vail, Shaughn Earle, Liz Schnabel, Ryan Mathews, Amanda Wajda, Rachel Gabe, Ella FanYiting and Christian Fentress. Many thanks for all of your hard work! It was super!

## **The 14th Annual Cassola Conference on the Teaching of Communication** By Eileen Medeiros

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*Variety's the very spice of life, That gives it all its flavor.*  
-William Cowper

If variety is the spice of life, then this year's Cassola Conference was full of flavor. Colin Beaven aka No Impact Man kicked off the conference with his keynote address, "How to Live: Help the World by Becoming Yourself". Though known for his environmental activism, Beaven's address focused instead on what he has learned about communication over the course of his experiences as a doctoral student in engineering, a consultant for non-profit groups, and magazine and book writer. He concluded with an exhortation for the audience to help students discover their mission and passion and also to help students figure out ways to meld the two.

After hearing from Beaven, attendees had the opportunity to hear from various high school and college faculty from a variety of institutions including Scituate High School, Marymount Manhattan College, Fitchburg State University, and Landmark College, about a variety of topics including "Student Writing and Instructor Feedback: Input from Conversation Analysis," "InterMEDIARies: Mediating Student/Teacher Worlds with Communication Technologies," "Professional Communication Meets Project-Based Learning," "Syntactic Boundaries and the Mechanics of Academic English," "Compulsive Computer Use: Impacts of Computers and Digital Devices on Youth in this Age of Information and Communication," as well as others about working with international students, theme-based writing, and active learning.

Lunch was held in Red Sauce and included an assortment of gourmet pizzas and calzones, salad, and Italian desserts.

Be sure to mark your calendars for next year's conference, April 13. "Rockstar Activist" Raj Patel will deliver the keynote address, and, like this year, it's sure to be a spicy event.

# With or Without a Cape: Mari Dias Combats Social Evils with Education and Panache

By Geraldine Wagner

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Who needs a fantasy superhero when you have a real live Mari Dias? I don't know what super powers the original Wonder Woman possesses, but I'm sure they pale in comparison with Mari's. First of all, she has enough energy, at any given moment, to light and run a city like New York (where, by the way, most super heroes just happen to live). She's one of those people whose daily schedule makes others, like me, feel tired just to hear it. She'll tell you herself that she's driven to do as much as she possibly can in the time she has. She credits this determination to seize the day to having been so ill through high school and college that she "was given last rites a few times." She says that her response was not to "to stop and smell the roses," but rather to cram as much as she could into every waking hour, because "who knows how long I have?" Luckily, health is no longer an issue, but the drive it gave her has remained to guide the way she lives. In fact, she wants her epitaph to read, "I'm not finished yet!"

Now, superheroes don't possess just one power, and Mari is no exception. What good would all that energy and drive do if it were spent in the service of selfish and trivial pursuits? Not only does she possess great strength of character but also commitment to caring for others and the desire to leave the world a better place than when she was born into it. Her passion, she says, "is empowering the marginalized, disenfranchised populations by whatever means necessary (increasing their emotional intelligence) and raising awareness of these populations in the general public."

We at Johnson & Wales University know her perhaps most as an extraordinary and inspiring educator whose love for theatre has grown the JWU Players from a small acting group to an A&S sponsored program that puts on at least two major productions per year, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. Mari, at heart, is a social activist, and her teaching and theatre commitments are only two (albeit major and consuming) components of a tripartite, completely interconnected, devotion to bettering society by helping individuals to achieve self-actualization. I wouldn't go so far as to say she has an alter-ego who goes around in tights fighting injustice wherever it's found, but she does wear some great hose and kick-butt boots that often make me wonder whether she might one day completely morph right in front of my eyes. I'm being flippant, of course, but it's only because I truly do not know how one human being packs so much into each day. I sometimes think she must have a secret lair in her home where she recharges, a little like Ironman. I know that it is probably just lots of vitamins and protein shakes, in addition to caffeine, that keep her going, but I like to romanticize when it comes to my heroes.

Whatever the secret source of her power, it's gotten her through a number of impressive academic degrees—in her multiple areas of specialization. After attaining an associate's in theatre, and a bachelor's in English, secondary education (with a concentration in creative writing), Mari began a master's in English. However, as fate would have it, she happened upon a position as a career counselor that would completely change her life—in and beyond academia. She was soon promoted to a state position as a counseling supervisor. She says, "We revamped the entire Employment and Training program statewide, which resulted in counseling "intake" centers: a one stop shopping concept where someone who needed employment could get job training, career interest testing, remedial help, GED prep, MH (mental health) counseling, food stamps, legal assistance, etc. I was promoted to supervise four of the intake centers south of Providence. The position also grew to include grant reading and writing, training counselors, and in-service training for counseling supervisors. It was at this time that I had to assess my situation. I was half way through the M.A. in English but working as a counseling supervisor. I switched graduate programs to an M.A. in Counseling Psychology."

She could now see that her love for literature was always rooted in the psychology of the story's characters and their relationships with one another. Psychology, as a discipline, allows her to analyze real people and situations; and theatre, which has never stopped being a part of her life, allows her to understand people from within: to get under their skin and truly experience what it might be like to be them. As she puts it: "I went from reading about people and what makes them tick; to studying and working with real people to help them understand what makes them tick; to acting, [and actually] becoming an individual by feeling what makes them tick." She ultimately realized that these various talents and passions could be synthesized by a career in teaching psychology, so after

*Continued on page 19*

## Campus Reads *Continued from page 1*

Also, students participated in a creative contest “Turn Trash Into Art,” organized and sponsored by members of the JWU Campus Reads committee, A&S, Student Activities and the International Center. The goal of the contest was to use trash or recycled material and turn it into a piece of art with the winner receiving various prizes. All campuses were encouraged to read the book and participate in book discussion groups. All events were very successful and a “job well done” goes out to everyone participating in and organizing these events.

*“It’s as if we are all having a party and no one is having a good time.....and who is going to clean up the mess?”*- Dr. Colin Beavan, lecture at Xavier Auditorium. At the Campus Reads lecture in Xavier Auditorium, April 7, 2011, Dr. Beavan was introduced by Dr. Laura Galligan. In introducing him, she asked the attendees to imagine a year without daily comforts, amenities, and with a vow to reduce their impact on the environment, as portrayed in Dr. Beavan’s book. “Could you do it?” she asked. The reality alone belonged to Dr. Beavan and his family. As Dr. Beavan took the stage, with his water jar in hand, he had everyone give a brief “hello” to the Denver campus as they were included in the lecture via live video. Present at the lecture was Dr. Beavan’s daughter Isabella, who was featured in his book, and his mother. Earnestly, Dr. Beavan referred to himself, first and foremost, as a father and very proud of his role as a parent. In his lecture, he was proud to recognize that his book has been read by more than 40,000 college freshmen and also over 30,000 participants in his “No Impact Week” project. True to his sustainable life style, Colin still rides his bike from place to place within the city. He proudly stated that in neighborhoods and parts of the city where bike paths are integral parts of the landscape, the crime rates are significantly lower. Not only is biking a sustainable form of transportation, it also encourages civility and prevents crime. He reassured us that his diet still consists of locally grown, in-season food and expressed gratitude to hard working farmers who produce great products. From the project, he learned that he required some necessary carbon producing amenities, such as electricity, to keep his sanity, but he has given up the comfort of television and air conditioning. He states that we can all contribute in whatever way we can towards reducing our carbon footprint and that we do not have to do a big project similar to his. He encouraged his listeners to be mindful of how they treat their environment and how they can contribute to slowing the rate of its destruction.

He comically reminded us that he still carries his water jar with him where ever he goes and reminded the audience that their part can be as small as reusing jars for containing drinking water rather than buying bottled water. He encouraged the practice of the three “R’s” of sustainability: reduce, recycle, and reuse. He described in detail that, in the spirit of the three “R’s,” he buys all his and his family’s clothes at second hand stores. He supports using second hand items since they have already been tested and are considered of better quality than newer products, which are susceptible to failure. “There is nothing wrong with using second hand items.”

He states that his only regret with his project was his experience with a reporter from the *New York Times*, who exaggerated one of his concepts and published a story titled “The Year without Toilet Paper.” He states that the story is the bane of his existence. He was hurt that someone could take a pure concept rooted in good intentions and make a mockery of it; according to Beavan, we have bigger problems, other than “What does Colin Beavan use to wipe his butt?” He never answered that question but humorously reflected on a statement made by one of his close friends: “Would you rather wash it off or smear it around?” Everyone had a good laugh.

In his lecture, he reflected on the B.P. oil spill of April 2010. He was amazed at how, during this crisis, the Democrats and Republicans were playing the blame game on whose fault it was rather than taking on the responsibility of a quick response. He leaves the responsibility up us. He summarized the current state of environmental affairs as if “we are all having one big party but no one is having a good time... Usually, during a party, everyone is having a good time, but why in ours [the Human race] are people, animals and nature suffering?” He compares the quick depletion of our natural resources as fueling the party and, in our haste, contributing to the destruction of our environment. And not just temporary destruction that can be bandaged over time, but complete destruction that will take generations to fix. He encourages us to become team players, to stop being selfish, to identify our part and work together to contribute to sustainable means in preserving our environment, our home. He emphasized that we need to stop playing the blame game and stop trying to identify the faults in others but rather to look at ourselves and see the faults within us. He stated that the birth of the *No Impact* project was due to a self realization that he could no longer blame others but needed to focus more on how WE CAN ALL do our part, together, to fix the

*Continued on page 13*

## Junot Diaz *Continued from page 9*

Diaz shared with the audience several stories about his personal life, specifically about his identity as a Dominican immigrant who moved to New Jersey when he was six years old. He discussed the ways his family encouraged his education but steered him towards a degree in law.

But Diaz had an epiphany; by seeking a law degree, he was following his parents' dream for him. What he needed to do was follow his own dream: becoming a writer. Later, Diaz read again, this time from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, a passage narrated by Oscar's sister Lola. Again, the passage was explicit in its content (involving the woman's discovery that her mother had breast cancer).

When Diaz opened the floor to questions from the audience, several students questioned his use of profanity and sexual language. In response, Diaz discussed the concept of the mask, the socially accepted veneer we employ in different contexts. Different voices are appropriate for different contexts and are used for different reasons. He can speak the language of an English professor when he is at MIT, or he can speak the language of the Dominican immigrants in the working class New Jersey town where he grew up. He uses these voices strategically, but they are also part of his legacy as an immigrant, as someone at home in two places, the Dominican Republic and America.

## Raise your voice *Continued from page 4*

To continue on the successful path of reusable incentives, the first 25 attendees to come to the panel discussion on promoting a more sustainable world were rewarded with reusable shopping bags donated by Whole Foods Market. Over 70 JWU students, staff, and faculty attended the event in Pepsi Forum featuring four speakers who uphold sustainable practices in their home and work lives: Nicolette Nicolaidis, a JWU graduate and local business owner specializing in local foods; Tara Lynn Cimini, an urban garden teacher and advocate; Greg Gerritt, coordinator of the Rhode Island Compost Initiative; and David Fisher, managing editor of EcoRI. The panel began with a discussion of their history and work in the Rhode Island sustainability movement. Next, an hour long question and answer session, moderated by *Raise Your Voice* advocate Morgan Osborne, actively engaged the audience. The event ended with a brief discussion on suggested ways in which the JWU community could become more sustainable and eco-friendly.

Kudos to Starbucks, Whole Foods Market, our Rhode Island speakers, and the JWU community for supporting the *Raise Your Voice* campaign!

## Campus Reads *Continued from page 12*

problem. For him, this approach has been less stressful and more successful. He reminds us that we are all the same and that we are at a critical point; if we all do our part we can save the world. And that is all that he asks: that we all do our part.

On his final day at JWU, April 8, 2011, Dr. Beavan was the keynote speaker at the Cassola Conference on Teaching Communication. This year's conference was focused on communication. He reminded the faculty and other educators that we need to be effective communicators and that, as effective communicators, we can shape future generations for the better.

There is no doubt that the time that Dr. Beavan spent with the JWU community has shaped our future forever. The events leading up to Dr. Beavan appearance made an impression on our faculty and students that will guide the way in which we apply sustainable practices in our daily lives. As for myself, I am more conscious of what I do and, especially, of what I throw away. Although, my wife reminds me that there is a fine line between reusing and hoarding, I cannot help but to think that everything that is considered waste may have a second purpose. But, as Dr. Beavan reminds us, we can all do our part and we must be mindful of what approach is practical. I thank, and I am sure so does the rest of the JWU community, the efforts of the many members of the JWU Campus Reads committee who made this event possible. And a warm thank you to Dr. Beavan for his time and words of wisdom. From this experience, hopefully, we all can identify our part and work together to make the world a better and sustainable place.



# JWU Faculty Fellows Showcase – Inspirational!

By Susan Connery

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The Feinstein Community Service Center extended an invitation to on- and off- campus audiences to attend JWU's Faculty Fellows presentations on April 27 from 3:45 pm to 5:30 pm. The event was held in JWU's Admissions Presentation Room in the Yena Center. The Service-Learning Faculty Fellows program is designed to enable faculty members to broaden their professional, disciplinary, and personal horizons, and reinvigorate their own work as scholars, teachers, and educational leaders in the service-learning pedagogy.

Susan Connery and Community Service-Learning Coordinators Katie Jourdenais and Erin McCauley worked closely with the two 2010-2011 Service-Learning Faculty Fellows, Ela Lozinski, (Arts & Sciences) and Peter Bortolotti (College of Business), as they shared their work as service-learning practitioners. The day of the showcase, the JWU students and community liaisons joined in their presentations.

## **Ela Lozinski – In Search of a Better Life: Challenges of West African Youth in America**

Students were required to work with a dozen Liberian youth who, after fleeing their war-torn country, made their home in Rhode Island. The group met at Higher Ground International, Inc. on Westminster Street in Providence. The youth were asked to tell their stories – of their hardships, struggles, and triumphs, and of the cultural and generational challenges they encountered transitioning from one country to another. Many of these young people shy away from talking about their lives for many reasons... be it the language barrier, lack of self-confidence, or just a feeling that nobody cares. The JWU students listened intently and asked questions which helped the Liberian youth to express themselves, to share their experiences, and to look for ways to heal. The youth discovered their voices and the JWU students filmed and recorded the experiences. They also researched the history of Liberian civil wars, using not only a variety of written sources but also photographs taken by photojournalists, such as Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros. The project enhanced students' classroom education by giving them a hands-on experience with problem-solution strategy, which was the focus of their Honors Composition class.

At the end of the process, the JWU students created a trailer "In Search of a Better Life: Challenges of West African Youth in America" and a 45 minute film for Higher Ground International, Inc. These tools will help to promote discussions with Liberian parents and community audiences not only concerning the individual lives of these youth but also the collective plight of West Africans who try so hard to put the war behind them and make a new life in a new culture.

## **Peter Bortolotti - Inspired Learning for Life**

Peter Bortolotti, an Associate Professor of Marketing in the College of Business creates an exciting environment for students to learn through JWU's directed work experience and in-class course projects in his Brand Marketing, Strategic Marketing, and Direct Marketing classes. He taught students, through modeling, how to collaborate with Trinity Restoration, Inc., a non-profit community development organization charged with the restoration and revitalization of the theatre complex at 393 Broad Street on Providence's Southside. The student's relationships continued to grow through their academic work experience with Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts (TAPA), Higher Ground International, Inc., Rhode Island Song Writers Association, Rebuilding Together Providence, Social Venture Partners Rhode Island, Providence Art, Culture & Tourism Council and various stakeholders in the Greater Providence arts community.

Students have assisted in the creation of affordable after school arts education programs and events for youth and adults; provided research for the development of an innovative membership model that will showcase diverse local artists in various events and settings; created and developed several fundraising and awareness building events; and designed and developed brand elements (logo, website, graphics, slogans, etc.) indigenous to the launch of the Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts charter school. These projects provided interdisciplinary resource sharing involving students and faculty from all colleges and schools in the areas of project management, as well as faculty evaluated class project/class component opportunities, and faculty development.

Peter Bortolotti has empowered JWU students to deepen their civic and academic learning, enhance the well-being of the community, and enrich the scholarship of the university.

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## 2010 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll *with Distinction*

By Susan Connery

The Feinstein Community Service Center was informed that Johnson & Wales University's Providence Campus has been named to the 2010 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll *with Distinction* by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Earning this distinction is not easy. A total of 851 institutions applied for the 2010 Honor Roll; 114 received the recognition of Honor Roll "with distinction." The Honor Roll recognizes higher education institutions that reflect the values of exemplary community service and achieve meaningful outcomes in their communities. Honorees for the award were chosen based on a series of selection factors including scope and innovation of service projects, percentage of student participation in service activities, incentives for service, and the extent to which the school offers academic service-learning courses. Our selection to the Honor Roll is recognition from the highest levels of the federal government of Johnson & Wales University's Providence Campus commitment to service and civic engagement on our campus and in our nation.

## Plato's Café Spring Term

By Paulette Levy

*"We ourselves cannot put any magic spells on this world. The world is its own magic."*

Shunryu Suzuki from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

**March 23, 2011-** Following a nasty winter, weather-wise, Plato's Café members were ready to greet the warmth of spring with open arms and some great discussion. Well, it was *snowing* when this facilitator grabbed her coat to make the 5-minute dash from teaching a period 4 class over to the ICC for the 3:45 pm meeting. Yes, *snowing!*

*Snow*, it turns out, is not so bad. Seventeen eager, excited, and chatty Plato's Cafe members attended, ready to dive into our first Spring 2011 discussion: "Does God exist? Or, is there a higher power determining aspects of our lives?" We left off with the same question: "What is the meaning of life?" Since many in this year's group are new members, they don't realize that the group tackles this subject year in and year out, still energized and interested, and, despite varied thoughts on the topic, no final conclusions were drawn. This meeting took us into the evening, and, although off topic now and again, we all walked away with some new things to think about still, no answer. *Maybe this is the point.*

**April 13, 2011-** Thoughts turned to business ethics with our new topic focused on underage drinking establishments in the city. This writer is often surprised and amazed at what she hears; is she hearing that the eighteen students seated across the tables from her really feel that there should **not** be under 18 clubs operating in our city? It sounds that way! Off topic a bit, we turned to the theory behind both wet and dry campuses and the safety of our students with questions being asked: "Should we allow legal drinking *on* campus where the surroundings may be more "user friendly? Should there be over 21 dorms on campus? Is it ethical?" The general consensus to this second question seemed to be a resounding "yes." *An answer?*

**April 27, 2011-** The final spring Plato's Café met at the ICC where discussion turned from the pragmatic of April 13 to the spiritual with our topic about dreams and their meanings. Are dreams telling as Aristotle suggested, or are dreams just our mind's responses to our wishes or fears? *No answers*, but lots of discussion.

Summing up this spring might bring us to a quote from *The Little Prince* author, Antoine De Saint-Exupéry: "The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves but in our attitude towards them."

# The Annual International Festival: Just One Big Family Reunion!

By Geraldine Wagner

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According to the current Dalai Lama, “Internal peace is an essential first step to achieving peace in the world.” But how do we “cultivate” that internal peace? His answer is equally profound because it is as plain as the different noses on our essentially similar faces: “It’s very simple,” he says. “In the first place by realizing clearly that all mankind is one, that human beings in every country are members of one and the same family.” One of the most endearing aspects of belonging to the Johnson & Wales University community of students, staff, faculty, and administration is witnessing, on a regular basis, a wide range of actions that demonstrate how this sense of mutual kinship is nourished and celebrated on our campus.

The Annual International Festival is one of the best examples of such a celebration! With its inspiring flags-of-many-nations ceremony, breath-taking performances of traditional songs and dances, world expo-like fair, and international foods buffet, the festival is like a brief, exquisite blossom on a plant whose roots grow stronger and deeper with each passing year. This “flower” does not just spring forth of its own accord, however. The event takes at least four months to plan, requires collaboration among colleagues and students, and would never get off the ground if everyone involved did not do this out of sheer love for everything this festival symbolizes. Although ESL faculty members lead the committee which plans the event, they are always joined by quite a number of colleagues from the other Arts & Sciences departments who share their passion for promoting inclusiveness at our university.

Not surprisingly, many of these faculty members have repeatedly collaborated with each other on interdisciplinary projects that promote communications across cultures and have witnessed firsthand how valuable it is to bring our international and domestic students together. We have seen them grow together as friends while engaged in peer to peer teaching and learning, and this inspires us to continue to try to build bridges between their perceived obstacles to communication. The International Festival pays tribute to this spirit of camaraderie, born of the recognition that our common humanity is only enriched by our differing cultural experiences and values.

Although it might sometimes seem to those of us who work the food tables that it’s “all about the food” for most of the more than 200 students who pass through the Pepsi Forum during the festival, one tour around the various country expos and you know that’s not really so. At every table, students are engaging each other in conversation. Even the delicious samosas, empanadas, kimbob, spring rolls, and stuffed grape leaves cannot compete with the excitement, good will, and pride in their cultural heritage exhibited by our international students acting as ambassadors for their countries. These students are always eager to talk about their countries as tourist destinations, explain cultural norms and conventions, give some history about their religious holidays, or talk about business protocols. But these are just ice-breakers. Many of the conversations I’ve had the pleasure to overhear between domestic and international students go much further. They might start out with a typical inquiry about traditional dress or a good travel destination, but they often progress to conversations about college life, dating, the role of women or elders in society, environmental issues, and even politics and the economy.

This is the real reward of such an event. Amidst the wonderful music, food, and entertainment, something far more exciting is happening: family, who’ve never seen or known each other before—are being reunited. They are discovering the connections between them that have always been there. Of course, there is always the proverbial and beautiful name writing in Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, and Korean (to name just a few), and, as expected, every last bit of food goes way before the festival ends; Nevertheless, later, during clean up, what I most remember—despite how utterly marvelous everything else may have been—are those moments when students connected with each other. I can still see them in my mind smiling and laughing, reaching out to each other in recognition of their shared humanity, relieved that this is so much easier than they imagined.

Next year’s International Festival will take place during October as part of International Week at Johnson & Wales University. Although the April date has always provided a nice culmination to a year’s worth of activities, we are even more excited about having the festival early in the year, so that our international students can be more fully welcomed into the JWU community right from the start. If you have never attended, I strongly encourage you to do so in fall. If you have, then you know to mark your calendars. This event never disappoints!

# Narrowing the Gap-A Symposium

By Mary Barszcz

On April 28, 2011, at Save the Bay, the College-Level Writing Collaborative hosted its second annual symposium. *Narrowing the Gap: From High School to College Readiness brought together over 50 high school and college educators from Rhode Island and Massachusetts to examine preparing students to write at the college level.*

After allowing time for networking and socializing, Mary Barszcz welcomed attendees and announced that the collaborative and Johnson & Wales had been awarded the Diana Hacker TYCA Outstanding Program in English Award in the category Reaching across Borders. In recognition of JWU's support of the collaborative, Mary presented the award plaque to Provost Veera Gaul, who promised to see that it found a fitting university home.

Eileen Medeiros then introduced keynote speaker Julia Steiny, who, until very recently, was the education columnist for the *Providence Journal*. In the course of her address, Steiny urged teachers to control their stories, to use the written word, in particular press releases, to communicate the message that they want the community to hear. She also urged attendees to find out why students need to write, to discover what students want their writing to do for them, and to use that information to get students to do what educators need—things like demonstrating a control of grammar and punctuation.

Following the keynote address, participants were able to choose from five topics and join facilitators and colleagues for table discussions. The discussions, which lasted for 30 minutes, revolved around the topic options “Weighing process and product: More or less?”; “Evaluating student work: Does one size fit all?”; “Crafting assignments: What’s wanted? What’s needed?”; “Writing rhetorically: What does it mean? What does it matter?”; and “Preparing English language learners: Ready or not?” Following the first discussion session, participants moved to another table to explore another topic.

And so the collaboration, organized and executed by the 2010-11 members of the College-Level Writing Steering Committee, Chris Natalizia, Quincy High School and Johnson & Wales University (English adjunct); Ruth Trainor, Scituate High School; Sarah Liebel, Blackstone Academy Charter School; Laurie Sherman, Community College of Rhode Island; Dav Cranmer, New England Institute of Technology; and Valerie Balkun, Mary Barszcz, Mare Davis, Eileen Medeiros, Terry Novak, and Donna Thomsen, Johnson & Wales University English Department, continued. If this symposium is any indication, 2011-12 promises even closer collaboration as high school and college educators work to narrow the gap that separates high school from college-level writing.

## Dorm Study Groups *Continued from page 6*

Students had the opportunity to play a bit of academic jeopardy and bring any subject or assignment for my review and suggestion. I certainly was more able to help some than others, but most just needed a helping hand. I found that students offered simple guidance on a paper's paragraph, a math problem, or a menu cost breakdown were off and running with my help. The nudge in the correct direction was all they needed to set them on the right course.

For myself, these sessions were interesting and rewarding because, as faculty, we do all we can during classes and office hours to aid and guide students through our courses. This time, however, is pulled in many directions. However, during the study sessions, diligent students can be given undivided attention for the help they need and have come in search of. This attention is very valuable because it helps them navigate their academic questions, but also assures them that faculty is there to help them – and enjoy helping them – learn and develop as students.

I would like to thank the Resident Directors and Assistants at Harborview, South, and East dormitories for working tirelessly to offer our students quality programs through Residential Life. They were always eager to organize and advertise new sessions. Without those dedicated staff members, this program, as all, would not have been successful.

So, if you ever feel down about attendance in your classes, come by the study sessions, you will find a group of eager and present students ready to challenge themselves and you with the academic issues of their day! You'll love it.

## People in the News

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**Nelson Guertin** (Humanities) successfully defended his doctoral dissertation entitled, *A Literary Analysis of the American Worker: Characterizations by London, Sinclair, Steinbeck and Rand*.

**Professor Marian Gagnon** (English) co-presented with Chairman of the Board Jack Yena at an alumni event at the Pepsi Forum in early April attended by 250-plus students. After listening to a brief presentation, students watched Gagnon's third and final documentary on the history of JWU entitled *Jack Yena's Legacy: Finding a Sense of Place*. This was followed by a "town hall" meeting with Dr. Yena.



**Emily Spitzman** (ESL) and Mike Waugh (International Center) are excited to announce the birth of their baby boy, Ezra Spitzman Waugh, born at 6:29 pm on March 30 at a whopping 10 pounds 2 ounces, 21.5 inches!

**Alexander Katkov** (Economics) attend the Principles of Economics Technology Symposium organized by McGraw-Hill publishing company in Scottsdale, Arizona, from February 10-13, 2011. The team that he led won the publisher's competition on the best use of the McGraw-Hill technology in the classroom offered during the symposium. From February 24-27, 2011, Dr. Katkov also made the presentation at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences in Las Vegas, Nevada. The topic of his presentation was "The Great Recession of 2008-2009 and Government's Role." This presentation has been published in the 2011 proceedings of 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences. On April 5, 2011, as the member of the World Affairs Council of Rhode Island, Dr. Katkov attended the council's meeting, *Brazil on the Rise: The World's New Economic Superpower*. Additionally, Dr. Katkov invited his students from his Comparative Economic Systems class to attend the presentation made by Mr. Paulo Sotero, Director of the Brazil Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

On April 4, 2011, **Guy Bissonnette** (Humanities) attended the annual meeting and conference of the North Atlantic Regional Business Law Association (NARBLA) at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts. Mr. Bissonnette has also submitted an article to the *Rhode Island Bar Journal*, entitled "R. I. Municipal Insolvency Lite," which is scheduled to appear in the September/October 2011 issue.

**Wendy Wagner** (English) presented a paper on "Using TED Talks to Teach Research and Writing Skills" at the 6th Annual Conference on the Teaching of Writing at the University of Connecticut in March. In April, her entry "Autism in the Middle" appeared on the "In Media Res" site, a project of *Mediacommons*. She also presented a workshop titled "When TED Talks, Everybody Learns" at the Teaching Professor Conference in Atlanta in May.

**Lizann R. Gibson, Ed.D.**, JWU 2010, (English adjunct) presented a paper on her dissertation, *Knowledge and Understanding of 21st Century Skills Through Educator Externships: Three Programs in Southern New England*, at the NEERO, North East Educational Research Conference in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on April 28, 2011.

The Arts & Sciences team JWU Walkers finished #1 among the Johnson & Wales teams for exercise minutes in the latest Shape Up RI Competition. They were #3 among the JWU teams for numbers of steps walked. The team consisted of **Amy Neeman, Terry Novak, Marc Davis, Eileen Medeiros** (English), **Cheryl Almeida, Mari Dias**, and **Michaela DeCataldo** (Social Sciences).

**Amy Neeman** (English) and **David Newman** (Social Sciences) presented "From Desperate Housewives - past and present - to New Jersey Housewives to simply House: Views on family and gender in popular culture" at the 2011 national conference of the Popular Culture Association.

In the spring of 2011, **Jennifer Lee** (English adjunct) presented papers at the University of Rhode Island Graduate Conference, as well as the Conference on College Composition and Communication. She also collaborated with the Writing Center at URI to develop a poster presentation for the Discovery at URI conference. This collaborative team was also awarded the Hope and Heritage Fund in order to travel to the New England Writing Center Association's conference.

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## Profile: Mari Dias *Continued from page 11*

completing her counseling psychology master's she pursued an Ed.D. at Johnson & Wales, majoring in Higher Education Leadership with a focus on emotional intelligence: a degree she completed in 2003. Unfortunately, the moment of her highest academic success coincided with her father's death: a story she recently recounted in her humorous and touching memoir *The Mortician's Daughter*.

Mari, however, has never been one to wallow in her own grief. Instead, personal tragedies only deepen her compassion for, and understanding of, the struggles of others. Indeed, her greatest epiphany—the “aha” moment she will never forget—came while teaching the emotional intelligence (EI) component in a skills training program for women transitioning from welfare to work. She remembers: “I felt like I was ‘band-aiding’ years of damage to self esteem and emotional intelligence competencies. I thought, ‘too bad someone didn't intervene when they were much younger.’ So I became their cheerleader and looked for opportunities to intervene at a much earlier age.” Those opportunities would take her back to her hometown of North Kingston where she proposed a creative dramatics program for grades 1 through 8 because she “knew theatre was a powerful mechanism to increase self esteem and EI competencies,... and [could] provide intervention at an early age.”

The program was a tremendous success and is now in the very talented hands of Mari's daughter, Lindsay (who has an English/theatre degree from Salve Regina), because even Mari, super powers and all, could not run two theatre programs! Besides, the JWU Players were a new challenge: helping students transition to being independent adults who, nevertheless, feel strongly connected to each other and their college community. If you ask her JWU Players, they will tell you she has helped them gain tremendous confidence through self expression and the further development of their talents. As we in the Players often say, we're a dysfunctional family, but what family isn't?" As co-chair, I can tell you, without a doubt, that the Players could not exist without Mari, and we would never be where we are without her leadership, either. Mari and I juggle producer/director responsibilities, but she does the lion's share, and all of our musicals have been her “babies.” From *Little Shop of Horrors* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, to the award winning *Urinetown* and this year's much acclaimed musical review, Mari has zapped all with her magic.

But if you're reading this, you probably know about, or have seen some of, this side of Mari's work. However, much of her theatre involvement has an even stronger, more immediate community service component to it. She has led a number of CSL initiatives in conjunction with our Feinstein Center that fore-grounded theatre as a means to personal empowerment. For three years, she led a drama program at Fogarty Elementary school, where she helped at-risk, inner city children learn social studies and literacy while broadening their cultural horizons by introducing them to the Broadway musical. She also works with this same population at Veazie Street School, where her annual Spooky Fun House has increased parental involvement in their children's education; and, most recently, she has created a CSL project that partners her students with Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts in order to raise awareness of hunger and homelessness right in our own backyard through performance-based education.

These are achievements any superhero would envy, but the true test of heroism is one's ability to see the smallest light in the deepest darkness: a kind of visionary eyesight, if you will, and Mari has been proving she has this extraordinary gift for the past six years. Every week, she takes her course entitled, “Changing Lives through Literature,” into the maximum security unit of a local prison in what is most certainly her most extreme and controversial use of art as education and social activism. She was recently interviewed about this by the *Providence Journal*, since early release for good behavior is a policy in questions these days. Mari says of this endeavor: “I am still ‘band-aiding’ adults, as well.... I use literature as a conduit for empowerment and self-directed change.... I encourage my students to take the character's point of view in order to increase empathy, [and we examine] story themes to increase locus of control. I always tell ‘my guys,’ ‘I can only give you the tools. You need to actually use them and incorporate them in your daily lives both in and outside of prison.’”

All of this work is awe inspiring, not just for its sheer volume and the kind of demands it makes on her emotionally and physically, but for the impact such work has on individuals and communities. Obviously, Mari is all about changing lives and believing that, for every life you know you've bettered, there are countless others you've

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## People in the News *Continued from page 18*

**Kenneth J. Rourke** (Economics) attended the *Teaching Economics 22nd Annual Conference* which was held at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh, Penn. on February 17-19, 2011. Ken was able to secure Dr. Sean Masaki Flynn (Scripps College, Calif.), the keynote speaker, and co-author of the economics textbook which has been used by Johnson & Wales University for the past several years as a distinguished visiting professor. Dr. Flynn will be presenting the topic "How Singapore Delivers World Class Health Care While Spending 80% Less Than We Do" at the Schneider Auditorium on Wednesday, October 19, 2011, from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM followed by a question & answer period. Ken is also a member of two committees: Active Learning and In-Services. He participated in the active learning project for the winter 2010-2011 term. In addition, he participated in the critical thinking project in both the winter 2010-2011 and spring 2011 terms. Finally, he participated in the Outcomes assessment program in the spring 2011 term. In addition, Ken is the contact person for any student seeking internship and volunteer opportunities at the 1st Discount Brokerage, Inc. branch office located in Providence, R.I. Ken is instrumental in placing more than eighty (80) percent of the interns for 1st Discount Brokerage Inc. from the Johnson & Wales University undergraduate and graduate school programs.

**Ken Schneyer** (Humanities) attended *Boskone*, the New England Science Fiction Association annual conference, at which he served on such diverse panels as "Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* at Fifty", "Hand-Waving Science", "What Is Time Travel Good For?", and "Does Mars Need Zombies?" At that same conference, he read from his story "Curative Measures" and did a joint flash-fiction reading with the members of the Cambridge Science Fiction Workshop. Ken also attended the Mid-Atlantic Academy of Legal Studies in Business annual conference in Newport News, Virginia.

In April, **Dr. Jim Brosnan** (English) attended a poetry writing workshop "Site Spectacular: Inspiration through Language and Place" with poet Kate Schapira. This Sunday afternoon event was sponsored by the Providence Public Library and was also attended by three members of the Weybosset Hill Writers (a student group advised by Jim). On Tuesday evening, April 12, Jim attended the annual poetry series sponsored by Moses Brown. Award-winning writer and educator Sharon Olds was the featured poet for the evening. Also, in April, he attended author Chris Bohjalian's "Giving Birth to the Novel: One Writer's Perspective on the Creative Process" presentation sponsored by the Kingston (Rhode Island) Free Library. On May 13, Jim attended a reading and discussion of fiction writing by Julia Spencer-Fleming at the York (Maine) Public Library. Julia's seventh mystery novel is *One Was a Soldier*. On May 14, Jim attended the Seacoast Writers Spring Conference held in Dover, New Hampshire. Rebecca Rule was the keynoter. Jim participated in a poetry workshop lead by Matt & Ayanna Gallant entitled, "Turning Minor Events into Significant Poems."

Jim's recent publishing credits include "Station Stop in Texarkana" in *The Maze*; "Outside Morgantown," "Long Beach," "Revisiting Alpine Meadows" in the *Tidepool Anthology*; "Question," "The Song Not Written," "When Darkness Comes," "Long Beach," "A Moment of Desire," "In Melville's Pew," "Ocean Lullaby," "Midwest Harvest" in *The Rhode Island Teacher as Write;*; and "Revelations" in *the Aurorean*. Also, his fiction piece "The Sun Never Shines in Norway" was published in *The Rhode Island Teacher as Writer*.

## People in the News Continued from page 20

**Karen Iacobbo** (English adjunct) was busy as a volunteer during the spring term. At the five-day SENE Film, Music, and Arts Festival, for which she is a member of the planning committee, Karen worked at the opening night party and art exhibit, at several of the film screenings, and at the closing music and poetry event. What's more, this term Karen did public relations work, writing press releases and articles and contacting local media to help with the promotion of two films from local award-winning filmmakers: Alex Asten's short comedy *Phantom* and TV show host Mike Messier's experimental drama *Blood! Sugar! Sid! Ace!*. Later in the term, Karen helped promote *The Music Legacy*, the benefit concert for the First Annual Arturo R. Coppola Memorial Music Scholarship. Acclaimed tenor/composer/director Arturo R. Coppola was a local favorite as well as nationally-known. In May, Karen organized the building of a vegetable, fruit, and herb garden for the Gloucester Senior Center on behalf of the town's Resource Commission. More than a dozen volunteers ranging from teens to the elderly built the garden.

The New England Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges (NEMATYC) held its annual conference on April 29-30, 2011. The conference themed "The 3 R's @ the 4C's" was held at Cape Cod Community College in West Barnstable, Massachusetts. **Charles Mazmanian** (Math) presented on "The little things I do in the classroom for our visual learner students." Following the wisdom of "a picture is worth a thousand words," the presentation was a compendium of activities designed to appeal to students whose learning style was primarily visual in nature. Also attending the conference from the Mathematics Department were **Dr. David Mello**, **Dr. Tamara Nikiforaki**, and **Mark Duston**. Also attending was **Dr. Alexander Katkov** of the Economics Department.

In anticipation of her new role as associate professor of counseling psychology, **Mari Dias** (Social Sciences) attended the American Counseling Association's annual national conference in New Orleans. Over 4,000 counselors attended the conference, which emphasized the need for disaster counseling, counseling of military and their families, LGBT counseling, and the role of technology in on-line counseling. On the literary front, Mari's auto-ethnographic memoirs entitled "The Mortician's Daughter" and "What's in a Name" were published in *Teacher as Writer*, published by the RI Council of Teachers of English. On stage, Mari has appeared in several monologue shows at Catch a Rising Star Comedy Club at Twin River as Sarah in "I wish I could go.." and as Mrs. Gino Giovannini in "The Wedding Invitation." Within the university, Mari provided a F.A.C.E.S. workshop entitled "Assignment by Design" to her colleagues from throughout the university. In addition, joining eleven other educators from throughout the state, she has been awarded a RI Campus Compact grant for 2011-2012. Around town, Mari continues her work as a CASA volunteer, facilitator of *Changing Lives through Literature* for the RI Department of Corrections, and is actively involved in the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund.

**Deirdre Newbold** (Feinstein Center) attended the Leading Age RI's 2011 Quality Of Life Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, May 11 at the Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI. The luncheon was a thank you "Honoring Those Who Enhance the Lives of Many" and the Johnson & Wales University community service-learning students were honored for their service at Steere House Nursing & Rehabilitation Center. Fourteen JWU students volunteered over the 2010-2011 year through sociology and psychology courses. Students visited with residents, did arts and crafts, and led raucous games of bingo. A few of the students continued their volunteering long after the CSL course was complete.

**Judith Turchetta** (Social Sciences) and (posthumously) Alexander "Sandy" Turchetta (COB) received the "Spirit of Lou Gehrig Award" at the ALS Association – Rhode Island Chapter "Evening of Hope" on May 7 at the Quiddnessett Country Club in North Kingstown. The award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated great compassion and an exceptional commitment to raising awareness and funds to support the ALS cause. Dr. Bowen was the honorary chair of the evening.

**Cal Collins** (Science) attended the MIT Sustainability Summit on April 22. The conference theme "Bridging Thought and Action: Creating a Sustainable Organization" featured presentations on building regional food systems, reviving New England's fishing economy, and the role of organic agriculture in food sustainability.

## Profile: Mari Dias *Continued from page 19*

impacted positively, as well. However, according to my own expectations of a superhero, I find her most “cape worthy” on those days when she stands before the judge in family court representing children in DCYF custody as a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer. She sees her work for CASA as yet another effort to intervene rather than “band-aid.” “I only take cases of children 8 years and under: I know I am still being a bit reactive rather than proactive, but it is still early in their lives.” I’ve seen Mari, time and again, carrying around hundreds of pages of case documents that she is reading in between everything else she has to do, and yet she knows every detail of every case she handles, the responsibilities for which also include visiting the families and making her own reports.

However, Mari thrives on this opportunity to protect and defend young lives. The same is true of her tireless commitment to combating violence through education and assisting the victims of violence in numerous ways. Indeed, this work completely redefines what heroes do, as it requires her to fight violence with understanding and forgiveness. Her devotion in this area is so deep that I could write a chapter on her involvement with each of the following organizations. Suffice it to say, she works with the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Board of Directors, Silent Witnesses, the RI Crisis Assistance Program, and the Institute for the Study and Practice of Non Violence in multiple voluntary capacities—including the organization of an annual Silent Witnesses vigil through Providence. Her commitment to combating violence through education and art found its ultimate expression in the documentary she made with her Sociology students: *RI Voices on Violence, Perspectives on Peace*. “I wanted my students to get involved with my activism as I am only one person, and I want to empower them,” she humbly states in regard to the film—but I, for one, know how much effort she put into this labor of love, even travelling several times to New York to have it edited at her own expense. This year, she plans to revisit and update the documentary to include more recent work and findings. She just applied for a fellowship with the *RI Campus Compact* that will, hopefully, allow her to continue this work with new interviews conducted by her TAPA students; as well as a quantitative study of “Changing Lives Through Literature” using a pre/post test of its influence on “her guys,” and a literature review of empirical data on the effectiveness of prison programs and their impact on recidivism.

It is clear to me that teaching, both inside and outside of the classroom—whatever the subject matter—is Mari’s main “weapon” for promoting non-violent conflict resolution and empowering those disadvantaged by social and psychological obstacles to self-fulfillment. In the new Counseling Psychology major (the first for Arts & Sciences!) that Mari helped develop along with Judy Turchetta, Cheryl Almeida, and Michaela Cataldo, she will be teaching others how to carry the torch she has been brandishing for at least half her life—and will, I’m sure, continue to run with all her days. She says she has always known she would be a teacher. She loved playing school as a child, and she was always, always, the teacher. She has never lost that sense of teaching as play: as sheer enjoyment in the act of learning and sharing knowledge. She sees herself as a facilitator in her classroom because she wants to lead her students to discover truths for themselves with her by their sides only as guide. Her teaching philosophy has been highly influenced by Parker Palmer, the distinguished educational theorist, who believes that great teaching begins with self-awareness: “teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness.... Knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. In fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge.” It is safe to say that Mari leads a well-examined life and that her students are the fortunate beneficiaries of this profound self-reflection.

I thoroughly believe that Mari Dias, like all superheroes, is immortal, but, perhaps, if she truly were, she would not be as driven. It’s no wonder that the quote she lives by confronts the grim reaper head-on with defiance: “I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake”(GB Shaw). If she has any Achilles heel or kryptonite-induced weakness, it can only be that she cares too much—about everyone and everything— but surely this is also the source of her greatest strengths.

The final test of a superhero is humility. Mari will probably be horrified that I compared her to superheroes throughout this profile, but that only proves my point. Of course, it’s for you as the reader to decide. However, next time you see her swoosh by you in a mad dash to her next adventure, I wouldn’t be surprised if you caught a fleeting glimpse of a billowing cape invisible to all but those who know who she really is.

# Hug Life???

By Deirdre Newbold

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“Our society is drastically failing to educate our youth. Every 26 seconds a student drops out. And the rates are much worse in low-income, urban, Black and Latino areas. Yet it is in these exact communities that hip-hop—an artistic form and lifestyle that has taken over as the premiere pop culture globally—was created.” Sam Seidel *Hip Hop Genius*.

On April 12 in Pepsi Forum, Sam Seidel, the Feinstein Community Service Center’s Social Action Series speaker, delivered an audio and video presentation entitled, “Hug Life: Sparking Creativity and Entrepreneurship with Urban Young People.” Seidel spoke candidly to a rapt audience of 200 JWU students about the challenges facing Providence youth.

Hug Life is an approach to life that honors young people’s creativity, brilliance and culture. So often, urban youth and, in particular, formerly incarcerated youth, are told to reject their culture in order to get ahead. The Hug Life philosophy, practiced by Seidel, infused into his programs, and performed at AS220’s Broad Street Studio, embraces the hip hop culture and celebrates urban youth’s way of life. There is a marked difference between “Thug Life” a life full of violence and “Hug Life” creating institutions that incorporate hip hop’s culture, creativity, and entrepreneurship.

Seidel reflected on how he came to this work beginning with his life as a middle class kid in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Coming from a diverse community in terms of race and class, some of his friends lived in mansions and others in the projects. Seidel, the child of two educators, was somewhere in the middle. His two best friends, Alex and Jason, were both good, smart kids, who, as they got older, wanted the same things...to hang out with friends, have fun, wear nice clothes, and own a car. More importantly, they both yearned for a place to feel a sense of belonging. The difference was that Alex had an attic apartment in his house to hang out with his friends, and Jason hung out in a park near the projects, an area constantly policed; Alex got a clothing allowance and a car from his parents, and Jason stole clothing and cars; Alex joined a varsity sports team, and Jason joined a gang. By age 16, Jason was arrested and sent to jail. Alex went to college and now has a full-time job and a beautiful family. Seidel doesn’t know what happened to Alex. This dichotomy has caused him to wrestle with the question, “How can I find a way to educate urban youth with high-risk backgrounds to achieve and consequently break this cycle of inequality?”

As a Brown University student, Seidel focused his work on the intersections between education, arts and incarceration. He taught a poetry class at the maximum security unit of a juvenile prison and, early on, realized that he needed to combine his love of hip hop to reach the youth. To his amazement the young adults were engaged, writing creatively and fully participating! Three days after graduation from Brown, Seidel was hired to direct the AS220 Broad Street Studio, a grassroots arts program for young people in and transitioning out of prison. Soon the youth were recording CDs, writing hip hop poetry books to sell, designing and marketing urban clothing lines, and creating national anti-tobacco marketing campaigns. Youth were using their streetwise hustle to be positive, vibrant entrepreneurs, and remain true to their hip hop roots. It was working!

Seidel has since left his work at the Broad Street Studio and is a consultant with a diverse set of projects such as reconfiguring a statewide juvenile justice system and working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to start and support innovative high schools. The *Hip Hop Genius* team works with school-based educators, youth organizations, nonprofits, foundations, and universities to work through issues of disengagement by youth. The JWU students working with Providence youth through their community service-learning or volunteer experiences are the ones who can (and do) broaden our view of education to “build on the brilliance that young people possess.”

# It Takes a Village and Spring Break

By Scott Palmieri

Spring break for college students often means a trip south for a certain stereotypical vacation, but students never fail to find ways to surprise and inspire us. The Feinstein Community Service Center continues to be a place for students to shine, and this past spring break proved to be a time for some remarkable moments of service.

What was a six day journey actually began two years ago with the work of Kaitlin Blake and Erin McCauley, both from the Feinstein Community Service Center, who collaborated with students from the Community Action Association (CAA), which is a part of National Service Organizations (NSO). This effort would also mean working with a variety of groups including Via International, which is a non-profit organization that seeks to assist communities across the world. Via, which had collaborated with NSO last year in students' service trip to San Diego, helped the CAA coordinate with Share Guatemala, which would be the direct contact on the ground for the students in their work.

Erin reports the admirable work that the students completed as they saw through the process of organizing the trip, creating marketing materials, and developing reflection activities. The seven student leadership board saw this process through, collaborating with the Study Abroad Office.

There were fourteen students who took part in the trip to Guatemala, and they ranged from freshmen to seniors and included American and international participants. Erin explains that there was an effort to find students who were interested in community service and travel, and two student leaders played a big role in choosing the students who were the best fit. Joining the students would be staff leaders Susan Connery from the Feinstein Community Service Center and Mehdi Mouthair and Diane McCrohan, both from the College of Business. From all of the service trips that Susan Connery has taken, she was excited to report what made this one different: "I have never come back from a trip when I felt totally refreshed."

Erin explains that this trip was "pretty life changing for many of our students." Given the itinerary, it is not a surprise. Starting each day at 6 a. m., the group spent most of their time in the village of La Union working with the community, although they also were able to experience the life of San Martin, where they stayed. They also spent a day in Antigua to explore a more urban region of the country. In La Union, the students and staff worked with the villagers on a variety of projects. "There was no complaining," Susan explains. "Everything we did just made sense." It was the spirit of collaboration with the community that helped foster this enthusiasm, and it is what Susan remembers most fondly. "It was very reciprocal," she reports. "You really felt that you were working on a joint project," as they coordinated their efforts with different groups from La Union.

The main focus was an elementary school, where the JWU volunteers painted the interior and exterior of the school buildings. Their beautification was a great deal of work, but, as Susan reflects, they were energized by the help of parents and other villagers in the projects. "Everything felt like a celebration," she recalls. "There was real solidarity with people from the village."

The JWU volunteers also conducted a sanitation lesson, teaching the students about the importance of hand washing, which involved reaching these students through song in their Spanish language. A visit to a special needs school in San Martin, where they greeted and played soccer with the children, was also on the busy agenda. Perhaps their most poignant contribution was a small gift that they presented to the villagers on their last night. It was a water pump, a need that the students came across in their work carting water for the various projects. Susan recalls this as a special moment as the idea came completely from the students. The villagers were "totally shocked" and said they would never forget their generosity.

Besides service, the academic side of this trip rounded out the true service-learning goal. The JWU students would learn a great deal in their discussions with villagers that took place each day. Subjects ranged from immigration to the civil war that involved the United States in such a significant way. There was also a tour of Mayan ruins and visits to sustainable farms that inspired some students whose interests are in organic farming and sustainability. Whether through these specific plans or just simple visits to the marketplace of San Martin, there was "a good blend of being able to see everything in their culture," Susan explains.

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# **AWARE Alliance Refugee Theater and the Making of the *SIX STEP LUNCH STEP* for Higher Ground International**

By Dorothy Abram

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This past winter the AWARE Alliance Refugee Theater collaborated with Higher Ground International, a non-profit afternoon and weekend activities program for inner city children and youth in Providence, R.I. AWARE/JWU students volunteered every Saturday morning for eight weeks to work with HGI students. The play and performance of the *SIX STEP LUNCH STEP*, our dance and theatre project for their annual event and showcase, involved twelve students, ages ranging from 8 to 14, with Liberian backgrounds (and immigrant children from Haiti that joined the program through AWARE). Together, the HGI group and AWARE/JWU students created a performance that reflected their love of dance, their hopes for the world, and their friendships with each other. In eight weeks, we moved from introductions to a full dance/theatre performance, with improvisational theatre as our program's educational focus.

In our play, dance was used as the artistic medium to represent conflict, resolution, and the creation of a loving community. The performance begins with two groups that are competing to be acknowledged as the better dancers. They come to realize that their dance skills only shine when they combine their talents and dance as a unified troupe. Through the phenomenal breakdance and teaching skills of two Johnson & Wales University students, and with additional assistance from my JWU Intro Psych students Anisah Bush, Elizabeth Ray, and Sheniqa Rogers, we volunteered our time and expertise for this community service theater program and event.

Before we could even begin, however, we needed to identify the composition, level, and background of the group. What were the signposts of their experiences and identity? It didn't take long to discover that the Liberian students had skills in both dance and performance. One student named Virginia demonstrated an attitude, sense of humor, and physical elasticity that would make her central to our project. In my mind, her only rival could have been the elastic character Gumby that I remember from cartoons in my childhood. Another child, Miracle, was a tiny nine-year-old girl who came into her glory through an uncanny capacity to repeat a complex dance sequence after having seen it only a single time. Ashley was shy and hesitant but secure and skilled in performance. Ten-year-old Eustand was a "bad ass" in class but melted into shyness on stage. Erode, eight-years-old, was one of our Haitian immigrant children who learned to embody musical rhythm by observing and imitating his Liberian male classmates. Patience joined us later in the term, replacing Precious' spot in the class. Precious was preparing to return to Africa with her mother to pick up her thirteen year old sister who grew up without them in a refugee camp in Cote d'Ivoire. Her sister finally was given permission by the U.N. to come to the United States to join the rest of her family. This was the first time that Precious would meet her sister face to face. These were some of the students we worked with in our specially-designed theater program for this community.

Having worked with refugees and children of refugees in previous programs, I could recognize that the children's issues were significantly different from those of their parents. Whereas their parents fled genocide, the children may have been born in refugee camps outside Liberia or in the United States, enabling them to claim their cultural identities from their new homeland. At our first session when I asked the children and youth where their parents came from, I received the reply, "From Africa." But, where in Africa, I persisted? No student in the group could tell me specifically. Can you tell me what part of Africa—north, south, central, east, or west? They shrugged. In contrast, these children of African refugees had so assimilated into contemporary American life that they knew the fashionable dimensions of (junk and fast) food, dress, slang, sexuality, dance, music, and values of American popular culture.

All of our HGI students displayed varying degrees of dance talent, performance experience, and cultural investment with their Liberian identity. Since this was the first time that AWARE Alliance volunteered in this community, we decided that improvisation would be the means we would use to engage young students. We chose to work with improvisation as a focus of our work together because the playfulness of improv would enable us to build the trust that we needed to create a quality performance in eight short weeks of Saturday morning classes.

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## Spring Break *Continued from page 24*

They learned about peoples' lives, especially through the understanding that a majority of the citizens live on less than two dollars a day. Whatever the experience, there was always time to reflect, which was purposely put into each day's goals. As student Douglas Cuddebank writes in the May 11 issue of the *Campus Herald*, "I realized how much I take for granted, while the Guatemalans celebrate life rather than sweating the small stuff."

Susan has seen "life-changing shifts" in the students who have taken part, as some are looking to take part in similar opportunities, including an internship at one of the Guatemalan organic farms. As she reflects, "When students look back, it's the experiential piece that matter the most in your education." The experience has been a part of the great work of CAA, which recently earned the Feinstein "Enriching America" Award, which "recognizes exceptional self-initiated community service projects performed in the past academic year."

Who would think that spring break would be the space for all this to take place? One never knows what will reach a student in his or her college career. For these students, it took a village.

## AWARE *Continued from page 25*

We started our class with improvisations that were developed by picking scenes, characters, and conflicts, that had been contributed by the group, out of a box. The first scene played out a mother and daughter in conflict. They were at a Christmas tree lot and disagreed about which tree to buy. The scene ended with the daughter abandoning her disabled mother at the tree lot (!). The second improvisation involved Aladdin (yes, the Disney Aladdin) meeting Precious (a girl in the group) at a disco. Aladdin became interested in Precious and decided to impress her by giving her a flower. Having just arrived on his magic carpet from the Middle East, he had no U.S. dollars to buy flowers so he gives her one from the club. All goes well until Precious discovers that he got the flower from the club's restroom, and she rejects him in rage and disgust. We enjoyed a lot of laughs as the characters played their parts!

It was obvious that the students were articulate with expressing and wanting to express conflict. It also became evident that their understanding of conflict was situated in extremes of right and wrong—and who is "right" and who is "wronged"—with no room for ambiguity or complexity. Perhaps trained educators may think that this attitude is the natural expectation of a particular cognitive developmental stage (deriving from the writings of Jean Piaget and others). However, we witnessed this simplistic construction of a binary moral universe across all the ages in the group, independent of ascribed cognitive developmental stage.

Our next challenge in this group was that the students oftentimes presented uninspired depictions of reality; that is, renderings without playfulness, imagination, or surprise. For example, in the play we were developing for the HGI event, the students chose to present the situation of a bully who tries to steal the lunch money of a girl on her way to school. The bully was all bad—an inhuman, violent, unable to be assuaged brute. The girl with the lunch money was all innocence and passivity and had no personal strengths or possibilities of choices to respond to the bully. Her only solution was to call on school authorities for punishment of the bully; the students could envision no other outcome, even in fantasy or play. Certainly, their school experiences reinforced the function of authorities in conflict resolution as well as cultural stereotypes of men and women, and girls and boys.

Our first step, then, was to shift the poles of opposition. We recognized that their skills and pleasure—the love of dance—could be the entryway into our re-envisioned world. In this way, it wasn't difficult at all for these students to envision a bridge between hero and villain. The villain and his gang as dancers were the "bad" (meaning "good") and playful parts. Most of the students wanted to play the "bad" roles. This consensus enabled us to discuss the complexities of a moral universe. Why are stories of conflict more interesting than tales of harmony? How could we understand the inner life of the bully and that of the girl to find that both lived in the same universe? How can we move beyond simplistic representations of good and evil to understand more deeply human complexity in our playwrighting process? What would that look like on stage? What would the opposite look like? Could we move beyond an either/or resolution?

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With heads and bodies spinning, the students danced and improvised and played with possibilities. In the end, our proposed scenarios delineated similar finales: the protagonists and antagonists became friends. They had visited each other's worlds, shared its joys, confronted its challenges, and bonded by sharing each other's lives through dancing together. They became known and familiar to each other through friendships that came about through working together for a shared goal. The poles create the middle space, so the play's resolution had to show a visual and emotional experience that honored the integrity of all parts. Theater and dance enable this theoretical concept to be embodied in time and space through the physical reality of the stage and dance. In this way, the students were able to make complex understandings of human existence become more than abstract arguments.

For example, when we revisited those original vignettes that the students first improvised (the Christmas Tree story and Aladdin, for example), the students composed different endings for the same stories that reflect a higher level of cognitive response. The Christmas tree abandonment of the disabled mother story was transformed into a humorous and deeper understanding of human folly after their engagement with the improvisation and playwrighting process. In the revised draft, the mother and daughter go to the Christmas tree lot as in the previous story and continue to argue over the tree they will buy. Then, in the modified version, both mother and daughter decide, magnanimously and simultaneously, to agree with the choice of tree of the other: the mother agrees to the daughter's choice and the daughter claims the mother's choice—so then the argument begins all over again! The students created an inverted, circling, and unresolvable moral and narrative universe. This time there was no victim and victor but simply humor and display of our human foibles. And, they changed the story's finale: instead of ending with an abandoned disabled mother, in this re-envisioning, the mother and daughter leave the Christmas tree lot together, bonded by their relationship of constant conflict.

What about our poor Aladdin, abandoned in shame and dishonor at the Providence disco? In the revision, the improvisation happened as before, but, in this new version, the play had another ending. In the first story, Aladdin sat rejected at a table with the flower that mean-girl Precious had thrown at him in her rage. This time, Virginia sees him and sits with him, striking up a conversation by commenting on his interesting "hot rags" and "bad ass" vehicle (the magic carpet). Love blossoms between them, and Aladdin hands her the frayed flower, which she takes with pleasure. Into the disco walks Precious who witnesses this new alliance between Aladdin and Virginia. In a jealous fit, she now claims Aladdin and grabs the flower as her possessions, since she was his first choice! Aladdin produces a golden flower that was hidden in his belt and gives it to Virginia, as they walk arm in arm out the door. Precious is left to simmer in her own mean-spiritedness with only a frayed flower as consolation.

Our performance of *SIX STEP LUNCH STEP* revealed complexity through the power of its choreography and story in the space of the stage. These other examples of their improvisation work also are testaments to the higher level of understanding they achieved. They demonstrate the complexity of the human emotions, relationship, and behavior that the students were able to achieve through the process of engaging in our theater program. Theater opens our hearts and minds with an expanded consciousness that is accessible to all members: playwrights, actors, and audience alike. *BRAVO!* to our AWARE/JWU students and to the HGI students for entering that space with courage, commitment, talent, and joy. Our AWARE Alliance Refugee Theatre created and performed the *SIX STEP LUNCH STEP*, a dance and theatrical presentation of identity, conflict, and resolution, through the power of the theatrical vision. *ENCORE!*

Higher Ground International has put our dance performance on YouTube—our dance/theater performance is performed and presented after the individual performances of the R.I. Songwriters Group singers at this event on February 27, 2011.

Please note: The word "playwrighting" used in this essay is not a misspelling. The "wrighting" traditionally used in this word is the same as the notion of the "wheelwright," the craftsperson who fashions the wheel. A playwright not only writes the play, but also *crafts* the play; hence, she is a *playwright* who *playwrights* by *playwrighting* a *play*—right?



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## **Spring Fogarty Update**

By Katie Jourdenais

Once again, the faculty of Arts & Sciences supported the university's work with Fogarty Elementary School through promoting service-learning in their classes this spring. Forty six students registered to assist at Fogarty through A&S courses this term, and they are bringing pride to the university through their positive and active role as mentors, tutors and role models at the school. A&S students are currently participating in the following programs: Literacy Tutors (all grades), Math Mentors (all grades), USA HOORAY! (grade 2), Globe Trotters (grade 3), Math Busters (grade 4), Leadership Mentoring Program (grade 5).

So far this term, Arts & Science faculty members have donated \$175 to the Fogarty School, which will go to assisting families in purchasing required uniforms for their children so that they can comply with school dress code policies. Thank you to Mark Duston for his ongoing fundraising efforts on behalf of the school.

Thanks to all who have donated to the school or supported their work through service-learning this year!

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## **A&S Celebrates Year's End at Save the Bay**

By Gwenn Lavoie

On May 12, although it was cool and blustery outside, the atmosphere was decidedly sunny inside the Save the Bay headquarters on beautiful Narragansett Bay! The A&S faculty, joined by many members of the JWU administration, gathered to celebrate the end of another productive academic year, to socialize with colleagues, and to chat about summer entertainment plans. The A&S deans and their assistants provided a wonderful buffet of delicious foods and beverages for everyone to enjoy. As we moved about the room to greet our colleagues, we checked out the bulletin boards that were covered with photos of the attendees as we looked in our high school and college days. Most of us had changed dramatically!

The speaking program was brief, but Dean Angela Renaud took advantage of our time together to recognize our four retirees for countless years of faithful service to JWU students. Dr. Renaud spoke about their lives and careers before joining the School of Arts & Sciences, as well as their enormous contributions to the university. Professor Joseph Alfano (Math), Dr. Matthew McConeghy (Science), Professor Deborah Ridolfi (English), and Professor Paulette Levy (English) will be greatly missed!

Dr. Renaud also announced the name of the A&S Teacher of the Year, Ryan Tainsh, of the Science Dept. He will represent us beautifully in the coming year at official university functions and will moderate several Teaching Conversations throughout the coming academic year, as well. Congratulations, Ryan! This is an award richly deserved!

The speaking program ended with a raffle, the prizes of which were gift baskets filled with the makings of great parties. All in all, it was a fun afternoon, deeply appreciated by all the members of the School of Arts & Sciences.