

# The Honorable Mention

Sponsored by Honors Council

Vol.III Issue 3, 07-08

April 30, 2008

## Honors Program Welcomes New Member to Staff

Report

Recently the Honors Program has been expanding its staff. One of the newest members is Assistant Director and Honors Advisor Jessamy Hoffmann. Jessamy will be working directly with Honors students. One of Jessamy's major roles is the primary academic advisor for ACES Honors students. She is supposed to be the first stop for Honors students who need help or have questions. Most of the time this will be simple questions about honors requirements and honors classes but she will also be available for any sort of help honors students need.

Jessamy also has some other things she is working on. One thing she is focusing on right now is expanding the John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program. The Rowe Scholars program is a scholarship program for undergraduate students interested in medical professions. As part of this, Jessamy recently took the Rowe Scholars on a trip to the UConn Health Center. There the students got hands on experience with many different facets of medicine. They learned about dealing with patients and how research works and even got to handle actual human hearts and brains. With Jessamy's involvement hopefully the Rowe Scholar program will expand so that more students will be able to have opportunities like these.

Jessamy was born in Brunswick, Maine and has lived in many places around the north east including multiple locations in both Maine and Pennsylvania as well as Cooperstown, New York. Jessamy comes to us after serving as Assistant Dean of Academic Services at the University of Mary Washington. There she spent much of her time working with students who needed help with certain issues like getting into classes when they were full or when the student doesn't have the correct requirements. She also helped organize things like orientation and tutoring.

Jessamy was very impressed with both the Honors Program and the people who work there. She says everyone in the Honors Office has been very helpful and she has settled into UConn very easily. She is also impressed with how much the Honors Program is doing now and how quickly it is expanding. By adding new staff like Jessamy and increasing what it is involved in, the Honors Program is continually improving itself.

-Gregory Newell

### Publishing Policy

The articles contained herein reflect the opinion of the respective authors and do not represent the opinion of Honors Program or with the exception of the editorial, the opinions of the Honors Council or The Honorable Mention Dept. The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit for reasons of space, clarity, libel, or style and to compose headlines for all articles printed.

## The 2008 Honors Distinguished Alumni Award Winner

By: Phil Gorecki

The Distinguished Honors Alumni Award was created to recognize an Honors alumnus who has excelled in his/her line of work, or has made a significant contribution to society or academia. The award is intended to foster alumni relations, creating a stronger Honors community for students both past and present. Alumni are nominated by Honors faculty and members of the student-run Honors Council, and the winner is selected by a committee comprised of Honors Program staff, students, and faculty. This year, the committee has selected Bonnie Sarno Vontell as the recipient of the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual University of Connecticut Honors Program Distinguished Alumni Award for her work in philanthropy, politics, law, and business.

Ms. Sarno Vontell grew up in West Redding, CT, and decided to pursue her undergraduate education at the University of Connecticut where she was admitted into the Honors Program. Of the many awards that Ms. Sarno Vontell received during her undergraduate career, her crowning achievement was graduating Summa Cum Laude as both an Honors Scholar and a University Scholar.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in History, Ms. Sarno Vontell entered the University of Connecticut School of Law to pursue a Juris Doctorate. While at the School of Law, Ms. Sarno Vontell served as a judicial clerk in the West Hartford Probate Court with the Honorable Judge John A. Berman presiding. After graduating from the School of Law in 1984, she continued her academic ambitions at the Yale Divinity School.

In 1987, Ms. Sarno Vontell began serving as the Trumbull Town Council Representative for the 4<sup>th</sup> District, and after serving a term as a Representative; she became the youngest person elected to the position of Chairman of the Trumbull Town Council. After five years in public office, Ms. Sarno Vontell earned her license as a life and health insurance broker for the state of Connecticut. She now serves as the co-owner of Charter Oak Insurance Services, LLC with her husband. The firm is one of the largest health insurance brokers in southern Connecticut.

In 2001, Bonnie Sarno Vontell was diagnosed with breast cancer and after a two-year struggle with the disease, doctors determined that the cancer was in remission. Ms. Sarno Vontell's experience as a breast cancer survivor inspired her to establish the Breast Shield Foundation, one of four philanthropic organizations that she has founded.

In addition to her professional and philanthropic accomplishments, Ms. Sarno Vontell has become a Masters rower at local, national and international regattas, and has won several championships as a member of US Rowing and the Saugatuck Rowing Club team. In 2005, she became a certified US Rowing coach and was a member of the team that won the 2005 FISA World Rowing Masters Regatta Women's Quad in Glasgow, Scotland.

Bonnie Sarno Vontell has had a tremendous impact on society and has affected the lives of many. It is for all of these reasons that the University of Connecticut Honors Program is proud to present Bonnie Sarno Vontell with the 2008 University of Connecticut Honors Program Distinguished Alumni Award.

Report

## Saying Goodbye to HC

By: Samantha Sherwood

As I wrap up my senior year here in Storrs, I have been spending a lot of time pretending it's not ending. Unlike many of the underclassmen who are looking forward to summer and returning home to sleep in their beds and shower with no shoes on, myself and the other graduating students are about to embark on the next chapters of our lives. While I welcome this change and the possibilities that come with it, the excitement is mixed with some sadness as I realize that I will miss my life at UConn. So it is in that spirit of nostalgia that I impart some reflective thoughts on this year. I have always been a fan of using a quote to sum up my feelings because if there is something important enough to say, chances are someone has already said it better. The quote I keep coming back to is from the blockbuster "Hope Floats" starring a young Sandra Bullock. This sappy tear-jerker is just the right mix of cliché sayings and mushy themes that one can only truly appreciate during times like high school and college graduations (or if you're a middle aged mom of three). If you have not seen the movie, I'm really not surprised, but it runs every so often on ABC Family or Lifetime if you're lucky. Despite the intense cheesiness that occurs throughout, there is one quote that stuck with me: "Beginnings are usually scary and endings are usually sad, but it's everything in between that makes it all worth living."

Admittedly this quote ranks about a 9.5 on the Hallmark scale of overly-emotional quotes. But, hey, if there is one time I get a pass on using that kind of quote it is now. My involvement in HC and Honors has served as part of that "everything in between." It has been a privilege to serve as your President for the past year, and the commitment and enthusiasm of our members has been unparalleled. This year HC had hands-down our most successful year ever. We held more events and had higher attendance than any previous year. We brought in more money for both the organization and outside charities than ever before. In other words, we were awesome! None of this would have been possible without the participation of the members of HC and the Honors community as a whole. I loved how I could walk around campus and see people in their HC shirts, or how I met Honors students of all years on the trip to Pearlinton who I can now call my friends. I loved how I saw diversity and culture on display at I-Nite, intellectual dominance at Battle of the Brains, and posters plastered all over the lecture halls for HC events. We launched the new website and e-mail, in addition to publishing several editions of the newsletter with fantastic articles. I truly believe that we have become one of the elite and most active student organizations on campus with all our success. Everyone should give themselves a pat on the back for an amazing job well-done! I want to thank in particular the HC executive board and committee chairs for their outstanding work and dedication. Also, I want to acknowledge the general members who stepped up to go above and beyond their expectations.

For the past four years, I spent every Wednesday at 7:00pm in South A 124/125 (there is no way I am calling it Wilson Hall). For four years HC has been a large part of my college career. Most of the time, I have loved it. Sometimes, I have hated the stress of it. But I have never regretted the time I put into it. I will miss HC, but I am also excited for the future of the organization. We will continue to grow and gain success. In my ideal world HC t-shirts are as coveted as UGG boots (I'm calling it as the next trend at UConn). In the meantime, HC will continue to serve the population at its core: the Honors students at UConn. So thank you all for making this year unforgettable and part of my "everything in between." Now, like the UConn Men's basketball team in the first round, I'm out. See you all at the formal!

## Spring Break in Mississippi

Telling people that you went to Pearlinton, Mississippi over spring break for hurricane relief elicits responses like "Wait, you mean New Orleans, right?" or "They're still rebuilding?" Here in Connecticut, Hurricane Katrina covered the front pages of the newspapers for weeks, but that was years ago. Now, political figures rarely, if ever, talk about Katrina. Before spring break, I, like others, assumed no news was good news. If people weren't talking about the devastation the hurricane left behind, it was because life had returned to normal and rebuilding was over. Well, when we went to Mississippi (no, not New Orleans), we saw not only that rebuilding is still happening but were told that the process may last up to a decade (and these people considered themselves lucky that it was going so quickly). And while I knew that there were still people in FEMA trailers, I assumed that the people left with nothing had nothing to begin with. While in some cases this may be true, we heard stories from people who owned homes destroyed by Katrina. These were people used to the basic amenities that American life has to offer- running water, indoor plumbing, a television, a kitchen- who were reduced to living in a tent for months after Katrina (and tents don't have electricity, running water, or plumbing). Even worse, with the town of Pearlinton in shambles and most of its residents still living in tents or with out-of-town relatives, the Red Cross pulled out after only six weeks. The people of Pearlinton quickly realized that the government was not going to help them, and if they wanted their town to be back to normal they were going to have to find a way to do it. Out of this mindset was born the Pearlinton Recovery Center (PRC), a place where Pearlinton citizens banded together. Their first goal was to provide their neighbors with basic necessities like food, clothing, and a place to shower and do laundry. After achieving this goal, the PRC set an even higher one. They wanted to rebuild their town, a task requiring both supplies and labor- lots of labor. In return for good Southern cooking and a warm bed, the PRC invited people from all over the country (and in some cases the world) to come down to Pearlinton and hammer a few nails or paint a house. This spring break, UConn Honors Council contributed its elbow grease to the cause of rebuilding Pearlinton. We worked on building homes for people whose homes were destroyed in the hurricane and repairing homes for those that were damaged. We worked for people who live in those notorious FEMA trailers which are a part of everyday life down there not just some buzzword in a newspaper heading. As we worked alongside the people of Pearlinton, we saw that just because Katrina relief no longer makes headlines does not mean the work is over. In fact, we're not even halfway there, but with more dedicated people like those at the PRC, we're getting closer every day.

- Michelle Przybylek

## Upcoming Events

- Honors Formal  
Place: Casa del Mia  
Date: Friday May 2nd  
Time: 5 PM—12 AM  
Hang out with honors friends at the third annual Honors Formal  
\$40 for Honors students, \$45 for non-Honors