

CONFIRMED: BASKETBALL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

# UConn

MAGAZINE

SUMMER  
2024

## THE MVP



TRISTEN NEWTON  
GUARD #2

## 5 PAIGE BUECKERS



THE  
STAR

## BLUE & WHITE GUY GYM TEACHER



THE SUPERFANS

Pg 16

UConn



THE ARCHITECT & THE CARPENTER

SLAMS



SAMSON JOHNSON #35







“ We know it’s not normal  
to go back to back. **But there’s  
not a single normal person**  
in this locker room.”

Alex Karaban '26 (ENG)



# Banner Year

**HOMETOWN KID**



DONOVAN CLINGAN CENTER #32

**UConn MEN'S 2024 MARCH MADNESS RUN**

+140 point differential — the largest in tournament history

23.3 point average winning margin

30 unanswered points vs. Illinois in Elite Eight

First back-to-back titles since Duke in 2007

**FAB FRESHMEN**



ICE BRADY #25

QADENCE SAMUELS #4

ASHLYNN SHADE #12

KK ARNOLD #2

**"PEOPLE BETTER GET US NOW... BECAUSE IT'S COMING."**

— COACH DAN HURLEY AFTER A 2020 LOSS TO VILLANOVA

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE** 🔒



NIKA MÜHL #10

"At 70 years young, Geno Auriemma has done one of the very best coaching jobs of his entire 39-year run at UConn. He lost FIVE players to season-ending injuries, and yet this UConn team is going to the Final Four for the 15th time in 16 years. An incredibly resilient season."

JOHN FANTA, FOX SPORTS BROADCASTER



2023-2024 UCONN MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

**"WE WANTED TO GIVE EVERYTHING SO WE COULD WIN ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING."**

— COACH DAN HURLEY

**The General**



STEPHON CASTLE

**ARC ANGEL**



ALEX KARABAN GUARD #11

"We've done something no school has ever done, and we've done it **twice**. So we have a reason to brag about it, because it's **true**. We're not being arrogant. We're just telling the **truth**."

— Coach Geno Auriemma on UConn claiming the "Basketball Capital of the World" title, CT Insider

**THE SPARK**



HASSAN DIARRA #10

AALIYAH EDWARDS #3



**QUEEN OF THE NORTH** 🍁



**THE HOMECOMING**

**IN THE PAST 25 YEARS**

UConn women's basketball has won

**40%\***

OF NCAA D1 CHAMPIONSHIPS

UConn men's basketball has won

**24%**

\*THE WOMEN ALSO HAVE 40% OF ALL NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS.

**UConn**



**THE STRATEGISTS**

**Academic All-American First Team**

**Cam Spencer**  
3.5 GPA  
Certificate in Nonprofit Management  
(4th Academic All-American in Men's Program History)

**Paige Bueckers**  
3.5 GPA  
BA in Human Development and Family Sciences  
**BIG EAST Women's Basketball Scholar-Athlete of the Year**

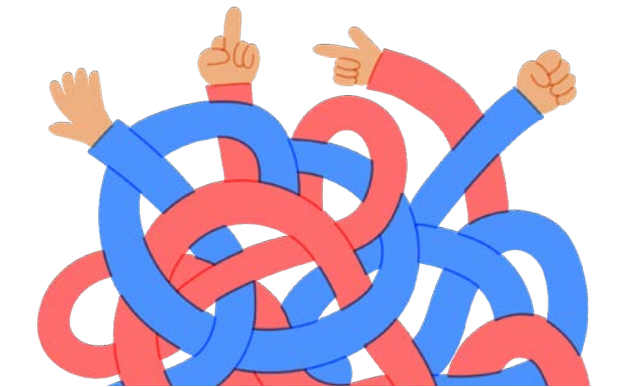
2023-2024 UCONN WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM



**SIXTH MAN**

# UConn 2024





SECTIONS

6
UConn Now

The class assignment that led to a wedding, the black bears in our backyards, the budding “Withered Flower” documentarian, the new pizzeria in town — with bonus breakfast sandwiches, and much more.



38
UConn Nation

A friend who writes poetry about growing up on Horsebarn Hill, and alums who write children’s literature on overcoming dyslexia; crossed paths in Dallas, New Hampshire, and New Delhi; inspire young engineers; and more — including a UConn crossword. Tom’s Trivia returns next issue.

FEATURES

16
SUPERFANS

There’s school pride, and then there’s UConn Pride. Among a seemingly endless tide of fans who cheer from around the world and those who show up game after game, season after season, there are some Husky Faithful who take fandom to a super-elevated level.

24
TOWARD A MORE PERFECT UNION

America is in need of marriage counseling. Enter Bill Doherty ’78 Ph.D. He’s been a couples therapist for some 40 years — now his national Braver Angels organization is helping red and blue find common ground.

30
NET WORTH

To save the world’s leatherback, hawksbill, and green sea turtles, says alum Jesse Senko ’06 (CAHNR), you first need to help the fishers whose very nets entangle them. Senko’s lighted buoys are helping to do just that.

OUR 2024 BANNER YEAR PACK

We created the retro trading card layouts on the special wrap cover and pages 2–3 to celebrate an extraordinary basketball season — even by Husky standards! The cards themselves do not exist — the magazine itself is the keepsake.

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VOL. 25 NO. 2

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FROM THE EDITOR



Associate Editor Julie Bartucca ’10 (BUS, CLAS), ’19 MBA in front of a bunch of her favorite superfans.

EXTRA? EXTRA AWESOME!

Like many Connecticut natives, I was raised by my alum parents to be a UConn basketball fan. Still, I knew little about the game before I began tagging along with friends to Gampel to cheer for the men’s team as a freshman in 2006. I quickly learned the rituals of the student section, where I sat in the front rows a few times thanks to friends who would wait in line, participating in all the coordinated bits, like holding newspapers in front of our faces to project boredom as the opposing team was announced and shouting “Left! Right! Left! ...” as a fouled-out player marched to the bench. I remember a friend leaning over to whisper, “That’s Big Red!” the first time I joined in on the U-C-O-N-N chant led by ... well, a big red-haired guy in the upper bowl.

Among thousands of season ticket holders and a fan community that spans the globe, there are some faithful fans like Big Red whose presence stands out. These superfans, some known by silly nicknames, many with recognizable shticks, uniforms, or props, have become Husky-famous and Husky-beloved — but you’d be forgiven for thinking their commitment might be a little over the top.

I have to admit that before interviewing the personality known as Mr. Hot Balls, words like “super relatable” and “really nice” weren’t the ones going through my head. But after hearing his story, and the others in the photo feature starting on page 16, I couldn’t stop gushing about what genuine, wonderful people they all were. Despite varied monikers and mojos, they have in common this one thing that’s, frankly, sweet and quite normal. These fans bleed blue like so many of us and have simply leaned a bit further in, finding a home among a vast sea of zealots with a shared passion for what Mr. HB (rightly!) deems “the largest cultural institution in the state, like it or not.”

I’m so happy we have them.

Julie Bartucca
Associate Editor





FEEDBACK

We want to hear from you! Please share thoughts, insights, discrepancies, recollections, photos — and how’s your Tom’s Trivia win-loss percentage coming? Post to our website at [magazine.uconn.edu](https://magazine.uconn.edu), email the editor at [lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu](mailto:lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu), or send by regular mail to UConn Magazine Letters, 34 N. Eagleville Rd., Storrs, CT 06269-3144.

Here’s a sampling of web, social media, mailed, and emailed comments on our last issue, edited for clarity and length. Find more and join the conversation at [magazine.uconn.edu](https://magazine.uconn.edu).

Snap!

➤ We loved the UConn Magazine with the picture of the Chemistry Building and frozen Swan Lake with skaters. Campus has changed so much since my husband and I graduated. He is from New York and I am from Michigan, but we both have stayed in Connecticut and still enjoy news, sports, science, and the arts at UConn and seeing the photos and recollections in UConn Magazine.  
P.S. Tim played basketball for Dee Rowe in 1968–69.  
Tim '68 and Susan L. Smith '70  
Lebanon, Connecticut

Star Power

➤ It was around midnight in the woods on a dark starry night.  
“Don’t move! Let me see your hands!” the police officer commanded.  
I saw a man in uniform with flashlight and gun out. One of my two companions started to argue. I told them to shut up and obey the officer’s commands. After things got sorted out, he said, “The neighbors called because the dogs were barking.”  
We explained that we were out doing observatory sightings for Cynthia Peterson, trying to find a dark, clear spot away from city lights. (The then rooftop observatory atop the physics building suffered from too much light pollution.) When I mentioned Peterson’s name, the cop said, “Yeah, I took astronomy from her last year.”  
I taught astronomy laboratories for Cynthia Peterson. I met the woman who would become my wife (43 years

so far) in Peterson’s physics laboratory. Peterson and her husband Gerald attended our wedding reception.  
Cynthia Peterson was a woman who cast a long, broad shadow, not only in physics and astronomy but also in life.  
Frederick Su '79 Ph.D.  
Bellingham, Washington



➤ I was overjoyed reading the article about how the East Road Observatory was brought back to life! I was a graduate student in physics finishing up my Ph.D. in 1979 when the observatory was assembled under the guidance of Cynthia Peterson and Richard Mindek. With the help of several graduate students (including myself) and some undergraduate physics majors, the observatory dome from the manufacturer in Mississippi was assembled and installed on top of the concrete base. We enjoyed using the new telescope to observe planets, galaxies, and nebulae. It is fitting that the restored observatory be named The Cynthia Wyeth Peterson Memorial Observatory!  
Robert B. Bossoli, '74 (CLAS), '80 Ph.D.  
Havre de Grace, Maryland

➤ In March 1970 I was a freshman taking the astronomy course with Cynthia Peterson when she organized a predawn class to observe bright comet Bennett, for which we had to climb to the roof of the physics building to use the 6-inch refractor for comet head detail observing. Already Peterson was talking about her early efforts to get UConn a “real” observatory. Some years later I read about the new facility and how proud she was that her longtime project had finally come to fruition. I’m so happy that everything’s back up and running, and naming the observatory for her is the perfect tribute to Peterson’s determination to get this facility funded and built. I hope to read an announcement of the official renaming soon!  
Robert Wendel '73 (CLAS)  
New York, New York

➤ The story of the now-functional telescope at Storrs is enlightening. Will the telescope be available for public viewing?  
Edward Putman  
Vernon, Connecticut

*The hope is to continue work so that there can be public star parties. There also is hope for live feeds from the observatory to the planetarium on campus. Both things await proper funding. — Ed.*

➤ This makes my heart happy!!  
Jeanne Ahern  
Storrs, Connecticut

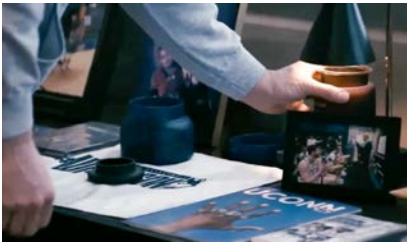
➤ I am pleased to see that UConn is excited about the new East Road Observatory. As a student in the late '60s, I took an introductory astronomy course with Dr. Eberhart. I believe he had discovered a comet that was eventually named after him. Great course ... great teacher.  
Bob Gustavson '68 (CLAS), '70 MA  
Lakeway, Texas

Prince Marvin

➤ The Hand, The Myth, The Legend.  
Brad Schepers  
  
➤ Marvin the Prince! Well-deserved accolades — you make “The Dan Patrick Show” better each and every day.  
Jeff Baker

The Frontman

➤ As a former regular at The Iron Horse, I wondered what happened to it. My first experience there was to see Scottish singer-songwriter Dougie MacLean. The place was filled with longtime fans, and I felt that sense of music community Chris Freeman describes (even though the artist we had come to see is from far away). I was disappointed these last several



years to not be able to attend a show or two at The Iron Horse, with my usual pre-show dinner at Amanouz Cafe, but it looks as if there will be a musical resurrection of sorts. Looking forward to taking that nice ride up to Northampton again.  
Bob Koorse  
West Hartford, Connecticut  
  
“It’s Not About the Food”  
➤ Joel — love the article but especially love your Zoom “Homemade” cooking classes. I’m a “closet chef” and have been attending every class since you started them during the pandemic. I’m really getting good — thank you!  
Abby Goodman  
Denver, Colorado

We were thrilled to see one of the five commemorative covers we made to honor last year’s men’s basketball championship on Coach Dan Hurley’s desk in an ESPN College GameDay video released in February.  
Get yours at [s.uconn.edu/5covers](https://s.uconn.edu/5covers)

Class Notes

➤ Thank you for including me! I’ve received some nice messages from former classmates. It was a great way to share a success with my fellow Huskies. Thank you again and GO UConn!  
Geena Russo '14 (CLAS)  
Bristol, Connecticut  
  
*Be next issue’s Geena! We want to hear from you — and see your old and new snapshots. Please email your updates to [alumni-news@uconnalumni.com](mailto:alumni-news@uconnalumni.com).  
And turn to page 38 to find out what your classmates have been up to. — Ed.*



Our ongoing readership survey (haven’t taken it yet? please do at [s.uconn.edu/magsurvey](https://s.uconn.edu/magsurvey) or scan the QR code above) tells us that, while some 95% of you can’t get enough stories about UConn sports, especially basketball, a smaller but equally passionate group can’t get enough stories about UConn’s research triumphs. Fortunately, we often find overlap: Turn to page 30 to read about the sea turtle research of alum Jesse Senko, who returned from a study abroad trip with his Arizona State University students (holding the UConn flag in Mexico) just in time to head to State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, to cheer his Huskies to their second-in-a-row national championship.





Hopkins-Staten works with the African American Alumni Council to support students of color as they move through UConn and prepare to enter the workforce.

CHECKING IN WITH

THERESA HOPKINS-STATEN: ENERGIZER

An Eversource exec who is helping to spark the futures of a new generation of UConn students

When addressing an audience of young women pursuing business careers a few years ago, Theresa Hopkins-Staten '81 (CLAS), '84 JD advised that “opportunity doesn’t always come in pretty packages.”

“Opportunities present themselves in different forms at different times and seasons in your life, and most of them require you to dig deep within yourself,” she says. “For me, it’s always meant that if God brings me to it, he certainly will give me what’s necessary to get through it and faithfully do so.”

Asked a few years ago to take on a newly created role at Eversource Energy, Hopkins-Staten embraced the opportunity and was named vice president for corporate citizenship and equity.

“The position was created because of the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Eversource, like many corporations, began to talk about and to think about systemic bias and racism and what it meant for the company, what it meant to its employees,” says Hopkins-Staten, who began her 30-plus-year career there as senior counsel and assistant corporate secretary. After several years, she was named president of the Eversource Energy Foundation and director of corporate community relations, where her team developed programs to assist customers with limited incomes and invested millions of dollars in Connecticut, western Massachusetts, and New Hampshire on initiatives aligned with the foundation’s focus areas, including community wellness and basic human needs; education, clean energy, and environmental stewardship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and community, economic, and workforce development.

A large corporation taking on issues of equity and inclusion concerning historically marginalized customers and

communities at an officer-level position was something Hopkins-Staten says she had never encountered before. “It was something that really made me think, because although this is certainly passionate work of mine, it’s different when you are asked to take on this awesome responsibility and lead an entire company basically around this critical issue,” says Hopkins-Staten. “But I did, and I did it by working with some great folks.”

She’s talking about the multigenerational, diverse group of Eversource employees called the Pro Equity Advisory Team, tasked with determining what equity and equality “looked like or should look like” for the company. That started with building trust around the idea of equity and inclusion. “It’s a topic that needs to be talked about, but people are really reluctant, hesitant, and reserved to talk about it for so many different reasons. But to do this work — and to do it with fidelity — I had to make certain that the members of the team felt comfortable, that they felt they could trust me and be very, very transparent.”

We had to bring our “true, authentic selves. It meant bringing in all of our individual biases, because we all know that we have them. It was a time of growth for me personally and professionally, and we experienced some great milestones and testimonies that we still continue to share.” They started each meeting with a “Did You Know” moment, spotlighting a member and their lived experience as it relates to equity to foster trust, learning, and engagement.

Hopkins-Staten has shared her legal experience, organizational skills, and passion for promoting equity and environmental justice with a broad range of organizations in Connecticut, including the iQuilt Partnership, Connecticut–Rhode Island National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Saint Francis

Foundation, United Way of Connecticut, Urban League of Greater Hartford, and National Urban League. “I believe in leading by example,” she says, adding, “I like to serve on boards that do work and have missions that are aligned with my value system.”

In recent years, her volunteerism has extended to her alma mater as a co-chair of the University of Connecticut African American Alumni Council — despite an undergraduate experience she says was difficult to negotiate.

“When I walked onto UConn’s campus in 1978, it was a different time, it was a different place.” Students of color, she says, faced criticism and hostility not only from other students but also in the classroom. In spite of that, she says, students of color “rose above those challenges.”

Reengaging with the University required some “soul searching,” she says. “I made a decision to move beyond what had been a painful experience toward making the change I knew was desperately needed. And that meant that I had to become involved as an alum.”

Hopkins-Staten says she is “very proud” of the progress the African American Alumni Council has made in recent years, including raising funds for an endowed scholarship awarded to students who have demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to service; successfully advocating for increased recognition for accomplished alums of color such as filmmaker Crystal Renee Emery '85 (CLAS) and the late Lorraine Rose Williams '73 (ED, SFA), founder of the Voices of Freedom gospel choir; and increasing outreach to students and young alums.

“That’s part of our role,” she says. “Those students need to see us and they need to understand that they too can get through UConn, get a degree, and come out and make a major impact on the lives of people as a result of their experiences there.” —GARY E. FRANK





3-18-2024

**Melissa Ruszczyk '09 (CAHNR), '24 MS** is studying black bear movement and behavioral changes in response to the availability of human-related food. Here, she is replacing collar batteries and re-marking tags on bears that are part of her thesis project—as a wildlife biologist for Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection she offered anthropogenic food to GPS-collared bears and is analyzing movement data and trail camera data to observe their behavior. Her findings may show that high concentrations of non-natural food can alter home ranges and increase strife between bears and other wildlife, which may be similar to what occurs in areas where bears have regular access to human-related food, such as unsecured trash and birdfeeders. “We want our bears to be healthy. We want our wildlife to stay wild,” Ruszczyk says. Watch her in action at [suconn.edu/blackbear](https://suconn.edu/blackbear).

© Peter Morenus

## GOOD TASTE

# SQUARE PEG PIZZERIA

Carla (Maffe) Boudreau '92 (CLAS) likes to tell everyone that when she met her future husband, Todd Boudreau '93 (CLAS), he swept her off her feet. They both lived in Alumni Quad at the time. “He was running late for rugby practice and knocked me down,” she says.

Todd and Carla are co-owners with her brother Jay Maffe '94 (BUS) of Square Peg Pizzeria in Downtown Storrs. Jay and Carla, who grew up in Hartford, say they've loved UConn forever but as students 30 years ago would never have imagined what it's become today.

Jay opened his first Square Peg Pizzeria in Glastonbury four years ago and now has two more stand-alone restaurants in Storrs and Vernon, with another opening soon in Columbia. Five more shops operate inside existing establishments, with another set to open soon at the Fairfield Inn & Suites in Plainville. Chefs at a commissary in East Hartford prepare the homemade dough (never frozen, says Carla) and sauce for all the sites.

The Storrs location is unique, Carla says, for the constant foot traffic and how fun it is “being back home.” She and Todd are reconnecting with friends old and new—hosting a rugby reunion and all manner of postgame gatherings, and filling team buses with phoned-in orders.

“We feel very much a part of UConn,” says Carla, “which is what all three of us were hoping for—not just to have a restaurant here but to really be back here as part of the community. I love saying I went to UConn.” —LISA STIEPOCK

## Green Ivy Breakfast Sandwich

Top a toasted homemade Square Peg everything bagel with 1 fried egg, 3 slices of cooked bacon, and 1 ounce of shredded mozzarella. Place it in the oven at 425 degrees for 1–2 minutes until the cheese melts. Top with a pesto drizzle, salt, pepper, and sliced tomato. Enjoy!

© Peter Morenus



While pizza is the popular standby, Square Peg's menu has much more, including pasta alla vodka (above, find the recipe on our website) and homemade bagels with spreads or as breakfast sandwiches like the Green Ivy (top, recipe left). Below: Carla (Maffe) Boudreau.







COVETED CLASS

# HDFS 4255/5255: LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

The Instructor:

A year after his second bout with thyroid cancer, Keith Bellizzi stands tall in his classroom, vigorous and slightly tanned after visiting one of his daughters at college in Florida. He gives the sense, when talking to you, that he really sees you. His capacity for empathy is tangible — the first thing you notice about him.

The Human Development and Family Sciences (HDFS) professor of gerontology who teaches this Living with Chronic Illness class lives with chronic illness himself. His first bout arrived at age 24, in the form of testicular cancer. Six months later he found out he had an unrelated cancer in his kidney. A decade later, a CT scan after a mountain bike accident revealed stage 3 thyroid cancer. And last year he dealt with a recurrence of that.

The illness has not defined his life, says Bellizzi, but it has shaped it.

After surviving that first bout at age 26, he became determined to dedicate his life to combating cancer. He went back to school and earned three graduate degrees: a master’s in psychology from Central Connecticut State, a master of public health from George Washington University, and a Ph.D. in human de-

velopment and family sciences from UConn.

His research focuses on healthy aging, resilience, and cancer survivorship. His teaching focuses on gerontology, chronic illness, and death and dying. It’s surprisingly lively — even uplifting.

**The Class:**

Chronic illness is an enormous public health challenge in the U.S. As the health care system’s ability to manage disease far outpaces its ability to cure disease, more and more of us live many years with diabetes, multiple sclerosis, autoimmune disorders, cancer, and other diseases with no fixed timeline.

HDFS 4255/5255 takes a broad view of chronic illness, exposing

students to a range of issues in health care delivery, disparities, and health literacy, as well as training them to speak openly about challenging topics, including end-of-life care, advance directives, and death and dying.

Participating in class discussions, both online and in person, is mandatory. Students also have weekly readings, write papers, do a book report (this year they can choose from “Being Mortal,” “When Breath Becomes Air,” and “Tuesdays with Morrie”), and interview someone with a chronic illness.

The interview is a keystone of the course. It even led to a wedding.

**Valerie Lachapelle ’13 (CLAS)**

interviewed Scott, a friend she’d been out of touch with, who was living with Ewing sarcoma. Lachapelle recently wrote Bellizzi to thank him.

“Through reconnecting with Scott, I also reconnected with his best friend, Cam, someone I went to middle school with. Cam and I really leaned on each other at the time of Scott’s death and became close friends. Ten years later we are married and had our first child this year. As a matter of fact, Scott’s mom officiated our wedding. ... I always give credit to this assignment for how my life has turned out. I wanted to share with you how much it meant to me.”

The class is intentionally small, fewer than 20 students, with a mix of graduate students and undergraduates. Most students intend to enter the health care and social work fields in some capacity.

One current student is already a medical doctor from Nigeria now pursuing his Ph.D. in HDFS at UConn.

While some students have gone on to practice medicine, others work in research — one is an analyst at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation; another is a scientist at the National Opinion Research Center in Washington, D.C.

“My hope is that they leave this class frustrated and angry with the U.S. health care system. But then

motivated to do something about it within their field,” Bellizzi says.

**Teaching Style:**

Bellizzi greets the students by name as they arrive.

When a woman walks in, clearly agitated, he asks her what’s wrong, and she relays how a man was extremely inconsiderate, blocking the stairwell and staring at his phone even after he saw her waiting. It made her feel totally disregarded. “Ick,” she says. But telling Bellizzi seems to ease the ick, and other members of the class weigh in, advising her to not take it personally.

The conversation moves to current events and then to the previous lecture, which was on Medicare’s and Medicaid’s role in chronic illness management. It’s hard to tell when the conversation ends and the class begins — which is by design. The class has a discussion board where students are required to post questions and observations about the readings and engage with one another. The conversation is ongoing, and there is so much discussion throughout the class that Bellizzi rarely gets through all his slides.

At one point, some of the students are shocked by how little money a person must earn in order to qualify for Medicaid. A classmate who uses a wheelchair confirms that number, and then gives advice on how to navigate the system and get the necessary help while on public assistance. Sharing from personal experience is encouraged.

There are occasional guest speakers, including UConn Center on Aging professor of medicine Rick Fortinsky and Stacey Brown, a professor in public health sciences at UConn Health’s Health Disparities Institute. Those lectures tend to be a little more formal. Proper conversational etiquette and active listening are expected and graded as part of class participation.

A Bellizzi trademark is the sprinkling of inspirational quotes in his

**“My hope is that they leave this class frustrated and angry with the U.S. health care system. But then motivated to do something about it within their field.”**

lectures. Some, like Gloria Steinem’s “The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off,” are funny. Others, such as late ESPN analyst Stuart Scott’s observation that “you don’t lose to cancer when you die, you beat cancer by how you live, why you live, and the manner in which you live,” are haunting. One young man temporarily stepped out of class with tears in his eyes after hearing that one; his mother had recently passed away from breast cancer.

The class has all the feels, and Bellizzi makes it a safe space to have them.

**Why We Want to Take It Ourselves:**

The topics hit close to home. If you’ve been delaying those important conversations with family members, hearing the story of how Bellizzi’s father — a business school professor at Quinnipiac University — spent his life savings on nursing-home care because he refused to discuss his own mortality with his sons will get your kids and you on the phone with a financial planner in a hurry.

In addition, the frank, open dialogue and storytelling will encourage you to ponder what it means to have quality of life, meaning, and purpose from unexpected angles. —KIM KRIEGER





OUR STUDENTS

# WITHERED FLOWERS

Nursing student travels 3,000 miles to document an epidemic of underage pregnancy

Kimberly Rosado '24 (NUR) has never taken a filmmaking class. She says she's never been great at talking to people, and she doesn't enjoy public speaking. A year ago, she didn't know much about professional cameras or audio recording. She'd only ever made small social media videos for fun. But none of that stopped Rosado from traveling alone more than 3,000 miles from home to make a feature-length documentary film, in two languages, in a different country — with support from BOLD, a pioneering UConn program aimed at cultivating courageous leadership in young women. At Danbury High School, Rosado completed a certified nursing assistant course and, after graduation, started working as a medical assistant before

applying to the UConn School of Nursing. Rosado, whose family is from Guatemala and Mexico, has known for some time that, as a nurse, she wants to help women. Growing up, she saw within her own family how women like her mother and grandmother, who didn't receive formal sexual and reproductive health education in school, often didn't know or understand what they were experiencing within their own bodies. "In Guatemala, a lot of women don't really like to talk about what's happening with them," says Rosado. "I just did a ton of research on things that are happening in Guatemala with sexual and reproductive health, and I found that they are having an epidemic of underage pregnancy." Between January and August 2023, the Observatory on Sexual and Reproductive Rights (OSAR) in Guatemala reported 43,331 pregnancies among adolescents and girls 10 to 19 years old, including 1,589 among girls 10 to 14. Under the country's law, pregnancies in girls under age 14 are considered to be the result of sexual violence. Human rights and health care advocates attribute the epidemic to a number of factors, including social and religious stigma, sexual violence and assault, lack of access to health care and contraceptives, lack of comprehensive education, and patriarchal attitudes and a culture of "machismo." For Rosado, learning about the challenges women, adolescents, and young girls face in Guatemala — where some of her family members still live — felt personal. **Getting Help** UConn's BOLD program focuses on facilitating opportunities for women's leadership on campus through funding, programming, and engagement in service projects. Once accepted into BOLD through a competitive application process, scholars in BOLD cohorts are given funding and support for individual student-led projects. They find a mentor and work to refine and execute their project, which is typically implemented during

**"the flower symbolizes innocence and purity, which are qualities that are robbed from these children"**

the summer between their junior and senior years. Rosado and her roommate, Daniela Bedoya '24 (SFA), were both accepted into BOLD's fifth cohort. And, lucky for Rosado, Bedoya is a photography major. "I was struggling to figure out how I was going to present the project. I'm not great with public speaking. I'm not great with talking to people. So I was like, You know what? Let me just put it in a documentary and let it speak for itself." With Bedoya's help, Rosado got a Sony camera that was easy to learn how to use, and found an enthusiastic mentor in Barbara O'Neill, an associate clinical nursing professor with a background in journalism and filmmaking. Rosado planned her trip to Guatemala City for summer 2023, lining up interviews and stays with family members, but hit an unexpected roadblock when her flight was abruptly canceled. When she arrived in Guatemala a week later, her originally scheduled interview subjects were no longer available, and she scrambled to regroup. Her aunt, a lawyer who works on women's reproductive health and maternal abuse issues, helped make new connections. "And thank God she did," says Rosado, "because they came out perfect. They were the best interviews I could have found." A large part of Rosado's work in Guatemala involved interviewing subject-matter experts — including the program coordinator at OSAR, practicing doctors and midwives, and the executive director of a health center that conducts clinics for women. Their

expertise and perspective helped her tell a story about the social, cultural, and political factors that often affect the lives of women and young girls in Guatemala. She took a week to teach herself the professional video editing software she used to compile her work into the 59-minute documentary "Una Flor Marchita," which she screened for the first time at the Student Union in Storrs last December. "Una flor marchita translates to 'a withered flower,'" she says. "I picked the title because the flower symbolizes innocence and purity, which are qualities that are robbed from these children at a young age."

The film, says O'Neill, "provides valuable insight into a subject that is underreported. Kimberly learned and performed all the roles that would typically require the expertise of a scriptwriter, videographer, editor, and production team." Rosado hopes to educate and advocate for others by sharing their stories. "We live in the U.S., so we have a different point of view," she says. "There are countries where the people are suffering, and they don't really know what sexual reproductive health is. They don't know their rights as women, so they don't seek them. They're blind to what their rights should be."

**Giving Help** Rosado believes the experience of producing her film will help her be a better caregiver and advocate for her patients. "When it comes to asking sensitive questions of patients, it definitely will help me with that, because you never know what someone is going through," she says. "A lot of these underage pregnancies are products of rape. So talking about super sensitive topics, and how to go about it with adolescents, is important. Education is super important as well. "So overall, it helped me become a better nurse, a better educator, and just a better person." —JACLYN SEVERANCE

## UConn Talks

On the rare simultaneous emergence of two cicada broods:

**"They are making a living, just like everything else."**

John Cooley, professor of evolutionary biology, Reuters, April 2, 2024

On the need to overhaul an entire culture:

**"Boeing's change in leadership is not enough to fix its problems."**

Robert Bird, professor of business law, The Hill, March 27, 2024

On East Coast earthquakes caused by slow compression of deep rock:

**"It's like having a big block of ice in a vise and you are just slowly cranking up the vise. Eventually, you're going to get some crackling on it."**

Robert Thorson, professor of Earth sciences, AP, April 6, 2024

On consolidating school districts to remedy education inequities:

**"Other than the politics, there's nothing that prevents us from redrawing school district lines."**

Preston Green, professor of educational leadership and law, USA Today, May 16, 2024

On the tiny maple sprouts blanketing Connecticut:

**"Those little seedlings we're looking at today are our next generation's 100-year-old trees."**

Tom Worthley, Extension professor, The Hour, May 1, 2024

On the rising popularity of fast food, despite health consequences:

**"If it's marketed to children, it's probably bad for you."**

Frances Fleming-Milici, director of marketing initiatives at UConn's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health, The New York Times, May 12, 2024



# There's school pride, and then there's UConn Pride. There's school spirit, and then there's UConn Spirit.

Husky devotees, especially those who rally around our men's and women's basketball teams, have been called “rabid,” “obnoxious as sh-t on social,” “one of the most knowledgeable and passionate fan bases out there,” “illogical [and] delusional” — and some of that comes from our own coaches. Among a seemingly endless tide of blue-bleeders, fans who cheer from around the world and those who show up game after game, season after season (even when we're not looking so hot on the hardwood), there are some Husky Faithful who take their fandom to still another level.

These are the superfans, the fervent, the ones you recognize from the jumbotron and some you might remember from your first game back in '92. There's no NIL for these folks — they're there on their own dime, rallying the crowd and buoying the team. And with 2024's second consecutive men's basketball national title and an unexpected women's Final Four appearance, there's no stopping them now.

By Julie (Stagis) Bartucca '10 (BUS, CIAS), '19 MBA  
Photos by Peter Morenus



**@MisterHotBalls | Location: The Internet | Occupation: Pot Stirrer**

When he started a burner account on X, then Twitter, to “be a moron” about UConn basketball, the luchador-masked Mr. Hot Balls never knew he'd end up here. Leaking an inside scoop on a buzzworthy recruit (Richie Springs in 2019) drove his follower count through the roof, and now this anonymous king of what's known as UConn Twitter co-hosts with @HurleyMania a fan call-in radio-style show on X that brings in major sponsor dollars and up to 10,000 listeners per episode — including government bigwigs and our own athletic director.

“I just think there's something special about being able to let your freak flag fly and be yourself. There's real value to giving into urges on the things you're passionate about,” he says of the voracious community of Husky fans on and off the internet. “When you give yourself to it, it's amazing the crazy sh-t that's going to happen. I'm just a grown adult with a basketball problem. What it's turned into is all a little surreal.

“The best part of this era of UConn basketball is that the online community has become a weird extension of the program — a unique fan culture that people pay attention to.”



## Front-Row Faithful

**Location:** Storrs

**Occupation:** UConn Students

There are few places more electrified than the front of the student section during televised NCAA basketball. All season, UConn students start lining up in the wee hours to guarantee a prime spot for big matches. Some get so hooked they wait, and wait, and wait for every game. “I just think front row is the best way to do it. You almost become a part of the game,” says **Samantha Perrottelli ’23 (ED), ’24 MS**, reliably behind the hoop for women’s basketball. “It’s just so fun. Some people think I’m crazy for what I do, but I don’t care.” Her max time in line: 10 hours.

## The Future

**Location:** Willimantic

**Occupation :** Elementary School

In Connecticut, youngsters are practically handed UConn fandom alongside their first pacifiers. Women’s basketball season ticket holders and Junior Husky Club members **Hayden, 9**, and **Emeri Patterson, 5**, eat up everything they can about their favorite players. Hayden treasures a “Happy Birthday” video message from **Nika Mühl**. The girls take turns pretending to be **Aaliyah Edwards** as they shoot hoops in the driveway and ask mom **Courtney** to style their hair in “Qadence puffs” or braids a la **Paige, Azzi**, or **Ashlynn**. “Because of UConn women’s basketball, my daughters have developed a love for the game and an understanding of the importance of being a good student and teammate,” **Courtney Patterson** says. That team “is a perfect example of perseverance and never giving up.”



Top, from left: ’23-’24 student section staples **Michael Marques ’27 (BUS)**; **Samantha Perrottelli ’23 (ED), ’24 MS**; **Noah Hill ’27 (ACES)**; **Daniel Barberi ’27 (BUS)**; **Anthony Laporta ’27 (BUS)**; **Coleman Hill ’23 (ED)**; **Kyle Garab ’24 (CAHNR)**; and **Matthew Brodeur ’27 (ENG)**. Bottom, from left: **Hayden and Emeri Patterson**



## The Crochet Queen | Location: Morris | Occupation: Home Health Aide

A decade ago, **Angel Earle** was working as a live-in caregiver for an 86-year-old woman named **Katie** who loved to watch UConn women’s basketball. Earle decided to take her to a game in person and, not owning any UConn gear, turned to her crocheting hobby to create her own UConn poncho. They continued going to games, and though **Katie** died in 2019, Earle’s collection of custom-crocheted UConn outfits for games at **Gampel** — and the attention she gets for them — has only grown. “I have more than 20 now,” she says of her sets, which include ponchos, leg warmers, and hats boasting the names and sometimes photos of Huskies past and present, adorned with tiny basketballs and **Jonathan** graphics. Earle brings a smile to the faces of many in the crowd — “I love when little kids come up to me,” she says — but the players give her more than that. “It’s so amazing to see them, watching them do what they love to do. They lay all their blood, sweat, and tears on that hardwood. I could be down and out and I go to the game and whatever happened before the game just never happened. It’s like they wash away all my sadness.”



## The Puppet Lady | Location: Simsbury

### Occupation: Retired IT Professional

At women's basketball games, Carol McKenzie's longtime best friend finds she has to remind people, "You're talking to a hand." That's how real it feels to interact with JJ, or Jonathan Jr., McKenzie's custom-made white husky puppet (which she's not selling, thanks for asking). Donning a size 2T UConn shirt, JJ has cheered alongside McKenzie at games since 2002, after she had him made by a vendor she met at a craft fair following a game at what was then the Hartford Civic Center. She wasn't sure exactly what she was going to do with him but remembered associate head coach Chris Dailey talking about the influence of another fan who led the crowd in cheers. "That was in the back of my head: 'Oh, I can help. I can spread the Husky love and get people to smile,'" says McKenzie, whose favorite moment she witnessed in person was when Sue Bird sunk a buzzer beater to win a dramatic Big East Championship against Notre Dame in 2001. "I don't do what I do to get on the jumbotron; I do it because I'm excited."



## White Suit Dynasty | Location: Higganum | Occupations: Consultant, Rising 7th Grader

During the college basketball season, Prem Aithal '01 MS starts his day by entering NCAA Division I men's basketball data into his custom-built algorithm on [premdawg.com](http://premdawg.com) to update his PPI, or Premdawg Performance Index, rankings. "That's like my morning yoga to get in the swing of things for the day," says the longtime UConn basketball obsessive and former finance director. Among the prolific contributors to the constant social media conversation surrounding UConn hoops, @Premdawg describes himself as the "Ted Lasso of UConn Twitter," aiming to make fellow fans laugh and feel good.

He serves his mission in part through goofy videos, such as a recent off-key rendition of the famous Folgers jingle with tweaked lyrics to reflect his new men's championship coffee mug and the dramatic reveal of his 11-year-old daughter, Asha, in her own version of Aithal's signature white suit, which he wears to big games. Passing his UConn love on to his daughter is perhaps his favorite part of all this: "It's one of those things that's such a pleasant, rewarding surprise of fatherhood." Says his wife, Becky, "It's like I'm living with two Prens now."





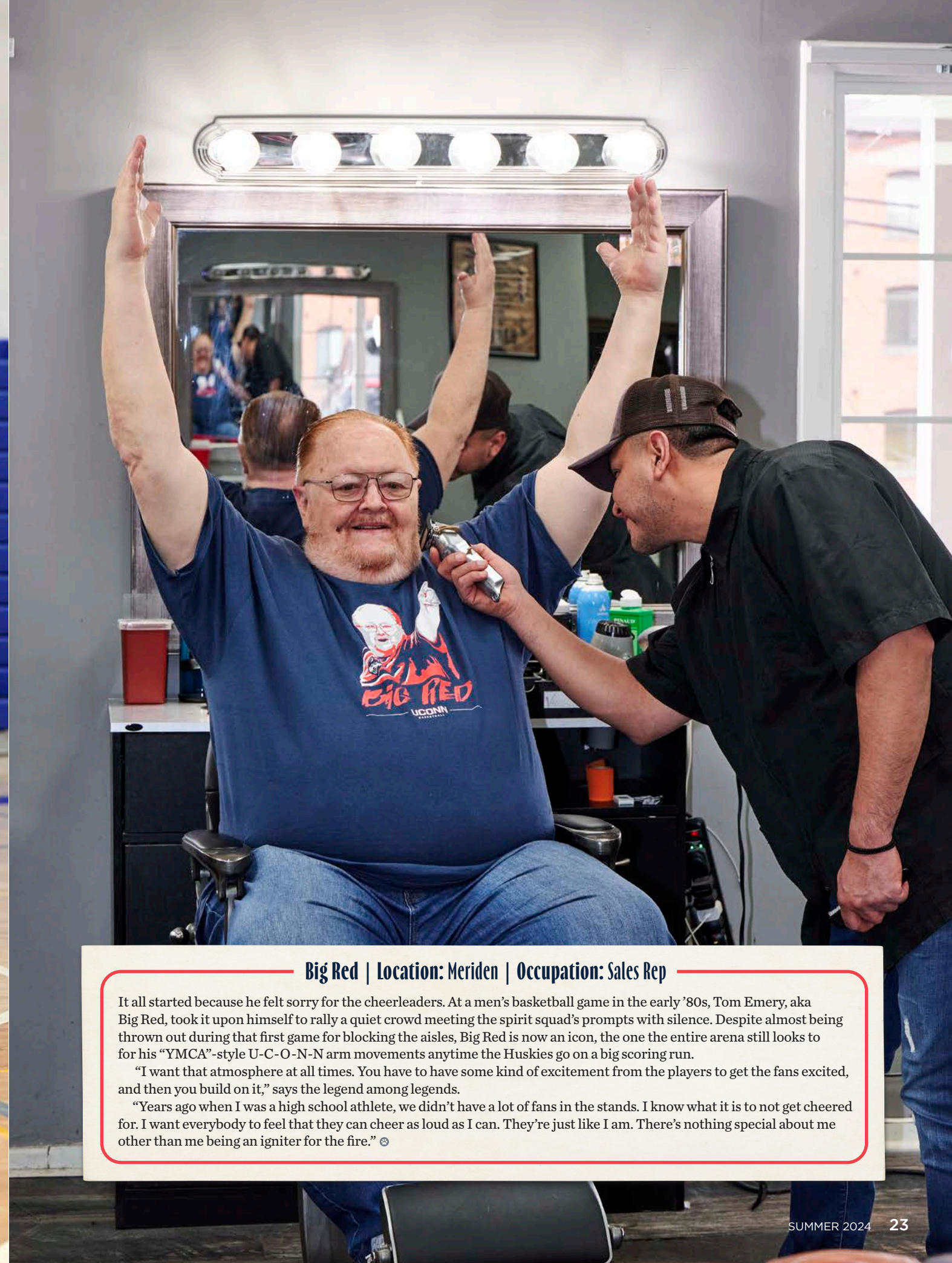


### Blue and White Guy

**Location:** Wallingford | **Occupation:** Teacher

When Ray Allen asks to take a picture with you, you must be doing something right. For a certain stretch in the aughts, there was one fan more known than all the rest, a stalwart in the front of the student section for any number of UConn sports. Dale Nosel '07 (CLAS) still “paints up” in his iconic half-blue, half-white for every football game and for men’s and women’s basketball Final Four appearances.

Challenged by his first-year roommate to shave his head and paint his face for a game at the then newly opened Rentschler Field, Nosel’s competitive spirit did the rest of the work: “I’m go big or go home, so I was like, OK, I’m doing this from now on.” (He began painting his whole body and donned only boxer shorts to out-fan a peer that a local paper deemed the #1 UConn fan.) Some things have changed — the oil paint he used at first didn’t crack, but it was near-impossible to get off and terrible for his skin; he’s switched to water-based — but a lot hasn’t. “I haven’t missed a football game since 2009,” he says — and that’s home or away. Although he wore his signature look to his UConn graduation, he won’t be doing so for his wedding later this summer, though his fiancée “is very supportive.”



### Big Red | Location: Meriden | Occupation: Sales Rep

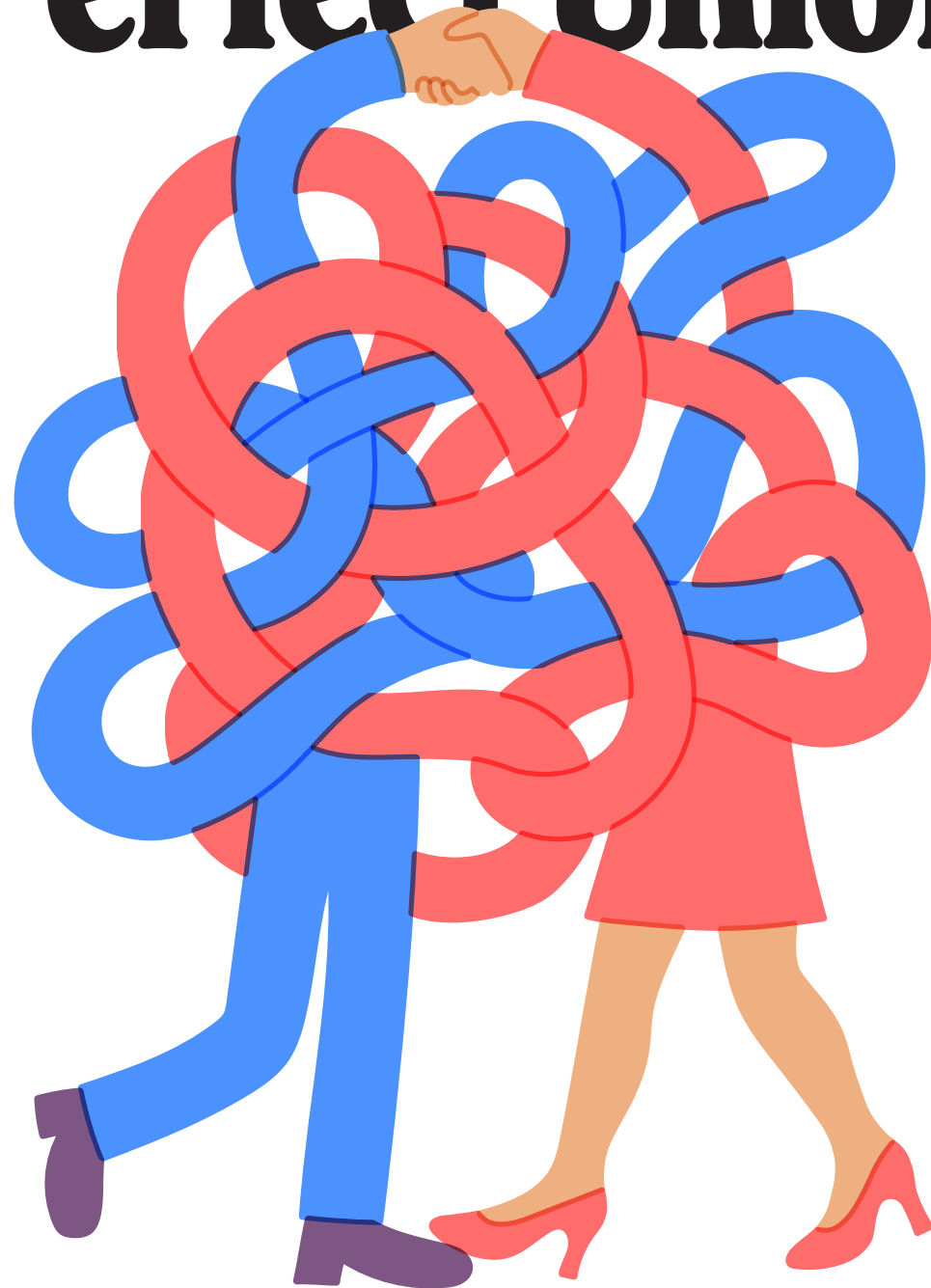
It all started because he felt sorry for the cheerleaders. At a men’s basketball game in the early ’80s, Tom Emery, aka Big Red, took it upon himself to rally a quiet crowd meeting the spirit squad’s prompts with silence. Despite almost being thrown out during that first game for blocking the aisles, Big Red is now an icon, the one the entire arena still looks to for his “YMCA”-style U-C-O-N-N arm movements anytime the Huskies go on a big scoring run.

“I want that atmosphere at all times. You have to have some kind of excitement from the players to get the fans excited, and then you build on it,” says the legend among legends.

“Years ago when I was a high school athlete, we didn’t have a lot of fans in the stands. I know what it is to not get cheered for. I want everybody to feel that they can cheer as loud as I can. They’re just like I am. There’s nothing special about me other than me being an igniter for the fire.” ☺



# Couples Counseling for America Toward a More Perfect Union



BY PETER NELSON ★ ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM LAHAN

America is in need of marriage counseling.

Enter **Bill Doherty '78 Ph.D.** He's been a couples therapist for some 40 years — but over the past eight, he's taken on a new type of client.

"I was not involved in anything political until right after the 2016 presidential election," says Doherty. That's when two of his colleagues asked him to help get 10 Hillary Clinton voters and 10 Donald Trump voters together to try to talk with — and understand — one another. "The country was sort of in shock. I had a lot of experience — in the therapy world, but also in community engagement — and I knew a fair amount about facilitating groups. The idea was to see if they could get past the stereotypes of each other, and find some common ground."

grams differ somewhat from state to state, but the basic structure is always the same: two co-chairs — one Blue, one Red — together lead each state alliance.

**Al Smith '65 (CLAS)**, the Red co-chair of the Connecticut Braver Angels Alliance, is a retired businessman who lives in Brookfield. He was a platoon leader in Vietnam, and has always considered himself a conservative. Smith says he started paying closer attention to politics after retiring from an outsourcing company. "About five years ago, I heard about Braver Angels and said that's what I believe in too. We have too much division, too much polarization, too much identity politics — and no civil discourse."

Chris Clouet is the Blue co-chair for Connecticut. He's a former school

*"We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break the bonds of our affection. The mystic chords of memory... will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."* **—1ST INAUGURAL ADDRESS, ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

Doherty's national organization, Braver Angels, grew out of that. The name evolved from "the better angels of our nature," a phrase in Abraham Lincoln's first presidential inaugural address.

With alliances in all 50 states and 12,750 members nationwide, the pro-

superintendent, former adjunct professor in UConn's Neag School of Education, current division chair of the Education Department at Mitchell College in New London, and a long-time liberal. In his superintendent role, he was seeing school board and PTA meetings getting out of hand.



“There was just so much rancor and divisiveness, so much misinformation and disinformation,” he says. “Before, people would say positive or negative things, but it was always personal, about their child, and that’s fair. But what started to happen was that people would come in with prepared scripts about things like immigration, for example, and it started to become contentious. I wanted to join a group that could bridge the differences, to come together to listen to each other, without always winding up to get your next point in — while ignoring the person standing in front of you.”

The ubiquitous and growing divisiveness and rancor in America — people shouting and talking over each other — seems to have taken over not just political debates, but ordinary life. Family dinners, book clubs, poker groups, PTA meetings, coffee klatches, and community get-togethers are being torn apart. Braver Angels wants people to start understanding one another, to consider why someone might think differently. To that end, the group hosts debates, discussions, and workshops in places like schools and community clubs. Leaders and members alike stress that the idea is not to change minds, but to foster listening and understanding of differences.

Sounds like couples counseling.

## Horror Movie Town Meetings

AKA

### “What I hear you saying is...”

Special projects coordinator Rick Porth and his colleagues at the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities in Hartford have taken a few Braver Angels sessions on civility and managing contentious public meetings. “Our members are mayors and first selectmen and town managers and so forth. They have to run a lot of public meetings, where sometimes there’s some pretty contentious issues on the agenda,” says Porth. There have always been such issues and disagreements, he says, but they’ve grown in recent years, “and a lot of the people I work for are eager to learn ways to try to manage this constructively.”

The workshops, he says, have helped them stay focused on moving forward, “not litigating why we’re where we are or pointing fingers or any of that kind of stuff. It’s best to keep focus on the future — trying to figure out what you have in common, and how you can

work together more constructively.”

What marriage counseling magic makes these workshops work like that?

Longtime Greenwich resident Deirdre Kamalani got some insight when she wanted to set up some Braver Angels workshops for elected officials in her town, and steering committee member Gary Holland (see Holland’s own story on page 28) suggested she take one first herself. Kamalani had spent 10 years in nonpartisan civic nonprofit work. She thought she had pretty good skills in terms of dealing with people of different political perspectives. She says she always practiced “engaging with respect, and really listening, and stating my point of view in a way where they would maybe understand it better. But when I went to the workshop, I learned that I could do things so much better. I’ll give you one example. They had us pick the statement about policing that was the opposite of ours, and the first thing we had to do was restate that back to the person. The goal is to make sure that the person you’re speaking with, who thinks very differently from you, feels heard by you and that you understand what their issues are. I did that restatement, and I thought it was pretty good. The moderator said to me, ‘You know, you’ve actually kind



of skipped ahead, and you’ve assumed some things about what the person was saying that they didn’t actually say.’ When I thought about it, he was 100% right. I assumed we had a common view on community safety, which might be a good assumption, but he said, ‘Don’t assume those things — just restate, as carefully as possible and as close to what that person said, back to them, so you’re showing that you’re really listening — and don’t jump ahead and don’t assume they were saying things they didn’t.’

“I am definitely a better listener since then. I’m much more careful about making sure that I know what someone’s really telling me.”

One of many Braver Angels exercises devised by Doherty, whose UConn doctorate is in family studies, is The Fishbowl. A group is in the middle, chairs in a circle. A group with an opposing viewpoint arranges their chairs outside the circle. The people in the middle are asked, “Why are your side’s values and policies positive and good for the country?” Then, “What are your reservations or concerns about your own side?” The people on the outside are just listening, trying to understand the people in the middle. And then they switch. Afterward everyone is asked what they learned

about how people on the other side see themselves — and if they saw anything in common.

“These are principles out of couples therapy,” says Doherty, “careful listening to try to understand the other person, as they see themselves. The willingness to admit that your side is not perfect. It does not have all the answers.”

## That Former Forever Friend

AKA

### “Help me understand.”

Craig Diamond, who describes himself as having been a knee-jerk Democrat until a few years ago, got involved with Braver Angels after the events at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. “My oldest friend Eric is a die-hard conservative Trump supporter. I’ve known him since kindergarten, around 50 years. We’ve stayed in touch, we see each other — I cherish his friendship, and he cherishes mine. But on Jan. 7, we were talking on the phone about what had happened. I was expecting him to say things like, ‘I can’t believe that happened. They stormed the Capitol, and that’s terrible, and they are insurrec-

tionists.’ His reaction was not like that at all. His reaction was, it’s not really that big a deal. It’s not any different than the Black Lives Matter people, or the people rioting and breaking the law in Portland and other parts of the country. What’s the difference?

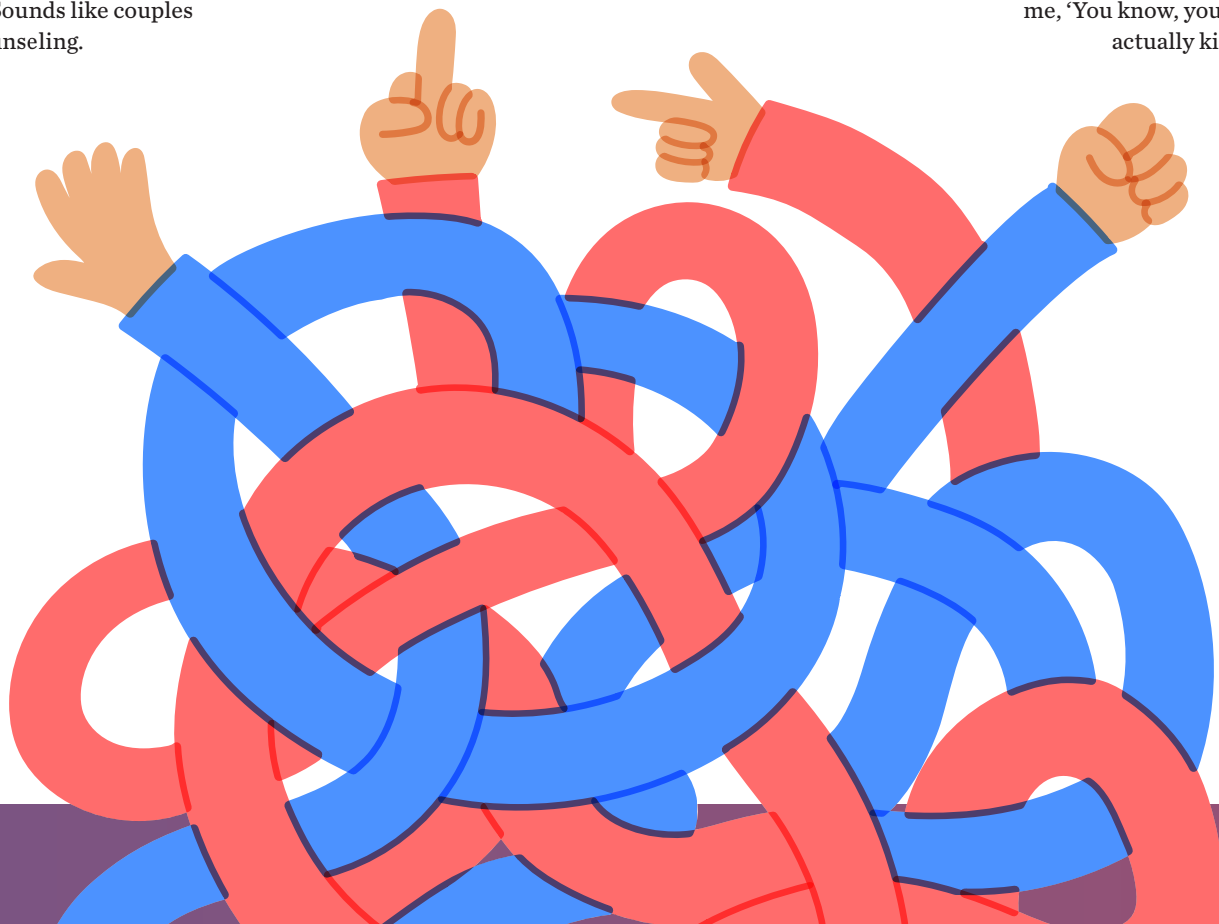
“My jaw dropped, and I got angry. I started raising my voice, and I don’t raise my voice to my friends. But I was starting to get really frustrated. I basically said, ‘You know what? I gotta hang up because I’m overheated here. I can’t.’ He wanted to talk about how to process it and very calmly challenged me. I didn’t want anything to do with it, because I just thought, ‘My friend’s gone off the deep end.’ I hung up, but after about 15 minutes, I thought, ‘Screw this. I’m not sacrificing this friendship over politics.’”

Diamond started a journey to understand conservatism. He changed his media diet. He worked with Braver Angels, which he says helped him stop his automatic us-and-them thinking. He and Eric are as close as ever for one reason, he says: “I started listening to him. That’s how I resolved it.”

It’s all about leaving room for doubt, says therapist and Connecticut Braver Angels member June Malone of Trumbull. “I’ll tell you what I think is the most dangerous thing, right now: certitude. People are certain that what they know, they know, and what they believe is right, and what they fear will actually happen. If you don’t have room for doubt, you can’t hear the other side.” She throws out another tried-and-true therapy trick used by Braver Angels.

“I have found one of the most effective techniques, when I’m first meeting with a couple, is to have the wife take on the role of the husband and tell me why he is angry with her. Then the husband takes on the role of the wife and tells me why she is angry with him. Reverse roles, so that they see each other through each other’s eyes. It works wonders to bring down the level of animosity so they can hear and understand each other better.”

Tell your story, advises Clouet.





68

## We are deliberately not trying to change people's minds on the issues, or turn them into moderates. We're trying to change their minds about each other.

"When you start talking about what brings you to your opinions," Clouet says, "what life events have helped mold your opinions, you start talking to someone else, and often you have things in common. Whether it's protecting a particular park, or something like that, in a community, suddenly you say, 'Oh, well — we both agree on that — what else do we agree on?'"

### Thanksgiving with Uncle Bob

AKA

### "Tell me a story about..."

Gary Holland of Ridgefield, Connecticut, grew up in Houston, Texas, but ended up going to school at MIT in Boston. He still has a lot of relatives in Texas, Georgia, and Oklahoma. A couple of years ago the family was getting together in Oklahoma City for Thanksgiving.

"My father's family comes from Oklahoma," says Holland, "and I have an uncle there. I'll just call him Uncle Bob; he is a real irascible S.O.B. And he always took great delight in kind of picking on me, even from when I was a kid, because I was always a little out-of-the-box kid. He's extremely conservative. Since I moved up north and had the audacity to marry a nice Yankee girl from Connecticut, I'm the black sheep of the family. He took great joy

in seeking me out and bending my ear about how horrible things were in the rest of the world because of all of the liberals, and it was always unpleasant for me.

"I knew this event was coming up, and I just happened to stumble across an announcement in the local newspaper about this Braver Angels workshop called Family and Politics about the skills to help you have a more pleasant gathering. I said, 'Why not?' I tuned in to the workshop and picked up a handful of good ideas. And then I went to the gathering, and I applied them, and for the first time in my life, I actually was able to have a real conversation with my Uncle Bob. It never really happened before. It was always kind of one-way, him beating up on me and criticizing my life and where I lived, and why aren't you back in Oklahoma or Texas? It was thoroughly pleasant for the first time."

What could possibly make such a big difference so quickly after so long?

"Very simple things," says Holland. "One of the simplest is the word 'Why.' So often when you're talking with somebody, and you have a disagreement with a position, or you're trying to understand them, you will say to them, 'Why do you think that?'"

"One of the things I learned in the course was that the word 'Why' is, more often than not, interpreted judgmentally and antagonistically. The suggestion, in the workshop, is to use

a different approach. Say, 'Well, I find it interesting, but I don't fully understand. Can you explain it to me?'"

"Say it in the context of, 'Can you tell me a story? What was the road that led you to that conclusion? What information? What experiences in your life ...?' Because then, what you're doing is, you're asking the other person to share their story. Many times, one of the root causes of polarization is that people don't feel that they're heard anymore. Nobody listens to them. So they end up ranting and raving at each other, rather than taking the time to listen. Put the emphasis on understanding. Understanding is not agreement. It's just understanding. It's OK to have a different opinion, but the important thing is understanding the opposition. When you explore that, you then have the basis for communication, to try to find the common ground. I will tell you, it is very rare, if you orchestrate it correctly, that no matter how contentious, you can't find some common ground.

"If I could find some common ground with my Uncle Bob, trust me — you can find common ground with anybody."

Did they really understand one another better after this?

"Absolutely. Because for the first time, we actually talked about what it was that took me up north and why I stayed up there, which had nothing to do with politics. It had to do with people and environment. I said that the joy of spring in New England was by itself almost enough to keep me up north. And he found that amazing. That was an insight to him. Things that had nothing to do with politics, that would cause a person like myself to live in Yankee land."

OK. We may know what we shouldn't do and say to exacerbate issues, whether with our children and partners or our Uncle Bobs. But it's easier said than done, right? How do we respond in the moment — to a person who seems "other"?

"To the political scientists and social scientists who study polarization,"

Doherty says, "'othering' is the first thing they talk about. Others — people who differ from us politically or vote for different candidates — become strangers. 'Who in the world are these people? How could they possibly vote for or support that view?' That didn't used to exist between the parties. There were liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats. There was not the sense of, 'Who the hell are these people? We are deliberately not trying to change people's minds on the issues, or turn them into moderates. We're trying to change their minds about each other.'"

There's real danger in seeing the other side as monolithic or seeing individuals as one-dimensional.

### It's the Guns/ Babies/Immigrants

AKA

### "Never use words like 'never' and 'always.'"

"When someone says, 'Those damn MAGA Republicans,' you're insinuating that all Republicans are MAGA when by whatever the definition is, maybe 30% of Republicans are MAGA, and then you're ticking off and excluding 70% who aren't," says Smith. "I'm a conservative, but two of the biggest issues that are liberal, or progressive, I totally agree with. I'm totally against what Republicans think on abortion and banning assault weapons. I carried an AR-15 in Vietnam. I don't think any citizen needs to have access to that weapon."

"I've shifted my language to talk about gun safety versus gun control," says Clouet. "Most gun enthusiasts agree that gun safety is important. Guns are serious business, and you have to be careful and thoughtful. I also support the traditionally conservative idea that government programs should be audited and reviewed, and when they become too bloated and ineffective, they should be either cut

back or done away with. It's reasonable to have that expectation. We need to make sure our money's being spent wisely. I agree completely."

We contribute to polarization when we define people and political parties by their extremes, says Doherty. "The largest political party is not the Democrats or the Republicans," adds Smith. "It's Independents. About 41% of the people in this country don't define themselves as Republican or Democrat. Some lean red, some lean blue, but they want to look at it down the middle."

"I always say we're all neighbors first. We're all neighbors," says CT state Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey, who was invited to participate in a Braver Angels mediated conversation with then representative, now state senator Stephen Harding. "He's on the other side of the aisle, and we talked about that. There's a way to disagree without being disagreeable. And there's a way to debate issues without personally attacking one another, and having the ability to behave in a way that allows our brains to be fully unified, utilized, and not just in fight-or-flight mode. You can be very strongly on one side of the aisle, or on the issues, and not be difficult to talk to. I think that's the whole point of Braver Angels."

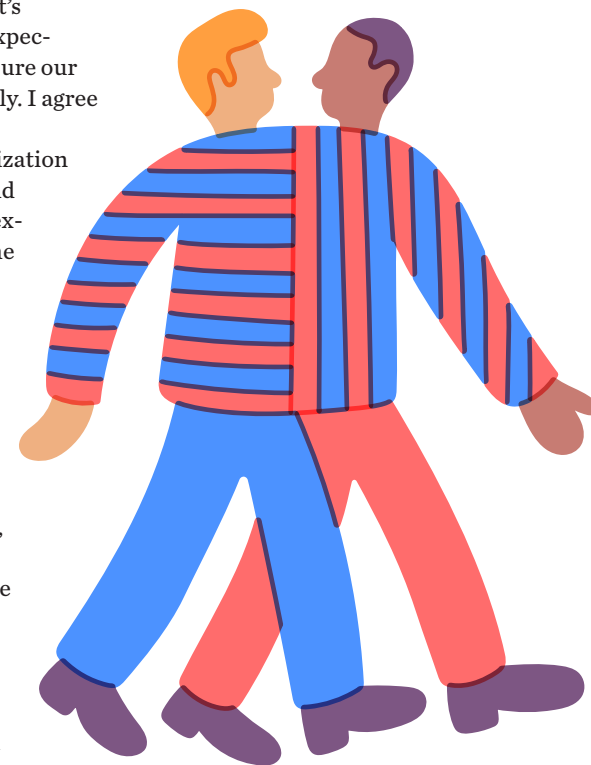
"It's a challenge," says Clouet, "to reach people who are very happy to be in their own bubble, in the echo chamber where everyone essentially agrees all the time, and you can just make fun of 'those people.' People of all different political ideologies do that."

When you're governing, you are representing all the people, says McCarthy Vahey. "There is no one human on the planet who I agree with 100% of the time. We're human, and what makes us human is we're

unique individuals. We all have our own fingerprint. It's how we negotiate those differences with one another. Most of us who do this work, we have a passion for it. Sometimes that passion flutters into things that aren't as productive, but we're doing it because we care about these issues. And we don't always agree about how to do it.

"My hope is that the Braver Angels message, and engagement, continues to expand, because I think this year, again, we're going to be faced with a lot of polarizing conversations, well beyond legislators talking to each other. It's family members at dinner tables. It's neighbors down the street. If we want to maintain the fabric of our communities, and the relationships within our families, we are going to have to practice these same principles that Braver Angels is talking about."

The stakes are high. In a marriage, if counseling doesn't work, a divorce can be contentious or amicable. What would that look like for America? ☺







Jesse Senko (center) and brothers Felipe (left) and Juan Cuevas measure a rare hawksbill turtle. Fishing nets around the Cuevas' tiny island of El Pardito in Mexico could accidentally snare hundreds of sea turtles every month. Then Senko arrived.



# Net Worth

To save the sea turtles, says alum Jesse Senko, you first need to help the fishers whose very nets entangle them ...

By Lisa Stiepock | Photos Contributed By Arizona State University



"I did what any 12-year-old boy would do — I latched onto the thing," says Jesse Senko '06 (CAHNR), recounting the time a "gigantic" green sea turtle

swam up to him while he was snorkeling in the Cayman Islands with his family. "I remember hearing the screams from my mom on the boat. She was terrified. She's screaming. And the crew's blowing whistles. And they're yelling. And I remember thinking, 'Screw it. I'm going on this ride.'"

Eventually the turtle brought Jesse back to the boat. But the ride never ended.

Even as Jesse's parents were yanking their delinquent out of the water, he was sputtering, "Now I know what I want to do with my life. I want to study sea turtles." Of course they laughed. "They were like, 'Oh my God, that's so cute.' I mean, they didn't discourage it. No, no," says Senko. "But they were thinking, Yeah, that's today."

Two decades and three university degrees later, Senko is still obsessed with sea turtles. His signature laser focus, though, has shifted from the sea turtles themselves to the fishers who unwittingly tangle sea turtles and other bycatch in their gill nets.

And to two fishers in particular.

Brothers Juan and Felipe Cuevas live off the Baja California peninsula on Isla el Pardito, which is believed to be the smallest island in the world inhabited year-round by a single family.

"It's a rock," says Senko. "It's basically a two-acre rock in the middle of the Gulf of California." A three-hour small-boat ride from the coast, there's no sign of civilization in any direction—just other islands, all uninhabited. The family has been on this rock for more than a century — legend has it they drifted there in a storm.

Senko met Juan and Felipe in January 2018 in Baja at a conference. "The moment you meet them, you're like, OK, these guys really know what they're doing. They're going to be leaders in the community, they're going to get other fishers to adopt new technologies. They have that 'it' factor. I knew I wanted to work with them."

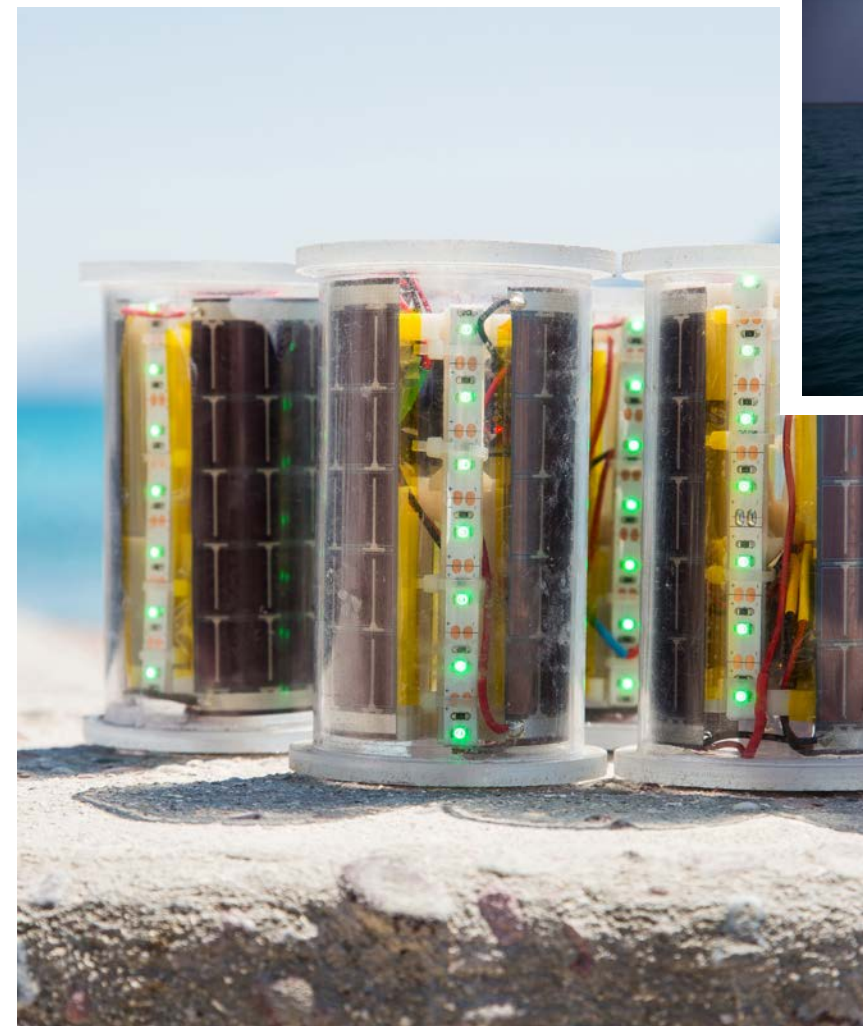
Speaking of the 'it' factor — by the time this fateful conference rolled around, Senko had become a bit of a wunderkind among turtle people. Since graduating from UConn in 2006, he'd

had the big "aha!" research moment (determining that turtles will avoid nets if they know the nets are there); devised a solution (nets are deployed at night when they can't be seen, so attaching battery-operated lights makes them visible to turtles and other larger marine animals who then avoid them); tested that solution (the lights reduced bycatch by a stunning 50% for turtles and 95% for sharks and rays — without affecting target catch); identified the fatal flaw with his solution (paying for and changing out the lights' AA batteries every few weeks — hundreds per net — is decidedly prohibitive); and come up with a potential fix (make the lights solar powered).

And, as luck would have it, the marine scientist who found himself needing to invent a solar-powered device was now teaching marine sciences at Arizona State University (ASU) — far from any ocean but home to some of the country's most innovative solar engineers.

### Buoyed

Senko and a team of ASU solar engineers, who were excited to work on a sea turtle project, traveled to Baja to talk with the brothers and other fishers about their plan to design solar-powered lights that would hang from fishing nets as the battery-operated lights had. "I was five minutes into the first meeting," recalls Senko, "and Juan



Senko worked with the Cuevas brothers to design these lighted buoys that help steer sea turtles (like the green sea turtle above), sharks, and rays away from gill nets. After nearly six years of fishing with the buoys and helping Senko's team collect data, Juan Cuevas says, "We want to learn how to read the results of scientific studies so we can teach conservation to other fishing communities in our region."





"Turtles fill unique ecological roles," says Senko. "There's a reason they've been around for 100 million years — they are good at what they do." For example, green turtles are herbivores who graze and keep seagrass healthy; hawksbills feed on sponges, which helps keep coral reefs healthy; and leatherbacks are nature's way of controlling jellyfish populations.



Senko, here with a leatherback turtle, says his hands-on teaching style is continually informed by his choice of an applied science major at UConn — fisheries and wildlife.

raises his hand and says, "Why don't you just make a lighted buoy?"

Senko loves this story because it illustrates so well how important it is to listen to the community that will need to implement your conservation ideas, the people whose livelihoods will be most affected. The Cuevas brothers were thinking about how they would fish with the lights and knew they'd rather not deal with an extra piece of

equipment, one that might weigh their nets down. They already needed buoys, so why not make lighted ones that would seamlessly integrate into their gear?

Senko and his team stopped working on the hanging solar lights and started designing buoys.

Once they had enough lighted buoys manufactured, they gave them to Juan and Felipe to test and then return to

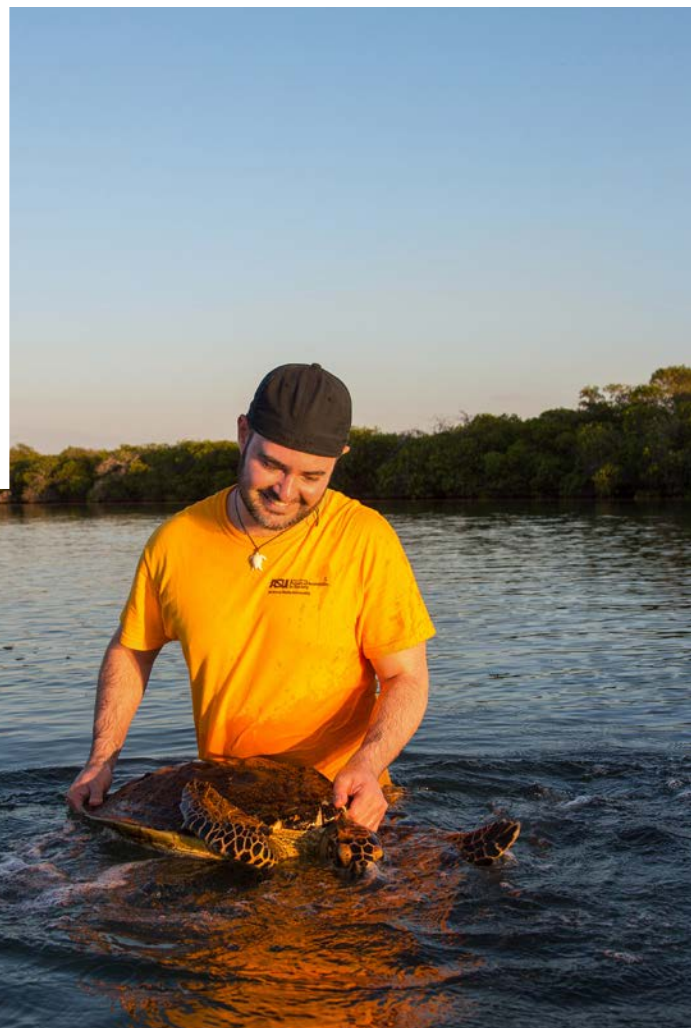
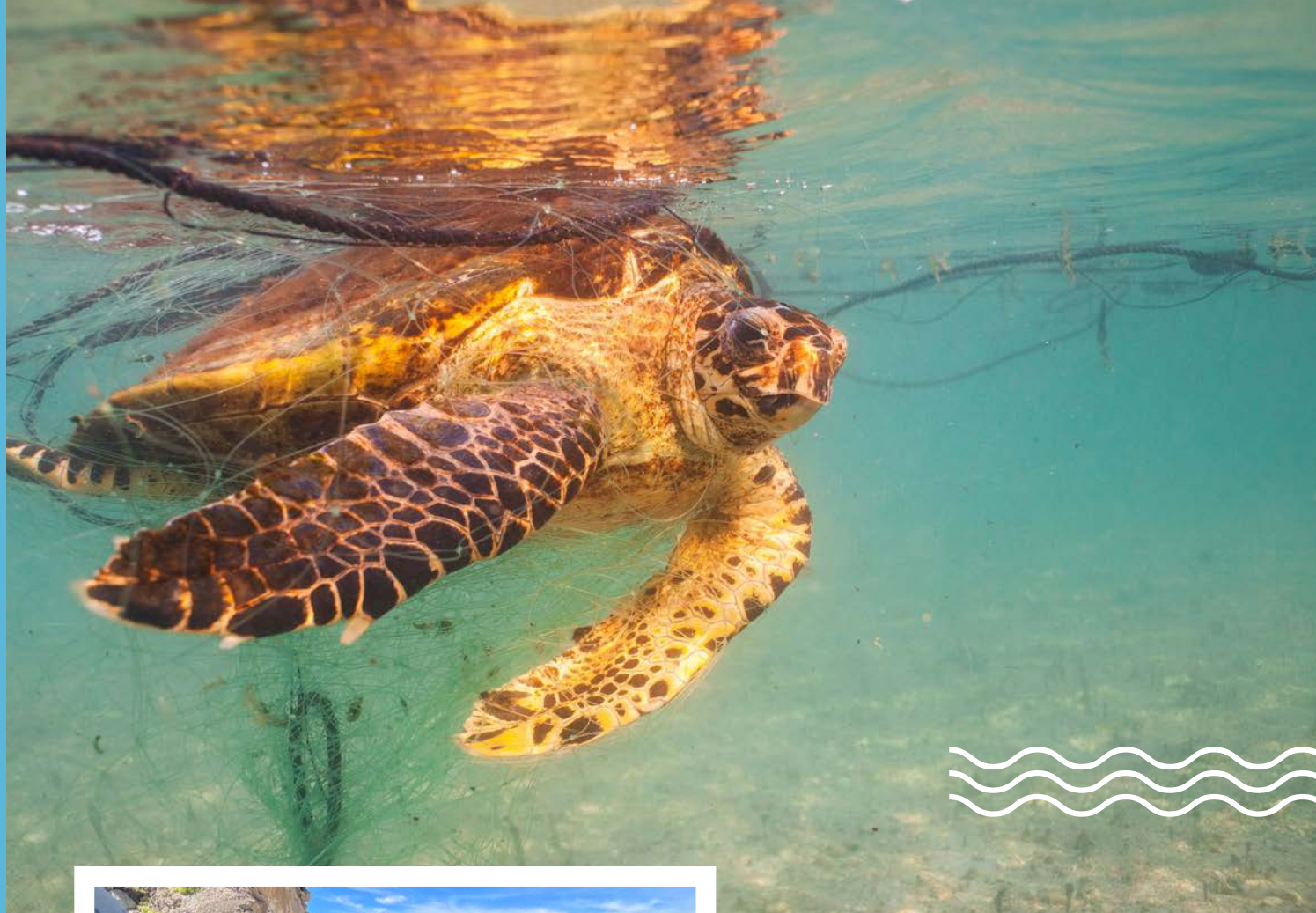
ASU. But the brothers asked if they could keep the buoys and Senko agreed, provided they'd keep testing and collecting data. For almost six years now the Cuevas have been fishing with solar-powered, illuminated nets.

"They're using the most sophisticated gill net technology on the planet," says Senko. "You would think that these big Chinese or Japanese fleets would be doing it, but no. It's this little

family that lives on a rock in the middle of the ocean. And they are reporting that they barely catch sea turtles anymore."

Juan concurs: "So far Jesse's lights have worked great. They make fishing easier for us because we aren't spending as much time removing bycatch from our nets. And they work really well at keeping turtles away. We rarely catch turtles when we fish with





Senko's study-abroad students weigh an adult hawksbill turtle. The spark for the illuminated gill nets project came to Senko when he was working on a research project for his own master's in Mexico. He was tracking sea turtles in the middle of the day: "This turtle swam up to a gill net and right before it was going to hit the net it made a complete U-turn. And I realized if the turtle sees the net, it may avoid the net."

the solar-powered buoys."

This has more impact than you might imagine. "I'm guessing we've saved thousands of turtles from just these two fishers," says Senko. "On a typical day, a fisher in that region may catch as many as four to eight turtles. So if you start doing the math, that's a lot of turtles." We did the math. Conservatively, 4 turtles  $\times$  300 days  $\times$  5 years = 6,000 turtles! But Senko continues. "I also like to look at it in terms of turtle years. So each one of these four turtles fishers are catching is on average 20 to 30 years old. So you're talking, you know, 80 to 120 turtle years per day, on the low end, that could be removed from the environment." Sea turtles typically live 50 to 100 years.

"Being a part of this project has really shown us how interconnected everything is, and how the impacts of bycatch in El Pardito can affect ocean ecosystems in other parts of the world," says Felipe. "The solutions we are developing with Jesse can be used anywhere in the world — to save turtles but also to make it easier for fishers to fish."

Indeed, if Senko and his team can produce these lighted buoys cheaply enough — which is precisely what they are working on now — it's hard to imagine any gill net fisher not wanting to use them. According to Senko, not dealing with those unwanted — and in the case of sea turtles and some sharks, environmentally protected — species makes life easier for fishers in three key ways: It gives them more time, better health, and a higher quality product to sell.

**More Time:** Lighted nets mean less bycatch means less time hauling and sorting and less weight to pull. "First of all, turtles and sharks are really hard to remove from nets; sometimes they just have to cut them out. And big animals like turtles — who average 100 pounds each — create a lot of hydrodynamic drag on the net, which makes it harder to pull. We've found that the lighted nets can save fishers 55 to 70 minutes a day. So that's a big one. I mean, it's time, right? Everybody wants more time. It's the most valuable resource."

"We rarely catch turtles when we fish with the solar-powered buoys."

**Better Health:** Lighted nets mean less bycatch means less weight to haul and sort. "Pulling nets is really hard in the Pacific, and a lot of these guys end up being unable to fish past their 50s or 60s because it's just too hard on their backs. So you're making it easier for them and potentially extending their careers. Imagine you're on an 18- to 20-foot boat and you have four to eight 100-plus-pound turtles in your net every single day. It's just an enormous amount of work to get them out of the net, to lift them up, to put them back into the water."

**Higher-Quality Product:** Lighted nets mean less time out on the water means the catch gets to shore faster. "Small scale fishers often don't have the capacity to ice their catch. They typically don't have ice in their homes. So they're working against time. Not having to struggle with unwieldy turtles, sharks, and rays means that as soon as they pull their nets up, they head right to shore. And there's a middleman with an ice truck waiting, right? So you've got a higher quality product."

### Script Flip

For years Senko was all about saving the turtle, but he's come to realize that helping fishers is the best way to help turtles. "We flipped the script," he says. "We've gone into these communities and we've basically said, 'How can we make your fishing easier? How can we make your fishing more efficient? You're still getting the reductions in turtle bycatch, but it's approaching it from a different standpoint. I think that is what's really innovative about our work.'"

The data from El Pardito proves the

point. Senko's original research with the battery-operated lights showed fishers caught 50% fewer sea turtles in their nets and 95% fewer sharks and rays. In the past six years, the Cuevases found a similar reduction in shark and ray bycatch, but sea turtle bycatch has been reduced by 65%

"I think the most gratifying thing about this project is just how much Jesse involves us in the study," says Juan. "We have worked with scientists before, but usually we are told what to do and how we can assist their research. But with Jesse it's been completely different — we work together to design the technologies we want to test, and then we also work with Jesse to design the experiments. And you know, that makes us feel like we are truly part of the team. A big thing for us is, How can we fish more sustainably? The solutions we are testing with Jesse give us hope for a future where we can fish better and preserve the balance of life."

The brothers say they and the rest of their family love showing the island to Senko's students, who come every spring to collect and sort data.

One of those students, Ryan Keating, after a day spent swimming with sea lions and whale sharks and watching the Cuevases and researchers "doing the work," echoed his professor's childhood experience. "We had journals to keep track of our thoughts throughout the trip." At the end of that day, he says, "the final thing I wrote was, 'I will become a marine biologist.'" The students in turn inspire the fishers.

"I want my children to fish but after working with Jesse, I also want them to go to school. I want them to learn about the ocean and maybe become scientists like Jesse," says Felipe. ☺





Kings of the Hill

Three generations of Huskies gathered on campus recently for a reunion that included a photo op with Jonathan. Nelson King '60 (ED) of Dayville, Connecticut; sons Kevin King '90 (ENG) of Plainville, Connecticut, and Tracy King '92 (BUS) of Halfmoon, New York; and grandsons Zachary King '26 (ENG) and Robert King '27 (ENG) continue the unbroken line.

Send your UConn Nation shots to alumni-news@uconnalumni.com.

CLASS NOTES

1950s

A photo of Lois Greene Stone '55 (ED) as a teenager and her hand-designed clothing and costume sketches are all featured in "Girlhood (it's complicated)," an exhibit now on tour from the National Museum of American History. Stone, a writer and poet, is married to Dr. Gerald E. Stone and has 15 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

William Lloyd '57 (BUS), who describes himself as a true lover of UConn women's and men's basketball, starting with "Geno, Rebecca, and Jennifer," wrote to say he went through ROTC at UConn and was awarded "Most Improved Cadet" on graduation day. "I probably was poor to begin with, however I did make major and received 14 Air Medals and two Distinguished Flying Crosses for 350 combat missions in Vietnam." Impressive!

1960s

Bruce H. Cagenello '60 (CLAS) lets us know that he is enjoying life in the retirement community Masonicare in Wallingford, Connecticut. He retired from Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties after more than 50 years in residential and commercial real estate. Among his many awards, including School of Business alumni of the year, is a recent one: 2022 Marquis Who's Who list.

Congratulations to Dennis Alfred Randall '64 (CLAS) and Donna Holcombe Randall '64 (CLAS), who met as first-year students in Storrs and recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary! They were married in Simsbury, Connecticut, during the summer break between their junior and senior years and

lived in off-campus housing for married couples on Cheney Drive in Storrs. They have four sons, Paul, Steven, and twins Brian and David, along with six grandchildren. They're both retired and live in Plantsville, Connecticut.

Jerome A. Meli '64 MS, '69 Ph.D. recently published "The Physics of Radiation Dosimetry," which is based on a course he taught in a master's degree program in medical physics at Columbia University.

James Lyons '65 (ED), '74 Ph.D. has released a new book, "From the Projects to the Presidencies: My Journey to Higher Education Leadership." It tells the story of his journey from being raised in a New Haven public housing project to eventually becoming president of six universities.

John Surowiecki '66 (CLAS), '78 MA, of Hebron, recently published his 14th and 15th books of poetry, "The Place of the Solitaires: Poems from Titles by Wallace Stevens" and "Chez Pétrouchka," which he describes as a long poem that gives Stravinsky's puppet a voice, albeit a rude and nasty one.



Gary Goshgarian '66 MA, writing under the pen name Gary Braver, published his 10th mystery, "Rumor of Evil." His novels have been translated into 16 languages, and three have been optioned for movies. He's an award-winning professor emeritus at Northeastern University, where he taught courses in science fiction, horror fiction, detective fiction, and fiction writing.

Here's some impressive news: Perry Zirkel '68 MA, '72 Ph.D., '76 JD, who re-



Writes Janet McMillan Rives, who this July will publish "On Horsebarn Hill: Poems," with cover art by Blanche Serban: "My father came to UConn as a professor of marketing in 1942. He eventually became the assistant dean of the School of Business. My family moved from Mansfield Center to the white farmhouse (next to the current Dairy Bar) in 1944, when I

was 6 months old. I spent my first nine years on Horsebarn Hill. In 1953, my family moved to 11 Eastwood Road, and in 1960, we moved to Tucson, Arizona, where my father became a vice president at the University of Arizona, his alma mater. I guess you can figure out that I've remembered my days on Horsebarn Hill my entire life!"

Snow Day

Icy air seeps under ill-fitted windows through which I see nothing but white — no maple tree, no stone wall, no church steeple, just pure white.

Bowls of corn flakes sit on our red Chromecroft dinette table while Mother stands at the sink, cigarette and Coke in hand. We listen to the Bob Steele show on WTIC from Hartford, listen as the Down Homers' country twang is interrupted by a reading of school closings: Tolland, Ashford, Coventry, Manchester, Willimantic, then finally, oh joy, our Storrs Grammar School.

Hooray! Snow day!



My sister (right) and me playing in the snow outside the house. This was probably taken in 1949.

1970s

Bob Rosen '70 (CLAS) was recently elected to a second two-year term to serve on the Amberley Village, Ohio, council. He was then selected by the council to serve as mayor.

Richard Formato '70 MS, '79 Ph.D., of Harwich, Massachusetts, recently co-authored a science fiction novel, "Node Riders," and a murder mystery, "Milo." Formato developed the central force optimization algorithm, widely used in engineering, science, and medicine, and invented variable Z<sub>0</sub> antenna technology.

Congrats to Wes Slate '72 (CLAS) on retiring



after a long career that included teaching, business, and public service, most recently as the city clerk in Beverly, Massachusetts. He and his wife, **Georgia Bills '79 (MA)**, are new grandparents of Jeremy John Slate and have lived in Beverly since 1981. ➔ Kudos to **Anne M. Hamilton '73 JD**, a former Hartford Courant journalist, for researching and writing “A Century’s Journey: Women at the University of Connecticut School of Law,” the fourth in the UConn School of Law’s series of short histories. The book explores the inspiring stories of many UConn Law alumnae. Hamilton details how the Hartford College of Law opened in 1921, advertising “evening classes for men and women,” a remarkable gesture just a year after women in the United States won the right to vote. The school’s co-founder, Caroline Lillard, worked with her husband, George, to establish the school and build its reputation. Still, women remained a tiny minority at the law school and in the legal profession for the next 50 years. The tide began to turn in the 1970s, and now women students outnumber men. ➔ **Daniel R. Robinson '74 JD**, who is a municipal court judge in Telluride, Colorado, writes with an update. “Although I am a third-generation native of rural Colorado, my memories of law school in Connecticut are among my fondest. My career as a community member, lawyer, and judge in western Colorado over the last 50 years has been quite successful. I attribute much of that success to the privilege of attending law school there.” ➔ United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut presented **Andy Bessette '75 (CLAS)** with its first George Bahamonde Lifetime Achievement Award. The award celebrates those with outstanding personal and

professional achievements who have dedicated themselves to philanthropy and community. Bessette, who is executive vice president and chief administrative officer at Travelers, is a member of UConn’s Board of Trustees and serves on UConn Health’s Board of Directors. He also is vice chairman of the Capital Region Development Authority and a member of the Board of Governors for Hartford Hospital. ➔ **Scott Prussing '75 (CLAS)** recently completed a successful second career as a novelist, writing more than two dozen novels in a variety of genres. He reports that his nine-book paranormal romance series, “The Blue Fire Saga,” is set in a mythical college in Connecticut (hmm) and has been downloaded more than 100,000 times on Amazon.



➔ **David Fetterman '76 (CLAS)** is pictured above with his family at the Times Square NASDAQ billboard announcing a recent honor. In December 2023, Fetterman was awarded the Global Impact Award by IAOTP (International Association of Top Professionals) for work highlighted in his book “Empowerment Evaluation and Social Justice: Confronting the Culture of Silence.” The award recognized his Feeding America-funded efforts to fight for food justice in the United States and his USAID-funded work to eliminate tuberculosis in India. He also has received a 2016 UConn Honors Dis-



Molly vs. Dyslexia

Inspired by her childhood struggles with dyslexia, **Krista Weltner '16 MFA** wrote and illustrated a picture book series about a girl named Molly who comes to terms with her dyslexia. Using storytelling techniques she developed in UConn’s Puppetry Arts program, Weltner shows Molly conversing with her personified dyslexia, a bumpy purple character named Lexi. During the three-part series, she discovers her diagnosis and learns how to advocate for herself. “When I was a kid, my dyslexia was something that I really did not like about myself,” Weltner says. “I felt isolated, anxious, and ashamed of myself. I felt very different and stupid. A lot of dyslexic people have a normal to above-average intelligence but often struggle with a fear they will be judged as stupid or less than. I hope that these books will help children who are going through it right now.” “Everyday Adventures with Molly and Dyslexia” is meant to be a teaching tool to help children examine their relationship with their learning differences. “The most impactful, profound part of a dyslexic person’s life is those vital years in elementary school when they are learning to read and write,” says Weltner. “I would like these books to support the emotional, often overlooked, side of growing up with dyslexia.” Weltner, who lives in Orlando, Florida, is also a puppet maker and filmmaker and has worked on two feature-length, stop-motion films, including “Wendell and Wild” by Netflix Studios. —GRACE MERRITT

tinguished Alumni Award and a 2008 Neag School of Education Outstanding Higher Education Professional Award. ➔ **Tom Morganti '76 (CAHNR)**, who lives and works in Avon, Connecticut, and is the

grandfather of two, reports that he has just published his 11th book, “M’yestyk.” It’s a memoir about his more than 40 years as a veterinarian in Connecticut. ➔ Congrats to **Vicki (Wollkind) Tesoro '77 (CLAS)** on being elected

to her fourth term as the first selectman of Trumbull. ➔ **Peter Emanuel Jr. '77 (ED)**, a private school educator who went on to earn a master’s in history, has published “Course Change: The Whaleship *Stonington* in the Mexican-American War.” Using the logbook of the whaleship *Stonington*, together with other primary and secondary sources, Emanuel spins the tale of the months the whaleship served as a gunship for the U.S. Navy during the Mexican-American War. ➔ **Patricia O’Connor '78 (NUR), '96 MS** writes with a life update: “I am so thankful to UConn for providing me with a career I have dearly loved. I have spent well over 40 years caring for people.” O’Connor was the first head nurse at Connecticut Hospice and spent many

years bringing hospice care to various communities in Connecticut. She went on to become a nurse practitioner in a primary care setting and capped off her career working in specialty palliative care in New Hampshire. She shares her career wisdom in a new book, “Navigating Life’s Final Journey: Conversations, Choices, Resources,” to “help educate, inform, and reassure people as they approach their end of life.”



➔ **Dennis S. Main '78 MBA** was recently reelected president of the board of directors of Avalonia Land

Conservancy, a nationally accredited regional land trust in New London County. He credits his MBA from UConn’s Center for Real Estate and Urban Economic Studies and his more than 40 years as a real estate broker for helping the land trust acquire and protect more than 2,000 acres. ➔ **Lisa C. Taylor '79 (CLAS), '81 MA** plans to launch a national book tour next year for her novel, “The Shape of What Remains.” She has written three poetry collections and two short-fiction collections, most recently “Impossibly Small Spaces.” She is the co-director of the Mesa Verde Writers Conference in Mancos, Colorado, where she lives with her husband, **Russ Taylor '80 (CLAS)**. She also teaches online for writers.com and serves on the board of the creative district in her small, mountain town. ➔ **Susan Packer Saposnik '79 (ED, SFA)** recently performed “Blue Rhapsody,” a piano concerto written for her by Michael Donovan. The world premiere took place last October with the Tri-County Symphonic Band in Marion, Massachusetts. In November, she performed the piece again with the Cape Community Orchestra on Cape Cod.

1980s



➔ The Society of Financial Service Professionals honored **Kevin Baldwin '81 (CLAS)** with the 2024 Ken Black Leadership Award. Baldwin is a founder and managing partner at B&L Financial Architects and has spent nearly 50 years in the financial services industry. In his spare time, Baldwin, of Hebron, Connecticut, likes to fly private and commercial airplanes.

➔ **Jeff Denman '82 MA** reports that he recently published his second book, “John Quincy Adams, Reluctant Abolitionist,” and is working on a third book about the plight of Quakers during the American Revolution.



➔ **Judge John D. Moore (Ret.) '83 JD** joined Pullman & Comley as a member of the Alternative Dispute Resolution practice group. He will focus on the mediation and arbitration of civil and family disputes. ➔ **Robert Bolgard '84 JD** shared a life update: “One of the best things that I’ve ever done was to get a law degree at UConn, attending mid-career at the night school. It helped me become a better trust officer and then vice president and regional manager at CBT and Fleet Bank until my retirement in 2000. Then I spent more than 18 years as an estate and trust attorney at Ericson, Scalise & Mangan in New Britain. I finally retired fully at age 84 and am now living in our former vacation home on a small lake in the Catskills in New York. Go Huskies!”



➔ **Glenn Marcella '89 (CLAS)** purchased his “Husky 6” vanity license plate last winter, confident of a sixth men’s basketball championship in the offing. This fan bleeds blue! As does his family: Wife **Liz '93 (CLAS)**





# CAPSTONE STUDENTS DESIGN THEMSELVES INTO COVETED TECH JOBS

If you’ve compared cell-phone costs at a Spectrum/Charter kiosk, played around on a display screen at a BMW dealer designing your own dream car, or compared features on a series of premium hot tubs, you’ve likely experienced the work of Reality Interactive in Middletown, Connecticut. The high-tech firm creates customer-focused, digital display technology experiences for Fortune 500 and other multinational companies, including BMW, Nintendo, Titleist, Behr Paint Company, and P.C. Richard & Son. “What we accomplish here is breathtaking,” says Jack Nork ’91 (CLAS), the company’s implementation director. “When I see the finished product, it is actually cooler than I ever thought. We have smart, highly educated employees who love to learn new things and then apply them.”

Last semester those employees included interns Deepthi Pai Manoor ’24 MS and Tharun Palla ’24 MS, two of 39 students who took part in a Reality Interactive–sponsored Capstone project for the School of Business’ master’s in business analytics and project management. Nork suspected that the company could both offer graduate students a hands-on experience in the real world and, in turn, expose the company to a talent pipeline. CEO Jim Ligotti agreed.

“Students loved the real-life experience of solving a business problem using data analytics,” says professor Sudip Bhattacharjee, who designed this course several years ago and mentored this group of students. They data mined massive amounts of digital display logs, he says, to find anomalies that negatively affected the customer experience. They worked closely with Reality Interactive reps, getting feedback and support and giving actionable insights.

“What was interesting to me was that every team approached the problem differently, and that gave us the opportunity to pick and choose the solutions we wanted to pursue,” says Nork. “It’s a win-win. UConn brings in top-notch, excited students to solve complex problems and bring solutions to Connecticut companies,” Nork says. “We want to continue our partnership with UConn so we can help students who can also help us. This program is really, really good. I want other people to know how good it is for students and businesses in Connecticut.”

“This close-knit, familial experience did more than just sharpen my technical skills,” says Manoor. “It imbued me with a passionate understanding of leadership and strategic innovation, pivotal for my future career milestones.” —CLAIRE HALL

From left at Reality Interactive: operations manager Ben Gadzik, Palla, Nork, and Manoor

and daughters Julia ’23 (CLAS), Olivia ’24 (ED), and Emma ’28 (CLAS) are along for the ride. ➔ **Jon Russo ’89 (BUS)**, who was a member of the Delta Chi fraternity and ROTC at UConn, was appointed to the advisory board of the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. He is the chief marketing officer and founder of B2B Fusion. ➔ **Tony Bertoldi ’89 (CLAS)** debunks common misperceptions about affordable housing in his new book “American Dream Come True.” Bertoldi, of Boston, Massachusetts, studied economics and real estate at UConn and is co-president of the affordable housing syndication company CREA.

## 1990s



➔ **Tim Bartlett ’90 (ED)** was named chief executive officer of the

Central Connecticut Coast YMCA following a nationwide search. A veteran YMCA professional who has already logged more than 34 years of service in the nonprofit world, he is a passionate community leader who has been recognized for his expertise in fundraising, community partnerships, collaborations, and volunteerism. Outside of work, he’s an avid sports, music, and cinema fan. He lives in Newtown, Connecticut, with his wife, Holly, a special education teacher, and has two adult children, Basil and Dylan. ➔ **Jason Calabrese ’93 (CLAS)** has published a book, “Boost Your Basketball IQ,” for players, coaches, and parents who want to gain some insights on the game and help sharpen players’ mental skills. He’s a senior executive at Ion Solar Pros in Middlebury, Connecticut.

➔ **Tara (Curtis) Mead ’94**

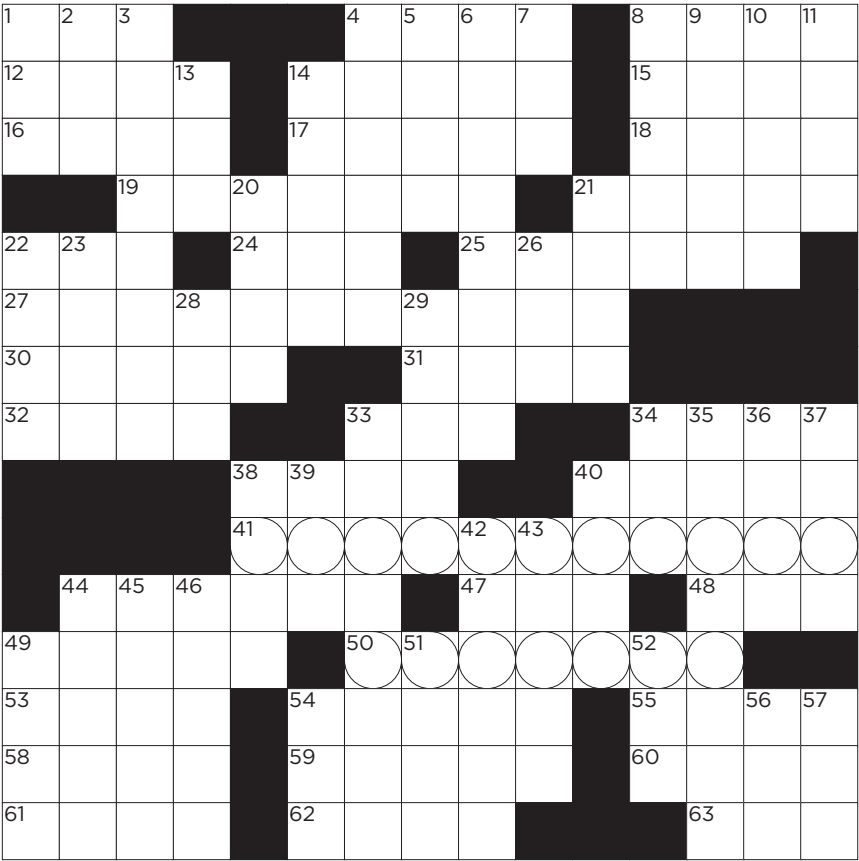
# COLLEGE MEMORIES

Elaine David ’68 (CLAS), her husband Carl, their son Frank, and their grandson Henry — all avid puzzlers — worked together to turn their hobby into a just-published book, “Little Grids for Big Kids: 24 Authentic Mini Crosswords for Young Solvers.” They made this one just for you.

## Across:

- 1 Fire remnant
- 4 Bring on board
- 8 Australian birds
- 12 Type of earring
- 14 Alumnae, e.g.
- 15 Longtime NCAAW basketball coach Auriemma
- 16 Pay to play
- 17 Surrounded by
- 18 Silver-tongued
- 19 With 10-down, a place on campus to relax
- 21 Casual collared shirts
- 22 Mrs., in Mexico
- 24 Formerly known as
- 25 Spring or summer
- 27 Storrs building named after the 71st governor
- 30 Indian tea region
- 31 Prefix for -biography or -pilot
- 32 At hand
- 33 Plum center
- 34 Money execs
- 38 Pakistan neighbor
- 40 Slack-jawed
- 41 Nutmegger’s residence
- 44 Sugar or ketchup container
- 47 Scooby—
- 48 Letter before tee
- 49 With 28-down, campus place to procure a sweet treat
- 50 UConn athletes since 1934 (previously called “Aggies”)
- 53 Ye — Shoppe
- 54 Cone-shaped tent
- 55 Place for a pothole
- 58 Proof of ownership
- 59 Agitates
- 60 Natural hair style
- 61 Bird that went extinct in the 1600s
- 62 Travelers’ stops
- 63 Charge

Henry Lin-David, Carl David, Elaine David, and Frank David



Solution: Pg 48

## Down:

- 1 “I get it!”
- 2 Ares, to Hera
- 3 Spicy taco topping
- 4 H.S. life skills class, for short
- 5 “That’s my cue!”
- 6 Lets
- 7 Humanities subj.
- 8 Some frozen waffles
- 9 — Yello (soft drink)
- 10 See 19-across
- 11 Weeps
- 13 Furry family member
- 14 Stork or crane
- 20 E pluribus —
- 21 El —, TX
- 22 — Lake, Storrs fixture near the chemistry building
- 23 What yeasted doughs do, hopefully
- 26 Winter hrs. at UConn
- 28 See 49-across
- 29 “The Office” actor Wilson
- 33 Roman temple
- 34 Tech used in some sci-fi films, for short
- 35 Goes head to head
- 36 Major work
- 37 Hardens, like jello
- 38 Disgusting
- 39 Sushi topping
- 40 Yours, in France
- 42 Old Ford failures
- 43 Some sodas
- 44 “The caveman diet”
- 45 Helped
- 46 Words to live by
- 49 Center named after a U.S. senator
- 51 Go — — smoke
- 52 Time period
- 54 Swimming + biking + running race, for short
- 56 Exist
- 57 A deer, a female deer





➤ UConn basketball legend, social justice reformer, author, two-time Olympic gold medalist, and Women’s Basketball Hall of Famer **Maya Moore Irons ’11 (CLAS), ’24 H** returned to the Gampel court to share hard-earned wisdom with graduates of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. “Living on a team is a way of life,” said Moore Irons, who gave practical tips for cultivating a team. “Wherever your journey brings you next, strive to bring that true winning-team way to whatever community you commit to, and you will end up experiencing the joy of living out your purpose.”

**(CLAS)** recently joined the Pennsylvania Association of Community Bankers as director of communications and marketing. She has an extensive background in communications, starting with an award-winning career in radio before segueing to public relations in 2008. Since then, she has worked in various sectors of the public relations field, including state government, health care, and higher education. ➤ Kudos to Vernon Public Schools superintendent **Joseph Macary ’94 (CLAS), ’16 Ed.D.** on being named the 2024 Connecticut Superintendent of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents. ➤ **Nicole Alioto ’96 MA, ’99 Ph.D.** returned to Storrs in March to speak on “How to Think Differently About Career and Technical Education” at a TEDxUConn event.



➤ **Omar Randall ’96 (CLAS)** was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps. A native of the Bronx, New York, he currently serves as the deputy commander at the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve and the U.S. Marine Corps Forces South in New Orleans. ➤ **Brandon Bailey ’96 (CLAS)** recently completed his doctoral degree in educational leadership from Pennsylvania Western University. He’s the director of educational services at Richland School District in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where he’s also been head football coach for the past 23 years. ➤ All rise for the Hon. **Rhea L. Moore ’98 (CLAS)**, who was recently sworn in as a municipal court judge in East Orange, New

Jersey. She previously served as outside counsel for the city with a practice that focused on workers’ compensation, employment, civil rights, civil litigation, and municipal court matters.

**2000s**  
➤ **David Franks ’00 (BGS)** was named VP of sales at Avtron Power Solutions, having previously been VP of sales and marketing for Stored Energy Holdings. Before embarking on his successful business career, Franks was an NFL offensive lineman for four years, playing for both the Cowboys and Seahawks. ➤ **Andrea Abbott ’00 (CLAS)** reports that she was hired as a STEM teacher with the Vail School District, which has four of the top 10 charter and public K–8 schools in Arizona.

➤ **Michael Alfano ’01 Ph.D.** was promoted to vice president for strategic initiatives at Sacred Heart University. He previously was vice president for strategic partnerships and dean of the Farrington College of Education and Human Development.



➤ **Cynthia Spitalny ’03 (CLAS)**, a marketing and strategy health and tech executive with more than 20 years of experience, recently joined XP Health as its chief marketing officer.

➤ Congrats to **Benjamin Fuller ’04 (SFA)** on being promoted to principal at Cornerstone Research, an economic and financial consulting firm, where he specializes in economic analysis of commercial litigation.



➤ Congrats to **Amanda Falcone ’05 (CLAS)**, public relations director for

Middlesex Health, on being named the 2023 Practitioner of the Year by the Public Relations Society of America Greater Connecticut Chapter. ➤ **Adam J. Lupino ’06 (CLAS)** was promoted to international representative for the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA) New England region, covering the six New England states and New York. Lupino has worked for LIUNA for more than 17 years, dealing primarily with policy and labor relations in the construction industry. ➤ **Zak Romanoff ’07 (CLAS)**, president of OMNI Food Sales, recently published “Death of a Broker: How a Brand Advocate Was Born.” The book is about the need for transparency and strong leadership in the food

industry and advises young professionals starting in a multitude of industries. “I would love to give back to UConn, a place that is very dear to my heart,” he says. “UConn gave me a home, a place where I was able to forge my identity and develop my interests.” ➤ The Hon. **Shanique D. Fenlator ’07 (CLAS), ’11 JD** of Hartford was elected to the Connecticut Bar Foundation’s James W. Cooper Fellows Program. Fellows are nominated by their peers based on their outstanding service to the profession and the larger community. Fenlator is an administrative law judge for the Connecticut Workers’ Compensation Commission in Hartford. ➤ **Nathaniel Nelson ’07 MA** recently



➤ Every year in June, classmates, friends, and family of **Sam Grad ’13 (BUS)** climb Mount Monadnock in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, to memorialize his life and untimely passing in 2014 from lymphoma. “The annual gathering of Sam’s Army is not only a tribute to a special person but an example of the deep bonds of friendship shared among fellow UConn alumni,” says **John Moore ’13 (CLAS)**.

Front, from left: **Mike Jacovino ’13 (ENG)** and **Chris Coccozza**. Rear from left: **John Moore ’13 (CLAS)**, **Harrison Holtz ’13 (BUS)**, and **Mike Giunta ’13 (CLAS)**



published his first children's book, "My Friend, Thomas Carl," about a cat waiting in an animal shelter for a new friend.



➔ **Beata (Hryniewicz) Harasim '08 (CAHNR), '12 Ph.D.**, a holistic and integrative doctor, completed a fellowship with the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists and is now the proud proprietor of Radiant Health and Wellness in West Hartford, Connecticut. ➔ Best wishes to **Tabitha (Banker) Demicco '09 (NUR)** and Louis J. Demicco III, who married in October at the Jonathan Edwards Winery in North Stonington, Connecticut. She's an RN case manager in community health at United Services in Mansfield, while he is the co-owner of a family business, Jewett City Greenhouses. They're both huge fans of the UConn men's and women's basketball teams. Go Huskies!

2010s

➔ **Richie Kremer '10 (CAHNR)** won the 2024 Emerging Leader Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Kremer has been superintendent at Hop Meadow Country Club in Simsbury for four years, following six years as an assistant there. Away from the course, he is an assistant cross-country coach at Simsbury High School and produced "Scrooge! The Musical" for his church. As a UConn student, he was pres-

ident of the student group participating in alternative spring break, providing hurricane and natural disaster relief. ➔ **Wendy Garvin Mayo '10 MS** of East Hartford reports that she recently published a book, "SHAPE Your Life: A 5-Step Blueprint for Sustainable Stress Management." She also recently launched Collaborative Cancer Care, a mental health practice curated to provide emotional support for cancer patients, cancer survivors, and families in Connecticut.



➔ Best wishes to **Alexander Kaiser '11 (CLAS)** and **Brittany (MacGregor) Kaiser '11 (NUR)** of Boston, Massachusetts, who married in October in Portland, Maine, before a crowd of UConn alums. They were both active in Greek life at Storrs and attended many of the same events on campus, but didn't get to know each other until they connected online and realized they lived on the same block in Boston! She is a cardiac transplant nurse, and he's a health care IT consultant. ➔ **Kris Cricchi '11 (CLAS)**, controller at Guilford Savings Bank, was given the 2024 New Leader in Banking award by the Connecticut Bankers Association.



➔ Congratulations to **Colin McDonough '12 (CLAS)** and **Maria Belén Ruiz '13 (CLAS)** on their wedding, which was attended by many



➔ **Emily Getler '12 (NUR)** and husband **Chris Rago '12 (NUR)**, of Boston, Massachusetts, shared happy news: "This is Teddy Rago, 5 months old, our next-generation Husky."

UConn alum friends.

➔ **Abigail Vacca '12 (CLAS), '14 MSW**, of Simsbury, recently launched the podcast "Global Treasures" on Apple Podcasts and other major platforms. Vacca says she and her co-host already have listeners in more than 35 countries. ➔ Fido just got an upgrade. **Elkin Taveras '12 (CAHNR)** and **Greg Dohan '14 (BUS)** recently teamed up to launch an unusual new business venture: private jet travel for pets. Their new company, Avolar Pets, flies dogs, cats, and other pets alongside their owners in the cabin of the jet, not tucked below with luggage. Pet owners sit on leather seats with access to an open bar and a light menu while Fido gets a complimentary bandana and doggie treats. ➔ **Timothy Watt '14 (ED), '16 MA** won the Connecticut 2023 Lights On Afterschool Teacher of the Year Award. Watt, a third

grade teacher at Mayberry Elementary School in East Hartford, joined Thrive Afterschool last year, immediately making an impact on the program and his students. ➔ **Christina Edwards '15 (CLAS)** writes that she has launched a business career consulting agency, C3 Career Consulting, designed to help women and people of color transition into jobs that maximize their income. She has more than 11 years of human resources experience in the technology and aerospace industry. ➔ **Shannon Cowles '15 (BUS)** reports that she was recently promoted to regional sales manager at Otis Elevator Company, where she supervises account managers in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, and Washington, D.C. She works remotely from her home in Naples, Florida. She says she has attended career fairs at UConn through her



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company and looks forward to participating in future events as an alum.



➔ **Melissa (Myers) Worth '15 (NUR)**, of Hudson, New Hampshire, writes with a life update. "I met my husband, **Justin Worth '14 (PHAR), '17 Pharm.D, '17 MBA**, during my sophomore year at UConn when we both lived

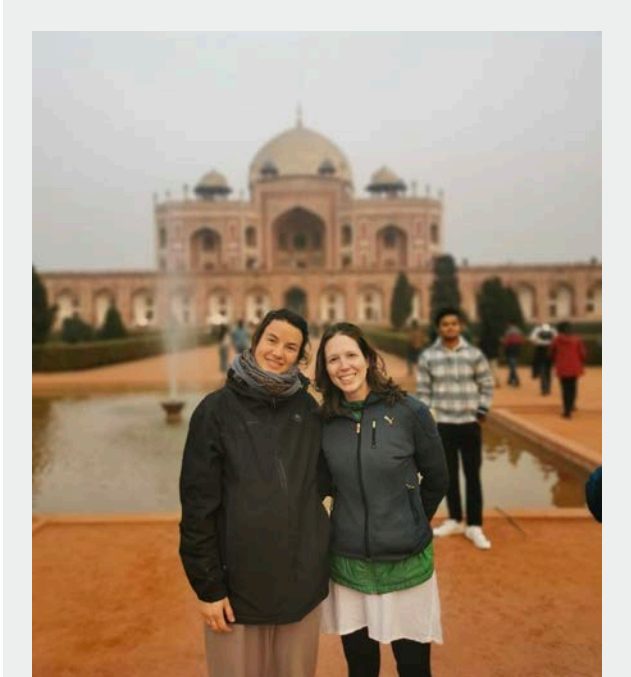
in Russell Hall (Northwest dorms) in 2012. We got married in 2019 and welcomed our baby girl, and potential future Husky, Hannah, in April 2023. We also live with our cat, Russell. We are so thankful to UConn for not only our education but for bringing us together. Go Huskies!" ➔ Congrats to **Sarah Ricciardi Russell '15 JD** and **Nicole B. Coates '11 (CAHNR), '15 JD** on being promoted to partner at Silver Golub & Teitell law firm. Both are members of the firm's Medical Malpractice and Serious Personal Injury groups and are based in the Stamford office.



➔ Congrats to **Kimberly Green Reynolds '16 MBA**, of Atlanta, Georgia, on being named chief procurement officer for Coca-Cola Bottlers' Sales & Services Company. ➔ **John Ewen '16 (CLAS)**, director of athletic communications at Manhattanville College, was named to the 2023 30 Under 30 list of College Sports Communicators. ➔ Best wishes to **Dennis Le '19 (CLAS)** and **Emily (Jarnutowski) Le '17 (CLAS)**, who tied the knot in December.

2020s

➔ **Danielle Erickson '23 JD** joined Pullman & Comley as an associate in the firm's Trusts and Estates practice. At UConn Law, she worked in the school's tax clinic, was president of the Family Law Association, and V.P. of the Women Law Students' Assoc., earning the 2023 National Association of Women Lawyers Outstanding Law Student Award.



➔ You never know where you'll run into a fellow Husky. **Sundari Birdsall '21 MPH, MSW** (right) was surprised and delighted to discover that Paula Wunsch, who spent a semester at UConn as a study abroad student, was staying at the same hostel as she was during a trip to Delhi, India, in January. "Paula's UConn Rec shirt was a familiar sight in a foreign country!" she says. Birdsall, who is a student wellness counselor at the Yale School of Medicine, says the pair shared nostalgic memories of fitness classes at UConn Rec and trips they took through the UConn Outdoor Education Center. "UConn connections go beyond borders!"





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