Surviving “Survivor”

Alum Chanelle Howell wanted her very presence on Season 42 of “Survivor” to make a difference. It did.
Destination: Dairy Bar

Full-time research professor and part-time photographer Milton Levin ’04 Ph.D. captured a father and sons paramotoring onto Horsebarn Hill from Bolton, Connecticut. John Dean ’89 (BUS), right, Kevin ’21 (BUS), left, and Jason ’26 (SPA) were seeking a half gallon of chocolate peanut butter ice cream and three spoons. For more photos, visit s.uconn.edu/fliers.
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Jen Cote, a UConn grad, decided to go on this amazing adventure, and then did it — and now she’s a park ranger on the other side of the country.

FROM THE EDITOR

HUSKIES IN THE WILD
This summer, my colleague Jen Cote and her family were at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming hiking a fairly remote trail around Jenny Lake when they heard someone call out, “Hey did you go to UConn?” The park ranger approaching on the other side of the trail, who had spied Cote’s UConn T-shirt, turned out to be none other than Hannah Bacon ’15 (CLAS), who made headlines in our magazine (“3,081 Miles,” Fall 2021) and across social last year when a job loss prompted her to not find a new job, but instead walk across the country solo to raise money for climate action. Cote remembered Bacon’s story well and admits, “We were a little starstruck.”

And they had a lot of questions for Bacon. “She told us about her trek cross country, which was great for my kids. It’s one thing to be told you can do or be anything. But it’s another thing to see it.” It was particularly inspirational, Cote says, because Bacon felt like one of them. “She’s local, a UConn grad, she decided to go on this amazing adventure, and then did it — and now she’s a park ranger on the other side of the country.”

Cote says they talked about Bacon throughout the rest of their trip. “I didn’t expect to connect with someone from UConn — especially in the middle of the woods in Wyoming!” And all because of a UConn shirt.

We love stories of encounters like these and random photos of UConn gear in the wild. Please share them with us so we can include them in our upcoming “In the Wild” feature in the UConn Nation section of the magazine.
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, email me at lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu, or send by regular mail to UConn Magazine Letters, 34 N. Eagleville Rd., Storrs, CT 06268-3144. Here’s a sampling of comments on our last issue, edited for clarity and length. Find more at magazine.uconn.edu.

“There Was Suddenly a Fatwa on My Head”

“...I read with some interest that one...” Sandi Bradley Simpson, via Twitter

“Congratulations!”

“...and the Class of 2026...” UConn Magazine, I enjoyed the most recent edition especially Leigh Montville’s article in The Daily Campus. Montville still has much to teach us...” Carol Gigi Stanley

The UConn love stories keep com- ing — find the latest on our website, including this issue’s spotlighted tale from Chuck Tennyson ’88 (CLAS), ’96 MBA and Donna-Marie Tenneyson ’95 MBA, whose kids (all Huskies, too) insisted they share their Storrs-centric love story, along with them (above) and some photos.

“The Giants Among Us”

“...a classic!” Wallace Moreland

“I Wouldn’t Have Listen- ted to Me”

“I wouldn’t have listened to me” Montville’s mentoring ways are remi- niscent of those of the truly best people I have met in academia. Or anywhere. He lives a life of balance like few people I know.” Paul Tennyson ’88 (CLAS), Chuck Tennyson’s father.

“...we publish to...” The Daily Campus.

“...and life-transformative educational experiences, and their personal and professional fulfillment.” Arthur M. Horwitz ’76 (CLAS), West Bloomfield, Michigan, via email

“...and at UConn...” University of Connecticut

“...this kid listened.” Arthur M. Horwitz

“...the Board of Trustees. “I will...” Radenka Maric, an acclaimed innova- tor in clean energy technology whose leadership as a vice president helped propel UConn to new heights in re- search funding, has been selected as the University’s 17th president. Maric has served as UConn’s interim president since Feb. 1, 2022, a peri- od in which she raised its national pro- file by hosting leaders of several top federal agencies for on-campus visits to demonstrate UConn’s successes in various areas of research and academia. She brought a highly student-centric focus to her interim presidency and says she will continue and expand those efforts in concert with others at UConn to prioritize student success and inclusion, access to mentoring and life-transformative educational experiences, and their personal and professional fulfillment.

“The Class of 2026”

“...the most recent...” The Daily Campus.

“The Giants Among Us”

“The University of Connecticut is the honor of a lifetime. I am proud and humbled to have your confidence and your trust,” Maric told the Board of Trustees. “I will work every day to continue to earn it, as well as that of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, patients, and many supporters.”

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FATHER-DAUGHTER DANCE

Marc D’Amelio ’91 (CLAS) describes himself as a man without a lot of hobbies. But he helped his daughters, Dixie, 21, and Charli, 18, rise to TikTok stardom, moved cross-country, part- nered with Abercrombie & Fitch on a new line of branded apparel, became a reality TV star, and won Best New Un- scripted TV Series at the MTV Movie Awards for “The D’Amelio Show,” all in just three years during a pandemic. And while he may have moved to Hollywood, D’Amelio still has hometown and Husky pride. The native Norwalker’s next project, branded D’Amelio Huskies Collective, was created to help UConn student-athletes develop and control their own name, image, and likeness. We checked in with him while he was back home in Norwalk in July.

You are known as a true-blue Husky. When I went there, UConn was an underdog — it was a school that was affordable. I transferred from community college and it’s almost as if I grew with the school. I remember telling my grandmother I was going to UConn, and she thought I was going to Canada! And now when you say UConn, there’s not a person who follows colleges who doesn’t know you.

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And my love of the City of Norwalk is so important to me, for similar reasons. We’re surrounded by all these affluent towns, and sometimes the schools get a bad rap. When we had the opportunity to move to Westport or Darien, we came back here to Nor- walk. I’m loyal in that way. And that’s the same way I feel about UConn. If I can create a buzz about the University of Connecticut, if I can use my plat- form to do that, I’ll do it. I do think sometimes people who follow me for Dixie and Charli information go, “Aw, he’s talking about the University of Connecticut again!”

You were a DJ at Huskies. What kind of music did you play? R&B and hip-hop. It happened as kind of a fluke. It was one of those long weekends where everyone came back on Sunday. The manager said, “We have such a crowd, I wish we had some music,” and I said, “This kid has all these records, I can go grab ‘em,” and then we performed, and the place went wild. The manager said, “Do you want to work here?” And I ended up becoming the Thursday night DJ.

Tell us a little about the D’Amelio Huskies Collective. What I’m trying to do is create a personal brand de- velopment collective, where we bring not just the best basketball players, the best football players, but have a diverse collective — I want to have at least one student from every sport and help them develop deals with compa- nies.

Your daughter Charli is one of TikTok’s biggest stars. How did you feel when she first became internet famous? I was comfort- able with social media. I grew up in a single-parent household, and I had an abundance of freedom. I never abused that freedom. With that said, I know that a lot of parents rightfully worry about the influence of social media. I started off with the girls on Mac computers with cameras on them, then iPhones, and then we gradually got into social media with the un- derstanding that you have a personal brand, and what you put out there could potentially be out there forever. I do think it’s really important now, for whatever you’re doing, to be involved in social media. People say “I graduated from Harvard or Yale,” and I think “Wow, they must be really smart.” And if someone has two mil- lion followers on Instagram, I think, “What do they do?”

Do you have any concerns about privacy? I can tell you a hundred stories about how we’ve had to navi- gate through the notoriety. People knocking on our door at all hours of the day, caravans of kids rolling up, getting swatted — someone delivering a hundred pizzas to our house. All those things happen.

But most of the interactions we have with the public are incredible — little girls crying when they see Charli. I try to remind my kids what they were like when they had their first interaction with someone they idolized. They’re really good. They have a clothing brand called Social Tourist, and we opened a store with Abercrombie & Fitch. There were like 300 people out front, and they sat and had a personal interaction, sometimes a minute or longer, with every single person there.

What is most fun about your fami- ly’s life now? It’s so surreal, it’s just nonstop cool stuff and I’m constantly pinching myself. Seeing my daughter Dixie perform at Madison Square Garden was pretty cool. And winning the MTV Unscripted award as a family — I grew up with MTV, and to get that popcorn award was pretty cool.

MTV! Since you brought it up: Beavis or Butthead? Oh man. Probably Beavis. They’re both amazing.

MTV is such a cultural icon. Growing up in the 80s, when MTV first started, from Michael Jackson to Aerosmith — and Run-DMC put hip-hop on the map — that represented culture in general. It was such a big part of my life. Now for my kids, there are hundreds of places. YouTube, social media. A show on Netflix. A show on Hulu. They have to go every-where. I don’t know how they navigate through all the streaming services, all the social media platforms. It’s pretty wild how they get their culture. —KIM KRIEGER

Peter Morenus
Almonds or grilled free-range chicken breast with quinoa, Brussels sprouts, kien, avocado, and pistachios.

Mazur shows off his “performance and recovery” spin on the character board.

The Kitchen QB

Jordan Mazur ’12 (CAHNR) dreamed of making the National Football League when he graduated from UConn, and he has accomplished that goal with the San Francisco 49ers.

No, you won’t see him on TV with a jersey and helmet as a player — Mazur works behind the scenes, helping the players on the field stay in top shape as the director of nutrition for the NFC West team. “I oversee every player’s nutrition and have an individualized meal plan for each of them,” says Mazur, a native of Suffield, Connecticut. “I monitor body weight and composition and, along with our sports medicine team, look at a player’s blood work for micronutrient, vitamin, and mineral levels.”

Then he uses the data to customize what each player eats, working with the team chefs and cafeteria staff on what is served during training camp, on practice, recovery, and game days, at the team hotel, and even on the plane to remote locations.

“The bottom line is that food is meant to be enjoyed, and there are many aspects to it — social, emotional, community, religious, and cultural. It’s about balance and moderation. I preach an 80–20 approach — 80 percent of the time you should be eating what you need to fuel your body and 20 percent of the time, eat the food you enjoy.”

He admits to the occasional ham and ice cream (UConn Dairy Bar banana chocolate chip is his favorite flavor: “Don’t knock it ‘til you try it.”)

He knows that people who see him with those foods tend to question whether a dietitian should be eating such things. “But if these are foods you enjoy, it’s OK to have them in moderation,” he says.

Maybe you have a couple slices of pizza instead of a whole pie. Don’t finish the whole pint of ice cream. It all depends on what your goals are. You have to listen to your body and know when you are full and when you are hungry, and have an intuitive eating approach.” —MIKE ENRIGHT

THE BOOK JUGGLER

Management professor Nora Madjar was a speedy reader in her native Bulgarian and says she delighted in learning to read in English because it let her slow down and better absorb the material. Now, she toggles between the two languages when listening to autobiographies in her work and fiction while exercising or turning pages for pleasure before bed.

Since the recent research confirmed assumptions that women pay a higher career price for remote-work interruptions than their male counterparts, is trying to find a balance like the rest of us — she finds associating different genres with contexts helps her keep them straight and saving fiction for workouts motivates her to move more to find out what happens next.


I enjoyed the story of this Nobel Prize–winning American biochemist on multiple levels and learned a lot about CRISPR gene-editing and the creation of mRNA vaccines. Isaacson explores the scientific process; the competition vs. collaboration amonges among male and female scientists; the rush to publish in journals; the importance of funding, and collaborations, and value systems; and the lag between findings and practical applications. But more than that, the fascinating story of Doudna’s path and how work affects her life allowed me to reflect on my own experience as an academic and scientist.

Alone Time: Four Seasons, Four Cities, and the Pleasures of Solitude” by Stephanie Rosenbloom

A pile of books on my nightstand, but I’m particularly looking forward to this one about traveling alone to Paris, Istanbul, Florence, and New York during four different seasons. The book initially appealed to me because I love traveling with my family and am looking forward to a trip to Europe and my home country of Bulgaria with a stopover in Istanbul. Coincidentally, I managed to squeeze in a short, solo day trip to Florence during a recent work trip to Italy. I thoroughly enjoyed it and expect the book will help me revisit the experience — and maybe I will be convinced to find more alone time on my travels.
LEO CAN HANDLE IT

From behind the wheel of a limo, Leo Lachut ’89 (CLAS) has seen a lot of things. Couples on the first day of marriage. Couples celebrating 50 years of marriage. Rock stars, movie stars, sports stars. Prom kids, awards season revelers, concertgoers, concert headliners, and many jet-lagged executives. But only once has he met the same bride twice.

“I pulled up to the house and the mother of the bride comes out and says, ‘Leo? I’m like, ‘How do you know me?’ She says, ‘You drove my daughter the first time she got married’!”

On the way to the church, the bride jokingly asked if they should share her secret with the groom. Lachut told her he’d have to keep mum. “There’s a privacy issue that is comparable across fields,” he says with a laugh.

Training consisted of driving around the door. “In my thousands of weddings,” he says, “I’ve never lost a bride.” Recognizing his unique skills, the company has made a habit of putting reassuring his passengers that everything will be OK. He’ll swing back for the rings. The parents will be found. “There’s huge overlap in people skills,” he says of his two careers. More than once he’s arrived at a wedding venue only to have the bride tell him to keep going, she can’t do it. He’ll talk quietly with her, urging deep breaths and giving her time to settle her emotions. When she’s ready, he opens the door. “In thousands of weddings,” he says, “I’ve never lost a bride.”

Clients, too, appreciate his steady demeanor. “I can solve a Rubik’s Cube blindfolded.”

Lachut on sensitive jobs, such as Make-A-Wish events for sick children and their families. “Give it to Leo,” they say at the office. “Leo can handle it.”

On being asked to share a fun fact for the Hartford Business Journal 2022 “40 under 40” interview:

“I can solve a Rubik’s Cube blindfolded.”

Operations and information management professor David Bergman, Hartford Business Journal, Aug. 15, 2022

On forcing future lawyers to disclose information about sealed convictions, juvenile cases, or arrests:

“It’s very unlikely that the information that is produced is going to predict who will later engage in misconduct.”


On Shinzo Abe, Japan’s longest-serving prime minister, who was assassinated in July:

“His personal vision for rewriting Japanese history, of a glorious past, created a real problem in East Asia, which will linger. It also divided Japanese society even further over how to approach its own responsibility for wartime actions carried out in the name of the emperor.”

History professor Alexis Dudden, The New Yorker, July 9, 2022

On the much larger Andromeda galaxy colliding with and devouring the Milky Way — in about 5 billion years:

Astrophysics professor Chiara Mingarelli, The Atlantic, Aug. 17, 2022

On keeping some small purchases secret from your spouse:

“We find that when people engage or imagine engaging in this secret consumption activity, they feel a little guilty. And so then they’re driven to want to invest back in the relationship. People are actually benefiting in the long run.”

Marketing professor Danielle Brick, medium.com, Aug. 28, 2022

On why it’s so hard to change people’s minds:

“People form opinions based on emotions, such as fear, contempt, and anger, rather than relying on facts.”

Human development and family sciences professor Keith M. Belizzi, The Conversation, Aug. 11, 2022

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EDCI 2100: POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Who is the “public” in “public education”? Future teachers in this class tease apart that question, using history and current events to examine the inequities in our educational systems and to posit real-world fixes.

The Instructor: At just 4 years old, Violet Jiménez Sims ’02 (SFA), ’05 MA, ’11 6th Year told her mother she wanted to “be one of the little people that lived inside the television.” Today, she laughs and says she’s learned that no one lives inside a TV, and instead of being an actress, she spends most of her time in front of a different audience: college students.

“Good teachers have to be good actors,” Sims says. “You have to be entertaining enough to capture students’ attention and use improv skills sometimes when things don’t go right.”

Her path took a turn from fine arts to education during her senior year at UConn, when she was homecoming royalty representing the Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center. “As part of that process I met a lot of people on campus,” she says. “One thing led to another, and there was an opportunity in the Dean of Students’ office.”

Sims took the role and quickly knew she was on to something. She liked working with students. After earning her master’s, she taught Spanish and ESL (English as a Second Language) at Connecticut public high schools in New Britain and Manchester before becoming an administrator at a Montessori magnet school in Hartford.

“There was nothing else I had done before that seemed so impactful to individuals,” she says of teaching. Now an assistant clinical professor in the Neag School of Education, Sims teaches “Power, Privilege, and Public Education” as a way to remedy an issue she saw frequently in public schools. “Equity work, diversity and inclusion — there were a lot of people in the field who just did not have any training connected to that,” Sims says.

Filling that gap when teachers are already leading a classroom is “almost a little too late,” she says, and that’s why she wants to help train students from the beginning.

Class Description: “We talk about educational equity and justice — the historical, social, cultural, philosophical, and legal frameworks of education — and connect it to current events,” Sims says.

Categorized as both a general education and service learning course, it gives students an introduction into schooling in America while encouraging them to go out and experience it firsthand. By the end of the course, students pick an education topic to center an advocacy project around.

But first, students must understand the development and structure of education. As with most courses, there’s plenty of assigned readings, podcasts, and guest speakers. But many points are driven home through reflection exercises. One early assignment asks students to evaluate their own K-12 education in a five-page narrative. Students are often left surprised, Sims says. They’ll pinpoint things like dress codes, school demographics, and teachers, evaluating how those may impact, you are constantly learning about it,” she says. “And in order to actually be good at it, you have to be extremely reflective at all times.”

Teaching Style: Collaborative. Sims says she likes to shape the class with the students taking it each semester. And she’s intentional about it, from the projects she picks to how she addresses the class. Whether she’s listening to groups discussing a reading or reaching out via email, she often refers to students as friends.

“I want students to feel comfortable. I don’t see a hierarchy to the knowledge. I happen to have a longer amount of time on this earth than them, but my knowledge isn’t in any way superior to theirs.”

She’ll provide materials and facilitate a discussion but really lets the students decide how they let the information sink in. “I try to co-construct instruction with students,” Sims says. She hopes to promote one of the most important values in her class: honesty. Sims knows it can be hard to dive deep and understand situations from other perspectives. But it all starts with open dialogue.

“I’ll have people share all sides of the spectrum, from students who have experienced discrimination in different ways to ones who grew up in very rural, conservative places. I want my students to speak up if perspectives are clashes for them or they just want to know more.”

Why We Want to Take It Ourselves: Being prepared to get on the teaching stage means knowing your potential audience of students — and yourself. That’s one of the main reasons, two years after taking it, Emily Gunzburg ’22 (ED) says it’s still her favorite class.

“Students who take this course learn who they are and how their identity impacts the way that school systems exist either inside the classroom as educators or outside of the classroom as taxpayers and potential future parents,” she says.

Gunzburg plans to become a teacher and see how understanding her own privilege has already helped her engage students during her senior year teaching experience in Manchester, Connecticut, public schools. “Explain- ing privilege to fourth graders can be very difficult at times. But I think because I went through a semester of understanding it myself I was able to aid in some sort of recognition that I hope will help them down the line.”

And that’s one of Sims’ main goals through this class. “If we have reflective practitioners who understand how they enter a space and how to be responsive to everyone else in that space, I think they will be prepared for whatever changes.” — CAMILA VALLEJO ’19 (CLAS)
UCONN NOW

OFF CAMPUS

Summer School

UConn Marine Sciences Ph.D. student Tyler Griffin records the salinity and temperature of a tidal creek with University of Albany undergraduate Mya Darsan as part of a Research Experiences for Undergraduates program collaboration between Mystic Aquarium and UConn Avery Point that is funded by the National Science Foundation.
Our Students

UCONN’S TENTH TRUMAN SCHOLAR IS A HUSKY AND A CYPRIOI

Irene Soteriou ’23 (CLAS) has an easy presence, a quick laugh, and a fondness for whipped cream on her pancakes—which makes her seem pretty much like your average 21-year-old college student. In many respects she is, but in others, not so much.

Soteriou was born shortly after her parents, Julia and Marios, came to this country from the Eastern Mediterranean island nation of Cyprus. Growing up in Middletown, Connecticut, Soteriou says, “I was all girl. I loved wearing dresses with sparkles, and my favorite toy was an American Girl doll named Lydia.” And then she laughs, adding, “I remember in preschool I wanted to grow up to be a princess.”

In the intervening years, the sparkles in her wardrobe have pretty much gone by the wayside, and Lydia has been put away for safekeeping. Soteriou’s new career goals center on justice and human rights—decidedly more impressive than any run-of-the-mill fairytale princess. One thing that has remained a constant for the graduate of East Catholic High in Manchester, Connecticut, is her commitment to family, both here and abroad. She and her younger brother Constantinos traveled to Cyprus every summer with their parents to visit grandparents and other relatives. “I love it there,” she says, “but I can’t imagine how different my life would be if that’s where I’d grown up.”

Soteriou spent much of this past summer in Cyprus, traveling from village to village interviewing Cypriot refugees. “I was speaking with folks who lost their homes in the 1974 Turkish invasion. It’s tragic because many of these refugees will likely pass away without ever having the opportunity to regain their homes.”

She wants to stop human rights violations, particularly in the Middle East. “I don’t see a lot of [human rights] decisions that I holistically agree with, and I think there’s a need to find a different way of doing things; there’s a need for a shift in how we engage with the rest of the world. It’s up to my generation to do that. We craft the future for ourselves, so it’s up to us to do better.”

She hopes her unusually styled pre-law double major of statistics and cognitive science will come into play here. “I believe that there is still so much untapped potential for fields like cognitive science to revolutionize the ways in which we craft more carefully informed and targeted approaches to conflict prevention, crisis resolution, and survivor rehabilitation,” she says. “My hope is that entering the foreign policy realm with the robust understanding of brain and behavior that I am gaining through my studies at UConn, along with the analytical tools that I am developing in my statistics classes, will enable me to lend certain unique strengths and perspectives to the table.”

Soteriou’s impressive combination of scholarship and activism has earned her extraordinary accolades. In 2021, she was named a Newman Civic Fellow, and in the spring of 2022 she added the designation of Truman Scholar, marking only the 10th time since 1996 that a UConn student has won the prestigious honor, which recognizes future leaders in public service.

Among her many student commitments, she serves as speaker of the Undergraduate Student Government, and is founder and president of the UConn Human Rights Symposium. She also founded and serves as executive director of the Student Coalition for Refugees and contributes as a student representative on the President’s Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility. This past year she joined UConn’s fourth cohort of Bold Scholars—a program that fosters leadership skills in young women. “Bold is the best thing I’ve done at UConn,” she says of the two-year program students enter in their junior year. “It’s about building strong relationships with ambitious women from a number of different fields.”

The program’s director, Liza Boritz ’03 (SFS), ’22 Ph.D., calls Soteriou “amazing” and notes how at a weekend spring retreat, “her energy, passion, and sense of humor were infectious for her peers and me. It’s hard not to be inspired by her words and her work.”

At all the accolades, Soteriou says she continues to ground herself in family advice. Cheering her on from Cyprus as she prepared for her Truman Scholar interview, her paternal grandfather, Kostas, told her she was “stubborn, but in a good way.” —SHEILA FORNAY ’03 (SOEC), ’06 LM.D.

Amid all the accolades, Soteriou says she continues to ground herself in family advice. Cheering her on from Cyprus as she prepared for her Truman Scholar interview, her paternal grandfather, Kostas, told her she was “stubborn, but in a good way.” —SHEILA FORNAY ’03 (SOEC), ’06 LM.D.

Our Librarian

Edwina Whitney (1868–1970) was the second and longest-serving head librarian at UConn, then Connecticut Agricultural College. Upon retiring in 1934, she earned the rank of emeritus librarian and an honorary Master of Letters—the only honorary degree UConn awarded an employee during its first century of existence. The Edwina Whitney Residence Hall, still an active residence hall, was built in 1938.

Whitney’s connection to the University ran deep. She was born in a small white house next to Mirror Lake. Old Whitney Hall, named after her father, became the first major campus building in 1881. Hired by UConn in 1900, she worked solo in a cramped two-room library, its 8,000 books illuminated only by kerosene lamps. By the time she retired, the library was electrified and its collection had quadrupled in size. These improvements reflected what Whitney saw firsthand: UConn’s rise from country farmstead to premier state university.

For her 100th birthday, UConn President Homer D. Babbidge presented her with a plaque (above) and a cake with 100 candles. She even received birthday greetings from President Lyndon B. Johnson and Connecticut Gov. John Dempsey. —MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ
At torrents of rain pour down over the thin outdoor shack covering us at an uptown smoothie bar, my notebook is drenched, my phone is getting wet, and so are we. “It’s A-OK,” says Chanelle Howell ’14 (CLAS). “I’ve seen much worse.” Of course she has. She was on season 42 of “Survivor.”

First airing in 2000, “Survivor” is the granddaddy of reality shows. Originally intended to be a challenge of survival in the wild, the game has evolved into “100% a social experiment, unequivocally,” says Howell. But there are still plenty of physical challenges.

I should know. I, too, have been immersed in “Survivor” of late. From my couch.

I recently discovered the show and have been consuming as much as I can to make up for 22 years of lost time. I flew across the country for this opportunity to talk with Howell and I am wondering about so many things. But first and foremost, I wonder why our smoothies are taking so long. Howell is unfazed. One of her big gains from “Survivor,” she says, is understanding the principle of patience. Back in New York now, she’s decked out in stylish running gear, with long hair, manicured nails, and her purple “Survivor” buff wrapped around her wrist, because she thought I would appreciate it. I did. Howell is even more beautiful in person than she was on my TV screen.

I work through my hunger-stoked lightheadedness and pull my frizzed-out hair away from my face to get started on our interview, smoothie or no smoothie. I am curious if she views the show differently, as a fan who has now seen the sausage getting made. Howell says she still loves “Survivor,” she just sees it through a new lens.

“I view it now as more of a production versus a natural organic experience — which is completely fine, because it’s not. We are not in a plane crash that goes down in the middle of the ocean and forces us to survive. I will never forget when I first started the show and we pulled up in the boat onto the
beach and there is a sea of hundreds of cameras and I was like, ‘OK, this is massive.’”

Our smoothies arrive and with them the blazing sun comes back, causing black eye makeup to sweat down my face. Howell’s makeup and hair stay put. She’s made for TV, and I have a feeling she will be a part of many more “massive” experiences. She doesn’t complain at all in these extreme city temperatures (95 degrees in the shade) and never once glances down at her phone. She seems to be truly in the moment, something people spend a lifetime searching for. And that will last longer than any prize money — and many, many blindsides.

**CHALLENGE:** A pandemic hits and Howell gets furloughed from her job at a consulting firm.

**REWARD:** Central Park turns out to be a good spot for running hills and practicing fire-starting skills.

**BLINDSIDE:** Once on the show, she realizes you can train all you want for the physical strength and survival skills, but what really matters is your mental game.

Howell trained hard for all aspects of “Survivor.” After hours of demanding physical workouts, she says, “I would practice making fire in Central Park, I would go find a rock and get my little flint.” She made sure the fires were small. “I’m not trying to get arrested before going on ‘Survivor.’”

And while Howell, a communications major and human rights minor, read books like “Can’t Hurt Me: Master Your Mind and Defy the Odds” by former Army Ranger/Navy SEAL David Goggins to ready herself, she found she was unprepared for how much she would evolve mentally.

“Significant parts of my personality have changed coming out of the show. Confidence. I used to be someone who played very small whenever I walked into a space … versus now I’m going to show up as I am, I’m going to take up space. I’m going to be my full self.”

It’s the moments like this I want to shout, “I’m telling you, you did not lose!” I mean, here is a woman who can now make fire from flint, made lifelong friends, kept her dream job, got a free trip to Fiji, and gained mega confidence.

**CHALLENGE:** Get noticed in a group of people who are all trying to get noticed.

**ADVANTAGE:** Howell learned to stand out from the crowd after transferring from Eastern to UConn.

**BLINDSIDE:** It turns out everyone on “Survivor” is an uber-extrovert.

> “I think that I’m a pretty personable person, but once they put you in a room with other extroverts, you’re like, ‘Damn.’”

Very early in her season Howell discovered some contestants had almost magical social skills. So she channeled some magical Husky thinking. After transferring to UConn from a smaller university, she says she learned the importance of significance, of wanting to be a part of something bigger than herself. “It showed me you can do more.”

Talking to me for UConn Magazine is exciting and feels “full circle,” she says. “When I was back at UConn would I in a thousand years have thought I would be where I am right now? No! Not nearly!”

**CHALLENGE:** This season “Survivor” made everyone work for food and supplies, no freebies on rice or gear.

**ADVANTAGE:** Howell had experience roughing it and had even killed a chicken when volunteering in Africa.

**BLINDSIDE:** Unlike in previous seasons, there were no chickens to kill.

> During her time at UConn, Howell volunteered to work at an orphanage in Cameroon, Africa, with a group called UConn Empower. “It was one of those formative experiences that I put on the same level as ‘Survivor.’ It significantly shifts integral pieces of your personality and how you view the world.”

Little did she know how good a “Survivor” proving ground it would be. In Cameroon she subsisted on mostly rice and tomato paste and walked to a river for fresh water. When she and her fellow volunteers wanted to celebrate their last day with a special chicken dinner for the children, she found — blindsided — she had to kill it herself. “You can’t go and buy chicken breast in the store there, you bought the live chickens.”

On “Survivor,” she barely ate for 12 days.

> “We won fishing equipment on day 5 … we were like, ‘OK, who wants to take out the fishing equipment?’ And everyone was looking around, no one...
an important dialogue about race — she sat on the “jury,” voted off.

—even if the game as a Black woman knowing that, no matter who you are as an individual, you are representing for all Black and Brown girls watching. In this moment, Oketch may well have cemented her eventual game win.

Though she wishes she could have taken part in the conversation, Howell is glad that her very presence as the first of two Black people voted off in a row set off what she considers a necessary dialogue. It was an emotionally charged episode and, as contestant Lindsey Dolashewich stated, “a moment bigger than the game.”

“It was hard to sit in the tribal council and not say anything,” says Howell. “Because it’s a shared experience that we all have and a fear that I think personally had and a lot of Black people, Black women have when they go into the game of ‘Survivor,’ which is: Is there going to be a pattern continued?”

Oketch and Wheeler spoke eloquently about what it meant to play the game as a Black woman knowing that, no matter who you are as an individual, you are representing for all Black and Brown girls watching. In this moment, Oketch may well have cemented her eventual game win.

Though she wishes she could have taken part in the conversation, Howell is glad that her very presence as the first of two Black people voted off in a row set off what she considers a necessary dialogue. It was an extremely important conversation to have … I’m happy that America or the world got to see that conversation.

It was Howell, in the finale, who cast the first vote for Oketch to win the $1 million, the first black woman to win the title in 20 years.

“The demographic that is watching the show is diversifying, which means we want to see people on the show that we relate to … and not just from a race perspective. For example, I’m a Black woman, there are so many different types of Black women. We don’t exist in monoliths, some of us are awkward, some of us are funny, some of us are serious, some of us are professionals, and so there are different archetypes within the sub-demo-graphics, which I think ‘Survivor’ is doing a great job of capturing so well. I remember a world where I would be like, ‘Oh, man, if they cast this person they may not cast me.’ But no, we’re in a world where they might cast both of us. And someone else.”

On the extreme red-eye to New York (scheduled to leave at 11:30 p.m., took off at 2 a.m.), I had thought ahead to my transition from “Survivor” fan to “Survivor” writer (is that a job? Probst, call me). I worried I would never be as enthralled with the show after our interview. But I am. Because it’s casting people like Howell, having dialogues about implicit bias, pushing people’s bodies and minds to their limits, that makes the show in many ways mirror the everyday struggles of humanity. It’s been a rough few years for us humans — and watching people live in a place with no cellphones, or jobs, or money, or computers, or social media, is a welcome all-consuming escape.

“You get so entranced in the game that nothing exists besides the game,” says Howell. “And it wasn’t until months later when I was like, whoa, I definitely lost a million dollars, that’s crazy.”

I have a feeling Howell will find another way to earn that million dollars. She’s done so much already — probably due in part to an Excel spreadsheet she made of things that would make her happy and things that would make her money. “Survivor” was near the top of that list. So were day trading, food blogging, and DJing, all things she has tried. She still has more to check off the list — Howell is just getting started. At age 30, she’s already been to 5 out of 7 continents. “I want to see all of them,” she says.

But first, she walks me to my subway stop so I can go back, take off my wet clothes, wring the sweat from my bra, eat a giant Tex-Mex bowl, and sit in the air conditioning. Not Howell. She turns around to go for a run in the park.

Back in my room, washing the sweat-drenched eye makeup off my cheeks, I think of something Howell said about “Survivor” (that sums up how I feel about our day together):

“Even the seconds that I hated, I still loved it as a whole.”
Caribou and Coffee

How a chance discovery at a quirky coffee shop turned up one of Connecticut’s most significant archaeological sites

By Elaina Hancock | Illustrations by Kailey Whitman

“I looked down and thought, “That shouldn’t be here.””

One day in May 2020, while settling on the porch of the Two Wrasslin’ Cats coffee shop in East Haddam, Connecticut, archaeologist Mark Clymer glanced down and noticed something left behind by someone who had been at the same spot before him — around 12,000 years ago.

Clymer, who’s studied the past and these people were likely following caribou herds coming through here, you can just imagine the migratory movements, while others insist they don’t want to slow the work, and just watch the dig proceed.

With hand spades, a few team members carefully loosen the dirt, working around some large stones. The site is laid out in a grid pattern so the locations where artifacts are found can be recorded and cataloged. Loosened soil is loaded into buckets and brought up to sifting trays fitted with hardware cloth to separate out potentially exciting finds.

“We have an interesting and very early site here, and the location is perfect,” says Clymer, pointing past the patio toward a brook behind the coffee shop. “It gets marshy back there, and you can just imagine the migratory caribou herds coming through here, and these people were likely following and hunting. This spot is just ideal.”

Leslie mentions the site’s closeness to the creek is also likely a reason why the team does not need to dig down too far: some pits are only about 11 inches deep, some 20. Even after thousands of years, the way soil has been deposited and removed in flooding events means the amount covering the artifacts is not as deep as one might expect.

Excavating what is left behind, layer by layer, gives glimpses into life across millennia. And each dig has uncovered more supporting evidence to indicate that the oldest artifacts were left by the first people of Connecticut, referred to by archaeologists as “Paleoindians.” These people were hunter-gatherers, moving seasonally across the landscape at the end of the last ice age, between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago.

“Sites dating from this time period are rare,” says Sportman, the Connecticut State Archaeologist and a UConn Extension professor.

“A lot of activity occurred here over the last couple centuries,” she says. “We’re finding ceramics; we found a half penny from the 19th century last year. We have found old glass, coal; there is all sorts of evidence from other time periods. It really showcases how the landscape has been used by people over the past 10,000 years, layers upon one another.”

Leslie says that near the cafe’s fountain, the team found tools that would have been used to scrape animal hides to remove fat or sinew so they could be turned into clothing or shelter, not unlike the canoes that now shield...
I bought this beautiful property and tried to run a business. I had no idea opening his own shop in Connecticut was inspired by the hip coffeehouse and went on to a 26-year career in 'in-between retirement,' says Thiede, it into a coffee shop in 2012, sort of an unusual as an active archeological site hardly a surprise to find something as kind of place that's full of stories, so it's Wrasslin' Cats, is eclectic and cozy, the coffee shop on the site, Two Paleoindians — likely followed herds of caribou over long distances, possibly through the year. They were purveyors of fine-quality stone, choosing only the best raw materials possible for making their tools as they traveled. The stone they preferred, though, is not found in Connecticut, which is why it stood out to Clymer. And it didn't take long to unearth the site's broader significance.

“We found the chip, the first real channel flakes ... within the first half a hour of digging,” Leslie says. “It was exciting because it doesn’t always work like that.”

“I really think about how random it is that something like this occurs.” The coffee shop on the site, Two Wrasslin’ Cats, is eclectic and cozy, the kind of place that's full of stories, so it's hardly a surprise to find something as unusual as an active archeological site in the backyard.

“This place here was built in 1784, and I bought it with the plan to turn it into a coffee shop in 2012, sort of an ‘in-between retirement,’” says Thiede, the owner. He wanted his business to be possible molecular biology at UConn in 1986 and went on to a 26-year career in pharmaceutical research. He says he was inspired by the hip coffeehouse scene in Seattle in the late 1990s to try opening his own shop in Connecticut. “I was a scientist and I thought I’d try to run a business. I had no idea what I was doing when I started, but I bought this beautiful property and named it after my cats.”

The two wrasslin’ cats were Bruno and Larry, named for professional wrestlers Bruno Sammartino and Larry Zbyszko because they loved to tussle. The shop is adorned with all manner of cat-themed memorabilia, which Thiede says were almost entirely contributed by members of the community. The oddities are everywhere you turn; among the more typical cat figurines and classic art deco Kit-Cat Clock are such oddities as framed hairballs, Bruno and Larry’s ashes on the fireplace mantel, bread art, and needle-felted replicas of Bruno and Larry made for Thiede by a student from Maine.

Community connection is vital to the excavation project, too. From the volunteer involvement in the dig to children sitting soil as a hands-on archaeology lesson, the atmosphere is supportive and productive. The work would be too much for one person, and Sportman notes that without the help of the nonprofit Friends of the Office of the State Archaeologist (FOSA) and the community, Connecticut would be missing out on this important glimpse of the past.

During the September dig, one regular customer brought artifacts she had found over the years to ask the archaeologists about. Leslie and Sportman, taking their break for lunch, were happy to describe the significance of the finds. In her roles as State Archaeologist and an Extension educator, Sportman fulfills part of UConn’s mission as a land-grant university, serving as a resource on her discipline, engaging and sharing knowledge with the public. The Wrasslin’ Cats site is the perfect opportunity for laypeople to interact with the experts, ask questions, and experience the research process as it happens. Thiede hopes to host an event at the shop for the team to present its findings. “I really think about how random it is that something like this occurs,” he says. Random, too, that someone like Thiede owns this property. The team is grateful for the opportunity to conduct research they realize can be disruptive, especially at the height of the pandemic when outdoor seating for coffee shops was at a premium.

“Lots of times you have property owners like Mark who are just excited to be part of the process and learning about the site,” says Sportman. “Then other times there are people who don’t want anybody to know that they’re there, because they just don’t want the attention on their property. On private land or state or federal land, it’s different. This is a purely research-driven project. There’s no reason to do it, other than the fact that everybody’s really interested.”

“Though I didn’t uncover the artifact, I’m a facilitator,” says Thiede, who is as fascinated by the artifacts as the archaeologists are. “They got more and more excited as they moved along. I found out that they designates the archaeological site as the Two Wrasslin’ Cats Site, and that was really cool. I’m just very humbled by their enthusiasm and what they’ve done over the past couple of years, getting the science done.”

“There could be sites like this all over, you just have to know what to look for.” The Wrasslin’ Cats Site story is a great example of why it’s important for budding and professional archaeologists to look out for artifacts in the ground. “Yeah, you get a lot of sunburns on the back of your neck,” Leslie quips. The Wrasslin’ Cats Site is found by chance. The site in Avon was a compliance dig, meaning the site had to be carefully excavated prior to construction, since it used federal funding. The site provides the oldest evidence to date of human occupation in the state and, along with the work of Zachary Singer ’17 Ph.D. at the Templeton Paleoindian Site in the Litchfield County town of Washington, provides important new information about Paleoindian ways of life. The new techniques have allowed us to take into question old models for locating Paleoindian sites, says Sportman, and provided opportunities to apply new technologies to the Wrasslin’ Cats Site story, which is an example of why it’s important for budding archaeologists to know what to look for. “We’re just getting started,” Sportman says. “There’s a lot of potential here for adding to the database of information about this period because we really just don’t know that much about it.”

Sites like Two Wrasslin’ Cats are important because they will help fill the knowledge gap about our earliest predecessors, and hopefully change the way history is taught.
Rosemary Sullivan ’69 MA was a 12-year-old schoolgirl in Quebec, Canada, when she first read “The Diary of Anne Frank.”

“It seemed just otherworldly that somebody would be trapped in a house for two years without being able to look out the window or make any noise,” she recalls. Rereading the diary as an adult, familiar with the wartime context, “changed my relationship with Anne Frank,” she says. “I was deeply impressed by the intelligence and candor and the moments of satire. It was an astonishing performance for a child from the age of 13 to 15.”

Her re-encounter was a prerequisite to a project that has captured headlines — and stimulated controversy — around the world this year. “The Betrayal of Anne Frank” (HarperCollins) is Sullivan’s meticulous account of a 5-year-long cold case investigation into a longstanding mystery: how Anne Frank, her family, and four other Jews hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam came to be arrested and deported. (Of the eight, only Anne’s father, Otto Frank, would survive the war.)

The investigation, featured on CBS’s “60 Minutes,” identified a surprising culprit: Arnold van den Bergh, a prominent Jewish notary desperate to save his own family. New York Times reviewer Alexandra Jacobs found the argument for his culpability “convincing, if not conclusive.” The reaction abroad — at least from those countries with the greatest stake in the story — was less favorable. In response to a critical report by five Dutch historians, the Dutch publisher, Ambo Anthos, announced in March that it would cease publication and remove the title from bookstores. HarperCollins Germany delayed the book but plans to publish a revised version later this year.

“I never doubted, and I still don’t doubt, the integrity of the investigation,” Sullivan says, noting that her larger goal was to describe the context of the tragedy. While tracing the investigation’s labyrinthine twists, she paints a portrait of World War II Amsterdam as a site of scarcity, peril, and shifting political allegiances. Death shadowed the entire Dutch civilian population, but especially the country’s Jews, most of whom died in Nazi concentration camps. “It should be possible to understand that van den Bergh was as much a victim as anybody else,” Sullivan says.

The Biographer as Detective and Adventurer

This Anne Frank project was a departure for the 74-year-old poet turned biographer. An emerita English professor at the University of Toronto, Sullivan had authored 14 previous books, including 2015’s acclaimed “Stalin’s Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva” and “Villa Air-Bo: World War II, Escape, and a House in Marseille.” She revels in tracking down archival documents and finding interview subjects in far-flung places. “I love the hunt,” she says. “The subtext of biography is as exciting as the text. The adventure, the search for the subject, involves encounters with people, geographies, political contexts. It’s a very enlarging experience.”

For this recent book, the parameters were more defined. An interdisciplinary team, relying on techniques such as artificial intelligence, crowdsourcing, and criminal profiling, conducted the research. Sullivan’s contribution was “an act of synthesis, pulling it all together,” she says, something at which she has long experience. Still, little in her early life predicted that she would become the narrator of such an iconic Holocaust story. “I didn’t expect this to be my trajectory,” she admits.

Born into an Irish Catholic family outside Montreal, she was the second
of five children. Her mother’s forebears immigrated after losing a child to the Irish potato famine of the 1840s; according to family lore, her father’s father was a Canadian cycling champion, met Rosemary’s father, Michael Patrick Sullivan, Quebec’s Junior Middleweight Boxing Champion, on a blind date. “Growing up in Quebec, you have to have a sense of politics — or be aware of how power functions,” Sullivan says. She “fell in love with books in high school,” but her father wanted her to help support the family. At his urging, her high school principal counseled her “that university would be wasted on a woman.” She ignored them both. Starting Out” (1998). Atwood, arguably the most high-ranking Nazi and the resistance, he may have viewed his best option as trading information.

“Like Otto Frank’s, his goal was simple: to save his family,” Sullivan writes. “That he succeeded while Otto failed is a terrible fact of history.” After the book’s publication and an instant bestseller, some of whom questioned whether the writer was in a position to say what it was like to live under occupation, in constant fear. And to ask for moral clarity in such a context of enormous ideological division, something rather nasty is surfacing.”

As usual, she says, “I’m enjoying the travel be in the future?”

Did I learn from my travels? What will thread the pieces with autobiographical meditations: “What in my childhood made me a lonely traveler? What political meditations: “What in my childhood made me a lonely traveler? What od of enormous ideological division, which often lead to violence,” she says. “We’re in a very risky period. We’re living in these two towers where we can’t talk to each other. We’re really going to have to be very careful, because the pandemic did not take care of itself.”

At the moment, Sullivan is working on a collection of her travels, dating back to 1977 and including solo trips to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, India, Egypt, Cuba, Peru, Mexico, Chile, and the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia, among other places. “I returned to reading them, provoked by the lockdowns during the pandemic,” she says. She plans to thread the pieces with autobiographical meditations: “What in my childhood made me a lonely traveler? What will I learn from my travels? What will I learn from my travels? What will I learn from my travels?”

As usual, she says, “I’m enjoying the writing.”

Sullivan at a book fair in Denmark promoting her acclaimed “Stalin’s Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva.”

Of Poets, Oligarchs, Revolutionaries — and Margaret Atwood

In 1979 Sullivan traveled to Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, where she met dissident writers. Her glimpses of those closed societies eventually became valuable background for “Stalin’s Daughter.”

A Divided Citizenry, a Complicated Villa

When Sullivan got a call from her agent in November 2018, telling her that HarperCollins wanted her for the Anna Frank biography, she was delighted: “I’ve kept mum for fear of stirring up European anti-Semitism. “That he succeeded while Otto failed is a terrible fact of history.” After the book’s publication and an initial burst of favorable publicity, a story in The New York Times showed the skepticism of Dutch scholars, some of whom questioned whether the writer could have possessed the addresses of Jews in hiding. The Dutch publisher beat an immediate retreat. “I was shocked,” Sullivan says. “The response — we apologize to anyone who feels offended by this book” — is something rather nasty is surfacing.”

As usual, she says, “I’m enjoying the travel be in the future?”

Did I learn from my travels? What will thread the pieces with autobiographical meditations: “What in my childhood made me a lonely traveler? What od of enormous ideological division, which often lead to violence,” she says. “We’re in a very risky period. We’re living in these two towers where we can’t talk to each other. We’re really going to have to be very careful, because the pandemic did not take care of itself.”

At the moment, Sullivan is working on a collection of her travels, dating back to 1977 and including solo trips to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, India, Egypt, Cuba, Peru, Mexico, Chile, and the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia, among other places. “I returned to reading them, provoked by the lockdowns during the pandemic,” she says. She plans to thread the pieces with autobiographical meditations: “What in my childhood made me a lonely traveler? What will I learn from my travels? What will I learn from my travels? What will I learn from my travels?”

As usual, she says, “I’m enjoying the writing.”

Sullivan at a book fair in Denmark promoting her acclaimed “Stalin’s Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva.”

chronicling the lives of literary women. Roethke.” But she would specialize in Spender’s longtime friend W.H. Auden, a writer-in-residence, and Sullivan met her doctorate from the University of different countries. Her master’s in suggested she get degrees from three one of her McGill professors, who on a woman.” She ignored them both. At his urging, her high school principal counseled her “that university would be wasted on a woman.” She ignored them both. Starting Out” (1998). Atwood, arguably the most high-ranking Nazi and the resistance, he may have viewed his best option as trading information.

“Like Otto Frank’s, his goal was simple: to save his family,” Sullivan writes. “That he succeeded while Otto failed is a terrible fact of history.” After the book’s publication and an initial burst of favorable publicity, a story in The New York Times showed the skepticism of Dutch scholars, some of whom questioned whether the writer could have possessed the addresses of Jews in hiding. The Dutch publisher beat an immediate retreat. “I was shocked,” Sullivan says. “The response — we apologize to anyone who feels offended by this book” — is something rather nasty is surfacing.”

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Sullivan at a book fair in Denmark promoting her acclaimed “Stalin’s Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva.”
Here’s what you need to do — get back the New Haven field office, asking the guys using their brains for justice and the FBI breaking up the mafia. These New York media market stories of Connecticut, our news came from the city more exciting. Frank loved the idyllic suburbs, but manager for ShopWell foods. Young Connecticut, to become a regional Italian foods shop, to New Fairfield, moved the family from Port Chester, than an hour — and they wore suits.”

Jr.,” says Figliuzzi. “These guys would solve every problem in the world in less 15 years after writing that book, but you can imagine sea

the FBI changed, was met with all manner of skepticism along the way. An uncle told him at a family gathering, “I don’t think it’s gonna work, because we’re Italian, and I don’t think they like us.” Undaunted, he gained a bachelor of arts in English from Fairfield University in 1984, the first in his family to earn a college degree, and went on to get his law degree, with honors, from UConn in 1987. He knew a law degree would be attractive to FBI recruiters but says his classmates scoffed. “They looked at me like I was crazy. ‘You’re gonna live on a government salary?’ They were all trying to become a partner in some law firm, or they were bored out of their minds, and how could they get an application?”

Integrity has always mattered to Figliuzzi, who became an agent almost exactly 15 years after writing that book. He was disappointed — but undaunted. He was turned down. As a kid growing up in southern Connecticut, our news came from the New York media market, stories of the FBI breaking up the mafia. These guys using their brains for justice and equality.” Inspired, he wrote a letter to the FBI and the same year he got that law degree. He worked in Atlanta, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he was a unit chief in the Office of Professional Responsibility, the FBI’s Internal Affairs component. In 2001, after the 9/11 attacks, he headed the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Miami, where many of the attackers had trained, and where the government feared more were hiding. A week after 9/11, anthrax powder was discovered in the Boca Raton mailroom of American Media, publisher of the National Enquirer. Al Qaeda was suspected at first, though the search ultimately led to a home-grown government scientist. Figliuzzi directed the FBI investigation from a trailer in the parking lot outside the American Media offices. “It’s a 66,000-square-foot, three-story building, filled with microscopic, deadly anthrax spores that killed somebody, and we’re doing hazmat entries into the building. Meanwhile, I see people getting on school buses. I see people out for their morning run, oblivious to the fact that down the street, an incredibly deadly attack has occurred. But that’s why we have the FBI, to take that kind of burden on, so that everybody else doesn’t have to worry about it.”

That sense of mission and honorable purpose has animated Figliuzzi’s life from the first day he set foot in the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, Virginia. After Miami, he became Chief Inspector and led the Cleveland Division in 2004. In 2011, he was named Assistant Director of the Counterintelligence Division, the nation’s top spy-catching agency. Over his 25 years of service, he watched the FBI change from an organization that primarily investigated crimes after the fact to one that tried to predict and prevent them. “Leading up to 9/11, the entire U.S. intelligence community was aware, because of the chatter being picked up by agencies across the globe, that people were being moved,” says Figliuzzi. “There was talk of assets being in place, waiting for the signal. We knew it was going to be big, but not where or how.”

After the 9/11 intelligence failure, the FBI hired thousands of young analysts to sift through all the data being collected. “That was a huge strategic shift,” says Figliuzzi. “You can imagine seasoned, grizzled FBI agents with guns and badges, and now we have young analysts embedded on every squad, in every office, who are suddenly driving intelligence, was met with all manner of skepticism along the way. An uncle told him at a family gathering, “I don’t think it’s gonna work, because we’re Italian, and I don’t think they like us.” Undaunted, he gained a bachelor of arts in English from Fairfield University in 1984, the first in his family to earn a college degree, and went on to get his law degree, with honors, from UConn in 1987. He knew a law degree would be attractive to FBI recruiters but
security intelligence experience. People with military experience. Wall Street finance experience for white collar crime. And, of course, cybersecurity is huge.

Cyber has driven what Figliuzzi sees as another fundamental shift in what threatens us. It comes both in the way social media can radicalize and organize domestic terrorists like those who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6 and in the way foreign actors can shut down, or hold ransom, American infrastructure like the Colonial Pipeline or the JBS meat-packing plant.

“This is the future. That’s how the next war starts,” he says. “We might already be in it.”

Figliuzzi perceives another shift in the bureau, one that is potentially even more critical. The FBI has a long tradition of policing itself and keeping its house in order, from vetting new recruits to polygraphing agents to debriefing missions in order to understand what mistakes were made. Outsider attacks undermine the agency’s reputation, even if they prove to be untrue.

The FBI, traditionally seen as a straitlaced apolitical law enforcement agency, has in recent years found itself at the center of multiple high-profile political controversies. From the investigations into former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s email use and into potential ties between Russia and Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign to the recent search of Trump’s home in Florida to retrieve top secret government documents, the agency has received a mixture of withering criticism and high praise from both ends of the political spectrum in an increasingly polarized America. In one of the most explosive events in the agency’s history, FBI Director James Comey was publically fired in 2017. The reason cited at the time — which was highly disputed — was his handling of the Clinton email investigation.

To avoid the appearance of partiality and to be transparent, said Comey, he famously closed, reopened, then again closed an investigation into then presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s emails, prior to the 2016 election. “Comey is a man of incredible integrity and ethics and yet, in his very attempt to do the right thing, he ended up having the exact opposite impact,” Figliuzzi says. You don’t have to be atop the organization for the burden to be immense, consequential.

“When young people talk to me about a career in the FBI, I say look, this is not a career or another job. It’s a calling. You’re never off duty. At a backyard barbecue or a kid’s PTA meeting, you’re that FBI person. You blow off vacations, birthdays, anniversaries, kids’ games. You look at your watch at five p.m., but the bad guys don’t stop at five. There’s a constant sense of urgency and of gravity. You make what could be life and death decisions, seven days a week, weeks on end.”

The FBI recognizes the stress that comes with the job, and the burnout that sometimes accompanies it, and allows federal agents to retire with 25 years of service — for Figliuzzi that came in 2012. “The good news is, you get to retire young,” he says. “The bad news is, you usually do need to retire when that time comes.”

For Figliuzzi, retirement has not been laid back. Last year he published “The FBI Way: Inside the Bureau’s Traditions of Policing Itself,” in which he interviews current and former active-duty FBI agents. He attributes his gift for eloquent speaking in part to his schooling at UConn Law. “Success is about effective communication. If you can’t communicate your ideas effectively, you’re not going to get anywhere. One of the strong things about UConn was, they stopped you from talking or writing like traditional language. UConn really didn’t stand for effective communication. If you can’t communicate your ideas effectively, you’re not going to get anywhere. One of the strong things about UConn was, they stopped you from talking or writing like traditional language. UConn really didn’t stand for that. I credit a great deal of my success in my career to them.”

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For Figliuzzi retirement means living in Tucson, Arizona, working as an analyst for MSNBC, publishing a book, and hosting a podcast — “The Bureau with Frank Figliuzzi.”

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CLASS NOTES

Lois Greene Stone ’55 (ED) reports that she and Dr. Gerald E. Stone celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary in June. They have 15 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren “so far.”

Hannah Riesenfeld Korobkin ’56 (CAHNR) writes from Phoenix, Arizona, with a life update. Korobkin has retired from her job as a physical therapist. She says that when she was at UConn, her professors, including Frances Tappan and James Bauer, were early pioneers in the physical therapy profession. She is hoping to hear from her classmates.

Reporting in from another warm climate, Jason Traiger ’67 MA says he is enjoying retirement in Sarasota, Florida, where he spends his time following local cultural events, bicycling, taking photos, and playing in the Manatee Concert Band.

Also enjoying retirement is Albert D. Surowiecki ’68 (CLAS), who was a revenue officer for the IRS in the New York City area. He is a Vietnam veteran and lives in Woodmere, New York.

Anne Greiner ’70 (CLAS) shares that three generations of her family have graduated from UConn. Her son, Neil Greiner ’93 MS, followed in her footsteps, and her grandson, Zachary Greiner ’22 (BUS), just graduated in May. Congratulations to a true-blue Husky family!

Kenneth Anchor ’70 MA, ’72 Ph.D., was honored with the Presidential Award from the American Board of Vocational Experts at its 2022 convention. He founded the multidisciplinary credentialing organization 40 years ago. A clinical psychologist based in Nashville, Tennessee, he also has served as psychology professor and internship training director at Vanderbilt University. He has published more than 95 book chapters and journal articles, along with five books, including “The Disability Analysis Handbook.”

Virginia H. Fallon ’71 (PHAR) sent us proof that she still has the freshman beanie she got in 1966 before finishing the five-year pharmacy program. Thank you Virginia!

William R. Kinloch ’73 (CLAS) has retired after a long career in law. His educational website, draftriotswalkingtour.com, is based on his lifelong study of the American Civil War and includes a virtual walking tour of four important sites from the 1863 New York City Draft Riots, including photos of the sites as they appear today. He and his wife, Barbara, make their home in Cheshire, Connecticut.

Bestselling author Robert D. Kaplan ’73 (CLAS) gave a nice shout out to his English professors at UConn. He dedicated his latest book, “Adriatic: A Concert of Civilizations at the End of the Modern Age,” to two professors emeriti. “I dedicated the book to David Leeming and the late Charles Boer because their classes on myth and modern literature led me to a lifelong infatuation with learning and the intellectual life. It is an example of how the liberal arts, as taught half a century ago, opened the mind of a working-class student,” he says. The book, his 20th, uses the travel pieces to explore poetry, art, architecture, history, geography, and geopolitics. Besides being a novelist, Kaplan reported on foreign affairs for The Atlantic magazine for 30 years.

Fred Andy Beissette ’75 (CLAS), a member of the UConn Board of Trustees, was inducted into the Connecticut Golf Hall of Fame in June. Beissette, who is executive vice president and chief administrative officer for The Travelers Companies Inc., is no stranger to athletic feats. He was a member of the 1980 U.S. Olympic Track and Field team in the hammer throw, setting an Olympic Trials record.

Barbara Tryon ’75 (CLAS) has published “The Broken Flower Girl,” under the name BJ Tryon.

Speaking of novelists, UConn professor emerita and retired psychologist Cynthia Herbert Adams ’76 MA, ’81 Ph.D., just completed “The Red Toque: Love and Loss in the Time of Tito.” Based on a true story, the historical novel centers on a farm family in the hills of Slovenia, and the six children who must survive both World War I and World War II. Adams has also written a trilogy of horror novels and a memoir.

Nick Checker ’77 (SFA) won a grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development’s Office of the Arts to develop a solo-performer adaptation of his stage play “Eugy for an Icon.” He also just published a new book, “The Legend of Kwi Coast,” a young-adult novel about a daring young dolphin.

Elaine W. Viens ’78

Ice Ice Baby

Turn to page 41 to find out why recent communications grad Luke Adams ’20 (CLAS) is standing barefoot atop this glacier in Greenland — and where he went from there.
**Northeast Connection Chili**

1 pork butt, cut into ¼-inch chunks
2 Spanish onions, diced small
½ cup garlic, minced
2 Anaheim chilies, seeded, charred, and peeled
2 poblano chilies, seeded, charred, and peeled
1 1/2 pounds tomatillos, peeled and rinsed
1 bunch cilantro, rinsed, big stems chopped off
1 quart chicken stock
2 tablespoons cumin
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon garlic powder
Hatch green chili powder, to taste
Salt and pepper, to taste

**Directions:**

In a large pot, sear the pork chunks a few at a time and set aside. Add the onions and garlic and sauté until soft.

Purse the roasted chiles, tomatillos, and cilantro together with a little bit of the chicken stock. Add everything back into the pot along with the rest of the chicken stock and all the spices.

Bring to a boil, then simmer under the heat, stirring occasionally, for about 2 hours. Adjust the salt and pepper to your liking. This chili is great served over rice!
**RESCUE MISSION**

**Kinesiology alum Yuri Hosokawa uses methods she learned at UConn to train the Japan Coast Guard.**

“In a game, the winning team gets a trophy or bragging rights. In a rescue situation, the winning team completes the mission and comes home alive,” says Yuri Hosokawa ’16 (CAHNR).

Hosokawa has dedicated her relatively short career to preventing heat-related deaths in athletics, notably as a key liaison between the International Olympic Committee and local athletic trainers at the Tokyo 2020 games. Now she’s set her sights on bringing the same discipline and philosophy to the Japan Coast Guard.

Hosokawa had some experience working with other tactical athletes during her time at UConn’s Korey Stringer Institute (KSI), but she knew the partnership she was about to embark on would be forging new ground in her home country of Japan, where athletic training isn’t considered a medical qualification. She learned to take the loop and try something new from her academic advisor and mentor, kinesiology professor and KSI CEO Douglas Casa ’97 Ph.D. “It’s always looking for that new spark, a way to connect A and B even when that seems impossible. I took that philosophy with me.”

So Hosokawa started work with her new team. Accepting the harsh realities of marine emergencies was the first step. “It’s that old saying—expect the best, plan for the worst,” she explains. “For athletes, there are fewer unexpected variables when it comes to how we optimize performance so they can be their best.” Natural elements, extreme conditions, and other hazards play a major role for rescue organizations, and the Japan Coast Guard was no different. “They have no idea what they’ll face or for how long. They may be out on the ocean for days and they’re always fighting nature. They don’t have a set of rules to play their ‘game.’”

Just like she has done with soccer players and track stars, Hosokawa used evidence-based training methods to make sure everyone was safe and knew their limits. For the first two years of the partnership, she educated the unit on physiology. She helped them learn to recognize red flags their bodies would raise to indicate they were entering the danger zone. “We established safety measures first and taught life-saving protocols. You can’t enhance performance without first making sure you know how to keep people alive.”

Then it was all about the data, an aspect of the work that Hosokawa loves. “We took temperatures, tracked how different clothing affected them, all of that. With that baseline, we can know their intensity zones and adjust accordingly.”

Hosokawa’s work isn’t just helping ensure medical safety. By teaching rescuers to listen to their bodies, she is helping shift the culture by connecting safety with performance. “Before they understood how heat illness works, cadets would want to keep pushing themselves past their breaking point. They wouldn’t want to admit they were struggling. Now upper-classmen make sure the new guys tell the truth about fatigue instead of hiding it. Now it’s ‘tougher’ to speak up than to stay quiet, because they know it’s a better way to do their jobs.”

While she’s only working with one base now, Hosokawa may be a lot busier in the near future. Japan’s Coast Guard protects 18,486 miles of coastline and other bases have learned how she’s helping the 5th Regional. They’re eager to up their game too. “My goal is that someday every base has a dedicated athletic trainer on staff.” —JESSICA MCBRIDE ’07 MA, ’17 PH.D.

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**Player1st Julie Linden ’90 (CLAS), ’95 MA** got some good news recently. Her one-act play, “Symptoms and Their Interpretations,” was selected for the 2022 William Inge Theatre Festival’s New Play Lab. Player1st to Philip Dukes ’91 (CLAS), ’99 MBA on being appointed chief counsel and senior policy advisor to the New York City Mayor’s Office of Pensions and Investments. Congratulations to Marcia Imbeau (continued on p. 44).
The Right Man for the Job

When Greg Lewis ’91 (BUS) teaches executive leadership seminars at Housatonic, where he is the Senior Vice President and CFO, there is one story he inevitably shares. If you want to be a leader, you need to think like one, he says. And there was a pivotal moment when he learned that lesson.

Early in his career, Lewis worked as a business analyst at The Stanley Works in New Britain, Connecticut, now Stanley Black & Decker. The company was considering investing $1 billion to purchase another manufacturer.

“I was super excited. I had prepared all the numbers, the spreadsheets, and the calculations,” says Lewis, who majored in finance at UConn. “I couldn’t wait to present all the financials, and the returns were quite compelling.”

Minutes into the presentation the CEO asked Lewis’ boss, “Who is going to run this new company?” The room was silent. There was no good answer for that critical question.

“Meeting adjourned!” the CEO bellowed. The acquisition was off the table, and Lewis hadn’t even had a chance to speak.

“Many times you learn the most from observing people around you, from the opportunity to be exposed to senior executives and how they think through problems,” he says. “I realized that day that business is much more than numbers. It comes down to risk, execution, and people. Picking the right people for the job is one of the most important things we do.”

A Future Ignites at UConn

Lewis grew up in Shelton, Connecticut, the youngest of six boys, with a younger sister who was born much later. “Growing up in my family there was a lot to live up to and a constant competitive spirit,” he says. His father owned a small wiring cable company and had a strong work ethic that Lewis has tried to emulate.

At St. Joseph High in Trumbull, Connecticut, he was a strong student and a football player. Longtime friend Dan Iassogna ’91 (CLAS) recalls his mom talking about Lewis. “That Greg Lewis is going to be somebody,” she would tell Dan.

“Greg was polite, smart, and he conducted himself almost like a CFO even then,” Iassogna says. “He was incredibly driven, a great athlete, but also just a nice person. He was always someone who was very easy to root for!”

Lewis chose engineering at UConn because one of his brothers had excelled in the field. But his first semester was an academic disaster, and he transferred to business.

“I think there’s a lot of pressure on kids today to decide their future in high school. When you’re young, life will take many twists and turns. You’ll get many things wrong,” he says. “You’ve got to risk something and not be afraid to fail. After all, my opening salvo at UConn was almost crash and burn. UConn is the place where I learned about myself and where I was going.”

At a Belden Hall dance in 1987, Lewis met Barbara Reynolds ’89 (BUS), from Wethersfield, Connecticut. The couple was married later. “Growing up in my family there was a lot to live up to and a constant worry about, and how we’re safe-guarding the health and safety of our employees in a pandemic.”

Everything Is a Trade-Off

With a demanding job and frequent international travel, Lewis recognizes the importance of taking care of himself both physically and psychologically.

He meets with a personal trainer twice a week, plays golf when he can, and takes long walks. He escapes to Cape Cod, where he can listen to the ocean, enjoy the peace, and reconnect with family and friends.

“You have to be purposeful, take care of yourself, and make time to unplug. I’m certainly not a textbook case for work-life balance. But if I don’t have a well to draw from, I’m not going to be helpful to anyone,” he says.

“As a leader, you’re giving energy to your people. If they see that you’re down, they’ll take their cue from you,” he says.
Makin' Money

Brian Feroldi ’04 (BUS) remembers sitting down with the HR department at his first job after graduation looking at the 401(k) forms they’d handed him. “I opened this glossy brochure and it said, ‘Do you want to put it into the high growth, low growth or medium growth?’ I decided to go with low growth.”

“I looked at the lady and said, ‘What do I do?’ She said, ‘I can’t help you with that. We’re not allowed to. Somehow, I was supposed to magically be able to fill out these forms and figure out my financial future, with essentially zero education about what to do.’ It’s a scenario millions in this country can relate to. So, I bought a book called ‘Why Not Me?’ about the struggles, experiences, stories, and strategies that led to his success as a personal trainer, business coach, and fitness franchise owner. Meanwhile, Peter Jones ’98 MBA has published “Treasure!” about the history of coins from shipwrecks. Frank W. Petters ’88 (ENG) is on the move. He ran the strategy and business development for the Department of State, and now has more than 600 employees worldwide. He recently published “Why Does The Stock Market Go Up?”

“Everything you’ve been taught about investing in school, but weren’t taught” (Choose Fi Media, 2022). Feroldi says he knows what mistakes new investors should avoid, because he’s made most of them himself. “I am drawn to the idea of taking money and turning it into more money, but I am also a firm believer in growing your income, keeping your expenses in check, and creating extra savings for yourself is an order of magnitude more important, and more impactful, than anything you can ever do with your investments.”

“I could go back in time 20 years and give advice to my younger self, it would be to focus on income, expenses, and savings, and don’t focus on the returns.”

In other words, don’t look at investing as a get-rich-quick strategy. Feroldi’s biggest regrets come from forgetting that he’d have to save money. “You can play that game all day with yourself. I should have bought it. I should have bought that. The biggest mistakes that I’ve made aren’t about what I should have bought. It was selling early. I actually owned Microsoft at 20 and then I sold it at 24, and now it’s just under 300. I missed out on 10- to 15-times larger return because I was in a rush to take a profit. I sold another company called DexCom for $7 per share. Last I looked, it was over $400 per share. Again, I bought something because I knew enough, and then I was in a rush to take a profit.”

Another common mistake newbies make is trying to time the market. “My short-term hunches are rarely correct. If you had asked me in March of 2020, when Covid was brand new, the world economy was falling apart, and businesses were shutting down — cruise ships, airline companies — if you had said, ‘Brian, what’s going to happen to the stock market over the next year?’ I would have told you, ‘It’s going down. Business is terrible. Unemployment is skyrocketing. It’s an awful time, economically.’ And that would have been exactly wrong. Because as soon as March 2020 happened and the bottom hit, the stock market pretty much went straight up over the next year.”

There’s another investing mistake that’s all too common, says Feroldi: “People wait too long. They delay the idea of having to think about investing for their retire- ment. Especially when you’re right out of school, and your income is limited, and you have all these expenses. You want to buy a house. You want to go on vacation. You want to do all these things, and you don’t have a lot of income to go around.”

“The dollars you put in when you’re 20 and 30 are so much more powerful than when you’re 40 and 50. You can buy individual stocks with a portion of your capital, but you’ve got a long-term mindset. You’ve got to buy the companies and just say to yourself, ‘I believe that this company is going to substantially grow revenue, and earn profits, over the next 10 years.’”

Buying and holding great companies is a time-tested way to build wealth. “If you can do that, the odds of you having a huge smile on your face 10 years from now, 20 years from now, 30 years from now, are extremely high.” — Peter Nelson
Congratulations to Lindsey (Welsford) Martinez ’05 (CLAS), who was appointed to serve as a judge in Orange County Superior Court in California. Martinez, of Brea, California, previously served as a senior attorney in the Fourth District Court of Appeal, Division Three. She earned her law degree at George Washington University.

Ismat Mikky ’06 Ph.D. was appointed chairperson of the Division of Nursing at Bloomfield College in Bloomfield, New Jersey.

Brett Eagleson ’08 (BUS) joined the New Haven, Connecticut-based Washington Trust as vice president of commercial real estate. Previously, he served as vice president and commercial loan officer at Guilford Savings Bank. He is active in community service and currently serves as treasurer on the board of directors for Guilford Youth Mentoring.

Lynn Malera ’08 MBA was named Treasurer of the United States by President Joe Biden. She will be the first Native American to hold this position. Malera became the first female chief of the Moho- gan Tribe in modern history in 2010.

Brittany Hunter ’08 (ED) ‘11 MS was promoted to business manager for Amecore at Microsoft, where she previously worked in talent management and as an HR program manager.

Alyssa Lynch ’09 (CLAS) on being promoted to partner at the law firm of Halloran Sage in Connecticut. She previously served as principal of Mansfield’s Dorothy C. Goodwin Elementary School and succeeds Kelly Lyman ’92 MA, ’93 6th Year, who retired in July.

Congratulations to Angela Burke Kunkel ’02 MA, whose debut picture book, “Digging for Worlds,” written for Worlds José Alberto Gutierrez and the Library Re-Built,” was selected as a Nutmeg Book Award nominee for grades two to three. She has two more books forthcoming with Random House Studio. “Make Way,” a picture book biography of author-illustrator Barbara Cooney, whose work is kept in UConn Library’s Archives & Special Collections.

Brian Feroldi ’04 (BUS), a writer for The Motley Fool who has 265,000-plus Twitter followers, has written his first book, “Why Does the Stock Market Go Up?” The book is designed to demystify the stock market for the average investor. Want some Feroldi investing tips? See our story on page 45.

Cara Marie Brown ’04 (CLAS) reports that she earned a master’s degree in special education in 2019 and is now teaching in the Waterbury, Connecticut, school system.

Decades after she first started working on messenger RNA as an undergraduate in a UConn lab, Lynn Maquat ’74 (CLAS) has received two major international awards for her groundbreaking discoveries in the field. Maquat, a mechanistic biochemist, recently won the 2021 Warren Alpert Foundation Prize from Harvard Medical School and the 2021 Wolf Prize in Medicine from Israel. She is best known for discovering a mechanism that destroys faulty messenger RNAs (mRNAs) in human cells. Her discoveries have led to a better understanding of human diseases and the development of RNA-based therapies to fight disease.

Maquat, who is the J. Lowell Orsbon Endowed Chair and a professor of biochemistry and biophysics at the University of Rochester, grew up in Easton, Connecticut, and was the first in her family to go to college.

“Back then, I was painfully quiet, very studious, probably too serious, and wanted to do well,” she says. “I grew a lot as a person at UConn since I was on my own and had to make my own decisions. I really liked to learn and took all sorts of classes. However, the best and, at the same time, most challenging experience for me was working in Stu Heywood’s lab. I spent two summers and four semesters working in his lab. I was well prepared for graduate school by the time I graduated UConn.”

In addition to making seminal discoveries, Maquat has been a mentor to women at work. She started the University of Rochester Graduate Women in Science, which provides mentoring for the professional and personal development of graduate students.

“When I was a graduate student, working toward a Ph.D. in biochemistry, there were no female biochemistry faculty members,” she recalls. “Moreover, a number of the male biochemistry faculty members sent the vibe that training women was not a good use of time and energy. I found my career to be full of difficulties because I am a woman. Fortunately, I believed in what I was doing.”

When she’s not in the lab, Maquat and her husband, Mark, love to spend time outside with Jacky, their “12-pound, non-shedding Schnoodle.” An avid traveler, her work has taken her to “amazing places” around the world, including Patagonia, Ladakh, Tibet, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. —Grace Merriett

Michael Piccirillo ’09 (ENG) married Rebecca Lussier ’07 (ENG) in 2016 and they welcomed their first child, Madelyn Maria Piccirillo, in March. “We hope Made- lyn will be a future Husky,” he says. Congratulations.

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Submissions may be edited for clarity and/or length.

MBA, who emigrated to the U.S. from Poland in 1999, has always shared a passion for creativity with her mother, Ewa. The mother-daughter duo recently founded Mia Bella Box, an online gift solution for individuals and companies, named for Lukowicka’s 7-year-old daughter, Mia. Marty Summa Jr. ’12 (ED) was promoted to director of digital media and social strategy for Sage Growth Partners. Previously he was senior director of social/digital media and branding for the University of Maryland’s athletic department.

Leah Lum ’18 (ED), ’19 MA and Bryan Kirby ’18 (ENG) have published two books, both titled “Empowered Leaders: A Social Justice Curriculum for Gifted Learners.” One is for fourth and fifth graders, the other for sixth through eighth graders.

Jake Krul ’17 (ENG) was promoted to assistant director of development in athletics for the UConn Foundation. He previously served as an assistant director of athletic external relations.

Olivia Piper ’17 (CLAS), a poet and fiction writer who has been published in Panicles Magazine, Her Heart Poetry, and the Connecticut River Review, has been admitted to Hollins University’s creative writing MFA program. At UConn, Piper directed and adapted several stage productions, including “Little Women” and “Brownstone,” and was a staff writer for HerCampus at UConn.

Constantine J. Alleyn ’17 MBA was named one of the Top 100 Women Leaders of Connecticut for 2022 by Women We Admire. She is founder and president of the Civilian Corrections Academy, which offers consultancy, training, mentoring, and career planning services.

Kailey Townsend, who attended UConn from 2015 to 2019, has taken on a new role as social media manager for the president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

And the winner is … Ryan Glista ’16 (CLAS), ’18 MFA, who snagged a New England Emmy for Outstanding Editing in the Boston/New England Region for the dance film, “While You Were Gone.”

Jessica Star garder ’16 (ED), ’17 MA and Bryant Kirby ’18 (ENG) have published two books, both titled “Empowered Leaders: A Social Justice Curriculum for Gifted Learners.” One is for fourth and fifth graders, the other for sixth through eighth graders.

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Out of the Minds of Babes

While running through an assessment with a young subject recently, Amanda Yagan ‘21 (CLAS) asked, “What do we use to tell the time?” Without skipping a beat, the boy confidently answered, “Alexa!”

The fact that he had no clue why his answer invoking the smart speaker made his mom and Yagan laugh underscores exactly what Yagan studies: how environmental factors, such as exposure to electronics, shape young brains and bodies.

As a clinical research assistant in the Advanced Baby Imaging Lab at Rhode Island Hospital, Yagan interviews children, leading them through the Mullen assessment scales for cognitive test and iPad games. She also administers MRI and other scans, all in an effort to better understand how brains grow and develop through infancy and childhood, and how factors such as genes, nutrition, exposure to electronics, and sleep shape this development.

“I love getting to work with kids,” says the speech, language, and hearing sciences major, who radiates such warmth and enthusiasm that it’s easy to imagine just how comfortable she makes these little ones. “Often the children get really shy at the beginning … and at the end they independently give me hugs, or sometimes they’ll want me to carry them around the lab, and we just hang out and bond as we pick out books for them to take home. I love that we are able to pick up on each other’s energy and know that we are in a safe space.”

Other perks that make her gig so cool? Yagan enjoys regularly having her mind blown by the work of her brilliant colleagues, as well as Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded trips to India, South Africa, Uganda, and Ghana to train doctors there to use portable MRI scanners, like the one she’s pictured with here.

“I’m so excited to go to work” each day, she says. “I come home and I’m so happy.” — JUliE (STAGIS) BARTUCCa ’10 (BUS, CLAS), ’19 MBA

It was Yagan’s job that first got our attention, but Amanda Yagan the person is impossible to resist.

Read more of her story at magazine.uconn.edu.
1. If you’re looking for owls at UConn Storrs, what’s the place you’re most likely to find them?
   A: The Avian Enclosure on the edge of Horsebarn Hill  
   B: Wilbur Cross  
   C: Whitney Hall  
   D: The Raptory, a bird-themed café in the basement of Gulley Hall

2. The commencement ceremony in May 2000 marked the debut of a new feature that would eventually become a standard part of the experience. What was it?
   A: Livestreamed video  
   B: Separate commencement speakers for separate schools and colleges  
   C: Golden cords given to Honors students  
   D: A website devoted to commencement

3. What is Babbidge Bog?
   A: The nickname given to the North Campus residence halls in the 1960s  
   B: A layer of pre-glacial wetland that lies beneath Homer Babbidge Library  
   C: The first site of the Spring Weekend staple of Oozeball  
   D: The name antiwar protesters gave to Mirror Lake during a “swim-in” demonstration in 1969

4. From 1973 to 1983, the UConn Fire Department had a Dalmatian mascot who accompanied the deputy chief on routine calls and rode in a fire engine during Homecoming parades. What was her name?
   A: Blaze  
   B: Smoky  
   C: Freckles  
   D: Jonathanette