

SO HOT — SUMMER IN THE CITY // STORRS TO SANTIAGO — ALL ROADS LEAD HOME

# UConn

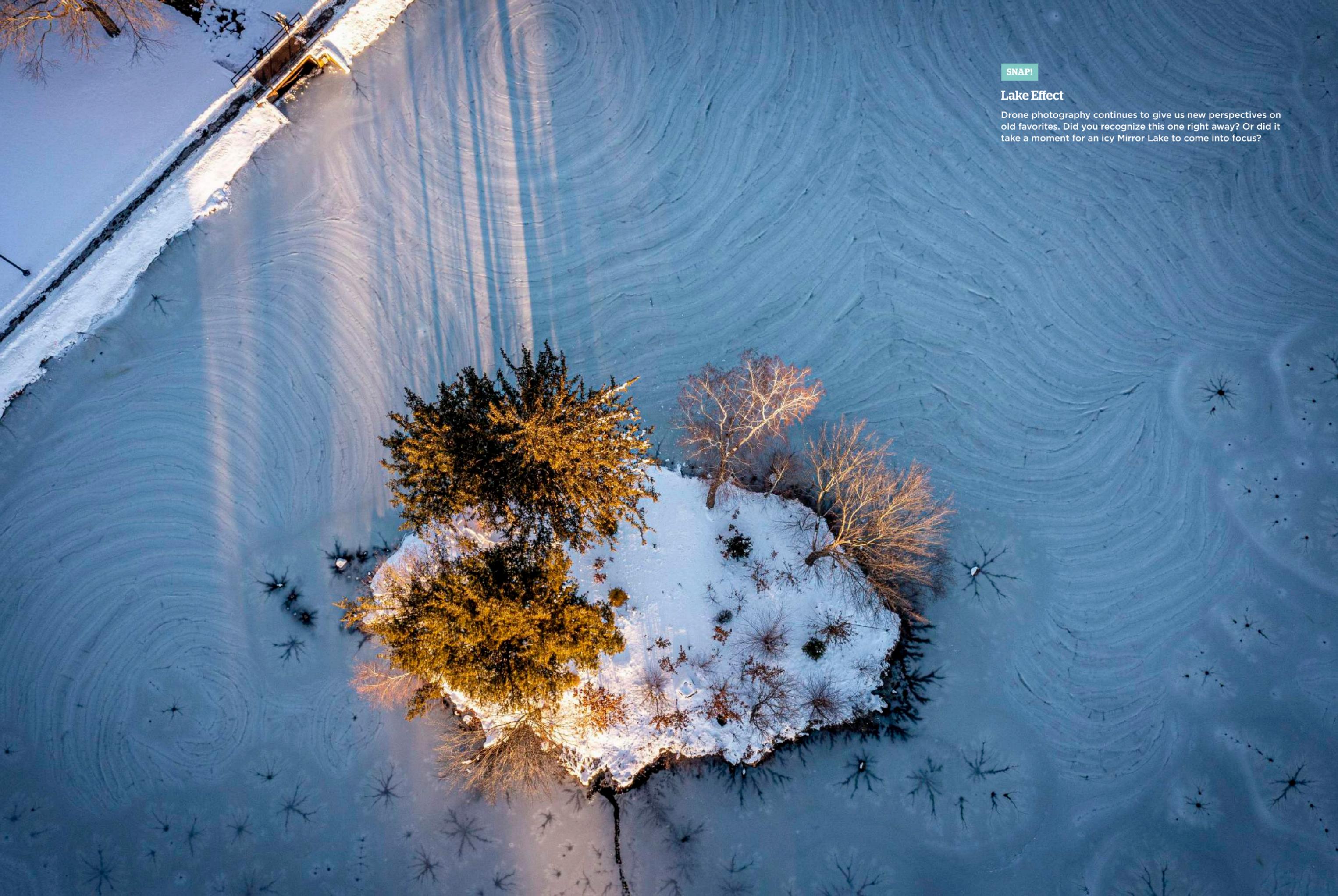
MAGAZINE

SPRING 2023

## Can Truth Triumph?

Journalism Professor Amanda Crawford on Sandy Hook,  
Alex Jones, and Our Culture of Disinformation

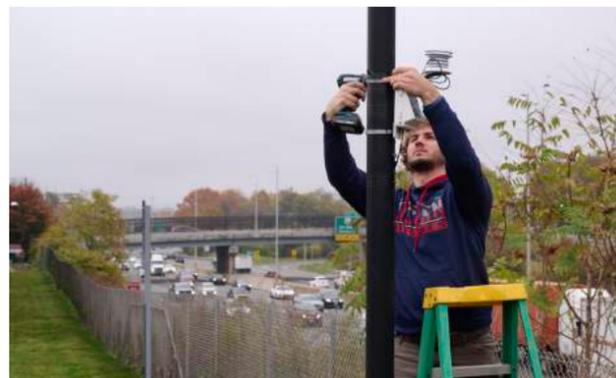
pg. 16



SNAP!

### Lake Effect

Drone photography continues to give us new perspectives on old favorites. Did you recognize this one right away? Or did it take a moment for an icy Mirror Lake to come into focus?



## FEATURES

### 16 Truth is Dead. Long Live Truth.

The disinformation inferno that ignited just hours after the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012 caused a shocking number of Americans polled six months later to say they questioned the most basic facts surrounding the shooting. Journalism professor Amanda Crawford believes it was the first conspiracy theory to catch fire in the social media age.

### 22 All Roads Lead Home

A storied Spanish hiking trail delivers a full-circle moment for '90s alum Alex Chang and some lucky current students. "On the Camino everyone writes their own story," says Chang. "Everybody gets something different from it."

### 30 So Hot

The work the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation at UConn Avery Point is doing today promises to make our city summers less oppressive tomorrow.

## UConn Magazine VOL. 24 NO.1

UConn Magazine is produced three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Fall) by University Communications, University of Connecticut.

**Editor** Lisa Stiepock

**Art Director** Christa Yung

**Associate Editor** Julie (Stagis) Bartucca '10 (BUS, CLAS), '19 MBA

**Photographer** Peter Morenus

**Class Notes** Grace Merritt

**Student Workers** Amanda Rodrigues '24 (CLAS), Baker Charbonnet '26 (SFA)

**Copy Editors** Sheila Foran '83 (BGS), '96 Ph.D., Gregory Lauzon, Elizabeth Omara-Otunnu

**Web Designer** Yesenia Carrero

### University Communications

**Vice President for Communications**  
Tysen Kendig

**Associate Vice President for Communications**  
Michael Kirk

**Senior Director of Creative Strategy and Brand Management**  
Tracy Anderson '09 MA

**Email:** uconnmagazine@uconn.edu

**Letters to the editor:**  
lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu

**Address changes:**  
contactus@foundation.uconn.edu or  
UConn Foundation Records Department,  
Unit 3206, 2390 Alumni Drive, Storrs, CT  
06269

### Additional Photo and Illustration Credits:

**Cover** Karagh Byrne

**Snap!** Sean Flynn

**Table of Contents** Karagh Byrne, Courtesy of Fresco Tours, Peter Morenus, Saskia Keultjes

**Tom's Trivia** University Archives & Special Collections

The University of Connecticut complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, age or other legally protected characteristics in all programs and activities and supports all state and federal laws that promote equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination, including the provision of reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. To request an accommodation or for questions related to the University's non-discrimination policies, please contact: Title IX Coordinator, Office of Institutional Equity, 241 Glenbrook Rd., Unit 4175, Storrs, CT 06269; Phone: (860) 486-2943; equity@uconn.edu (non-discrimination policies); ADA Case Manager, Department of Human Resources, 9 Walters Ave., Unit 5075, Storrs, CT 06269; Phone: (860) 486-3034; hr@uconn.edu (accommodation requests).

## FROM THE EDITOR

### FOREVER YOUNG



Left: Mary (McCarthy) Stagis '85 (SFS), front row, second from right, at a 2022 reunion with friends from Fairfield Hall. Right: Julie (Stagis) Bartucca '10 (BUS, CLAS), '19 MBA, second from right, with her UConn squad at the wedding of Deidre (Schelin) Salisbury '10 (CLAS).

While interviewing Christine (Berry) Walker '73 (ED) for our spotlight on life-long UConn friends on page 39, tears stung my eyes when she read me a message from Patricia (Robustelli) Weber '73 (CLAS): "We formed a very strong bond. I think that's why when I walk into a room at our summer get-togethers, I feel like I'm 18 again."

I could relate. I love my alma mater for countless reasons, but 10 of them occupy space in my heart like no other: Ashley, Ashley, Christine, Emily, Deidre, Jess, Julia, Kami, Lindsey, and Mary.

A dozen years after graduating, I still text daily with the group of women I met in Shippee Hall freshman Honors housing in fall 2006. Walking to the dining hall together promptly at 5 p.m. to laugh over a lengthy dinner (and, often, peanut butter on ice cream) or dancing at Huskies Bar gave way to visits, trips, and get-togethers, supporting each other through first jobs, weddings, babies — and even divorces and infertility.

When I was growing up, my mom — Mary (McCarthy) Stagis '85 (SFS) — would often share memories of her glory days in The Jungle (North Campus), with a big, co-ed group that included my dad, Tom Stagis, and her longtime best friend Leslie (Wohlhueter) Forte '85 (SAH). The Fairfield Hall crew features in photos from my baptism and first birthday party, and I remember playing with their children at parties. As family life became busy, they stayed in touch through Christmas cards and the occasional phone call, and in the past two years my mom and a few others began organizing large reunions.

"We always pick up like no time has elapsed since we've seen each other," Mom says. I feel the same: Though our WhatsApp chat is very active, I leave every in-person gathering of my Shippee girls — fewer and farther between now that the second generation has come along — feeling like I've been wrapped in a big hug.

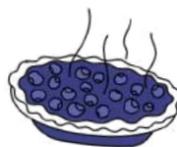
The foundation we built here, while living steps away from each other and even sometimes sleeping on the same bunk beds, withstands time and distance, aided by technology and deeply rooted history. Like UConn, these friendships just feel like home.

*Julie Bartucca*  
Associate Editor

## SECTIONS

### 1 UCONN NOW

Fighting fast fashion, howling at the full moon, fixing teeth for free, finding dinner on the evening bike commute, lighting up periodic table elements, baking the perfect blueberry pie, and more.



### 36 UCONN NATION

For this Valentine's Day edition, alums share enduring Husky love — platonic and romantic — and fill us in on what's new: a TV show, a hockey arena, a job with the Celtics, a way to conserve water and a way to make it rain. Plus Tom's Trivia and much more.



## 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](http://magazine.uconn.edu), email me at [lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu](mailto:lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu), or send by regular mail to *UConn Magazine Letters*, 34 N. Eagleville Rd., Storrs, CT 06269-3144.

Here's a sampling of comments on our last issue, edited for clarity and length. Find more at [magazine.uconn.edu](http://magazine.uconn.edu).



**Dr. Mary Donegan** @Dr\_Donegan · Nov 9, 2022

Did I really just send a "please correct my affiliation to UConn not UCONN email?" Yes, yes I did. Just doing the lord jonathan's work out here, all day every day.

Mary Donegan, urban and community studies professor, West Hartford, via Twitter. For the backstory, turn to page 13.

### INSTAGRAM



@uconnhuskies Our photographers don't miss #frozenfenway #icebus

For more Huskies hockey, see page 40.

### Out of the Minds of Babes

➔ A wonderful story about an extraordinary young woman [Amanda Yagan]. There is no doubt that she will continue doing wonderful things regardless of her eventual career choice.

Sandra Ulrich '71 MA, Yarmouthport, Massachusetts, via our website

### A Husky and a Cypriot

➔ Irene [Soteriou] wrote the Alliance Against Genocide's monthly newsletters while she interned with Genocide Watch. Her initiative and creativity made her one of our most outstanding staff members. How she found time to do that along with her many other activities still amazes me. I hope Irene will become a major advocate for human rights in our State Department, the UN, human rights NGOs, or refugee rights organizations.

Greg Stanton, Founding President, Genocide Watch, via our website

### Coveted Class

➔ It is great to read about the work you [Violet Jiménez Sims] are doing to not only prepare prospective educators, but also in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge that your students must have in order to think on their feet and always have a plan B. Well done.

Cindy Morrissey '78 (CLAS), Tolland, Connecticut, via our website

### Tom's Trivia

➔ Wow! Love these facts! I only got question 2 right, though.

Lauren Lee '23 (CLAS), New London, Connecticut, via our website

### Caribou & Coffee

➔ An exciting and informative article with encouraging cooperation from property owners and archaeologists. Thanks for the positive presentation!

Ellis McDowell-Loudan, McGraw, New York, via our website

### On UConn Magazine

➔ I thought I was unique having a Michigan vanity auto plate that read "UConn 52." That is until, returning from a doctor's visit, I saw and honked at a "UConn 84" plate. Then they passed me returning my honk and wave. It made my day. I look forward to my *UConn Magazine*. The school and its students are doing spectacular things. I don't think I'd qualify for admission today. Keep it up!

Bill Vollano '52, Ann Arbor, Michigan, by postal mail

➔ Thank you so much for the arrival of the latest issue of the *UConn Magazine*! I learned much history there in 1966-67. My adviser, A. William Holland, was a remarkable historian and professor! He visited me in Bethel, Maine, every summer until his death.

Stanley R. Howe, Bethel, Maine, by postal mail



### KUDOS

### I'm With the Band

David L. Mills, director of the UConn Marching Band — known across the region as The Pride of Connecticut — retired at the conclusion of the 2022 season after 33 years at the helm. More than 600 alumni band members came out to the Homecoming football game at The Rent in celebration of Mills' impressive career as a music educator.

Homecoming weekend itself felt like a tribute to Mills, with scores of former band members filling alumni events to reminisce and celebrate his legacy.

Mills grew the UCMB from a program with 120 members when he arrived in 1990 to one of the Northeast's premier college marching bands and the largest student organization on campus — 300-plus musicians strong. In 2019 and 2021, UCMB was one of the three finalists for the Sudler Trophy, awarded every two years to the nation's top college marching band.

—JASON REIDER '15 (SFA), PROUD UCMB ALUM



CHECKING IN WITH

# #32

Swin Cash '02 (CLAS), the former Husky star and current VP of Basketball Operations and Team Development for the NBA's New Orleans Pelicans, was enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame last fall. We caught up with her in November at Gampel Pavilion, where she became just the third UConn basketball student-athlete to have their number retired. Cash's 32 now hangs in the Gampel rafters alongside Rebecca Lobo's 50 and Ray Allen's 34.

Cash's on-court accolades are legendary — on her way to two NCAA championships and three WNBA championships, she was named a first team All-American, an NCAA tournament most outstanding player, a four-time WNBA All-Star, and a member of the WNBA's 2021 25th Anniversary Team. But Cash was quick to tell us that she hopes to be remembered more for her contributions to the lives of others.

"That to me is more important than the baskets I have scored and champi-

onships I have won. Helping the people that are coming behind you is what really matters."

Cash is proud of "She's Got Time," a podcast and social media presence she started to help women navigate a career in the business end of sports. "I really wanted to create an inter-generational type of connectivity and community for women who want to be in sports."

In her NBA front office job, Cash's responsibilities run the court. "I oversee everything that touches our players, whether it is marketing, branding, or social responsibility, and I am also involved in our scouting, draft, free agency, and trade deadline processes," she says. "It's a multitude of things that is a lot of fun and has also sharpened my skill set. My day-to-day interactions and interfacing with the business side of the team is constantly growing my understanding of that side of basketball."

She translates that for the next generation.

"In my time with the Pelicans, one of the million-dollar questions I get

is, 'What do you do and how do you do it?' Sometimes women don't get the real answers, and I felt like there was a void of mentors for young women. I got together with some friends of mine to create [She's Got Time] and it is really my passion project right now. I want to give back to young women who have played the game, been managers, been involved in all parts of the game in college, and help them figure out what a full-time career path in sports can look like for them."

Cash and her husband Steve Canal have two sons, Saint and Syer. They are determined to make the future better through social justice and equity.

"The world is in a tough place right now, but I believe in freedom and the right to vote," she says. "I try to lean into things where I can create change, and one of the things I am most proud of is working with local organizations and institutions to make sure people have polling places to go to. I try to lend my voice and my platforms to organizations to see how we can expand and continue to grow people's rights. I think the world needs a lot more love and less hate."

The Hall of Famer continues to be as "thick as thieves" with Husky mates Sue Bird '02 (CLAS), Asjha Jones '02 (BUS), and Tamika Williams-Jeter '02 (CLAS). "I feel like we helped transition UConn into a different stratosphere, from a cultural connectivity standpoint, and we allowed Coach Auriemma to play the game a different way," says Cash. "The previous groups at UConn were different because they had size, but we had a different speed and athleticism, and the game continued to evolve."

She still uses the lessons she learned under Auriemma and Chris Dailey, associate head coach. "UConn helped set that standard I have today. I always tell people that not only is there a day-to-day approach to the details at UConn, but also attention to driving the culture of the program, and the expectation that the bar is set high." —MIKE ENRIGHT



At Gampel Pavilion last fall, Cash — with husband Steve Canal, sons Saint and Syer, and Coach — became the third Husky to have a basketball number retired. "I feel like we helped transition UConn into a different stratosphere," says Number 32 of her '02 Husky team.



OUR STUDENTS

Madeline Kizer models an Urban Outfitters jumpsuit from an overstock retailer, an upcycled license plate cuff, a \$1 thrifted belt, Mudd shoes from eBay, and thrifted jewelry.

also can have clothing altered, attend workshops on sewing and upcycling, hear talks about fast fashion, and shop for goods from student-run small businesses.

As a first-year student in UConn's F3 program for female entrepreneurs, Kizer, who grew up thrifting with her grandmother, created a thrifted clothing brand she called "kizerskollection." Through her research, she came across clothing swap events in the U.K. and decided to bring the concept to UConn.

"In the fall of 2021, I started hosting small events and pitching at various pitch competitions," says Kizer. "I realized that it would be beneficial for students to have a place where they can go and just recycle everything they have at school."

At first, Kizer's plan was met with some doubt, but she wasn't dissuaded. She applied for and received a UConn IDEA grant and then, with Koomson and Andrick, a grant from the UConn Office of Sustainability. After official approval from UConn President Radenka Maric, the three set up shop in a former café space in the Family Studies Building.

Compared to a cash business, the swap model "is almost more beneficial" to spurring a cultural shift, Kizer says, "because it encourages students to think about how much they're consuming and to look back in their closets for things they can donate to pursue this item that they think they're going to get more use out of."

Kizer hopes the Swap Shop — where students have donated gems such as never-worn Doc Martens and Ugg boots and "amazing vintage pieces" — will open people's eyes to what is possible. "Throughout all of the swaps I've held, I have really tried to glamorize thrifting so that it attracts more people and encourages those who wouldn't normally thrift to do so." —ELAINA HANCOCK

## RAGE AGAINST THE FASHION MACHINE

Madeline Kizer '24 (BUS) would like us all to take a moment to consider what is required to make a single cotton T-shirt: land, labor, pesticides, and other resources to grow and process the cotton; chemicals and dye to turn the fiber into fabric; labor and power to transform that fabric into a shirt — not to mention transportation through each step. Chances are that a consumer buys the tee for significantly less than the cost of the labor and resources used to produce it.

The current culture of disposable or

fast fashion is harmful to the environment and to human rights, says Kizer. "If something is so cheap, that's how you know it's not sustainable."

Last fall Kizer, with Efua Koomson '22 (CLAS) and Lyla Andrick '24 (CAHNR), opened the UConn Swap Shop, where students can purchase clothing with credits earned from donations to promote sustainable shopping habits. "We want to raise awareness about sustainability and get people to talk about it," says Kizer.

At the campus Swap Shop, students

### UConn TALKS

On establishing more than \$100,000 in fellowship funds:

**"It is our responsibility as successful women to stand at the door and let other women in."**

University President Radenka Maric, *Connecticut Magazine*, January 2023

On why the violent religious fervor behind the Jan. 6 Capitol attack should not shock us:

**"The riot was a pitch-perfect performance of the kind of white Christian nationalism that has ebbed and flowed throughout American history."**

Sociology professor Ruth Braunstein, *Time* magazine, Dec. 30, 2022

On the doubling of Connecticut's Asian American population since 2000:

**"Asian American migration to the state has been part of every industry — from the aerospace industry, to insurance and accounting firms, to the incredible medical research facilities."**

History professor and director of the Asian and Asian American Studies Institute Jason Chang, *Connecticut Insider*, Dec. 29, 2022

On algae as the new kale:

**"This crop doesn't require fresh water. Doesn't require land. Doesn't require fertilizer."**

Marine sciences professor emeritus Charles Yarish, *National Geographic*, Nov. 8, 2022.

On using fast-growing hemp to make an alternative to plastic:

**"There's a reason why they call it weed."**

Chemistry professor Greg Sotzing, *News 8*, Oct. 31, 2022

On what to do if you come across turkeys battling over pecking order:

**"If it were me, I would settle in and watch the spectacle!"**

Ecology and evolutionary biology professor Chris Elphick, *Salon*, Nov. 11, 2022

### ON CAMPUS

#### All Smiles

Last November the UConn School of Dental Medicine hosted the Connecticut Mission of Mercy Free Dental Clinic for the first time in the clinic's 15-year history. Over two days, a team of 800 volunteers that included 160 UConn dental students, faculty, staff, and residents and 30 School of Medicine Urban Service Track students provided vital dental care to more than 1,000 patients.

—COURTNEY CHANDLER '21 MBA

Read more at [s.uconn.edu/dentalclinic](https://s.uconn.edu/dentalclinic).



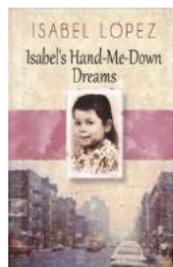


3 BOOKS

### Scribbling in the Margins

When we spoke with Fany DeJesús Hannon '08 MA in November, she had just begun week two of her appointment as Interim Dean of Students after a decade as director of PRLACC, UConn's Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center. Her books are always hard copy and often end up full of scribbled markings, sticky notes, and folded corners — things to remember and things to share. Not surprising for this collector of wisdom and friends, Hannon is constantly seeking ways to grow and to support others in their growth. When we went to press she had just added a doctoral degree in higher education administration to her laurels.

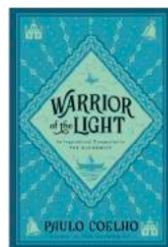
**Just Finished:**



**"Isabel's Hand-Me-Down Dreams" by Isabel López '75 (CLAS)**

In my second year at PRLACC, Isabel emailed me saying she was a founder of PRLACC, had just written her memoir, and would like me to read it. I read it back then, and I just read it again. She talks about coming to UConn in the '70s, finding only 17 Puerto Rican students, and protesting to start PRLACC and give them a home. For our 50th anniversary, Ana Isabel, as she is now known, contacted those 17 students, who all came back to Storrs for the celebration. It was wonderful to see them all in person, like seeing her book coming to life. I was especially over the moon to meet Isabel and have her sign the book, which I have been using for years in teaching peer mentoring classes. I hope she knows the impact she's had on me and every single Latinx student we've had on this campus.

**Reading Now:**



**"Warrior of the Light" by Paulo Coelho**

I love Paulo Coelho. He's a Brazilian author and the first book of his I read, like everyone else, was "The Alchemist," and I fell in love with his writing. "Warrior of the Light" is basically short passages about this warrior who is facing obstacles and finding opportunities. You can take this book like a daily devotional. There's a story but not a linear story. I can open it anywhere and find pieces of wisdom and a bit of perspective. Every single thing I read, I always think about how can I apply what I have read? Whether it's fiction or nonfiction, I may not have all the answers but the hero of this story might. Coelho talks in this book and in "The Archer" about how you never know who you're going to encounter or what people are carrying inside of them, and asks how can you unpack that and help them.

**On Deck:**



**"Mexican Gothic" by Silvia Moreno-Garcia**

I'm very curious about what is going to happen to the heroine in this novel. My go-to is to support Latinx authors and this is the first book I'm reading by Silvia Moreno-Garcia. I love movies like "The Others" that are psychological with a little bit of horror and not too much gore. This is a psychological thriller that takes place in the 1930s in an area in Mexico where there were many factories and people were dying. The cousin of the protagonist is very sick, keeps having hallucinations, and they don't know what's wrong with her. The protagonist sets out to solve the mystery of what's wrong with her. It had great reviews so I'm hoping winter break will give me the opportunity to read it. I think I'm going to have more time now that I'm done with my dissertation.



THIS JUST IN

### Some Viruses Turn Humans Into Mosquito Magnets

Zika and dengue fever viruses alter the scent of mice and humans they infect. The altered scent attracts mosquitoes, which bite the host, drink their infected blood, then carry the virus to their next victim. Researchers from UConn Health are part of the team that uncovered this sneaky way viruses increase odds of transmission. Find more at [s.uconn.edu/skeeter](http://s.uconn.edu/skeeter).

TRENDING

## ROAD EATS

It started when he posted a video of himself taking a bite out of an onion he found on the side of the road. TikTok went nuts.

His partner was the one who pointed out that it was about eating. Most people don't eat stuff they find on the side of the road, she said. They don't even touch it.

Really, there are two types of people in the world. One sees something lying in the street and thinks, "Trash." The other sees something lying in the street and thinks, "Yes! A 30-pound package of frozen cookie dough!" Geno Villafano, Ph.D. student and pro cyclist for Cannondale, is one of the latter.

He scored the cookie dough along Storrs Road last summer. It was still frozen. Had to have fallen off a truck earlier the same day. Other stuff he finds isn't always obviously fresh, so he uses his background in biochemistry to judge safety.

"I'm acutely aware of how many heat cycles that sandwich or bag of chips has gone through," Villafano explains. The finds come on his 30-mile commute to and from Rockville, Connecticut, to Storrs, specifically Leighton Core's genomics lab, where he is developing assays to measure how genes are expressed — so we don't question his precision calculation credentials. Other favorite food finds include fresh asparagus, sacks of potatoes, and oyster mushrooms.

But Villafano also finds stuff that isn't food. He usually picks that up, too. Pool cues, socket wrenches, sleds, foot-long framing nails, Bose headphones — it all gets put in his backpack or tied to the bike frame and either used or decently disposed of. He posts them all on his TikTok channel as ride finds.

Villafano cleans up trash, rescues baby turtles, returns lost phones to



Ph.D. student and pro cyclist Geno Villafano finds the craziest things on the 30-mile commute between his Rockville home and a Storrs genomics lab. He posts most. He eats many.

their owners, and is not above tucking the occasional half-drunk bottle of Hennessy into his waistband. And he does it all with zero carbon footprint. The man may just be the superhero of our time.

But Villafano begs to differ. "As a kid I was very turned off by road cycling because it has a very pretentious vibe, a lot of gatekeeping. I post videos of myself eating stuff off the road because I like to make a joke of it. You don't have to train religiously or take it seriously. Biking and eating is fun!" —KIM KRIEGER



Wondering what else Villafano finds on his rides to Storrs? Go to [s.uconn.edu/roadfood](http://s.uconn.edu/roadfood).



COLLECTIONS

## PERIOD PIECES

Christian Brückner, head of UConn's chemistry department, started collecting more than 45 years ago when he was a young teen in Germany and his father a metallurgist who'd bring home laboratory leftovers. From an early 19th century bottle of mercury salt to manganese nodules scooped from the bottom of the Pacific, Brückner's childhood collection grew through the decades, reaching more than 1,000 pieces. Many now grace a wall-sized interactive periodic table in an atrium of the Chemistry Building. Every item has a story. "I wanted to connect each element to the natural world, our daily lives, and the work that we do in research labs," says Brückner. Find Kimberly Phillips' story on Brückner and his collection, along with more photos and video, at [s.uconn.edu/period](http://s.uconn.edu/period).



THIS ALWAYS IN

### What's in a Name?

It's not an acronym. What would the two Ns stand for? The O?

We know — the magazine you're holding has it in big, bold, capital letters on its cover: UCONN. But that's an exception to the rule, like Jonathan's T-shirt at right. There's only one way to go when using the University nickname in a sentence — with a capital "U," a capital "C," and a lowercase "o-n-n."

"As a former English major and current pedant, it drives me crazy to see it written 'UCONN,'" says Meghan Bard '03 (CLAS), a contributor to the UConn sports blog "A Dime Back."

"It is not an acronym, it's an abbreviation of the University of Connecticut, so only the U and C should be capitalized. It ... shows a lack of care when a publication gets it wrong."

The moniker surfaced shortly after the Connecticut General Assembly approved a bill changing the formal name of the institution from Connecticut State College to the University of Connecticut in 1939. In 2013, the University adopted "UConn" and an accompanying all-caps wordmark as



**UCONN**

**UConn**

the primary visual identifier of the institution as part of a major rebranding effort in partnership with Nike.

While many naysayers point to that logo as a driver of this widespread confusion, pay attention next time you're texting about another household name with an all-caps logo: How would you capitalize American Express? Whole Foods? Tesla? (Even Nike.)

"Ultimately, it's not a huge deal,"

says Tom Breen, UConn's director of news and editorial communications, before catching himself. "No, wait, scratch that. It is a huge deal. It is the hugest deal. Please stop writing 'UConn' in all caps. You'll feel better, we'll feel better; the world will be a better place." —TYLER R. MORRISSEY '14 (CLAS)

Read more at [s.uconn.edu/allcaps](http://s.uconn.edu/allcaps).

UCONN ON WIKI

### Lubbie Harper Jr.



The Honorable Lubbie Harper Jr. '67 MSW, '75 JD is a retired judge and public servant and the third African American to serve as a Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. While serving temporarily on the court in 2008, Justice Harper cast the deciding vote in *Kerrigan v. Commissioner of Public Health*. The ruling legalized same-sex marriage in Connecticut.

Born and raised in New Haven, Harper became the first in his family to go to college. He earned a Master of Social Work degree from UConn in 1967 and a JD from the UConn School of Law in 1975. A judge since 1997, he has been entrusted with judicial office by a Democratic and two Republican governors. His deciding vote in *Kerrigan v. Commissioner of Public Health* made Connecticut the second state in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage permanently.

Justice Harper joined the Connecticut Supreme Court full time in 2011 and retired the following year. He continues to chair the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System. The *New Haven Register* named him Person of the Year in 2018, and he accepted the Public Service Award from the UConn School of Law Alumni Association in 2022. —MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ



*"Why is the moon so hungry?  
Because it's only full once a month."  
Bobby Flowers '24 (BUS)*

CLUBBING

LUNACY

Moon Club is relatively new at UConn. Students across years, majors, and interests gather on the Great Lawn to celebrate each full moon. It's known for Instagram memes and accusations of being a cult, but for students it seems to be about community — and lunacy.

At November's Blood Moon meeting, on the eve of the 2022 midterm elections, I meet UConn Joker; someone playing the accordion; a person dressed as Jesus; a guy with a decorated skull staff; and students

chanting, dancing in circles, and doing cartwheels. "I find

a strong sense of kinship with the moon and, you know, it's just a really, really cool celestial object," Vladimir Klyukin '26 (ACES), known here as "Staff Guy," told me.

Recent transfer students Amethyst Van Antwerp '25 (ED, CLAS), Riley Smith '25 (CLAS), Tyler Conroy '24 (CLAS), and Hannah Renzoni '26 (CAHNR) say they came out of curiosity, but seem like converts. "You can just be comfortable here, there's no judgment," says Smith.

"Moon Club just allows you to meet some really out-of-the-box people that you would never imagine meeting in everyday life," Sophia Rogers '24 (NUR) tells me. "I've witnessed a bagpipe, a mandolin, people playing

drums ... it's just fun to meet a ton of people."

Sociology master's student and club VP and Instagram manager Nicola Wilk '22 (CLAS), aka "Moon Mommy," says the club started small, but "blew up" in COVID 2020. "It was one of the only clubs on campus that got to meet in person, a lot of people were able to join and just, like, appreciate the moon from a safe distance, staring at it."

The question remains: Is it a cult? Moon Mommy says no, but others remain skeptical.

"I don't think it's organized enough to be one, but it's basically one. It's beginning, it could be one. It has potential," says Conroy. —KAYLEIGH COLLINS '24 (CLAS)

GOOD TASTE

EAT YOUR WORDS



Passed down through generations, written on index cards, posted to the web at the bottom of a meandering story about a blogger's family hike — a recipe is much

more than a step-by-step guide to creating a delectable dish.

Lynn Z. Bloom, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and Aetna Chair of Writing emerita, unwraps all the symbolism in something so ostensibly simple in her latest book, "Recipe," part of the Bloomsbury Publishing "Object Lessons" series in which writers explore "the hidden lives of ordinary things."

A fan of the "top-flight" series of "short, quirky, unusual" books, Bloom challenged herself to write a proposal that would be accepted in the highly selective series. "I've always liked to cook, everybody likes to eat, everybody in my family cooks, it's fun to do," she says. "So I thought I would write a proposal based on unusual ways to look at the process of how most home cooks do what they do."

She was thrilled to learn her pitch was accepted as the pandemic and lockdowns took hold and people the world over ramped up their home cooking, spawning terms like procrastibaking. "This was the perfect thing to write where I could not think of disease, death, or disaster," says Bloom. "I wanted it to be a happy book."

Bloom taught at UConn from 1988 to 2015. She's written more than 25 books, including an in-depth biography of famed child-rearing expert Dr. Benjamin Spock, who taught her about precision: "If you don't write clearly,

someone could die." This book, she says, is perhaps the most universal.

"Essays in academic journals only get read by other academics," Bloom says. "This book literally gets people where they live, gets people talking."

"Recipe" begins by taking the subject at face value, breaking down the components of a recipe as an instruction guide. "A recipe is a success story," Bloom writes. "A recipe tells the story of how any cook, however naive or sophisticated, in partnership with the recipe's words and music, can transform often disparate ingredients into a congenial — even exciting — treat."

Centered on chicken noodle soup and its countless variations, from Jewish Penicillin to The Chicken Soup of the Chinese Aunties, that chapter is the spool from which the rest of the book unwinds — even Bloom's exploration of the recipe as a how-to is multilayered, playing with the unique spin every cook puts on every dish, every time, and the way personal tweaks become favorite family recipes.

Each chapter is anchored by a representative dish to dissect deeper meanings: macaroni and cheese for comfort, the Thanksgiving meal for celebration, chocolate for cooking improvisation. (You'll find Bloom's favorite sentence in that last chapter.)

And even in what she says is the one "distressing" (but vital) chapter, on food insufficiency, recipes have a place: This section probes the numerous ways to make simple porridge. Bloom in her research found a cookbook written by prisoners in a Holocaust camp. "The recipes were a link to their heritage," she says.

"When you're looking at food, you're looking at culture, history, hospitality, community, transmission of values, nurturing, celebration. You can't do any of these without food."

Bloom leaves the reader with what she says is "the best recipe, maybe of anything" for a pie that contains so much fresh fruit she thinks it could practically be considered a health food. Bon appétit! —JULIE (STAGIS) BARTUCA '10 (BUS, CLAS), '19 MBA



The Best Blueberry Pie

To eat this pie is like eating fresh berries, only better. Use the largest, plumpest berries to fill the pie shell.

Serves 6-8

- 4-5 cups fresh blueberries
- 1 9-inch pie shell, baked and cooled
- ¼ cup water
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1-2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon Grand Marnier (optional)
- ¼ cup fresh raspberries (optional)

Distribute 2½ cups fresh blueberries evenly in cooled pie shell. Cook water, sugar, salt over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Add remaining blueberries (2-2½ cups) and stir over low heat until the mixture thickens — less than five minutes. Some of the berries will burst during this process, turning the mixture beautifully blue. Avoid cooking them to mush.

If the sauce is too runny, mix 1 tablespoon cornstarch and ¼ cup cold water, then briskly stir in a few tablespoons of the hot mixture until blended. Whisk this slurry into the cooking berries and continue whisking for about a minute until the mixture thickens as desired. Repeat if necessary.

Remove from heat. Add butter and Grand Marnier. When cool but not congealed, pour the sauce over berries in the shell. Chill until ready to serve. Decorate with fresh raspberries, if desired.

# Truth is Dead

By Amanda J. Crawford,  
UConn Journalism Professor

Illustrations by Karagh Byrne

## It all started in a fever dream on a small sailboat off the coast of Jalisco.

Our friends set off a few months earlier to travel the world by sea. My husband and I joined them in southern Mexico for the first week of 2018. It was a time of transition in our lives, and we looked to the trip for tranquil respite on the cheap as we tried to figure out what came next.

The journey to meet them was long; we flew into Puerto Vallarta and then traveled several hours by bus. But when we set sail north along the Pacific coast the next morning, everything seemed perfect. The boat cut a swift white line between indigo water and periwinkle sky. Wave-sculpted stacks of rock pierced the meniscus of the sea, and a humpback whale and her calf burst from the sparkling waves before us. That evening, we anchored in a near-empty lagoon and were lulled to sleep by the lilt of the sea.

When I awoke the next morning, though, the pressure in my head felt as if I had spent the night on the ocean's floor rather than bobbing along on top of it. My friends insisted I was just seasick and would feel better off the sailboat. So we piled into a dinghy to explore the shore and brack-

ish channels thick with mangroves. As we sipped cerveza under a palapa in the sand, my eyes grew bleary, my lungs tightened, and my head throbbed. I could no longer deny the truth that threatened to disrupt this magical journey just as it started: the influenza virus I had contracted along the way took hold.

**In the weeks leading up to the trip, I had been thinking a lot about truth. At the end of 2017, I certainly wasn't the only one.** The 2016 election, marred by fake news and a Russian disinformation campaign, had delivered a presidency of "alternative facts." *Time* magazine asked on its cover, "Is Truth Dead?" President Donald Trump told more than 2,100 lies to the public his first year in office, an average of six a day, according to *The Washington Post*. Outrageous conspiracy theories and extremism poisoned public discourse as anti-vaxxers, flat-Earthers, and climate change deniers waged an assault on science. That August, hate and white nationalism had crawled out of the shadows and into the torchlight of the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Then two of the deadliest mass shootings in modern U.S. history occurred just five weeks apart: 58 people were murdered at a concert on the Las Vegas strip in October 2017, and 26

were killed at a Texas church in November. The traumatized survivors — like those from almost every high-profile mass shooting since the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, five years earlier — faced heinous accusations that they were willing participants in a false-flag plot to take away guns.

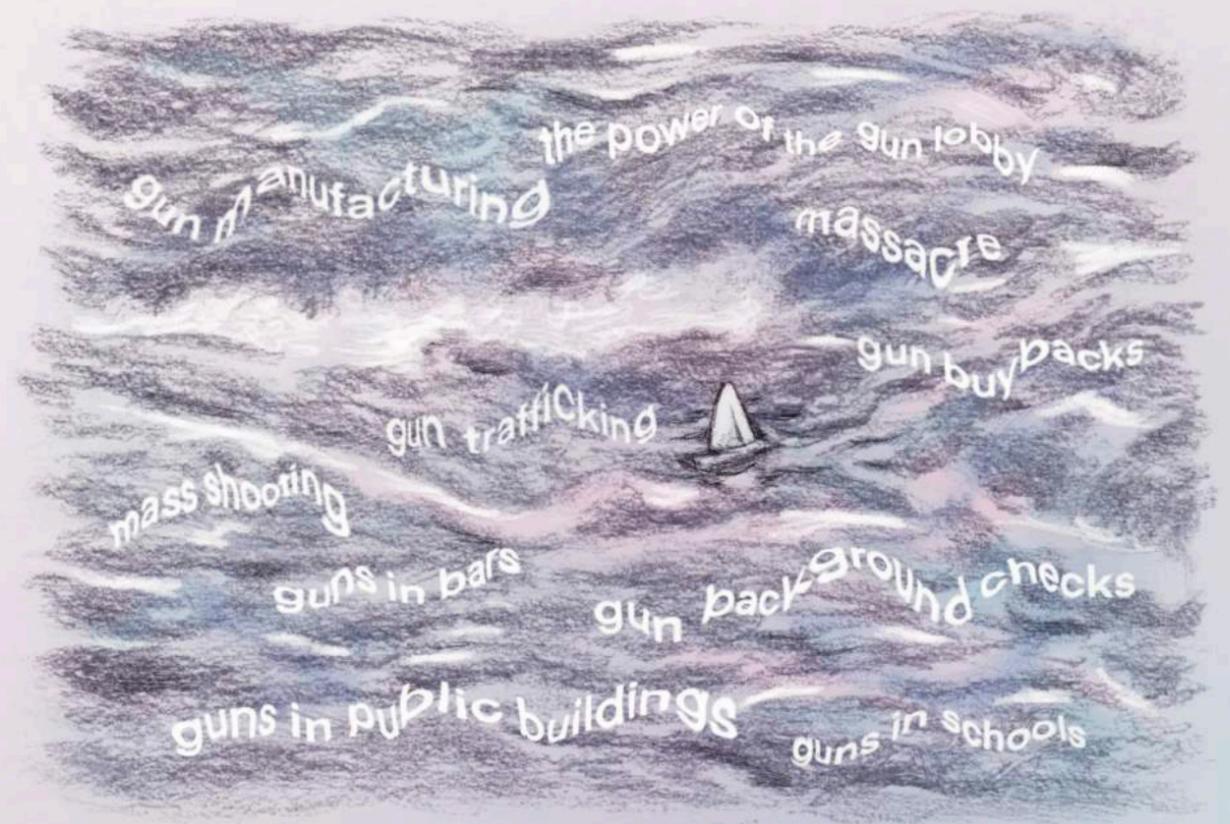
Of all the markers of the post-truth era, the cruel and politically motivated denial of these tragedies bothered me the most. As a journalist, I had covered several mass shootings, starting with one that had gravely wounded someone I had known for years as an Arizona

political reporter, Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. The shooting at Giffords' constituent event in a grocery store parking lot in Tucson in 2011 left six people dead, including a staffer, a federal judge, and a 9-year-old girl. I did not personally know any of the people who were murdered, but several close friends did and were shattered by the losses. After that, it seemed, the gun massacres didn't stop. I was in Aurora, Colorado, in July 2012 to report on a mass shooting at a movie theater there for Bloomberg News. A couple of weeks after that, there was a mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and, in December, the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I helped cover the tragedies and, in the aftermath, wrote a lot about guns: gun manufacturing, gun trafficking, gun buybacks, and gun background checks; guns in public buildings, guns in bars, guns in schools, and the power of the gun lobby. Changes to national gun laws had seemed all but inevitable after Sandy Hook, but within months even modest, common-sense proposals with broad bipartisan public

support had failed in an increasingly polarized and dysfunctional Congress.

When Bloomberg News closed several regional offices, including mine, about a year after Sandy Hook, I was weary of gun violence and politics and was, frankly, disillusioned. I accepted a job as a journalism professor in Kentucky, a state neither my new husband, Toby, nor I had visited before my job interview. We settled into a creative nook in the Bible Belt, the college town of Bowling Green. There, we performed together in a band and opened a music studio and arts venue in the front of the green Victorian we rented downtown. I taught, gardened, and wrote about things unrelated to guns as political polarization worsened and America's mass shooting crisis continued.

Then, in early 2017, our little Kentucky town became the subject of a firestorm over fake news after Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway, on a TV news program, cited a made-up massacre in Bowling Green to justify the administration's ban on travel



from several majority-Muslim nations. She blamed the media for people not knowing about it. It was ludicrous. (Later, she said she misspoke.) I penned a satirical response for *The Huffington Post*, and a friend, who thought it was funny, printed us a vinyl banner that stated simply in bold red and black type: “The Bowling Green Massacre Never Happened.” We hung the quirky testament to our town’s moment in the fake-news spotlight from the edge of our front porch. Tomato plants grew over the banner that summer, and we often forgot it was even there.

Then, in December 2017, an angry, shaggy-haired stranger drove to our house and parallel parked out front. When he saw one of our acquaintances on the porch wearing a local government windbreaker, he started shouting about deep-state conspiracies. When Toby came out, the stranger pointed at the sign: “Are you still butt-hurt about Trump?” he yelled. Then he grabbed my husband, who was standing five tall concrete steps above him, and pulled him down onto the sidewalk. The men tussled on the ground, and the stranger landed a hard kick against Toby’s head. Eventually, Toby was able to pin him and call the police. (The man was charged with a misdemeanor.) The local newspaper wrote about the incident and people reminded us over and over again how lucky we were that the man didn’t show up with a gun.

Then, the backlash started on social media. People called us “libtards” and accused Toby, who was left bloodied and bruised in the encounter, of beating up an innocent Trump supporter who was minding his own business on a public sidewalk. A middle-aged blonde woman who ran a booth in an antique store where I frequently shopped sent me dozens of vitriolic social media messages telling me we deserved to be attacked.

“You should be doing things to unify

the community,” she wrote. “If you care so much about fake news, why don’t you do something about it?”

We ran a nonprofit that organized community arts events. I taught journalism and coordinated the university’s First Amendment Studies program. I tried to reason with her. This was not a nameless troll. It was someone in our community. But it was no use. The woman’s nasty messages and posts on our social media pages continued until we blocked her.

**A week later, I was sick on the deck of the sailboat in Mexico. As my friends swam in the lagoon, thoughts about truth, democracy, fake news, conspiracy theories, online cruelty, and real-world violence swirled in my feverish skull.** I had

become a journalist because I believed in the essential role of a free press in democracy: to seek the truth, hold those in power accountable, and empower the people for self-governance. I had walked away from organized religion many years ago, but my faith in the power of truth — and the concept of the marketplace of ideas that is the foundation of modern First Amendment jurisprudence — had never wavered.

But the marketplace of ideas had never been as free as it was after the advent of social media. Suddenly all the gatekeepers — journalists, publishers, universities, scientists, government officials, and other institutions that had previously vetted ideas before their mass distribution — had been sidelined. Truth competed online with an infinite number of outrageous ideas. Vicious hate speech, fake news, anti-science gibberish, odious conspiracy theories, hoaxes, and the manifestos of madmen zoomed around the world to billions of people in a flash and were promoted by computer algorithms that favored controversial content that spurred

engagement without any regard to its social value or veracity.

The air temperature reached toward 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and my internal temperature soared even higher as I fretted about the incredibly high stakes for our society and our democracy. I closed my eyes against the sunlight. There is a quote that I often share with my students when I lecture about free expression. It’s from John Milton’s essay “Areopagitica,” an early argument in favor of a free press, written in 1644. It is a bromide that I have turned over the years just as others take comfort from their favorite Bible verse:

*“And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously ... to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?”*

**A hot breeze rocked the sailboat, lulling me in and out of consciousness. All the winds, I thought. All the winds.** Abstract notions took shape in the pastel dreamscape of my mind, and I watched Milton’s words play out on a battlefield. It was an impressionist depiction that only makes sense within the omniscience of dream: a bundle of color that I knew to be Truth, beset on all sides. Battered by armies of wind. All the winds of misinformation. A tempest of fake news and propaganda. Winds of hate. Winds of willful and wanton ignorance.

It was the second decade of the third millennium, and all the winds were blowing. They blustered along the superhighway of information, gained strength in the chasms that divided us, and rattled the very foundations of our democracy. Truth was in the field, but she was bloodied. I was not alone in doubting her strength.



**When I got home, I tried to organize the thoughts the fever dream had inspired — and sort out what this meant for the direction of my research.** I knew every generation had

carved out the parameters of acceptable speech in consideration of the most odious ideas of the time. I could think of no conspiracy theories more odious than the denial of the uniquely American horror of public mass-casualty gun violence and the cruelty to vulnerable people that those false narratives inspired. Just over a month later, on Valentine's Day 2018, another high-profile school shooting in Parkland, Florida, brought mass-shooting denial back into the limelight. In the aftermath, teenage survivors, whose calls for change reinvigorated the gun policy reform movement, were viciously pilloried online. Soon after, families of Sandy Hook victims filed lawsuits in Texas and Connecticut against right-wing disinformation purveyor Alex Jones of Infowars. For years, Jones had told his audience of millions that the mass shooting in Newtown was a government-staged hoax to take away guns — and encouraged them to investigate it. Families that had endured a horrific tragedy and suffered an unfathomable loss were accused of being “crisis actors” in the deep-state plot. They were harassed and threatened online, and sometimes confronted in person, too. Jones has claimed he was just asking questions, reporting on internet rumors, and exercising his free speech. But while opinions are protected under the First Amendment, defamatory false statements — like the many Jones had made over the years insisting that there was proof of a hoax at Sandy Hook — are not protected and are punishable under the law.

Around the same time the lawsuits were filed, I was offered an assistant professorship at UConn. In August, as my husband and I settled into a rented colonial in the Quiet Corner, several social media companies acted in near unison to ban Jones, Infowars, and others who had spread hate and

misinformation on their platforms. As outcries over censorship went up from the right, I knew I had found the battle between conspiracy theories and truth that I wanted to chronicle. I thought by examining this dark corner of the misinformation crisis, I could shine light on many of the existential challenges facing our nation. I began interviewing people who had been directly impacted by the conspiracy theories, including victims' family members, survivors, local residents, first responders, and members of the clergy.

Among those I connected with was Lenny Pozner, the father of Noah Pozner, the youngest and only Jewish victim of the Sandy Hook shooting. Pozner has made it his life's mission to fight back against those who claimed Noah and other victims never existed.

“I felt like I needed to defend my son,” Pozner would later explain in court. “He couldn't do that for himself, so I needed to be his voice.”

At first Pozner, whose journey I later chronicled for *Boston Globe Magazine*, had tried to reason with deniers — thrusting himself into hostile online forums and releasing his son's personal records as proof Noah had lived and died. But he soon realized his truth didn't stand a chance against the onslaught of lies. So Pozner started a nonprofit called the Honr Network and recruited a team of online vigilantes to

wage war with trolls on social media and flag hoaxer content for copyright claims or violations of internet company guidelines.

By the time I met Pozner in person for the first time in Florida in early 2019, he had become an expert in the opaque rules of the private companies that control so much modern public discourse. He kept his son's Batman costume and small flip-flops in his drawer so he would see them every day when he dressed, then he crossed his apartment to his computer, where he spent hours every day skimming through hateful content trying to preserve his son's memory. He and his volunteers had succeeded in getting thousands of social media posts and blogs deleted from the web, and he had helped persuade several platforms to change rules to block denial of tragedies like the Sandy Hook shooting. But his success had come at a cost. He faced continuous harassment and even death threats. He had moved a half-dozen times, altered his appearance, and lived in hiding.

The day after I met Pozner, I drove across Florida to meet with a man who had been Alex Jones' lead “expert” on Sandy Hook. A one-time cop and school employee, the retiree had spent years tormenting Newtown officials and victims' families and targeting surviving children with outlandish claims. He handed me a background check on Pozner, convinced the grieving father was a deep-state operative. I later met

and wrote about another leading Sandy Hook conspiracy theorist, a retired philosophy professor and Holocaust denier who Pozner successfully sued for defamation in Wisconsin. Though the man fancied himself a champion of academic freedom, he sent a letter to UConn's leadership trying to get me fired after I wrote about his trial for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He enumerated 26 complaints about my conduct, one for every letter in the alphabet. Among his strikes against me was speculation that I might be Jewish since I once spoke at a Hartford synagogue.

The further I got into my research, the more concerned I became about where misinformation could lead. Initially, some of my friends, family, and colleagues questioned whether deep-state conspiracy theories were really that widespread. But I continually ran into normal people around the country, and even in Connecticut, who proclaimed with certainty that the Sandy Hook shooting didn't happen. Normal, workaday people who didn't spend their days in alt-right forums or trying to reach the darkest corners of the web. There was the waitress at a Cracker Barrel in Florida. The bartender and the cook at our favorite Connecticut bar. My husband's friend of more than 20 years. The doubts about Sandy Hook, though thoroughly debunked, had permeated mainstream society and fed distrust of the media and the

government in ways that had fractured our common perception of reality.

I became increasingly worried that conspiracy theories like this would lead to political violence. But even as I pointed to the growing number of “Q” signs at Trump rallies — a reference to the absurd QAnon grand conspiracy theory about the deep state — many people I talked to didn't believe these outlandish notions could have much of an impact. “What happens to democracy if members of Congress promote these kinds of outrageous false beliefs?” I asked. I had no way of knowing at that time that conspiracy theories would lead to a violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, but I felt certain that they would continue to spread online and cause escalating harm in the real world.

Since then, we've all lived through a global pandemic made worse by false beliefs that it was a government hoax. The “big lie” that the 2020 election was stolen was promoted by Trump, right-wing news outlets, members of Congress, and elected officials across the country. The election lies along with the QAnon conspiracy theory led to the deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, that sought to block the

peaceful transfer of power for the first time in our country's history. The entire nation now seems to be transfixed by the fight against misinformation and debating the future of free speech in the digital era.

Though I believe that there are still many challenges on this front ahead, I do see hope for the future. Many people have awakened to the dangers of false beliefs and, as the results of many 2022 midterm contests showed, are rejecting candidates who cater to extremism and promote election lies. As someone who studies media law, I also see hope in the American judiciary. The final bulwark in the defense of reality, judges and juries in courts around the country are starting to weigh in by punishing those who spread lies that defame and cause real-world harm. As I write this in late 2022, Jones and Infowars have been hit with judgments of nearly \$1.5 billion in lawsuits by Sandy Hook families. And courts around the country are taking up cases against those who have promoted election lies and other conspiracy theories.

All the winds are still blowing, but I continue to have faith in the power of truth. ☺



**Amanda J. Crawford, an assistant professor of journalism at UConn, is writing a book that explores the dual crises of misinformation and mass shootings. You can find links to her recent work at [s.uconn.edu/crawford](https://s.uconn.edu/crawford).**

© Leanora Benkato





All

Roads

Lead

Home

\* By Kevin Markey  
\* Photos by Yuhang Rong and  
contributed by Fresco Tours

**A storied Spanish hiking trail delivers a full-circle moment for '90s alum Alex Chang and some lucky current students. "On the Camino, everybody writes their own story," says Chang. "Everybody gets something different from it."**





... a way to be mindful and to shed some of the stresses of the past few years.

Last summer Ngozi Taffe '97 (BUS), '02 MBA, '20 Ph.D. stepped onto Spain's storied Camino de Santiago trail with her daughter Sidney '24 (CLAS), a political science major. They laced up their boots in the small town of Sarria in Galicia and, over the course of 10 days, walked 70 miles to the medieval cathedral city of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. Along the way they passed through ancient oak and chestnut forests, working farms, and cobblestoned villages that have sheltered pilgrims since the time of the Crusades.

"At first I thought, this is crazy," says Sidney. "Walking 100 kilometers? I wasn't sure I could do it. But you get out there and you meet other people and you hear their stories, why they're walking, the things they're dealing with, and it becomes this intense bonding experience. When you reach the cathedral in Santiago, it's very emotional. There's such a huge sense of accomplishment. People are hugging and crying, and you feel so connected because you've all walked the same path."

Falling in with different people is a big part of the Camino experience, says

Alex Chang '94 (BUS). Chang is the founder and owner of Fresco Tours, which led Ngozi and Sidney's trek. "On the trail, people wish each other, 'Buen Camino,'" he says. "Good walk.' You bump into a man from Belgium or a woman from Japan and you learn a little bit about their lives."

Chang first went to Spain while still an undergrad, spending the summer after his junior year studying Spanish art and culture in Madrid. At the time, the classes seemed a bit outside the scope of his marketing major, but decades later he points to them as a critical piece of his education. "Living in Spain, exploring the culture I was immersed in, it really affected me."

So much so that Chang returned after graduation to work in the Madrid office of a global market research company. He had no intention of staying beyond a year or two while he figured out what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. But an answer began to emerge on his first Camino de Santiago trek — ironically, he'd gifted himself 18 days hiking the fabled network of pilgrimage routes that arc across Europe as a way of saying goodbye to Spain before heading back to the States.

Months later, the Camino was still with him, and he had Spain on the brain often while trying to settle back into

corporate America. What had really fired him up, Chang realized, was sharing his passion for different cultures. He connected the dots back to UConn, where one of his favorite activities had been giving tours to prospective students as a Husky Ambassador. It was a way of letting people in on the magic.

"It's part of my personality, I guess," he says. "It just feels right."

So Chang went back to Spain and, 17 years ago, started Fresco Tours, running full-service guided walks on the history-drenched Camino. Now a leading tour operator, the company is a repeat winner of the Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice award, among other accolades. Meanwhile, the Camino itself, known as the Way of St. James in English, has exploded in popularity. The 1,000-year-old trail system drew nearly 400,000 pilgrims from all over the world last year, each of whom walked for their own reason — to reflect on their lives, to let go of a burden, to give thanks, to disconnect from the hurly-burly of wired

✱ After falling in love with Spain during UConn study abroad, Alex Chang '94 (BUS) went on to found Fresco Tours, a leading Camino de Santiago tour company. "It is a great joy to be able to show people a country that has become my second home," he says. Walkers on the fabled trail often place stones atop markers, symbols of burdens they're leaving behind.

✱ Clockwise from top left: wildflowers along the trail; the Camino routes come together at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, burial place of the apostle St. James; the Camino's northern route winds through Spain's verdant Galicia province; Ngozi Taffe, associate vice president of UConn Global Affairs (right), and daughter Sidney Taffe, a third-year political science major, strike a pose in Monte do Gozo during their 100-kilometer hike last summer; overlooking the Atlantic at the A Ferida ("The Wound") statue in Muxia.



**"You feel so connected because you've all walked the same path. On the trail, people wish each other, 'Buen Camino. Good walk.'"**



\* Clockwise from top left: A vaulted passage within the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, which was consecrated in 1211; distinctive yellow and blue signage guides trekkers along one of Europe's best-marked trails; a Galician hórreo, a corncrib/granary outside Portomarin; the Camino is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe; in English, the Camino is known as "The Way of St. James" — scallop shells, traditional symbols of St. James, turn up everywhere along the trail, including as wayfinding marks.



\* Opposite page: As it passes through farms, villages, and backyards, the Camino encourages chance encounters. "You have lawyers, bricklayers, teachers, retired people, students, all religions, all ages, all sexes, all socioeconomic backgrounds," says Chang. "You put them together in the pot and it works." When people meet, they always ask two questions: "Where are you from?" and "Where did you start?"

life, or simply for the physical challenge. Beginning in May, UConn students will be joining these modern pilgrims, learning about Spain — and ideally, themselves — as they trek into Santiago with Fresco Tour guides. In a full circle moment, Chang's journey is doubling back to the place where it started, as he partners with UConn's Office of Experiential Global Learning on this 10-day Camino de Santiago study abroad opportunity. That, of course, is what brought the Taffes to Spain last summer. Before committing to the study abroad program, Ngozi, who is the associate vice president of UConn Global Affairs, needed to make sure the trek would be a good fit with the University's global mission. "At UConn we aim to give students a life-transformative education," she says. "Part of this is giving students a global view of the world in a meaningful way." The combination of history, culture, and human connection ticked all the right boxes for her. "With the pandemic and everything else going on over the last few years, we were thinking of innovative ways to create space for our students," she says. "Something a little bit different than what we traditionally offered, a way to be mindful and to shed some of the stresses of the past few years. We want to cater to students not just from a course perspective, but holistically, developing the whole person. There's an educational component and there's a growth component." Two additional criteria for Ngozi were ac-





... the terrain you'll cross and landmarks you'll encounter, castle walls and monasteries, ancient ruins.



\* Above: Hillside farms nestled between ridges are characteristic of Galicia in far northwestern Spain, the "green corner of the Iberian Peninsula." Opposite, clockwise from top: A scallop mosaic in Sarria; worn-out hiking boots make an impromptu memorial at kilometer marker 0.000; a bronze boot marks the end of the road in Fisterra, where the Camino meets the Atlantic Ocean; Santiago de Compostela airport in Lavacolla; livestock are a common sight along the bucolic northern route; mist settles over the fields at O Cebreiro; a fresco painting at the church of Vilar de Donas in Palas de Rei.

cessibility and affordability. She wanted the program to be within reach of students of varying means and degrees of outdoor experience. Partnering with Chang allowed her to address those needs. Meals are included and accommodations are communal, keeping costs down and camaraderie high. And the trek won't require specialized training. If a student reaches a certain point on a hike and feels maxed out for the day, Fresco Tours will pick them up in a van and shuttle them to the next stop. "Alex's guides were amazing, the amount of information they were able to provide, the historical context," says Ngozi. "They break the trip down into bite-size chunks, and each evening you learn about the next day's segment, the terrain you'll cross and landmarks you'll encounter, castles and monasteries, ancient ruins." Sidney describes the final day of the journey with her mom, when they hiked out to a remote promontory overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. As waves crashed against the rocks at a place named Fisterra, literally "end of the earth," they suddenly heard the opening notes of a familiar melody. A man with a guitar was playing "Redemption Song" by Bob Marley. "I'm half Jamaican," says Sidney. "And when I was a kid my dad always played Bob

Marley. 'Redemption Song' was our favorite. It's about emancipating yourself from mental slavery, and that's what the trip was like, letting go and being yourself. My mom and I looked at each other, like 'Is this really happening?' Then we started to sing." All part of that communal Camino experience, says Chang. Because UConn students will be walking continuously, they will run into people on day three that they met on day one, which will allow them to bond not only among themselves but also with the larger community traveling to the same place. "This is synchronized slow travel at its best," he says. "Come with an open mind," he adds. "Come with a smile. Those little things will get you a long way on any journey." "And a good pair of shoes," says Ngozi. "I definitely recommend good shoes." ☺



# SO HOT

We all know how much our surroundings influence the temperatures we experience. A hot, humid day in a bustling city of concrete, glass, and steel feels far more oppressive than the same day spent in a lushly wooded park or on a breezy beach.

On one of the hottest days of the blisteringly hot summer of 2022, locations around the city of Norwalk, Connecticut, saw a range of high temperatures. Calf Pasture Beach, at the shore, hit 96 degrees, while a mile inland, sensors at East Norwalk train station and Naramake Elementary School each clocked a high of 104 degrees.

“On a hot day, I’m thinking about multiple aspects,” says Yaprak Onat, assistant director of research for CIRCA, the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation at UConn Avery Point. “One is how can people cool down if they don’t have a place like a cooling shelter or a park? Also, how hot will it be at night? We are relying on the evening to release that heat-related stress, but if you’re not getting that relief, that’s also a problem.”

When nighttime temperatures stay above 91 degrees — called “tropical nights” — emergency rooms see an uptick in conditions like heat stress. After several tropical nights in a row, the trend gets increasingly worse. This most adversely affects people who are older, poorer, and have certain

**BY ELAINA HANCOCK**



 CORNING FOUNTAIN  
HARTFORD  
7/14/20  
85°F

One or two degrees of global warming may not sound like much, but these incremental deviations from the mean lead to more frequent and extreme heat waves. City dwellers are especially vulnerable, making excessive heat an environmental justice issue.

health conditions — they're more vulnerable to the consequences of a warming world and tend to have the fewest resources, says CIRCA executive director James O'Donnell.

By mid-century, Connecticut could see as many as 40 tropical nights per year, quadrupled from the current 10. Nights that spur increasingly oppressive days.

"We've had people walk two miles in 100-degree heat to our office for an appointment" because they need their benefits that badly, says Tania Parrent, supervisor of senior services at Family and Children's Agency in Norwalk. If they had called ahead, the agency would have gotten these senior citizens a ride, but many clients don't call. "We make them sit here and we call an ambulance. We've seen people get really sick. We see it every year," says Parrent.

The homeless and precariously housed population is also at great risk from the heat. Some low-income folks live in their cars and cannot afford to waste gas by running the air conditioning. Many of them are creative about cooling off.

"We know one man, he gets resourceful; finds a cross breeze beneath an underpass by the water, for example," says Parrent. "People also cool off at the park, or at the beach."

## BOILING POINT

Onat's research is quantifying what people on the street know from experience — it's cooler by the water and in parks. Last spring she and her team of UConn undergraduate and graduate students installed sensors to collect heat, dew point, and humidity data in strategic locations across Norwalk.

"We are trying to identify what the temperature feels like to the human body, and the differences between neighborhoods," says Onat.

These real-time data measurements will help researchers, politicians, and planners determine what needs to be done to build resilience, she says. "We can propose solutions to cities facing specific problems."

It's this ability to present solutions that drew Onat to UConn. Before joining CIRCA, she studied coastal vulnerability in the Hawaiian Islands while pursuing her master's and Ph.D. at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

"When I saw the [UConn] job posting, I

**Carson Hill '21 (CLAS)**, a marine sciences graduate and CIRCA research assistant, removes some of the sensors CIRCA used to collect heat data in Norwalk through the summer. Established in the wake of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, CIRCA's early focus addressed the state's vulnerable coastline, but other climate change impacts are becoming increasingly apparent, especially for vulnerable communities in urban areas, says executive director James O'Donnell.



 EAST NORWALK  
TRAIN STATION  
11/1/22  
66°F

knew it was for me,” she says. “I thought, ‘they’re making big changes by incorporating science and community and state partnership. I want to be a part of that.’”

Onat credits her drive to help build more sustainable and resilient communities to her singular perspective having grown up in Turkey and studied in Hawaii.

“Living in Hawaii gave me great insights on how we should not work against nature but work with it for the community. It is very rooted in Hawaiian culture that nature is there and you are part of it, instead of you owning it, like Western societies see it. You are part of a community, you are part of nature, which pushes me to work on resiliency-related issues.”

Indigenous Hawaiians, she says, are representative of marginalized groups who contribute minimally to climate change and yet are among the most vulnerable to its consequences. Learning about them sparked her interest in climate and environmental justice. “It’s important to empower these impacted communities to create solutions that truly serve them.”

And, while we are seeing the effects of climate change multiply seemingly overnight, adaptation will not happen overnight. Onat says she sees CIRCA working steadily to gain the trust of the Connecticut community through openness and engagement.

“That’s also what I saw during my Ph.D. research, engaging with city planners. If I’m not able to inform the community or the planners, then they will just do what they know, the way that they know to do it. There are not going to be informed, science-based decisions and therefore, there is not going to be progress. Now, I have the perfect opportunity to incorporate research with decisions that can change people’s lives.”

It’s all about finding — and funding — solutions.

“I come from a nation that was built from crumbles through working with the community to build prosperity, and in praising science, praising women’s leadership, and raising the level of education. I was raised with those values and it has always made me work for what is best for the community; I need to give it back. I think this perspective shaped where I am right now. With climate change issues, it is important to see that you are a part of a big, meaningful world — and you need to work with it.” ☺



Heat is the leading weather-related cause of death in the U.S. and an underappreciated but rapidly growing threat. Based at UConn Avery Point, researcher Yaprak Onat views the problem through a unique lens shaped by her Turkish upbringing and studies in Hawaii.

 UCONN  
AVERY POINT  
11/7/22  
54°F



Knowing their shared love of cars, an optometrist friend loaned the couple his vintage Rolls for portraits.

### Joyride

➔ Just months before **Julie M. Jones '20 MBA** met Andrew Rose at an NAACP conference — he was president of Central Connecticut State University’s chapter and she was VP of the chapter at Southern Connecticut — a friend had tried to introduce them at another event, but Jones couldn’t make it. Fortunately the two were seated at the same table at the conference and hit it off. Nine years later, last August, they wed at the Farmington Polo Club. In addition to cars, they love UConn basketball, travel, and their English bulldog, Peanut Butter. For four years, Jones (now Rose) balanced UConn MBA studies with full-time work; she leads a corporate marketing team for Macy’s, Inc. “Andrew and I over the last decade have worked very hard in our careers, pursuing our passions to create a great life for ourselves. UConn was a big part of that for me,” she says.

### CLASS NOTES



➔ Storytelling expert **Peninnah Manchester Schram '56 (CLAS)** reports that she’s featured in a new biography, “Peninnah’s World: A Jewish Life in Stories,” by Caren Schnur Neile. A Yeshiva University professor emerita, Schram continues to present storytelling workshops and programs, primarily on Zoom, and has written 13 books herself. She’s a proud UConn alum. “I owe so much of my professional and personal life to UConn, which opened my eyes to literature and dramatic literature. I was proud that I was cast in a college play presented every semester. I loved being at the Storrs campus and in the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority dorm. In short, I had great experiences, both academic and social, while I was at UConn.” ➔ **Jim Bennitt '57 (ENG)** writes in with an update from Melbourne, Florida. After serving as a U.S. Air Force pilot and spending 30 years at Pratt & Whitney, he has a thriving income tax business and remains a Husky fan. “I love the women’s basketball, but watching every game is a challenge from Florida.”



➔ Sixty-two years after they met on a blind date at UConn, **Marilyn (Johnson) Kirschbaum '60 MA** and **Joel Kirschbaum '60 MS** are still going strong. Marilyn worked as a teacher for people with disabilities while Joel was a research chemist. They live in Williamsburg, Virginia, and have two children and “three wonderful grandchildren.” ➔ After more than 50 years in residential and commercial real estate, **Bruce H. Cagenello '60 (CLAS)** retired from Berkshire



➔ Funky Dawgz band member **Tommy Weeks '13 (SFA)** wrote in September to say he had just finished filming a new Guy Fieri TV show. “I recently had the opportunity to join the house band as the saxophonist on ‘Guy’s Ultimate Game Night,’ which just premiered on Food Network and Discovery Plus for streaming. There were many celebrity guests — Bret Michaels, Jay and Silent Bob, Alyssa Milano, Cheech Marin, **Bobby Moynihan '99 (SFA)**.” House band Sophistafunk, from left: Weeks, Adam Gold, Jack Brown, and Emmanuel Washington.

Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties. He has served on a wide range of boards and commissions, including the Connecticut Real Estate Commission, the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, and the Governor’s Task Force on Housing. He also was president of the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors and a member of the UConn Real Estate Advisory Council and the Simsbury Zoning Board of Appeals. A justice of the peace, he married many young couples across the span of two decades. He and his wife, Dody, live in Wallingford, Connecticut, and have three children, six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. ➔ **Brian Flesher '63 (BUS)** says he’s enjoying his “semi” retirement in Phoenix, Arizona, where he produces comedy shows, adjudicates plays, and does the occasional hair and

makeup design. ➔ Capping a long career in public service, **Andrew E. Dinniman '66 (CLAS)** recently retired after four terms in the Pennsylvania State Senate, including serving as Democratic chair of the education committee. A professor emeritus at West Chester University, he taught there for more than 45 years. As a student at UConn, Dinniman was president of his freshman, sophomore, and junior classes and president of student government his senior year. “My studies and leadership experiences at UConn greatly assisted in my career.” ➔ **David Prindiville '68 (CLAS)** has been going the distance for years at the Manchester Road Race. The former president and elite runner coordinator of the event, he was named honorary chairperson of last year’s 86th annual race held Thanksgiving morning in Manchester,

Connecticut. An oral and maxillofacial surgeon, he volunteered for the race for 37 years before retiring to Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in 2015. A former high school discus thrower and football player, he became a recreational runner after reading “Aerobics” by Dr. Kenneth Cooper and entered the race for the first time in 1976.



➔ Former Cranston High School West football coach **Bruce R. Mastracchio '71 MA** has racked up several awards over the last decade. His hometown of East Greenwich, Rhode Island, recognized him for his dedication and contribution to local youth in 2012. Since then, he was named to the Providence Gridiron Hall of Fame,

landed on the Wall of Honor at his high school, and won the Gridiron Club's Lawrence P. Gallogly Humanitarian Award. Congratulations! ➤ Retired Superior Court Judge **Michael E. Riley '72 (CLAS)** was named 2023 Lawyer of the Year by "The Best Lawyers in America" for arbitration in the Hartford area. A mediator and arbitrator in state and federal court civil matters, he spent 28 years as a trial attorney and 13 years on the bench, retiring in 2017. ➤ Half a century of marriage — that's some-

thing to celebrate! **John M. "Jack" Silva '73 (ED), '74 MA** and his wife, Christine, just had their 50th wedding anniversary. Both have retired from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill after more than 25 years and "look forward to spending more time in their native New England in the years ahead." Jack, who is the founding president of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology, continues to consult with professional athletes. ➤ **Steve Kemper '75**

**(CLAS), '80 Ph.D.** published a new book, "Our Man in Tokyo: An American Ambassador and the Countdown to Pearl Harbor." ➤ **Brian Gragnolati '79 (BUS)** joined Concord Health Partners, a health care-focused investment firm, as an executive partner. ➤ **A.C. Macris '79 MS** has written "Moral Revenge: The End of a Legacy," a book about family, honor, devotion, and revenge.



➤ **Anand Chaudhuri '80 MBA** writes that he published "A Long and Winding Journey in America — Living My Best Life." Find it on Amazon. ➤ **James Hupp '82 MD** was appointed special advisor to the president for oral health at Louisiana Tech University. In his new position, he'll help the university determine whether and how to develop a new college of dental medicine to improve the oral health of underserved citizens of northern Louisiana and southern Arkansas. Previously, he served as vice dean for academic, student, and faculty affairs for the Washington State University College of Medicine. ➤ **Paul Martino '82 (CLAS)** was named to a newly formed health testing advisory board for iXlayer, a leading platform for health testing. Martino is the co-founder and chief strategy officer of VillageMD. ➤ After a long career at The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P), where he served as corporate vice president and chief tax officer, **Joseph J. Gorman '84 MBA** has retired to Naples, Florida. Prior to joining A&P, he held tax and financial positions at Texas Gulf Sulphur Co. and EF Hutton. He and his wife, Maureen, now enjoy the Sunshine State, where he continues to hone his financial analysis skills by managing his family portfolio.

➤ Congratulations to **Harold C. Robinson '85 (CLAS), '89 MA, '90 Ph.D.** on winning the 2021 ONR Bisson Prize for naval technology achievement. Robinson, of Colchester, Connecticut, is an electronic engineer physicist at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport Sensors and SONAR Systems Department. ➤ Also moving on: **Eric Bernardin '85 (CAHNR)**, who graduated with a degree in agricultural engineering, was named Fuss & O'Neill's first director of municipal services. He works directly with local leaders to find funding options and long-term solutions for economic growth in communities. ➤ **George Barrios '87 (CLAS), '89 MBA**, co-founder and co-CEO of Isos Capital Management, was named an officer of Progress Acquisition Corp. ➤ Lt. General **John Healy '89 (CLAS)** was named to run the Air Force Reserve Command last August. As the new commander, he's responsible for the U.S. Air Force's reserve forces comprising more than 74,000 airmen and civilians. Healy entered the Air Force in 1989 after receiving his commission from the Air Force ROTC program at UConn. Besides commanding at the squadron, group, wing, and numbered Air Force levels, he served in a variety of high-level positions, most recently as deputy to the Chief of Air Force Reserve. He is a command pilot with more than 5,000 military hours and 402 combat hours and has flown for the civilian airline industry. ➤ Maj. Gen. **Francis Evon Jr. '89 (BUS)** was reappointed by Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont to serve another four-year term as adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard. He's been in this role since July 2018. ➤ **Nkechi Madonna Agwu '89 MS**, a mathematics professor at Borough of Manhattan Commu- (continued on p. 40)

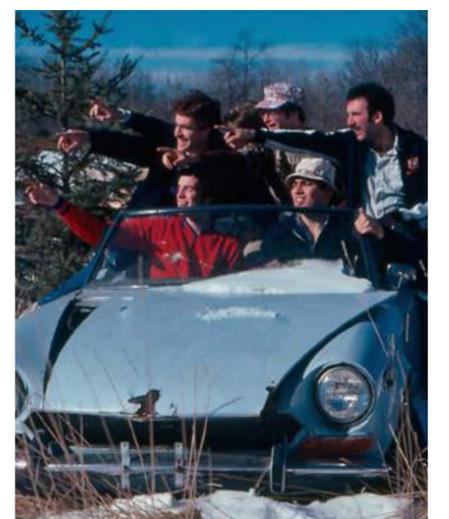
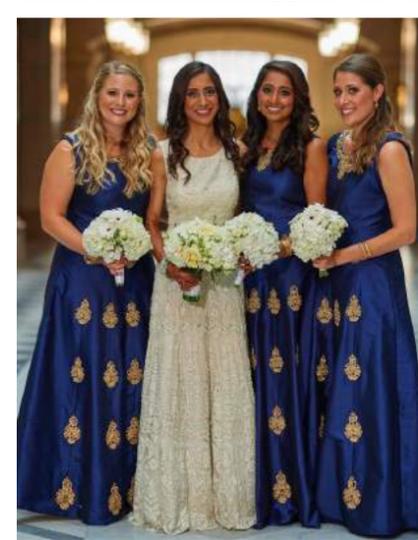


➤ More than 100 students and alumni gathered in April to celebrate 30 years of UCTV (UConn Student Television) among them, from left, some of the club's founders: **Rob Vietzke '93 (CLAS)**, **Amanda (Jewsbury) Wendt '92 (CLAS)**, **Christopher Short**, **Jason Fiedler '92 (CLAS)**, **Tara (Curtis) Mead '94 (CLAS)**, **Scott Pallo '95 (CLAS)**, and **Jessica (Ryan) Burn '96 (CLAS)**. It's an accomplished group. Burn is a senior analyst in IT security and risk at Forrester Research and has produced a series of videos for Forrester on cybersecurity. Fiedler is a supervising effects artist for Creative Studio Edit at ESPN, having won Emmy, Clio, and New York Film Festival awards for his work. Mead is the communications and marketing manager for Widener Law Commonwealth in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Pallo worked for MTV after college and has been a freelance animator/composer for more than 20 years. Short is president of Southern Elevator and recently trademarked "Intellivator," a universal analytics system to manage elevator performance. Wendt owns Mandalin Design, creating digital media for small business clients. Vietzke is founding architect of the Connecticut Education Network, vice president of Internet2, and owner of Insight Infrastructure Services.

**BESTIES**

A year ago, our issue also dropped on Valentine's Day, with eight married couples who all met in McConaughy Hall in 1980 on the cover. But the love depicted in the story wasn't just romantic. At its core, it was a story about lasting friendship. It inspired many of you to share with us the special bonds you formed on campus and have maintained in the years — often decades — since. Keep them coming!

Learn the stories behind these photos — and find more — at [s.uconn.edu/friendship](http://s.uconn.edu/friendship).





➔ Congratulations to **John Fetterman '93 MBA**, who was sworn in on Jan. 3 as Pennsylvania's 54th senator. He posted this throwback photo during his hard-fought, nationally watched campaign against Dr. Mehmet Oz.

nity College, was honored with both the 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award signed by President Joe Biden and the Worldwide Chaplain Ambassador of Hope Award at a gala of the Worldwide Association of Small Churches.



➔ **Anthony Susi '90 MM** wrote in with a musical note. Two of the seven compositions he published last year will be featured at the 76th Annual Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic in Chicago: "A Joyous Sleigh Ride" for string orchestra and "Home Awaits" for concert band. ➔ Once a Husky ... **Richard L. McCarthy '90 (BUS)** recently returned to the University to lead the UConn Health Information Technology Department. He has held IT leadership positions at both

civilian and military medical institutions, most recently serving as CIO of White Plains Hospital in New York. ➔ **Tom Leibowitz '90 (CLAS), '92 MS** is moving up. He was named senior vice president and chief actuarial officer at Delta Dental of California. Leibowitz joined Delta Dental in 2011 as vice president and chief actuary and previously served as executive director of Kaiser Permanente's western regions. ➔ **Patricia Hurlbut Sellars '90 (BGS)** began her studies at UConn in 1950 and would have graduated in 1954, but left in 1952 "to pursue a different agenda." She married and had three children — two daughters graduated from UConn and went on to continue their studies. Sellars finally received her BGS degree from the Extended and Continuing Education Department (with honors) in 1990. "It took 40 years, but I knew I could do it." She recently published

"Kickin' Eighty," a book she began on her 88th birthday. She says she wrote the book to look back on her life and to learn from it. She has many plans for an interesting future filled with more adventures, including starting her next book, "Nibbling at Ninety," soon! "I loved being a returning student and hope that the BGS department is more successful than ever!"

➔ Kudos to **C. Augusto Casas '92 MBA**, who received a Fulbright Specialist Program award. He will complete a project at Corporación Universitaria del Caribe (CECAR) in Colombia that aims to exchange knowledge and establish partnerships within engineering education.

➔ Congrats to **Namita K. Tripathi Shah '93 (BUS)**, a partner in the Day Pitney LLP law firm, who was given the Cornerstone Award in recognition of her contributions to the South Asian Bar Association (SABA) and the South Asian legal community by SABA North America for 2022. ➔ Maj. **Michael A. Goba '94 (BUS)**, of Lebanon, Connecticut, has retired as a U.S. Army Judge Advocate General after 20 years of serving as an attorney in Iraq, Bosnia, and Kosovo, as well as Fort Hood in Texas and Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

➔ **Desiree A. Diaz '94 (NUR), '07 MS, '11 Ph.D.**, an associate professor and undergraduate simulation coordinator at the University of Central Florida College of Nursing, was named president-elect of the International Association of Clinical Simulation and Learning.

➔ **Sujit Ghosh '96 Ph.D.** is the interim department head of statistics at North Carolina State University. He's also an editor of the journal *Sankhya* and a member of the scientific advisory committee of the Canadian Statistical Science Institute. ➔ **Leslie Torres-Rodriguez '97 (CLAS), '00 MSW**, the

superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, was appointed to the board of trustees of Trinity College. She is the parent of a junior at Trinity. ➔ **Jason Cardinal '98 (ENG)** was elected to the board of directors of Urban Engineers, where he is vice president and New England regional manager. ➔ Also moving on is **Hendrik Deurloo '98 MBA**, the senior vice president and chief commer-



The Toscano Family Ice Forum at UConn Storrs was christened Jan. 13 and 14 with the women beating Merrimack and Vermont, and the men battling Northeastern (shown) for a tight 4-3 loss.

cial officer at Pratt & Whitney. He was appointed president of P&W's Commercial Engines.



➔ **Nancy Tandon '00 MA**, who earned her master's in communication disorders, wrote two novels last year aimed at children in grades 4 through 6. "The Way I Say It"

was drawn directly from her time as a speech and language pathologist, while "The Ghost of Spruce Point" is a mystery set on the coast of Maine.

➔ Craft beer aficionado **Dan DiSorbo '01 (SFA)** profiled 50 of the most sought-after hops from around the world to help readers understand the science and story behind beer's most important ingredients in his new "Book of Hops." DiSorbo, of Orange,

Connecticut, is a principal at PB&J Design, a brand design agency, and has written and illustrated several bestselling books. He also co-founded a Connecticut craft brewery and has won craft beer industry competitions. Wondering which hops are for you? Turn the page. ➔ **Monica Caldas Benton '01 (BUS)** was named executive vice president and chief information officer of Liberty Mutual. Pri-

or to that, she was executive vice president and global CIO for GRM. ➔ **Jon Kukucka '03 (CLAS)** was recently cited in "The Best Lawyers in America 2023" in the practice of family law and family law arbitration for the second consecutive year. Kukucka, of Clinton, Connecticut, works for the Pullman & Comley law firm. ➔ **David Rusbasan '04 MA, '10 Ph.D.** also has some good (continued on p. 43)

LIFE LESSONS

# GETTING HOPPY

Dan DiSorbo '01 (SFA) just wrote the "Book of Hops," so we asked the designer and craft beer aficionado to help our readers navigate a plethora of styles, including pale, hazy, juicy, dank, and roasty.

Find more about Dan's beautiful new book at [s.uconn.edu/hoppy](http://s.uconn.edu/hoppy).

## WHAT BEER SHOULD I DRINK?



➤ The amazing online alumni community that is the Boneyarders rallied around a Husky fan in need. A GoFundMe callout for \$600 to help with transportation costs for Keith Gaither, who has cerebral palsy, to get to a football and/or basketball game this year exploded. In just a week, \$2,000 had been raised. UConn Athletics got into the act and instead of getting to one or two games, Gaither had been, by mid-December, to three football, three men's basketball, and two women's basketball games, with some serious backstage encounters to boot. "I thought he was gonna pass out when he met Coach Auriemma," says friend Paul Farina. "Paige [Bueckers] as well. I actually enjoy watching his reactions more than I enjoy meeting these people myself." Above from left: former Husky coach E. J. Barthel, Farina, Gaither, running back **Victor Rosa '26 (BUS)** and his parents Deanna and Glenn.

news. He was selected as an assistant dean at Marian University's College of Arts and Sciences in Indianapolis. A native of Merrillville, Indiana, he will lead the School of Behavioral and Applied Social Sciences as one of four new assistant deans at the university's College of Arts and Sciences. ➤ **Ebony Murphy '04 (CLAS), '10 MA** says she is happily living in Brooklyn, New York, after spending

seven years in California. She has joined the English faculty at Saint Ann's School and remains on the boards of the Independent Shakespeare Company and NARAL Pro-Choice California Privacy PAC. She was thrilled to be included in the humor anthology "Fast Fierce Women: 75 Essays of Flash Nonfiction" by UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor Gina Barreca.

➤ **Vikram Nafde '05 MBA** was named executive vice president and chief information officer for Webster Financial Corp., the holding company for Webster Bank. ➤ **Jeffrey Smith '04 (CLAS) '07 MA** founded a nonprofit in 2016 called Vanguard Africa based in Washington, D.C., and routinely publishes on issues related to democracy, human rights, and U.S. foreign policy. He remains active in the UConn Storrs community, where he serves on the Human Rights Institute Advisory Board. ➤ **Michael Colonnese '09 (CLAS)** joined the equity research department at H.C. Wainwright & Co. as a senior equity analyst focusing on cryptocurrency and fintech. ➤ **Brandon Parrinello '09 MBA** is director of state and local pandemic relief oversight at the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Inspector General. ➤ **Mina Farahani '09 (CLAS)** and **Mikhail Ponskhe '07 (CLAS)** married in 2015 and welcomed Cyrus Henry Ponskhe in August. "We look forward to showing Cyrus where his parents first met someday!" Farahani says.

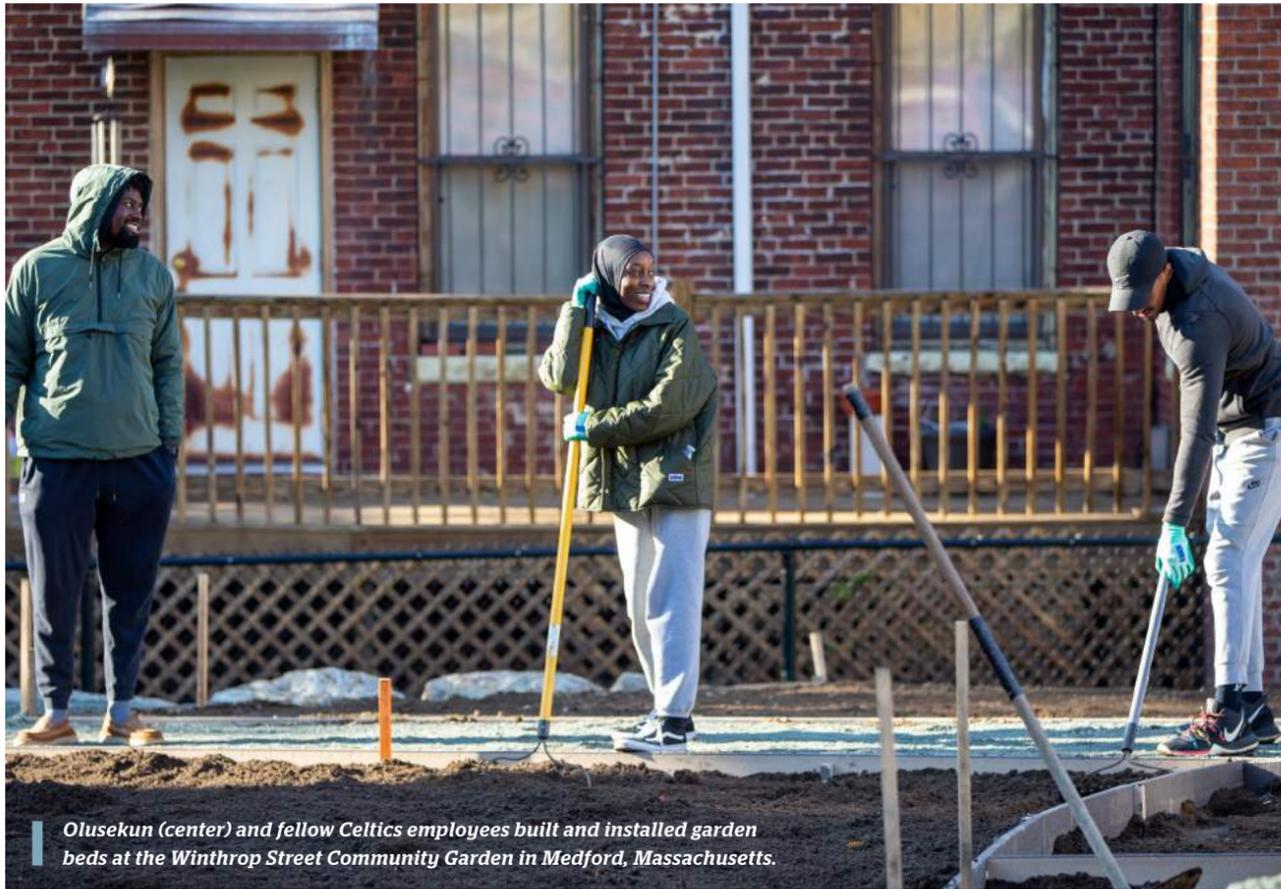


➤ **Jay White '10 MSW** published his first book, "Earth to Brockton," about a young man leaving Brockton, Massachusetts, in the 1970s, moving to Maine, and launching into adulthood. ➤ **Samantha Jones '10 (SFA, CLAS)** was awarded a Ph.D. in music from Harvard University in May and now holds a postdoctoral fellowship in the Fellowships & Writing Center at Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. She first developed her research specialization in the ethnomusicology of Irish traditional dance while pursuing her master's in music at Boston University. ➤ **Yana**

**Reiser '10 (BUS), '11 MS,** of Manchester, Connecticut, was promoted to director of assurance and advisory services at the Glastonbury-based accounting and advisory firm Fiondella, Milone & LaSaracina. ➤ **Shane R. Goodrich '10 (CLAS), '13 JD,** an attorney at the Boston law firm of Morgan, Brown & Joy, was recognized by 2023 Best Lawyers in the "Ones to Watch" category. ➤ **Reilly S. White '13 Ph.D.** was promoted to associate dean at the University of New Mexico's Anderson School of Management. He was awarded the Paul Ré Emerging Promoter of Peace Prize for his work on financial literacy for immigrants and refugees. ➤ Congratulations to **Sara Piazza '13 (ED), '14 MA** and **Dan Young '11 (PHARM), '13 DPH,** who were mar-



➤ When it comes to themed weddings, **Kate Stringfellow '11 (CAHNR)** and **Matt Ziance** hit a hole-in-one! Matt, a golf enthusiast who introduced Kate to the game, pulled off a Masters-themed wedding, complete with "caddie" ring bearers. Says Matt: "The ultimate highlight was having the voice of the Masters, Jim Nantz, send us a personalized video to play for our guests before our reception began."



Olusekun (center) and fellow Celtics employees built and installed garden beds at the Winthrop Street Community Garden in Medford, Massachusetts.

TRAJECTORY

## BLEEDING BLUE ... AND GREEN

Alum Wura Olusekun's job is to make Boston Celtics fans happy — win or lose

"On my way to school when I was younger, I used to pick up the newspaper *Metro Boston* at the local train station or at Dunkin', flip to the sports section, and clip out pictures of the Celtics players like Ray Allen to use as a bookmark," says **Wura Olusekun '16 MS**. "Sports and education have really been the two foundations of my life."

Now manager of community engagement for the National Basketball Association's Boston Celtics, Olusekun works for the same team whose players' photos used to mark which chapter she'd just read.

Olusekun grew up in Revere, Massachusetts, but declared herself a UConn sports fan at an early age. "It's the

biggest sports school in New England. I mean, BU and UMass are both big too, but basketball is my favorite sport."

Her fandom continued even as a Rutgers undergraduate. New Jersey's state university and UConn both competed in the Big East conference at the time, which guaranteed a matchup in Piscataway once a year. She'd sit in the front row in Husky gear. "People always used to get on me for that," she says, laughing. "My junior year in 2011, when Kemba [Walker and UConn] won the championship, that was a very exciting time for me."

When choosing a graduate school for her master of science in sport management, she says, "I had to go to UConn."

For her capstone project, she launched a series of guest speakers and panel discussions titled "Beyond the Field" to discuss broader political and social issues in sports. Originally intended only for her final semester, the series continues two or three times per semester to this day.

Top athletes, journalists, professors, coaches, and other experts come to UConn to discuss everything from kneeling protests during the national anthem, to Title IX progress, to the debate over public funding for sports stadiums. Speakers have included Chaim Bloom, chief baseball officer for the Boston Red Sox, and Moushumi Robinson, a gold medal winner in the women's 4x400 meter relay at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens.

After graduation, Olusekun worked for the National Hockey League as an assistant for social impact, growth initiatives, and legislative affairs, then switched sports to work for Major

League Soccer as senior coordinator for social responsibility.

Her current Celtics community engagement job helps run several programs and initiatives. When you see Celtics players reading to elementary school kids or volunteering at a local soup kitchen, that's usually organized by her division. "We work with community organizers, politicians, daycares, hospitals," she says.

The team's "Heroes Among Us" recognizes notable locals at center court during a timeout each game. (The night before our interview with Olusekun saw a 15-year-old climate activist from Easthampton, Massachusetts, honored.) Last November, the Celtics announced a new partnership with

Boston Medical Center's mobile unit Curbside Care for Moms and Babies. The unit makes checkups and home visits to needier areas, so that expectant or new mothers don't have to travel to the hospital, and even delivers groceries and household items.

"Women in the community say it's saved their life or saved their baby's life," Olusekun marvels.

Last year, UConn's Neag School of Education awarded her the 2022 Outstanding Early Career Professional Award, which is proudly displayed on her desk in Boston.

For students interested in pursuing a career in the sports world, Olusekun recommends using the campus environment for exposure to more than

just the mainstays like basketball or football. "I had a classmate who was a rowing coach," she says. "I was never interested in rowing, but then I started to pay attention."

As of this writing, the Celtics command the best winning percentage in the NBA, with Vegas betting odds ranking the team as the favorite to win next June's championship. Does that affect her job in any way?

"We set out to do this work so even if the team finishes the season 0-82, we're still going to make people smile, give people the resources they need, and get the work done," says Olusekun. "But it's nice that we're getting the job done both on and off the court." —*JESSE RIFKIN '14 (CLAS)*



▶▶ **Anthony Carbonella '07 (CLAS), '11 DMD**, of Hamden, Connecticut, was the first of four brothers to go to UConn. His biology degree led to dental school, then the Air Force, where he completed an Advanced Education in General Dentistry residency at Travis AF Base in California: "My first assignment after residency was at McGuire AF Base in New Jersey, where I was able to practice in every dental specialty. I found myself happiest on the days I was performing orthodontics." After 11 years of military service, Carbonella, wife Angela, son Anthony, daughter Siena, and dog Pliny, settled in Newtown. Carbonella has an orthodontics practice in Bethel. "I hope to re-engage with both the pre-dental society at UConn Storrs and the dental school at UConn Health," he writes.

ried in April at a ceremony that included 10 UConn alumni guests. ▶▶ **Christopher Newell '14 (BGS)**, director of the Akomawt Educational Initiative and former director of the Abbe Museum, joined the board of directors of the New England Foundation for the Arts. He is a citizen of the Passamaquoddy Tribe in Indian Township, Maine. ▶▶ **Eleanor Reeds '14 MA, '18 Ph.D.** writes that she and her husband, **Adam Jacobs '09 MA**, welcomed a baby son, Finn Reeds Jacobs, in November 2021. "We currently live in Nebraska, where I am an assistant professor of English at Hastings College, so we're not sure yet if Finn will be more of a Husker or a Husky!"



▶▶ **Kim Iacovo '14 (CLAS)** and **Collin Monahan '13 (CLAS)** tied the knot in August in front of a crowd that included 30 other UConn grads, including two who graduated

as far back as 1978. ▶▶ Goal! **Brienne Scully '14 (ED, CLAS)** has scored a new job as counsel for Major League Soccer. ▶▶ **Jason Lublin '14 (ED)** became a computer science teacher at Jesuit High School in Tampa, Florida earlier this year.



▶▶ Three generations of Huskies totaling more than 60 alumni came to celebrate the wedding of **Samantha Arnold '15 (CLAS)** and **Thomas Andreoli '13 (ENG), '17 MBA** at Arnold's parents' house in Simsbury, Connecticut, recently. The happy couple met as undergraduates and returned to UConn for their MBAs. They even named their dog Kemba. Arnold works for Shenkman Capital while Andreoli works for Sikorsky. Congrats! ▶▶ Cheers! Beer expert **Max Finnance '15 (CLAS)** has earned the title of Master Cicerone. Like a sommelier, the title recognizes an exceptional understanding of brewing, beer, and pairing — combining

**TOM'S TRIVIA ANSWERS**

1. A; 2. D; 3. B; 4. B

outstanding tasting abilities with extensive knowledge of commercial beers. Finnance is the senior manager of education and training for Artisanal Brewing Ventures (ABV). He grew up in Connecticut and served in the Navy for five years before attending UConn, where he majored in biology. He worked as a brand ambassador for Captain Lawrence Brewing Co., and then as a sales representative for Sixpoint Brewery prior to the company's acquisition by ABV. He lives in Connecticut with his wife and two dogs.



➔ **Garrett Connolly '15 (CLAS), '17 MA** married **Kaila Toce '15 (CLAS), '16 (NUR)** in Hampton, Connecticut, in July, surrounded by family and friends, including UConn alumni. Connolly is a middle school teacher, while Toce is a pediatric nurse.



➔ **Ritchie Shane '16 (BUS), '22 MBA** and his wife, **Emily (Spriegel) Shane '14 (CLAS)**, got married in December 2021 in Simsbury surrounded by many of their closest UConn friends. They met through the co-ed fraternity Phi Sigma Pi in Storrs. They still live in Connecticut (continued on p. 48)



Curtis with his family at Rincon Beach in Carpinteria, California.

**UPDATE**

You may remember the photo we ran a few years back of **Ben Curtis '06 (CLAS)**, then president of Daylight Holdings in LA, celebrating with his client Rami Malek, who had just won the Best Actor Oscar for playing Freddie Mercury in "Bohemian Rhapsody."

Curtis, who played hockey at UConn, says his big break into the world of talent management came when, as a senior, he landed an internship with the New York Yankees. "My grandfather was roommates with George Steinbrenner at Culver Military Academy, where I went to [high] school. One day, my grandfather asked me what I wanted to do when I graduated. He said, 'Do you want to work for the Yankees?' He said he'd write Steinbrenner a letter. One day, when I was coming out of creative writing class, I got a call from the Yankees asking me to come to interview at the stadium the next day."

The internship was in community relations, which meant assisting celebrity clients during baseball games. "I helped them get comfortable at the game," he says. "That was my first foray into working with celebrities."

In the last few years, Curtis has become more of a media entrepreneur. He co-founded and co-launched an apparel brand for gamers called Cloak and helps run a scripted podcast company called QCode with fellow alum and company founder and CEO **Rob Herting '06 (BUS)**.

And living in LA has fueled his passion for the outdoors. When he's not hiking in the Santa Ynez Mountains, he's surfing the waves of Rincon, near his home in Santa Barbara. He's become increasingly dedicated to environmental causes and says he is excited that UConn is too.

"UConn is doing an incredible job being a leader in environmental causes — like aquaculture, sea farming, and regenerative agricultural practices," he says. "Those are all things that I care deeply about and that's really exciting to me."

To that end, Curtis is giving a scholarship to a UConn student-athlete majoring in environmental studies. "I hope it inspires some student-athletes to pursue studies in environmental issues," he says. "I'm shooting a flare into the air to show other alumni how important environmental-driven causes and practices are within the school and to encourage them to donate as well." —GRACE MERRITT

Learn more about Curtis and UConn's environmental trailblazing at [s.uconn.edu/curtis](https://s.uconn.edu/curtis).

**HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMIT**  
AT  
**THE DODD CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**



**Join Us for the Inaugural Human Rights Summit.**

Scholars, activists, policymakers, artists, and business leaders from around the world will gather to examine "Human Rights and the Global Assault on Democracy." Through high-profile lectures, workshops, roundtable discussions, and a student-oriented hackathon, we will investigate key threats to democracy and the critical role of international justice and the rule of law.

UConn students, alumni, parents, and friends are invited to join us as we share insights, build relationships, and inspire action.

**October 25-27, 2023**  
**The Dodd Center for Human Rights**  
**Storrs, CT**

**Learn More & Register**  
[summit.humanrights.uconn.edu](https://summit.humanrights.uconn.edu)



**SHARE YOUR NEWS!**

➔ To submit a Class Note send an email: [alumni-news@uconn-alumni.com](mailto:alumni-news@uconn-alumni.com)

or write:  
**Alumni News & Notes**  
**UConn Foundation**  
**2384 Alumni Drive,**  
**Unit 3053**  
**Storrs, CT 06269**

➔ To submit an obituary email: [contactus@foundation.uconn.edu](mailto:contactus@foundation.uconn.edu)

Obituaries can be found at [foundation.uconn.edu/obituaries](http://foundation.uconn.edu/obituaries)

*Submissions may be edited for clarity and/or length.*

and continue to root for the Huskies. ➔ In career news, **Denise Whitford '17 MBA**, who has more than two decades of experience in bank operations, lending, sales, and service management, was named State Star for 2022 by the Connecticut Small Business Development Center. ➔ **Cameron Flower '17 (ENG)** sent an update: "Since graduating from UConn, I have been pursuing my Ph.D. in computational and systems biology at MIT. Now entering my 6th, and hopefully final,

year of doctoral studies, I'm beginning to wrap up my research in the systems biology of cancer at the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT. I'm also currently enjoying a computational biology internship at BioNTech, the pharmaceutical company that teamed up with Pfizer to produce the widely distributed COVID-19 vaccine. My passion for science and learning is just as high as it was when I was a biomedical engineering undergraduate at UConn, and I often think back on the many fond memories I made at work and play on that hilly Storrs campus." ➔ Congratulations to **Matthew Rasey '18 (SFA)**, who won a Sports Emmy for his graphic design work for the Super Bowl LVI Pregame — Tech Team Studio while working at NBC Sports in Stamford, Connecticut.

➔ Kudos to **Anthony Mangiafico '18 Ph.D.** on being named the National Administrator of the Year by the Coalition on Adult Basic Education in April at its national conference in Seattle. The award is given for an outstanding contribution toward fostering the concept of education as a continuous life process. He served as director of adult and continuing education in East Hartford, Connecticut, for eight years before recently taking the same position with Wallingford Public Schools in Connecticut. ➔ **Kylie Sarantides '18 (BUS)** writes that she and her husband,

➔ Kudos to **Shea Ralph '02 (ED)**, in her second season as head coach for women's basketball at Vanderbilt University. Last year Ralph led the Commodores to their first postseason appearance since 2014. Here she and husband Tom Garrick, with their daughter, Maysen, make the V.U. sign.



➔ **Charles Fayal '15 (ENG)** and **James Edward Fayal '77 (ENG)** started NOWi a few years ago to help people conserve water. The father-son team developed a water monitor that detects leaks and other sources of water waste and alerts property owners and real estate managers to the problem and potential savings. Based in Stonington, Connecticut, their pilot program is centered on New London, Connecticut, but they have since expanded into the Bay Area of California.

**Dave Valentukonis '18 (BUS)**, have always loved UConn. "We both have dozens of alums in our families and were able to attend together. Now we often watch UConn sporting events and take our dogs for walks on Horsebarn Hill." ➔ **Meaghan Perdue '18 MS, '21 Ph.D.** is combining her interests in language, reading, and brain development for research she is doing at Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary, Canada. Perdue, a postdoctoral associate in the Department of Radiology at the Cumming School of Medicine, uses imaging techniques to examine the brain structures of children learning to read. She hopes to uncover the relationship between neuroscience and reading and eventually be able to identify reading disabilities earlier in

childhood — when intervention is most successful.



➔ **Daphne Wampold '21 (CAHNR)** reports that, after struggling with her weight and her relationship with food her entire life, she has lost more than 100 pounds and is now a competitive bodybuilder. She says her fitness journey started more than two years ago at the Recreation Center on campus. Last summer, she competed in her first two National Physique Committee bikini bodybuilding shows. She also has launched a career as an online coach to help other young women get into strength training.



**JOB ENVY**

**Cloud Seeding**

Last fall, **Janna Greenhalgh '01 (CLAS)** tried to make it rain over Saudi Arabia by spraying a salt mixture into thunderstorm clouds from flares attached to her small plane. The technique, called cloud seeding, increases precipitation — particularly welcome there, as the dry kingdom gets less than four inches of rain a year. A natural resources pilot, Greenhalgh typically flies over her home state of Idaho, triggering mountain snow that will melt and bring water to that desert-like region.

When her company teamed up with the Saudi government on last fall's high-profile project, it took workplace challenges to the next level, she says, as companies with different cultures, languages, alphabets, numbers, calendars, and laws joined in the scientific endeavor. The only woman on the project in a country with different legal and cultural structures for women, Greenhalgh was conscious of being a representative of her company and her country. She says she stayed acutely aware of the potential influence she might have on this job "more so than on other jobs that I've done."

While most of her work these days involves cloud seeding, she also has conducted visual animal surveys — flying over Cape Cod to track right whales and over Nevada to count desert bighorn sheep. She also maps wildfires, making nighttime passes over blazes and relaying information to firefighters to help them plan their attacks. She admits that some of her missions are high-risk but says she is always well prepared. "Every pilot practices for emergencies. It just becomes part of the job."

Greenhalgh came to UConn in the late '90s as a commuter student on the GI bill after spending six years in the Coast Guard in nearby Groton, Connecticut. A biological sciences major, she worked as a field biologist, environmental educator, and archaeologist before pursuing her childhood dream to become a pilot to support science. "I love joining science and aviation," she says. "The teams I have worked with, the projects we have flown, and the problems we have solved creatively are thrilling. Reviewing data from a groundbreaking study, getting to know an individual whale as if it were an old friend, and seeing snowfall on the national weather radar that you created from one small flare, make the hardships endured in less-than-ideal conditions so worthwhile. This is not an easy career, but it's so rewarding." —GRACE MERRITT



## CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO TOM'S TRIVIA!

Go to [s.uconn.edu/spring23](http://s.uconn.edu/spring23) or p. 46 to see if you know as much as King of UConn Trivia Tom Breen '00 (CLAS).



- 1. During an 1893 debate in the General Assembly, a legislator hostile to the development of a liberal arts curriculum at what was then Storrs Agricultural School mocked students with a term, which was then adopted by sports fans at rival schools. What was it?**

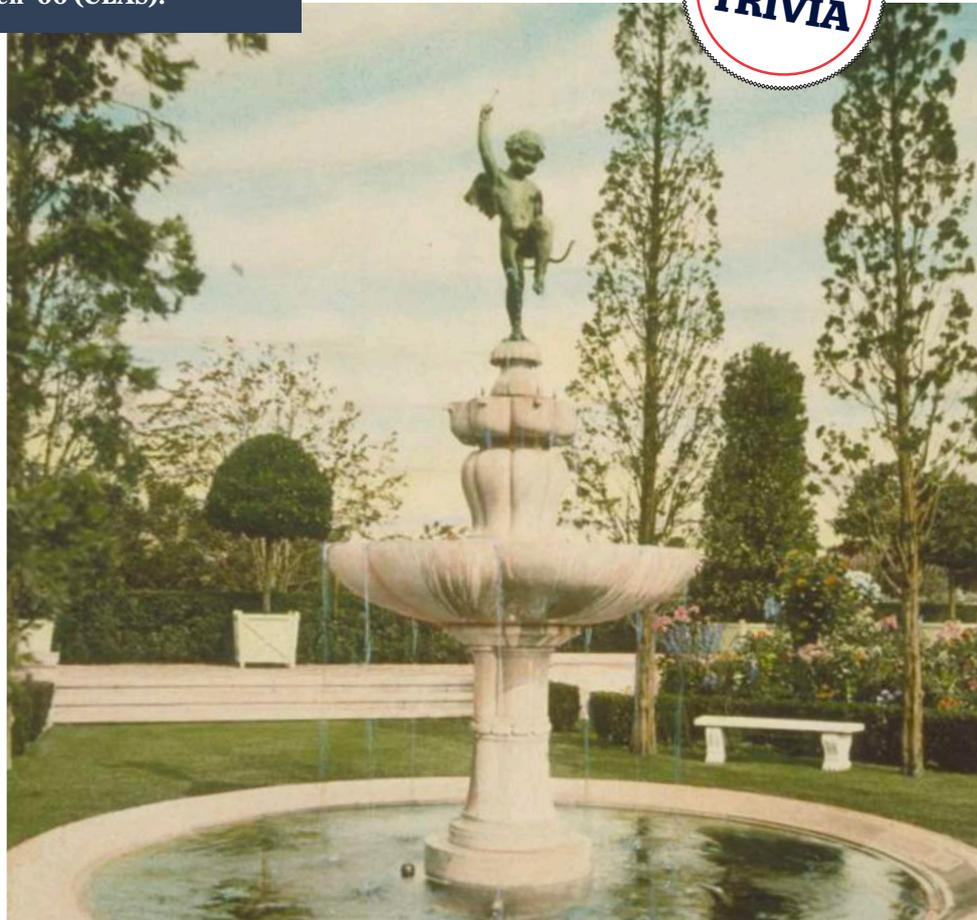
A: The Singing Farmers  
B: The Highfalutin Huskies  
C: The Greco-Roman Yeomen  
D: The Dairy Poets

- 2. In 2006, the buildings that comprise Charter Oak Apartments were renamed in honor of the first six students to graduate from Storrs Agricultural School. What names did they replace?**

A: The counties of Connecticut  
B: Early UConn presidents  
C: The members of the first Board of Trustees  
D: The New England states

- 3. What fall 1982 phenomenon, disrupting classes from Mirror Lake to the Student Union Mall, did University Senate members ask to have removed from campus?**

A: Personal computers  
B: Students playing loud music  
C: The Sony Walkman  
D: Roller skates



- 4. Branford House at UConn Avery Point was built by financier Morton Freeman Plant and designed by his wife, Nellie, who was trained in architecture at the Sorbonne. Plant supported many aspects of civic life around Groton and New London, including a minor league baseball team called what?**

A: The Freeman  
B: The Planters  
C: Morton's Men  
D: The Pointers