We know it's not normal to go back to back. But there's not a single normal person in this locker room.

Alex Karaban
Banner Year

UCONN MEN’S 2024 MARCH MADNESS RUN

-140 point differential - the largest in tournament history

-23.3 point average winning margin

30 unanswered points vs. Illinois in Elite Eight

First back-to-back titles since Duke in 2007

AALIYAH EDWARDS #3

“WE WANTED TO GIVE EVERYTHING SO WE COULD WIN ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING.”
- COACH DAN HURLEY

IN THE PAST 25 YEARS

UCONN women’s basketball has won 40% of NCAA DI CHAMPIONSHIPS
UCONN men’s basketball has won 24% of NCAA DI CHAMPIONSHIPS

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

“PEOPLE BETTER GET US NOW... BECAUSE IT’S COMING.”
- COACH DAN HURLEY AFTER A 2020 LOSS TO VILLANOVA

ARO ANGEL

“WE’VE DONE SOMETHING NO SCHOOL HAS EVER DONE, AND WE’VE DONE IT TWICE. SO WE HAVE A REASON TO BRAG ABOUT IT, BECAUSE IT’S TRUE. WE’RE NOT BEING ARROGANT. WE’RE JUST TELLING THE TRUTH.”
- Coach Geno Auriemma of UConn

UConn 2024

THE STRATEGISTS

ANNE MARIE ROSS

2023-2024 UCONN MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

QUEEN OF THE NORTH

THE HOMECOMING

THE SPARK

HASSAN DiARRA #10

THE GENERAL

STEPHEN CASTLE

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

NIKA MÜHL #10

THE SPARK
FEATURES

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

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

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

UConn Magazine
VOL. 25 NO. 2
UConn Magazine is produced three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Fall) by University Communications, University of Connecticut.
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Our 2024 Banner Year Pack
We created the retro trading card layouts on the special wrap cover and pages 2–3 to celebrate an extraordinary basketball season — even by Husky standards! The cards themselves do not exist — the magazine itself is the keepsake.

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

I’m so happy we have them.

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

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

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

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

38 UCONN NATION
Catch up with alums who write poetry about growing up on Horsebarn Hill and children’s literature on overcoming dyslexia, crosses paths in Dallas, New Hampshire, and New Delhi, inspired young engineers; and more, including a UConn crossword. Tom’s Trivia returns next issue.
Feedback

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

Here's a sampling of web, social media, mailed, and emailed comments on our last issue, edited for clarity and length. Find more and join the conversation at magazine.uconn.edu.

Snap!

We loved the UConn Magazine with the picture of the Chemistry Building and Frozen Swan Lake with skaters. Campus has changed so much since my husband and I graduated. He is from New York and I am from Michigan, but we both have stayed in Connecticut and still enjoy news, sports, science, and the arts at UConn and seeing the photos and recollections in UConn Magazine.

P.S. Tim played basketball for Dee Rowe in 1968–69.

Tim ‘68 and Susan L. Smith ‘70

Lakeland, Connecticut

Star Power

It was around midnight in the woods on a dark starry night.

“Don’t move! Let me see your hands!” the police officer commanded.

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

Robert B. Bossoli, ’74 (CLAS), ’80 Ph.D.

 Havre de Grace, Maryland

I am pleased to see that UConn is excited about the new East Road Observatory. As a student in the late ‘60s, I took an introductory astronomy course with Dr. Ehrbott. I believe he had discovered a comet that was eventually named after him. Great course... great teacher.

Bob Gustavson ’68 (CLAS), ’70 MA

Lakehwa, Texas

The story of the now-functional telescope at Storrs is enlightening. Will the telescope be available for public viewing?

Edward Putman

Vernon, Connecticut

The hope is to continue work so that there can be public star parties. There also is hope for live feeds from the observatory to the planetarium on campus.

Both things await proper funding. — Ed.

This makes my heart happy!!

Joanne Ahern

Storrs, Connecticut

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Robert Wendel ’73 (CLAS)

New York, New York

It’s Not About the Food

Love the article but especially love your Zoom “Homemade” cooking classes. I’m a “closet chef” and have been attending every class since you started them during the pandemic. I’m really getting good — thank you!

Abby Goodman

Denver, Colorado

Prince Marvin


Brad Schepers

Marvin the Prince! Well-deserved accolades — you make “The Dan Patrick Show” better each and every day.

Jeff Baker

The Frontman

As a former regular at The Iron Horse, I wondered what happened to it. My first experience there was to see Scottish singer-songwriter Dougie MacLean. The place was filled with longtime fans, and I felt that sense of music community Chris Freeman describes (even though the artist we had come to see is from far away). I was disappointed these last several years to not be able to attend a show or two at The Iron Horse, with my usual pre-show dinner at Amazour Café, but it looks as if there will be a musical resurrection of sorts. Looking forward to taking that nice ride up to Northampton again.

Bob Kooose

West Hartford, Connecticut

“Thank you for including me! I’ve received some nice messages from former classmates. It was a great way to share a success with my fellow Huskies. Thank you again and GO UConn!”

Geena Russo ’14 (CLAS)

Bristol, Connecticut

Be next issue’s Geena! We want to hear from you — and see your old and new snapshots. Please e-mail your updates to alumni-news@uconnalumni.com.

And turn to page 28 to find out what your classmates have been up to. — Ed.

Class Notes

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

Turning to page 30 to read about the sea turtle research of alum Jesse Senko, who returned from a study abroad trip with his Arizona State University students (holding the UConn flag in Mexico)
In a large corporation taking on issues of equity and inclusion, opportunities present themselves in different forms at different times and seasons in your life, and most of them require you to dig deep within yourself," Hopkins-Staten says. "For me, it's always meant that if God brings me to it, he certainly will give me what's necessary to get through it and faithfully do so.”

A few years ago, Hopkins-Staten was asked a few years ago to take on a newly created role at Eversource Energy Foundation and director of corporate community relations, where her team developed programs to assist customers with limited incomes and invested millions of dollars in Connecticut, western Massachusetts, and New Hampshire on initiatives aligned with the foundation's focus areas, including community wellness and basic human needs; education, clean energy, and environmental stewardship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and community, economic, and workforce development.

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

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

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

Hopkins-Staten faced criticism and hostility in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Eversource Energy Foundation called the Pro Equity Advisory Team, tasked with determining what equity and equality “looked like or should look like” for the company. That started with building trust around the idea of equity and inclusion. “It’s a topic that needs to be talked about, but people are really reluctant, hesitant, and reserved to talk about it for so many different reasons. But to do this work — and to do it with fidelity — I had to make certain that the members of the team felt comfortable, that they felt they could trust me and be very, very transparent.”

We had to bring our “true, authentic selves. It meant bringing in all of our individual biases, because we all knew that we have them. It was a time of growth for me personally and professionally, and we experienced some great milestones and testimonies that we still continue to share. “They started each meeting with a “Did You Know” moment, spotlighting a member and their lived experience as it relates to equity to foster trust, learning, and engagement. Hopkins-Staten says she is “very proud” of the progress the African American Alumni Council has made in recent years, including raising funds for an endowed scholarship awarded to students who have demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to service; successfully advocating for recognition for accomplished alumni of color such as filmmaker Crystal Renee Emery ’85 (CLAS) and the late Louise Rose Williams ’71 (CLAS), SFA, founder of the Voices of Freedom Gospel choir; and increasing outreach to students and young alumni.

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

CHECKING IN WITH

THERESA HOPKINS-STATEN: ENERGIZER

An Eversource exec who is helping to spark the futures of a new generation of UConn students
While pizza is the popular standby, Square Peg’s menu has much more, including pasta alla vodka (above, find the recipe on our website) and homemade bagels with spreads or as breakfast sandwiches like the Green Ivy (top, recipe left). Below: Carla (Maffe) Boudreau.

SQUARE PEG PIZZERIA

Carla (Maffe) Boudreau ’92 (CLAS) likes to tell everyone that when she met her future husband, Todd Boudreau ’93 (CLAS), he swept her off her feet. They both lived in Alumni Quad at the time. “He was running late for rugby practice and knocked me down,” she says. Todd and Carla are co-owners with her brother Jay Maffe ’94 (BUS) of Square Peg Pizzeria in Downtown Storrs. Jay and Carla, who grew up in Hartford, say they’ve loved UConn forever but as students 30 years ago would never have imagined what it’s become today.

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

The Storrs location is unique, Carla says, for the constant foot traffic and how fun it is “being back home,” says Carla. They are reconnecting with friends old and new — hosting a rugby reunion and all manner of postgame gatherings, and filling team buses with phoned-in orders. “We feel very much a part of UConn,” says Carla, “which is what all three of us were hoping for — not just to have a restaurant here but to really be back here as part of the community.” —Lisa Stiepock

Green Ivy Breakfast Sandwich
Top a toasted homemade Square Peg everything bagel with 1 fried egg, 3 slices of cooked bacon, and 1 ounce of shredded mozzarella. Place it in the oven at 425 degrees for 1–2 minutes until the cheese melts. Top with a pesto drizzle, salt, pepper, and sliced tomato. Enjoy!
HDFS 4255/5255: LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

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

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

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

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

HDFS 4255/5255 takes a broad view of chronic illness, exposing students to a range of issues in health care delivery, disparities, and health literacy, as well as training them to speak openly about challenging topics, including end-of-life care, advance directives, and death and dying.

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

The interview is a keystone of the course. It even led to a wedding. Valerie Lachapelle ’15 (CLAS) interviewed Scott, a friend she’d been out of touch with, who was living with Ewing’s sarcoma. Lachapelle recently wrote Bellizzi to thank him.

“Through reconnecting with Scott, I also reconnected with his best friend, Cam, someone I went to middle school with. Cam and I really leaned on each other at the time of Scott’s death and became close friends.

Ten years later we are married and had our first child this year. As a matter of fact, Scott’s mom officiated our wedding. ... I always give credit to this assignment for how my life has turned out. I wanted to do something to share with you how much it meant to me.”

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

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

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

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

Teaching Style:
Bellizzi greets the students by name as they arrive.

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

The conversation moves to current events and then to the previous lecture, which was on Medicare’s and Medicaid’s role in chronic illness management. It’s hard to tell when the conversation ends and the class begins—which is by design. The class has a discussion board where students are required to post questions and observations about the readings and engage with one another. The conversation is ongoing, and there is so much discussion that one his mother had recently passed away from breast cancer.

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

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

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

—KIM KRIEGER

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

Kimberly Rosado ’24 (NUR) has never taken a filmmaking class. She says she’s never been great at talking to people, and she doesn’t enjoy public speaking. A year ago, she didn’t know much about professional camerawork or audio recording. She’d only ever taken a filmmaking class.

For Rosado, learning about the challenges women, adolescents, and young girls face in Guatemala — where some of her family members still live — felt personal.

Getting Help

UConn’s BOLD program focuses on facilitating opportunities for women’s leadership on campus through funding, programming, and engagement in service projects.

Once accepted into BOLD through a competitive application process, scholars in BOLD cohorts are given funding and support for individual student-led projects. They find a mentor and work to refine and execute their project, which is typically implemented during the summer between their junior and senior years.

Rosado and her roommate, Daniela Bedoya ’24 (SFA), were both accepted into BOLD’s fifth cohort. And, lucky for Rosado, Bedoya is a photography major. “I was struggling to figure out how I was going to present the project. I’m not great with public speaking. I’m not great with talking to people. So I was like, You know what? Let me just put it in a documentary and let it speak for itself.”

With Bedoya’s help, Rosado got a Sony camera that was easy to learn how to use, and found an enthusiastic mentor in Barbara O’Neill, an associate clinical nursing professor with a background in journalism and filmmaking. Rosado planned her trip to Guatemala City for summer 2023, lining up interview subjects and stays with family members, but hit an unexpected roadblock when her flight was abruptly canceled. When she arrived in Guatemala a week later, her originally scheduled interview subjects were no longer available, and she scrambled to regroup. Her aunt, a lawyer who works for the Observatory on Sexual and Reproductive Rights (OSAR) in Guatemala, was like, “You know what? Let me just put it in a documentary and let it speak for itself.”

On the rare simultaneous emergence of two cicada broods:

“On the need to overhaul an entire culture:

“Boeing’s change in leadership is not enough to fix its problems.”

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

On consolidating school districts to remedy education inequalities:

“Other than the politics, there’s nothing that prevents us from redrawing school district lines.”

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

On the maple syrup harvests blanketting Connecticut:

“Those little seedlings we’re looking at today are our next generation’s 100-year-old trees.”

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

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

“If it’s marketed to children, it’s probably bad for you.”

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

Giving Help

Rosado benefited from the experience of producing her film, which will help her become a better caregiver and advocate for her patients. “When it comes to asking sensitive questions of patients, it definitely will help me with that, because you never know what someone is going through,” she says. “A lot of these underage pregnancies are products of rape. So talking about super sensitive topics, and how to go about it with adolescents, is important. Education is super important as well.

“We live in the U.S., so we have a different point of view,” she says. “There are countries where the people are suffering, and they don’t really know what sexual reproductive health is. They don’t know their rights as women, so they don’t seek them. They’re blind to what their rights should be.”

“We’re just starting to talk about the problem, and we’re just starting to find patients,” she says. “Unfortunately, a lot of patients have a real hard time coming forward. They don’t know how to talk to their doctor about it. We’re starting to make a push to talk more about it.”

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

“It’s like having a big block of ice in a vise and you’re just slowly crumbling up the vise. Eventually, you’re going to get some cracking on it.”

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

On the need to overhaul an entire culture:

“Boeing’s change in leadership is not enough to fix its problems.”

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

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

“The end of the world is near.”

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

On the need to overhaul an entire culture:

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Robert Bird, professor of business law, The Hill, March 27, 2024
There’s school pride, and then there’s UConn Pride. There’s school spirit, and then there’s UConn Spirit.

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

These are the superfans, the fervent, the ones you recognize from the jumbotron and some you might remember from your first game back in ’92. There’s no nil for these folks — they’re there on their own dime, rallying the crowd and buoying the team. And with 2021’s back-to-back men’s basketball national titles and an unexpected women’s final four appearance, there’s no stopping them now.

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

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

“I just think there’s something special about being able to let your freak flag fly and be yourself. There’s real value to giving into urges on the things you’re passionate about,” he says of the voracious community of Husky fans on and off the internet.

“When you give yourself to it, it’s amazing the crazy sht that’s going to happen. I’m just a grown adult with a basketball problem. What it’s turned into is all a little surreal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Big Red
Location: Meriden | Occupation: Sales Rep

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

“I want that atmosphere at all times. You have to have some kind of excitement from the players to get the fans excited, and then you build on it,” says the legend among legends. “Years ago when I was a high school athlete, we didn’t have a lot of fans in the stands. I know what it is to not get cheered for. I want everybody to feel that they can cheer as loud as I can. They’re just like I am. There’s nothing special about me other than me being an igniter for the fire.” @
America is in need of marriage counseling. 
Enter Bill Doherty ’78 Ph.D. He’s been a couples therapist for some 40 years — but over the past eight, he’s taken on a new type of client. “I was not involved in anything political until right after the 2016 presidential election,” says Doherty. That’s when two of his colleagues asked him to help get 10 Hillary Clinton voters and 10 Donald Trump voters together to try to talk with — and understand — one another. “The country was sort of in shock. I had a lot of experience — in the therapy world, but also in community engagement — and I knew a fair amount about facilitating groups. The idea was to see if they could get past the stereotypes of each other, and find some common ground.”

Doherty’s national organization, Braver Angels, grew out of that. The name evolved from “the better angels of our nature,” a phrase in Abraham Lincoln’s first presidential inaugural address. With alliances in all 50 states and 12,750 members nationwide, the programs differ somewhat from state to state, but the basic structure is always the same: two co-chair — one Blue, one Red — together lead each state alliance.

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

Chris Clouet is the Blue co-chair for Connecticut. He’s a former school superintendent, former adjunct professor in UConn’s Neag School of Education, current division chair of the Education Department at Mitchell College in New London, and a longtime liberal. In his superintendent role, he was seeing school board and PTA meetings getting out of hand.

“We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break the bonds of our affection. The mystic chords of memory... will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.” —1ST INAUGURAL ADDRESS, ABRAHAM LINCOLN
There was just so much rancor and divisiveness, so much misinformation and disinformation,” he says. “Before, people would say positive or negative things, but it was always personal, about their student, and that’s fair. But what started to happen was that people would come in with prepared scripts about things like immigration, for example, and it started to become contentious. I wanted to join a group that could bridge the differences, to come together to listen to each other, without always winding up to get your next point in — while ignoring the person standing in front of you.

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

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

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

What marriage counseling magic makes these workshops work like that?

Longtime Greenwich resident Deirdre Kamlini got some insight when she wanted to set up some Braver Angels workshops for elected officials in her town, and steering committee member Gary Holland (see Holland’s own story on page 28) suggested she take one for herself. Kamlini had spent 10 years in nonpartisan civic nonprofit work. She thought she had pretty good skills in terms of dealing with people of different political perspectives. She says she always practiced “engaging with respect, and really listening, and stating my point of view in a way where they would maybe understand it better. But when I went to the workshop, I learned that I could do things so much better. I’ll give you one example. They had us pick the statement about policing that was the opposite of ours, and the first we had to do was restate that back to the person. The goal is to make sure that the person you’re speaking with, who thinks very differently from you, feels heard by you and that you understand what their issues are. I did that restatement, and I thought it was pretty good. The moderator said to me, ‘You know, you’ve actually kind of skipped ahead, and you’ve assumed some things about what the person was saying that they didn’t actually say.’ When I thought about it, he was 100% right. I assumed we had a common view on community safety, which might be a good assumption, but he said, ‘Don’t assume those things — just restate, as carefully as possible and as close to what that person said, back to them, so you’re showing that you’re really listening — and don’t jump ahead and don’t assume they were saying things they didn’t.’

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

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

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

Craig Diamond, who describes himself as having been a knee-jerk Democrat until a few years ago, got involved with Braver Angels after the events at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. “My oldest friend Eric is a die-hard conservative Trump supporter. I’ve known him since kindergarten, around 50 years. We’ve stayed in touch, we see each other — I cherish his friendship, and he cherishes mine. But on Jan. 7, we were talking on the phone about what had happened. I was expecting him to say things like, ‘I can’t believe that hap- pened. They stormed the Capitol, and that’s terrible, and they are insurrec-
tionists.’ His reaction was not like that at all. His reaction was, ‘It’s not really that big a deal. It’s not any different than the Black Lives Matter people, or the people rioting and breaking the law in Portland and other parts of the country. What’s the difference?’

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

‘Diamond started a journey to un- derstand conservatism. He changed his media diet. He worked with Braver Angels, which he says helped him stop his automatic us-and-them thinking. He and Eric are as close as ever for one reason, he says: “I started listening to him. That’s how I resolved why we’re both doing this. It’s all about leaving room for doubt, says therapist and Connecticut Braver Angels member Jenny Sullivan of Trumbull. ‘I’ll tell you what I think is the most dangerous thing, right now: certainty. People are certain that what they know, they know, and what they believe is right, and what they fear will actually happen. If you don’t have room for doubt, you can’t hear the other side.’ She throws out another tried-and-true therapy trick used by Braver Angels.

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

Tell your story, advises Clouet.
We are deliberately not trying to change people’s minds on the issues, or turn them into moderates. We’re trying to change their minds about each other.

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

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

“My father’s family comes from Oklahoma,” says Holland, “and I have an uncle there. I’ll just call him Uncle Bob; he is a real irascible S.O.B. And he always took great delight in kind of picking on me, even from when I was a kid, because I was always a little out-of-the-box kid. He’s extremely conservative. Since I moved up north and had the audacity to marry a nice Yankee girl from Connecticut, I’m the black sheep of the family. He took great joy in seeking me out and bending my ear about how horrible things were in the rest of the world because of all of the liberals, and it was always unpleasant for me.

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

What could possibly make such a big difference so quickly after so long? “Very simple things,” says Holland. “One of the simplest is the word ‘Why’. So often when you’re talking with somebody, and you have a disagreement with a position, or you’re trying to understand them, you will say to them, ‘Why do you think that?’

“One of the things I learned in the course was that the word ‘Why’ is more often than not, interpreted judgmentally and antagonistically. The suggestion, in the workshop, is to use a different approach. Say, ‘Why I find it interesting, but I don’t fully understand. Can you explain it to me?’ “Say it in the context of, ‘Can you tell me a story about…’

“There are many, many, many, many, many many, many things in common. Whether it’s policing, or the environment. I said that the joy of spring in New England was by itself almost enough to keep me up there, which had nothing to do with politics. It had to do with people and the ability to behave in a way that allows our brains to be fully unified, utilized, and not just in fight-or-flight mode. You can be very strongly on one side of the aisle, or on the issues, and not be difficult to talk to. I think that’s what people in this country don’t define themselves as Republican or Democrat. Some lean red, some lean blue, but they want to look at it down the middle.”

“When someone says, ‘Those damn MAGA Republicans,’ you’re insinuating that Republicans are MAGA when by whatever the definition is, maybe 30% of Republicans are MAGA, and then you’re ticking off and excluding 70% who aren’t,” says Smith. “I’m a conservative, but two of the biggest issues that are liberal, or progressive, I totally agree with. I’m totally against what Republicans think on abortion and banning assault weapons. I carried an AR-15 in Vietnam. I don’t think any gun enthusiast would cause a person like myself to live in Yankee land.”

“Braver Angels mediated a conversation with some neighbors,” adds McCarthy Vahey, who was invited to participate in a Braver Angels mediated conversation withlage state senator Stephen Harding. “He’s on the other side of the aisle, and we talked about that. There’s a way to disagree without being disagreeable. And there’s a way to debate issues without personally attacking one another, in the having the ability to behave in a way that allows our brains to be fully unified, utilized, and not just in fight-or-flight mode. You can be very strongly on one side of the aisle, or on the issues, and not be difficult to talk to. I think that’s what people in this country don’t define themselves as Republican or Democrat. Some lean red, some lean blue, but they want to look at it down the middle.”

“When you’re governing, you are representing all the people, says McCarthy Vahey. “There is no one human on the planet who I agree with 100% of the time. We’re human, and what makes us human is we’re unique individuals. We all have our own fingerprint. It’s how we negotiate those differences that is the true art. Most of us do this work, we have a passion for it. Sometimes that passion flutters into things that aren’t as productive, but we’re doing it because we care about these issues. And we don’t always agree about how to do it.”

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

The stakes are high. In a marriage, if counseling doesn’t work, a divorce can be contentious or amicable. Which would that look like for America? ①
Jesse Senko (center) and brothers Felipe (left) and Juan Cuevas measure a rare hawksbill turtle. Fishing nets around the Cuevas’ tiny island of El Pardito in Mexico could accidentally snare hundreds of sea turtles every month. Then Senko arrived.

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

Net Worth

To save the sea turtles, says alum Jesse Senko, you first need to help the fishers whose very nets entangle them ...
“I did what any 12-year-old boy would do — I latched onto the thing,” says Jesse Senko ’06 (CAHNR), recounting the time a “gigantic” green sea turtle swam up to him while he was snorkeling in the Cayman Islands with his family. “I remember hearing the screams from my mom on the boat. She was terrified. She’s screaming. And the crew’s blowing whistles. And they’re yelling. And I remember thinking, ‘Screw it. I’m going on this ride.’”

Eventually the turtle brought Jesse back to the boat. But the ride never ended. Even as Jesse’s parents were yanking their delinquent out of the water, he was sputtering, “Now I know what I want to do with my life. I want to study sea turtles.” Of course they laughed. “They were like, ‘Oh my God, that’s so cute.’ I mean, they didn’t discourage it. No, no,” says Senko. “But they were thinking, Yeah, that’s today.”

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

And to two fishers in particular. Brothers Juan and Felipe Cuevas live off the Baja California peninsula on Isla el Pardito, which is believed to be the smallest island in the world inhabited year-round by a single family. “It’s a rock,” says Senko. “It’s basically a two-acre rock in the middle of the Gulf of California.” A three-hour small-boat ride from the coast, there’s no sign of civilization in any direction—just other islands, all uninhabited. The family has been on this rock for more than a century—legend has it they drifted there in a storm.

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

Speaking of the ‘it’ factor — by the time this fateful conference rolled around, Senko had become a bit of a wunderkind among turtle people. Since graduating from UConn in 2006, he’d had the big “aha!” research moment (determining that turtles will avoid nets if they know the nets are there); devised a solution (nets are deployed at night when they can’t be seen, so attaching battery-operated lights makes them visible to turtles and other larger marine animals who then avoid them); tested that solution (the lights reduced bycatch by a stunning 50% for turtles and 95% for sharks and rays — without affecting target catch); identified the fatal flaw with his solution (paying for and changing out the lights’ AA batteries every few weeks — hundreds per net — is decidedly prohibitive); and come up with a potential fix (make the lights solar powered).

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

Senko worked with the Cuevas brothers to design these lighted buoys that help steer sea turtles (like the green sea turtle above), sharks, and rays away from gill nets. After nearly six years of fishing with the buoys and helping Senko’s team collect data, Juan Cuevas says, “We want to learn how to read the results of scientific studies so we can teach conservation to other fishing communities in our region.”
raises his hand and says, “Why don’t you just make a lighted buoy?”

Senko loves this story because it illustrates so well how important it is to listen to the community that will need to implement your conservation ideas, the people whose livelihoods will be most affected. The Cuevas brothers were thinking about how they would fish with the lights and knew they’d rather not deal with an extra piece of equipment, one that might weigh their nets down. They already needed buoys, so why not make lighted ones that would seamlessly integrate into their gear? Senko and his team stopped working on the hanging solar lights and started designing buoys.

Once they had enough lighted buoys manufactured, they gave them to Juan and Felipe to test and then return to ASU. But the brothers asked if they could keep the buoys and Senko agreed, provided they’d keep testing and collecting data. For almost six years now the Cuevases have been fishing with solar-powered, illuminated nets.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Script Flip

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

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

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

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

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

“I want my children to fish but after working with Jesse, I also want them to go to school. I want them to learn about the ocean and maybe become scientists like Jesse,” says Felipe.
Three generations of Huskies gathered on campus recently for a reunion that included a photo op with Jonathan Nelson ’60 (CLAS), who re-tired eight years ago and now is a professor emeritus of education and law at Lehigh University, has continued his research and writing and recently reached his 1,700th publication with an article in the *Journal of the Connecticut Law Review.* He also recently had original artwork displayed at the Prince Street Gallery in New York City and with Long Island City Artists at the Factory gallery in Long Island City, New York.

Snow Day

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

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

Hooray! Snow day! 

Gary Goshgarian ’64 MA, writing under the pen name Gary Braver, published his 10th mystery, “Rumor of Evil.” His novels have been translated into 16 languages, and three have been optioned for movies. He’s an award-winning professor emeritus at Northeastern University, where he taught courses in science fiction, horror fiction, detective fiction, and fiction writing. He lives with his family in Arlington, Massachusetts.

Here’s some impressive news: Perry Zirkel ’68 MA, ’72 Ph.D., ’76 JD, who re-tired 20 years ago and now is a partner in law practice and teaches in the MBA program in Medical Physics at the University of Connecticut. He retired eight years ago and now is a professor emeritus of education and law at Lehigh University, has continued his research and writing and recently reached his 1,700th publication with an article in the *Journal of the Connecticut Law Review.*

Kings of the Hill

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

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for men and women,” a re-advertising “evening classes of Law opened in 1921, how the Hartford College alumnae. Hamilton details stories of many UConn Law series of short histories. The Journey: Women at the law school and in the le -

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杰出校友奖，2024 Ken Black Leadership Award. Baldwin is a founder and managing partner at B&L Financial Archi -

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1980s

The Society of Financial Service Professionals honored Kevin Baldwin ’81 (CLAS) with the 2004 Ken Black Leadership Award. Baldwin is a founder and managing partner at B&L Financial Architects and has served nearly 50 years in the financial services industry. In his spare time, Baldwin, of Hebron, Con -

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1960s

to her fourth term as the first selector of Trumbull. Peter Emanuel Jr. ’76 (ED) was recently reelected president of the board of directors of Avalonida Land Conservancy, a nationally accredited regional land trust in New London County. He credits his MBA from UConn’s Center for Real Estate and Urban Economic Studies and his more than 40 years as a real estate broker for helping the land trust acquire and protect more than 2,000 acres. Lisa C. Taylor ’79 (CLAS) ’81 MA plans to launch a nation -

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2010s

for her career working in specialty palliative care in New Hampshire. She shares her career history in a new book, “Where’s Left Journey: Conversations, Choices, Resources,” to “help educate, inform, and reassure people as they approach their end of life.” David Petterson ’76 (CLAS) was pictured above with his family at the Times Square NASDAQ billboard announcing a recent honor. In December 2022, Petterson was awarded the Global Impact Award by IATP (International Association of Top Professional) for work highlighted in his book “Empowerment Evaluation and Social Justice: Confront-

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COLLEGE MEMORIES

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

Across:
1 Fire remnant
4 Bring on board
8 Australian birds
12 Type of earring
14 Alumni, e.g.
15 Longtime NCAAW basketball coach Autiema
16 Pay to play
17 Surrounded by
18 Silver-toned
19 With 10-down, a place on campus to relax
21 Casual collared shirts
22 Mrs., in Mexico
24 Formerly known as
25 Spring or summer
27 Storns building named after the 7thst governor
30 Indian tea region
31 Prefix for -biography or -pilot
32 At hand
33 Plum center
34 Money exchequer
38 Pakistani neighbor
40 Slack-jawed
41 Nuthmegger’s residence
42 Sugar or ketchup container
47 Scooby—
48 Letter before tee
50 Vortex
51 With 28-down, campus place to procure a sweet treat
52 N Computer
53 Arial
55 Police for a pilots
56 Place for a pole
58 Proof of ownership
59 Agilites
60 Natural hair style
61 Bird that went extinct
62 Travelers’ stops
63 Charge

Down:
1 “I got it!”
2 Area, to Hera
3 Spicy taco topping
4 H.S. life skills class, for short
5 “That’s my cue!”
6 Leta
7 Humanities stub
8 Some frozen waffles
9 ... Yello (soft drink)
10 See 19-across
11 Wrees
13 Furry family member
14 Stork or crane
20 E pluribus
21 El ... TX
22 Lake, Storns feature near the chemistry building
23 What yeasted dough does, hardens, like jello
24 “The Office” actor Wilson
25 “The cavalry diet”
26 Words to live by
27 Place for a pothole
28 Some soda
29 “The Office” actor Wilson
30 Roman temple
31 Phone, used in some sci-fi films, for short
32 Goes head to head
34 Major work
35 Hardens, like jello
38 Disgustung
39 Squish topping
40 Yours, in France
41 Old Ford failures
42 Some soda
43 “The caveman diet”
44 “The Office” actor Wilson
45 Helped
46 Some sodas
47 “The Office” actor Wilson
48 “The Office” actor Wilson
49 Center named after a U.S. senator
50 Go ... smoke
51 “The Office” actor Wilson
52 Time period
53 “The Office” actor Wilson
54 Spacecraft
55 “The Office” actor Wilson
56 “The Office” actor Wilson
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63 “The Office” actor Wilson

Solution Pg 48
Maya Moore Irons ‘11 (CLAS), ‘24 (H) returned to the Gampel court to share hard-earned wisdom with graduates of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. “Living on a team is a way of life,” said Moore Irons, who gave practical tips for cultivating a team. “Wherever you’re going, there’s always someone you can lean on. It’s about having each other’s backs.”

2000s

Adam J. Lupino ‘06 (CLAS) was promoted to international representative for the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA) New England region, covering the six New England states and New York. Lupino has worked for LIUNA for more than 17 years, dealing primarily with policy and labor relations in the construction industry. Zak Roma-noff ‘07 (CLAS), president of OMNI Food Sales, recently published “Death of a Broker: How a Brand Advocate Was Born.” The book is about understanding the need for transparency and strong leadership in the food industry and advises young professionals starting in a multitude of industries. “I would love to give back to UConn, a place that is very dear to my heart,” he says. “UConn gave me a home, a place where I was able to forge my identity and develop my interests.”

The Hon. Shanique D. Fenlator ‘07 (CLAS), ‘11 JD of Hartford was elected to the Connecticut Bar Foundation’s James W. Cooper Fellows Program. Fellows are nominated by their peers based on their outstanding service to the profession and the larger community. Fenlator is an administrative law judge for the Connecticut Workers’ Compensation Commission in Hartford. Nathaniel Nelson ‘07 MA recently completed his PhD in public health and strategy at Yale University. He previously worked for LIUNA for more than 17 years, dealing primarily with policy and labor relations in the construction industry. Zak Roman-noff ‘07 (CLAS), president of OMNI Food Sales, recently published “Death of a Broker: How a Brand Advocate Was Born.” The book is about understanding the need for transparency and strong leadership in the food industry and advises young professionals starting in a multitude of industries. “I would love to give back to UConn, a place that is very dear to my heart,” he says. “UConn gave me a home, a place where I was able to forge my identity and develop my interests.”

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

2010s ➤ Richie Kremer ’10 (CAHNR) won the 2024 Emerging Leader Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Kremer has been superintendent at Hop Meadow Country Club in Simsbury High School for four years, following six years as an assistant there. Away from the course, he is an assistant cross-country coach at Simsbury High School and produced “Strange! The Musical” for his church. As a UConn student, he was president of the student group participating in alternative spring break, providing hurricane and natural disaster relief. ➤ Wendy Garvin Mayo ’10 MS of East Hartford reports that she recently published a book, “SHAPE Your Life: A 5-Step Blueprint for Sustainable Stress Management.” She also recently launched Collaborative Cancer Care, a mental health practice curated to provide emotional support for cancer patients, cancer survivors, and families in Connecticut.

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

➤ Congratulations to Colin McDonough ’12 (CLAS) and Maria Belen Ruiz ’13 (CLAS) on their wedding, which was attended by many UConn alums.

➤ Abigail Vacca ‘12 (CLAS), ’14 MSW, of Simsbury, recently launched the podcast “Global Treasures” on Apple Podcasts and other major platforms. Vacca says she and her co-host already have listeners in more than 25 countries. ➤ Fido just got an upgrade. Elkin Taveras ’12 (CAHNR) and Greg Dohan ’14 (BUS) recently teamed up to launch an unusual new business venture: private jet travel for pets. Their new company, Avolar Pets, flies dogs, cats, and other pets alongside their owners in the cabin of the jet, not tucked below with luggage. Pet owners sit on leather seats with access to an open bar and a light menu while Fido gets a complimentary bandana and doggie treats. ➤ Timothy Watt ’14 (ED), ’16 MA won the Connecticut 2023 Lights On Afterschool Teacher of the Year Award. Watt, a third-grade teacher at Mayberry Elementary School in East Hartford, joined Thrive Afterschool last year, immediately making an impact on the program and his students. ➤ Christina Edwards ’15 (CLAS) writes that she has launched a business career consulting agency, CS3 Career Consulting, designed to help women and people of color transition into jobs that maximize their income. She has more than 11 years of human resources experience in the technology and aerospace industry. ➤ Shannon Cowles ’15 (BUS) reports that she was recently promoted to regional sales manager at Ottis Elevator Company, where she supervises account managers in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, and Washington, D.C. She works remotely from her home in Naples, Florida. She says she has attended career fairs at UConn through her school’s career services.

The UConn School of Nursing is growing, and we need your support. Opening in fall 2026, our new, five-story building will provide an innovative, state-of-the-art learning environment where we will prepare high-quality nurses to meet health care delivery needs across Connecticut and beyond.

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No. 8
online nursing master’s program in the U.S.

Top 5%
ranked undergraduate nursing program

32%
increase in enrollment from 2023 to 2024

32%

9,700+

alumni worldwide
Melissa (Myers) Worth ’15 (NUR), of Hudson, New Hampshire, writes with a life update. “I met my husband, Justin Worth ’14 (PHAR), ’17 Pharm.D, ’17 MBA, during my sophomore year in Russell Hall (Northwest dorms) in 2012. We got married in 2019 and welcomed our baby girl, and potential future Husky, Hannah, in April 2023. We also live with our cat, Russell. We are so thankful to UConn for not only our education but for bringing us together. Go Huskies!”

**Congrats to** Sarah Ricciardi Russell ’15 JD and Nicole B. Coates ’11 (CAHNR), ’15 JD on being promoted to partner at Silver Gobin & Teitell law firm. Both are members of the firm’s Medical Malpractice and Serious Personal Injury groups and are based in the Stamford office.

**Congrats to** Kimberly Green Reynolds ’16 MBA, of Atlanta, Georgia, on being named chief procurement officer for Coca-Cola Bottlers’ Sales & Services Company.

**John Ewen ’16 (CLAS),** director of athletic communications at Manhattanville College, was named to the 2023 30 Under 30 list of College Sports Communicators.

**Best wishes to** Dennis Le ’19 (CLAS) and Emily (Jarnutowski) Le ’17 (CLAS), who tied the knot in December.

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

**Melissa (Myers) Worth ’15 (NUR),** of Hudson, New Hampshire, writes with a life update. “I met my husband, Justin Worth ’14 (PHAR), ’17 Pharm.D, ’17 MBA, during my sophomore year in Russell Hall (Northwest dorms) in 2012. We got married in 2019 and welcomed our baby girl, and potential future Husky, Hannah, in April 2023. We also live with our cat, Russell. We are so thankful to UConn for not only our education but for bringing us together. Go Huskies!”

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

**Sundari Birdsall ’21 MPH, MSW (right) was surprised and delighted to discover that Paula Wunsch, who spent a semester at UConn as a study abroad student, was staying at the same hostel as she was during a trip to Delhi, India, in January. “Paula’s UConn Rec shirt was a familiar sight in a foreign country!” she says. Birdsall, who is a student wellness counselor at the Yale School of Medicine, says the pair shared nostalgic memories of fitness classes at UConn Rec and trips they took through the UConn Outdoor Education Center. “UConn connections go beyond borders!”**