

# UConn

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2019

## ***The Next Wave***

*Thomas Katsouleas, UConn's 16th President*





**SNAP!**

**sign, post.**

Inspired by the "LAX" sign at Los Angeles International Airport, UConn's newest waypost sits along Route 195 in Storrs on the north end of campus. The 8-foot-high, 2-foot-deep letters were installed just in time for the Class of 2019's memorialization and merriment.



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- magazine.uconn.edu
- HOT DIGGITY DOG**  
See Oscar Mayer Wienermobile driver Gabriella Medvick '18 (SFA) driving in New York City and hear her sing *the* song. [s.uconn.edu/wiener](http://s.uconn.edu/wiener)
- AND THE WINNER IS...**  
Tune into the UConn 360 podcast to hear Grammy-winning composer Kenneth Fuchs. [s.uconn.edu/fuchs](http://s.uconn.edu/fuchs)

**SPEAKING OF WINNERS**  
See video of the message Team Impact's Daniela recorded for Geno from the hospital and more from these heroic kids. [s.uconn.edu/teamimpact](http://s.uconn.edu/teamimpact)

**U-C-O-N-N**  
A new sign = a new selfie op. [s.uconn.edu/sign](http://s.uconn.edu/sign)

**SURF'S UP**  
Behind the scenes on our gnarly cover shoot. [s.uconn.edu/surf](http://s.uconn.edu/surf)

**BABY HORSESHOE CRABS**  
Watch them flip and fold. [s.uconn.edu/crabs](http://s.uconn.edu/crabs)

**Cover and Snap!** photos by Peter Morenus **Table of contents:** Katsouleas and Suozzo photos by Peter Morenus; Fuchs photo by Benjamin Ealovega; Maddox photo by Stephen Slade '89 (SFA); illustration by Katie Carey

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FROM THE EDITOR



NOW PLAYING: ELSA NOCTON

Elsa Nocton has not quite hit teenagerdom and yet she has headlined the Hard Rock Café in New York City and is a member of the UConn Women's Volleyball Team. Typical of girls her age, Elsa talks a mile a minute. Her pile of homework is spread out on the couch where she never sits. Instead she bounces in front of me, spreading and twirling her arms for emphasis — whenever they aren't busy scooping up and dangling one of her four cats. She's telling me about singing at the Hard Rock Café for a fundraiser in which she helped garner more than a million dollars for the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, a summer camp in Ashford, Connecticut, for seriously ill children and their families. Elsa has a neuromuscular disease that causes chronic pain and fatigue. She can't recall a day in her 12 years without pain. "There's some everyday stuff that's super simple for other kids I can't do," she says, "like putting up my hair. I have a lot of trouble even like brushing my teeth or making my lunch, opening things." She says she tries hard to stay positive: "I know so many camp kids who have it harder." But getting through her school day with a good attitude means, "I'll come home and I'm super, super, *super* cranky." Her mother nods and laughs while filling a bowl with food for their rescue pit bull mix.

It was the kids at Hole in the Wall who told Elsa about Team Impact, an organization that pairs kids who have chronic or serious illnesses with college athletic teams. UConn has the most pairings in the country (see page 36). "One of the best things in my life is being part of that team," says Elsa. "Even though the kids at my school are super nice, they don't really understand. These girls are like 18, so they're much more understanding and know how to deal with it. They're basically like my second family. Like my big group of sisters."

Elsa joined the team last year and because she lives in Storrs, she not only goes to team games and practices, and texts and FaceTimes with the players but, she says, sashaying from side to side, "We go out to the Dairy Bar a lot."

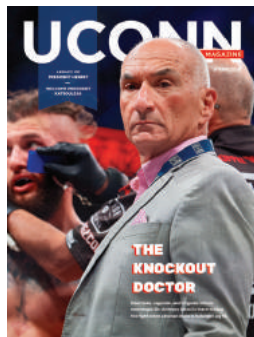
The players say Elsa inspires them and helps them feel less homesick, too. When Anna Petrova '21 (ACES), whose sisters are far away with mom and dad in Voronezh, Russia, was given a class assignment on her favorite athlete, she wrote about Elsa.

Says Elsa: "It's just so different when I'm with them, I can just relax. I don't have to cover it up with a smile."

*Lisa T. Stipock*

**Vice President for Communications** Tysen Kendig **Associate Vice President for Brand Strategy** Patricia Fazio '90 (CLAS), '92 MA **Editor** Lisa Stiepok **Art Director** Christa (Tubach) Yung **Photographer** Peter Morenus **Editorial Assistant** Camila Vallejo '19 (CLAS) **Contributors** Julie (Stagis) Bartucca '10 (BUS, CLAS), Kenneth Best, Tom Breen '00 (CLAS), Christine Buckley, Kristen Cole, Steve Criss, Stefanie Dion Jones, Michael Enright '88 (CLAS), Benjamin Gleisser, Elaina Hancock '09 MS, Julia M. Klein, Kim Krieger, Grace Merritt, Elizabeth Omara-Otunnu, Stephanie Reitz, Jaclyn Severance, Susan Twiss, Loretta Waldman **Contributing Photographer** Sean Flynn **Copy Editors** Sheila Foran '83 (BGS), '96 Ph.D., Gregory Lauzon **Web Designers** Christine Ballestrini '03 (SFA), Yesenia Carrero.

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## LETTERS

Scores of you wrote in to tell us about bobcat sightings in your backyards. We heard, too, from grateful patients of our cover subject Dr. Alessi, enthusiastic clubbers lauding their favorites, and more. Find a sampling below.

Get in touch! Email me at [lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu](mailto:lisa.stiepock@uconn.edu) or post something on our website at [magazine.uconn.edu](http://magazine.uconn.edu).

### The Knockout Doctor

➔ The best neurologist. He helped me get back on the field in 1994! Never forgot his care and safety! Thanks, Dr. Alessi. Peter Connolly '96 (CLAS), New Fairfield, Conn., via Instagram

### Where the Wild Things Are

➔ Twice in the last week, we've seen a large bobcat walking on the ice in the pond behind our house — very beautiful. It seems much bigger than the one in your article. Too far away for a good photo, though. Marylou Carlson Bradley '69 (NUR), Storrs, Conn., via our website

➔ Tracy, love the work that you do — it is my passion in life as well, although not professionally. I serve on the board of directors for a non-profit organization in Suffield, Conn., The Friends of the Farm at Hilltop (FOFAH), where my contribution includes making the property more wildlife friendly and

teaching others how they can do the same in their yards. I would love to have you come visit sometime. Keep up the good work. Barbara Rodgers, 35-year employee at UConn Health, West Suffield, Conn., via our website

### The Reapers and the Flowers

➔ An inspiring article about a leader who's making a meaningful difference — for the planet and also for so many people. Margaret L. Winslow, Cambridge, Mass., via our website

### Class Notes

➔ I entered UConn in the fall of 1967 and lived in "The Jungle." There were two women's dorms, as I remember, at the bottom right of The Jungle. Your story in Class Notes features 11 women, most of whom graduated in 1972, and says they were some of the first women to live in The Jungle. I graduated in 1971 and knew women from my class who lived there starting

in 1967. The curfews, locked doors, and house mothers were a reality. Robert J. Jamback '71 (SFA), Dunbarton, N.H., via our website

### Clubbing

➔ You are all awesome! Jonathan The Husky (@jonathanhusky14), via Instagram

➔ I live in Aiken now and USCA has polo. I wish UConn could play them here. Go Huskies and Go Pacers! Katherine Holmes Hoelscher '79 (CLAS), Aiken, S.C., via Instagram

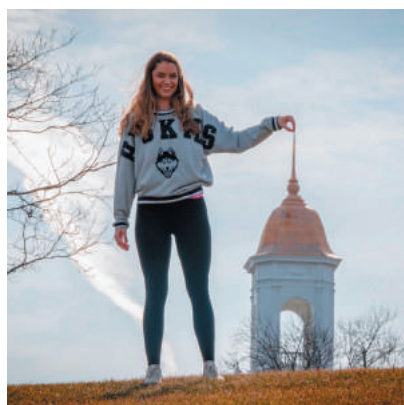
➔ Aw, I'm so glad y'all [Revolution Against Rape] are still going strong and doing this important work. Casey Healey '16 (CLAS), Santa Elena, Ecuador, via Instagram

➔ Best program on campus [Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters]! Jamie Moran '18 (ED), Springfield, Mass., via Instagram

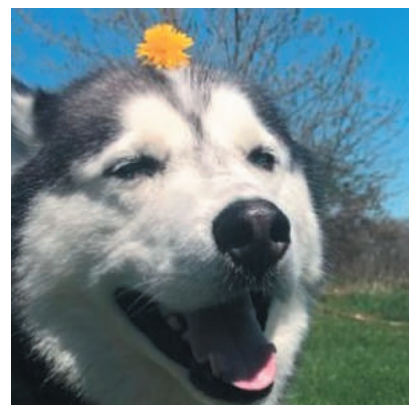
## INSTAGRAM



Horsebarn Hill is prepped for Commencement #UConn19 @miltonlevin



Iconic #UConnNation @UConn



Hope everyone is enjoying this beautiful weather! @jonathanhusky14

## UPDATE

### BABY SWING TREES

UConn's beloved "swing tree" near Mirror Lake that graced the cover of our Spring 2018 magazine is now reaching the twilight of its natural life. However, it will live on through dozens of healthy seedlings that UConn horticulture professor Mark Brand has nurtured in a campus greenhouse since last fall.

The swing tree has been undergoing special treatment since last year when horticulturalists noticed signs that indicated health problems, particularly when the upper portion of its crown failed to leaf out in springtime. Estimated at nearly 70 years old, it's already relatively old for that type of tree — a Dahurian birch, also called Asian black birch. The tree had been home to two wooden swings since about 2010, and had become a popular meeting spot for friends and place for people to write in the journal that makes its home in a nearby mailbox. Sadly, the tree's crown again did not leaf out this spring, so while UConn will continue to care for and monitor it, the swings won't return to that particular tree. —STEPHANIE REITZ

➔ For more on the tree, the seedlings, and the journal go to [s.uconn.edu/tree](http://s.uconn.edu/tree).



Stephen Slade '89 (SFA)

## KUDOS

### PENDERS BECOMES WINNINGEST BASEBALL COACH IN UCONN HISTORY

Jim Penders '94 (CLAS), '98 MS became the all-time winningest coach in UConn baseball in May when he picked up win #557 in New Orleans against Tulane by an 8-5 score. Penders, who has coached here for 16 years, surpassed the legendary Andy Baylock, who won 556 games between 1980-2003, and remains on staff today as the Director of Alumni and Community Affairs for the football team. Penders has led UConn to NCAA Championship appearances five times in the past nine years.

## CHECKING IN WITH

## CHRIS MURPHY WALKS THE WALK

Outside Senator Chris Murphy's Washington, D.C. office the cherry blossoms are in full bloom. Inside, the halls are buzzing with colleagues and reporters waiting to speak to Murphy '01 JD, who has just returned from a trip to Ireland "representing our interests in the Brexit debate, which includes protecting the Northern Ireland peace process."

Elected to a second six-year term last November, Murphy also served six years in the House and eight in the Connecticut General Assembly. He's known for dogged work on gun safety, income inequality, access to quality education and health care, and veterans' rights. He's also known for his annual summer strolls across the state, 100-plus miles of walking, talking, eating — and posting on Twitter. "It's become Forrest Gumpish," he says, "because you can find me if you follow social media, so people come and join. There are times when we literally have a roving town hall."

**Has social media changed the way you legislate?**

Though I regularly engage on Twitter, I generally don't love the fact that we've been forced to condense our thoughts and policy proposals into a handful of characters. People get to see the real me on Facebook and Twitter, but there are a lot of times when I start to write a tweet about a complicated topic and then erase it, knowing there's

no way I can do it justice on Twitter. Not everybody has that restraint, so I worry that much of our dialogue is becoming oversimplified.

**You say you've gotten up every morning since the Sandy Hook massacre committed to working on gun safety. What does that look like?**

I work internally as hard as I can, but really my focus is on building up the power of the anti-gun violence movement. I've become convinced that we're probably going to need to win this issue by winning elections.

**It takes a lot of patience?**

Well, yeah, I mean, great social change movements don't happen overnight. The social change movements you don't read about are the ones that give up after 3 years or 5 years or 7 years.

**You've helped Connecticut to achieve the strongest gun safety laws in the country, right?**

Yes, and the nice thing is we did it by working with Republicans. We did it in a bipartisan way.

**You and your wife met as UConn Law students. Is it a meet-cute story?**

I don't even know what that means! We met at a bar in Hartford watching UConn beat Duke for the 1999 national basketball championship. I was a freshman state legislator at the time, so she got a mutual friend to introduce us. She wanted to lobby me on legislation to get loan repayment for students who

went to work for legal aid.

**That counts as "meet cute." Did you get it for her?**

No, I don't think it passed.

**You both still have student loans. Do you think a decent education could cost less by the time your sons go to college in 7 or 8 years?**

If college inflation continues on its current pace, the year that my oldest is a freshman is the year that my undergrad alma mater will hit \$100,000 a year. I think the cost of college is an absolute crisis in this country, and my party is often too obsessed with student loans. We've got to have strategies to reduce, not just control, the cost of a college degree, or we will bankrupt families and give up our one advantage as an economy, which is the quality of our workforce.

**Did you really carry a briefcase, not a backpack,**

**to Wethersfield High?**

No! No, I didn't. I admit it's not hard to believe, but it was a joke that one of my high school friends played on me talking to a reporter after I first won my seat, and it's now part of the bio. I mean, I was president of my class, vice president of the debate club, I was a pretty serious student. But I did not carry a briefcase.

**When you look at the Betos and Kamalas, do you think that should be you too?**

No. I think that there's really important work to be done here in the Senate. I love this job and I love that we have great candidates running for president. If I thought that the only way I could make a difference was to run for president, I'd consider it. But that's not the case.

**What are you reading right now?**

"Say Nothing," about Northern Ireland. —LISA STIEPOCK



Chris Murphy with Hartford mayor Luke Bronin during Murphy's annual Walk Across Connecticut last year.

UConn Talks

On taxing soda in hopes of improving children's health:

**"Hopefully it will help people realize this is a serious problem, and this is a real potential part of the solution."**

Marlene Schwartz, professor of human development and family sciences and director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, *Popular Science*, March 26, 2019

On why social media platforms must combat fake content and hate speech by focusing on a limited number of topics:

**"The consequences of believing that vaccines cause harm are eminently more dangerous than believing that the Earth is flat."**

Niam Yaraghi, assistant professor of operations and information management, Brookings Institution, April 9, 2019

On the snake that developed a spider-like tail to lure prey, including lizards, frogs, even birds:

**"It's one of those things that makes me feel awe in the power of natural selection."**

Kurt Schwenk, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, *Discover Magazine*, April 16, 2019

On children who are no longer considered to have autism spectrum disorder:

**"There has to be something biologically different between those kids who, when given the same treatment, bloom, compared to those who stay the same. We just don't know what it is."**

Deborah Fein, distinguished professor of psychological sciences, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2019

On reports revealing one million species are under threat of extinction thanks to humans:

**"There's no one answer for the cause. It's death by a thousand cuts."**

David Wagner, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, "NBC News," May 6, 2019

On phones posing a risk to our long-term health:

**"Your cortisol levels are elevated when your phone is in sight or nearby, or when you hear it or even think you hear it. It's a stress response, and it feels unpleasant, and the body's natural response is to want to check the phone to make the stress go away."**

David Greenfield, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry, *The New York Times*, April 24, 2019

On encountering the new "bubblegum coral" species off the coast of Massachusetts:

**"Like a stroll through Dr. Seuss's garden."**

Peter J. Auster, research professor emeritus of marine sciences, *The New York Times*, April 9, 2019

On the truth behind ancestry testing:

**"The degree of genetic similarity can tell you if someone was a close or more distant genetic relative, but not whether they were a direct ancestor."**

Deborah Bolnick, associate professor of anthropology, *Forbes*, April 10, 2019



TASTE OF STORRS

SCOOPED

Ringed in the 40th anniversary of Winter Weekend in February, the Student Union Board of Governors (SUBOG) hosted its beloved annual event — One Ton Sundae. It's an almost mandatory experience for students to get a personal bucket of midwinter Dairy Bar ice cream. The line forms hours in advance, often wrapping around the Student Union, all in the name of free ice cream on the SU Terrace. For the first time this year, not one but two boats held an actual ton of ice cream, including several nut-free selections. Considered the "official unveiling" of the yearly Senior Scoop flavor, One Ton Sundae featured the Class of 2019's Peanut Pretzel Paw Print blend of vanilla ice cream, chocolate covered pretzels, and peanut butter swirl. Sabreena Mei '19 (RHSA), pictured above right, and Madison Ready '19 (CLAS), above left, were two of the seven students who created and named the 2019 Senior Scoop.

Photo by Peter Morenus

IN DEVELOPMENT

DESIGNING FOR THE NEXT FRONTIER: DEEP SPACE

Fifteen days and nights of continuous sunlight, followed by 15 days and nights of continuous darkness. Passing meteorites that frequently strike the ground and kick up debris. Radiation unfiltered by any sort of atmosphere. One-sixth of the Earth's gravity, no air pressure to speak of, and persistently occurring moonquakes. The environmental conditions on the surface of the moon are challenging, to say the least, making NASA's goal of returning and staying on the moon by 2024 a feat for scientists and engineers.

UConn researchers are on the front line of the effort, thanks to a new NASA-funded project aimed at advancing the design of resilient, deep-space habitats. A team from UConn — in a partnership led by Purdue and including Harvard and the University of Texas at San Antonio — was recently selected to be a part of a new Space Technology Research Institute (STRID). The institute will help design mission architecture for a sustainable human presence first on the moon, and later on Mars or possibly other planetary bodies, such as other planets, moons, or asteroids.

"On the moon, the environment is extremely harsh, there's no atmosphere, and it's a hard vacuum; the temperature fluctuates in the extreme, and it is under continuous exposure to a deadly level of radiation," says professor of structural engineering and applied mechanics and team leader Ramesh Malla. "When you build a human habitat in such an extreme environment, engineers face a great many challenges. Materials will behave differently in this extreme temperature fluctuation. Not only that, you really have to worry about radiation, and there is continuous danger of micrometeorite impact. Our purpose is to come up with habitats to survive in this kind of situation, this kind of extreme environment." — JACLYN SEVERANCE

For more go to [s.uconn.edu/deepspace](https://s.uconn.edu/deepspace).

KUDOS

**GATHERU IS FIRST UCONN STUDENT TO BE NAMED BOTH A TRUMAN AND A UDALL SCHOLAR**

Wanjiku (Wawa) Gatheru '20 (CAHNR), a rising senior majoring in environmental studies with a minor in global studies, has been named a 2019 Truman Scholar by The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation and a 2019 Udall Scholar by the Udall Foundation. She is the first student in UConn's history to win these two prestigious national awards in the same year.

Gatheru is one of just 62 students nationwide to receive the Truman award, presented to undergraduates who have devoted themselves to public service. The Udall Scholarship was awarded to just 55 college sophomores and juniors for leadership, public service, and commitment to issues related to Native American nations or to the environment.

"I have never considered a path outside of public service," Gatheru says. "I come from a family full of healthcare providers, so it makes sense that I have always been drawn to serving people through public service."

Prior to arriving at UConn, Gatheru spent a year in Thailand as a Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Scholar of the U.S. State Department, an experience that solidified her commitment to culturally competent conservation. She has completed internships with the City of Hartford's Office of Sustainability and the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network.

On campus, Gatheru served as vice president of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and as the student co-chair of the 2019 University-wide Metanoia, pursuing the theme of "Youth for Change." She is a 2018 UC Santa Cruz Doris Duke Conservation Scholar and a 2018 Newman Civic Fellow, and is motivated to connect grassroots movements to institutions of power. She was a lead organizer in



Connecticut's first Youth Climate Lobby Day, a United Nations Global Health Fellow, a delegate at the 2017 U.N. Climate Change Discussions, a founding member of the President's Council on Race and Diversity, and played a critical role in the successful implementation of an environmental literacy general education requirement at UConn.

Gatheru, who is from Pomfret, Connecticut, says she plans to pursue a joint JD and master's degree, with hopes of a public service career that empowers and supports culturally competent, community-based environmental solutions — particularly focusing on educating, informing, and involving disenfranchised communities of color.

"While communities of color and low-income communities are often at the forefront of environmental injustice, these individuals are largely underrepresented in decision-making on climate, clean air, and transportation," she says. "As a lawyer, I plan to work to bridge this divide by actively engaging front-line communities in the decisions

that impact their everyday lives."

She mentored students as a teaching assistant in the African American Cultural Center, is a peer research ambassador at the Office of Undergraduate Research, and is an intern at the Office of Environmental Policy. She hosts pop-up food closets as co-founder of the UConn Access to Food Effort (UCAFE), which seeks to address food insecurity and student hunger on campus.

"As the proud daughter of two Kenyan immigrants, I am incredibly aware of the sacrifices that my parents have made to ensure that my siblings and I have the opportunity to live a life beyond survival," says Gatheru. "This truth grounds me in everything I do and motivates me to use my education to uplift those who may not have access to the opportunities that I have had."

UConn's seventh Truman Scholar, she and last year's winner, Akshayaa Chittibabu '19 (CLAS), were UConn's first consecutive winners in more than 30 years. She is also UConn's seventh Udall Scholar. —JACLYN SEVERANCE

Photo (above) by Sean Flynn, (right) by Peter Morenus

COLLECTIONS

TOWERING

Faculty members and students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences published more than 65 books in 2018, spanning the spectrum of the humanities, sciences, and social sciences.

Many won national awards, including family development expert Abdul Khaleque's "Intimate Relationships across the Lifespan," about love in different cultures, which won an Independent Publisher Book Award; and journalist Mike Stanton's "Unbeaten," about boxer Rocky Marciano, which was named one of *Library Journal's* Best Books of 2018.

Philosopher Mitchell Green's book "Know Thyself: The Value and Limits of Self-Knowledge" spawned from his popular massive open online course of the same name, while language expert and polyglot Peter Constantine's press, World Poetry Books, translates some of the world's foremost poetry, from the ancient Greeks to Rainer Maria Rilke, into English.

Lest we leave behind the sciences, mathematicians Emiliano Valdez and Guojun Gan show us how to create killer decision trees in "Actuarial Statistics with R: Theory and Case Studies," while anthropologist Merrill Singer reveals the human sociopolitical ramifications of global warming in "The Anthropology of Climate Change."

And that's just the tip of the stack. With some measures showing printed book sales increasing over the past two years, these authors show that the currency of academic scholarship is alive and well. —CHRISTINE BUCKLEY





THIS JUST IN

GRANTED

Studies show that students of color tend to be more successful if they have a teacher of color, however the percentage of minority teachers doesn't mirror the growing number of students of color.

In hopes of helping to bridge this gap, the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund granted \$240,000 to students enrolled in the Neag School's Integrated Bachelor's/Master's (IB/M) Program for the next three years.

Ten students of color will receive \$2,000 apiece for each year of enrollment to cover the extra costs of pursuing their teaching degrees. They also will be encouraged to mentor younger students of color and use additional funds to cover their networking programs and community activities.

For more on this program, visit [s.uconn.edu/granted](http://s.uconn.edu/granted).

ON CAMPUS

GAME OF CHAIRS

This year's ubiquitous "GOT" conversation gets a nod at the William Benton Museum of Art with a show of 13 chairs by contemporary artists entitled "Game of Thrones: An Exhibition of Contemporary Art Furniture."

Museum director Nancy Stula asked each artist to create a chair that would depict the intersection between beauty and functionality, hoping visitors would see these everyday items as something more.

**Charlotte MacGregor '17 (SFA)** got into the act by recording a self-guided phone tour in which she assigned each chair a character in the show. For instance, Wendell Castle's "Black Widow" (pictured in forefront above), made of polychromed fiberglass in a mix of red and black, is MacGregor's ideal throne for the heartless queen Cersei Lannister and her history of bloodshed. Here's how MacGregor matches the two:

"A woman you love to hate or hate to love. No one can deny she is an absolute powerhouse. A master at the game of thrones . . . I think this chair would call out to Cersei on a spiritual level. When she's not sitting on it, the foreboding form would certainly keep anyone else from sitting on it. When she is, the form is perfect for her relaxed yet intimidating style of lounging that reminds you of a lion waiting to pounce. Not for nothing, but this particular throne is called 'Black Widow,' which I think is especially fitting for a woman with whom men — and women for that matter — seem to have very poor survival skills." —**CAMILA VALLEJO '19 (CLAS)**

The show runs through July. For more, go to [s.uconn.edu/thrones](http://s.uconn.edu/thrones).

THIS JUST IN

LAUGH MORE, LIVE LONGER

High-quality conversations and laughter may help explain the Latinx health paradox: longer life expectancies in that population compared to other cultures, despite poorer socioeconomic and psychosocial circumstances.

Past research has proposed the fact that Latinos often live nearer to extended family as a factor in their good health. However, "quality of conversations and conversational partners are two variables that haven't been looked at before," says associate professor of psychology Nairán Ramírez-Esparza, who led the study with Adrián García-Sierra from the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences.

They found that Latina mothers tended to laugh more and have more high-quality conversations compared to white European mothers, a trend that may be due to the proximity of family members for Latina mothers along with the values of *simpatía*, a cultural expression of being kind, polite, and avoiding negative interactions. "Latinas are talking to people they know very well, because they live closer to them," says Ramírez-Esparza.

Latinx cultural values extend beyond the family, the researchers note, because this socialization remained the same with others in their everyday lives as well. The behaviors are natural and not limited to familial interactions.

One interesting trend noted in both groups of women was the overall lower rate of high-quality conversations between women and their partners.

"We kind of know why, because in the busy day-to-day household routine, we are taking care of basic things and not necessarily having deep discussions," says Ramírez-Esparza.

—**ELAINA HANCOCK '09 MS**

For more on how this study was conducted and what's next, visit [s.uconn.edu/laughter](http://s.uconn.edu/laughter).

3 BOOKS



MO COTTON KELLY

Montique "Mo" Cotton Kelly says she never tires of the joy that "cracking open a new book, smelling it, and turning the pages" brings her. Her job as VP of Alumni Relations and Communications requires a lot of travel, which she translates as "quality reading time." The mom of two typically is reading two or three books at once and is on pace to read 50 books this year. Yes, she's counting.

Just Finished:



"Becoming" by Michelle Obama

I had this book for a while but was saving it for my book club. I so enjoyed it; I both laughed and cried. Before starting it, I figured we all knew her story because of Barack, but I think we sort of lumped her in with him. I learned so much about who she is, with and without him. Not that anyone doubted she is a true, strong, independent woman. But getting to know her in these pages was pure joy, and also a little heartbreaking: She navigates first her own family, then her relationship with Barack and their family together, and then how fiercely she has to work to protect that family and maintain their family values under that bright light of the presidency.

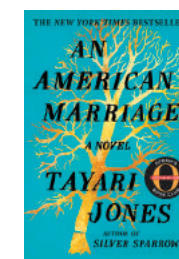
Currently Reading:



"Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts." by Brené Brown

I am starting to read "Dare to Lead," which a colleague gave me. The author did a TED Talk on women's empowerment in the workplace, and my favorite point from that was: Who we are is how we lead. I'm also reading **Colum McCann's "Transatlantic"** for my next book club meeting. And I'm reading "Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands" about doing business internationally. I'm going to China this summer with a group from UConn to meet with admitted students and their families and for alumni events in Shanghai and Beijing.

On Deck:



"An American Marriage" by Tayari Jones

I have so many on-decks! But this one, "An American Marriage," is literally on my nightstand, and I put it on my Goodreads reading list as "next book." It came out last year, and after reading the title and the six-line description I ordered it immediately. It's about a young African-American couple dealing with the wrongful-assault conviction of the husband shortly after their wedding. Another book club summer pick is "Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town" by **Jon Krakauer**, whose nonfiction reads like fiction.





STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

## SHANE YOUNG '21 (BUS)

There aren't a lot of guys who can claim to have played basketball in college for Hall of Fame Coach Geno Auriemma. But it has been part of Shane Young's UConn experience. Young is a practice player with Women's Basketball, joining the practices two days a week as part of a rotation of 20 guys.

That's not, however, what brought him to UConn. Growing up in a legacy family, Young says he was drawn to the University by its business school and the opportunity for academic success.

### So yours is a UConn family?

My mom, brother, and sister all came here. My brother and sister are twins, five years older than me. I came up to visit them all the time. So I got a great sense of UConn, and I thought I would not only fit in but be successful here.

### How did you choose your major?

I knew I liked math and I liked business, and I didn't want to be an

accountant. But I knew that you can apply finance to any type of business. My parents are both business owners.

### Do you have specific career goals?

I have an internship this summer with TD Securities in New York City. Hopefully that will give me a better idea of whether I want to do investment banking. I had an internship last summer, too, for an insurance company.

### Are there particular programs or people that are helping you move closer to your career goal?

Yes, the UConn Consulting Group has been instrumental in my development. We're a management consulting group with a strong alumni advisor base. We work with real companies on semester-long projects, helping with whatever issues they come to us with.

### Recently you were named a Bab-bidge Scholar, which means you

earned a 4.0 two consecutive semesters. What's the secret to convincing professors in so many different courses that you've mastered the material?

It's different for every class, but once you come up with a plan for how to go about learning the material, it makes it a lot easier. I figured out how to do well in high school, but college is more intense in how much you're responsible for outside of class, so I had to make some adjustments.

### You're also a practice player with the Women's Basketball team. You must be pretty good to play with the UConn women! Why did you decide not to be a college player yourself?

My dad's still asking that question! For most of my life leading up to college, I spent a lot of time on basketball. But I knew college basketball wasn't for me. I wanted to focus on my career more, and I knew that if I played in college, I wouldn't be as focused on my academics or be as able to do internships and join clubs. It was a tough decision at the



Young teaching a First Year Experience class (left) and at a Women's Basketball practice getting direction from Associate Head Coach Chris Dailey '99 M.Ed. on how to guard Napheesa Collier '19 (CLAS). The tattoo is a Bible verse his mom always told him, Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

time, but one I'm glad I made.

### They say the WBB practices are tougher than the games. What's a practice like?

It is tough! As practice players, we're doing whatever Geno wants from us, whether it's playing defense on them or getting rebounds for them, or playing offense, acting as players on the opposing team that they're about to play.

### Do you get teased playing with the women?

No, they're really nice. They definitely know that they're better than us, and they love rubbing that in our faces! But it's great, because it makes us competitive and that's what they want from us, to be as competitive as we can, so we're giving them a challenge. So it's cool.

### Are there any opportunities for romance between the practice players and the team?

No! No, no! Most of them, I think they're actually dating other athletes. They told us right away, don't even try.

### The players told you?

No, the coaches. I'm not going to get in trouble with Geno!

### I saw a photo from your Alternative Spring Break this year. What was that like?

Fifty of us took a bus to Detroit. Each day, we did something different. We went to a food bank and did some organizing and packaging of food; we went to one of the poorest schools in Detroit and got to talk with some of the kids. It was a great learning experience.

### How do you spend your free time?

The free time that I have, I have to carefully plan for. I try to set blocks of time in the week. A lot of times, that's going to the gym or working out — something that relieves my stress. This semester, I've also made time for seeing friends more, because especially in my first year at UConn, I was really focused on academics. But this year, I've built so many relationships that mean so much to me that I think it's crucial for me — in order to be happy and continue to have

the drive that I have — to also spend time with the people I care about.

### Do you have items on your bucket list to do before you graduate?

I want to join the Student Managed Fund.

### What advice would you give an incoming student?

It's cliché, but I would say try your hardest to get involved with things as soon as you get here. Find groups and things that you're passionate about, and join new things that you don't think you'd really enjoy. I didn't think I would like consulting, but I joined the UConn Consulting Group, and that has been one of the greatest things that's ever happened to me.

So I would say get involved, put yourself out there, and challenge yourself with new things and new groups, because you learn so much and you grow as a person, and you meet people that are just going to be there for you and be so important in your college life.

—ELIZABETH OMARA-OTUNNU

This August, **Thomas Katsouleas** takes the helm as UConn's 16th president.

By Stephanie Reitz | Photos by Peter Morenus

# *The Next Wave*





Katsouleas visited with faculty, staff, and students on UConn campuses this spring (here and pg. 21).

**There's a naturalness to a conversation with Tom Katsouleas, an amiable feeling of picking up where you left off.** It's an innate attribute, one that's helped UConn's incoming 16th president make an immediate impression on the countless alumni, students, employees, and others he's encountered as he prepares to take the helm of Connecticut's flagship university on Aug. 1.

He's incredibly smart, they observe. Insightful without being pedantic. Unpretentious and quick to laugh, but astute in reading the room and going beyond hearing others to truly listening and absorbing what they're sharing.

Oh, and he can literally save your life. A plasma scientist and engineer with deep roots in research and academics, Katsouleas is also a former Los Angeles County lifeguard and All-American swimmer. He's an avid sailor, surfer, and water-skier, too, along with being an occasional cliff jumper and a self-described sucker for nonfiction adventure stories in which the main character somehow survives despite all odds.

Leaving his position as executive vice president and provost of the University of Virginia, Katsouleas, 61, arrives this summer with his personalized skateboard and, most notably, a range of purposeful ambitions for UConn's future as it moves to the next phase of its nearly 140-year history and continues to cement its status as one of the nation's premier public research institutions.

The new president's unanimous confirmation by the UConn Board of Trustees followed a highly competitive six-month national search, in which more than 200 applicants vied for the job Susan Herbst leaves to join the faculty after eight years as president.

Katsouleas spent four years at Virginia after serving for seven years at Duke University as dean of the Pratt School of Engineering and professor of electrical and computer engineering. He previously worked at the University of Southern California and at UCLA, his alma mater for both his bachelor's and Ph.D. degrees.

He will be joined in Connecticut by his partner, Dr. Anna Maria Siega-Riz, associate dean for research in UVA's

School of Nursing and national expert in nutrition, maternal and child health, who recently was named as the new dean of the School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Katsouleas also has two teenage children and, though he's resolved to respect their wishes on the colleges they choose, they're sure to have more than their fair share of UConn gear.

We talk with Katsouleas about what drew him to UConn, his thoughts on higher education's future both locally and writ large, and his joy at the opportunity to lead a university he has admired since long before last winter, when he visited Storrs for interviews during a swirling snowstorm.

**Having worked at public and private universities, what are your thoughts about going into the presidency at a high-profile public institution such as UConn?**

The broad mission of a public university appeals greatly to me. All research universities have the role of preparing students for life and careers, and performing research that benefits society. But there's also a wider scope for the public university that includes uplifting the surrounding community and state, providing greater access to education for citizens from all geographic areas and financial backgrounds, and I find that particularly exciting.

Working with lawmakers is the aspect of this role that will be newest to me, and seeing the extraordinary commitment that Connecticut has made to UConn is really one of the things that attracted me to this leadership opportunity. The legislators I've met are interested in more than just providing financial support to the University; they deeply care about being part of the strategy and planning that goes into moving the University forward and, correspondingly, the state. That's a wonderful thing, and makes me excited to partner and engage with them.

**Many in higher education say that athletics serve as a "front porch" of sorts that can attract attention, but then draw people's interest into a university's many teaching,**

**research, and service offerings. Where do you see UConn Athletics down the road?**

You know, many people have sent me messages to offer words of welcome and support, and easily the most common sentiment accompanying that is about UConn's athletic conference — ideas to improve teams, add new sports or cancel others, and any number of related thoughts.

As I said earlier this year, athletics are part of our identity as a major, broad-context university, and we're committed to building a culture of winning at UConn that benefits every aspect of the University, including academics.

You'll see me enjoying a lot of different games. Basketball and football are my favorites, but I also have a background in swimming. I'm looking forward to adding UConn hockey, baseball, soccer, and other sports to my list of regular events. Our student athletes work hard and represent UConn so well, and I'll be there cheering them on so they know that they have my support and admiration.

**"There's also a wider scope for the public university that includes uplifting the surrounding community and state, providing greater access to education for citizens from all geographic areas and financial backgrounds . . ."**

**You come from an engineering background, so we know your roots are deep in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Do you worry about the push-pull that some others believe exists nationwide between prioritizing STEM and humanities studies?** I believe strongly that the growth of STEM actually points to the need for the humanities.

When you think about applying STEM knowledge to societal grand

**“Truth is the core value of any academic institution. But we have many other values as well, and those include diversity, inclusion, respect, and responsibility.”**

challenges, you very quickly realize technology alone isn't enough to do it. Whether it's providing clean water for the billion people who don't have access to it on a regular basis, or preventing cyberterrorism, or whatever the need is, there's not only a technical dimension. There's also a very human dimension in which we as a society have to determine what is feasible, viable, and desirable.

We need engineers who are trained in these technical fields, but we also need them to collaborate with specialists who understand business, behavior, public policy, history, social sciences — the wide dimension of knowledge that's available at a large university like UConn.

**The principles of free speech are under pressure at many universities, and institutions including Virginia and UConn have struggled with the difficult balance of protecting constitutional rights while expecting people to adhere to institutional values. How do you view this issue?**

I like to tell students that ethical dilemmas are not between right and wrong. When it's between right and wrong, you know what to do. Clearly, do what's right. But the real ethical dilemma is between right and right — that's where free speech becomes so complicated.

Free speech is absolutely essential, and of course we're bound by the Constitution to uphold it, but even more than that, it's the basis by which we pursue truth, and truth is the core value of any academic institution. But we have many other values as well, and those include diversity, inclusion, respect, and responsibility. Universities in particular have a special role in society to try and broker the middle ground and navigate in such a way that we uphold all of these values.

Parenthetically, I think it can be harder for today's generation of students to understand and appreciate the evolution of free speech over the decades, having not grown up with the experience of the 1960s and seeing how important free speech was in bringing about civil rights to people who had been denied them. Instead, they've grown up in an era when they've seen free speech used to allow people to be hurtful, to add insult or injury to values and people they care deeply about.

When I talk with students, I tell them we're absolutely committed to supporting free speech, but that they need to remember that just because a person has the right to say something doesn't guarantee them the right not to be criticized for what they say. The entire community has a responsibility to speak up for what we value, and to speak out when someone says something under the protection of free speech that's inconsistent with those values.

**We're learning more every day about “President Designate Thomas C. Katsouleas.” Can you tell us more about the informal side of yourself, Tom — the water-loving, skateboard-riding, snowboarding dad who's soon going to become one of Connecticut's most familiar faces?**

My hobbies are anything to do with the water. In fact, there's a Ph.D. student at UConn Avery Point who was an L.A. County lifeguard like me, and he reached out to invite me to surf with him when I get to Connecticut. I've gotten a lot of invitations: the sailing club, the skydiving club, so many other great ones. I'm also really looking forward to UConn's student programming in the arts and theater, especially any musicals. I feel like the offerings on such a broad-context university campus will be amazing.

Something that might surprise people, and which I don't really mention much, is that I've been playing bridge since I was a grad student. A group of us played every few weeks as grad students and post-docs. We were a little self-conscious about the fact that it was bridge; we told everyone we were heading off to poker night. I'm usually okay

at it, other than when I go to a bridge club and a bunch of 80-year-old women kick my butt.

My father was born in Greece near the coast outside of Kardamili and is retired there, so we visit family there every summer and travel around the region, sometimes sailing to various islands. It's really one of the most remote and rugged parts of Greece, and very beautiful.

We like to do things there like water-skiing and cliff jumping, but my daily routine is pretty simple. One of the best times is when I jump in the water near the beach where we stay and swim about a mile and a half down the coast to our favorite restaurant right on the beach. Anna Maria or my father and the kids bring a little bag with a pair of shoes, a bottle of water to rinse with, and a T-shirt, and they leave it on the beach for me. I swim up, clean up, walk into the restaurant beachside, and eat our favorite Greek food looking out over the water. That's the idyllic life for me.

**You're wrapping up your time in Virginia while visiting Connecticut periodically and preparing for all of the changes ahead. How's that going?**

I've been overwhelmed with the warm welcome I'm receiving. People have reached out to me since the day of the announcement — not just from the UConn family, but people from around the country who've told me about time they spent at the University and in the state. So many of them tell me about how much they love Connecticut and the affection and respect they have for UConn. It's been universal, and it's made us all the more excited to be coming.

It's a humbling experience because as a provost you realize that although you're in charge of academics at your university, very few people know you on sight. I don't have a real sense yet of how that will change when I'm walking around UConn's campuses as president. My hope is that if students and others do recognize me, they will feel comfortable stopping to talk with me or coming by the Benton Museum for coffee with me when I'm there. ☺



# SHOW RUNNER

Jenn Suozzo '99 (CLAS) was named executive producer of "NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt" last fall. The former dancer says she directs each episode as if it were a ballet.

BY JULIA M. KLEIN  
PHOTOS BY PETER MORENUS

**A** typical day for Jenn Suozzo '99 (CLAS) starts around 8 a.m. and doesn't end until Lester Holt, who anchors "NBC Nightly News," signs off at 7 p.m. But that's only when no crisis intervenes.

"I always feel like we're on 24/7. News happens all the time," says Suozzo, who was named executive producer of "Nightly News" in October after serving as interim EP since July. She remembers the logistical challenges of a recent spring Sunday night, when tornadoes slammed the South, causing multiple fatalities. "Lester was in California, and we needed to get him from California to the South to cover the tornadoes because there were so many people who lost their lives," she recalls. "Those stories stay with you."

Suozzo is headquartered at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, also known as 30 Rock or the Comcast Building, an iconic 1930s Art Deco skyscraper in midtown Manhattan. The



**“SHE IS SO CALM UNDER PRESSURE... SHE TAKES THE JOB VERY SERIOUSLY. SHE DOESN'T TAKE HERSELF SERIOUSLY AT ALL.”**

**—MAUREEN E. CROTEAU '71 (CLAS) JOURNALISM PROFESSOR AND DEPARTMENT HEAD**

building's dark, busy lobby has black terrazzo floors with brass inlay and is decorated with scenes of men at work in Catalan artist Josep Maria Sert's massive mural, "American Progress." By contrast, the NBC and MSNBC newsrooms upstairs have a sleekly contemporary look, with exposed brick walls and screens tuned to shows from broadcast and cable competitors. Suozzo's own small office is still largely unadorned. A coffee mug sits on a shelf above her desk. "Behind every successful woman," it reads, "is a tribe of other successful women who have her back."

Wearing a flowing, patterned black and gold dress, Suozzo greets a visitor with a firm handshake and a radiant smile, projecting warmth and command amidst the daily frenzy. "She is so calm under pressure," says Maureen E. Croteau '71 (CLAS), the long-time head of UConn's Journalism Department, who remembers Suozzo's cool professionalism during the 9/11 terror attacks. "She takes the job very seriously. She doesn't take herself seriously at all."

"I bring leadership, I bring passion, I bring dedication, and I bring empathy — every day," says Suozzo, who also counts among her strengths "great people skills" and "a strong ability to read a room."

Suozzo has enjoyed a charmed career at NBC, her only employer since graduation. She counts among her mentors the network's revered chief foreign policy correspondent, Andrea Mitchell, whose MSNBC show she helped launch in 2006. Now Suozzo, in turn, is helping to boost the careers of other women, including Kasey O'Brien '16 (CLAS), an associate producer with the show. "She cares about the people who work for her," O'Brien says. "She gives you opportunity before you know you're ready for it because she knows you're ready."

## ZOOM

A Frenchtown, New Jersey, native whose mother was an English teacher, Suozzo didn't initially envision a journalism career. "I was very passionate about helping women who were victims of domestic violence and their children — the legal side of all of that," she says. She thought she might become a lawyer. Her great love was dance, but her parents counseled her, "You can dance after you go to college." She *did* study dance at UConn, even subbing at times for her professor.

In high school, Suozzo worked on the student newspaper. At UConn, she joined *The Daily Campus*. By junior year, spurred by her love of language and interest in investigative reporting, she was ready to commit, double majoring in journalism and English. For her television internship, she was placed with the FOX affiliate in Hartford. But a field trip to WVIT, the local NBC station, convinced her that was where she belonged. She asked Croteau to switch her.

"So she did — and she really laid the trajectory for my whole career," Suozzo says. The two remain close friends, and Suozzo serves on the Journalism Department's professional advisory committee.

Croteau remembers how adeptly Suozzo took to that internship: "She would talk to me about the things she was covering, and it was very mature — not like a kid who was wowed by everything. And she was so interested in every part of it, every tiny facet of what was going on in the newsroom."

Uncertain whether she wanted to be on air or behind the camera, Suozzo did her best to learn both sets of skills. "It was like catnip to me — I just loved it," she says of the experience, adding that WVIT's lead anchors at the time, Gerry Brooks and Joanne Nesti, were also instrumental in laying the foundation of her career. And she stays in touch with them to this day, too.

## CROSSFADE

Suozzo's first paid TV gig, also at WVIT in Hartford, was as a teleprompter operator. "I worked my way up to the camera and then the floor director," she says, before becoming an associate producer and then a producer. The news director Liz Grey "just really believed in me," Suozzo says.

"I will never forget it. I was sitting in the newsroom towards the back. She came out of the office and screamed my name, 'Where's Jenn Suozzo?' And I was like, 'My God, what did I do? I'm right here!'"

"I went into her office, and she said, 'So, I'm going to promote you. I need you to go into the control room and learn how to do the control room and don't come out till you know.' And so — I did."

When new management took over the Hartford station, Suozzo made the move to MSNBC and then NBC, ascending the production hierarchy. She produced for many of the network's stars — "you just have to adapt



**Suozzo and Holt at their current newsroom desks. The two worked together at MSNBC before both ended up on "The Nightly News."**

to who you're working with" — but admits to especially warm feelings for Mitchell and the late Tim Russert, host of Sunday morning's "Meet the Press."

"He was the icon of the business" and was "beyond nice," she says. Her partnership with Lester Holt, whom she met when both were at MSNBC, began in 2012, when she was part of the small team at NBC's weekend news program.

"Jenn brings a calm to a process that can be anything but," says Holt. "Her demeanor, confidence, and quick decision making lowers the stress level for all of us. If there is a crisis going on in the control room during the broadcast I never know it. Jenn's voice in my earpiece remains steady and reassuring no matter what else may be going on."

Suozzo enjoys covering politics, getting the big interview. But the stories that have haunted her most have involved the loss of life. She cites the case of Scott Peterson, convicted in 2004 of murdering his preg-

nant wife, Laci, and their unborn child, Connor; the 2005 disappearance from Aruba of Natalee Holloway, declared dead seven years later; and "a particularly gruesome murder case that I've never forgotten," involving Jessica Lunsford, a nine-year-old who, in 2005, was raped and buried alive. "I choke up now thinking about it," Suozzo says.

Another day she will never be able to forget came in 2012.

"We had just entered a network meeting when we first learned there might be something happening in Newtown," Suozzo recalls. "Then we heard it was an elementary school and then a first-grade class. Someone said how many victims there were, little children. To this day I remember the air stood still, everyone was silent. Some people cried, others left the room. And that night we reported live from Newtown on the bone-chilling tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, many of us through our own tears and feelings. There are still no words."

**“SHE GIVES YOU OPPORTUNITY BEFORE YOU KNOW YOU’RE READY FOR IT, BECAUSE SHE KNOWS YOU’RE READY FOR IT”**

**—ASSOCIATE PRODUCER KASEY O’BRIEN ’16 (CLAS)**

## BANDWIDTH

Suozzo’s regimen involves a blizzard of meetings and decisions. She starts the morning talking to senior producers and fielding calls from correspondents around the country and the world. “We’re trying to lay out what we’re doing for the day,” she says.

A 9 a.m. meeting with the entire news division is followed by a 9:30 meeting with the show staff, which she runs. “The producers have a chance to pitch their stories to the whole ‘Nightly’ staff, and then we’re off and running,” she says. She gives an example of the thought process: “How do we make Peter Alexander’s piece about what’s happening at the White House today? What’s the angle? How are we telling it? Who’s telling it? What does that look like?”

By way of guidance, she asks her producers: “What is your moment of impact in every story? What is the one thing I’m going to remember?”

With many viewers already aware of the top news of the day, the evening broadcast needs to provide something extra. “We can all be on our phones all day, and you know that there is a school shooting,” says Suozzo, on a day when yet another school shooting, in Colorado, will lead the show. “What is it that ‘Nightly News’ is going to offer you from that school shooting that you’re never going to forget? What is going to stay with you the next day? Is it a sound bite? Is it a moment? Is it an image?”

Suozzo says that she has also “put pedal to the metal on the original reporting.” On this particular day, she and producer Eric Salzman are proud of nabbing the first television interview with Chris Hughes, a co-founder of Facebook, whose op-ed in *The New York Times* called for the powerful company to be broken up. NBC national correspondent and weekend anchor Kate Snow goes beyond the headlines to ask Hughes about the state of his friendship with Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s CEO. Hughes, in response, turns almost wistful, noting that it’s been two years since he’s seen his former Harvard roommate.

“Throughout the day,” Suozzo says, “there’s constantly producers in here,” part of a “nonstop conversation.” They discuss their changing stories, logistical hurdles, how to get the job done cost effectively. She also spends time discussing the next day’s

and next week’s stories. Her pace quickens as she describes the routine, as though mimicking the day’s accelerating rhythm: “All these pieces are coming together. Everybody out there is working on their story in their silo, and then it’s our responsibility — and mine — to funnel everybody, so that it comes out seamlessly.

“Meanwhile, I’m having marketing meetings, PR meetings, staying on top of things like that. I’m meeting with news directors from across the country [and asking]: ‘How is NBC helping you? How can we help you more? How can you help us? Let’s partner together.’ Building those relationships is something that is very crucial, too.”

Suozzo leads a second news meeting at 2:30 p.m. Holt sits to her left at a conference table ringed by producers. One of them summarizes the latest developments out of North Korea, Iran, and Venezuela. Andrea Mitchell joins the group to offer her insider take on the foreign policy news, including its domestic political ramifications.

Producers and correspondents, some of them calling in, swiftly run through other stories: U.S.-China trade talks, President Trump’s defense of his son Donald Jr., the school shooting, storms across the country, the Hughes interview, controversial abortion legislation in Alabama, a San Francisco teacher on extended medical leave obliged by state law to pay for a substitute teacher. They detail the planned succession of images and sound bites and the questions that remain. Suozzo, earnest and low-key, thanks each one in turn.

## TICKER

After the 2:30 p.m. meeting, she says, it’s “go time.” That means, she says, “the scripts need to come in. I need to make sure that all the scripts have what they need in them. Is there something missing? Is it written well? Does it make sense?”

“And then,” she says, “I have to look at the broadcast as a whole: What are the pieces in the first block, what’s in the second, what’s in the third, and how are we ending the show? Because of the dance background, I like to look at the show as like a ballet. It all needs to flow together. All the acts need to come together for the final show.”

One of the obvious challenges is late-breaking news. “The school shooting the other day didn’t happen till 5 o’clock,”



she says. “For a while, the White House was deciding to release all of their news at 5:30, and we’d have to blow up the show and do something different. So we’re constantly on our feet — up until we’re in the show. Things happen, and you have to react.”

So far, the all-important numbers are good: Though trailing ABC’s “World News Tonight” in total viewership, “Nightly News” continues to lead the three networks in the coveted demographic of adults 25-54. “I have no concerns about the durability of the format,” Suozzo says. “People said years ago that the evening broadcasts would be obsolete.” In fact, she says, “we get 9 million viewers, on average, every night.”

## GALLERY

Suozzo’s day ends in the darkened control room, a complex of computer monitors, audiovisual equipment, and screens that

resembles the Broadway set of “Network.” Wearing headphones, Suozzo sits near the center, surrounded by her team. The order of stories has been reshuffled slightly during the day, and one planned story has been held. But there have been no major crises, no need to blow up the show. The Hughes interview, as Suozzo anticipated, is arresting. A closing piece, for NBC’s signature “Inspiring America” segment, focuses on identical twins who both battle and support each other on their way to academic success.

When the broadcast wraps, Suozzo rushes out to dinner, but not before thanking her guests. Postmortems will have to wait. Tomorrow, she will do it all again.

To an outsider, the constant pressure seems stressful, exhausting. Not to Suozzo. “It’s invigorating,” she says. ☺

*Julia M. Klein’s writing has appeared in The New York Times, Mother Jones, and more. She is a contributing book critic for the Forward.*

**Suozzo in the “Nightly News” control room. When she made the move from floor director to producer back in Hartford at WVIT, she recalls her boss there promoting her by saying: “Go into the control room and learn how to do the control room and don’t come out till you know.” And so she did.**



## THE HORSESHOE CRAB

# The Fortunate Ones?

Unique among species, the horseshoe crab has persisted, unchanged, for hundreds of millions of years. But now, its survival is threatened by the harvesting of its prized baby-blue blood. A team at UConn seeks to map its DNA and save it from extinction.

Written by Kim Krieger | Illustrations by Katie Carey

“What is that — it looks like a prehistoric Roomba,” my friend said.

We were sitting on a seawall, our feet dangling in the water. “That” was weaving its way through the sea grass beneath our toes. Roundish and brown, about a foot and a half across, with a long, sharp tail, it was a horseshoe crab, patrolling the tidal realm for worms and shrimp and bits of detritus that it would promptly Hoover up, eating and cleaning the seafloor as it went.

Horseshoe crabs are ubiquitous along the coast of Connecticut and the rest of the eastern U.S., but most people who live elsewhere, like my friend, have never heard of them. Which is odd, because most of us owe our lives to their blood.

### Eons

Horseshoe crabs first evolved 450 million years ago, a little after the super-continent Pangaea began breaking up. It was a time long before the dinosaurs, when mollusks and trilobites dominated the seas and the most complex life-forms on land were plants similar to liverworts.

Pause just a second there and think about that. There were no land animals. Not even insects. There were no trees, no ferns, no flowering plants.

But there were horseshoe crabs.

“The dinosaurs came and went, but the crabs stayed,” says Rachel O’Neill, a geneticist and director of UConn’s Institute for Systems Genomics. O’Neill is an expert in mapping the DNA of weird genomes. Most recently, she was part of the team that sequenced the koala genome, but she’s also done salp (jellyfish-like creatures) and tammar wallaby (miniature kangaroo).

“Weird animals have weird biology and are great ways to understand species diversity and adaptation to Earth’s diverse environments,” O’Neill says. Now she’s focusing closer to home to map the DNA of possibly the weirdest animal of all: the local Connecticut horseshoe crab, *Limulus polyphemus*.

One of the horseshoe crab’s great mysteries — the thing that makes it weirder than almost anything else

alive — is that it hasn’t changed since the Ordovician period of the Paleozoic. That’s close to an eon of geologic time.

The crabs cruising today’s shores are absolutely identical to the crabs that crawled around post-Pangean waters. The horseshoe crabs of the Ordovician already had ten legs, eyes on their tails, the rounded shell with a hinge a third of the way across that lets the crabs fold and maneuver and flip over. And they had the amazing blue blood so cherished by today’s medical industry that it could threaten the well-being of the species. A map of the horseshoe crab’s DNA would not only be a window into the DNA of the Paleozoic period, it could also be the key to the species’ survival.

### Bluebloods

Horseshoe crab blood is so valuable because it is teeming with cells called amoebocytes. Amoebocytes attack bacteria and coagulate like glue around them, instantly sealing off holes in the crab’s circulatory system. Because even 450 million years ago, bacteria were everywhere. That violent reaction to bacteria has made horseshoe crab blood the perfect elixir for the pharmaceutical and medical device industries, which use an extract from the blood to test for contamination every batch of

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prevent this, manufacturers kept large numbers of rabbits, injecting them with test samples and monitoring them for days to see if they got sick.

Until 1956 when, in a stroke of luck, physician researcher Frederik Bang realized that the cell walls of gram-negative bacteria are exactly what cause horseshoe crab amoebocytes to react. Test

shoe crabs from fertilized eggs, they found no instructions on how to do so. Eventually they figured it out.

### Babies

“Look, I found a molt today,” says graduate student Kate Castellano. Like many insects, horseshoe crabs shed their skin when they grow too big for it. Castellano holds up a thin, transparent shell, its diameter barely the length of the first joint of her thumb. It’s from one of the little *Limulus* babies scooting around the 30-gallon tank in a common area of the Institute for Systems Genomics. The little crabs hop, using their tails to jump. They can also stand up on all 10 legs, legs that surround their mouths on their undersides.

Even in places where horseshoes are plentiful, few people get to see baby crabs. They stay safely in the water where they can’t be spotted and eaten by land predators. But here, in the Institute’s common area, there’s a round table with four chairs. People often come and sit by the tank to watch.

Translucent beige with brown spots, the whole front end of the crab’s carapace is covered in sensory cells that can smell. When Castellano drops shrimp in the tank, the crabs converge and eat like hungry hungry hippos in the children’s game. There are 27 of them in the tank, which is decorated like the town of Bikini Bottom in the “SpongeBob” cartoon. “A lot of what we’re doing is pretty basic biology,” says Castellano. In the beginning “we didn’t know their lifespan.” Around 30 years it turns out. But in raising the crabs and examining their DNA, Castellano and O’Neill have discovered a lot.

One of the larger babies grabs a particularly big piece of shrimp and falls onto its back, trying to wrestle the piece into its mouth on its underside. Perhaps babies isn’t the right word; at almost three years old, they’re more

a sample of medicine with horseshoe crab blood extract, limulus amoebocyte lysate, and if the stuff clots you know immediately there is contamination. Fast and effective.

Today, the limulus amoebocyte lysate test is the FDA standard. But horseshoe crabs have to be captured from the wild and bled. More than 300,000 crabs are gathered, pierced near their hearts, and bled every year in the eastern U.S. The baby-blue blood gathered sells for about \$60,000 per gallon, according to a September 2018 *Business Insider* report. The bled crabs are then released, but a research study showed 18% of them subsequently die, and the females do not breed for some time after being bled.

The fact that there is only one research study publicly available that even tracked horseshoe crabs after they were bled brings up another important point: There is very little research on them at all. In fact, when O’Neill’s lab tried to raise baby horse-

vaccine, saline, or other injected drug, as well as every pacemaker, artificial hip, or other implanted device.

Now you might think, why, what’s the big deal? There are plenty of ways to make sure things are sterile; we’ve known how to do that since Louis Pasteur boiled milk in the 1800s.

But for injectable medications and implantable devices that come into contact with our bloodstream, sterility is not enough. Sterility means there are no live microorganisms that can cause infection. But sometimes organisms don’t have to be alive to cause trouble. Mere pieces of the cell walls of gram-negative bacteria can cause the human body’s immune system to freak out and become septic, a terrible cascading inflammatory disease that can kill quickly if unchecked. This was a serious problem in nineteenth and early twentieth century medicine, when traces of dead gram-negative bacteria on otherwise sterile equipment or medications killed many people. To

like toddlers. Horseshoe crabs mature at about the same rate as humans, becoming sexually mature between 12 and 15 years old. This means it’s hard to do multigenerational studies of them in the lab. And it also means they would take a long time to bounce back from a population crash. Unfortunately their numbers are already dropping. In areas where crabs are most commonly harvested, fewer and fewer females are showing up to mate. Some places used to have so many crawling up the beach at the full moon in spring that the sand seemed to have turned entirely to crabs. That sight is rarer now, although the animals are still common along the Connecticut coast.

### Synthetics

Capturing another creature and bleeding it on a yearly basis to provide for our safety may seem morally questionable. But no one wants to go back

a synthetic replacement for limulus amoebocyte lysate. The replacement works okay; it was recently approved by the European Union as an acceptable substitute. But it is based on a simple copy of a single protein in horseshoe crab blood.

O’Neill, Castellano, and their colleagues think they can do better than that. They are mapping a full assembly of the horseshoe crab’s DNA. Part of their goal is to look for a more complete understanding of the amoebocyte response. They are striving to get every gene isolated and its function described, or at least hinted at.

It’s not easy — there aren’t many detailed DNA maps of modern spiders or ticks, the crab’s closest living relatives, to compare to, much less any of a 450-million-year-old fossil. But O’Neill’s lab has already made its own horseshoe crab DNA assembly and is comparing it to the two other horseshoe crab genomes that have been published.

Compiling a complete map of an organism’s DNA is like cutting up a dictionary into little pieces, shuffling them in a bag, and then putting it back together. Each word or gene might be sliced into two or more pieces. And unlike words in a dictionary, the genes don’t have their definitions written out neatly next to them. Annotating a genome — describing the function and meaning of each gene — can take years and is rarely complete, simply because we don’t yet know what a lot of genes do.

The two currently published horseshoe crab genomes are nowhere near as detailed as O’Neill’s assembly, but whenever you cut up a dictionary into tiny pieces, some get lost. It’s always good to compare with someone else’s reconstruction to mop up any bits you’ve missed.

### Reveals

What the UConn scientists have already found has been astonishing. First, the horseshoe crab has seven copies

of its genetic code. Humans have two, one from mom and one from dad. Plus, none of those seven copies has a complete *Hox* gene set. *Hox* genes tell developing fetuses where to grow limbs and a head — essentially how to structure the body. Geneticists had thought that every animal needed one, but apparently the horseshoe crab manages without. And this might be a clue to one of its great secrets: “We hypothesize, maybe the horseshoe crab can’t change. Maybe it’s frozen, because it’s missing a *Hox* cluster,” O’Neill says.

## “MOST OF US OWE OUR LIVES TO THEIR BLOOD”

The second astonishing thing is the genes that researchers suspect describe the action of the amoebocytes in the crabs’ blood. O’Neill and her colleagues believe they might be able to understand the reaction well enough at the molecular level to design a synthetic test that is even more sensitive than the horseshoe crabs’, or a non-liquid that can work as a swab on a surface. Such a synthetic could be the crab’s salvation.

“At this point it’s science fiction. But this is a novel way of thinking about any contaminant detection,” says O’Neill.

Science fiction or not, it’s a compelling idea. In a twist of fate, horseshoe crabs and biotech companies seem to prefer the same real estate. How many of the pharmaceutical chemists, executives, and entrepreneurs working in Connecticut’s rich biotech corridor along Long Island Sound realize that their ability to bring their products to market hinges on the health of prehistoric arthropods crawling through the tidal muck a few hundred yards away?

How ironic, and lovely, if they never have to think about it — if, someday soon, we can design a substitute for the horseshoe crab’s amoebocytes that works even better than the original. ☺





# MASTER CLASS

Grammy-winning composer Kenneth Fuchs shares with students the lessons he's learned from industry giants — and from his beloved high school band director.

By Kenneth Best

Four days after walking off the stage at the Staples Center in Los Angeles with a Grammy Award, Kenneth Fuchs stands before a group of students presenting original quintet compositions as performed by fellow student musicians (*above*). Listening to a piece for oboe, flute, clarinet, French horn, and bassoon, Fuchs asks the composer if after hearing her music performed she would make any changes. She thinks the ending could be more dynamic.

"Begin thinking about the range of the instruments," Fuchs tells her. "What will give depth to the sound? The bassoon goes down to B flat, so use it to enrich the sonority in the bass. In the opposite direction, the French horn is like a yellow highlighter. As you did with the oboe and flute, use the upper register in the French horn. I loved it."

In guiding his students toward a deeper understanding of the creative process, music composition professor Fuchs is passing along his experiences in the music industry, experiences that are more real than the illusions of overnight success depicted on shows like "American Idol," but only slightly less star-studded.

Fuchs first came to music in church, singing in the choir at the age of 10. Piano lessons soon followed, then school band at Piper High School in Sunrise, Florida. The band's new director, Bentley Shellahamer, became his Mr. Holland — the inspirational teacher in the 1995 Richard Dreyfuss film "Mr. Holland's Opus." It was Shellahamer who set Fuchs on the path to becoming one of America's finest composers, with four Grammy nominations for his contemporary classical recordings with the London Symphony Orchestra.

When Fuchs told Shellahamer that he wanted to become a composer, the band director wrote out the ranges for

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all the instruments in the band on a sheet of manuscript paper that Fuchs still has. He encouraged his student to write prolifically, promising to play anything he wrote.

"And he did," says Fuchs. "He played the first piece, which won a student composition award from the Florida Bandmasters Association."

Now Fuchs tells his student composers to write as much as possible and when they've finished a piece, he tells them, "You have to find the players you have written it for, get them to rehearse it, and hear what it sounds like immediately so you can know if the choices you made are those you really want. That was such a profoundly important gift that Mr. Shellahamer gave me."

And he pays it forward. "My job is to get them to take their enthusiasm, or their interest in wanting to become composers, and to focus it. If a student comes to me with very little experience or really not having written much original music, the first thing is to get them interested and excited about writing something that they can finish and feel good about," says Fuchs. "That begins with writing a work for their own instrument. What better way for them to express their own musical thoughts than through writing for an instrument that they feel comfortable with?"

Some of the composition forms Fuchs teaches weren't around when he was in school, as his digital media and design program students demonstrate in creating soundscapes to animate digital projects. "We work on matching the sound with the motion. My experience with composition students at UConn is that many have a sincere interest in video game scores, which are elaborate-

ly produced with full-sized symphony orchestras. There is a real crossover here. The goal of any composition is to put over the footlights to the listener a communicative musical statement, whether it is for piano trio, symphony orchestra, or string quartet. You need to write music that the audience can understand. That's what it's all about. It is the composer's job to understand the power of all different kinds of musical sounds so the audience responds."

## Dear Stephen Sondheim...

After earning a music degree from the University of Miami, Fuchs hoped to study at The Juilliard School in New York City under the masters of American symphonic music — Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, David Diamond, Vincent Persichetti, and Roger Sessions. He immersed himself in their music and wrote audition compositions for band, not orchestra. The Juilliard judges advised him to expand his knowledge, compose an orchestral work, and reapply.

Disappointed but determined, Fuchs sought advice from three composers he had written to while studying in Miami — Aaron Copland, William Schuman, and Stephen Sondheim. His letters asked about particular pieces of their music and the decisions the composers made about formal structure and instrumentation.

"They took my questions seriously and responded to the letters. To a person, each of them said when you come to New York, we'll get together," Fuchs says. "You learn that the real greats are big enough to lend a helping hand."

He spoke with Schuman, the former



president of Juilliard and Lincoln Center, and met with Sondheim just after “Sweeney Todd” opened on Broadway. At Patelson’s Music House, the well-known music store that used to sit across from the stage door at Carnegie Hall, he told owner Joseph Patelson that he would like a job.

Two weeks later, a letter arrived from Patelson offering him one. Later the same week, Schuman wrote to say he had arranged for Fuchs to take lessons from Stanley Wolfe, then-director of the Extension Division at Juilliard. For the next year, Fuchs worked at the music store six days a week and studied at night with Wolfe, beginning work on an orchestral composition.

This time his audition earned him admission to Juilliard, where he earned Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees.

### Long and Winding Road

After Juilliard, Fuchs spent a year as an assistant dean at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts before returning to New York for an eight-year stint as dean of students at the Manhattan School of Music. In 1998 he became director of the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma and oversaw completion of a new music center.

Fuchs continued to write music but felt he had not yet found his own voice. He decided to take on a large orchestral work and devote as much time as necessary to finding his writing voice. Over the course of two years that voice emerged as he composed the 18-minute “An American Place.” In 2003 he completed “Eventide,” a concerto for English horn and orchestra, for Thomas Stacy of the New York Philharmonic.

While several of his ensemble com-

**FUCHS AND FALLETTA: Facing page and left, above — in London recording with the London Symphony Orchestra; left, below — at the Staples Center in L.A. during the 61st Annual Grammy Awards after winning Best Classical Compendium for “Fuchs: Piano Concerto ‘Spiritualist’; Poems of Life; Glacier; Rush.”**

positions had been recorded by the American String Quartet and principals from the New York Philharmonic, Fuchs now was ready to record his orchestral work.

He reached out to JoAnn Falletta, a Juilliard classmate and rising star in the conducting world, to ask if she would be interested in conducting the new works, as well as “Out of the Dark,” the first of Fuchs’ works that Falletta had conducted while they were students. Her response was immediate: She accepted his invitation and mentioned she was going to be recording with the London Symphony Orchestra and might have time to add other sessions for his compositions.

With support from then-president of the University of Oklahoma David L. Boren and his development staff, funding was raised, and six months later Fuchs was in London recording with Falletta and the LSO. In quick order, their work was accepted by Naxos, the world’s largest classical record label, for its new American Classics Series, aimed at promoting solo discs by composers, and “Eventide” was nominated for two Grammy Awards.

“Nobody could believe a first disc by a virtually unknown composer would get two nominations, but it did,” Fuchs says. “We didn’t win, but that’s what started it all.”

### And the Winner Is...

“It all” includes recording in London at the famed Abbey Road Studios, best known for albums by The Beatles but also where many of the 20th century’s most celebrated musicians recorded, including pianist Vladimir Horowitz, cellist Pablo Casals, bandleader Glenn

Miller, and singer Tony Bennett.

Fuchs says being in that legendary space never grows old.

“To walk through the double doors into the reception area to realize that so many artists of all styles of music have recorded at that studio and to walk down the halls and see the pictures

of Falletta.

The title track is performed by pianist Jeffrey Biegel. The disc also includes “Rush,” a concerto for alto saxophone and orchestra performed by Timothy McAllister; “Poems of Life,” a work based on the poems of Judith G. Wolf, sung by countertenor Aryeh



“  
To realize that so many artists of all styles of music have recorded at that studio and to walk down the halls and see the pictures of those superstars...is thrilling, it’s inspiring...”

of those superstars in pop, rock, jazz, and classical music is thrilling, it’s inspiring; intimidating in the best sense; it makes you want to do your best when you are there. I’m very grateful we’ve had three opportunities to do so.”

And of course “it all” includes the charmed fourth nomination for this year’s win: the Grammy Award for Best Classical Compendium for “Spiritualist’ — Concerto for Piano and Orchestra,” the London Symphony Orchestra’s fifth recording of Fuchs’ original compositions under the baton

Nussbaum Cohen; and “Glacier,” a concerto for electric guitar and orchestra, performed by D.J. Sparr.

“The fact that we have the validation of the voting membership of the Recording Academy for an album of tuneful and tonal orchestral music that is accessible and emotionally direct is deeply gratifying to me,” says Fuchs.

“The Grammy win puts my music in the realm of established American composers whose work will have an enduring influence on American musical composition.” ☺



# TEAM IMPACT

## A Winning Way to Heal

By Elizabeth Omara-Otunnu  
Photos by Stephen Slade '89 (SFA)  
and Peter Morenus



**I**f you watched any Husky men's basketball home games this season, you likely caught glimpses of a towheaded youngster shooting baskets with the players during warm-ups, giving them high-fives as they returned to the court after halftime, or exchanging an "air handshake" with players on the bench each time one of the team scored a three-pointer. His name is Rylan Ellingwood, he's 7 years old, and he's a member of the team.

Women's fans who came to First Night, the official opening of basketball season, were introduced not only to the new student-athletes but also to a little girl with some nifty dance moves. As 6-year-old Daniela Ciriello stood on the court with Coach Geno Auriemma (and alongside Rylan and Coach Hurley), she endeared herself to the crowd

to 16 facing serious and chronic illnesses with college athletic teams. UConn has the most Team Impact pairings of any Division 1 school in the country. The children and their families say that involvement with the teams provides a welcome distraction from their daily struggles.

### "Rylan Gives Us Hope"

When Rylan is with the basketball team, he's a bundle of energy. The casual observer would be surprised to learn he has an autoimmune disorder that makes him vulnerable to ailments other kids would quickly shake off — a cold will turn into pneumonia — so he doesn't go to birthday parties during flu season, must cancel play dates if the friend has a cold, and wears mittens when he's out shopping.

immunity on him. The infusion takes 13 hours to complete, and the effects only last a few weeks before Rylan gets cranky, his muscles get sore, and he becomes susceptible to infection again.

By the time Rylan was 5, he was scared of the infusion. "He hated it," says his mom, Tanya. "He wouldn't get in the car. He would scream, cry, kick, bite, scratch his way out. It would take five nurses to hold him down just to get the IV into him."

But then Rylan's longtime infusion nurse introduced him to Abigail Brouker, a Team Impact kid matched with the UConn Softball team, who was being treated next door. Rylan was so engrossed in Abigail's story, he didn't even notice that his dreaded treatment was already under way.

The program matched him with men's basketball — his favorite sport. It was a hit from the get-go. A few of the guys played basketball with him, lifting him up to make slam dunks. "When we left," says Tanya, "he was beaming from ear to ear — he was so happy. I don't get to see him like that a whole lot."

Though he's now comfortable with the

**"When we left he was beaming from ear to ear — he was so happy. I don't get to see him like that a whole lot." — Rylan's mom**

and the players by demonstrating a leg lift in a made-for-Instagram moment.

Come soccer season it was 15-year-old Maddox Bruening's turn to join his team on the bench at almost every UConn Men's Soccer home game. For two seasons now, Maddox has also joined the team for workouts, practices, and team meals.

Rylan, Daniela, and Maddox are three of the 13 children at UConn who are part of Team Impact, a national nonprofit that connects children ages 5

When he was eight months old, an immunologist at Connecticut Children's Medical Center discovered Rylan's blood was missing B cells, meaning his immune system has no memory cells. His body showed no sign of the childhood immunizations he had received.

Now Rylan, who lives in Ellington, Connecticut, returns every four weeks to Connecticut Children's for an infusion drawn from the blood plasma of 100 different donors that confers their

entire team and regularly attends home games, Rylan has formed a special bond with two players he met early on: Mamadou "Mo" Diarra '20 (CLAS) and Alterique "AI" Gilbert '20 (CLAS), both of whom have experienced serious injuries that have impacted their careers. With Mo sitting out after knee surgery that cost him most of the season, Rylan would sneak his favorite candy — Sour Patch Kids — to him on the bench when Coach wasn't looking.

"Rylan gives us hope," says Mo. "We



**Photos at left, clockwise from top left: Maddox has been on the bench for all but two men's soccer home games in the two seasons he's been with the team; Rylan and his team during First Night of the 2018-19 season; every three weeks Daniela has a six-hour blood transfusion. Photos on pages 40-41, clockwise from top left: Maddox, center, and his "brother" George Kutrubis '20 (CLAS), left in gray shirt looking at Maddox, with the rest of the team on Maddox's signing day; Daniela with Katie Lou Samuelson '19 (CLAS). Rylan bonding with Alterique Gilbert '20 (CLAS) on Rylan's first day with the team; Maddox getting some pointers from goalie Shane Keenan '22 (BUS); Rylan during one of his 13-hour monthly infusions at Connecticut Children's; Daniela will receive her 100th transfusion this summer. Photo on pages 36-37: Daniela impresses the crowd with her leg lift, accompanied by coaches Geno Auriemma, left, and Dan Hurley, with Rylan.**



all go through problems, but ours are temporary and Rylan has something he has to live with for the rest of his life. He comes every day with the same energy, the same excitement, so you can't sit there and feel sorry for yourself."

With Al, says Tanya, Rylan will talk about anything — about life, his illness. "It's just so awesome, because it comes from someone else other than me. Al has great values, and I trust what he says to Rylan completely."

Says Al, "We're glad Rylan could be part of the team. For me personally, it's been a special relationship between me and Rylan. He continues to inspire us all with his fight and determination."

Rylan shows the players the same empathy they show him. He'll send Al a congratulatory video after a good game or an encouraging video when Al might be disappointed. After Al suffered a season-ending eye injury in early March, Rylan messaged him as his "soldier-buddy."

"We just keep going because that's what we have to do," he wrote.

Tanya says the effects of Rylan's time with the team have been profound. He no longer resents his illness and now faces his infusions with confidence. "Going to the games is awesome," she says, "but the best part of it has been the relationships he's developed. They've changed his outlook on life."

### "She's Loved By Everyone"

Daniela Ciriello, a first-grader from Plainville, Connecticut, may be seen at women's basketball home games, jumping for joy behind the bench when her team makes a great play or waving

pompoms on the sidelines with the UConn cheerleaders. Despite her exuberance, Daniela has a life-threatening condition that has dogged her since she was a baby: thalassemia major, a rare and severe form of anemia, meaning her blood doesn't make enough healthy red blood cells.

Daniela must receive regular transfusions that take up to six hours each. This summer will mark her 100th transfusion. The family also monitors Daniela carefully for any sign of infection because of her IV port.

It's a tough balancing act for the family to coordinate trips to the hospital along with the everyday demands of raising four kids ages 2 to 12, and the family faces additional stress from the expense of Daniela's treatment: her medications alone cost thousands of dollars a month. They also recently found out that two-year-old Matteo has thalassemia as well, though a milder form.

That's why Team Impact is so special, says her mom, Nicole. "What Daniela does with the team and what they do for us — it's just fun. It takes our minds off reality."

The family mostly attended weekend home games this year to work around the siblings' schedules. The players, of course, also have a lot going on in their lives. And that's partly what has made for a good fit. "I know how busy they are, they know how busy we are," says Nicole. "We just make it work."

Daniela loves throwing miniature soft foam basketballs into the crowd after a home win, and even when she watches the games at home on TV, she

jumps up and down with her blue-and-white pom-poms, cheering for her team.

Before almost every game, says her mom, Daniela records a good-luck video telling the team to "kick butt." When she's in the hospital, she'll make a video telling them they inspire her. "It gives her a little boost of energy," Nicole says: "If you can do it, I can do it."

When Coach Auriemma was sick and missed a couple of games, Daniela put on her best dress and recorded a get-well video for him, including a reminder to be sure and watch the games. The players in turn mail her postcards from the road, as well as Christmas and Valentine's cards.

"She really lights up," says Nicole. "I think she feels like she's part of something, seeing how much they care about her and how much they include her."

Kyla Irwin '20 (CLAS), one of the players who's developed a rapport with Daniela, says Team Impact is "a really great opportunity to take yourself outside of your usual life." She says the team doesn't discuss health issues with Daniela. "We want her to focus on other things and feel included in everything we do, make sure she knows she's loved by everyone."

The Ciriellos, however, also have a serious purpose behind the videos they send from the hospital — they hope to raise the team's awareness of the importance of blood donation. "We're very big advocates of giving blood," says Nicole, whose family organizes blood drives every year. "Giving blood doesn't cost anything, and it doesn't take very long. Blood is what's keeping Daniela alive."

**"He's had to cope with some mean people, so to be surrounded by so much positivity, it's been life changing." — Maddox's mom**

### "One of the Guys"

Fifteen-year-old Maddox Bruening joined the men's soccer team in April 2017.

Maddox was diagnosed at age 1 with eosinophilic esophagitis, a gastrointestinal disorder involving multiple food allergies that cause inflammation of the esophagus. Eating isn't fun. And because he can't consume enough food by mouth, he gets most of his nutrition from a liquid feed delivered through a tube into his stomach.

Active and energetic, Maddox loves to play soccer, basketball, and lacrosse in his hometown of Glastonbury, Connecticut. He has missed only two UConn home games in two seasons. Maddox also joins the team at some nearby away games, as well as workouts, practices, and team meals.

He has shadowed student-athletes serving as counselors at the Ray Reid Soccer Camp, been recognized with other Team Impact kids and teams during halftime at a basketball game, and attended a Team Impact gala where he met NFL player Julian Edelman of the New England Patriots.

At the heart of his interaction with the team is a strong connection with George Kutrubis '20 (CLAS), a pre-

med student who thinks of Maddox as a younger brother. "He definitely brightens the mood wherever he goes," George says. "He's a very positive guy, and it's just great having him around."

George and Maddox tease each other like brothers do. And George says he also feels like a second dad to Maddox at times, reminding him to eat his lunch or wear extra layers on a cold day. Maddox doesn't mind. He says it's good to have someone other than his mom be on his case.

The two exchange text messages often, talking about school or video games or the family dog. But they don't talk about Maddox's health. "It seems like he doesn't want to bring that part of his life into this one, which I understand," George says. "Maybe it makes him feel more normal than he feels otherwise."

Maddox's mom says he looks up to the student-athletes as role models. He hopes to go to college himself one day, and George promises to stay in touch after he graduates, so he can mentor him in the college application process.

Though Maddox plays it cool about his illness at school, too — he says only a couple of his friends know about his feeding tube port — he hasn't escaped

being bullied for other things.

Being on the Men's Soccer team helps him get past the difficult times — even though at first, his peers didn't believe him. In eighth grade, when his class played "Two Truths and a Lie," his classmates called him out for saying two lies: "I like

eating milk chocolate" (he's allergic to it) and "I'm a member of the UConn Men's Soccer team." But they had to take it back when Maddox pulled up a video of his signing ceremony with the team.

For Maddox's mom, the time the family spends at soccer games, or out to dinner while Maddox is at practice, is "a respite from the real world."

Recently, as if the transition to high school wasn't enough, Maddox was diagnosed with Sever's disease, an inflammation that often affects active kids going through a growth spurt. Not only has he had to cut back on participating in his beloved sports, he also has to do physical therapy three times a day.

The team has helped him get through. When he balked at having to go to yet another specialist about the pain, they encouraged him to stay the course. And continuing to hang out with the players on campus has provided an ongoing outlet for his passion for sports.

"He just wants to be part of the team, one of the guys," says his mom. "He's had to cope with some mean people, so to be surrounded by so much positivity, it's been life-changing," she adds.

"It's a different kind of healing." ☺

### The Rest of UConn's Team Impact Team:



**Abigail Brouker, 13, of Unionville, Softball, since September 2017. Abigail had leukemia.**



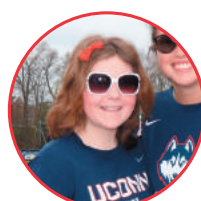
**Caleb Curran, 6, of Manchester, Men's Tennis, since February 2018. Caleb has a cardiac disorder and Down syndrome.**



**Ashley Greenier, 10, of Vernon, Women's Ice Hockey, since April 2017. Ashley has a lung disorder.**



**Grayson Hand, 9, of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, Baseball, since March 2015. Grayson had leukemia.**



**Genevieve Neiman, 13, of Somers, Women's Tennis, since January 2017. Genevieve had leukemia.**



**Camden Soucy, 11, of Tolland, Men's Ice Hockey, since April 2014. Camden had neuroblastoma.**



**Elsa Nocton, 12, of Storrs, Women's Volleyball, since March 2018. Elsa has a neuromuscular disease.**



**Meredith Ross, 10, of Vernon, Women's Swimming and Diving, since January 2019. Meredith had leukemia.**



**Kaleigh Thereault, 9, of Manchester, Women's Lacrosse, since August 2018. Kaleigh has tuberous sclerosis complex.**



**Rebekah Tirrell, 14, of Putnam, Women's Soccer, since April 2019. Rebekah has juvenile idiopathic scoliosis.**



Curtis (right) with Malek, aka Freddie Mercury.

## We Are the Champions

“Curiosity is key” is the motto that took **Ben Curtis ’06 (CLAS)** from interning with the New York Yankees his senior year to celebrating at the Oscars this year. As president of Daylight Holdings in L.A., he manages celebrities, including Rami Malek. He says he first noticed Malek on HBO’s “The Pacific” and later guided him to lead roles in “Mr. Robot” and “Bohemian Rhapsody.” Seeing his client win Best Actor for playing Freddie Mercury in “Rhapsody” was like reaching the top of the mountain, Curtis says. “The highlight of the night was right after he won when his agent and I ran backstage. We were all hugging and crying for a couple minutes — it was surreal. And of course that all led to staying out celebrating until 5 a.m.” —*CAMILA VALLEJO ’19 (CLAS)*

### CLASS NOTES



➔ **Michael Wallace Gordon ’57 (BUS), ’63 JD** writes that he would enjoy hearing from other UConn alums from the 1950s. He reports that he retired in 2007 as both the Dasburg Professor of Law at the University of Florida and the Distinguished Fulbright Professor of International Law at Universidade Catholica Portuguesa in Lisbon. At the age of 74, he built a drift boat, went to Wyoming, and became a professional fly-fishing guide. He lives in St. Augustine, Fla., in the winter and Montana and Wyoming during the summer. In his spare time, he has written the first 11 of the Macduff Brooks Fly Fishing Mysteries. Writing as M.W. Gordon, his first novel of the series, “Deadly Drifts,” won Book of the Year and Best Suspense/Thriller of the Year in the Royal Palm awards from the Florida Writers Association.



➔ **Ray Olderman ’62 (CLAS), ’64 MA**, of Madison, Wisc., and his wife, **Star Schechter Olderman ’64 (CLAS)**, celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary in January. He reports that he became a teaching assistant upon graduating from UConn and then an instructor at UConn Waterbury in 1965. He recently published a memoir called “Good as a Girl.” ➔ **Helen Cabaniss Brown ’63 (NURS), Allison Clarke Harper ’63 (NURS), and Grace Fleet Bates ’63 (NURS)** held a reunion this summer at the Martha’s Vineyard cottage where many of their

classmates vacationed. She says a number of them got jobs at the little hospital there during the first summer after graduation. ➔ **David R. Goldfarb ’65 (BUS)** reports that he has had a long career at the Connecticut Hospice, Inc., rising in the ranks from chief accountant to chief financial officer. At the same time, he took on various positions at his synagogue and is currently the “Gabbai” or sexton, a position he has held for 24 years. In June 2018, he received the Henry M. Zachs Spirit of Judaism Award from the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford for his contributions to the greater Hartford community. He credits his education at UConn for allowing him to commit the resources he learned for the betterment of humanity. ➔ **Richard Sohn ’69 (CLAS), ’76 Ph.D.** is one of several editors of the newly published book “Quantum Field Theory: Lectures of Sidney Coleman.”



➔ **Alan Srebnick ’71 (BUS)** and his wife Carole took a 10-day hiking trek through the Peruvian Andes to the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu. He said he found the Incan history and culture fascinating and the people lovely and gentle. ➔ **Jane Keddy ’71 (CLAS)** recently published a memoir, “Serial Monogamy: An illustrated memoir.” The story opens in a classroom at UConn in 1968 and continues with her experiences in the Urban Semester Program run by Mike Wogan. ➔ **Judy Barlin ’73 (CLAS)**, of Miami, Fla., received the first Sandra C. Raymond Advocate of the Year Award at the Lupus Foundation of America 2019 National Lupus Advocacy Summit. Judy, along with her husband **Wayne ’73 (BUS)**, has dedicated

countless hours advocating for families impacted by lupus and has given and raised millions of dollars to ensure the needs of children with lupus are recognized in research. Judy is a member of the Foundation’s National Board of Directors and chairs the Board’s Advocacy and Government Relations Committee. Her son, Michael, lost his life to lupus at the age of 24. ➔ UConn Trustee **Philip Rubin ’74 MA, ’76 Ph.D.**, of Fairfield, Conn., CEO emeritus and board member at Haskins Laboratories and adjunct professor in the Department of Surgery, Otolaryngology at Yale University School of Medicine, has been named to serve as a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences Challenges for International Scientific Partnerships (CISP) Large-Scale Science Working Group. The research goal of CISP is to assess the challenges and opportunities presented by evolving trends in society, as well as changes in the types and structures of international science partnerships. ➔ **Harold Haldeman ’74 JD**, a veteran naval officer and family law attorney, was made partner at the Law Offices of Edward Nusbaum, a Westport-based family law practice. He lives in Fairfield, Conn. ➔ **Bill Hendricks ’75 (BUS)** reports that he was recently appointed director, branch control officer at Oppenheimer & Co. Inc. in Los Angeles, Calif. He has more than 30 years of experience in the securities industry, holding management positions for Wells Fargo Advisors, UBS, and Paine Webber. ➔ **Thomas Welsh ’75 (CLAS), ’80 JD** has been appointed general counsel of Nippon Steel & Sumikin Bussan Americas, Inc. ➔ **Tom Ingrassia ’75 MA** was recently honored for his book “Reflections of A Love Supreme: Motown Through the Eyes of Fans,”

by the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs with its Pinnacle Award as Best Musical History Book of the Year. This is the second award for the book, which was named Best Music Book by the National Indie Excellence Awards. Ingrassia’s first book, “One Door Closes: Overcoming Adversity by Following Your Dreams,” is currently being adapted as a documentary film due out in late 2019. Ingrassia is also the host of “The Motown Jukebox” on WCUW 91.3 FM in Worcester, Mass. ➔ **Bongi Magubane ’77 (CLAS)** of Hartford, Conn., a former information-technology executive at Aetna, was sworn in as the new Connecticut Commissioner of Motor Vehicles in March. Magubane, who was born in South Africa, built a long career as an information technology specialist. Prior to Aetna, she was a consultant for the information technology company Keane and, before that, at Cigna. ➔ **Diane Lee Baron ’77 (CLAS)** is a teacher of the visually impaired in Montgomery County, Md. She has worked in the fields of multiple disabilities and/or visual impairment for 43 years. Her contemporary comedy/romance novel, “Gal Wonder,” was published in 2017. Her interview book, “The Fandom Fifty,” about people involved in the Maryland/D.C. science fiction community, will debut in July.



➔ **Kevin Baldwin ’81 (CLAS)**, of Hebron, Conn., has been named president of the American College of Financial Services Alumni Association. Baldwin co-founded and is managing director of B&L Financial Architects. ➔ **James T. Healey, Jr. ’82 (BUS)** is the new president of the





ALUMNI PROFILE

## SUCCESS IS IN THE CARDS

For more than a decade, **Moises Rodriguez '95 (CLAS)**, assistant general manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, has traveled to the Dominican Republic to find the team's Latin American baseball stars of tomorrow. He watches teenagers play their hearts out on hard-scrabble fields, digging balls out of the dirt to make the kind of put-outs that put smiles on scouts' faces.

The best of the best of these youngsters are signed to contracts (in Latin America, the minimum signing age is 16) and enter a baseball academy owned by a Major League team. Here they eat, sleep, take classes to achieve the equivalent of a high school education, and learn the fundamentals of baseball. The Cardinals, just like every other Major League team, has such a facility in Central America.

Before being promoted in 2017 to his current position, where he monitors player development within the Cardinals' minor and major league system, Rodriguez spent a decade as the organization's director of international operations. Every three weeks,

he jetted to the Dominican Republic to supervise the players at the academy.

"It was a lot of long hours, and I made a lot of sacrifices for the team, but it's worth it," says Rodriguez from his office in Busch Stadium. "Trying to be an influential person in the process of building a World Series championship team is what drives me." The challenge, he says, is finding youngsters who have the right combination of athletic skills and heart.

"Heart is subjective," he says. A player has to show desire, the ability to learn and to make adjustments on the fly. "When watching these kids, I ask myself, 'Are they gritty? Competitive? Resilient?' But at the end of the day, it's how they perform. Unfortunately, not everyone we acquire turns into a prospect."

### Aces

Prospects he has developed into everyday Cardinal players include outfielder Marcell Ozuna and pitchers Carlos Martinez and Sandy Alcántara (who was recently traded to the Miami

*Rodriguez (right) with outfielder José Martínez and chairman and CEO Bill DeWitt, Jr., at the St. Louis Cardinals spring training complex in Jupiter, Florida.*

Marlins). John Mozeliak, the Cardinals' president of business operations, says Rodriguez, who was hired in 2007, is responsible for building the team's presence in Latin America.

"We knew that we needed to do something different for the team, so we started to build the infrastructure of a presence in the Dominican Republic," Mozeliak says. "We turned the operation over to (Rodriguez), and he's been able to put the St. Louis Cardinals on the map."

### Full House

Rodriguez moved to New York City from Puerto Rico with his mother when he was 10 and grew up a passionate Yankees fan. "But I also grew up watching the Cardinals a lot," he says with a smile. "In New York, you're either a Yankees fan or a Mets fan, and whenever the Mets played the Cardinals, I always cheered for the Cardinals."

Rodriguez worked in the Athletic Communications office at UConn, where he says then associate athletic communications director Tim Tolokan and Kyle Muncy, who now oversees the Office of Trademark Licensing and Branding, helped establish his career path. "Their confidence in me made me believe I could do the job," Rodriguez says. "Kyle taught me how to be a professional."

Today, Rodriguez supervises a department of 25 scouts and coaches, trainers, and administrative personnel based in St. Louis and the Dominican Republic. His professional philosophy is simple: Work hard, and always keep learning from the people around you. "I meet a lot of people, and observe what's good in them and then try to gather their positive ingredients," he says. "I'm lucky to have a lot of people who are positive in my life — especially my wife and kids. They're what drive me. At the end of the day, I'm doing it for them." —BENJAMIN GLEISSER

Connecticut State Golf Association. ➔ **Novant Health** named **Mark J. King '83 (CAHNR)** vice president of research and innovation in March. He previously served as assistant vice president of research administration at Atrium Health, where he oversaw clinical trials and research operations.

➔ **Robert J. Smith '83 6th Year, '86 Ph.D.** was honored by The Woodstock Academy in Woodstock, Conn., with the installation of his portrait in the school library, the first such recognition of a faculty member by the school. He is a faculty emeritus of the academy, his 30 years as English Department chair the longest such tenure in school history, and his dissertation on the school's role as a town academy was recognized by a lifetime trustee appointment as academy historian. He also recently published "A History of The Woodstock Academy, 1801–2016."

➔ **David Samuels '83 (BUS)** received the National Outstanding Eagle Scout Award (NOESA) by the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA). The March 2019 reception was held at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Va. ➔ **Steve Patten '85 (CLAS)** has been awarded the National Association of Realtors National Commercial Award in recognition of his professional achievements in commercial real estate.

➔ **Susan Cragin '76 (CLAS), '86 (CLAS)** was elected Merrimack County (New Hampshire) Registrar of Deeds for a term that began January 2019.

➔ **Barbara T. Burke '87 MS** has joined the law firm Carlton Fields as a nursing consultant in the Hartford office. She is a member of the firm's mass tort and product liability practice group. ➔ **Alison L. Clarke '88 MBA** of Norwalk, Conn., recently established ALC Health Plans, an insurance

agency with an emphasis on Medicare-eligible individuals and health plans for individuals and small employer groups. ➔ **C.J. Karamargin '89 (CLAS)** has been named deputy state director for U.S. Sen. Martha McSally of Arizona. He served as the senator's district director when she was in the House of Representatives and as communications director for U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. Karamargin is a former reporter and editor whose father, **John '54 MA**, aunt, **Felia '49 (NUR)**, and uncle, **Michael '57 (CLAS), '71 Ph.D.**, also hold UConn degrees.



➔ **Jacqueline McLean '92 MSW** was a featured guest on the 6th annual NightSide with Dan Rea show on nonprofits on WBZ-AM radio in Boston recently. Jacqueline is co-founder of NFL Speaks, a nonprofit charitable organization. NFL Speaks' mission is to develop, recruit, and maintain a highly skilled national network of behavioral health professionals to offer a model of care that responds to the unique mental health needs of retired professional football players and other professional athletes and to reduce the stigma that perpetuates the silent crisis of men's mental health. ➔ **Jeff Rossi '93 (BUS)** recently was named national partner in charge of manufacturing and distribution practice at CohnReznick LLP and office managing partner for the firm's Hartford and Stamford offices.

➔ **Conway Campbell '93 (CLAS)** has been named to a new position of vice president for student success at Assumption College in Worcester.



MAKING GOOD

### The Husky Ticket Project

Despite living in New York City, "UConn's 6th borough," for the past five years, true fans **Kevin Solomon '14 (BUS)**, **Jeremy Longobardi '12 (BUS)**, and **Kevin Kortsep '12 (BUS)** have made it a mission to keep supporting UConn Nation.

Being too far afield to attend most games gave the trio the idea for Husky Ticket Project, their NYC nonprofit that provides free UConn football and basketball tickets to deserving young fans while also providing support and revenue to UConn Athletics.

"In 2007, I went to a USF vs. UConn football game while I was still in high school. I was sitting in the rain, but eventually it cleared up and UConn won. My buddy and I ran to the field and in that moment, I felt like a true Husky," says Kortsep. "I want to re-create that experience for as many kids as possible."

In just its first year, Husky Ticket Project raised \$6,000 and sent more than 500 lucky kids and chaperones to games. Through a partnership with Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters, Luke Williams and his "little brother" Tristen from Meriden, Connecticut (pictured above), were two of the many ticket recipients. Tristen is a die-hard sports fan, and attending his first UConn game was an eye-opening experience, says Williams. "Being surrounded by blue skies, players, and cheering crowds at Rentschler Field really helped Tristen open up and realize we don't need to travel far to have these kinds of experiences." —CAMILA VALLEJO '19 (CLAS)

➔ Learn more and see more happy recipients at [s.uconn.edu/tix](http://s.uconn.edu/tix).

**TOM'S TRIVIA**



Oozeball 1985

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO TOM'S TRIVIA!**

Go to [s.uconn.edu/july19trivia](http://s.uconn.edu/july19trivia) to see if you know as much as King of UConn Trivia Tom Breen '00 (CLAS).

1. At the Oct. 11, 1958, rivalry football game at UMass Amherst, the UConn marching band charged into the opposing fans' bleachers and scuffled with rival students in a bid to recover something that had been stolen from the UConn campus. What was it?  
 A: The state flag that flew above Gardner Dow Field  
 B: A wooden sign that stood on Rte. 195 welcoming drivers to Storrs  
 C: The head from the UConn mascot costume  
 D: The sign that hung above Jonathan IV's kennel
2. This spring marked the 20th anniversary of the Chemistry Building constructed on North Eagleville Road, overlooking Swan Lake. What was on that site before the state-of-the-art facility was built?  
 A: Widmer Cottage  
 B: The Charles E. Waring Building  
 C: Cecil Kotto Hall  
 D: The Orford Refectory
3. In the late 1950s, Connecticut's civil defense plan called for UConn's Storrs campus to be used as what in the event of a nuclear attack?  
 A: A staging ground for the deployment of Nike missiles  
 B: The central fallout shelter for northeastern Connecticut  
 C: The state capital  
 D: An important agricultural hub to prevent food shortages
4. The Student Alumni Association board member who takes charge of organizing Oozeball each year is the vice president of tradition. But when the muddy volleyball game began in 1984, its organizer had a very different title. What was it?  
 A: The Oozemaster General  
 B: The Wizard of Ooze  
 C: Secretary for Mud  
 D: The Sultan of Splat

He will focus on student achievement across the college's many departments and divisions. ➔ **Daniel Johnson '94 MS** has been promoted to associate at Dewberry, a privately held professional services firm. Johnson, who works in the firm's Boston office, serves as a project manager in the structural engineering department. ➔ **Kevin S. Fox '95 (CLAS)** has been selected as one of the 2019 National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellows in recognition of his commitment to geography education. Kevin recently returned from a 10-day expedition on the National Geographic *Explorer* to enhance his geographic knowledge of Arctic Svalbard. ➔ **C. Taylor Leigh '97 (BGS)** has opened a private practice in divorce mediation and integrative life coaching at The Center for Divorce and Healing in Southington, Conn. She has worked with families in transition through divorce professionally for more than 25 years. ➔ **Kim S. Johnson '98 (CLAS)** is director of marketing for a not-for-profit called Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. In her role, Kim directs all aspects of digital and traditional marketing to support the organization and the nine social enterprise businesses it operates. Homeboy Industries seeks to provide free services and job training to former gang members and previously incarcerated men and women, allowing them to redirect their lives and become contributing members of the community. After attending UConn, Kim received her MBA from The College of William & Mary. ➔ **Simone Morris '98 MBA**, CEO of Simone Morris Enterprises, published her first book, "Achievement Unlocked: Strategies to Set Goals and Manifest Them." Her company was recently certified as a minority and woman business enterprise.

**2000s**

➔ **Spencer Cerruto '00 (BGS)** has been named chief of police of the New Milford Police Department. He has 32 years of police experience and a community policing philosophy. He is an adjunct professor of criminal justice at Post University and Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury, Conn. ➔ **Raghu Savalgi '00 MBA**, with his wife Vani and son Praveen, started the SPLAR Foundation and Savalgi Nutritional Center, which provides protein-rich powder for children to mix into their drinks, and Savalgi Creative Innovation, a center for education in business management and information technology. ➔ **Michael Boecherer '00 (CLAS), '02 MA** has a Ph.D. from Stony Brook University and just earned the title of full professor of English at Suffolk County Community College in Riverhead, N.Y., after 12 years of service. ➔ **Amanda Bundock-Simjian '01 (CLAS)** received the Wallingford Education Foundation's Distinguished Alumni Award. ➔ **Clyde Tinnen '01 MBA** has joined Foley & Lardner LLP's

Business Law Department and Transactions Practice Group as a partner in the Milwaukee office. He is a member of numerous professional organizations, including the Wisconsin African-American Lawyers Association, the Chicago Black Partners Alliance, and the Jackie Robinson Foundation, and volunteers with the Waukesha Teen Court Program. He was named one of *Savoy Magazine's* Most Influential Black Lawyers in 2015 and 2018. ➔ **Jackie Burns '02 (SFA)** starred as Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, in "Wicked the Musical" at the Hollywood Pantages Theatre. ➔ **Craig Orski '03 (BUS)**, a former UConn men's swimming and diving team captain and CNBC's VP, Finance & Strategy and **Seth Harris '06 (CLAS)**, Senior Director of Audience Growth & Partnerships, were among a group recognized for their work at CNBC and their support of Financial Literacy Month by ringing the NASDAQ opening bell in March. ➔ **Jon Dahlquist '03 (ED), '05 MA** has been named the first dean of wellness and athletics at East Catholic High School in Manchester, Conn. Dahlquist

previously served as associate athletic director for Towson University in Maryland and director of football operations at UConn. ➔ **Courtney Lundgren Connors '04 (BUS)** was the Grand Marshal of this year's Greater New Haven St. Patrick's Day Parade. From Hamden, Conn., she remembers watching her father marching in the parade as a New Haven firefighter. An assistant controller at Yale, she also runs Courtney Connors Events, has three children, and has been involved in the parade committee for years. ➔ **Grace Festa '04 (CLAS)**, business development manager at the Greater Richmond (Va.) Partnership, Inc., has earned the designation of Certified Economic Developer. She coordinates the Business First Greater Richmond program, which assists local economic development offices in expansions and retention. ➔ **David J. Rotatori '04 MBA** has been named CEO of Ion Bank. He lives in Naugatuck, Conn., with his wife, Pam, and daughters Cara, Mia, and Alena. ➔ **Jennifer (Mitrano) Huntington, '05 (PHARM), '07**

**Pharm.D.**, and her husband, **Daniel Huntington '04 (CLAS)**, announce that their son, Ryan Daniel Huntington, was born in April 2018. He joins big sisters Ella and Avery. ➔ **Tom Feige '05 (CLAS)** and his wife **Katelyn (Pelletier) Feige '08 (CLAS)** welcomed a son, Thomas Richard Feige III, into the world in October 2018. Married in 2014, they live in Beacon Falls, Conn. ➔ **Tim Murray '06 (CLAS)** and **Erica (Pachlhofer) Murray '06 (BUS)** welcomed twin girls, June and Abigail, in August 2018. ➔ **Mark Zambrano '06 (BUS)** has written "Surfing in Huntington Beach," published by Arcadia Publishing. ➔ **Derek McFerran '06 Pharm.D.** was honored with the 2018 President's Circle Award by Commonwealth Care Alliance in Boston, Mass., for his significant contributions to the organization's pharmacy and clinical programs. He is the organization's director of pharmacy. ➔ **Rachel Fain '07 CLAS** was promoted to partner at the Halloran Sage law firm in Hartford, Conn. She is a member of the firm's Litigation and Dispute Resolution practice group, and she was named a Rising



➔ **Rob Carolla '94 (CLAS)** reports that he and several UConn alumni, including (right, from left) **Sherrie (Medeiros) Muncy '91 (CLAS)**, **Carolla**, **Bob Studley '94 (CLAS), '99 MA**, **Tod Levesh '97 (CLAS)**, **Geoff Bushman '96 (CLAS)**, **Kyle Muncy '92 (CLAS)**, and **Tammy (Garr) Donovan '91 (CLAS)**, reunited as part of the media coordination team when UConn hosted the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship first and second rounds in Hartford. All had been undergraduate student workers for the UConn Athletics Communications staff: (left, from left, back row) **Studley, Levesh, Bushman, Carolla, Andrew Prince '85 (BUS)**; (from left, front row) **Jim Waldinger '94 (CLAS)**, **Medeiros Muncy**, **Luanne (Pudlo) Dunstan**, **Mike Lanza '83 (CLAS), '86 JD**.



ALUMNI PROFILE

# 100 AND COUNTING

When you ask Morton Katz '39 (CLAS) '51 JD what he learned at UConn School of Law, three lessons top his list: how to be a good lawyer, the importance of preparation, and knowing when to settle a case. Katz has had more time than most to ponder the value of his legal education, and, at 100, he's still putting those lessons to use.

For the past 20 years, Katz has worked as a special public defender at Hartford Superior Court. The rest of his nearly seven decades in practice include a mix of civil and defense work and an appointment as a Superior Court magistrate. He is also a decorated World War II veteran who remained in the army in intelligence and civil affairs roles until his retirement as a colonel in 1972.

While his frame may be bowed, his wit and recall are stunningly sharp. He delights in telling stories about his favorite cases, and ticks off names and dates with more precision than people half his age. When he talks about his upbringing in Hartford and service in the army during World War II, a fuller picture of him comes into focus. That's when his self-effacing nature, innate sense of justice, and commitment to serving others shine through.

Katz faithfully attends conferences at the law school and serves as a mentor, regularly visiting the school to speak to students. "He brings immense warmth and vitality whenever he comes to campus. His example is a source of inspiration to everyone around him," says Timothy Fisher, dean of UConn Law. "He is a national treasure."

A self-described "Depression kid," Katz dismisses himself as a mediocre student — despite making the National Honor Society at Weaver High School in Hartford. With the help of a generous uncle, he attended UConn, then known as Connecticut State College,



Still practicing law at 100 years old, Morton Katz '39 (CLAS) '51 JD has worked as a special public defender at Hartford Superior Court for the past 20 years. He says his wife keeps him healthy, and making sure defendants have good representation is what "keeps him going."

and majored in chemistry, for which he says he had no aptitude.

Katz joined the ROTC and Citizens Military Training Camps and received a commission in 1940. Then, halfway through his second year of graduate school at Iowa State University, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

"My professor, Henry Gilman, said 'Write your thesis, and we'll get you your master's degree,'" Katz recalls. He left school in April 1942 for basic training at Fort Benning. On the train to Georgia Katz remembers four officers of color who were "shown terrible racism," he recalls. "The treatment was shameful." The impression stayed with him and changed the course of his life.

During the war, Katz crisscrossed North Africa and Europe. He fought at Venafro and Anzio Beach in Italy, in the south of France, and the Ardennes region of Belgium, first with the army's 502nd Parachute Infantry, then with the 101st Airborne and 509th Parachute Infantry. When in 1945 his unit suffered massive casualties, he joined the 82nd Airborne's 505th Parachute Infantry, crossing the Elbe River and helping to liberate Wöbb-

lin concentration camp.

"The S.S. officers got away, but we captured the commandant, and I have his gun to this day," he says.

Katz returned in 1946, thankful to be alive. After marching in the victory parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City, he traveled to the West Coast, stopping to visit the families of his fallen army buddies along the way. Back at Iowa State, he received a teaching fellowship, but didn't like the research side of the work and resigned in 1948. He then enrolled in UConn School of Law and after only one class, he knew he had found his calling.

He credits his wife Shirley, a retired pharmacist whom he married in 1964, with keeping him healthy all these years. He also has a purpose in life: Making sure defendants have adequate legal representation is what keeps him going, he says.

"My daughter asks me, 'Why don't you retire?'" Katz says. "I tell her, because I love it. Somebody needs me, and I have to be somewhere. I'm doing what I want to do, and there is some defendant out there who needs a damn good lawyer." —LORETTA WALDMAN

# Bring your HUSKY PACK back to UConn this Fall

## Mark your Calendar!



**UCONN HOMECOMING:**  
Friday, October 18th  
Saturday, October 19th



**HUSKIES FOREVER 5K & LIL' HUSKIES KIDS K:**  
Sunday, October 27



**SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH UCONN NATION!**

Your classmates want to know about the milestones in your life. Send news about weddings, births, new jobs, new publications, and more to:

➔ alumni-news@uconnalumni.com

or via snail mail to:  
**Alumni News & Notes**  
**UConn Foundation**  
**2384 Alumni Drive**  
**Unit 3053**  
**Storrs, CT 06269**

Submissions may be edited for clarity or length.

Star by Super Lawyers in 2018 in the area of personal injury defense. ➔ **Sarah LaRose '07 (CAHNR), '08 MA** completed her Ph.D. in agricultural education at the University of Florida after teaching high school agricultural education at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury, Conn., for seven years. In August 2018, she became an assistant professor of agricultural education at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. ➔ Future Husky Brooks Tenenhaus was born in February to **Lauren (Foster) Tenenhaus '08 (CLAS)** and husband Brian of Killingworth, Conn. He was welcomed by big sister Mila. ➔ **James Halperin '09 (BUS, ENG)** and **Tracy Jolson '10 (CAHNR)** were married Sept. 8, 2018. Reports Tracy: "We had an ice sculpture of a husky, a specialty cocktail honoring the bionic beaver, had all of our friends on the dance floor for a picture, and had tons of fun chanting all our favorite

UConn chants! I even hand-made my bridesmaids a shirt to get ready in with a husky patch."



➔ **Ariel Grossman '10 (BUS)** married **Geoffrey Winkley '11 (BUS, ENG)** on November 3, 2018, in Baltimore, Md., where they live. The wedding party was full of Huskies, including **Emily Kozak '10 (BUS), Ilana Eides '11 (BUS), Lyndsey Sonkin '10 (NURS), Kevin McQuade '11 (CLAS), Joshua Lesse '11 (CAHNR), and Will Carnes '11 (CLAS).** ➔ **Elizabeth Netz '10 MA** and husband Daniel announce that their daughter, Brooke Maria Netz, was born in April. The couple was married July 2016. ➔ **Holly Sansolo '11 (CLAS)** and **Brendan Crouse '11 (BUS)**, who met as freshmen living in Russell, were married in Middletown, Conn., on Nov. 24. They now live in Norwalk, where Brendan works for Pepperidge Farm and is pursuing his MBA and serving as an adjunct professor at UConn Stamford. Holly works for Indeed.com in Stamford. ➔ **Rebecca Levine '11 (BUS)** married Ross Hadfield in Newport, R.I., on Sept. 23, 2018 with the following Huskies in attendance: **Audrey Ozga '11 (CLAS), Laine Miller '11, Karen Sutin '12 (BUS), Emily Kozak '10 (BUS), Alyssa Yogel '11 (CLAS), Ariel Winkley '10 (BUS), Lisa Mutnick '10 (CLAS), Rebecca (Levine)**

**Hadfield '11 (BUS), Samantha Yogel '11 (CLAS), Jeremy Hudson, Danielle Efronson '12 (BUS), Jimmy Miller '11 (BUS), Chris Halloran '10 (CLAS), Geoff Winkley '10 (BUS, ENG), Griffin Weigel '10 (CLAS), Kelsie Ross '11 (BUS), and Dan Levine '77 (BUS).** ➔ Corporate attorney **Frank Eucalitto '12 (CLAS)** joined the Verrill Dana law firm in Westport, Conn. ➔ **Olivia Bogucki '12 (CLAS)** has accepted a two-year postdoctoral fellowship in clinical health psychology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. She is a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at University of Maine and a predoctoral intern at the University of California, San Diego. ➔ **Hartford Performs**, an organization that brings visiting artists into Hartford Public Schools, has appointed **Robinson+Cole lawyer Charles F. Modzelewski '13 (CLAS), '16 JD** to its

board of directors. ➔ **Andrew Tuitt '13 (CLAS)** published his first book, "My Mathematical Proof of God's Existence." ➔ **Stephen Schirra '14 (CLAS)** reports that his nonprofit, "Around the Worlds, Around the World," which teaches underprivileged children how to play soccer in free camps, has now reached nearly 4,500 kids in 35 countries. He won a Community MVP Award from Major League Soccer along with recognition from the Boston Celtics and the New England Patriots. ➔ **Camille Sauer '14 JD** was just named one of 13 lawyers in a new shareholder class of Benne & Witcoff, a national intellectual property law firm. Sauer, of Washington, D.C., represents clients in all facets of technology protection and commercialization, focusing on utility and design patent procurement and intellectual property counseling.



➔ Mom Natalie Vitone assures her sister Christina Smith '11 (CLAS) that these triplet nieces and nephew are sure to make many visits to UConn.

Peter Morenus



**JOB ENVY**

**Hot Dog!**

**Gabriella Medvick '18 (SFA)**, aka Grillin' Gabz, was one of the 12 lucky hotdoggers hired to cruise the 27-foot-long bright yellow and orange Oscar Mayer Wienermobile cross country for the past year. So far she's driven from Texas to Maine at speeds up to 75 m.p.h. (abiding by the speed limit of course) to get the word out about Oscar Meyer's new preservative- and nitrate-free hot dogs. Before hitting the road, Medvick took serious driving lessons at "Hot Dog High" in Madison, Wisconsin, where she also learned more than a few hot dog puns. We caught up with her when the tour brought her back to UConn. As the first alum to be hired for this position, Medvick says she couldn't wait to show UConn Nation her new set of wheels and ketchup with her fellow Huskies. "My UConn education was so hands-on — it gave me the right experience to cut the mustard and drive the Wienermobile," she says. — CAMILLA VALLEJO '19 (CLAS)

➔ For more of our interview with Medvick, go to [s.uconn.edu/wiener](http://s.uconn.edu/wiener).

**IN MEMORIAM**

Please visit [s.uconn.edu/julyobits2019](http://s.uconn.edu/julyobits2019) to find obituaries for alumni and faculty. And please share news of alumni deaths and obituaries with *UConn Magazine* by sending an email to [alumni-news@uconnalumni.com](mailto:alumni-news@uconnalumni.com) or writing to Alumni News & Notes, UConn Foundation, 2384 Alumni Drive Unit 3053, Storrs, CT 06269.

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Looking for Tom's Trivia? See pg. 48

